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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**CONFLICT IN TIME, PETRIFIED IN SPACE:  
KENYA-SOMALIA BORDER GEOPOLITICAL  
CONFLICTS**

by

Carolyne M. Mutisya

June 2017

Thesis Advisor:

Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez

Co-Advisor:

Carolyn Halladay

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE June 2017	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE CONFLICT IN TIME, PETRIFIED IN SPACE: KENYA-SOMALIA BORDER GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Carolyne M. Mutisya				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ___N/A___.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)  In response to Kenyan citizens' growing uneasiness with regard to the cross-border violence from Somalia-based terrorists, the government of Kenya has begun to erect a barrier along its shared border with Somalia. This thesis looks at the interconnectedness of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands that are home to the Somali ethnic group and the potential impact of the border barrier on this population.  The thesis examines the link between the historical bordering process carried out by the colonial and post-colonial powers, which contributes to the complexity of border security. Geopolitical analysis examines this process and the emergence of identity politics within the Somali ethnic group, as well as how this ethnic identity has been exploited by terrorists and contributed to conflicts. Additionally, securitization theory explains not only the government's decision to harden the border, but also the population's acceptance of an existential threat that legitimizes it.  The research concludes that the barrier on the Kenya-Somalia border will impact the Somali ethnic group in the borderlands. To minimize this impact, the research recommends the border fence as a temporary solution to enhance security in Kenya and suggests ways for the government to leverage the support of the borderlands population to effectively ensure this solution.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS border, identity, ethnic group, geopolitics, conflict			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 121	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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**CONFLICT IN TIME, PETRIFIED IN SPACE:  
KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS**

Carolyne M. Mutisya  
Major, Kenya Defence Forces  
Msc., University of Nairobi, 2014

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(COMBATING TERRORISM: POLICY & STRATEGY)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 2017**

Approved by: Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez  
Thesis Advisor

Carolyn Halladay  
Co-Advisor

Mohammed Hafez  
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

In response to Kenyan citizens' growing uneasiness with regard to the cross-border violence from Somalia-based terrorists, the government of Kenya has begun to erect a barrier along its shared border with Somalia. This thesis looks at the interconnectedness of the Kenya–Somalia borderlands that are home to the Somali ethnic group and the potential impact of the border barrier on this population.

The thesis examines the link between the historical bordering process carried out by the colonial and post-colonial powers, which contributes to the complexity of border security. Geopolitical analysis examines this process and the emergence of identity politics within the Somali ethnic group, as well as how this ethnic identity has been exploited by terrorists and contributed to conflicts. Additionally, securitization theory explains not only the government's decision to harden the border, but also the population's acceptance of an existential threat that legitimizes it.

The research concludes that the barrier on the Kenya–Somalia border will impact the Somali ethnic group in the borderlands. To minimize this impact, the research recommends the border fence as a temporary solution to enhance security in Kenya and suggests ways for the government to leverage the support of the borderlands population to effectively ensure this solution.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>1. Border Theory .....</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2. Identity Politics.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>3. Border Walls and Fences.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>THESIS OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDERLANDS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHY AND INHABITANTS OF THE KENYA– SOMALIA BORDER .....</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>1. Geography .....</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>2. People .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>TIME FRAMES .....</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>1. Pre-colonial Time Frame.....</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>2. Colonial Time Frame.....</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>3. Post-colonial Time Frame .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS ON THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS.....</b>	<b>50</b>
	<b>1. Irredentism-Based Conflict.....</b>	<b>51</b>
	<b>2. Resource and Political Conflicts .....</b>	<b>56</b>
	<b>3. Terrorism.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER FENCE .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND OF THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER FENCE.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>SECURITIZATION OF THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER.....</b>	<b>78</b>
	<b>1. Securitization Theory .....</b>	<b>79</b>

2.	The Application of Securitization Theory to the Kenya– Somalia Border Fence.....	80
C.	ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE BORDER BARRIERS ON THE BORDERLAND POPULATION .....	82
1.	Description of the Mandera Region .....	84
2.	Possible Impacts on the Somali Ethnic Group .....	86
D.	CONCLUSION .....	89
V.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	91
A.	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	92
B.	CONCLUSION .....	93
	LIST OF REFERENCES .....	95
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	105

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Area Occupied by the Somali Ethnic Group.....	1
Figure 2.	Closed or Open Borders.....	12
Figure 3.	Border Settlement Patterns. ....	13
Figure 4.	Kenya-Somalia Borderlands. ....	19
Figure 5.	Kenya-Somalia Borderland’s Water Zones. ....	21
Figure 6.	Somalia Ethnic Divisions.....	22
Figure 7.	Kenya-Somalia Border Colonial Map. ....	28
Figure 8.	Colonial Map after World War I.....	33
Figure 9.	Somali Galla Line and Tribal Grazing Areas. ....	34
Figure 10.	Somali Flag. ....	40
Figure 11.	Ethnic and Country Borders in Post-colonial Africa. ....	42
Figure 12.	Representation of Conventional Irredentism. ....	45
Figure 13.	Ogaden Region and North Eastern Province. ....	53
Figure 14.	Wajir 1992–93 Conflict Zone. ....	58
Figure 15.	Wajir 2000 Conflict Zone. ....	60
Figure 16.	Garissa Conflict Zone. ....	62
Figure 17.	Mandera Conflict Zone. ....	64
Figure 18.	Al Shabaab Terrorist Attacks.....	69
Figure 19.	Distribution of Terrorist Attacks by Al Shabaab in Kenya.....	78
Figure 20.	Progress of the Kenya-Somalia Border.....	82
Figure 21.	Mandera and Bula Hawo Towns.....	85

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**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Al Shabaab’s Influence on Terrorism in Kenya. ....68

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) for selecting me to participate in this rewarding professional development and educational experience in my career.

I would like to thank my thesis advisors for helping me find my voice, and for their dedication and patience in ensuring that my thesis represents my ideas. My thesis advisor, Professor Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez, gave me direction through the extensive literature review and guided my conceptual approach to the analysis. For advising my work, his expertise in border studies and similar subjects was priceless. My thesis co-advisor, Professor Carolyn Halladay, assured this thesis was scholarly correct and provided eloquent, valuable advice. This thesis accurately represents the ideas I battled to put into words, thanks to her diligence. I will forever be grateful for the time they both dedicated to make this a success.

I would like to reserve my most sincere and heartfelt thanks for my husband and daughters. I can never sufficiently express how thankful I am for your patience, love, encouragement, and support, which made it possible for me to complete this honorable academic achievement.

God bless you all.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Although they are two nations separated by a clearly marked border, Kenya and Somalia are intimately connected by the Somali ethnic group that has long inhabited the lands lying on either side of the border. The epicenter of that connection is “the Northern Frontier District of Kenya (N.F.D.) [which] is dominantly Somali-inhabited”<sup>1</sup> as shown by the ethnographic map in Figure 1.

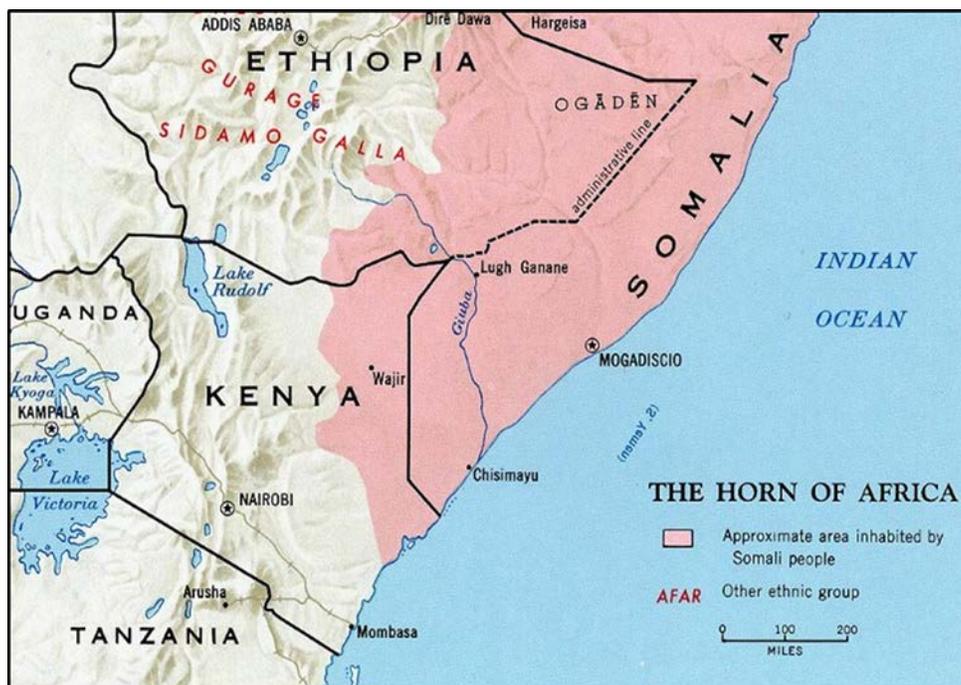


Figure 1. Area Occupied by the Somali Ethnic Group.<sup>2</sup>

The borderline that divides the area already occupied by the Somali ethnic group was drawn by European colonial powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through “treaties,

<sup>1</sup> A. A. Castagno, “The Somali-Kenyan Controversy: Implications for the Future,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 2, no. 2 (July 1964):165, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/158817>.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Muturi Njeri, “Kenya that was Never Kenyan: The Shifta War & The North Eastern Kenya,” April 2015, <https://medium.com/@muturi/kenya-that-was-never-kenyan-the-shifta-war-the-north-eastern-kenya-e7fc3dd31865#.9zjz6qkqz>.

agreements, and exchanges of notes and protocol”<sup>3</sup> for their own interests during the colonial period. The colonial powers did not take into consideration the physical or social characteristics of the location of the borders. They did not, as Wafula Okumu states, “respond to what people believe to be [a] rational demographic, ethnographic, and topographic boundary,”<sup>4</sup> and, thus, drew borders that felt arbitrary to the local population. In any event, the resultant division of people and fractured cultural areas form the basis of contemporary conflicts, particularly among the border populations in most African countries. Still, these boundaries were adopted after independence in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by the majority of African countries, disrupting socio-cultural and political systems at the borderlands. The Kenya-Somalia border is no exception, with the Somali ethnic group separated by the territorial borders of Kenya and Ethiopia. In other words, the border lands are home to a people of a common socio-cultural identity and a different political identity.

The lack of governance in Somalia has led to the emergence of a clan-based insurgent and terrorist group—Al Shabaab—and many years of instability have led to a large number of refugees and illegal immigrants in Kenya and other countries within the East African region. The refugees, illegal immigrants, and the Kenya Somalis form an extensive network for the Somali ethnic group within the region, which makes it easy for Al Shabaab to recruit fighters from within this network. This protracted refugee situation in Kenya and the open border between Kenya and Somalia allows the Somali-based Al Shabaab terrorists to blend in with the refugees and move freely across the border. Meanwhile, the political instability in Somalia provides a favorable environment for terrorist training that poses enormous security challenges to Kenya and other neighboring countries.

---

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad B. Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” in *The Delimitation and Demarcation of Boundaries in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa: Commission of the African Union, 2014), 12, <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-2-en-2013-delim-a-demar-user-guide.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Wafula Okumu, “The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries: With Specific Reference to Africa,” in *The Delimitation and Demarcation of Boundaries in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa: Commission of the African Union, 2014):4, <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-2-en-2013-delim-a-demar-user-guide.pdf>.

In its recruitment of Kenya Somalis, Al Shabaab exploits ethnic and religious similarities in identity at the borderlands, the grievances of a marginalized community, and the vulnerability of the young Somalis in the refugee camps. A recent terrorist attack at Garissa University (150 kilometers from the Kenya-Somali border) in April 2015, in which more than 147 students were killed, was organized and staged from Dadaab refugee camp, and one of its masterminds was a Kenya Somali recruited by Al Shabaab. The attack sharply demonstrates Al Shabaab's success at recruiting from within the Kenyan and refugee populations.

Kenya continues to experience terrorist attacks at the borderlands and in its major cities. Among the terrorist attacks in the capital city of Nairobi were the attacks at the United States Embassy in 1998 and the Westgate Mall (the most posh and most visited mall by wealthy Kenyans and expatriates) in 2013. These two terrorist attacks "altered perceptions of terrorism in Kenya's public"<sup>5</sup> in a similar manner to how the 9/11 terrorist attacks changed how Americans viewed their borders. This changed view is manifested in the "unprecedented attention ... to boundaries and homeland security [and has] led to massive shifts in governance priorities, public opinion, public expenditures, and the nature of doing business in North America."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Kenyans have reframed their borders as a core territory linked to terrorist attacks and now regard border security policies as essential to prevent further attacks.

#### **A. RESEARCH QUESTION**

What role have geopolitical conflicts played in the hardening of the Kenya-Somalia border?

The research aims at studying the link between the identity politics of the Somali ethnic group both in Somalia and Kenya, and the geopolitical conflicts that have led to hardening of the Kenya- Somalia border.

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<sup>5</sup> Volker Krause and Eric E. Otenyo, "Terrorism and the Kenyan Public," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 2 (August 2006): 101, doi: 10.1080/10576100590905075.

<sup>6</sup> Victor Konrad, "Towards a Theory of Borders in Motion," *Journal of Borderland Studies* 30, no.1 (March 2015):3, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2015.1008387.

To respond to the research question, the thesis explores the independence and post-independence bordering process of the Kenya-Somalia boundary. Then, the thesis analyzes the post-independence geopolitical conflicts that have occurred along the border with the central objective of establishing the relationship between identity politics of the Somali ethnic group and the geopolitical conflicts that have culminated in a closure of the border.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The Kenya-Somalia border is viewed as the gateway for the Al Shabaab Somali terrorist group responsible for the attacks in Kenya and the East African region. The insecurity perceived to originate from the border has led to the decision to put up a border fence and close down the refugee camp in consideration of national security interests.<sup>7</sup> A fence along such a complex border presents a challenge because it will divide people of a common identity who maintain close ties with one another. This thesis explores the complexity of the management of such an important border region for the future peace and stability of Kenya and its impact on what has been Kenya's positive relationship with Somalia. The practical significance of the proposed research lies in the benefits of reconceptualization of the border fence on the Kenya-Somali border while maintaining security in Kenya and in the East African region. The thesis may also provide a source for scholars, researchers, and most importantly, the policy makers.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review seeks to promote the reader's understanding of border theory, identity politics, and border walls and fences in order to establish how the bordering process creates grounds for identity politics that are used as a mobilizing factor in geopolitical conflicts. This literature review helps to address the major research question covered in this thesis by providing a theoretical understanding of the genesis of

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<sup>7</sup> Loulla-Mae Eleftheriou-Smith, "Kenya Garissa University Attack Al Shabaab Gun Man Abdirahim Abdullahi Identified as Son of Kenyan Government Official," *Independent*, September 23, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/kenya-garissa-university-attack-al-shabab-gunman-abdirahim-abdullahi-identified-as-son-of-kenyan-10156726.html>.

identity politics and the role it play in conflicts in order to understand the push factors that have contributed to Kenya's current geopolitical policy.

## 1. Border Theory

Borders are evolutionary in nature, and they serve different purposes to those who draw them and those living along them at different times.<sup>8</sup> Victor Konrad in his article "Towards a Theory of Borders in Motion" refers to the evolutionary nature of borders as 'borders in motion,' and writes that "the border is increasingly at the center of the politics of identity [and] security...yet it is not as fixed as it appears either in practice or in meaning ... and the making and unmaking of borders is just a matter of time."<sup>9</sup> Chiara Brambilla describes the evolution as a change in the concept of borders over time and argues that it is the "progressive movement of borders from the marginal to the political sphere."<sup>10</sup> Okumu, when referring to African borders, argues that "pre-colonial African boundaries 'were not static' and fluctuated in the period immediately before the imposition of colonial rule and the ensuing boundaries."<sup>11</sup> He further states that "boundaries are political creations that reflect the mindset and needs of those in power."<sup>12</sup>

These authors all agree that borders are dynamic in nature; their physical form changes both in space and time to define their geopolitical purpose and demonstrate the political control of state borders. Adekunle Ajala offers another perspective of evolution of borders and presents an argument based on three processes<sup>13</sup> through which borders must evolve. The first process is allocation, which he defines as the process of arbitrarily dividing up land for political reasons. Delimitation is the second process, which involves

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<sup>8</sup> Okumu, "The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries," 34.

<sup>9</sup> Konrad, "Towards a Theory of Borders in Motion," 1.

<sup>10</sup> Chiara Brambilla, "Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept," *Geopolitics* 20, no. 1 (May 2014): 15, doi: 10.1080/14650045.2014.884561.

<sup>11</sup> Okumu, "The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries," 37.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Adekunle Ajala, "The Nature of African Boundaries," *Africa Spectrum* 18, no. 2 (1983):178, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40174114> .

selection of the border site using the information available. The last process is demarcation, which he explains, is the actual marking of the border on the ground by the use of beacons, pillars, or fences.<sup>14</sup> In line with this argument, Ajala states that all the borders do not have to go through the three stages and can be defined as legitimate borders by going through only one of the processes, which is the case for African borders.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, before borders can evolve, borders must be created. Different scholars describe this process. For Noel Parker and Rebecca Adler the bordering process constitutes “the activities which have the effect of constituting, sustaining or modifying borders.”<sup>16</sup> According to Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Brilliant Mhlanga, the bordering process, which “brings to light the dialectical and inextricable links of geography and history,”<sup>17</sup> forms a solid basis for explaining present-day state of borders in Africa. Understanding the evolutionary nature of a border calls for an appreciation of the bordering process of a particular border because, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mhlanga explain, “space is differentiated and institutionalized through the generation of borders and interrogation of this construction process, and its production, is a recurrent feature of borders, bordering, and borderlands.”<sup>18</sup> Brambilla points out that when studying the evolution of borders it is imperative to “focus on the way in which the very location of borders is constantly displaced, negotiated and represented as well as the plurality of the process ... at different points within a society.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Beatrix Haselsberger, borders are human constructs that are put in place to serve the interests of those who establish them and hence further study of this

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<sup>14</sup> Ajala, “The Nature of African Boundaries,” 178.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Noel Parker and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, “Picking and Choosing the ‘Sovereign’ Border: A Theory of Changing State Bordering Practices,” *Geopolitics* 17, no.4 (8 November 2012): 776, doi: 10.1080/14650045.2012.660582.

<sup>17</sup> Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Brilliant Mhlanga, *Bondage of Boundaries and Identity Politics in Postcolonial Africa* (Africa Institute of South Africa, 2013), 25, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=1561410>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>19</sup> Brambilla, “Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept,” 19.

aspect of borders develops the acceptance that borders are not a perfect fit for all.<sup>20</sup> Okumu, in connection with the African bordering process by the colonial powers, explains that “the concept of territorial delimitation of political control was ... culturally alien ... and this makes colonially imposed boundaries ‘alien’ to Africa.”<sup>21</sup> Okumu’s argument does not entirely mean that there was an absolute absence of the concept of borders: “pre-colonial Africa had systems of using zones or border marches as buffers between kingdoms.”<sup>22</sup> These zones were used between either different communities or different enclaves for the pastoralist communities.<sup>23</sup> Muhammad B. Ahmad also writes that “African pre-colonial socio-political structures and institutions have, in their own rights, functional categorizations that can be equated with present-day borders.”<sup>24</sup> Both authors agree that some form of borders existed in Africa before colonization and so the drawing by colonial powers of new borders that did not coincide with the socio-cultural spaces also changed the function of the borders.<sup>25</sup>

Julian V. Minghi argues that “the boundary effect depends on the character of the region in question,”<sup>26</sup> and so, to talk about African borders, it is essential to look at “the continent’s history of colonization.”<sup>27</sup> Between 1884 and 1904 the colonial powers in Africa carried out a bordering process to divide Africa into colonies. The colonial borders led to the formation of not just “lines in the sand or on a map,”<sup>28</sup> as David Newman states, but several other invisible borders defining different identities. As Mhlanga refers to it, the act was a “cartographic mischief inflicted on the continent by European

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<sup>20</sup> Beatrix Haselsberger, “Decoding Borders: Appreciating Border Impacts on Space and People,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 15, no.4 (2014): 505, doi:10.1080/14649357.2014.963652.

<sup>21</sup> Wafula Okumu, “The purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 36.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” 12.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Julian V. Minghi, “Boundary Studies in Political Geography,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 53, no. 3 (September 1963):418, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8306.1963.tb00457.x.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Mechlinski, “Towards an Approach to Borders and Mobility in Africa,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 25, no. 2 (2010): 97, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2010.9695764.

<sup>28</sup> David Newman, “On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18, no.1 (2011):14, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2003.9695598.

statesmen in Berlin over a century ago.”<sup>29</sup> The historical study of African borders “gives a critical perspective on a boundary’s role through time to its present status.”<sup>30</sup> The role and the scale of borders from pre-colonial time changed during colonial time to borders that defined colonial territories.

After independence African states were faced with two choices, either to carry out a re-bordering process or accept the imperfect borders drawn by the colonial powers.<sup>31</sup> The African states unanimously through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) did not consider a re-bordering process, “fearing to open a Pandora’s Box of irredentism and secessionist claims.”<sup>32</sup> The function of the border had changed and it was now an institution that defined the sovereignty of a state. The “trap of seeing the borderline rather than viewing the dynamic interaction,”<sup>33</sup> as Konrad argues, is the genesis of a good number of conflicts in Africa. Rivalry for power between the state and the border communities ensued in a bid to control the borderlands. The arbitrary nature of the borders divided people of common identity, and this forms the fault lines of geopolitical conflicts today.

Both the colonial and the post-colonial bordering process defined a “closed system of imagining space”<sup>34</sup> defined by some form of identity and led to the creation of majority and minority groups within the territorial spaces. The bordering process resulted in the constant strife to reunite people of a common identity who were separated by imposed borders. The colonial and post-colonial states, as Elizabeth E. Watson argues,

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<sup>29</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mhlanga, *Bondage of Boundaries and Identity Politics in Postcolonial Africa*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Minghi, “Boundary Studies,” 420.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” 16.

<sup>32</sup> Dominique Jacquin-Berdal, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa: A Critique of the Ethnic Interpretation* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), iii.

<sup>33</sup> Konrad, “Towards a Theory of Borders in Motion,” 3.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth E. Watson, “A “Hardening of Lines”: Landscape, Religion and Identity in Northern Kenya,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 203, doi:10.1080/17531055.2010.487330.

“transformed what were simply social phenomena or forms of moral ethnicity into more competitive and exclusive forms of political tribalism.”<sup>35</sup>

The method used by the colonial powers to demarcate and delimit borders is argued to be the origin of African geopolitical conflicts along many borders, because it disrupted a social order that existed for many years.<sup>36</sup> Studies of colonial borders as one of the causes of conflict in African countries seek to establish the link between borders and conflict with consideration that most of these borders do not reflect the interests of the local population. As Marilyn Silberfein and Al-Hassan Conteh argue, African borders are different because “they have evolved through an entirely different process ... [and] this phenomenon is important because it has become clear that boundaries in Africa play a role in perpetuating conflict.”<sup>37</sup> Another argument by Alberto Alesina, William Easterly, and Janina Matuszeski on the subject is that the borders of many African countries have been a result of the colonial processes that did not respect the desire of the borderland population. Some ethnic groups that have been grouped into one country wish to join their kin in the next country, while other ethnic groups are split by national borders. The strife for reunification of ethnic groups along the borders is one major cause of border conflicts today.<sup>38</sup> While the authors have a consensus that many African conflicts have indeed had a border dimension attached to them, and not necessarily in regard to the location, reinforces the argument that there is a nexus between the bordering process and conflicts.

## 2. Identity Politics

Identity politics is defined by Cressida Heyes in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* as a “wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared

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<sup>35</sup> Watson, “A “Hardening of Lines”: Landscape, Religion and Identity in Northern Kenya,” 202.

<sup>36</sup> Minghi, “Boundary Studies,” 420.

<sup>37</sup> Marilyn Silberfein and Al-Hassan Conteh, “Boundaries and Conflict in the Mano River Region of West Africa,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 23, no.4 (2006): 344, doi: 10.1080/07388940600972685.

<sup>38</sup> Alberto Alesina, William Easterly, and Janina Matuszeski, “Artificial States,” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 9, no. 2 (April 2011): 247, doi: 10.1111/j.1542-4774.2010.01009.x.

experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups.”<sup>39</sup> The encyclopedia further states that “identity politics rests on unifying claims about the meaning of politically laden experiences to diverse individuals.”<sup>40</sup> This argument bases identity politics on marginalization. Mary Bernstein’s description of identity politics differs and emphasizes the cultural aspect; she states that “scholars see identity groups as advocating for recognition of and respect for their cultural differences, which [they] derive from their distinct group identities.”<sup>41</sup> Parker and Nissen describe identity politics by writing that “all politics is identity politics,”<sup>42</sup> meaning that the choices that people make in politics are purely guided by identity. They further describe that identity politics is used to describe the “differences and grievances rather than similarities and bonds among groups.”<sup>43</sup> This argument ties in with the Heyes’ assertion that the motivation for identity politics is marginalization or grievances.

Among the various forms of identity that contribute to discourse in the world is ethnic identity, and as Clayton D. Peoples writes, statistics show that more than 60 million people have lost their lives to ethnic conflict since 1945.<sup>44</sup> Ethnic identity is a “subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent.”<sup>45</sup> Kanchan Chandra argues that certain categories such as culture, history, territory, and language are not enough to describe ethnic identity<sup>46</sup> and places emphasis on the importance of

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<sup>39</sup> Cressida Heyes, “Identity Politics,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/identity-politics/>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Bernstein, “Identity Politics,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29737711>.

<sup>42</sup> Parker and Adler-Nissen, “Picking and Choosing the ‘Sovereign’ Border: A Theory of changing State Bordering Practices,” 53.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Clayton D. Peoples, “Identity, Discrimination, and Conflict among Ethnic Minorities at Risk in the Modern World,” in *The Politics of Ethnicity and National Identities*, ed. Santosh C. Saha (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 89.

<sup>45</sup> Kanchan Chandra, “What Is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (June 2006):400, doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.062404.170715.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

descent; however, J. Milton Yinger has a different view and uses culture, history, territory, and language to classify ethnic identity as either hard or soft<sup>47</sup> depending on how much one fits into the categories. Alicia F. Chavez and Florence Guido-Debritto describe ethnic identity as “an individual’s identification with a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture.”<sup>48</sup>

A comparison of ethnic identity definitions reveals that descent is a constant defining factor.<sup>49</sup> By contrast, Eva Poluha argues that ethnic identity is a social construct and can change at a particular time. She cites an example of Swedish identity and how until the 1970s “with the influx of immigration, ‘Swedish-ness’ developed as a separate identity in relation to other groups from whom Swedes wanted to distinguish themselves.”<sup>50</sup> She acknowledges that “ethnicity is a resource to be mobilized or an instrument to be employed for further ends”<sup>51</sup> and has been closely associated with separatist movements that exploit ethnicity as a means to end marginalization.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Border Walls and Fences

As Okumu describes, the function of state borders can be perceived as positive or negative; positive when uncontested, providing “national and transnational economic and social life,”<sup>53</sup> and negative when they are “partitioning people, even those who speak the same language and practice same culture into separate political units with different national orientations.”<sup>54</sup> Okumu goes on to state that independent states choose “how the

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<sup>47</sup> J. Milton Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* (New York: State University, 1994), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Alicia Fedelina Chávez and Florence Guido-DiBrito, “Racial and Ethnic Identity and Development,” *New Direction for Adult and Continuing Education* (1999):40, doi:10.1002/ace.8405.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Eva Poluha, “Ethnicity and Democracy-A Viable Alliance,” in *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa*, ed. M.A. Mohamed Salih and John Markakis (Stockholm, Sweden: Elanders Gotab, 1998), 33.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 48.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

boundaries are to function and whether they have an ‘open’ or ‘closed’ character.”<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Brambilla claims that a “border as [a] geopolitical wound cannot break cultural processes along and across it. Identity, culture, and memory become more and more complex and multiple ... with reference to everyday lives spent at the border.”<sup>56</sup> Further, the choices states make between having their borders closed or open are determined by the activities at the border, which dictate whether the border functions as a bridge or as a barrier, as illustrated in Figure 2.

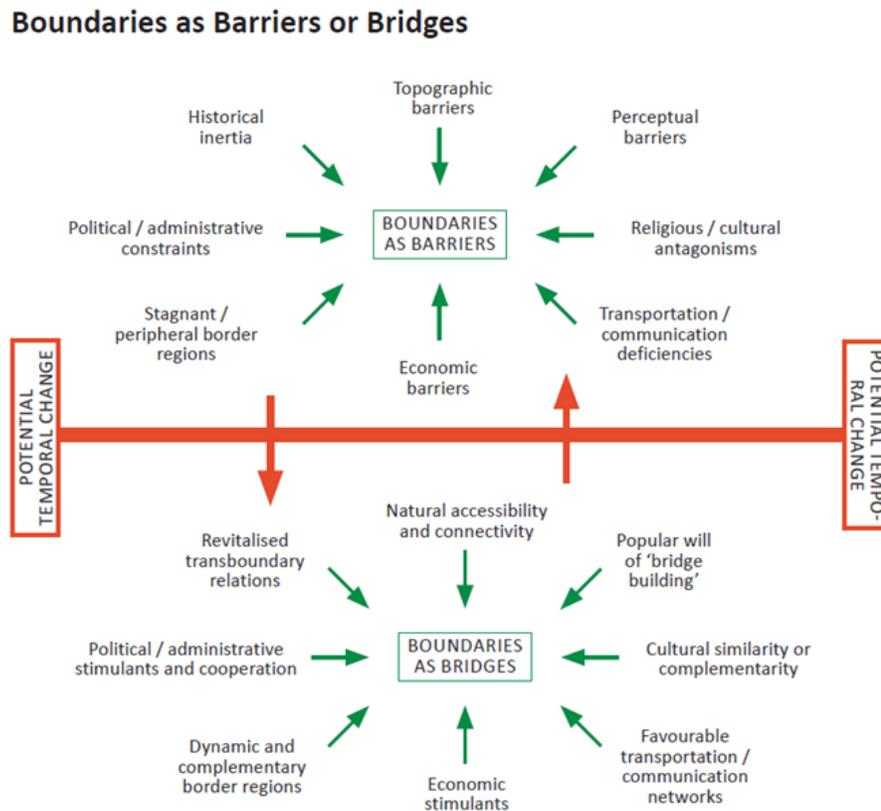


Figure 2. Closed or Open Borders.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 48.

<sup>56</sup> Chiara Brambilla, “Borders and Identities/Border Identities: The Angola-Namibia Border and the Plurivocality of the Kwanyama Identity,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 22, no. 2 (November 2011): 35, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2007.9695675.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

On the other hand, Charles R. Boehmer and Sergio Peña argue that the character of a border is not only determined by the existing activities at the borderlands but also by anticipated threats. Specifically, “the more a state expects conflict (insecurity) with its neighbor, the more closed its borders will be.”<sup>58</sup> One of the indicators of whether borders are bridges or barriers is the type of infrastructure at the borderlands and settlement landscapes, as illustrated in Figure3.

### Boundaries as Barriers or Bridges

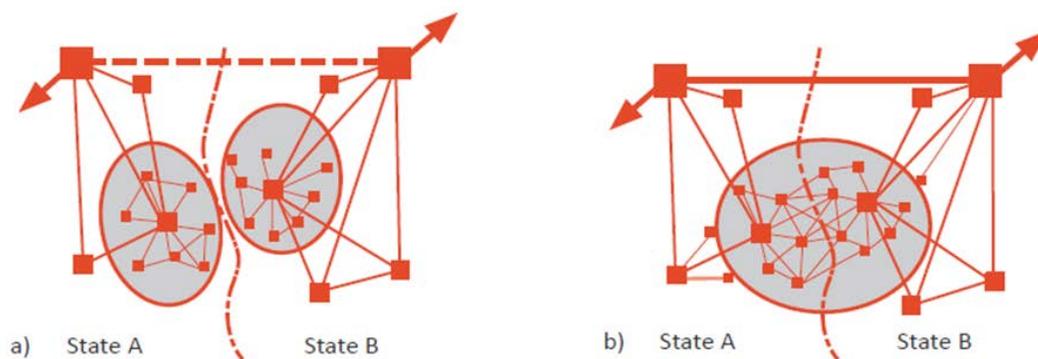


Figure 3. Border Settlement Patterns.<sup>59</sup>

As Okumu illustrates in Figure 3, Michael Schack also reinforces the argument that in border regions the level of social interactions<sup>60</sup> plays a central role in determining the type of border. Brambilla describes the borderlands as the place “where people are involved in various webs of relations that affect a cross-border region where social and economic political relations are carried out daily,”<sup>61</sup> which is evidenced by “the daily

<sup>58</sup> Charles R. Boehmer and Sergio Peña, “The Determinants of Open and Closed Borders,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27, no.3 (December 2012): 275, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2012.750950.

<sup>59</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 50.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Schack, “Regional Identity in Border Regions: The Difference Borders Make,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 16, no.2 (21 November 2011):100, doi:10.1080/08865655.2001.9695576.

<sup>61</sup> Brambilla, “Borders and Identities/Border Identities,” 22.

movement across the boundary to go to school, pasture the livestock, attend the church, doing business across and over the boundary.”<sup>62</sup>

Globalization has created a borderless world but state borders have maintained “a pervasive influence ... in shaping the organization of human life and identity.”<sup>63</sup> Recently, in reaction to security threats, states have changed the function of many borders in the world from bridges to barriers through the militarization of border infrastructure to prevent people of one country from conducting relations with people on the side of the border as part of the counterterrorism strategy. The trigger for this change has been labeled by Elizabeth Vallet as a “security seeking reflex”<sup>64</sup> and by Boehmer and Peña as the “right to exclusion on the basis of state sovereignty”<sup>65</sup> in order to deal with issues ranging from illegal immigrants, drug trafficking, terrorism, gun smuggling, and human trafficking to name just a few.<sup>66</sup>

The hardening of borders enforces Okumu’s argument that the state border is a “paradoxical phenomenon in the sense that it is a zone where not only is activity created but also restrained.”<sup>67</sup> The state’s change of the function of the border affects the borderland population whose identity and sense of belonging is defined by the very border. Social and family ties grow across the border and although, as claimed by Okumu, “the neighbors across the border could be culturally despised [,] they may also be relatives who are valued for their social capital in times of calamities or hardship.”<sup>68</sup>

History has proven that “all boundaries are leaky no matter how well they are fenced and patrolled by police or military forces[;] ... this simply shows that despite restrictions, it is almost impossible to stop the flow of human populations or goods across

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<sup>62</sup> Brambilla, “Borders and Identities/Border Identities,” 35.

<sup>63</sup> Leslie R. Alm and Ross E. Burkhart, “Bridges and Barriers: The Lake Superior Borderlands,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 28, no.1 (23 May 2013):47, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2012.751728.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Vallet, *Borders, Fences and Walls* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Boehmer and Peña, “The Determinants of Open and Closed Borders,” 275.

<sup>66</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 51.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

a boundary.”<sup>69</sup> The porosity of borders has been witnessed at highly guarded borders like the U.S.-Mexico border, the North Korea-South Korea border, and even the Berlin wall before its collapse in 1989. The trend, though, has not stopped new border barriers, and hence, as Vallet argues, “their true purpose is to maintain a sense of security and identity ... [in which] the image of a fortified border becomes more important than its actual effectiveness.”<sup>70</sup>

#### **D. HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH**

The uniqueness of the Somali people reinforces their identity in the Horn of Africa, and the Somali ethnicity generates loyalty and dedication to one another within the group.<sup>71</sup> The hypothesis for this research is that the bordering process that led to the formation of identity politics is the cause of the geopolitical conflicts along the border, and that erecting a border fence is a temporary solution to leverage security in Kenya as part of the overall management of the conflicts at the border with Somalia.

#### **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

To determine to what extent identity politics contributes to geopolitical conflict, this thesis examines how the Kenya-Somalia bordering process was carried out by both the colonial powers and the post-colonial governments. The research also analyzes the geopolitical conflicts that have been experienced at the border with an aim of establishing the link between identity politics and the conflicts. Lastly, the geopolitical policy to close down the Kenya-Somalia border and its impact on the Somali ethnic group is considered.

The method of research consists of a geopolitical analysis to link space and conflict at different levels. The approach focuses on a single case study of the Kenya-Somalia border in which the geo-analysis research method is effective in explaining the changes that have occurred at this particular border in relation to the conflicts. The research incorporates maps, scholarly information related to the study, policy documents,

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<sup>69</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 53.

<sup>70</sup> Vallet, *Borders, Fences and Walls*, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Jacquin-Berdal, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa*, 17.

and think tank and non-governmental organizations reports that highlight identity politics as a causal factor for geopolitical conflicts. Additionally, literature on border walls and fences contributes to explaining the effectiveness and usefulness when put in place.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis comprises of five chapters. Chapter I covers the introduction and a literature review of the key aspects of the thesis: borders, identity politics, geopolitical conflicts, and border walls and fences. Chapter II covers the background information of the Kenya-Somalia border and the Somali ethnic group. In the third chapter, I offer a detailed analysis of the geopolitical conflicts that have been witnessed on the Kenya-Somalia border. Chapter IV looks at Kenya's decision to put up a border fence offering an analysis of the effectiveness of the infrastructure in solving the insecurity issues in the country and the possible effects on the Somali ethnic group. The findings of the research are synthesized along with a thematic analysis in the second, third, and fourth chapters. Chapter V contains the conclusion and recommendations that can inform policy and strategy in Kenya.

## II. THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDERLANDS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Contemporary African borders originate from European colonialism that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The legal status of the borders was established through treaties, agreements, and exchanges of notes between various colonial powers for their interests.<sup>72</sup> The Europeans did not take into consideration the “spatial distribution of the African ethnicities before colonization,”<sup>73</sup> and hence they drew borders that were arbitrary to most African communities. Nonetheless, the post-colonial governments adopted these borders as evidenced by the many ethnic groups partitioned by national borders today, including the Somali ethnic group living on the Kenya-Somalia border. The question remains: how much did the bordering process affect the Somali ethnic group on the Kenya-Somalia border?

In this chapter, I examine the history of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands across both time and space to determine the impact of the bordering process on the Somali ethnic group. Time is considered within the tri-fold history of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, while space is used to explore the geopolitical evolution of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands. The goal of this research is to cover the role and territorial interests of the primary stakeholders in the region within the principal events that took place within the three time frames. The primary stakeholders are the Somali ethnic group, the British and Italian colonies, and the post-colonial governments of Kenya and Somalia. The principal events covered in the research are: the bordering process, the definition of identity, and the territorialization of ethnicity.

This approach not only historically situates all the actors within the Kenya-Somalia border; it also illustrates the structural crisis created by the primary actors within the three time frames, highlighting the cumulative effects on the Somali ethnic group.

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<sup>72</sup> Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” 12.

<sup>73</sup> Elias Papaioannou and Stelios Michalopoulos, *The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa* (NBER Working Paper No. 17620) (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, November 2011): 1, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17620>.

The approach also provides the research with an analytical framework for tracing the process that led to the definition of the current Kenya-Somalia border.

## **A. GEOGRAPHY AND INHABITANTS OF THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER**

Before delving into the three time frames, the research provides a geographical description of the borderlands and its inhabitants. The changes on the borderlands are depicted by the number of times the map of the region has changed in the past decades.

### **1. Geography**

Borders, as defined by Dereje Feyissa and Markus Hoehne, are “the institution[s] of interstate division according to international law.”<sup>74</sup> Aboubakr Tandia describes borders as “identity markers, exclusive and inclusive at the same time.”<sup>75</sup> Borderlands, on the other hand, are “territorially defined as the physical space along the border—on both sides of it.”<sup>76</sup> From these definitions, the border is a mark for territorial division, while the borderlands focus on the inclusiveness and exclusiveness that they provide to the people living on both sides of the border. In the case of this research, the territory of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands are defined as the area between the Juba and Tana rivers, which is the former Northern Frontier District on the Kenyan side, and the Jubaland province on the Somalia side, as shown in Figure 4.

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<sup>74</sup> Dereje Feyissa and Markus Virgil Hoehne, “State Borders and Borderlands as Resources,” in *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Dereje Feyissa and Markus Virgil Hoehne (New York: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2010), 1.

<sup>75</sup> Aboubakr Tandia, “Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighborhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau,” *Africa Nebula* 2 (2010), 20, [http://www.nobleworld.biz/images/Tandia\\_s\\_Borderland\\_Identity.pdf](http://www.nobleworld.biz/images/Tandia_s_Borderland_Identity.pdf).

<sup>76</sup> Dereje Feyissa and Markus Virgil Hoehne, “State Borders and Borderlands as Resources,” 1.

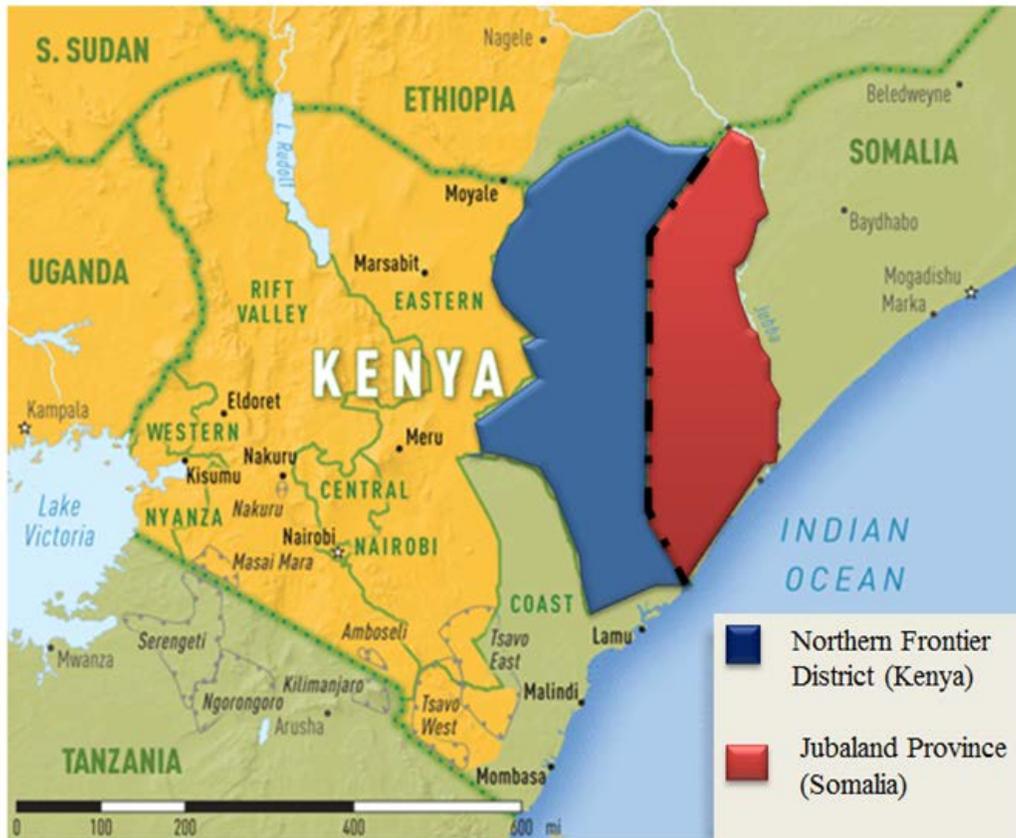


Figure 4. Kenya-Somalia Borderlands.<sup>77</sup>

The total area of the Northern Frontier District is 127,358.5 square kilometers, while Jubaland province has a total area of 121,056.04 square kilometers, making a total of 248,414.54 square kilometers of borderland, which is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Michigan.

The climate at the borderlands is semi-arid and arid desert, which plays a critical role in shaping the mode of livelihood within the region. It is suitable for limited agriculture, and hence, the population there has adapted by primarily practicing nomadic pastoralism with minimal crops grown along the rivers. Due to the demanding climate and environment, the Somali people are forced to move often with their animals to look

<sup>77</sup> Adapted from Mark D. Gershman, Emily S. Jentes, Rhett J. Stoney, Kathrine R. Tan, Paul M. Arguin, and Stefanie F. Steele, “Yellow Fever and Malaria Information by Country,” CDC (December, 2016), <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2016/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/yellow-fever-malaria-information-by-country/kenya>.

for water and pasturage. Rains in the region are highly unpredictable, with an average rainfall of 200–300 mm per year, which accounts for severe droughts in the region. Temperatures are high, with an average of 28° C (82° F) in the cold months and 33° C (92° F) in the hot months.<sup>78</sup>

The low rainfall and the arid climate make water a valuable resource in the region and often the water zones are “friction generating spots in times of stress and water shortage, and areas of socialization when the rains come and water becomes plentiful.”<sup>79</sup> The Kenya-Somalia border area has two perennial rivers: the Tana River on the Kenyan side and the Juba River on the Somalia side, as shown in Figure 5. Seasonal water zones shown in Figure 5 (circled in red) are widely spread throughout the borderlands.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ken Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” USAID Report (31 August 2005): 3, [http://www.somali-jna.org/downloads/Kenya-Somalia%20 Menkhaus%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.somali-jna.org/downloads/Kenya-Somalia%20Menkhaus%20(2).pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2015), 13. The research discusses resource-based conflicts in Chapter III.

<sup>80</sup> Guido Ambroso, “Clanship, Conflict and Refugees: An Introduction to Somalis in the Horn of Africa,” UNHCR (March 2002), [http://dspace-roma3.caspur.it/bitstream/2307/4150/1/Clanship,%20conflict%20and%20refugees\\_An%20introduction%20to%20Somalis%20in%20the%20Horn%20of%20Africa.pdf](http://dspace-roma3.caspur.it/bitstream/2307/4150/1/Clanship,%20conflict%20and%20refugees_An%20introduction%20to%20Somalis%20in%20the%20Horn%20of%20Africa.pdf).



Figure 5. Kenya-Somalia Borderland’s Water Zones.<sup>81</sup>

## 2. People

The Jubaland province and the Northern Frontier District are separated by the international border between Kenya and Somalia. The two regions are intimately connected by the Somali ethnic group who lives on both territories, making it “one of the largest relatively homogeneous ethnic blocs in Africa.”<sup>82</sup> Within the larger region in the Horn of Africa, to the north is Ethiopia and to the east is Somalia, and both regions are inhabited by the Somali ethnic group, as shown in Figure 6.

<sup>81</sup> Adapted from Bruce Wedderburn’s Trip Reports blog (November 2012), <http://bruce-wedderburn.blogspot.com/2012/11/kenya-october-2012.html>.

<sup>82</sup> David E. Kromm, “Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute,” in *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science* 70, no.3, 359, doi: 10.2307/3627482.



reference to Islamic identity within the Somali ethnic group the term ‘veil lightly worn’ is often used “because Somali Imams often don’t speak or read Arabic, ... [and] Islam is readily accepted to the extent that it blends well with local culture and clan loyalties,”<sup>86</sup> which illustrates the clan primacy. The ethnic group traces its origin through two families, the Samale and the Sab, who are further subdivided into six clans: Hawiye, Dir, Isaaq, Darod, Digil, and Rahanweyn, each with numerous sub-clans spread across the Horn of Africa.<sup>87</sup> The Darod sub-clans (Ogaden and Marehan) dominate the southern tier of the borderlands and the Hawiye sub-clans (Degodia and Ajuran) occupy the north, as shown in Figure 6.

## **B. TIME FRAMES**

This research covers the history of the Kenya-Somalia border by progressing from the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial era in order to highlight the events that have shaped the border over time.

### **1. Pre-colonial Time Frame**

The history of the Somali ethnic group can be traced back 2,000 years, but for the purpose of this research, the pre-colonial period covers the 10th century up to the 1850s.<sup>88</sup> This period adequately provides a basis to describe the Somali ethnic group of the Northern Frontier District and the Jubaland province before colonialism, when neither Kenya nor Somalia existed as states. The aim of this section is to describe the traditional livelihood and organization in the Kenya-Somalia borderlands with regard to three main points: border existence, social structures (specifically the concept of clanship and religion), and political organization.

In the research on borders in Africa, little attention is given to the existence of traditional borders before colonization because of the notion that there were vast pieces of land and a very scarce population creating no need to demarcate territory with

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<sup>86</sup> Seaboyer and Last, “Clan and Islamic Identities in Somali Society,” viii.

<sup>87</sup> Jacquin-Berdal, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa*, 144.

<sup>88</sup> M. J. Fox, *The Roots of Somali Political Culture* (Colorado: First Forum Press, 2015): 5, <https://www.rienner.com/uploads/55f73f10c7ea1.pdf>.

borders.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, there existed some form of borders unique to this period. As Lee Cassanelli writes, “national frontiers and geographical boundaries were much less codified.”<sup>90</sup> Ahmad describes borders with a social function as they “existed as social phenomena that govern[ed] inter-human and inter-communal relationships.”<sup>91</sup> The Somali ethnic group, being nomadic pastoralists, was susceptible to the effects of climate change, which led them to be in constant movement in search of grazing land and watering points.<sup>92</sup>

The constant movement, however, did not deter the Somali clans from having borders between their pasturelands. Communities agreed among themselves through the clan heads on the extent of land that each community could farm or graze their animals. As Okumu explains “pre-colonial Africa had systems of using zones or border marches as buffers between kingdoms.”<sup>93</sup> In advancing Okumu’s claim, Zoppi writes that the buffer between clans was approximately one kilometer in order to avoid clashes over grazing land.<sup>94</sup>

The difference between the pre-colonial borders within the Somali clans and state borders today is that the former were not static.<sup>95</sup> Freedom of movement was guaranteed across the borders because in Somali culture “pasturage is regarded as a gift of God to man in general, or rather to Somalis, and is not considered to belong to specific groups.”<sup>96</sup> Amid this free movement of the Somali people, the administration of borders

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<sup>89</sup> Gregor Dobler, “Boundary Drawing and the Notion of territoriality in Pre-colonial and Early Colonial Ovamboland,” *Journal of Namibian Studies* 3 (2008):8, [https://www.ethno.uni-freiburg.de/dok/publikationen\\_dobler/dobler\\_territoriality\\_jns.pdf](https://www.ethno.uni-freiburg.de/dok/publikationen_dobler/dobler_territoriality_jns.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> Lee Cassanelli, “The Opportunistic Economics of the Kenya Somali Borderland in Historical Perspective,” in *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Dereje Feyissa and Markus Virgil Hoehne (New York: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2010), 133.

<sup>91</sup> Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” 12.

<sup>92</sup> I. M. Lewis, “The Somali Conquest of the Horn of Africa,” *Journal of African History* 1, no. 2 (1960): 214, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/180241>.

<sup>93</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 36.

<sup>94</sup> Zoppi, “Greater Somalia, The Never-ending Dream?” 46.

<sup>95</sup> Okumu, “Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 36.

<sup>96</sup> I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002), 9.

by the clans in the pre-colonial era also contrasted with the management of state borders in the contemporary world.

The interaction of the Somali ethnic group along the borderlands, before any form of colonial or state jurisdiction, paints the picture of a society whose organization was dictated largely by their nomadic life. The legitimate authorities during this time were the clan elders, and in cases of clan clashes over grazing land, watering points, and livestock raids, they were resolved amicably by the clan heads and the clan elders.<sup>97</sup> Abdisalam Issa-Salwe describes the political organization of the Somali people as a ‘pastoral democracy,’ where

[c]lan leaders claimed no rights as rulers over their people, in spite of being responsible for all affairs concerning the clan and its relations with other clans. They presided but did not rule over people to whom they were responsible.<sup>98</sup>

The Somali people had no idea of any political order beyond the clan system and existed as a decentralized society. As Dominique Jacquin-Berdal writes, referring to the Somali people, “anthropologists have defined sociopolitical organization [of the Somali ethnic group] as a ‘segmentary lineage system,’ a system that is characterized by its extreme decentralization.”<sup>99</sup> The form of decentralization among this community can be attributed to their constant movement in search of pasture and water, which did not allow them to have a “stratified and hierarchical socio-political system”<sup>100</sup> like other communities that settled down in one geographical location.

Religion forms another factor that defines the identity of the Somali ethnic group. During the pre-colonial period, religion was introduced to the Somali ethnic group, unlike many other communities who practiced indigenous African religions until colonization. In the 12th and the 13th centuries, the Arabs introduced Islam to the Somali people, who

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<sup>97</sup> I. M Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1980), 10.

<sup>98</sup> Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Center* (London: Haan Associates, 1994), 8.

<sup>99</sup> Jacquin-Berdal, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa*, 144.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

accepted it and adopted it as their religion. All the Somali population within the Jubaland and Northern Frontier District are Sunni Muslims.<sup>101</sup> Religion conformed to the mobile lifestyle of the Somali people, as the religious leaders moved with the nomads, teaching them about the Qu’ran (the Islamic holy book).<sup>102</sup> Religion provided the Somali ethnic group with an identity that transcended the clans and gave them a Somali-wide consciousness. This, however, did not imply that religion superseded the clan authority; the clan system was still superior to religion with a distinct separation of the two. The religious leaders, for instance, only involved themselves with religious matters and were urged to keep away from clan politics.<sup>103</sup> Religion, paired with the clan system resulted in a potent and resilient identity of the Somali people; as Lewis writes, “Islam adds depth and coherence to those common elements of traditional culture which, over and above their many sectional divisions, unite Somalis and provide the basis for their strong national consciousness.”<sup>104</sup>

## **2. Colonial Time Frame**

This section centers on the colonial administration of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands, and the key political events during the colonial period with emphasis on territorial aspects, particularly the role of imposed borders and colonial policies on the social structure of the Somali people in the Jubaland province and the Northern Frontier District. The British colonial governors administered the Somali ethnic group on the Kenya-Somalia borderlands for 37 years, from 1887 to 1924. The region was split in 1924 between the British colony and the Italian colony for the rest of the colonial period. With the split of the region, the Somali ethnic group was administered under different colonies whose policies differed. To emphasize the differences between the British and the Italian colonial policies, the colonial timeframe is covered in two sub-sections: 1887–1924 and 1924–1963.

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<sup>101</sup> Fox, *The Roots of Somali Political Culture*, 5.

<sup>102</sup> Education Encyclopedia, “Somalia-History & Background,” accessed 4 March 2017, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1376/Somalia-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (1980), 16.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

a. *Colonial Rule on the Kenya-Somalia Borderlands, 1887–1924*

At the Berlin Conference of November 1884 to February 1885, the rules for the European occupation of Africa were set.<sup>105</sup> African borders were carved out on blank maps in “European capitals at a time when Europeans had barely settled in Africa and had little—if any—knowledge of local conditions.”<sup>106</sup> As Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou write, quoting the British Prime Minister’s remarks,

[W]e have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man’s feet have ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.<sup>107</sup>

The prime minister’s statement demonstrates the scant knowledge the colonial powers had of the geographic conditions in Africa when they drew the borders, and the total disregard of the interests of the borderland dwellers.<sup>108</sup> As Ahmad writes, through the Berlin Conference the colonial powers “attempted to integrate Africa into the European concept of nation-states with clearly defined and demarcated borders,”<sup>109</sup> not considering the existing functional structures that the African people had in place.

Somalia and the Somali people were parceled for colonization by Italy, France, and Britain, while Kenya was under the British East Africa Protectorate. As Abdulla Mohamoud states, “no other country in Africa has been so radically fragmented into five colonial zones like Somalia.”<sup>110</sup> This research, however, is limited to the British and Italian colonies on the Kenya-Somalia borderlands. In 1887, the extent of the British protectorate stretched from the western bank of Juba River, extending westwards to the East African region and bordering the Italian protectorate to the east. The British colony’s

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<sup>105</sup> Papaioannou and Michalopoulos, “The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa,” 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” 12.

<sup>110</sup> Abdulla A. Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006), 103–104.

sphere of influence included both the Northern Frontier District and the Jubaland province, as shown on Figure 7.

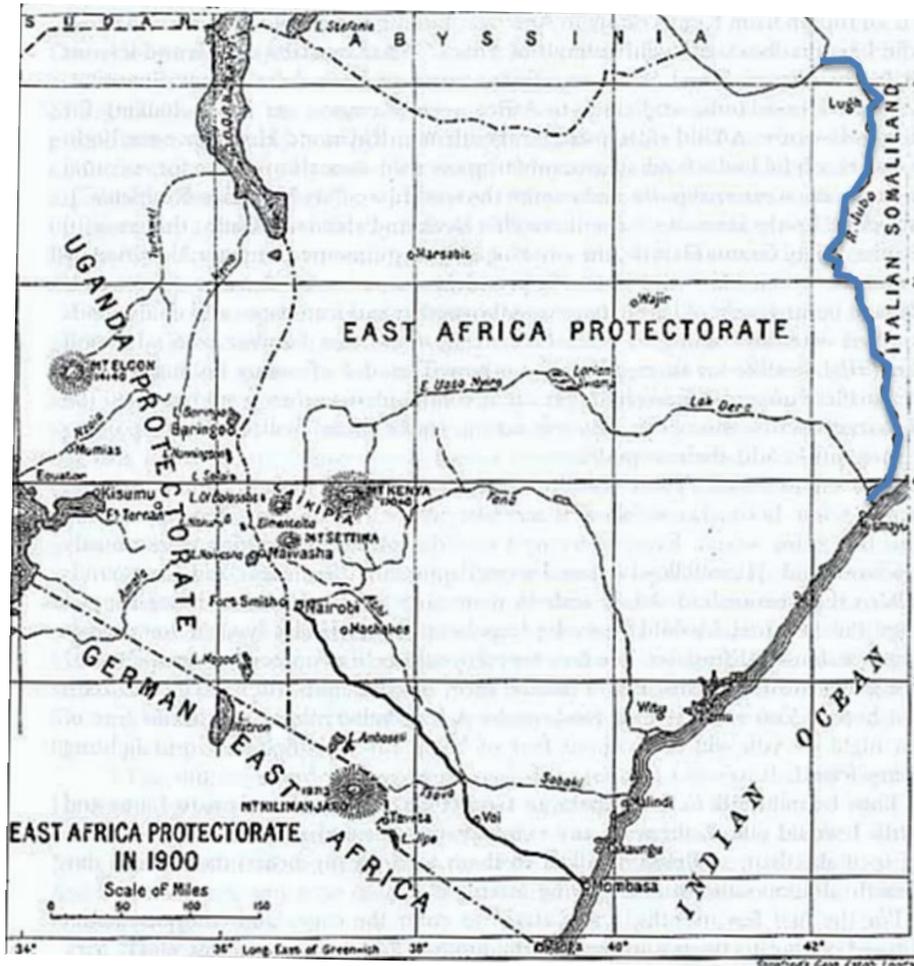


Figure 7. Kenya-Somalia Border Colonial Map.<sup>111</sup>

The border between the two colonies was such that the British East Africa protectorate comprised the whole of the present-day republic of Kenya and the Jubaland province, which is a part of present day Somalia. The River Juba marked the border between the British colony and the Italian colony.

<sup>111</sup> Adapted from Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 37.

The Somali ethnic group proved the most difficult community for the British to subjugate.<sup>112</sup> The Somali population resisted the British rule, but upon realizing that the resistance “was undertaken within the traditional framework of their segmentary system,”<sup>113</sup> the British colonial powers peacefully negotiated with the clan leaders, promising to preserve their existing social and political structures.<sup>114</sup> This approach worked and was formalized by signing with each clan a protection treaty whose preamble read: “for the maintenance of our independence, the preservation of order, and other good and sufficient reasons.”<sup>115</sup> From the signing of the treaties in 1886, up to the independence period in the early 1960s, the “treaties recognized that each clan area was a separate ‘territory.’”<sup>116</sup>

The signing of treaties with the different Somali clans in the borderlands by the British colony had two effects on the Somali ethnic group: the territorialization of the Somali clans and definition of the identity of the Somali ethnic group. Although the Somali clans were loosely territorialized in the pre-colonial era, this move by the colonial rulers changed the way the Somali ethnic group within the borderlands viewed their clan borders. Before colonization clan borders were used to roughly define designated grazing areas while during colonization the borders defined fixed clan territories.

Ironically, the British colony entered into agreement with individual clans not for the maintenance of the status quo of the Somali political and social structures, but for British interests. The colony’s intent was demonstrated in the way it used ‘friendly’ clans to raid other clans that were hostile to British rule.<sup>117</sup> The colonial policy of “divide and

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<sup>112</sup> E. R. Turton, “Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activity in Kenya 1893–1960,” *Journal of African History* 13, no. 1 (1972): 121, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/180970>.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>114</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, (1980), 46.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Northern Somalis for Peace & Unity, “The Illusionary ‘Somaliland’: Setting the Record Straight,” (Canada: NSPU, 2006), 7, [http://www.hiiraan.com/news/2006/may/Somaliland\\_Illusory.pdf](http://www.hiiraan.com/news/2006/may/Somaliland_Illusory.pdf).

<sup>117</sup> Turton, “Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activity in Kenya 1893–1960,” 123.

rule” created conflict among the clans,<sup>118</sup> much as it had among the peoples of British India. The British colony supplied the clans with weapons, as Mahamoud writes, “the Somali clans acquired for the first time sophisticated and modern weapons, which replaced their simple and traditional swords and daggers.”<sup>119</sup> As a consequence of this availability of firearms within the Somali community, the violent fighting within the clans increased. In addition, the peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms that existed for centuries between the clans were no longer embraced and conflicts often escalated more or less immediately to violent clashes.

The British colonial government maintained limited control over the Somali population in the borderlands. The colony’s government in Kenya was based in Nairobi, Kenya’s capital, which is more than 400 miles (more than 10 hours road travel time) from the Northern Frontier District. Considering the limited communication technologies at this time, the distance “enhanced isolation [of the Somali ethnic group], a factor which also conditioned their perspectives ..., into believing themselves a people apart.”<sup>120</sup> The colonial government appointed agents in the name of chiefs (in Arabic, *Akils*), one for each clan to provide a link to the administration. This form of administration was the Somali ethnic group’s first experience with centralism and marked the beginning of the weakening of the stability of the socio-political structures within the population. The chiefs had limited judicial powers and administered the Somali people using the colonial laws alongside the Muslim magistrate (*Kadhis*), who handled religious issues. The colonial laws were applied with consideration of the local circumstances and the requirements of the colonial rule and hence did not conflict much with the traditional laws. The net effect of colonial law created a perception within the Somali ethnic group that it was superior to the traditional laws, which delegitimized and undermined the preexisting traditional rule.<sup>121</sup> The problem with this arrangement for the Somali ethnic

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<sup>118</sup> Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)*, 60.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 14.

<sup>121</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (2002), 46–47.

group is that the colonial laws did not cover all aspects of people's lives, leaving gaps that had formerly been addressed by the traditional regulations.

Due to the difficulty in governing the ethnic group, and the distance of the Northern Frontier District from the colonial headquarters, the British colonial rulers contemplated separating the Northern Frontier District into a separate administration. As Vincent Bakpetu Thompson writes, the British Colonial rulers stated that:

If it were possible to detach the districts inhabited by the Somalis, it would be an excellent thing to form them into a separate government, as they are different in population, economic and physical conditions from the other provinces; but, unfortunately they are too small to form a separate administration, and the adjoining Somali territories are not British.<sup>122</sup>

The expression by the British administration reflected the dilemma the colonial powers had in the governing the ethnic group and their desire to confine them within the Northern Frontier District. Through the adoption of policies applicable to the ethnic group the Colonial government confined the Somali ethnic group within the district.

The policies adopted toward the Somali ethnic group further defined Somalis' identity as people different from the rest of the population under the colony. The first policy was based on the identification system. In order to recognize the people under their protectorate, the British introduced the pass book as a form of identification. The pass book was used as a form of identification for the rest of the communities under the British East Africa protectorate except the Somali ethnic group in the Northern Frontier District.<sup>123</sup> As Abdirashid Abdullahi states, "the Somali of the NFD [Northern Frontier District] were ... the only community in the Kenya colony that did not carry identity papers and they instead used their tax receipts as a way of identifying themselves to the authorities when requested."<sup>124</sup> These opinions and attitudes of the British colony toward the Somali ethnic group at the borderlands contributed to the policies they adopted in

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<sup>122</sup> Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 18.

<sup>123</sup> Abdirashid Abdullahi, "Colonial Policies and the Failure of Somali Secessionism in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya Colony, c.1890-1968" (Master's thesis, Rhodes University, 1997), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11984624.pdf>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

governing the Somali-inhabited territory. The policy isolated the Somali ethnic group, which contributed to the growth of the Somali identity consciousness.

***b. Colonial Rule on the Kenya-Somalia Borderlands, 1924–1963***

The aftermath of World War I ushered in a new era for the Somali ethnic group. Through a secret treaty (the Anglo-Italian boundary treaty) signed in London on July 15, 1924, the British colony ceded the Jubaland province to the Italians “as reward for joining the allies in World War I.”<sup>125</sup> While the transfer of land involved the relocation and division of the Somali people, they “were not consulted, and little or no account was taken of clan distribution or grazing needs.”<sup>126</sup> The treaty came into force and the British and Italian colonies embarked on border demarcation to mark the extent of their frontiers through an Anglo-Italian commission.<sup>127</sup> The commission redefined the border from the Juba River to an almost straight line that defines the present boundary between the Somali Republic and Kenya, as shown in Figure 8.

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<sup>125</sup> Cassanelli, , “The Opportunistic Economics of the Kenya Somali Borderland in Historical Perspective,” 136.

<sup>126</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (2002), 99.

<sup>127</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, (1980), 106.

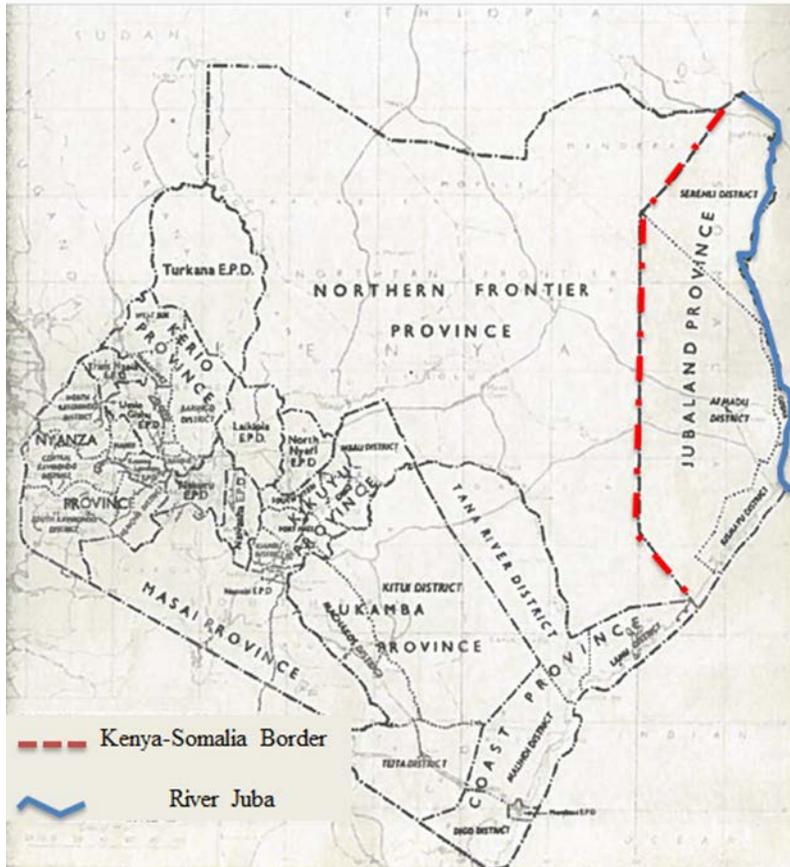


Figure 8. Colonial Map after World War I.<sup>128</sup>

The implication of the “sharing of the spoils of the great war” to the Somali people was the multi-scale division of people of the same ethnic group along clan and family lines. The border also significantly disrupted the nomadic pastoralists, who needed to move freely within the grazing areas and migrate often in search of water and pasture for their animals and for themselves.

The free movement of the Somali people in search of grazing lands and water wells within the borderlands complicated the management of the Somali-inhabited regions by the colonial administration. At one point, for example, “a large number of Somalis estimated at 10,000 entered the ... [Northern Frontier District from Jubaland Province] with large herds as a result of drought, but with the coming of the rains they

<sup>128</sup> Adapted from Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 38.

departed with their herds.”<sup>129</sup> Due to this seasonal movement, the British colonial government “sought to confine the pastoral populations to the remote north east to a series of tribal territories or blocks,”<sup>130</sup> as shown in Figure 9. The tribal grazing zones did not effectively stop the Somali population from the movement, and subsequently, the British colony created a new internal border—the Somali Galla Line, shown on Figure 9—in order to confine the Somali people within the Northern Frontier District and to stop their migration further inland in search of pasture.<sup>131</sup>

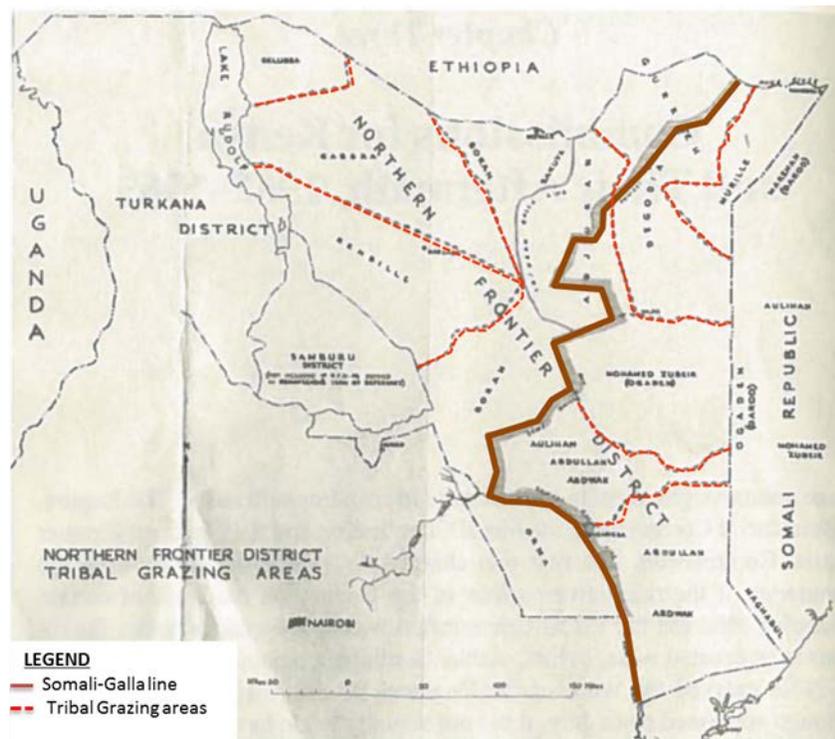


Figure 9. Somali Galla Line and Tribal Grazing Areas.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 20.

<sup>130</sup> Cassanelli, “The Opportunistic Economics of the Kenya Somali Borderland in Historical Perspective,” 135.

<sup>131</sup> Ogenga Otunnu, “Factors Affecting the Treatment of Kenyan-Somalis and Somali Refugees in Kenya: A Historical Overview,” *Refuge* 12, no. 5 (November–December 1992): 21, <https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/download/21678/20351>.

<sup>132</sup> Adapted from Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 82.

The Somali Galla Line was significant and “caused Somali resistance to British colonialism to escalate. The colonial regime responded to the revolt of the Somali ethnic group by declaring the Northern Frontier District a closed district in 1926.”<sup>133</sup> The closing of the Somali-inhabited territory imposed restrictions to the movement of the Somali population and severe punishment for anyone who contravened the order.<sup>134</sup> From the isolated policies imposed on the Somali ethnic group in the Northern Frontier District, it is clear that they did not share a common colonial experience with the rest of the Kenyan population in the British protectorate. The imposition of restrictions created a feeling of separation among the Somali population, who required permits to travel to the rest of the country and often described their travel out of the Northern Frontier District as a trip to Kenya.<sup>135</sup> The collective punishment reinforced through the isolation policies adopted towards the Somali ethnic group by the British colonial authorities further contributed to the growth of the Somali consciousness.

Moreover, the British colonial administration did not make any serious attempts to develop the Northern Frontier District. The administration considered the district’s population “too small to merit attention while there was so much to be done in the more densely inhabited areas of the colony”<sup>136</sup> and also did not find much economic gains from the district. Although the British colonial administration could have done much to develop the Northern Frontier district, for instance, opening up the area for trade with other communities and also building watering holes to prevent the constant migration of the Somali ethnic group, they did not. The British colony maintained a light presence in the district and probably retained it as a buffer with the Italian colony in Somalia. With the international border, the Somali-Galla Line, and clan grazing areas borders imposed,

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<sup>133</sup> Otunnu, “Factors Affecting the Weatment of Kenyan-Somalis and Somali Refugees in Kenya: A Historical Overview,” 21.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Richard Nolte, “Crisis in a Desert,” *Institute of Current World Affairs* JS-3 (30 April 1963):1, <http://www.icwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/JS-3.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> Abdullahi, “Colonial Policies and the Failure of Somali Secessionism in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya Colony, c.1890-1968,” 102.

the nomads lived in abject poverty, and as with the other factors mentioned, this also raised the ethnic sensitivity of the Somali people.

In the same light, the Italian colony had its policies for governing the Somali ethnic group in Jubaland. The comparison between the Italian colonial administration of the Somali ethnic group in Jubaland Province and the British colonial administration of the Northern Frontier District reflects similarities and differences in the models of colonization adopted towards the Somali population in the borderlands. The Italian colonial administrators adopted a policy of “containment and neglect”<sup>137</sup> of the Somali population in the borderlands. The Italian administrative center of Jubaland was located in Mogadishu—Somalia’s capital—and “was the reflection of Italian fascism, bureaucratic and highly centralized.”<sup>138</sup> It was because of the fascist practices that the Italians “deliberately militarized the Somali clans and plunged them into a situation in which turmoil, instability and destruction prevailed.”<sup>139</sup> The militarization of the Somali clans by both the British and the Italian colonies is one of the negative effects of colonization on the Somali ethnic group.

Unlike the British colonial rule that adopted decentralized governance, the Italian colony had a centralized approach. Italian officials held posts and this weakened the traditional structures within the Somali ethnic group. The Italian colony also embraced a more modern attitude towards governance and developed an elaborate economic plan for the Jubaland province, the result of which was reflected by the economic infrastructure at the end of the colonial era.<sup>140</sup> The disparity in wealth and infrastructure across the border became a source of clan rivalries, as those under the British colony were economically

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<sup>137</sup> Cassanelli, “The Opportunistic Economics of the Kenya Somali Borderland in Historical Perspective,” 135.

<sup>138</sup> W. A. Degu, “The State, the Crisis of State Institutions and Refugee Migration in the Horn of Africa: The Cases of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia”(master’s thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2002), [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1062206/48477\\_UBA002000875\\_16.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1062206/48477_UBA002000875_16.pdf).

<sup>139</sup> Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)*, 61.

<sup>140</sup> Degu, “The State, the Crisis of State Institutions and Refugee Migration in the Horn of Africa.”

disadvantaged compared to their counterparts under the Italian colony.<sup>141</sup> Transitioning to the post-colonial era, the effect of the colonial rulers' policies formed the basis for geopolitical conflicts on the Kenya-Somalia border.

World War II led to another border adjustment between the colonies on the Kenya-Somalia border. Victory and defeat informed this border adjustment. Britain defeated Italy, and as a result, Italy ceded the Jubaland province back to the British colony. This move brought 90 percent of the Somali territories (Jubaland, the Northern Frontier District, and the Ogaden in Ethiopia) under British colonial authority between 1941 and 1950.<sup>142</sup> This post-war development brought not only a shift of borders, but also a change of administration policies for the Somali population. The Jubaland province went back to British administration, reuniting a formerly split community. Somali families were able to re-unite with their kin after years of being separated by an international border.

This period of unity under one imperial ruler helped bring the Somali people together and ignited the claim for the unification of the Somali ethnic group.<sup>143</sup> The British colony supported the unification scheme and attempted to create a “greater Somalia,” which was aimed at uniting the Somali ethnic group within the Horn of Africa. As Mahamoud writes:

In 1946, Britain tabled a proposal, which recommended that the best way for the wandering Somali pastoral nomads to survive in the marginal environment of Somalia was to let the country unite and remain under British Administration. However, this proposal, known as the Bevin<sup>144</sup> Plan was swiftly rejected by Ethiopia as well as by the other three big

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<sup>141</sup> Center for Justice and Accountability, “Somalia: Colonial Legacy,”<http://cja.org/where-we-work/somalia/related-resources/somalia-colonial-legacy/>.

<sup>142</sup> Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)*, 68.

<sup>143</sup> Thompson, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: The Kenya-Somalia Border Problem 1914–2014*, 25.

<sup>144</sup> Bevin was the foreign secretary of Britain at that time.

powers (France, USA, and the USSR) because they were suspicious of the British intentions.<sup>145</sup>

The British proposal did not succeed because it was viewed as a way of expanding Britain's sphere of influence within Africa.<sup>146</sup>

This plan sparked the Somali identity unification, which has since grown to plague the borderlands even today. The rejection of the unification of the Somali people divided the community once again, and the Jubaland province was handed back to the Italian colony in 1950 to "administer for a period of ten years under United Nations Trusteeship."<sup>147</sup> The ten years granted to the Italian colony to administer the Jubaland Province came to an end in 1960, and in the same year, Somalia gained independence. The border between colonies changed to a border between an independent Somali state and the British colony.

After independence, the Somali ethnic group continued to pursue its dream of unification. In 1962 the Somali population in the Northern Frontier District expressed its wish of uniting with the Somali Republic during the negotiations for Kenya's independence at the Lancaster conference.<sup>148</sup> In response, the colonial rulers set up a commission "to ascertain the desires of the inhabitants of the Northern Frontier District regarding its future."<sup>149</sup> The commission conducted a referendum in the Northern Frontier District and five out of the six administrative districts within the District voted to secede to the Somali Republic. The British colony rejected the commission's finding "on the grounds that it was not prepared to take a unilateral decision on the future of the

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<sup>145</sup> Abdulla Mohamoud, "State Collapse and Post-conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960- 2001)" (master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2001), [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1061731/48811\\_UBA002000838\\_10.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1061731/48811_UBA002000838_10.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> Abdullahi, "Colonial Policies and the Failure of Somali Secessionism in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya Colony, c.1890-1968."

<sup>147</sup> Abdulla A. Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)*, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Nolte, "Crisis in a Desert," 5.

<sup>149</sup> Kromm, "Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute," 362.

territory so close to Kenya's independence."<sup>150</sup> On December 12, 1963, Kenya gained its independence with the Somali Northern Frontier District as one of its administrative units.<sup>151</sup>

The Somali population on the Kenya-Somalia borderlands was especially dissatisfied with the decision not to unite them with people of their common identity. As Zoppi writes, expressing the sentiments of the Somali Republic's leaders in 1962:

Our misfortune is that our neighboring countries (...) are not our neighbors. Our neighbors are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate 'boundary arrangement'. They have to move across artificial borders to their pasture lands. They occupy the same terrain and pursue the same pastoral economy as ourselves. We speak the same language. We share the same creed, the same culture and the same traditions. How *can* [original italics] we regard our brothers as foreigners?<sup>152</sup>

The sentiments expressed by the Somali leaders reflect how their identity at different levels pulled them together. The independence of both Kenya and Somalia introduced a political identity to the Somali population at the borderlands and was followed by an endless struggle by the Somali population in the Northern Frontier District and in Somalia to be united under one country. The independent Somalia was determined to establish a 'Greater Somalia' by fighting to integrate all the territories inhabited by the Somali ethnic group. To reinforce their commitment to unity, the independent state of Somalia included in Article VI, Section 4, of their constitution a clause that read: "The Somali Republic shall promote by legal and peaceful means, the union of Somali territories."<sup>153</sup> The struggle for the unification of the territory inhabited by Somali ethnic groups was manifested in the wars that followed independence: the Ogaden War in Ethiopia in 1977 and the Shifta War in Kenya in 1963.

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<sup>150</sup> RRT Research Response, *Refugee Review Tribunal* (November 2008): 4, [https://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1930\\_1292341414\\_ken33956.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1292341414_ken33956.pdf).

<sup>151</sup> Kromm, "Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute," 362.

<sup>152</sup> Zoppi, "Greater Somalia, The Never-ending Dream?" 50.

<sup>153</sup> Kromm, "Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute," 362.

This geopolitical aspiration of uniting the five Somali-inhabited regions into a “Greater Somalia” has also been captured in the design of the Somali flag, as shown in Figure 10.

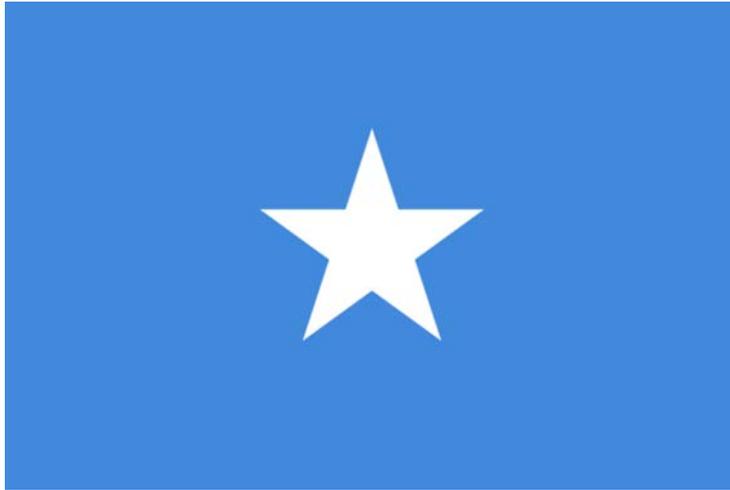


Figure 10. Somali Flag.<sup>154</sup>

The five-pointed star in the middle of the flag represents the five regions that are inhabited by Somali people: Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Ogaden (Ethiopia), and the Northern Frontier District (Kenya).<sup>155</sup> The symbolism on the flag “point[s] to the fact that their ties of blood, religion, language, ... culture, economy and history make them the largest homogenous group in the continent”<sup>156</sup> and provides the Somali population with a justification for unification. The struggle to unify the Somali people within the same borders is deeply rooted in the arbitrary borders imposed on them by the European colonial powers, which laid the foundation for the geopolitical conflicts experienced on the borderlands.

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<sup>154</sup> Flagmakers, “Flag of Somalia-A Brief History,” accessed 3 March 2017, <https://www.flagmakers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Flag-of-Somalia-A-Brief-History-Download.pdf>.

<sup>155</sup> Donovan C. Chau, “At the Crossroads of Cultures? A Historic and Strategic Examination of Kenya-Somalia Relations,” *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 1 (2010):69, doi: 10.1080/21520841003689035.

<sup>156</sup> Nolte, “Crisis in a Desert,” 6.

### 3. Post-colonial Time Frame

Independence for Kenya and Somalia changed the character of the borders, from a demarcation line dividing different colonial territories to a border between sovereign states. As a consequence, a new political identity for the Somali ethnic community at the borderlands was introduced after independence. The colonially demarcated borders presented the new independent states in Africa with two options: “they could either maintain the *status quo* by accepting the imperfections inherent in the colonial partitions with the attendant consequences of managing separatists’ and irredentists’ tendencies, or make the effort to redesign the borders.”<sup>157</sup> In solidifying their independence, Africa’s post-colonial governments’ focus was on economic development and social integration of the communities within their states, which influenced their decision on the colonially inherited borders. As discussed subsequently in this section, African countries opted to maintain the territorial status quo under the auspices of the Organization of OAU with the realization that “any attempt to redraw the boundaries either on ethnic, racial or linguistic basis would lead to untold chaos.”<sup>158</sup> The resolution to keep the colonial borders in Africa contributed to the many geopolitical conflicts on the continent.

The decision to maintain the colonial borders that felt arbitrary to the local people was legally reinforced in Article 111, paragraph 3, of the charter of the OAU. It urged the member states to maintain “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for its inalienable right to independent existence.”<sup>159</sup> Bearing in mind that, as Okumu points out, “there are 109 international borders that divide 177 cultural or ethnic groups in Africa,”<sup>160</sup> as shown in Figure 11, the OAU developed mechanisms in anticipation of border conflicts.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ahmad, “African Boundaries and the Imperative of Definition,” 16.

<sup>158</sup> Ajala, “The Nature of African Boundaries,” 187.

<sup>159</sup> Samuel Chime, “The Organization of African Unity and African Boundaries,” in *African Boundary Problems*, ed. Carl Gosta Widstrand (Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1969), 66, <http://www.diva-portal.se/smash/get/diva2:392542/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

<sup>160</sup> Okumu, “The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 44.

<sup>161</sup> Chime, “The Organization of African Unity and African Boundaries,” 67.



Figure 11. Ethnic and Country Borders in Post-colonial Africa.<sup>162</sup>

The assumption of the OAU that the maintenance of the colonial borders meant that the status quo was upheld was a generalized view because, as history has proved, borders have different effects in general; some create peace while some create conflict. Even with the declaration of respect for the colonially inherited borders, the OAU to date has been procrastinating in conducting border demarcation, and what the majority of African countries hold are colonial border treaties.<sup>163</sup>

Borders have different functions for different entities. For the new governments of Kenya and Somalia, the border was “geopolitically and socio politically necessary, especially for building state institutions.”<sup>164</sup> The difference in how the two parties

<sup>162</sup> Adapted from Ethnic and Country Borders, International Growth Centre, accessed 3 March 2017, <http://www.theigc.org/blog/national-institutions-and-subnational-development-in-africa/>.

<sup>163</sup> Okumu, “The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries,” 40.

<sup>164</sup> Ricardo Rene’ Laremont, “Borders, States, and Nationalism,” in *Borders, Nationalism and the African State*, ed. Ricardo Rene’ Laremont (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 6–7.

viewed the border at independence became a source of conflict. Soon after Kenya's independence in 1963, the Somali community in the Northern Frontier District, now named the North Eastern Province, was still revolting to join their kin in Somalia as a spillover from the last phases of the British colonial rule. The Somali ethnic group's claims of self-determination and the Somali Republic's efforts to unite all Somali-inhabited regions was felt by Kenya as a threat to its territorial integrity.

The Kenyan government's response to the territorial claim by the Somali ethnic group was in line with the post-colonial government's objectives. The government was fixated on maintaining the colonial border, as the first Kenyan president said: "as far as the Kenya-Somalia boundary is concerned, there is absolutely no room for dispute: the boundary was clearly demarcated ... and we stand by that boundary ... because it clearly spells out the areas of sovereignty of the two States."<sup>165</sup> The unrest on the Kenya-Somalia border for the infant government of Kenya was a great challenge, as skirmishes at the borderlands between the government and the Somali population became common and led to the Shifta War. The agitation of the Somali population to join their kin caused the government to declare a state of emergency, which lasted for 30 years, in the North Eastern Province.<sup>166</sup> This declaration by itself felt like a form of discrimination to the Somali ethnic group because "Kenya had two separate legal regimes: one applied exclusively to the NFD [Northern Frontier District] and the other to the rest of the country."<sup>167</sup> The post-colonial government, following in the footsteps of the colonial powers, implemented policies to contain the Somali population within the North Eastern Province. The Kenyan Somalis were subjected to vetting exercises to prove their citizenship and their movement was restricted within their administrative boundary.

During the 30 years of the state of emergency, the North Eastern Province remained underdeveloped; the Kenyan government did not initiate any development

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<sup>165</sup> Observations of Member States on the draft articles on succession of States in respect of treaties adopted by the Commission at its twenty-fourth session, "Succession of States with respect to treaties," *Yearbook of the International Law Commission* 2 (1974): 316, [http://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/a\\_cn4\\_275.pdf](http://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/a_cn4_275.pdf).

<sup>166</sup> RRT Research Response, *Refugee Review Tribunal* (November 2008): 4.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

projects or make any effort to integrate the Somali population with the rest of the country.<sup>168</sup> The government's efforts in the province maintained security and not development; indeed, 80 percent of the budget allocated for the North Eastern Province went to security, whose net result is reflected in the underdevelopment in the region to date. These policies under the post-colonial government drew the Somali population in the North Eastern Province closer to the Somali Republic. At the same time, the Somali Republic also felt obliged to help its kin across the border, which increased conflicts experienced at the borderlands soon after independence between the ethnic group and the Kenya government. The situation at the borderlands remained "a source of political anxiety for the independent government of Kenya throughout the 1960s and reinforced the image of the frontier district as a source of chronic violence and insecurity."<sup>169</sup>

Moreover, Somalia was the only sub-Saharan country that rejected the colonial borders even after the OAU declaration.<sup>170</sup> Post-independence Somalia's pursuit of the 'Greater Somalia' and the dismissal of the colonial borders led to its engagement in conflicts with its neighbors. The first agenda of the post-independence Republic of Somalia was to unite the Somali ethnic group that had been separated by state borders, and as Mahamoud states, "this mission became the primary political task that the government of the new Somali Republic had to shoulder."<sup>171</sup> To achieve this objective the Somali Republic adopted an "irredentism" strategy. David Kromm defines irredentism as "the desire of a nation state to incorporate territory inhabited by people of the same nation but under suzerainty [*sic*] of another government."<sup>172</sup> Julianna Fusezi acknowledges the dynamic nature of irredentism and describes different forms of the phenomena. Relevant to this research is conventional irredentism, which she explains is

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<sup>168</sup> Kromm, "Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute," 363.

<sup>169</sup> Cassanelli, "The Opportunistic Economics of the Kenya Somali Borderland in Historical Perspective," 136.

<sup>170</sup> Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)*, 104.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>172</sup> Kromm, "Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute," 359.

“principally concerned with solidarity rooted in shared identity”<sup>173</sup> and it involves detaching “land and people from one state in order to re/incorporate them into another.”<sup>174</sup> A recent example is the action taken by Russia against Ukraine, annexing the Crimean peninsula in 2014, based on Russian identity. An illustration of this type of irredentism is shown in Figure 12.

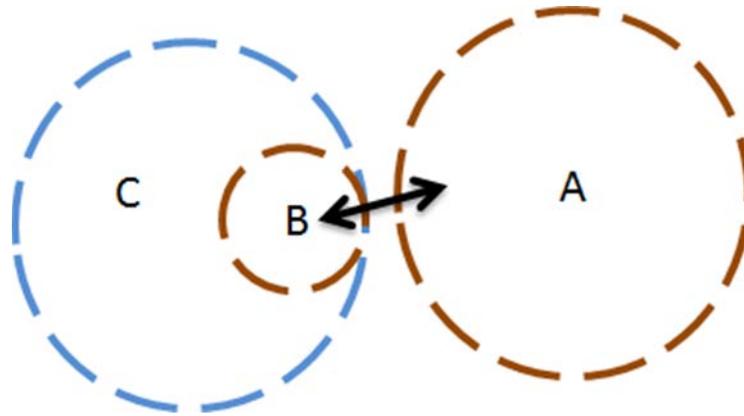


Figure 12. Representation of Conventional Irredentism.<sup>175</sup>

Figure 12 illustrates the pre-conditions for irredentism, where “a parent state (A) and its trans-border ethnic brethren (B) is situated in a neighboring host state (C).”<sup>176</sup> Fitting this model into this research, Somalia is the parent state, and the Somali people forms the trans-border ethnic group, while Kenya is the host state. The irredentism strategy of Somalia as the parent state was aimed at taking advantage of the similarity in identity of the Somali people at the border to build an ethno-national identity.

The irredentism strategy was abandoned in 1969 due to internal power struggles between the clans, which ended Somalia’s civil government through a military coup. A military government took over Somalia from 1969 until 1991 when the state

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<sup>173</sup> Julianna Christa Elisabeth Fuzesi, “Explaining Irredentism: The Case of Hungary and Its Transborder Minorities in Romania and Slovakia” (PhD diss., London School of Economics, 2006).

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

collapsed.<sup>177</sup> Somalia then went into a civil war in 1991, whose consequences were felt all through the borderlands. The flow of refugees through the border into Kenya led to the opening up of camps within the borderlands to host the thousands of refugees. The lack of law and order as a result of the civil war provided terrorists with suitable recruiting and training grounds in Somalia. Terrorist attacks, enabled by the porous Kenya-Somalia border, have been experienced in Kenya and have led to its decisions to close the refugee camps and put up a border fence along the Kenya-Somalia border to stop further terrorist attacks.

### C. CONCLUSION

As described in Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, independent Kenya was an imagined community for the Somali population in the North Eastern Province and hence the inspiration for their struggle to join their kin in Somalia. With the urge to develop the new states, African leaders chose to maintain the colonial borders as they were. The choice was a decision based on the assumption that borders serve the people around them equally. The geopolitical conflicts today on the Kenya-Somalia border can be linked to the colonial borders that divided people of a common identity and reflect the inseparable link between geography and history. This research proposes that African leaders re-organize their "Berlin Conference" to demarcate borders that reflect the realities today to avoid future conflicts.

In the three time frames examined, both internal and external factors came into play for the borderland Somali community. The internal factors, as B.J. Hesse argues correctly, are first the very nature of the Somali people; the clan dynamics and the nomadic way of life that works against the functioning of a state. Second are the environmental conditions at the borderland that make the Somali ethnic group an enduring community.<sup>178</sup> These factors make the Somali people's identity different from any other community around them. The external factors that came in with colonization,

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<sup>177</sup> Mahamoud, *State Collapse and Post Conflict Development in Africa: The Case of Somalia (1960-2001)*, 78.

<sup>178</sup> Brian J. Hesse, "Introduction: The Myth of 'Somalia,'" *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 3 (25 August 2010): 250, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2010.499232>.

including the introduction of borders and policies of isolation, only exacerbated the Somali identity crisis. The borders lack legitimacy to the Somali people because they neither established these borders nor were they consulted in the process of demarcating the borders. Moreover, the Somali ethnic group views the border as an obstacle to their unification.<sup>179</sup>

Nonetheless, it is evident from the events within the three time frames that a structural problem of the borders created by the colonial powers was adopted by the post-colonial sovereign states. The Somali identity was defined according to different criteria, both by the colonial and post-colonial governments, raising the ethnic sensitivity of the community. The nature of the relationship between the Somali people and the post-colonial Kenyan government at independence perpetuates tension to this day.

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<sup>179</sup> Zoppi, "Greater Somalia, The Never-ending Dream?" 45.

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### III. GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS ON THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER

The interconnectedness of the Somali ethnic group straddling the Kenya-Somalia border has over the years defined the geopolitics at the border. This chapter begins by defining both geopolitics and geopolitical conflicts. What is geopolitics? Geopolitics, as defined by Yves Lacoste, is the study of “power struggles on a given territory.”<sup>180</sup> He further writes that “geopolitics connects geographical knowledge and historical facts; it brings together two types of data to obtain an overall view, in order to understand the entire context and the issues connected.”<sup>181</sup> What, then, are geopolitical conflicts? Geopolitical conflicts, as described by Eva Poluha are conflicts that “focus on disagreements and rivalries pertaining to geography, economics and demography of policy and foreign policy of a state, country or region.”<sup>182</sup> This chapter focuses on the post-independence geopolitical conflicts along the Kenya-Somalia border, the conflict drivers and their impact to Kenya, bearing in mind that the sources of these conflicts are interlinked with one another.

The arbitrary borders drawn by the colonial powers form one of the major sources of border conflicts in Africa.<sup>183</sup> The Kenya-Somalia border is no exception: the Kenya-Somalia borderlands have been a conflict zone since both Kenya and Somalia gained their statehood. The conflicts in these borderlands are predominantly driven the identity politics of the Somali ethnic group. This ethnic group at the Kenya-Somalia borderlands possesses multiple identities: citizenship, territorial, clan, religion, and sub-clan, among others. Citizenship defines whether a Somali person belongs to Kenya or Somalia, and this remains significant on this border because of the political rights and benefits that

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<sup>180</sup> Yves Lacoste, “Geopolitics Is Still Used to ‘Wage War,’” *Le Nouvel Economiste*, <https://geostrategieblog.wordpress.com/yves-lacoste-founding-father-of-french-geopolitics/>.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Poluha, “Ethnicity and Democracy-A viable Alliance,” 33.

<sup>183</sup> Aguibou Diarrah, “An Overview of the African Union Border Programme,” in *The Delimitation and Demarcation of Boundaries in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa: Commission of the African Union, 2014):4, <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-2-en-2013-delim-a-demar-user-guide.pdf>.

come with the citizenship of a state.<sup>184</sup> Territorial identity, which is tied to the clan identity, is defined by the clans' regions and is a "vehicle for ethnic exclusionary rights and land access"<sup>185</sup> to the clan members. With the growth of urban centers in the borderlands, there is a new emerging form of identity, the "urban place identity."<sup>186</sup>As Ken Menkhaus describes, the "strong urban-place identity invariably occurs in multi-clan towns."<sup>187</sup> The clash of these various identities of one ethnic group has dominated the conflicts in the Kenya-Somalia borderlands.

The previous chapter set the stage by outlining the bordering process that intertwined Kenya and Somalia at the borderlands and some of its problems, most of which are manifested through conflicts. The historical background on the Kenya-Somalia border provides this research with the foundation for a bottom-up approach to the geopolitical conflicts on the borderlands. This chapter discusses in chronological order some of the geopolitical conflicts experienced in the Kenya-Somalia borderlands. For each of these conflicts, a judgmental and narrow-minded explanation has often been offered, singling it out as a onetime event that prevents one from understanding the relationship between all these conflicts. This research endeavors to look deeper into the causes and geopolitical representations of these conflicts in relation to each other, considering the history of the borderlands.

#### **A. GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS**

The conflicts covered under this section are grouped into three main categories based on three conflict drivers. The closely related causes of conflicts are discussed under one category. For each category, the conflicts involved may be many and so the discussion is limited in detail to a few conflicts under each group. The conflict categories are:

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<sup>184</sup> Menkhaus, "Kenya–Somalia Border Conflict Analysis," 6.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

- Irredentism- and secession-based conflicts
- Resource and political conflicts
- Terrorism

### 1. Irredentism-Based Conflict

One of the many consequences of the partitioning of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands by the European colonial powers was that it “generated irredentist demands”<sup>188</sup> by the Somali Republic. Irredentism is defined by German Kim as “the attempt by a sovereign state to incorporate the territories of ethnically-related populations in neighboring countries.”<sup>189</sup> Irredentist conflicts, as Kromm writes, “are likely to occur where boundaries have been defined without respect to the existing ethnic, economic and political order.”<sup>190</sup> Gigi Gokcek describes irredentism conflicts as those that occur when an ethnic group “inside [a] sovereign state, attempts to unite with its kin, who are living as a minority in a neighboring country or countries, by making claims on the adjacent territories where these same people are concentrated.”<sup>191</sup> She further claims that irredentism-based conflicts are more common on borders with homogenous identities than borders with heterogeneous identities.<sup>192</sup> Secession, on the other hand, as defined by Viva Ona Bartkus, is “the formal withdrawal from an established, internationally recognized state by a constituent unit to create a new sovereign state.”<sup>193</sup> Secessionism is based on territorial claims, which are justified by what the secessionists claim to be historical injustices.<sup>194</sup> Gokcek argues that secession claims “emerge when minority groups declare their independence, separating themselves and the territory on which they

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<sup>188</sup> Papaioannou and Michalopoulos, “The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa,” 4.

<sup>189</sup> German Kim, “Irredentism in Disputed Territories and Its Influence on the Border Conflicts and Wars,” *Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2016): 89.

<sup>190</sup> Kromm, “Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute,” 364.

<sup>191</sup> Gigi Gokcek, “Irredentism versus Secessionism: The Potential for International Conflict,” *Nationalism and Ethics Politics* (August 2011): 276. doi: 10.1080/13537113.2011.600105.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Viva Ona Bartkus, *The Dynamic of Secession* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>194</sup> Lea Brilmayer, “Secession and Self Determination: A territorial Interpretation,” *Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository* 1, no. 1 (1991):179, [http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss\\_papers/2434](http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/2434).

reside from the sovereign authority of a state ruled by a different ethnic majority.”<sup>195</sup> In offering a difference between the two terms, Kim depicts that irredentist conflicts are initiated by sovereign states, while secessionist conflicts are instigated by a minority ethnic group. Both irredentism and secessionism take place across borders and hence they both challenge the territorial integrity of a state.<sup>196</sup> Kim highlights that “in the case of ethno-territorial cross-border conflicts, irredentist and secessionist movements often coincide.”<sup>197</sup>

As discussed in Chapter II, colonialism left the Somali ethnic group divided between Somalia, Ethiopia (Ogaden region), Kenya (North Eastern Province) and Djibouti.<sup>198</sup> After independence, Somalia’s immediate concern was the reunification of the Somali ethnic group in the region.<sup>199</sup> Somalia’s quest to join all the Somali-inhabited regions was open as they included the irredentist policy clause in their constitution at independence and gave a symbolic expression through their national flag.<sup>200</sup> The region covered in the scope of this conflict is the ethnically distinct region, the North Eastern Province of Kenya, shown in Figure 13.

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<sup>195</sup> Gokcek, “Irredentism versus Secessionism: The Potential for International Conflict,” 276.

<sup>196</sup> Kim, “Irredentism in Disputed Territories and Its Influence on the Border Conflicts and Wars,” 89.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Papaioannou and Michalopoulos, “The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa,” 4.

<sup>199</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, “From Irredentism to Secession: The Decline of Pan-Somali Nationalism.” In *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States*, ed. Lowell W. Barrington (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 112.

<sup>200</sup> Jacquin-Berdal, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa*, 161.

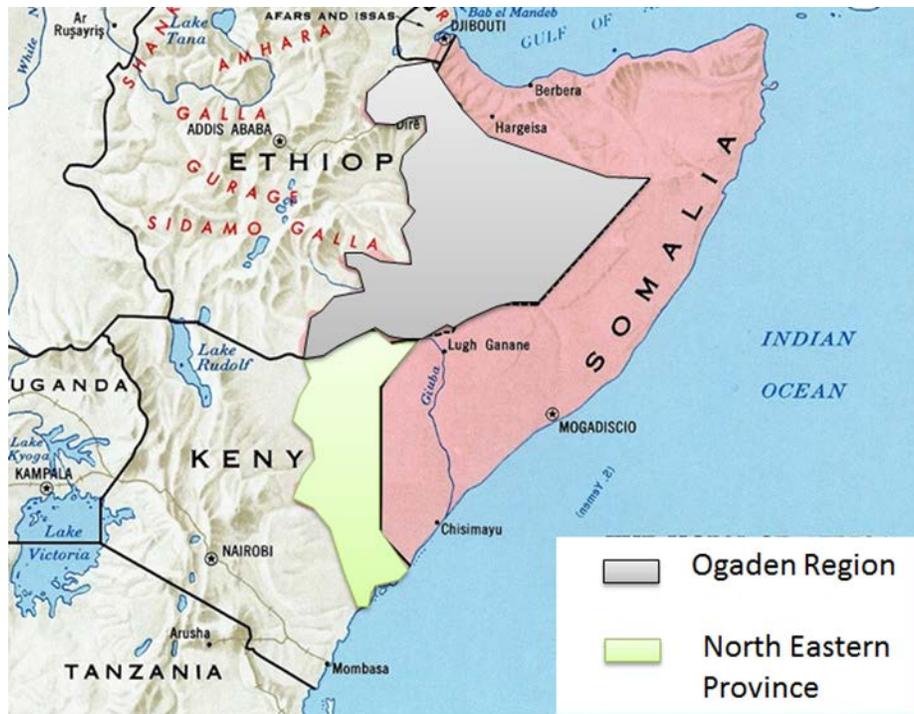


Figure 13. Ogaden Region and North Eastern Province.<sup>201</sup>

The situation that the post-independent Somalia state was faced with is best described by the Somali prime minister's own words, as Lewis writes:

Our misfortune [...] is that our neighbouring countries, with whom like the rest of Africa, we seek to promote constructive and harmonious relations are not or neighbours. Our neighbours are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate boundary 'arrangements'. They have to move across artificial frontiers to their pasturelands. They occupy the same terrain and pursue the same pastoral economy as ourselves. We speak the same language. We share the same creed, the same culture, and the same traditions. How can we regard our brothers as foreigners?<sup>202</sup>

The description by the prime minister of Somalia conveys how much the identity politics of the Somali ethnic group plays a role in the geopolitical conflicts. To achieve its ambitions, "the Government of Somalia... naturally supported its Somali kinsmen in the

<sup>201</sup> Adapted from Njeri, "Kenya that was Never Kenyan: The Shifta War & The North Eastern Kenya.."

<sup>202</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (2002), 179.

N.F.D [Northern Frontier District] in their struggle for secession from Kenya and for union with the Republic.”<sup>203</sup> Somalia’s post -independence goals differed from those its neighbors hosting the Somali ethnic group and this formed the basis for the geopolitical conflicts on the Kenya-Somalia border.

Shortly after independence in 1963, Kenya was struggling with how to manage all the different ethnic groups within its territorial borders, with a desire to establish a unified state. The division of ethnic groups along the borders was the most urgent issue to deal with, and on the forefront was the Kenya-Somalia border. From the colonial legacy, the Somali-inhabited North Eastern Province remained the most isolated and least developed region of Kenya, and the “Somali tribesmen of the [region] ... announced their intention of seeking self-determination independently of the rest of Kenya in order that they could unite with their kinsmen”<sup>204</sup> in Somalia. The pre-independence referendum was another contributing factor to the secession claims by the North Eastern Province Somali population. The rejection of the pre-independence referendum by the British colony, to determine whether the North Eastern Province Somalis wanted to join their kin, was still a fresh idea in the minds of the North Easterners. The outcome of the referendum led to the rise of insurgents in the district, who started attacking Kenyan government installations immediately after independence.<sup>205</sup> The insurgent attacks led to a declaration of a state of emergency in the region at independence.<sup>206</sup> The declaration marked the beginning of the first conflict in the borderlands, codenamed the *Shifita* War meaning the bandits war.

*a. Shifita War*

The Shifita War started at Kenya’s independence in 1963 and ended in 1967. The war was a spillover from the colonial era following Britain’s denial of the Northern

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<sup>203</sup> I. M. Lewis, “The Problem of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya,” *Sage Journals* 5, no. 1 (April 1963):58, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/030639686300500104>.

<sup>204</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (2002), 184.

<sup>205</sup> Otunnu, “Factors Affecting the Treatment of Kenyan-Somalis and Somali Refugees in Kenya: A Historical Overview,” 22.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

Frontier District's Somali population from joining their kin in the Somali Republic during the referendum in 1962. The parties to the war were the Kenyan Somali insurgents (*Shifita*, as Kenya's government referred to them) informally supported by the Somali Republic against the Kenyan government. The insurgents in the North Eastern Province aimed at seceding from Kenya and uniting with the Somali Republic. Somalia identified with the insurgents, because of ethnic identity and because the war supported their irredentist claims to make a 'greater Somalia.'<sup>207</sup>

The war developed from a low-intensity conflict to major attacks by insurgents, whose operational guidance, military training, and weapons were received from the Somali Republic.<sup>208</sup> The thinly manned 682-kilometer border between Kenya and Somalia provided the insurgents with a quick escape from the Kenyan security forces into safe havens on the Somalia side. The insurgents understood well that the "Kenyan forces would not cross the border without leading to a state of war with Somalia and even when the Shifita remained in Kenya, their fellow tribesmen would loyally shield them."<sup>209</sup> The Somali insurgents, in November 1963, attacked a military camp within the province and this attack "captured the attention of the Kenyan government, swiftly resulting in the deployment of hundreds of Kenyan soldiers by air and road to contain the Shifita threat."<sup>210</sup> The operational tactics of the Shifita were limited and only geared toward achieving a political objective of secession and not a military objective<sup>211</sup> as demonstrated by their choice of targets.

The social goal of the Shifita was to reunite with their kin in Somalia. The clan structure was beneficial to the Somalis because it helped in organization. For instance, as John Ringquist writes, "operational security was achieved by organizing forces into small clan-based, semi-independent cells that received orders from the upper echelons ... and

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<sup>207</sup> Njeri, "Kenya that was Never Kenyan: The Shifita War & The North Eastern Kenya."

<sup>208</sup> John Ringquist, "Bandit or Patriot: The Kenyan Shifita War 1963–1968," *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 13, no.1 (2011): 109, [http://isndemo.atlasproject.eu/asset\\_demo/file/491bfaac-af33-4cd8-9f9a-9881afb1064f/d3b1d8a9-ecb6-4063-8b13-c4177bf822c0/ch5.pdf](http://isndemo.atlasproject.eu/asset_demo/file/491bfaac-af33-4cd8-9f9a-9881afb1064f/d3b1d8a9-ecb6-4063-8b13-c4177bf822c0/ch5.pdf).

<sup>209</sup> Njeri, "Kenya that was Never Kenyan: The Shifita War & The North Eastern Kenya."

<sup>210</sup> Ringquist, "Bandit or Patriot: The Kenyan Shifita War 1963–1968," 108.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

utilized codes to protect clan and individual identities.”<sup>212</sup> The insurgents effectively used their environment (both the harsh weather and the residents of the North Eastern District) to counter the Kenyan government forces.

By 1966, the Kenyan government had spent \$4,500,000 (equivalent to \$33,470,518.87 today) in the war. Due to the skyrocketing cost, the government adopted different counterinsurgency measures.<sup>213</sup> The Kenyan administration put the Somali population in the North Eastern Province in forced villages under police guards, or as Hannah Whittaker refers to it, “forced villagisation.”<sup>214</sup> This move by the Kenyan government not only affected the insurgents, but also restricted movement for the whole nomadic population, whose livelihood depended on movement, hence disrupting their social order. The balkanization of the Somali people in the North Eastern Province into villages reinforced their identity further. The war continued until 1967, when Somalia and Kenya restored their diplomatic relations, ending Somalia’s support to the insurgents.

The Shifta War was uniquely a Somali ethnic group identity based war. The isolation of the Somali ethnic group by the British colonial administration and the underdevelopment of the North Eastern Province of Kenya provided the impetus for the succession claims. Irredentism of the independent Somali Republic also favored the war and provided external support to the Kenya Somali population in their struggle to join their kin. This perspective gives the Shifta War both a historical and a social context. The similarity in identity at different scales: tribe, religion clan and sub clan, provided the Somali population in the North Eastern Province with external support for the war. The borderlands on the Somalia side provided a sanctuary for the insurgents.

## **2. Resource and Political Conflicts**

Conflicts over grazing land and water wells on the Kenya-Somalia border have occurred since both states gained their independence. Culturally, “the various pastoral

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<sup>212</sup> Ringquist, “Bandit or Patriot: The Kenyan Shifta War 1963–1968,” 108.

<sup>213</sup> Njeri, “Kenya that was Never Kenyan: The Shifta War & The North Eastern Kenya.” .

<sup>214</sup> Hannah Whittaker, “Pursuing Pastoralists: The Stigma of Shifta during the ‘Shifta War’ in Kenya, 1963–68,” *Eras* 10 (November 2008):1, [artsonline.monash.edu.au/eras/files/2014/02/whittaker-article.pdf](http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/eras/files/2014/02/whittaker-article.pdf).

communities and clans conducted raids and counter raids as an organized and governed survival mechanism, especially during periods of severe drought.”<sup>215</sup> The Somali ethnic group is predominantly pastoralist and so, as previously mentioned their livelihood is dependent on the availability of pasture and water for their animals. Moreover, over the years due to overgrazing, environmental degradation is evident in the borderlands and has led to the low productivity of the land. The reduction in productivity has left the Somali community in the Kenya-Somalia borderlands in conflict over the scarce pasture and water sources. The seasonal patterns in the borderlands also define the conflict cycle. During the dry seasons, which occur between December and March as well as July and September, grazing is concentrated around the water wells, which generates competition for the pasture and drives conflict between the clans.<sup>216</sup> The conflicts covered subsequently provide an understanding of how resources, mainly grazing areas and water wells, drive conflict on the Kenya-Somalia border. Conflicts over the political representation of the various Somali clans in the North Eastern Province are interlinked with the control of resource areas, and as Menkhaus notes, “each inflames and exacerbates the other and none can be properly explained in isolation.”<sup>217</sup> Overall the multi-scalar Somali identities are mobilizing factors in the conflicts as this research demonstrates with the Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera conflicts.

**a. Wajir Conflict**

Wajir is one of the borderlands regions within the North Eastern Province and it is inhabited by the Somali ethnic group. The town lies in the territory of three different clans, namely the Ajuran, Degodia, and Ogaden,<sup>218</sup> as shown on Figure 14.

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<sup>215</sup> Eileen K. Omosa, “The Impact of Water Conflicts on Pastoral Livelihoods,” *International Institute for Sustainable Development* (August 2005): 4, [http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2005/security\\_pastoral\\_water\\_impacts.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2005/security_pastoral_water_impacts.pdf).

<sup>216</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 4–5.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

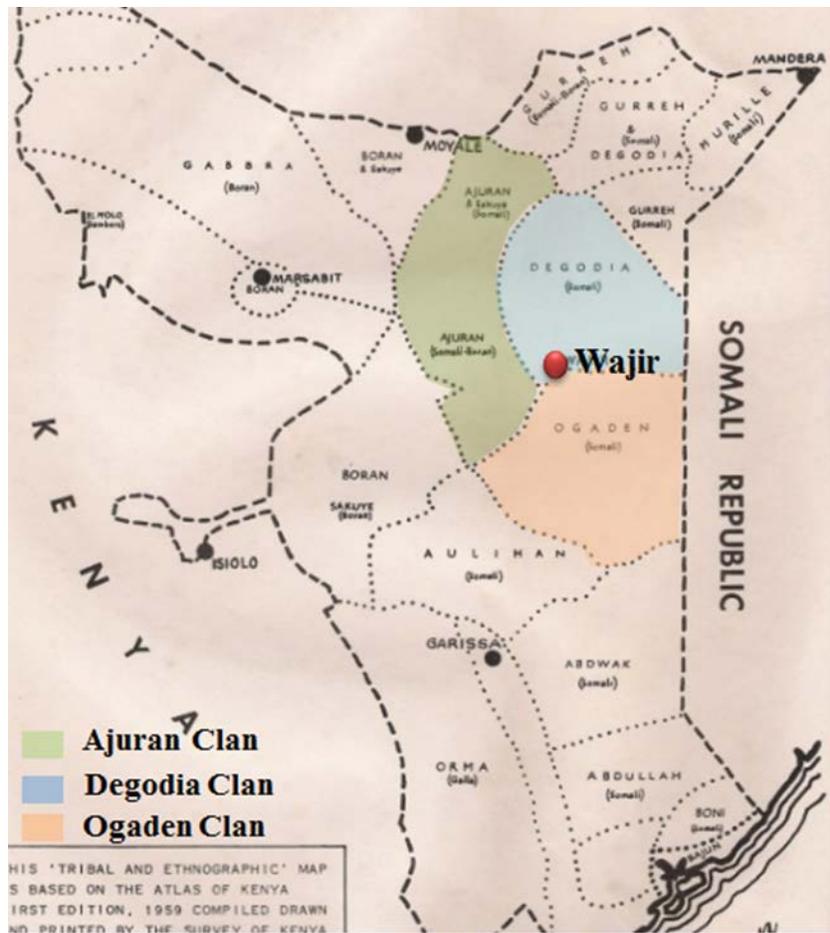


Figure 14. Wajir 1992–93 Conflict Zone.<sup>219</sup>

As Eileen Omosa describes, “most of the people [in the region] identify with their clans, whose elders govern access and use of watering points and other shared resources. Sharing of the common and limited water implies competition and conflicts.”<sup>220</sup> The conflicts experienced in this border region are resource-based as the three clans fight to control the pasture and water wells. The instability in Somalia has greatly contributed to the level of violence in two ways: first, the availability of weapons for the clan members, and second, the increase in the migration of similar clan members from Somalia to join their kin in Wajir extended the conflict beyond the border. The upsurge in population

<sup>219</sup> Adapted from “Kenya Ethnic and Tribal Maps: 1959,” *Murulle Online* (October, 2016), <http://muruleonline.blogspot.co.ke/2016/10/kenya-ethnic-tribal-maps-1959.html>.

<sup>220</sup> Omosa, “The Impact of Water Conflicts on Pastoral Livelihoods,” 4.

among the clan members due to migration also put more pressure on the limited resources within the Wajir area, creating conflict among the three clans.<sup>221</sup> The cross-border nature of this conflict is based on the clan identity politics among the Somali ethnic group.

The 1992–1995 conflict in Wajir was among the Ajuran, Degodia, and the Ogaden clans in the Wajir region. It was during this same time that Kenya was moving from single party to multiparty politics. The trigger for the conflict was the representation of the clans in the political realm.<sup>222</sup> As Menkhaus remarks, the “clans [were] fearful that victory by rival clans would institutionalize the rival’s hold on resources and eventually disenfranchise the losers,”<sup>223</sup> a demonstration of how resource conflicts are reflected in the political process. The political administration units did not match the clan territories and so some clans were had greater representation in some administrative units than others. The failure of the Kenyan government to consider the clan borders when laying out the political administrative units may have been well intended, to allow the clans to interact and live harmoniously with one another, but it ignored the strong clan identities among the Somali ethnic group.

Clan dynamics notably played a key role in Kenyan parliamentary elections for the region. In the 1992 election, it is alleged that “the demographically ascendant Degodia clan sought to increase its numbers by bringing in Degodia from outside the constituency to vote,”<sup>224</sup> which saw the clan manage to elect one of their own as a Member of Parliament. This victory of the Degodia clan to the Ogaden and Ajuran was viewed as a threat. The two clans felt threatened that the Degodia clan was going to dominate them and grab all the resources within the region. This tension over the election led to a three-year conflict where “a total of 500 businesses in Wajir were looted or destroyed [and] livestock estimated at a value of \$900,000 were lost to rustling.”<sup>225</sup> The resolution of the conflict was followed by a demarcation of the political administrative

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<sup>221</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 20–24.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

units in line with the clan borders.<sup>226</sup> This approach of matching clan borders and political units was good, but did not lead to the solution of the underlying resource conflict in Wajir, which is evidenced by the subsequent conflict in 2000. In this year, the conflict moved north and involved the Ajuran in the Wajir region and the Gurreh in the Mandera region, as shown on Figure 15. This conflict was a spillover of the 1992–1995 conflict; the Gurreh clan supported the Degodia clan in the elections, which aggrieved the Ajuran clan. In this conflict “[15] villagers died, 3,300 were displaced, and 15,000 cattle were stolen.”<sup>227</sup>

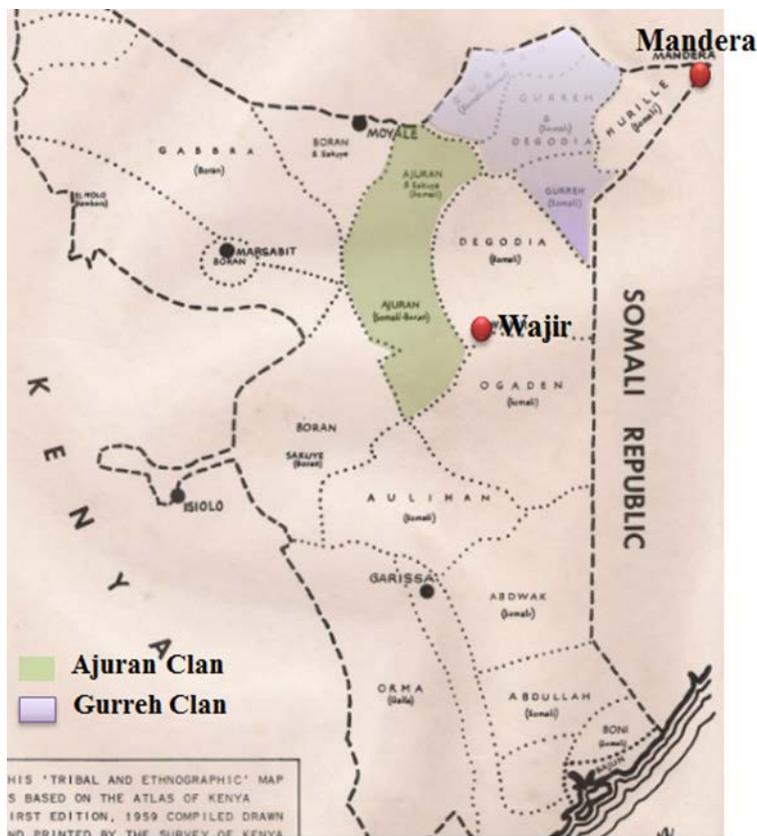


Figure 15. Wajir 2000 Conflict Zone.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>226</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 21.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Adapted from “Kenya Ethnic and Tribal Maps: 1959,” *Murulle Online* (October, 2016), <http://muruleonline.blogspot.co.ke/2016/10/kenya-ethnic-tribal-maps-1959.html>.

Both these conflicts experienced in the Wajir region have been viewed by many both in academia and government as a political conflict. This simplistic way of looking at the geopolitical conflicts among the Somali population, however, is one of the problem areas in conflict resolution on the Kenya-Somalia border. By looking at the wider picture, we can see the political conflicts are driven by control of grazing areas and water wells. The basis of these conflicts is the identity of the Somali ethnic group. South of Wajir, in Garissa, another resource-based conflict was experienced between two sub-clans.

***b. Garissa Conflict***

The Garissa conflict took place from 1998 to 2000 between the Auliyahan and Abduak Somali sub-clans over access to the Tana River. Both the Auliyahan and Abduak sub-clans belong to the larger Ogaden clan. The Abduak sub-clan's grazing area is within the river, as shown in Figure 16. The Auliyahan sub-clan moved their animals close to the river during the 1998 dry season, and this triggered the conflict between the two sub-clans.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Menkhaus, "Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis," 21.

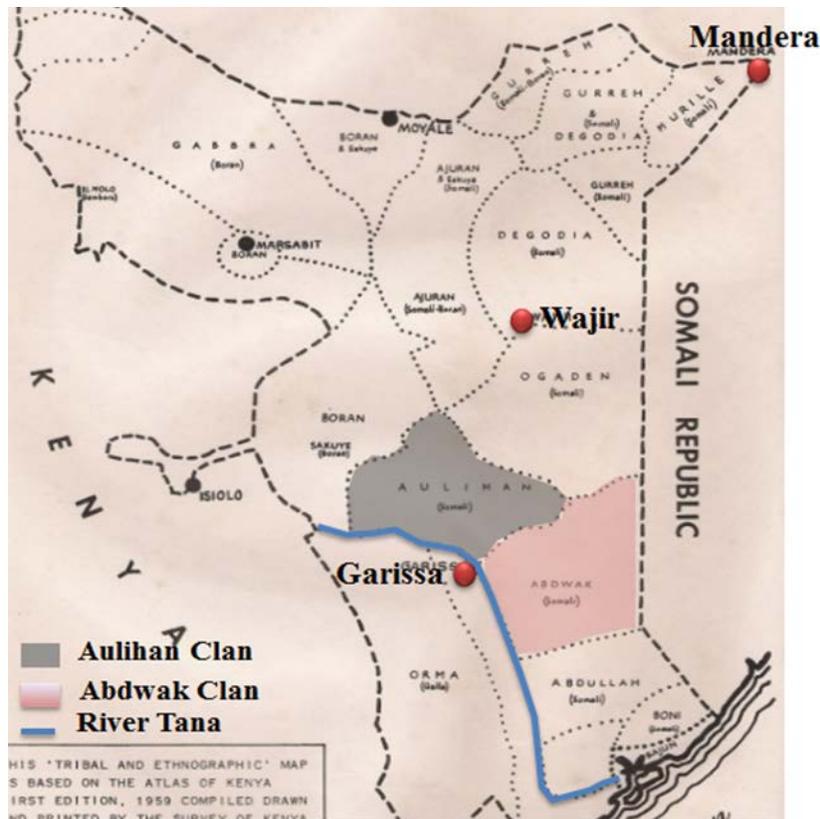


Figure 16. Garissa Conflict Zone.<sup>230</sup>

The political administration boundaries of the two sub-clans did not align with the sub-clan boundaries and this contributed to political tension during the election years, just like in the Wajir conflict. The rising political tension between the two clans was the reason for the denial of the resource to the Aulihan sub-clan. The situation, as Menkhaus explains, was worsened by the upsurge in the demographics of the Aulihan sub-clan due to the large number of refugees who flocked to the region from Somalia.<sup>231</sup> The growing Aulihan population “threatened to upset the balance in upcoming general election.”<sup>232</sup>

<sup>230</sup> Adapted from “Kenya Ethnic and Tribal Maps: 1959,” *Murulle Online* (October, 2016), <http://muruleonline.blogspot.co.ke/2016/10/kenya-ethnic-tribal-maps-1959.html>.

<sup>231</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 25.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26.

Notably, the conflict led to “as many as 30 deaths per day in the town.”<sup>233</sup> The conflict was ended in 2002 by the Kenyan government through a mediated clan peace initiative.

The Garissa conflict, just like the Wajir conflict, aligned with access to grazing areas and water in the Tana River and incoherent political administrative blocks. The voter importation from the neighboring Somali Republic contributed to the tension and demonstrated how identity politics played a role within the Somali ethnic group. The correlation of politics with the scarcity of resources is vital in the conflicts in the Kenya-Somalia borderlands, and the political drivers of conflict predate the perennial sub-clan conflicts in Garissa. North of the Kenya-Somalia border in Mandera, another geopolitical conflict was experienced years after the Garissa conflict ended.

*c. Mandera Conflict*

The Mandera region is inhabited by the Garre and Murulle clans of the Somali ethnic group, as shown in Figure 17. The Mandera conflict was between the two clans and it started in 2004. Menkhaus recounts that the “two clans have had a long history of periodic struggles over grazing land, dating back to the 1920s.”<sup>234</sup> The clan conflict over pasture land resulted in one death, which triggered revenge killings on both sides. Political administrative borders also contributed to the clan conflicts in the region.

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<sup>233</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 27.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

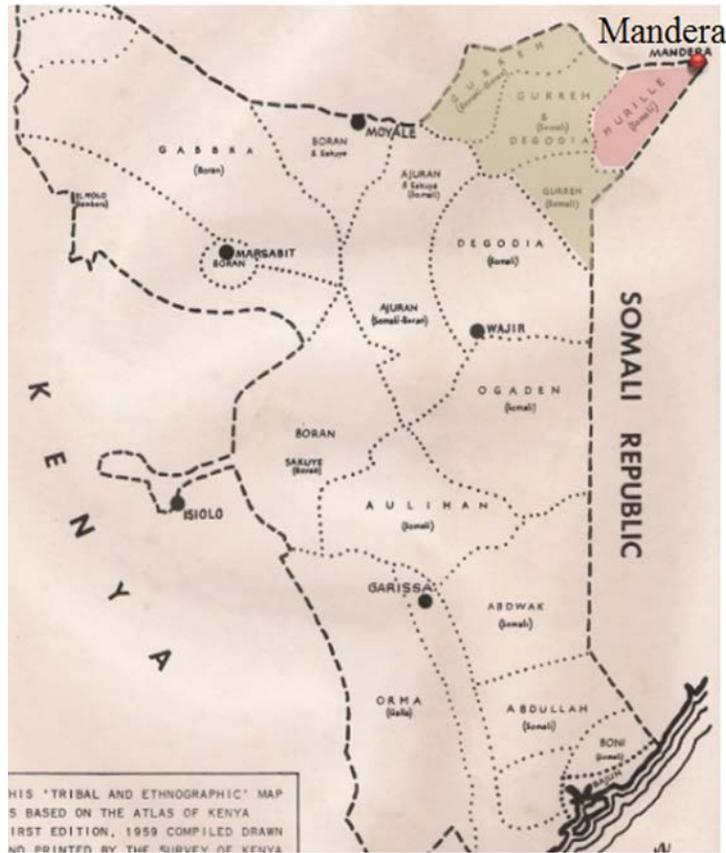


Figure 17. Mandera Conflict Zone.<sup>235</sup>

The Alango location, which was disputed by both clans because of the Alango dam, provided a source of conflict intertwined with politics and resources.<sup>236</sup> The creation of political administrative units that traversed shared resources between the Somali clan was one of the conflict drivers on the Kenya-Somalia border. Compared to the Wajir and Garissa conflicts, this conflict caused the most deaths; it resulted in a massacre of 22 people, and by the end in 2005, there were a total of 50 deaths and 30,000 people displaced.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Adapted from “Kenya Ethnic and Tribal Maps: 1959,” *Murulle Online* (October, 2016), <http://muruleonline.blogspot.co.ke/2016/10/kenya-ethnic-tribal-maps-1959.html>.

<sup>236</sup> Ngala Chome, “Violent Extremism and Clan Dynamics in Kenya,” *Peaceworks*, no. 123 (2016): 21, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW123-Violent-Extremism-And-Clan-Dynamics-In-Kenya.pdf>.

<sup>237</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 27.

The political and resource conflict drivers are inextricable as seen from the Mandera conflict. The non-alignment of clan and political borders triggered an interclan conflict over the Alango dam. The control of water as an essential resource for the nomadic community cannot be vested on one clan, and so the consideration of location of water resources in laying out political borders is essential to avoid clan clashes.

The three geopolitical conflicts discussed in this research reflect how complex and multilayered conflicts are on the Kenya-Somali border. The similarity reflected in these conflicts is the use of identity at different levels to mobilize engagement in conflict. Transitioning from resource-based conflicts, the research now looks at contemporary conflicts that have affected the Kenya-Somalia border.

### **3. Terrorism**

The fall of Siad Barre's regime in Somalia in 1991 led to the outbreak of civil war, which changed the dynamics of the geopolitical conflicts on the Kenya-Somalia border. While the resource-driven, irredentism and secession conflicts previously covered are based on the Somali ethnic group identity at different scales, terrorism provided a conflict involving individuals and groups who use identity as a mobilizing factor to recruit fighters who are used to committing acts of terror. Somalia provided safe havens for the training and growth of terrorism, due to the lack of a stable government to maintain the rule of law.

Several scholars have written about the relationship between state instability and terrorism. As Edward Newman argues, terrorism predates the conditions created by the failure of a state.<sup>238</sup> A CNBC special report highlights that Africa's geopolitical politics, which are driven by local factors, provide avenues for terrorism.<sup>239</sup> In agreement, Jean-Marie Guéhenno also discusses terrorism and argues that the geopolitical conflicts in Africa provide terrorists with safe havens to establish operational bases and conduct

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<sup>238</sup> Edward Newman, "Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no.4 (25 Oct 2007):463, doi: 10.1080/09546550701590636.

<sup>239</sup> Jean-Marie Guéhenno, "Africa's Geopolitical Issues Exploited by Terror Groups," CNBC Africa Report, January 2015.

recruitment.<sup>240</sup> In their book, *Terrorism and Political Violence in West Africa: A Global Perspective* Mahmoud N. Musa and Adabayo E. Adeyemi make an argument that there is a strong link between conflict, organized crime, and terrorism, with conflict thriving in countries with poor or no governance, which makes it easy for organized criminal groups to operate. The nexus between organized crime and terrorism is therefore “developed because of their common convergence of causes,”<sup>241</sup> under the nurturing environment of conflict. They also seem to engage in the same tactics to raise money to support themselves.

The prolonged instability in Somalia defines an unstable political identity. It has led to Kenya hosting some 511,000 refugees in Dadaab refugee camps, which have been in existence for the 25 years of the conflict in Somalia.<sup>242</sup> Dadaab refugee camps are located in the Northern Frontier District, 85 kilometers from the Kenya-Somalia border. The location of the camps is significant because the host community is the Kenyan Somalis and also because they have become a permanent residence for Somali refugees who are unwilling to return to their country due to the conflict. The location and conditions at the refugee camps offer no educational or economic opportunities, especially for the young Somali refugees, and so a number of them moved to Kenya’s urban areas for a number of reasons: “to access better education opportunities and health facilities; to find work and build a different future for oneself and one’s family; to get in contact with relatives abroad with a view to arranging onward migration to other countries.”<sup>243</sup> This movement has presented an influx of a sizeable number of Somali youth not only confined in the refugee camps, but also in the urban areas within Kenya.

The lack of governance in Somalia significantly led to the emergence of a clan-based insurgent and terrorist group—Al Shabaab. The protracted refugee situation in Kenya and the open border between Kenya and Somalia allows the Somali-based Al

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<sup>240</sup> Guéhenno, “Africa’s Geopolitical Issues Exploited by Terror Groups.”

<sup>241</sup> Mahmoud N. Musa and Adabayo E. Adeyemi, *Terrorism and Political Violence in West Africa: A Global Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2015), 8.

<sup>242</sup> Anna Lindley, “Between a Protracted and a Crisis Situation: Policy Responses to Somali Refugees in Kenya,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 5 (2011): 7, doi:10.1093/rsq/hdr 013.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

Shabaab terrorists to blend in with the refugees and move freely across the border, while the political instability in Somalia provides a favorable environment for training, posing enormous security challenges to Kenya. Al Shabaab exploits ethnic and religious similarities in identity at the borderlands, the grievances of a marginalized community, and the vulnerability of the young Somalis in the refugee camps for recruitment. Citing an example of how Al Shabaab uses regional identity to mobilize Kenyan Somalis, Ngala Chome writes:

Al-Shabaab leaders have circulated a narrative of victimization and alienation of Somali (and Muslim) interests by the Kenyan government and its Western allies. Political debates such as the historically tumultuous relationship between Kenyan Somalis and the Kenyan state are increasingly interpreted using religious imagery.<sup>244</sup>

Al Shabaab has recently intensified their attacks in Kenya. Religious identity is manifested in the Al Shabaab attacks, which are planned to target non-Somali and non-Muslim populations. This has been demonstrated in attacks within the North Eastern Province; in November 2014, Al Shabaab terrorists attacked a bus in Mandera County and killed 28 non-Somali Christian commuters; in December 2014, they attacked a quarry site and killed 36 non-Somali Christian workers, and in April 2015, they attacked Garissa University College and killed 148 (mainly Christian) students.<sup>245</sup>

Statistics compiled by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) show that “Al-Shabaab has been responsible for the majority of terrorist attacks in Kenya, carrying out at least 200 attacks between 2008 and 2014, which accounts for 63 percent of all attacks in Kenya during this time period,”<sup>246</sup> as shown in Table 1. The most targeted area for the attacks has been the borderlands and the big towns in Kenya, as shown on Figure 18.

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<sup>244</sup> Chome, “Violent Extremism and Clan Dynamics in Kenya,” 13.

<sup>245</sup> United States Department of State Publication, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2014” (June 2015): 27, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/239631.pdf>.

<sup>246</sup> Amy Pate, Michael Jensen, and Erin Miller, “Background Report: Al Shabaab Attack on Garissa University,” *Kenya National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism Report* (April 2015): 2, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/STARTBackgroundReport\\_alShabaabGarissaU\\_April2015.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/STARTBackgroundReport_alShabaabGarissaU_April2015.pdf).

Table 1. Al Shabaab's Influence on Terrorism in Kenya.<sup>247</sup>

Perpetrators of Terrorist Attacks in Kenya, 1975-2014	Attacks	Fatalities	Wounded
Al-Qa`ida	3	240	4000
Al-Shabaab	213	520	1160
Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya	2	1	0
God's Oppressed Army	2	0	0
Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK)	3	0	5
Kenya African National Union (KANU)	5	5	8
Kisii Activists	1	4	0
Maasai	1	3	4
Maskini Liberation Front	3	27	100
Merille Militia	4	7	4
Mombasa Republican Council (MRC)	11	47	10
Mungiki Sect	4	8	2
Mwakenya Dissident Movement	2	4	0
Nandi Tribe	4	0	32
National Development Party (NDP)	1	0	2
Oromo Liberation Front	2	1	1
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)	3	15	85
Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF)	4	19	11
Sabaot Tribe	2	40	0
Sungu Sungu	1	5	0
Toposa and Dongiro Tribes	2	89	0
United Somali Congress	1	1	2
Unknown/Other	162	373	445
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>1435</b>	<b>5886</b>

<sup>247</sup> Amy Pate, Michael Jensen and Erin Miller, "Background Report: Al Shabaab attack on Garissa University," 2.

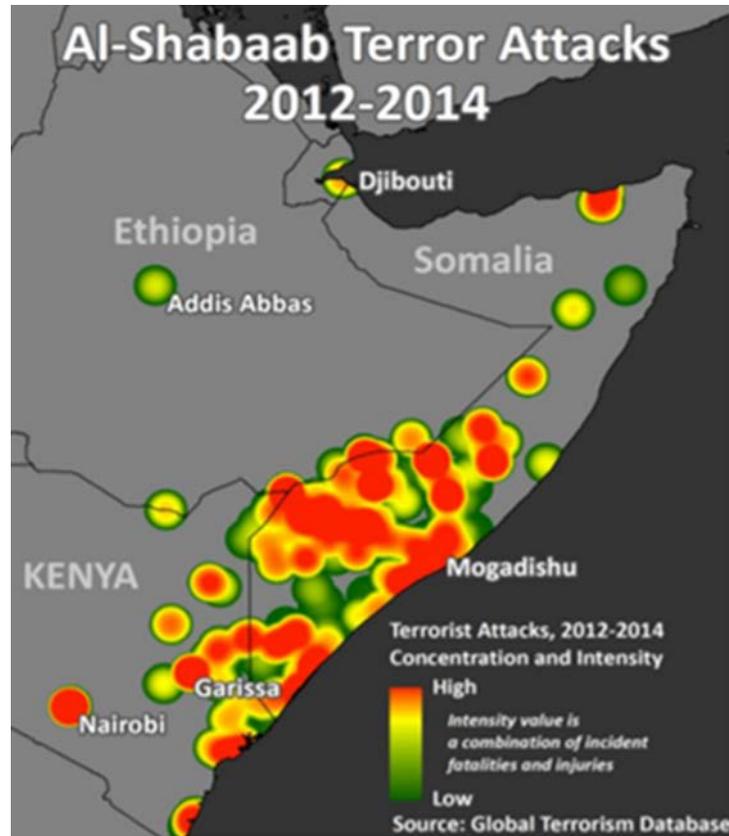


Figure 18. Al Shabaab Terrorist Attacks.<sup>248</sup>

The terrorist attacks in the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi, included the United States Embassy in 1998 and the Westgate Mall (the most posh and most visited mall by wealthy Kenyans and expatriates) in 2013. These two terrorist attacks “altered perceptions of terrorism in Kenya’s public”<sup>249</sup> in a manner similar to how the 9/11 terrorist attacks changed how Americans viewed the U.S. borders. This change is manifested in the “unprecedented attention ... to boundaries and homeland security [and has] led to massive shifts in governance priorities, public opinion, public expenditures, and the nature of doing business in North America.”<sup>250</sup> Similarly, Kenyans have reframed their borders as a core territory linked to terrorist attacks and now regard border

<sup>248</sup> Amy Pate, Michael Jensen and Erin Miller, “Background Report: Al Shabaab attack on Garissa University,” 1.

<sup>249</sup> Krause and Otenyo, “Terrorism and the Kenyan Public,” 101.

<sup>250</sup> Konrad, “Towards a Theory of Borders in Motion,” 3.

security policies as essential to prevent further attacks. The policies adopted to secure the border include the closure of the refugee camps, closure of the border, and erection of a border fence, and deployment of the military in Somalia.

*a. Impact of the Geopolitical Conflicts to Kenya and Policies Adopted*

The Global Terrorism Index, which ranks countries according to the impact of terrorism, ranked Kenya 19th out of 163 countries in 2016.<sup>251</sup> The impacts of the terrorism and the other geopolitical conflicts, in which the instability in Somalia has a role to play, can be grouped into security impacts and economic impacts. Under the security impacts, one of the effects of the instability in Somalia to Kenya is the flow of arms through the Kenya-Somalia border. As Menkhaus writes, “the Somali civil war produced a major weapons flow in the Kenya-Somalia border area.”<sup>252</sup> The rise in weapons has contributed to the rise in clan conflicts within the North Eastern Province. Some of the refugees from Somalia have joined their clans within Kenya, which has led to an increase in the number of some clans. The increase in population put a strain on the grazing areas and water wells, exacerbating clan clashes over resources.<sup>253</sup> Additionally, the increase in the clan population has “greatly enhanced and politicized [the] sense of clanism among Kenyan Somalis.”<sup>254</sup> The numbers are important to the clans for political mobilization.

The economic impact is felt in a number of ways. Various goods are smuggled through the thinly manned Kenya-Somalia border into Kenya. As Menkhaus states, “Somali entrepreneurs exploit the absence of customs and taxes in Somalia to move a range of consumer goods—sugar, dry foodstuffs (rations), cloth, basic household items, fuel, cigarettes, and light electronics—across the Kenyan border.”<sup>255</sup> The goods are transported to the rest of the country, and although this transit trade has led to the growth

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<sup>251</sup> Global Terrorism Index 2016, “Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism,” START (2016):10, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>.

<sup>252</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 27.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–16.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

of border towns, it presents unfair competition to Kenya's local industries, leading to the closure of some. Another sector that has been especially affected by terrorism is tourism. Tourism remains a key sector in the Kenyan economy; it "accounts for approximately 4% of the country's GDP and is crucial to the economy, bringing in US\$500 million in foreign exchange."<sup>256</sup> The numerous terrorist attacks, to include kidnapping of tourists by Al Shabaab, has had an impact on the tourism sector in Kenya. A decline in tourists coming to Kenya, the imposition of travel bans to citizen of certain countries—for example, the United States and the United Kingdom—and the loss of jobs for the people working in the tourism sector have affected the economy.

Looking at the policies the Kenyan government has adopted sheds some light on the relationship between government policies adopted toward the border and the geopolitical conflicts. The irredentism and secession conflicts at the Kenya-Somalia border experienced at independence led to the adoption of a containment policy toward the North Eastern Province through the declaration of a state of emergency. The policy was geared toward preventing the conflict from spreading to other parts of the country and it served the purpose until it was lifted in 1992. The pastoral Somali ethnic group moved freely across the lightly guarded border to graze their animals and this contributed to the close bond within the ethnic group.

In 1991, when the civil war broke out in Somalia, the border was open to the Somali people running away from the war. The swelling number of refugees led to the opening of refugee camps within the North Eastern Province. The refugee camps have become a permanent residence for the Somali population due to the protracted conflict. Since 1998, Kenya has experienced terrorist attacks that have catapulted counterterrorism to the top of the agenda to curb the security threat. Among the counterterrorism strategies adopted are: deployment of the military in Somalia to respond to the increase in cross border attacks by Al Shabaab; the closure of Dadaab refugee camps; and the building of a border fence along the Kenya Somali border. The use of the military to secure Kenya was

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<sup>256</sup> John Fletcher and Yeganeh Morakabati, "Tourism Activity, Terrorism and Political Instability within the Commonwealth: The Cases of Fiji and Kenya," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 10 (November 2008): 547, doi: 10.1002/jtr.699.

viewed as “Kenya’s willingness to employ hard power in defense of its geostrategic interests.”<sup>257</sup> The border is viewed by the Kenyan government as the gateway for the terrorists to enter Kenya while the refugee camps provide the terrorists with a safe haven within Kenya to plan and stage attacks in Kenya’s territory. For the Somali population, meanwhile, the border has facilitated the interaction of the ethnic group within the borderlands. The main question here remains, how will the border fence affect the Somali ethnic group? The fence, which divides the Somali ethnic group at the border, is one of several security policies adopted toward the Kenya-Somalia borderlands. These policies, which are aimed at isolating the Somali ethnic group to avoid the spread of conflict to the rest of the country, form the discussion for the next chapter.

## **B. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has covered the geopolitical conflicts the Kenya-Somalia border has experienced through three themes: irredentism and secession, resource and political drivers for conflict, and terrorism. While some of the conflict is based on resources, they are significant to the Somali ethnic group because they are formulated and understood in terms of identity. The themes form the conflict drivers within the borderlands and are connected to each other through the Somali ethnic group. Although this chapter has categorized the conflicts, the research has demonstrated the interdependence between them: for example, the pattern of politically-based conflicts is connected to the control of grazing areas through the Somali clans. The categorization, however, has provided an overview of the main conflict drivers within the borderlands.

The trends from the conflict mapping in this chapter and the historical developments on the Kenya-Somalia border discussed in Chapter II identify the experiences of the Somali ethnic group that enhances the understanding of the geopolitical conflicts. The British “colonial policy of containment and neglect”<sup>258</sup> of the Somali ethnic group at the borderlands was perpetuated by the post-colonial

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<sup>257</sup> Faith Mabera, “Kenya’s Foreign Policy in Context (1963-2015),” *South African Journal of International Affairs* 23, no. 3 (November 2016):367, doi: 10.1080/10220461.2016.1254677.

<sup>258</sup> Menkhaus, “Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis,” 10.

government's adoption of a policy of isolation by declaring a state of emergency in the province. The effect of these policies was the reinforcement of the identity of the Somali ethnic group, which drove the irredentism and secession-based conflicts. The second historical theme is the allocation of fixed clan grazing areas by the colonial government. The effect of the territorialization of the Somali clans at the borderlands is that the "clans today view contemporary political and administrative boundaries ('locations') as an extension of the colonial-era exclusionist zones, and invoke those boundaries to oust other clans,"<sup>259</sup> which drives conflicts. The conflicts generated by the non-alignment of the clan borders with political administration units are about the Somali clan identity politics.

The geopolitical conflicts discussed demonstrate the multi-scalarity of conflict based on the various identities of the Somali ethnic group. The borderlands have experienced conflicts based on ethnicity, clan, sub-clan, and religion. The variety of identities among the Somali ethnic group, which is tied to borders, provides a platform for the mobilization of the ethnic group or part of the ethnic group for various reasons. Religion provides the Somali people with a commonality that goes beyond the clan identity. Overall, the identity politics of the Somali ethnic group are at the core of the geopolitical conflicts on the border.

Terrorism, as a new phenomenon in the Kenya-Somalia border environment, has changed the Kenyan government's policies drastically. The political instability in Somalia has contributed to terrorism within Kenya by the Al Shabaab terrorist group that finds safe havens for training in Somalia. Other transnational crimes that arise from the instability include the smuggling of goods and arms across the border. The refugee camps that had been hosted for 25 years provided the terrorists with a staging ground and recruitment center. The Al Shabaab terrorist group's "recruits were drawn from close family and kinship networks found on both sides of the Kenya-Somalia border,"<sup>260</sup> a demonstration of how the identity of the Somali ethnic group is related to terrorism. The

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<sup>259</sup> Menkhaus, "Kenya –Somalia Border Conflict Analysis," 10.

<sup>260</sup> Chome, "Violent Extremism and Clan Dynamics in Kenya," 16.

increase in the impact of the terrorist attacks on Kenya's economy and security has led to the adoption of policies on the Kenya-Somalia border. The hardening of the border is the main focus of this research.

The history of the Kenya-Somalia border and the geopolitical conflicts experienced on the border reflect the dynamics of the Somali ethnic group at different scales. The decision to build a border fence opens a new chapter for the border and the Somali ethnic group at the borderlands. The next chapter explores the possible effects of the fence based on the past history of the border.

#### IV. KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER FENCE

The history of countries hardening their borders through the construction of border walls and fences dates back to the pre-modern times, when walls were built to define the extent of imperial territories against decentralized tribes—as in the case of the Great Wall of China. Hardening, as described by Stephane Rosiere and Reece Jones, “does not mean completely closing, but rather the attempt to control all cross-border movements and to direct them to appropriate checkpoints.”<sup>261</sup> In this research the word “barrier” will be used to refer to all kinds of walls or fences. As a recent historical trend, states have erected barriers along their borders for reasons ranging from territorial defense to economic, social, and cultural influence, and more recently, the fear of migration and terrorism. As Jean-Jacques Roche writes, “when circumstances require and the population feeling of insecurity increases too fast, the border can turn into a wall.”<sup>262</sup> The current bordering process defines the right to exclusion or inclusion as well as the feeling of “self” and “others,” which is defined at the border.

Globalization brought a mix of trends in the perception and treatment of borders. As Ana Marleny Bustamante describes, there is “openness, permeability and removal of borders, on the one hand and, on the other, greater enclosure, separation and perceptions of the border as a barrier or wall.”<sup>263</sup> Globalization as claimed by scholars and politicians created the notion of a borderless world where state borders were permeable to allow the flow of goods and population, and states were interdependent on each other. In the 1980s and 1990s border studies focused on the opening of borders to allow the flow of goods and human resources. The advancement in technology increased the flow of information across borders, which almost declared borders obsolete. Similarly, just as globalization

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<sup>261</sup> Stephane Rosiere and Reece Jones, “Teichopolitics: Re-considering Globalisation through the Role of Walls and Fences,” *Geopolitics* 17, no. 1 (February 2012):218, doi: 10.1080/14650045.2011.574653.

<sup>262</sup> Jean-Jacques Roche, “Walls and Borders in a Globalized World: The Paradoxical Revenge of Territorialization,” in *Borders, Fences and Walls: State of Insecurity?*, ed. Elisabeth Vallet (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 105.

<sup>263</sup> Ana Marleny Bustamante, “The Impact of Post-9/11 U.S. Policy on the California–Baja California Border Region,” *Journal of Borderland Studies* 28, no. 3 (May 2013): 309, doi: 10.1080/08865655.2012.751729.

inspired the opening of borders, the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States and the subsequent policies adopted had a major impact on the re-closing of many state borders around the globe. As Rosiere and Jones write “from the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to violence of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, borders were mainly studied through the prism of globalisation.”<sup>264</sup> Statistics show a tremendous increase in border barriers in the recent past; in fact, among the 65 border barriers built “around half were constructed between 2000 and 2014.”<sup>265</sup> This upsurge in border barriers indicates a change in how states view borders in relation to their security.

Kenya joins the list of 65 countries that have built barriers along their borders to date.<sup>266</sup> Following a series of terrorist attacks by the Somali-based terrorist group Al Shabaab, Kenya resorted to the building of a border fence to prevent further attacks. Considering the interconnectedness of the Kenya-Somalia borderlands that dates back hundreds of years, how will this border fence affect this borderland community? This chapter analyzes the efficacy of the Kenya-Somalia border fence as a strategy adopted to contain Al Shabaab and to stem future terrorist attacks in the country and the possible effects on the Somali ethnic group. This analysis adopts two approaches: the geopolitical approach, which will enable the research to draw lessons from other countries that have put up similar border barriers for security reasons. The second approach is based on securitization theory to help the research come up with a rational explanation for Kenya’s decision to erect a barrier on a border with such a long history. The main focus falls on the effect on migration in the region and separation of communities and breaking of existing social, cultural, and economic cross-border exchanges.

Specifically, the chapter proceeds as follows: First it examines in brief the background of the Kenya-Somalia border fence, before discussing the securitization

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<sup>264</sup> SRosiere and Jones, “Teichopolitics: Re-considering Globalisation through the Role of Walls and Fences,” 217–218.

<sup>265</sup> Uri Friedman, “Donald Trump’s Proposal for the U.S.-Mexico Border Isn’t Outdated. It’s a sign of the Times,” *Atlantic*, 19 May 19 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/05/donald-trump-wall-mexico/483156/>.

<sup>266</sup> Raheem Kassam, “Walls around the World that Work: Britain Is the Latest Country Bolstering Its Borders,” *Breitbart*, 7 September 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/2016-presidential-race/2016/09/07/walls-work-britain-latest-country-building-bolster-borders/>.

theory in order to rationalize Kenya's decision to harden the border. Lastly, the discussion uses geopolitics to explain the possible effect of border securitization on the Somali ethnic group in the borderlands with reference to already existing border barriers.

#### **A. BACKGROUND OF THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER FENCE**

When the government of Somalia collapsed in 1991, the lack of rule of law gave way for the growth of terrorism. The terrorist group Al Shabaab, which has since declared its affiliation with Al Qaeda and shares “its long-term interest of establishing one Islamic caliphate to unite all Muslims,”<sup>267</sup> demonstrated its capability to launch attacks outside of Somalia. Al Shabaab targets within the region include Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya. From 2011, Al Shabaab attacks in Kenya intensified with two major attacks: the Westgate Mall attack in 2013 and the Garissa University attack in 2015. The concentration of the attacks as shown in Figure 19 was, however, along the Kenya-Somalia border.

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<sup>267</sup> Daniel E. Agbibo, “Terrorism Without Borders: Somalia’s Al-Shabaab and the Global Jihad Network,” *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5, no. 1 (February 2014): 28.

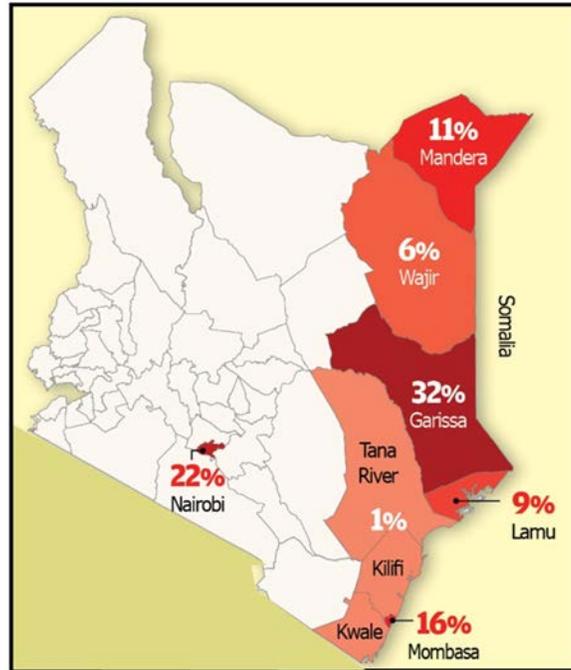


Figure 19. Distribution of Terrorist Attacks by Al Shabaab in Kenya.<sup>268</sup>

The Kenya-Somalia border fence was initiated in April 2015, following the Garissa University attack. As Brendon Cannon writes, “the decision to construct a security wall occurred against a backdrop of the public rage and anguish felt in Kenya following the attack and compounded by repeated Al Shabaab attacks in the country since 2008.”<sup>269</sup> The terrorist attacks in Kenya transformed the way the Kenyan government and population alike viewed the open Kenya-Somalia border. The border was regarded as a vulnerability to the threat of terrorism—a marked change over even the preceding half century of conflict on and around the border.

## B. SECURITIZATION OF THE KENYA–SOMALIA BORDER

An examination of the divergent scholarly views on why countries take such decisions found a number of explanations. Security panic is used to explain the fear that

<sup>268</sup> Brian Analysis, “Devolution in Kenya: Balancing Issues and Risk Factors for County Governments,” July 2015.

<sup>269</sup> Brendon John Cannon, “Terrorists, Geopolitics and Kenya’s Proposed Border Wall with Somalia,” *Journal of Terrorism Research* 7, no. 2 (May 2016): 23.

engulfs the public and forces leaders to respond by implementation of policies to address the vulnerability.<sup>270</sup> Another view used by scholars to explain why states label certain conditions as existential security threats and choose to deal with them through extreme means is the securitization theory. This research examines securitization theory to explain Kenya's decision to build a barrier on the Kenya-Somalia border to contain the Al Shabaab threat without consideration of likely geopolitical repercussions.

## 1. Securitization Theory

Security has emerged as one of the top agenda items of most governments today, with leaders implementing different policies to secure the state. Border barriers emerged as a possible response by states to the security threats in the globalized era. How do scholars explain states' border protection policies? The effort to better understand the modus operandi of "who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results and, not least, under what conditions (what explains when securitization is successful)"<sup>271</sup> has launched a proliferation in security studies. Securitization theory advanced by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap De Wilde of the Copenhagen School provides an analytical approach to explaining the rationale behind security policies.<sup>272</sup> The central question in this Copenhagen School research is to investigate why a country engages in certain security policies. Securitization theory as described by Vladimir Šulović:

conceptualizes security as a process of social construction of threats which includes securitizing actor (mostly political elite), who declares certain matter as urgent and a posing threat for the survival of the referent object, that, once accepted with the audience, legitimizes the use of extraordinary measures for neutralization of the threat.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Lorna Y. Atmore, "Fear Factors in Political Rhetoric, Threat Inflation, and the Narrative of September 11" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014).

<sup>271</sup> Catherine Charrett, *A Critical Application of Securitization Theory: Overcoming the Normative Dilemma of Writing Security* (Working Paper No. 2009/7) (Barcelona, Spain: International Catalan Institute for Peace, December 2009), 13.

<sup>272</sup> Atmore, "Fear Factors in Political Rhetoric, Threat Inflation, and the Narrative of September 11."

<sup>273</sup> Vladimir Šulović, "Meaning of Security and Theory of Securitization," Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, October 2010, 4, [http://www.bezbednost.org/upload/document/sulovic\\_\(2010\)\\_meaning\\_of\\_secu.pdf](http://www.bezbednost.org/upload/document/sulovic_(2010)_meaning_of_secu.pdf).

Border policies as Serghei Golunov explains can be “considered as a result of successful securitization.”<sup>274</sup> He further states that, “by the analogy of securitization, it is possible to speak about the borderization of security issues.”<sup>275</sup> The threat in the case of this research is terrorism, the further effects of which states seek to prevent through a number of ways. The erection of state barriers has become a popular choice. Terrorism as Ana Marleny Bustamante writes “causes despair among the potential targets and uncertainty on the states that are the object of a terrorist attack.”<sup>276</sup> Terrorism, therefore, becomes a security issue that leads to securitization.

Lorna Atmore explains the concept of securitization by focusing on the role played by three actors in the process: the audience, who is the public or any other group that must be convinced of the validity of the actions based on the perceived threat; the securitizing actor who is the government; and the referent object, which is the security threat.<sup>277</sup> The three actors provide the foundation for the use of securitization theory in explaining security policies that states adopt.

## **2. The Application of Securitization Theory to the Kenya–Somalia Border Fence**

Using the securitization theory to explain Kenya’s security policy, we can identify the three actors in the securitization process: the Kenyan government as the securitizing actor, terrorism from Somalia as the threat, and the Kenyan population as the audience. The government engaged in securitization of its border with Somalia to protect the safety of its citizens and the wealth of the nation by providing a secure environment for the tourism industry. According to the securitization theory, states adopt security policies when faced with an existential threat, and by the same token, Kenya is building a border fence to keep away the terrorists who pose a threat to its population and economy. The

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<sup>274</sup> Serghei Golunov, “Border Fences in the Globalized World: Beyond Traditional Geopolitics and Post-Positivist Approaches,” in *Borders, Fences and Walls: State of Insecurity*, ed. Elisabeth Vallet (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 123.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Bustamante, “The Impact of Post-9/11 U.S. Policy on the California–Baja California Border Region,” 308.

<sup>277</sup> Atmore, “Fear Factors in: Political Rhetoric, Threat Inflation, and the Narrative of September 11.”

effects of terrorism experienced by the population, ranging from death to loss of livelihoods for those working in the tourism industry, inclined Kenyans to support the border securitization. This support means that the pronouncement by the Kenya government that the problem of terrorism could be reduced by erecting a border fence was accepted by a majority of Kenyans, and by their acceptance, the action was legitimized.

As Golunov writes, “building a fence is one of the most visible measures possible, overtly signifying that something has been done.”<sup>278</sup> Evidently on the Kenya-Somalia border, the governor of Mandera County was quoted saying that, “We are happy with the progress ... as visible work has been done unlike in the last two months when we visited the site.”<sup>279</sup> The governor’s comment reflects the symbolism of the actual border fence to the government’s efforts to secure Kenya. The border fence along Kenya’s eastern border will cover the full extent of the land border and when complete will be “a barrier of fences, ditches and observation posts.”<sup>280</sup> The lineup of entry and exit points along this border infrastructure remains crucial to the Somali ethnic group in the borderlands.

Through the lens of securitization theory, the Kenya-Somalia border securitization is a state’s response to terrorism that was considered an existential threat to the country. The only question that this research would ask is: does this solution—or the threat—include the borderland population?

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<sup>278</sup> Golunov, “Border Fences in the Globalized World: Beyond Traditional Geopolitics and Post-Positivist Approaches,” 118.

<sup>279</sup> Ismail Kushkush, “Kenya Envisions a Border Wall that Keeps Shabab Violence Out,” *New York Times*, April 2015, [www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/world/africa/kenya-plans-to-build-a-border-wall-that-keeps-shabab-violence-out.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/world/africa/kenya-plans-to-build-a-border-wall-that-keeps-shabab-violence-out.html).

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

### C. ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE BORDER BARRIERS ON THE BORDERLAND POPULATION

The fence is reported to have progressed to three kilometers as of 2 December 2016, as shown by a section in Figure 20.<sup>281</sup> This section examines the documented reaction of the Somali ethnic group toward the border fence and uses a geopolitical approach to explain some possible effects of the border fence to the population.



Figure 20. Progress of the Kenya-Somalia Border.<sup>282</sup>

Kenya's approach for the support of the security policy has seen support from the Kenyan Somalis at the borderlands. The government, on realization of the strength of the Somali ethnic group's social structures, sought cooperation through the clan leaders, especially the Marehan clan, who largely occupy Mandera, where the border fence commenced. In a meeting with the clan leaders, Kenya's Interior Cabinet Secretary

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<sup>281</sup> Manase Otsialo, "Kenya-Somalia Fence to Keep Away Unwanted Elements," *Daily Nation*, 2 December 2016, <http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/Kenya-Somalia-border-fence/1183298-3472166-hyn3f6z/>.

<sup>282</sup>Source: "Kenya-Somalia Border 'Wall' Turns out to be Barbed Wire Fence," *Star*, 8 February 2017, [http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/02/08/photos-kenya-somalia-border-wall-turns-out-to-be-barbed-wire-fence\\_c1503204](http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/02/08/photos-kenya-somalia-border-wall-turns-out-to-be-barbed-wire-fence_c1503204).

remarked that “the construction of the security border wall will continue but assured Somalis that it’s purely to check Al Shabaab incursion and not to restrict the local resident’s movements.”<sup>283</sup> This approach has provided support and cooperation from the Kenyan Somalis living in the borderlands as the construction of the border fence progresses. This distribution of the Somali clans astride the border makes it a weak argument for this research to conclude that the same support the Mandera portion of the border is giving the government will apply along the entire border.

Securitization theory explains that the acceptance by the population that an issue is an existential threat not only legitimizes the government’s actions but it also takes the issue from “normal politics to a mode of emergency.”<sup>284</sup> Acceptance by the majority of Kenyans was facilitated by the danger and fear that terrorism created through the various attacks in Kenya, especially the Westgate Mall and Garissa University attacks. The security policy was not even deliberated by parliament as “executive decrees become taken up as law under the veneer of national security.”<sup>285</sup>

As the border fence construction progresses, questions of the effects on the borderland community are bound to arise. As Vallet states:

the meaning of a border fence may seem to be primary in respect to its physical essence, but for people having to deal with such a border, the barrier is primarily not so much a set of norms and perception but a hard and quite tangible reality.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Samuel Yosef Agnon, “Kenya Seeks Cooperation with Marehan, A Somali Border Clan to Boost Security,” Strategic Intelligence Service, April 2016,

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://intelligencebriefs.com/kenya-seeks-cooperation-with-marehan-a-somali-border-clan-to-boost-security/>.

<sup>284</sup> Amir Lupovici, “The Limits of Securitization Theory: Observational Criticism and the Curious Absence of Israel,” *International Studies Review* 16 (2014): 390–410, doi: 10.1111/misr.12150.

<sup>285</sup> Wangui Kimari, “Why the Wall Kenya Is Building on Its Border with Somalia Is a Terrible Idea,” *Africa is a Country* (April 2015), <http://africasacountry.com/2015/04/why-the-wall-kenya-is-building-on-its-border-with-somalia-is-a-terrible-idea/>.

<sup>286</sup> Golunov, “Border Fences in the Globalized World: Beyond Traditional Geopolitics and Post-Positivist Approaches,” 123.

Border barriers have had an impact on borderland populations by reshaping communities and their social relations across the border. Cross-border populations who share similarities in identity at different levels are likely to be more impacted by a border barrier, because over the years the community forms a solid trans-border identity. The Somali ethnic group on the borderlands of the Kenya-Somalia border falls under this category. A border barrier between the Somali ethnic group will contribute to the discontinuity of the strong collective identity across the border.

This following subsection first looks at the description of the Mandera region, which reflects the architecture of other built up areas along the border in order to analyze the possible effects on the borderland community.

### **1. Description of the Mandera Region**

Mandera County forms the northernmost part of the Kenya-Somalia border. The region is inhabited by the Garre, Degodia, and Murule clans, with the Marehan clan from across Somalia migrating in large numbers over the years of conflict in Somalia. On the Somali side of the border is the Marehan clan. As Chome states, “most if not all of the clans in Mandera county have a physical presence (or close clan ties) with clans in Somalia.”<sup>287</sup> Another factor facilitating Al Shabaab’s attacks in this county is the “increased inter-clan rivalry and conflict, especially the competition between a Garre-Murule alliance and a possible Degodia-Marehan alliance.”<sup>288</sup> The county’s “exposure to events and politics in Somalia through both legal and illegal cross border clan ties and trade”<sup>289</sup> also made it subject to a number of terrorist attacks from Al Shabaab. Terrorism in Mandera grows out of other geopolitical conflicts in the county.

Settlement and growth is mainly concentrated around the town centers. Mandera town is on the Kenyan side and Bula hawo, on the Somalia side, with no regard for the border, as shown in Figure 21.

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<sup>287</sup> Chome, “Violent Extremism and Clan Dynamics in Kenya,” 20.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

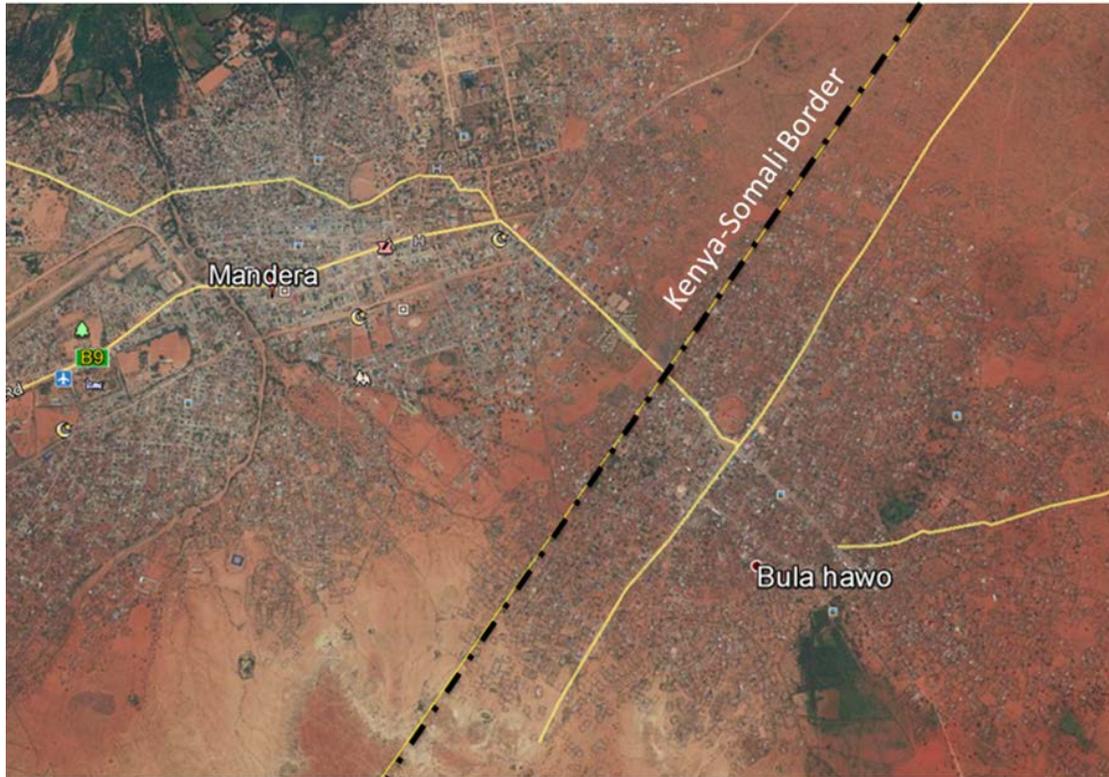


Figure 21. Mandera and Bula Hawo Towns.<sup>290</sup>

In essence there are households that lie beside the borderline while others straddle both sides of the border.

The interconnectedness of the two towns is not only through clan relations but also through trade. In Somalia, because of the absence of strict government regulations and taxation, traders are able to import goods, mainly from the Middle East, at a fair price from other countries through the maritime transport facilities across the country. The goods are mainly supplied to Kenya's border towns. (The Kenyan seaport to the border is 1179 kilometers [732 miles] by road.) These goods are also cheaper and hence more attractive to the borderland Kenyan population. For instance, the price of locally produced sugar in Kenya is about \$600 per metric ton, while smuggled sugar through the

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<sup>290</sup> Google Earth Image of Mandera and Bula hawo, accessed 1 April 2017.

Kenya-Somalia border costs \$400 per metric ton, which is a demonstration of how lucrative smuggling is to the Somali ethnic group at the borderlands.<sup>291</sup>

## **2. Possible Impacts on the Somali Ethnic Group**

The historical, cultural, and economic ties of border communities continue to be affected as border barriers increase around the world. In an international conference on fences, walls, and borders, Victor Konrad described the geographical impacts of border barriers in stages:

The first stages are characterized by a spatial re-ordering of borderlands as a security zone; a detrimental effect on the environment; the stretching and tearing of the social fabric; the social and economic straining of communities at the border; a heightened sense of uncertainty; and a polarization of secured and non-secured spaces, places and people.<sup>292</sup>

Within the dynamics of the Mandera region this research looks at the possible effects of the border fence on the Somali ethnic group in the borderlands. A geopolitical analysis of a barrier's impact on different communities around the world, in this case the U.S.-Mexico border, is applied to offer the research a comparative view.

### ***a. Impacts of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall on the Borderland Community***

Like many borderlands, the U.S.-Mexico borderland shared by San Diego and Tijuana is intertwined due to historical, social, and geographical factors that connect the people in this region. Given particularly close ties with their southern neighbors, the "U.S. communities along the border with Mexico experience a reality that is essentially different from that of the rest of the country [;] U.S. immigration policy has transformed the region into a militarized zone."<sup>293</sup> In addition to the border fence itself, the enhanced

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<sup>291</sup> Adow Jubat, "How Illicit Trade in Guns, Sugar Thrives along Porous Border," *Standard Newspaper* (December 2013), <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000099083/how-illicit-trade-in-guns-sugar-thrives-along-porous-border>.

<sup>292</sup> Anna Grichting, "Fences, Walls and Borders: State of Insecurity?," International Conference, University of Quebec of Montreal, Canada ( May 2011): 6, [http://www.uvm.edu/ieds/sites/default/files/Fences\\_Grichting.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/ieds/sites/default/files/Fences_Grichting.pdf).

<sup>293</sup> U.S.-Mexico Border Policy Report, "Effective Border Policy: Security, Responsibility and Human Rights at the U.S.-Mexico Border," Washington, DC (November 2008): 8, <https://law.utexas.edu/humanrights/borderwall/communities/municipalities-US-Mexico-Border-Policy-Report.pdf>.

security systems that come with it expand the borderland that is affected by the securitization and in turn the population affected.<sup>294</sup> The population living in the borderlands experiences the complexity of the militarization of the border that for a long time had been a symbol of economic and social connectedness.

The U.S.-Mexico border provides one example of a border barrier that has separated families that for generations have freely crossed the border. In a case covered by ABC News, “sisters [who] only live about seven miles apart, but they haven’t seen each other in a decade because a life-changing obstacle stands between them”<sup>295</sup> exposes the reality of how families are separated by the border barrier. The border barrier restricts migration and forces those attempting to cross to use illegal and dangerous routes, leading to many deaths. Statistics taken on this border show that “since the inception of blockade operations in 1994, more than 4,000 migrants have died crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, most often due to dehydration and exposure in the desert.”<sup>296</sup>

Specifically, the geopolitics of the Tijuana-San Diego region on the U.S.-Mexico border offers this research a comparative case of a border region affected economically by the border barrier. The residents of the borderlands have reacted to the economic changes by moving away from the border town of Tijuana, which has since become an abandoned town.<sup>297</sup> As Bustamante states, “the main changes brought about at the border with policy initiatives after 9/11 have spilled over in the whole society of this region.”<sup>298</sup> Adaptation of societies may differ depending on a number of factors ranging from social and economic to ethnic, but the Tijuana-San Diego region provides possible economic effects to borderland communities.

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<sup>294</sup> Konrad, “Borders, Bordered Lands and Borderlands: Geographical State of Insecurity Between Canada and the United States and the Impacts of Security Primacy,” 85.

<sup>295</sup> Michelle Kessel, Robert Zepeda and Lauren Effron, “Families Separated by US-Mexico Border Embrace in Emotional ‘Hug not Walla’ 4 –Minute Reunions,” *ABC News*, 1 February 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/families-separated-us-mexico-border-embrace-emotional-hugs/story?id=45205124>.

<sup>296</sup> U.S.-Mexico Border Policy Report, “Effective Border Policy: Security, Responsibility and Human Rights at the U.S.-Mexico Border,” 12–13.

<sup>297</sup> Bustamante, “The Impact of Post-9/11 U.S. Policy on the California–Baja California Border Region,” 312.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

**b. *Possible Impacts of the Kenya-Somalia Border Fence on the Borderland Community***

By the same token, the Kenya-Somali border fence will transform the borderlands into a security zone. The Kenyan government focus will increasingly be on this border to secure it in order to prevent terrorists from entering the country. The restrictions applicable in a security zone, including restriction of movement by imposition of curfews, might apply. The Somali ethnic group being nomadic depends on seasonal movement to feed and water their animals and so the border fence will restrict this movement and consequently the livelihood of the borderland community.

The Somali families that have kin on both sides of the border will be separated and their interaction restricted. The settlements on this border, as seen in Figure 21, have grown with no regard for the borderline. Trans-border movement has for years facilitated the interaction between the borderland communities establishing some inextricable links between them. There are shared social facilities like schools and hospitals as “almost 70 percent of students in the schools next to the borders are Somalis.”<sup>299</sup> With the effects of prolonged civil war in Somalia the basic facilities are missing on the Somalia side as demonstrated by Somali children attending school on the Kenyan side.

Border barriers that have separated borderland populations suffer the consequence of illegal crossings. The border’s terrain is favorable because of the absence of natural obstacles, which makes crossing from any point possible. The vast Kenya-Somalia border will require a large security force to augment the border surveillance equipment in order to ensure that no illegal crossing takes place. The positioning of exit and entry points along the Kenya-Somalia border fence is therefore crucial to facilitate movement through the border.

Two main socio-economic activities that are carried out across borders are the movement of people and goods. Contraband goods are smuggled to Kenya through the porous Kenya-Somalia border. As Adow Jubat writes, “smuggling has been ongoing along the Kenya-Somalia border since the fall of Siad Barre’s regime in the 1990s ...

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<sup>299</sup> “Somali Children Crossing into Kenya to Get Education,” *Capital News*, 21 January 2014, <http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2015/01/somali-children-crossing-into-kenya-to-get-education/>.

[and] has created an ‘untouchable’ community of millionaires, mainly Kenyan Somali traders.”<sup>300</sup> The government loses on taxation of these goods, illegal arms and ammunition find their way to Kenya, the local markets suffer losses due to the cheap goods, and the borderland community thrives due to this kind of trade. The refugee camps in Kenya “mutated into major smuggling hub for sugar, rice, pasta and electronic goods.”<sup>301</sup> With a border fence and closure of the refugee camps, this economic dynamic that is attributed to the protracted statelessness in Somalia and the ethnic group connection will be curtailed.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, in its best interest Kenya has, as other states around the world have done, resorted to building a border fence on its eastern border to address a security threat that it considered existential. Given the history of the Kenya-Somalia border, the fence will separate communities living on the borderlands, affecting their social and economic ties in a demonstration of how security re-shapes a borderland on interaction.

Border barriers around the world present different outcomes. Some border barriers have been effective in achieving their purpose; for instance, the Israel-Palestine border barrier has facilitated the reduction in terrorist attacks. Yet, others have presented negative results, as in the U.S.-Mexico border barrier. Geopolitics presents both the advantages and disadvantages of border barriers. Among the benefits of a border barrier to states is that it provides the citizens of a country with a visible measure taken by the government to curb insecurity. To the government, the border barrier provides an avenue to tabulate statistical results to show its effectiveness. Border barriers are effective in deterring because they make it difficult for those intending to enter a country illegally. Among the disadvantages of border walls and fences is the cost of building and maintaining them.<sup>302</sup>

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300 Jubat, “How Illicit Trade in Guns, Sugar Thrives along Porous Border.”

301 Ibid.

302 Golunov, “Border Fences in the Globalized World: Beyond Traditional Geopolitics and Post-Positivist Approaches,” 118–127.

The U.S.-Mexico border experience suggests that states build border barriers without considering the probable geopolitical repercussions, such as the impact on the borderland communities that have co-existed for centuries. The U.S.-Mexico border barrier has had negative effects on the borderland communities on both sides of the border, and the militarization of the border disrupts the connection between cross-border communities. Similarly, the Kenya-Somalia border will artificially separate the Somali ethnic group living in the borderlands. Through the years there has been legitimate cultural, economic, and social cross border interaction, which is likely to be negatively impacted by the border fence.

The Kenya-Somalia border fence provides a temporary fix for containing Al Shabaab and preventing further terrorist attacks by managing the flow of Somali nationals through the border. The fence is regarded as a temporary solution because the civil strife in Somalia inhibits a more comprehensive solution.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kenya-Somalia border remains a key geographical feature in the geopolitical conflicts experienced in the borderlands. An analysis of the bordering process carried out within the colonial and the post-colonial periods has established that the Kenya-Somalia border, like many African borders, is a colonial creation that did not take into consideration the interests of the Somali ethnic group. While some form of borders existed during the pre-colonial era, the colonial borders promoted a sense of shared identity among the Somali ethnic group through the bordering process and the policies adopted. Understanding the colonial experience of the Somali ethnic group helps us also to understand that borders are constructed on the basis of their usefulness to those who create them and not the borderland population. The independent governments of the post-colonial period did not change the borders drawn by the colonial rulers and instead respected and maintained them, imposing different political identities on the people at the borderlands. The geopolitical conflicts that continue on the borderlands emerged from this continuity in the ill-conceived demarcation of borders.

This research finds that the geopolitical conflicts experienced on the Kenya-Somalia border have been articulated and perceived in terms of identity politics mainly because ethnic mobilization is common to the conflicts. The instability in Somalia forms an important variable because with such interconnected borderlands the effects of this instability project themselves across the border into Kenya and in other countries within the region. The lack of governance and rule of law in Somalia provided Al Shabaab terrorists with a safe haven in which to conduct training. The growth of terrorism in Somalia has been felt in Kenya and specifically at the borderlands. The kinship network at the borderlands provides the terrorists with an extensive network within Kenya. In Kenya's best interest, the construction of a border fence is underway to prevent the Al Shabaab terrorists from entering the country.

The dilemma of building of a border fence on a border with such a long history and that cuts through the Somali ethnic group has led this research to turn to securitization theory to explain this state act. The theory provides the research with an

explanation of the adoption by Kenya of such a tightly controlled border policy in escalating security primacy. The securitization of the Kenya-Somalia border, according to the theory, is not the product of a unilateral decision undertaken by the government but a response to interaction between the government and its population, which is reacting to a security threat. In this regard, the border fence provides a tangible action by the government to address the citizens' sense of insecurity created by terrorism emanating from the Somalia-based terrorist group that previously found it easy to cross the border into Kenya.

With the ongoing regional and international efforts to stabilize Somalia and its government, it is hoped that terrorists will no longer find a safe haven there. Hence, the border fence will facilitate positive collaboration between the Kenya and Somalia. In this case, the border fence will be a temporary solution to restore order along the border.

#### **A. RECOMMENDATIONS**

With the border fence in progress this research recommends the following:

- In ensuring the delicate balance between security and the legitimate flow of goods, as well as the interaction of the borderland community, the positioning of multiple entry and exit points on this border fence, as discussed in Chapter IV, is recommended to mitigate the negative effects of the border securitization on the borderland population.
- Collaboration with border communities, as witnessed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security relationship with the Indian tribal governments, increases the integrity of border barrier.<sup>303</sup> In the same light, collaboration with the Somali ethnic group to ensure effectiveness of the border barrier in preventing further terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab is recommended.
- The open Kenya-Somalia border has for many years facilitated trade among the Somali ethnic group at the borderlands, as covered in Chapter IV. The border barrier will likely pose a challenge to trade leading to loss of livelihood for the traders. To mitigate this effect, the research recommends: empowerment of young Kenyan Somalis at the Kenya-Somalia borderlands through job creation and economic investment to

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<sup>303</sup> Report to the U.S. Senate, "Border Security: Partnership Agreements and Enhanced Oversight Could Strengthen Coordination of Efforts on Indian Reservations," GAO-13-352 (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2013).

curb radicalization. The government's implementation of development projects within the borderlands can prevent the marginalization that Al Shabaab has capitalized on in recruiting the Kenyan Somalis.

## **B. CONCLUSION**

The final thoughts on this research remain that the government of Kenya must ensure the efficacy of the border barrier to deter Somalia-based terrorists such as Al Shabaab from entering Kenya. This measure, it is hoped, will be temporary. When a stable government of Somalia can eliminate the terrorist recruitment and training camps within its borders, the need for the border fence should decline as the Kenyan people should no longer fear terrorist spillover. Until that time, however, the government of Kenya should continue to contribute to regional efforts to promote stability in Somalia.

Furthermore, although the fence may only be a temporary measure to restore a sense of security among the Kenyan population, the government must ensure that the fence will cause only minimum disruption to the border community. The long-established social and economic ties remain between the people living in the borderlands—on both sides of the fence. A smooth transition for the Somalis attending Kenyan schools and hospitals should be worked out to improve relations with the borderland community. The fence must not disrupt these ties or the people's access to natural resources. It is essential to communicate clearly that the border barrier is built out of a desire for security and not to restrict collectively or to divide the Somali ethnic group. Finally, the collaboration of the Kenyan government with the Kenyan Somalis at the borderlands is a powerful first step to curtail the activity of terrorists who have been taking advantage of ethnic identity and hiding within this population.

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