

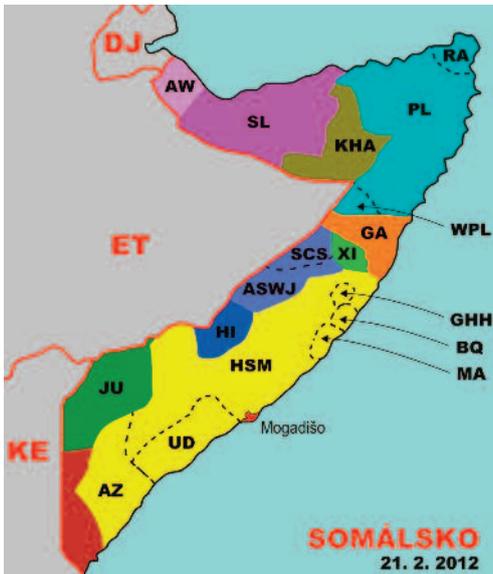
Flags in Somalia – Somalia in flags

by Jaroslav Martykán

Abstract Since 1991, when the Siad Barre's regime was overthrown, Somalia experienced a conflict comparable to a long-time civil war. A disintegration of the country found expression in several autonomous and/or separatist states proclaimed and established on its territory unilaterally and resulted in the existence of more than twenty entities effectively existing on the Somali soil and displaying their own flags. Moreover, there exists an extremely frustrating phenomenon of the self-proclaimed semi-states introduced by the National Charter of the Somali Transitional Federal Government from 2004. This constitution i.a. extended the State structure of Somalia by the governments of autonomous and federated states and regions and authorized them to adopt their own organic laws, state flags and arms. In that way, the separate autonomies have been allowed to display their own symbols, whilst those of Somalia remain reserved for the Transitional Federal Government. Up to now, 55 particular flags pertaining to various self-governing entities have been adopted in Somalia since 1991. Their overview has been presented in this paper and proves that majority of the flags adopted either by the effectively established autonomous regions and states or the quasi-states proclaimed abroad gave the priority to the Somali national symbolism in their shapes.

Since 1991, when the President Mohamed Siad Barre's regime was overthrown, Somalia experienced a conflict comparable to a long-time civil war. Victory of the opposition powers over this authoritative government led to expansion of irredentist movements across the all country. They left the indigenous tribes fighting each other for land and mineral reserves. A disintegration of Somalia continued into several autonomous and/or separatist states proclaimed and established on its territory unilaterally and resulted in the existence of more than twenty entities effectively existing on the Somali soil and displaying their own flags. In August 2012, the so called Transitional period of Somali history ended after the House of the People of a new two-chambered Parliament was chosen by tribal elders and the new President Hassan Sheikh Mahamud was elected by it. However, Somalia remains divided into a constantly shifting patchwork of territories some controlled by foreign troops, including Kenyans (under the AU banner) and Ethiopians, others by clan militias, fully functioning regional administrations, pirate gangs and religious groups. Two of the most difficult challenges for new federal government are the large parts of southern and central Somalia controlled by al-Shabaab, and the north-western territory of Somaliland which declared itself independent in 1991, and to all intents and purposes functions as a completely separate country.





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|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| AW – Awdalland | SL – Somaliland | KHA – Khatumo |
| PL – Puntland | WPL – West Puntland | RA – Rasa-Asayr |
| GA – Galmudug | SCS – Somali Central State | AZ – Azania |
| XI – Ximan | GHH – Gal-Hiran Haradhere | BQ – Bila-Quban |
| HI – Hiiraan | MA – Mareeg | JU – Jubaland |
| HSM – Al Shabaab | ASWJ – Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a | UD – Udubland |

Fig. 1

Apart of the Republic of Somaliland that declared its entire independence on Somalia in 1991 already, they appeared initially two semi-independent entities on the territory of Somalia (i.e. Puntland /since 1998/ and South-West Somalia /2002-2006/) enjoying the relatively peaceful development if compared with the situation in the remaining “core” or “residual” Somalia. When the process of civil war among particular clans and sub-clans in residual Central Somalia developed into one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in the world, the internal situation in the country became critical. A mandate of the incapable central government under the President Abdalqasim Salad Hassan expired in 2003 and an expected chaos threatened the country. Then, the international community managed after long negotiations to force leaders of 48 fighting factions to sign the peace agreement in Nairobi (Kenya) on 29.01.2004. They also agreed to form the Transitional Federal Parliament and Transitional Federal Government (hereinafter “TFG”) where all clans from the residual Somalia, Puntland and South-West Somalia delegated their representatives; Somaliland does not take part in the reconciliation process. However, as the former discredited warlords and clan elders were allowed by the international community to participate in the newly established bodies of the Somali state both the Parliament and government remained very weak and old tribal conflicts paralyzed their activities. Nor the promised military assistance from the African Union was provided effectively and soon. Such a situation resulted in renewal of clashes between clannish militias, in the surroundings of Mogadishu especially. So-called Islamic courts began their activities in parallel with the structures of warlords and their militias. Through an implementation of the Islamic law sharia across the country threshed about lawlessness and tribal wars and invasions, the courts gained a great support of the population. This people's support assisted their big territorial gains during the struggle against the TFG in 2006. There were 14 autonomous entities proclaimed in Somalia in the course of this struggle since 2006 as shown on the map (Fig. 1).



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia_Numbered_Regions.png

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|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 – Lower Juba | 7 – Banaadir | 13 – Bari |
| 2 – Middle Juba | 8 – Middle Shabele | 14 – Sool |
| 3 – Gedo | 9 – Hiiraan | 15 – Sanaag |
| 4 – Bay | 10 – Galguduud | 16 – Togdheer |
| 5 – Bakool | 11 – Mudug | 17 – Woqooyi Galbeed |
| 6 – Lower Shabele | 12 – Nugaal | 18 – Awdal |

Fig. 2

Moreover, there exists an extremely frustrating phenomenon of the self-proclaimed semi-states introduced by the National Charter of the Somali Transitional Federal Government from 2004. The charter established the federal administration of the country and allowed the formation of the relatively autonomous regions as potentially positive aspect because it could produce local credible leadership and also contribute to the reemergence of Somalia. However, the increasing development of the system of semi-state style of government seems to reignite hidden clan conflagrations. At least forty-three semi-regional states have been announced in Somalia since 2010. They all have self-nominated presidents and they also create their own identities, to include flags, arms, state anthems and websites. The most negative aspect of this development is that the mini-states appear superior to the central government, potentially complicating national reunification. The mini-states phenomenon in Somalia has become a political opportunity for power-hungry politicians and businessmen expelled by the Islamic militias from the country to diaspora who organize the proclamation of mini-states in as cities across Europe, the United States, and in some Arab and African states, though not in Somalia. It could even lead to confrontations among mini-states and the federal government, particularly among the mini-states themselves who could have confrontations on the borders dividing them, because every single clan and even sub-clan living on the same area strives for establishment of such a mini-state and then tries to claim his share of the resources and power in the federal government. Therefore, the increasing phenomenon of mini-states could jeopardize national unity. (Fig. 2)



Somaliland (1996 -)



Jubaland (1998 - 2001)



Jubbaland-1 (2010 -)



Federated Hinterland (project)

Fig. 3

Finally, when the exiled Somali Parliament adopted the Transitional Federative Charter in February 2004 it effected seriously an advancement of regional flags in the country. This constitution i.a. extended the State structure of Somalia by the governments of autonomous and federated states and regions and authorized them to adopt their own organic laws, state flags and arms. In that way, the separate autonomies have been allowed to display their own symbols, whilst those of Somalia remain reserved for the Transitional Federal Government only, as stipulated in the Article 6 of the Charter.

Up to now, 57 particular flags pertaining to various self-governing entities have been adopted in Somalia since 1991. There are ten groups we can divide all the flags flown above those states in.



Islamic Courts Union (2000 - 2006)



al-Shabaab (2001 -)

Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (2007 -)



Fig. 4

1) Flags of separatist states derived from the flag of the West Somalia Liberation Front and its colours of red, green, and white (Fig. 3): Somaliland (1996-) and Jubaland (1998-2001); Federated Hinterland (project) and Jubbaland -1 (2010-) have displayed colours of red and green interpreted as those of clans Digil and Rahanwein

2) Flags of religious character in black, white and/or green, with Quran quotations and other Moslem symbols (Fig. 4): Islamic Courts Union (2000-2006), al-Shabaab (2001-), Hizbul Islami, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (2007-)

3) Flags identical with the National flag of Somalia and/or those completed with some distinguishing element (Fig. 5a): Puntland (1998-2009), Galmudug (2006-2010), Northland (2008-2009), Banadir (2011-), Banaadirland (2011-), Galgaduud (2011-), Jubba-Jaziira (2011-) - a turquoise variant of blue, Maakhir (2008-2009) + two narrow stripes, Hiiraan (2010-) + a white triangle, Somalia Central State (2010), Jubbaland-3 (2012-) + a white crescent, (Fig. 5b) Ximan and Xeeb (2010-2011) + a red triangle and the regional emblem, Dooxo (2011-) + a local vessel, El-Bur (2011-) + two local vessels, SSC (unofficial) + local emblems and inscriptions, Khatumo (2012-) + a crescent and three stars (in W), Northland (unofficial) + a horse's head and an inscription



Puntland (1998 - 2009)
Galmudug (2006 - 2010)
Northland (2008 - 2009)
Banadir (2011 -)
Banaadirland (2011 -)
Galgaduud (2011 -)



Jubba-Jasiira (2011 -)



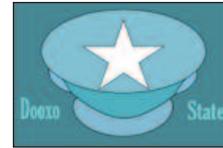
Maakhir (2008 - 2008)



Hiiraan (2010 -)



Ximan and Xeeb (2010-2011)



Dooxo (2011 -)



El-Bur (2011 -)



Somali Central State (2010)



Jubbaland - 3 (2012 -)



SSC (unofficial)



Khatumo (2012 -)



Northland (unofficial)

Fig. 5a

Fig. 5b



4) Flags with representation of the National flag in form of a light blue triangle with a white star over the field (Fig. 6a): Puntland (unofficial, 2003), Hiiraan and Midland (2010-), Mareeg (2011-), Udubland (2011-), Jubba and Shabelle (2011-), Jiin-Webi (2011-), (Fig. 6b) Dooxada Shabelle (2011-), Waax and Waadi (2011-), Rasa Asayr (2011-), Jubbaland-2 (2012-)

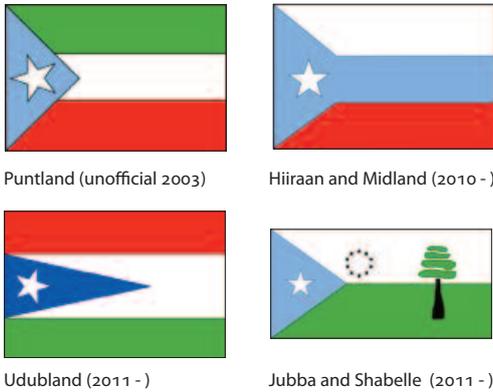


Fig. 6a

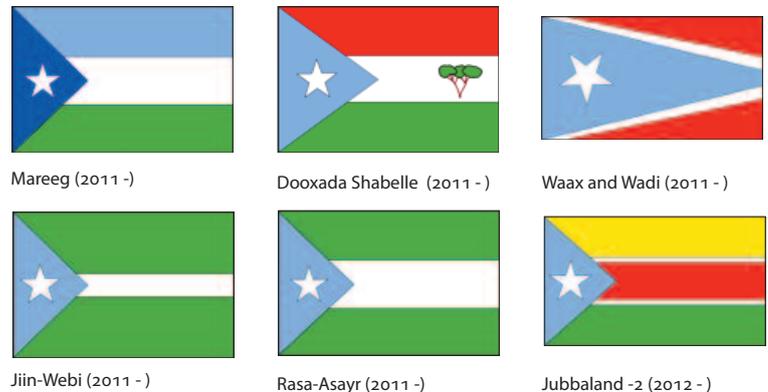


Fig. 6b

5) Flags with representation of the National flag in form of a light blue superior stripe with a white star (Fig. 7): South-West Somalia (2002-2006, 2011-), Koofur-Galbeed ee Soomaaliya (2011-), Puntland (2009-), Gal-Hiran and Haradhere (2010-), Maakhir (2012-), Golol Mudug (2012-)

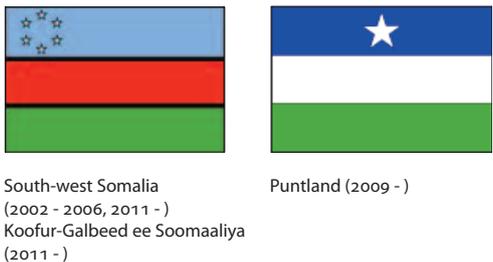


Fig. 7



6) Flags with representation of the National flag in form of a vertical stripe across the hoist (Fig. 8): Jubaland (2006), Jubaland (2010-), West Puntland (2012-)

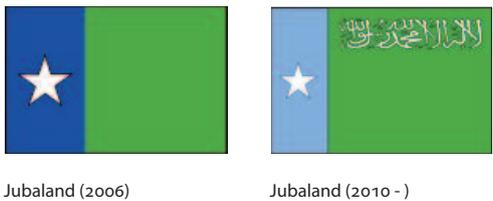
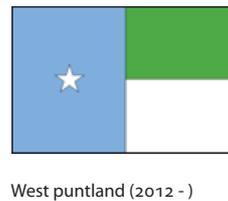


Fig. 8



7) Flags with representation of the National flag in other forms (canton, stripe or other geometric shape) (Fig. 9): Gedoland (project), Jubba-Raas (2011-), Dooxada Cagaaran (2011-), Hamar and Hamardaye (2011-), Shabelle-Jubba (2012-)

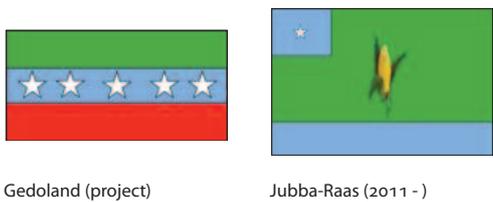
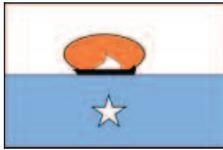


Fig. 9



8) Flags in the colours of the national flag (Fig. 10) in form of a) stripes: Maakhir (2007-2008), Awdalland (2009-), Azania (2011-), Salal (2011-2012), Saylac and Lughaye (2012-); of b) a blue field completed with white and green colours (for Islam): the Federation of SSC (2009-2012), Galmudug (2011-)



Maakhir (2007 - 2008)



Awdalland (2009 -)



Azania (2011 -)



Salal (2011 - 2012)



Saylac and Lughaye (2012 -)

Fig. 10



Federation of SSC (2009 -2012)



Galmudug (2011 -)

9) Flags of a white background with the arms in the centre (Fig. 11): Galmudug (2010-2011), Ximan and Xeeb (2011-), Abweyn (2011-)



Galmudug (2010 - 2011)



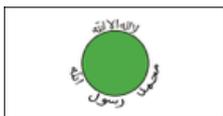
Ximan and Xeeb (2011 -)



Abweyn (2011 -)

Fig. 11

10) Other flags (Fig. 12): Somaliland (1991-1996), Shabeelaha Dhexe (2009-), Karkaar State (2011-)



Somaliland (1991 - 1996)



Shabeelaha Dhexe (2009 -)



Karkaar state (2011 -)

Fig. 12

It is obvious that the majority of the flags adopted either by the effectively established autonomous regions and states or the mini-states proclaimed abroad gave the priority to the Somali national symbolism in their shapes. Originally, the unilaterally declared autonomies insisted on their appurtenance and loyalty to the Republic of Somalia and endorsed its National flag and slightly modified State-arms. However, after the Transitional Federative Charter reserved the national symbols of Somalia for its Transitional Federal Government in 2004 this practice had to be changed. In 2003, such a change occurred unofficially in Puntland for the first time. After the constitutional provision about identity of the Puntland's and Somalia's flag (originally assumed for 12 months only) had to be prolonged repeatedly for more than five years it was evident that such a distinguishing symbol would be necessary for the country. There have been some variations of an unofficial flag of Puntland putting a white Somali star into the blue disc in the centre of the horizontal tricolour of green, white,

and red, or replacing the central white stripe by the blue one with a white star in its centre again. However, the most popular was the model completing the tricolour with a blue triangle at the hoist charged with a five-pointed star that expressed supremacy of the federative state of Somalia. Many mini-states arranged their flags in this way in 2010s. Another method of modification of the Somali National flag for the same purpose was to add some new figures on it – from simple two narrow stripes added to the flag's bottom part (Maakhir 2008-2009) up to many new figures, letters etc. placed on the flag's field (SSC unofficial). At third: in case of horizontally striped regional flags, the uppermost stripe is usually designated for the National flag depiction. If the flag is striped vertically, a blue stripe charged with a Somali star is positioned at the hoist, i.e. in the place of honour, too. The fourth possibility how to exploit the National symbolism on the regional flag is to add it in form of a canton or another geometric shape used when the flag has been constructed. The fifth and last manner of the National flag's projection into the regional symbol is the use of its colours – white and blue – in an expressive amount with a minor application of the third colour, mainly green for Islam.

Finally, it is possible to state that regional flags hoisted in Somalia also reflect absolutely prevailing representation of Somalia on themselves. Really, flags in Somalia show Somalia in flags!



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Biography of the author:

Jaroslav Martykán is a Czech citizen born on the 14th July 1948. He studied Finance and Credit at the Prague University of Economics from 1966 to 1971. In 1973, he joined the foreign trade company SKODAEXPORT, Ltd. where he retired in 2011 as the financial project manager. He is a founding member of the Czech Vexillological Society (the former Vexilologický Klub, 1972), which he has served in numerous capacities, including its President since 2004. His vexillological interests are: flags of municipalities, sports clubs and other entities in the Czech Republic, as well as historical flags of Czech origins; he is also interested in Turkish vexillology. He publishes in the bulletin Vexilogie, of which he was executive editor between 1975 and 1983. Since 1997, he edits the annual publication Vexilokontakt, in which the most interesting articles from the CVS bulletin Vexilogie have been published in English.

