

Political Recognition or Geostrategic Investment?

(Translated)

Al-Rayah Newspaper - Issue 581 - 07/01/2026

By: Ustadh Nabil Abdel Karim

For over three decades, Somaliland has existed in a unique situation within the international order. It is a territory possessing the attributes of a state in terms of administration, security, and relative stability. However, it lacks the crucial element in international law: international recognition as an independent state.

Recently, the region's name has resurfaced strongly, driven by reports and analyses pointing to growing interest from the Jewish entity in bringing the issue of Somaliland before the international community for recognition as an independent state separate from Somalia, in exchange for conditions and commitments that Somaliland would undertake should such recognition be granted.

The roots of the issue trace back to the colonialist era. Somaliland was a British protectorate until 1960, before voluntarily uniting with Italian Somaliland to form what is known today as Somalia. This merger occurred without balanced constitutional arrangements, resulting in a profound imbalance in the distribution of power and wealth. With the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, the country descended into civil war. In 1991, the northern political and clan elite unilaterally declared independence, re-establishing the "Republic of Somaliland."

Despite this unilateral declaration of independence and the lack of international recognition, Somaliland managed to build a model that differed somewhat from the rest of Somalia. It established local governing institutions, held internal elections, and created security forces that maintained a minimum level of stability, in addition to developing limited foreign relations. It operates within a complex regional environment as an internationally unrecognized entity, yet compelled to cultivate external relations to ensure its security, economy, and survival.

Its foreign policy rests on two fundamental principles: first, avoiding direct confrontation with neighboring countries, and second, forging pragmatic, non-sovereign understandings instead of full international agreements.

Its relationship with Ethiopia is of paramount importance; Ethiopia is a landlocked country, and the port of Berbera serves as a vital gateway to the Gulf of Aden. Therefore, Ethiopia relies on Somaliland as a political and economic lever, and there are trade, logistical, and security understandings between them including unofficial diplomatic representation. However, Ethiopia has not officially recognized Somaliland to avoid a confrontation with the Somali government.

Regarding its relationship with Djibouti, it is a normalized one, characterized by clan and border cooperation, alongside clear competition, especially concerning ports. Djibouti opposes Somaliland's secession and supports a unified Somalia.

Its relationship with the Somali Federal Government is marked by political estrangement and conflict as Mogadishu considers Somaliland a rebellious region. Its relationship with Puntland is deeply hostile as Puntland believes in federalism within the Somali state, unlike Somaliland which advocates for independence.

Thus, it can be said that Somaliland is not entirely isolated, but it is politically besieged; it has practical partners, not formal allies, within limited understandings. Somaliland has returned to the forefront of international attention due to its location on a global trade and security corridor, making it a focal point in the struggle for influence in the Horn of Africa between the United States, China, Russia, Turkey, the Gulf States and the Jewish entity. This comes amidst the increasing weakness of the central Somali government and its growing dependence on external support.

In this context, the Jewish entity has raised the issue of recognizing Somaliland on the political stage. Benjamin Netanyahu announced his intention to recognize it as an independent state, within the framework of the Abraham Accords, on Friday, December 27, 2025. This proposal was met with near-total international rejection. The Somali government, on the same day, categorically rejected Jewish entity's recognition of what it calls the "separatist region."

The Jewish entity's approach is driven by several motives, most notably: the strategic advantage of Somaliland's geographical location, which would grant it an additional geostrategic presence in a region close to the Middle East, and the desire to strengthen its engagement in the Abraham Accords process and expand the circle of normalization in Africa and the Middle East. Discussions have also taken place regarding the possibility of resettling Palestinians in this territory. These proposals are used as political maneuvers within the context of displacement projects, whether as part of previous American plans or ongoing attempts to revive them.

These moves cannot be understood as a moral step by an entity that has occupied land, displaced its people, and continues to commit genocide and forced displacement against them. Instead, these developments must be interpreted within the strategic doctrine of this Jewish entity, where recognizing Somaliland serves to defend policies of imposing a fait accompli, redefine the concept of international legitimacy, and justify establishing relations with unrecognized entities. This is a long-term legal investment, not an innocent precedent.

Despite the potential geopolitical gains this recognition may bring, it is not without political and security risks that may outweigh the anticipated benefits, especially in a volatile region like the Horn of Africa. Among the most prominent of these risks are: antagonizing the African Union, which rejects altering borders inherited from colonialism; hindering the Jewish entity's efforts to obtain observer status within African institutions; and opening the door to power struggles with Somalia, Turkey, and Egypt. This weakens the legal discourse of the Jewish entity itself regarding the rejection of imposing a fait accompli by force, and transforms the Somaliland issue from a strategic opportunity into a political and security burden.

The Somaliland issue once again highlights the transformation of the Horn of Africa into an arena of open conflict for influence, where geopolitical calculations take precedence over the principles of international law, a clear indication of the fragility of the global order. The Jewish entity's interest in this region does not stem from a vacuum, but instead from an understanding of its geographical, maritime, and security importance, especially in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea.

The future of Somaliland is not contingent on a decision by this entity or any other, but is rather linked to the balance of power in the Horn of Africa, and to the ability of local and regional actors to realize that dismantling fragile states may yield short-term gains. However, it often opens the door to conflicts that are longer and deeper than anyone can control.

In light of American plans to divide the countries of the region, especially Muslim countries, into small, warring entities, and to fuel power struggles within them to cripple their infrastructure and drain their people and resources, it becomes imperative for the people of the region to be aware of these schemes, designed to divide their homelands and plunder their wealth for the benefit of the colonialist through agent rulers whose only concern is preserving their posts and riches at the expense of their countries and people.

O People of Somalia, O People of Africa: The fundamental solution for restoring dignity and honor lies in committing to this Ummah's project of resuming the Islamic way of life by establishing the Second Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate) on the Method of the Prophethood, and expelling the colonialist from our lands. This will not be achieved through mere wishes, but by removing the ruling faction that governs by man-made laws, designed to serve Western interests and distance the Ummah from its Deen which is the safeguard of its affairs.