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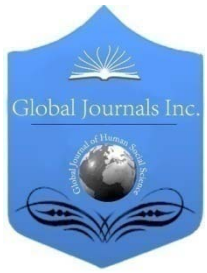

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Unmasking the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Towards a Critique of the Conflicting Historiographies in Somalia

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Abstract- This article offers critical examination and explanation of the claim of "clan cleansing" in Somalia as was featured forcefully in the book by Lidwien Kapteijns on the 1991 Somali clan convulsions. Upon the publication of the book, conflicting narratives of the Somali conflicts were delegated from oral discourse to academic venture as the debate over who lost what, why and where in 1991 and over who won, what, why and where has become both a politicised project and an academic phenomenon. By re-evaluating the whole picture, the article casts a new light on Kapteijns's book (2013) and demonstrates how inaccurate simplistic statements were used as a documentation of the clanised conflicts in 1991 Somalia. Blaming specific clans and communities of complicity for "clan cleansing," when there is no reliable document and real proof, is tantamount to igniting a new round of warfare. Drawing on long experience of living and working in Mogadishu – the city this author was born and bred as well as the site of the conflict itself – and also using interviews conducted with players and bystanders of Somali politics across clan lines, the article argues that Kapteijns has produced the most mythico-historical work in Somali Studies.

Keywords: *somali conflicts, clanised wars, clan narratives, historiographies.*

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Keywords: somali conflicts, clanised wars, clan narratives, historiographies.

I. Introduction

In January 1991, Somalia plummeted into clan convulsions, as a consequence of two decades of state terror by the clano-military regime of General Mohamed Siad Barre that culminated in clanocide – that is, selectively annihilating certain clans physically and politically. Ever since the Siad Barre, which ruled since 21 October 1969, was removed from power on 26 January 1991 by the United Somali Congress (USC), led by General Mohamed Farah Aideed, the proponents of the military regime have sought consistently yet contradictorily in restoring their rule (Ingiriis, 2016: 3-34). The legacies of the regime led to clan convulsions where clans fought not only against each other, but also within themselves. Once Siad Barre and his supporters fled Mogadishu, they sought refuge and sanctuary in their clan areas as they felt there would be no any other safer place in Somalia. By contrast, most other Somali clans and communities remained in Mogadishu and suffered the same atrocities that came with the collapse of the regime. Which group whose truth is worth telling hinges upon where or which side with which one affiliates himself or herself.

Drawing on long experience of living and working in Mogadishu – the city this author was born and bred as well as the site of the conflict itself – and also using observations over the players and bystanders of Somali politics across clan lines, this article critiques a flawed work on 1991 Somalia by Kapteijns (2013) and argues that the book is the most mythico-historical work in Somali Studies. Kapteijns reiterates from the beginning to the conclusion that a "clan cleansing" had occurred in 1991.[1] She alleges and indicts – without reliable reference – that a "campaign of clan cleansing" occurred in Mogadishu not just in January 1991, but the whole 1991 and 1992, and, to her reckoning, it was the first time this occurred. This is the thesis that informs her book from the perspective of a particular clan-group. In addition to identifying the invalidity of partisan and partial points, this article shows how she lobbies for certain clans at the expense of others.

After re-evaluating the whole picture by drawing attention to the fact that Kapteijns has concealed a conflict of interest, the critique casts the light on the claim of "clan cleansing" and demonstrates how inaccurate simplistic statements were used as a documentation of the clanised conflicts. Charging specific clans and communities of complicity for "clan cleansing," when there is no reliable and real proof, is tantamount to igniting a new round of warfare. Not only is Kapteijns's tendency a sign of falling victim to one's own polemical proposition against previous scholars, it is also a political trajectory concealed in what Sartre (1961: 7) would call "a walking lie." It is important to keep this walking lie at bay and warn the learned and the laymen alike – those who are interested in Somali Studies – not to be hoodwinked mistakenly by a myth-making at work (Malkki, 1995). The atypical aspect of Kapteijns (2013) is that she does not confine herself to offering clan-affiliated viewpoints of the clan convulsions in 1991, but she unleashes herself to try to pepper rumour with a myth. To rebuke this myth is not simply dismissing the myth, but engaging with it to put the record straight. Most recently, Menkhaus (2014a: 679)

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has concluded that Kapteijns's book is both a "controversial" and a "flawed". This was primarily because the book "provides one clan, the D[a]arood, much more ammunition in its grievance narrative than others, and for that reason will be heavily contested" (681).

Short of the culture of violence of the Somali society, Kapteijns fails to present a *long durée* historical context of the 1990s Somali clan cataclysms other than one – strewn with exaggeration, advocacy, overestimation, overemphasis and overstatements – that derived from *histoire événementielle* (Ingiriis, 2013b: 112-114). The State-sponsored terror of the Siad Barre regime was first unleashed upon the Hawiye in 1972, second on the Majeerteen/Omar Mohamoud from 1979-1985, the third on the Isaaq from 1981-1990 (even though Kapteijns restricts the latter only in 1988, when the Hargeisa Holocaust became known to the world) and the third on the Hawiye again in 1983 until 1990. In between those state terrors and clanocides were the unreported incidents of Galgaduud, Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle massacres that persisted from 1983 to 1990 as well as the oppression felt by the Digil-Mirifle or Rahanweyn (Reewing) and the Bantu/Jareer under the regime.[2]

Kapteijns propagates the 1991 wars over fending off and fending against the Siad Barre by the Hawiye and the Daarood militias were "clan cleansing" committed by certain clan against the other while what that certain clan had done to the other was simply "violence against civilians" (Kapteijns, 2013: 242).[3] As the novelist Achebe (2012: 59) has noted: "The [Africanist] writer is often faced with two choices – turn away from the reality of life's intimidating complexity or conquer its mystery by battling with it. The writer who chooses the former soon runs out of energy and produces elegantly tired fiction." This fiction is evident in the most recent studies that embraced Kapteijns's turn and trajectory of clanistic interpretation by describing what followed Siad Barre's ouster a "clan cleansing" (e.g. Horst, 2013: 228-245) or – as Menkhaus (2014a: 559) has most recently put it – "the ethnic cleansing campaign" (also see Lewis, 2004: 503).[4] Indeed, "the best" and "the powerful" scholarly studies of war and conflict are those averting "to reply on single-factor explanations" but seeks "to weave several factors into a more complex argument" (Brown, 1996: 574). Since other perspectives are largely absent from the existing literature, this critique pursues many-factor explanation to show that the new civil war historiography in Somalia views the conflict as an insular and one-sided phenomenon.

a) The Narration of the Narrative

The "clan cleansing" proponents confer on individual responsibility more than institutions since the latter – because of their sheer structural dimension – is often what dictates the former to act how s/he acted. Kapteijns (2013) is concerned about the 1991-1992 Somali clanised wars, though elsewhere she extended the date to 1993 (2010: 46). The outset of the uncivil war in Somalia was for her in 1978, when the Majeerteen/Mohamoud Saleebaan officers attempted to overthrow the Siad Barre's regime. Later on, she would cut one year and put the date at 1979, which was again when some of the coup instigators joined the Somali Democratic Action Front (SODAF) and later formed the Somali Salvation Front (SSF), which – upon emerging out from two proto opposition groups – became the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF).[5] For those familiar with Somali politics, the choice of dates stands not only a political by purpose, but also a concealment of what other clans and communities suffered under the two decades of clano-military dictatorship by the Siad Barreregime. Be that as it may, Kapteijns comes from these pages as a pro-particular clan and even a pro-particular sub-clan within the clan-group by accusing the USC, which led the popular uprising that drove the dictator out of the country, of "clan cleansing" campaign, while referring to the allegations of one particular clan narrators in Boston, Los Angeles and Columbus in the United States. The information she drew from these Diaspora communities would have beena quite distinct from the one from other clans and communities had she employed triangulation in her work. Even the answers one gets in the same question from two rivals are varied from one clan to another in the Somali case, for the answers themselves are subsequently derived from the type of questions raised (Ahmed 1995b: ix-xiv).As such, what was poisonous for some could for (an)othercomes as prosperous. *White's (1983: 167) observation in Kenya that "[w]hat one group of prostitutes says about another is not generally considered significant historical data" is more apt to this case.*

In comparison, unlike Keen (2005), who conducted ethnographic interviews with all sides of the Sierra Leonean conflict, Kapteijns (2013) has interviewed one side of the two sides of the Somali clanised wars.[6] Ironically, this bias affects her own work as her informants and narrators fall into one category of clan closest to her, as well as clan-conscious opinion makers who appear to be quick in picking up her work, only to justify their call for a retaliation over what had happened in 1991.[7] Even if she draws on what some certain single narrators and clan-conscious informants fed into her, Kapteijns travels to nowhere else to verify the claims made on the other side. By this controversial claim wherein characterisations are congruent with what Diane Lewis calls "in-here" clans and "out-there" clans (Lewis, 1973: 585),[8] Kapteijns has chosen "to fight fire with fire" (Marcus and Fischer,1986: 2). The fact that she has not been "wary about becoming trapped within the mental categories of [her clan] informants" (Tosh, 2010: 321) led her to another fact that no single informant from

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other clans or communities was included in her work as an informant, narrator or interviewee. Contra to her contention that the conflict has specific victors and victims, centuries-old clan vendettas have been a defining feature in the pastoral nomadic Somali world (Lewis, 1961; also Bongartz, 1991; Brons, 2001; Hashim, 1997; Ingiriis, 2012a; 71-99; Simons, 1994, 1995).

Kapteijns does take into account valuable contributions by Hussein Adam on the *long durée* of the uncivil war, Ali Jimale Ahmed on the causes of the uncivil war in an urban setting, Catherine Besteman on how it affected on subaltern communities, Maria Bongarts on the most nuanced overview of the uncivil war, Lee Cassanelli on the role of resource in the uncivil war, Isabelle Duyvesteyn on the comparatively Clausewitzean conception of the continuation of the war by privatised means, Abdi Kusow on the different perspectives of the uncivil war, Virginia Luling on how to recover from the uncivil war, Samuel Makinda on the role of clan politics in the uncivil war, Roland Marchal on the role of Islam in the uncivil war and Anna Simons on what precipitated the civil war.[9] For Kapteijns (2013: 266n6), substantial works by Somali scholars and authors who were on the ground for fieldwork or were eyewitness to the events, such as Hussein Ali Dualeh, Mariam Arif Gassem, General Jama Mohamed Ghalib and Rakiya Omaar, carry "half-truths and falsehoods," while her affiliated clan-oriented narrators and informants like Abdiaziz Nuur Hersi, Abdullahi Farah Hoolif and Abdiweli Ali Gaas (*ibid*.: 266n6), present the "truth," for they charged rival clan members as guilty, pointing – more often than not – to the USC leaderships, only to heap on memories of centuries-old clan-hate narrative.[10] As a result, Kapteijns (*ibid*.: 156) so passionately pursues the 1991 with a partisan voice, while assuming that her work "may go uncorrected."[11] It is contradictory to commence her work that this "project does not try to bring all these divergent memories and interpretations of the violence of 1991 into open. Nor does it try to simply 'correct' or displace them" (*ibid*.: 15). Yet, this was a statement to which she does not heed to follow. Right from the beginning to the end, she displaces and dispels how other Somalis – except those with which she affiliated – viewed what had happened in 1991.

b) Fabricated Notions and Narratives

The new neologism of "clan cleansing" first surfaced in the early 1990s. If informants who acted as agents in the conflicts succeeded to portray themselves as victims, the selective usage of sources warrants scrutiny. The selective sources are not an issue limited to here and there. More awkward is the authenticity of the sources cited as contemporary documents, such as "Concerned Somalis," "Mogadishu Massacre," and "Kismaayo Massacre" (e.g. Kapteijns, 2013: 284). These are cited without a small grain of salt; the material as well as inconsistent information given by clan-conscious informants are accepted credulously, while their allegations to others are treated as reliable evidenceas long as they reinforce the objectives of the work, which are to present the case of a particular clan-held narrative as a valid point. It is thus unsurprising why Kapteijns does not incorporate these documents into the infamous "Letter of Death" memo drafted by General Mohamed Said Hersi "Morgan", who committed crimes against humanity as the "big man"or the "the butcher of Hargeysa" in the then Northwest (present-day Somaliland).[12] The memo, which was sent and suggested to Siad Barre to wipe out the Isaaq clan-group – since they constituted the bulk of the SNM rendering a serious military challenge to the regime – was one of the rare documents exposing how the Siad Barre regime conducted the genocidal campaign of eradication in the then Northwest.

Kapteijns's informants decided not to talk about the fact that many Somalis have taken the risk of saving each other in the midst of clan reprisals whereas some lost their lives in that very philanthropic course, a fact which contradicts the claim of "clan cleansing". Even those credited with helping mediate between the rival clans were not spared in her selective targeting. It comes as no surprise that what reinforces the "cleansing" claim is the reinvention of the reality on the ground. A fabricated account given by one informant is illustrative of how the claim has no empirical basis. This escapee of the 1991 clan convulsions, according to Kapteijns (2013: 145), was en route to the Mogadishu International Airport during the height of the war when his host had received a phone call. Needless to say that there were no telephone lines – let alone mobile phones – in war-torn Mogadishu at the time, a testament that accepting fabricated stories without critical re-evaluation results in a walking lie. It should be noted that the first telecommunications corporation in Mogadishu was opened in 1996 by the Olympic Telecommunications Company owned by cross-clan Somali businessmen.

With a peculiar and puzzle propositions abounding on the way, there are other mythico-historical tales (Malkki, 1995) such as the falsified mobile *his-story*, which does not confine to one single story. For one more example, Kapteijns (2013) quotes one contemporary clan leader in Puntland about the "murder in Baydhaba of local Majeerteen bank employees and a wealthy merchant [...] together with other men" at "the tomb of Sheikh Uways." Apart from circumventing to record the other clan killings in Baydhabo, especially the massacres meted out against the Digil-Mirifle (Reewing) clan-group, Kapteijns fails to take into account that Sheikh Aweys's tomb is *not* located in Baydhabo, but in Biyooley, 12km from Tiyeeglow, a district administered in Bay region. Not only is this another evidence of concocting stories under an academic veil, but also

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making a new method of infusing clan-held mythical memories into scholarship. Recording a particular clan narrative with the comparative versions of other clan discourses as an empirical fact to document the clanised wars is tantamount to creating more contestation among the warring Somali clans. Sprinkled through the "clan cleansing" are such myths and misconceptions prevalent as one single clan's narratives of the 1991 convulsions. Overall, the 1991 Somalia was an era that one British journalist reported from Mogadishu that "only the children can be trusted" (Shields, 1991).

c) "Clan Cleansing" as Political Capital

Even if the politics of violence in the Somali clan conflicts is described single-handedly and anecdotal reporting, there are other histories, other "clan" memories, other war traumas and other perspectives that have yet to be written, which one could not consciously ignore. One is left puzzled how one could make misleading historical claims by purporting a myth as a history on one hand and denying other clans and communities of their suffering during the uncivil wars. If Kapteijns had glanced at the narratives and voices of other clans, a series of different chains other clan convulsions would most certainly have been observed. This is a point that she finally notes. Citing anthropologist Nigel Eltringham, Kapteijns (2013: 276n40) has commented that "[t]he oft-repeated insight that a civil war is never just one war, but many wars and that (in Rwanda) each person has a unique 'genocide story' is also relevant to the Somali case." But, this important insight, which was not heeded, does not stop her rebuking other clan narratives, even if she recognised that many Somalis "have interpreted and continued to interpret this violence from the narrow perspective of the victimization of their own clan" (*ibid*.: 44). Indeed, a parochial perspective seemingly drawn from her informants is what (un)wittingly informs Kapteijns's study. This is evident, when she admits that: "I also received direction. Given that the violence of the civil war has so divided Somalis, I allowed myself to be gently guided toward what *my friends* and *colleagues* [...] considered *legitimate*" (*ibid*.: 22, my emphasis).[13] Even though what "friends and colleagues" interpreted as "legitimate" appears to be "illegitimate" to other Somalis, one could hardly dismiss the fact that her clan informants "were the embodiment of the military regime and its only political and economic beneficiaries" (*ibid*.: 61).

The political expressions like *ciribtir* (extermination) or *tirtirid* (cleansing) were interchangeably used to overemphasise the unexpected, ignominious defeat suffered by those who attempted to defend the Siad Barre regime during the popular uprising in 1991. Becoming a new byword and part of the stereotyped war categories afterwards, the "clan cleansing" claim still serves as a "political capital" (Prunier, 2009: 3) for certain clan political players to first label and then arrest orally their rival clans. The claim is not new in the sense that it was in line with what veterans of the SSDF – cognisant of the lack of no word for clan cleansing – were permeating since 1991. These veterans propounded a new neologism "*qabiil sifeyn*" (clan cleansing) or what others from the former Siad Barre regime called "*tirtirid qabiil*" (clan extermination) via memoirs (cf. Deyr,1997: 233; Dool,1995:62; also see Ahmed,2012; Ciise,1995; Farah,2000; Farah, 2007; Haid, 2016; Hassan,2004; Mohamed,1994; Issa-Salwe, 1996; Ismail, 2010; Keenadiid, 2012; Xasan, 2000).[14] These authors maintained the makings they made up, yet they could hardly come out with reliable findings (for congruent critique, see Clifford, 1986: 6). No wonder that – sharing a common clan genealogy, as all of them were – these authors took the task to dehumanise those clan rivals they held responsible for ousting the Siad Barre regime. Put differently, they all reiterate the claim attached with the "clan cleansing" catchphrase that a certain clan "cleansed" another. Of course, they have no reliable evidence other than referring to each other to support their claims.

However, their clan counterparts did in no way attribute agency to a particular clan. Almost all other Somali and non-Somali authors who first-hand witnessed and wrote about the 1991 war (e.g. Abdi,2013; Alim,2008; Afrah,1994; Aroma,1995:a, 1995b; Caddow, 2001; Gassem, 1994) and those who observed it inside and reported from the warzone (Hartley,2003; Henry,1991; McGreal,1991; Perlez,1991a, 1991b; Shields,1991) or followed it from the outside (Adam, 1992: 11-26; Adan, 1994: 99-109;Bongartz, 1991; Brons 2001; Bulhan, 2008; Dualeh, 1994; Ghalib, 2012, 1995, Hashim, 1997; Kusow, 1994: 36-46; Luling, 1997: 287-302; Marchal, 2013: 331-354; Omar, 1992; Osman, 1996; Simons, 1995) agree one main crucial point – that is, what happened in 1991 was far from "clan cleansing" on one single particular clan. Rather, what happened was either *colaadihii sokeeye* (civil hostilities) or *dagaalkii sokeeye* (civil war). These authors do not rebuke the fact that "some killings were clan-oriented revenge killings" (Besteman, 1996: 128), but reveal the structure that rendered these killings to occur.[15] The source that verifies the "clan cleansing" claim is the Somalisaying "*been badan sheeg, ha lagaa rumeystee*" (tell too many lies until you find one gullible individual ready to swallow). As Lewis (1961: 252) also acknowledged well before the conflict: "It is always extremely difficult to discover even the immediate causes of a Somali feud; especially when, after the event, many rival accounts are given." Reflecting on the wider African conflicts, particularly Rwanda and South Sudan, wherein the former he had a first-hand encounter, Prunier observed:

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If we take some of the largest African bloodlettings of recent times into consideration, neither the quasi-genocidal war between northerners and southerners in the Sudan nor the Somali clan wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s reached a truly genocidal stage simply because the killers were too disorganised and the killing field was too big and uncontrolled. In Rwanda, all the pre-conditions for a genocide were present: a well-organised civil service, a small tightly-controlled land area, a disciplined and orderly population, reasonably good communications and a coherent ideology containing the necessary lethal potential (Prunier 1995: 238).

d) The "Legitimate" and "Illegitimate"

Of a bizarre presentation, Kapteijns (2013) quarrels with those who have presented a distinctive perspective from hers, particularly those who expressed an opposite view, berating award-winning journalists like Aidan Hartley for not reporting and recording the "clan cleansing" so she could probably find an evocative quote.[16] As her analysis is not based on ethnographic fieldwork research, she relies heavily on political works on the clanised wars written by journalists and Italian diplomats, such as Mario Sica and Claudio Pacifico, who strongly favoured Siad Barre and his regime. Their memoirs are sites to judge the armed opposition groups with a jaundiced eye.[17] Kapteijns does not compare those memoirs with independent Italian sources before accepting uncritically – and wholeheartedly – the half-baked story dished out here and there, not to mention the scandal of *Fondo Aiuti Italiano* (FAI), where billions of Italian lire were embezzled by the Italian government officials in conjunction with Siad Barre's regime. Many of her informants were allegedly participated in this embezzlement in multiple spheres. Indeed, the long commitment of Italian authorities and diplomats in supporting Siad Barre and his regime for expropriating international aid has been documented in detail elsewhere (Achtner, 1993; Bridges, 2000: 91-92; Caddow, 2001: 78-126).

For the more than two decades that the Siad Barre regime ruled, the basic clan framework upon which his regime was founded was the concept of the MODH coalition: the Mareehaan, the Ogaadeen, the Dhulbahante clans. Throughout their struggle against the regime, the armed opposition groups were pointing out this clan nepotism to show that the regime was basically for certain clan enterprise at the expense of other clans. Upon misinterpreting the objectives of these opposition groupsand not accommodating their perspectives, Kapteijns (2013: 274n24) twists the MODH concept as Misrepresentation, Orchestration and Denial. Even though the MODH coalition crumbled in late 1989 (after the Ogaadeen/Awlyahan uprising in Kismaayo), it suddenly resurfaced in January 1991 as a strong clan strategy to counter the uprising against the regime after Siad Barre called for his whole clan-group for solidarity to save his regime from rival clans. However, the MODH concept – so crucial a base for the clano-dictatorial regime – was not "introduced" by the SNM, when, on the contrary, the acronym was coined well before the front's formation. It was a common knowledge that Siad Barre's rule was based on the MODH clan system prior to having been revealed in intelligence sources as late as 1977 (*Africa Confidential*, 1978: 4; and *Africa Confidential*, 1984a: 7-8).[18] With the MODH system in place, the other Somali clans and communities, even if they were not opponents, came to be considered as the "enemy clans" by the regime.[19]

e) Poetry: The Invisible Witness Account

The only important aspect in Kapteijns's work (2013) is an analysis of oral literature produced during the clan convulsions. Generally employed in the Somali repertoire as a form of resistance in times of internal and external intrusion (see Ahmed, 1996), poetry serves dual purposes: to heal and to memorise the conflicts. From hindsight observation, one discerns that Kapteijns makes a serious misinterpretations on the contents of the poems she explores without rigorous and robust learning about the context as well as the consequences.[20] Compounded with a lack of nuanced understanding of the Somali word and world contributes to a further misinterpretation she makes on selective poems with the aim of backing up her claims. With such a determination, the result paves the way for a crude conclusion that leaves aside a vast and various (o)mission and makes more mistake than common. In a spite of the coverage of poetry usage, including some clan hate-narratives, there are deliberate but strange silences on other hate-narratives and/or hate-counter-narratives as captured on video clips posted on numerous Somali websites.[21] Here, Kapteijns unfolds into a one-way street journey branded as "the clan-hate narrative" (2013: 54) to target the serious compositions of particular poets and deliberately avoid the exposition of similarly hostile clan-hate narratives *or* counter-narratives from other poets, a subjectivity that derails deliberately her supposed academic independence.

Kapteijns's approach to putting the war poems into the "clan cleansing" claim is persecutory. In discussing (an English translation of) a Somali poem called "Disaster" (*Musiibo*) by the poet Mustafe Sheikh Elmi, she findsno proof of the case of "clan cleansing", yet she berates the poet for negligence of not calling what occurred as "clan cleansing" (e.g. Kapteijns,2013: 23-28). A careful reading of the poem demonstrates that Mustafe chronicles the events in 1991 as a class rivalry and not anything close to "cleansing."The other crucial pattern he proposes is the economic dimension of the war. To take one example, when the poet states "even the soil" was looted, what he meant by "the soil" alludes to economic resources, more specifically the economic

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aid granted by the international community but embezzled by the Siad Barre regime and his Italian patrons. Kapteijns (2013) insists her misinterpretation and misconception of poetic metaphors, perhaps because of lack of socio-cultural understanding of the Somalis beyond the tell-tale paradigm of informants who seem to be stakeholders in the project. On the other hand, all poets to whom Kapteijns refers have unanimously regarded clannism as the real root causes of the 1991 clan convulsions. This unanimous conclusion contradicts – and to a larger extent, cancels out – her argument that the causes of the conflicts were not clan and clannism, but "clan cleansing," as though the clanised wars were a *consequence*, but not as a *real historical cause* for the war. A poem called "*Aniga iyo Qabiil*" (I and Clan), cited in Kapteijns (2013: 45), a poet aptly charges clannism for what went wrongwith Somalia, attributing to it one of the most serious predicament of Somali suffering. First approaching us before the clan (not the vice versa, as Kapteijns writes), the poet stated:

Clan (Qabiil) and I had a discussion and disagreed with each other.

I am without a nation (*qaran*) because of what you have caused:

collapse, flight, and disaster

In the continents I reside now, I am naked because of you.

Do you not acknowledge that I have been set back a century and a half?[22]

When Kapteijns finds no dietary supplement in these poems for her "clan cleansing" project, she refers to the introduction of another poem by the late poet Abdi Muhammad Amiin, who also noted that what happened in 1991-1992 was "clan retaliation" (Kapteijns, 2013: 30). It goes without saying that, where there was a retaliation, there should have been a preceding grievous action to be avenged. Amiin offered a credible explanation in his poem that what he had observed in 1991 Somalia was clan vengeance versus clan vengeance – which is to say, clan reprisals. Instead of taking this into consideration, Kapteijns selectively skims over this part of the poem, which suggests the opposite of her claims. If Amiin and almost all other poets noted the war against Siad Barre in 1991 as a popular uprising – note that Amiin's and Mustafe's poems reveal a class rivalry in the 1991 conflict rather than "clan cleansing" – Kapteijns considers their poemsnot as a complement for her campaign and offers no discussion of the poets' witness accounts. Drawing from poets who sided with either Siad Barre or the SSDF, Kapteijns (2013: 23) contends presenting "mediations of violence." But mediation is confounded with meditation, as intervention and arbitration could not be conducted by a mediator who is part of the conflict. As for oral poets (the so-called "clan poets"), other authors who suffered from the same Kapteijns's flaws have similarly failed to mention the other side of the oral discourse, such as Ali Elmi Afyare and Aden Abdi Ahmed "Toosi-Luquntaada," who were the mouthpiece for the Siad Barre regime versus Geelle IsmailLiire "Geelle Faruur" and Khalif Sheikh Mohamoud who stood the other side of the fence in using poetry to mobilise adherents for the armed resistance groups.[23]

A closer examination of Amiin's poem exposes the political beneficiaries of the war, even when the crucial and critical part of the poem was discarded in Kapteijns (2013) through copying and cutting. In his poem, Amiin pointed out to "those who, in Barre's final hour, came to the failing dictator's help and proposed 'to let the old man be'" (cited in Kapteijns, 2013: 33). One of those men to whom the poet was referring was none other than Yusuf Osman Samatar (Barda'ad), a former post-colonial political party leader and the husband of Maryan Muuse Boqor (Kapteijns's earlier co-author), who – after many years of a solitary confinement under Siad Barre's regime – came as his spokesman during the rush hour of the clanised wars.[24] Apparently aware of the claim of "clan cleansing" and, as such, avoiding to fall into that trap, Lewis noted that Siad Barre's "pathetic appeals to his Darod clansmen to come to his rescue only resulted in their being singled out for vicious retaliation and 'clan cleansing' (as Somalis called it) in the ensuing chaos of Mogadishu" (Lewis,2004: 503). The curious observer would then ask: who were those who defended Siad Barre with tooth and nail for in his final hour? Many of those to whom Lewis referred as "Somalis" were obviously men like Barda'ad who came to his rescue (Adam, 1992: 11-26; Aroma, 1995a).

Propagating the claim of "clan cleansing" have minimised the role of Siad Barre in triggering clans to commit violent, brutal atrocities to each other long before his rule came to fall. Overlooking Siad Barre's calls for clan cohesion to salvage his regime at a time he was packing his clothes out of the Villa Somalia (Ingiriis, 2012c: 27-28), Kapteijns (2001a: 28) contradicts herself, as she acknowledged elsewhere that Siad "Barre made his security forces commit acts of violence against members of a certain clan (or clan family) falsely using the name of another clan (or clan family)".[25] Here, it is unclear whether the targeted clan to which she alludes was the Hawiye or the Isaaq, though it should be one of them. Kapteijns (*ibid*.: 13) maintains to highlight that "the process of demystifying the Barre regime's manipulations of history is still in its infancy". The legacies of the Siad Barre's regime affected not only history, but nearly each aspect of Somali society, politics and culture. In fact, Siadism itself has become and proved to be a culture of sadism (Ingiriis, 2012a: 63-94).

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It would be hard for one to justify this culture and try to twist it by claiming claims of "clan cleansing."

II. Conclusion

The persisting cliché of "clan cleansing" is, *inter alia*, inherently dictated by the clannish tradition and tendencies of the Somali politics. For example, the accusation that a person was killed by one individual is conceived as a sign of weakness and pathetic. The person complaining has to point the finger at the whole clan and say "that clan killed one of ours." It is not a clan culture to claim otherwise. It is a clan-held wide custom in Somali settings to hear claims of "clan cleansing" and counter-clan "cleansings." If you ask, for example, someone whose brother was killed by Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf's forces in 2007/2008 Ethiopian invasion in South-Central Somalia who killed his brother, he would most likely say "*reer hebel*(that clan)," the clan of the Colonel. If you ask a Colonel's clansman whose sister was killed in the 1991 clanised wars who killed her, he would most likely say "*reer hebel* (that clan)." This phenomenon of making the whole clan accountable for killing, which suggests that there is no individual guilty other than collective guilty, is something deeply rooted in the pastoralist Somali culture and it warrants further research. In spite of – or because of – this, Kapteijns's book (2013) is constantly used by clan propagandists to spread hatred and hostility toward certain clans and communities.

By connecting the boundaries of politics with the borders of culture, Kapteijns's (2013) overemphasis is on the construction and invention of "clan cleansing" where the latter does not exist. While suppressing it to include previous clanised wars during the dictatorial era in her analysis, influential historical accounts on clan violence(s) produced have been left out (cf. Hanley, 2004 [1971]).With no cure for the war traumas, Kapteijns (2013: 50) purports to understand "the clannist mindset of the Somali people", suggesting at the end of her book that the treatment for clannism is to prescribe the Somalis "more of the same" of "such undiluted doses that it will either cure or kill the patient" (*ibid*.: 212), which, in this case, would mean producing more clanistic narratives as her work. This kind of simplistic and superficial misinterpretation has the potentiality to reignite hatred among Somali clans and add more fuel to the yet unresolved perpetual and persistent conflicts still wreaking havoc in most of Somalia.

Endnotes

[1]The book fails to offer a backdrop on how the "cleansing" was evolved in the first place. Of all the clanocides meted out by the military dictatorship to certain communities, Kapteijns (2013: 80 & 87, 90) mentions just two "collective clan punishments."

[2] The role of the Siad Barre regime in organising clan conflitcs was noted, but its agency on the Hawiye versus the Daarood wars was dismissed. It is here when Kapteijns leaps from her own misinterpretation to persecutory statements that she falls down. She misleadingly maintains that the military regime has been the subject of scholarly inquiry for "at least three major studies" (2013: 77). But, she draws on only those studies that verify her aims. Missing (and ostensibly shrugged off) is the most nuanced study that both historically contextualised and politically surveyed from the 1960s to the 1990s. The substantial study of Simons (1995), which is an ethnographic work conducted in Mogadishu months before the collapse of the dictatorship is missing in Kapteijns's discussion of literature on the fall of the regime.

[3]The only time what something akin to clan cleansing occurred in the Somali milieu preceded 1991, given the magnitude of the "Hargeysa Holocaust" in 1988/89 against the Isaaq, the Baydhabo man-made famine 1992-93 and the Ethiopian invasion of southern Somalia 2006-2009.However, Kapteijns reduces the death toll in Hargeysa at 5,000, when it was 50,000 casualties as confirmed by the Human Rights agencies in the U.S. and the UK. In singling out the Isaaq clan-group who were subjected to a harsh punitive treatment that culminated in clanocide, Kapteijns (2013: 83 & 87) insists the regime-sponsored violence on them was warfare, the Hawiye more or less the same (*ibid*.: 99), while the Majeerteen/Omar Mohamoud one was clan cleansing, even though the evidences documented by the human rights organisations do oppose to the way she portrays. Perceived as monolithic, Kapteijns (*ibid*: 275n52) argues that the British had favoured the Isaaq clan-group, a claim grounded in synchronic narratives, contradicted by Langton Prendergast Walsh, the first British administrator of Berbera, who showed that the Isaaq suffered most of the British policy of collective punishment, a policy of retribution against any villain's whole community (Walsh, 1910: 374-375). It is peculiar that Kapteijns assumes – without giving any source – that European colonialism "did not so much elevate one group [clan] over another" (2013: 226). However, historical evidence says otherwise.

[4] Elsewhere, Menkhaus (2006/07: 84, 85 & 98) has also used the term "ethnic cleansing" very broadly without defining what he means. At the same time, he has recently noted that "[w]hen *xeer* breaks down, revenge killings, threats of violence, or actual attacks by whole sub-clans against other lineages come to play a central role in the advancement and protection of clan interests" (2014b: 561). Elsewhere, Menkhaus found that what happened in 1991 was "general chaos" (1996: 173).Again, he has recently acknowledged that what happened in 1991 was "communal violence" (2014b: 569).

[5] "Response To David Laitin's Reflections On Clan Cleansing In Somalia." Available at: http://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/-2013/11/14/response-to-david-laitins-reflections-on-clan-cleansing-in-somalia/ (accessed on 27 December 2013). Cf. Kapteijns (2001a: 11).

[6] This does not mean to imply that what happened Somalia was an echo of Sierra Leone; on the contrary, Somali clan convulsions was nothing compared to Sierra Leonean wars.

[7] See, for example, http://www.wardheernews.com/somalia-a-government-failing-at-its-own-peril/ (retrieved on 17 April 2013); and http://www.wardheernews.com/halting-the-divide-president-mahmoods/ (retrieved on 17 April 2013). For most recent commentaries about the claim of "clan cleansing," see http://www.wardheernews.-com/codenames-clan-cleansing-gross-human-rights-violations-somalia/ (accessed on 8 September 2014); and http://www.wardheernews.-com/book-review-clan-cleansing-somalia-ruinous-legacy-1991/ (accessed on 7 September 2014).

[8] Lewis has, nevertheless, employed these concepts differently in relation to alienation (1973: 581-591).

[9] Cf. Adam (1992: 11-26); Aroma (1995a); Besteman (1999); Bongartz (1991); Ahmed (1995, 1995b; ix-xiv); Cassanelli (1996: 13-26); Duyvesteyn (2005); Kusow (1994: 31-46); Luling (1997: 287-302); and Marchal (2013: 331-354). In Kapteijns's (2013), there is no discussion of such a civil war literature, particularly what triggers and sustains the Somali wars. For a theoretical explanation, see Elbadawi and Sambanis (2002: 307-334).

[10] Abdiweli Gaas, who is currently leader of Puntland mini-State and briefly served as Prime Minister (2011-2012) in President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed's government, was an informant and narrator whom

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Kapteijns contacted via email, telephone and from a gathering in Garowe (e.g. Kapteijns, 2013: 246n16, 262n157, 264-265n40, 267n78, 267-268n81 and 269n100). On how Kapteijns became entangled and attached to this particular clan members, see among others (Kapteijns 2001c: 719-722, 2001d: 10-18, 2000: 25-34, 1999: 27-47, 1992: 175-180). Kapteijns does not acknowledge her familial relations with her informants. By failing to do so, she reproduces the reductionist literature against which she chastises in chapter 3 (2013: 146-158).

[11] Eltringham's quote is cited in Kapteijns (2013: 240).

[12] The complete letter is available at: http://www.aburin.20m.-com/letter_of_death.htm (accessed on 17 April 2013). The authenticity of the document was verified by Dr Mohamoud Sheikh Ahmed Musa, a former Chief of Somali Supreme Court on 27 April 1987. For details, see Dunn (1987), 1-4. Indeed, Kapteijns could not hide her familial affiliation of General Morgan, when praising him for how "against all odds he had regrouped, raised new funds, recruited fighters from the refugee camps [in Kenya], and re[-]entered the war" (2013: 187). Rejecting to refer to first-hand war accounts provided by other Somalis, Kapteijns offers no systematic contextual analysis except copy and paste references of selective new reports from Kismaayo, General Morgan's then military base. Meanwhile, to make her case more appealing, she makes sweeping accusations on several members only to be able defending other criminals.

[13]This statement cannot negate the fact that her informants played their part of the 1991 consequences of the long clan dominance and oppression as long as they partook their role of the civil war.

[14] *These books, booklets and pieces were written by politically-conscious authors who considered themselves as "victims" and hence advocating for their clan-group.*

[15] Samatar (1990/1991: 138) wrote about "the clan massacres," "senseless cataclysm" and "clan massacres" to make sense of what occurred in 1991. The 1990s wars were not simply between the Hawiye and the Daarood. As one detailed study on Somali social order described: "After Barre's overthrow, the Daroods were endangered by retaliation from other clan lineages" (Sorens and Wantchekon, 2000: 14n14). It should be noted that the Daarood was not targeted as a Daarood, but as beneficiaries of the State. Since the Daarood as a people became synonymous with the State, primarily because of clan affiliation with Siad Barre, they were identified with his oppressive clano-military regime after the fall. Hence, clan reprisals started where nearly 4,000 Somalis across clan lines were killed in a tit-for-tat clanised war. *Human Rights reported that most of those killed were pro-Siad Barre supporters (Human Right Watch, 1992: 4).*

[16] Hartley (2003) has written about his experiences in reporting from the 1991 clanised wars in Somalia in his memoir, *The Zanzibar Chest: A Story of Life, Love, and Death in Foreign Lands*.

[17] For example, Pacifico's meeting with Siad Barre is repetitively reproduced (e.g. Kapteijns, 2013: 122, 126, 144 & 260).By pervading conjectural claims, the propagators of the clan cleansing claim presumeda reincarnation of the Siad Barre regime in the early 1990s.

[18] Other Somalists would offer a unique insight into the MODH structure and grasp the gist of the concept if they could possess with linguistic mastery of the Somali rather than approaching it from mistranslations by an interested third party. For reflective poetical analyses on the conflict, see Ahmed (1996).

[19] It is important to reiterate that the term "enemy clan" was constructed, not after the overthrow of Siad Barre, but during his military rule. Surprisingly, the so-called enemy clans were hurdled at harsh condemnation in Kapteijns's (2013).

[20] Kapteijns carries war poetry, classified in her own individual judgement as "prestigious" and "nonprestigious" genres, with preferences of the latter, which means not to shy away of clannism (Kapteijns, 2013: 53).

[21] It is surprising that Kapteijns also leaves out women's genre of poetry, *Buraanbur*.

[22] On the misinterpretation of Kapteijns's analysis on poet Mohamed Ali Ibaar's resistance to the Ethiopian occupation, see Kapteijns (2010: 57-64).

[23] For example, Elmi (2010: 51) has pointed out to several poets from the opposition groups, but not to those on the side of the military regime.

[24] Barda'ad was arrested in 1978 (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 1984: 4). Compagnon (1995: 347) put the date of his detention at 1975. Faarax (1990: 42) also claimed that Barda'ad was detained nearly 20 years by the Siad Barre regime, but the truth was that he was in prison for not more than a decade. In 1992, Barda'ad gave an interview to visiting American newsmen in Gedo, detailing his determination to support Generals Siad Barre and Morgan, his clansmen. The interview to which is referred could be watched here: '1993 General Mohamed Hersi "Morgan"', https://www.youtube.com/-watch?v=1z8DwaomdOU(between min 00:05 – 02:34), accessed on 12 January 2015.

[25] The thesis of my previous article on Siad Barre's last days tackles Kapteijn's statement that "written analyses of Barre's tactics are still schematic, perhaps because no clan group dares to denounce the perpetrators among its own ranks" (Kapteijns, 2001a: 28; cf. Ingiriis, 2012a: 63-94, Ingiriis 2012c: 27-28).

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