

Djibouti

Ethnicity in Djibouti

Group selection

Djibouti, a former French colony, became independent on June 27, 1977. Within Djibouti, two main politically relevant ethnic groups may be discerned: the Afars and the Somalis (an overwhelming majority of whom belong to the Issa clan, while much of the remaining Somalis belong to the Gadaboursi clan from neighboring Somaliland). To assess respective group sizes, an average estimate is derived from Fearon⁽⁹⁶⁹⁾ and the CIA's World Factbook⁽⁹⁷⁰⁾: accordingly the Somali population numbers about 55% of the population, while the Afar numbers around (36%). The Afar settlements are predominantly located in the rural North and Western areas of country, but extending as far south to Lac Abbe, while the Somalis live in Djibouti's southern third and also form a majority in the capital, Djibouti-city⁽⁹⁷¹⁾, 269). Besides, within Djibouti-city, a small Arab population (mostly from Yemen) also exist⁽⁹⁷²⁾, 218), as well as a tiny ethnic Indian community (Based on the author own experience in Djibouti). However, none of these latter ethnic groups articulate any over political claims, and thus they are not coded as politically relevant for the period 1977-2013. Due to the continued French military presence, a large expatriate French population also live in the country, although it size has shrunk over time, as France has diminished its military assets over the years to about 2'000 in 2013⁽⁹⁷³⁾.

⁹⁶⁹ [Fearon, J.D., 2003]

⁹⁷⁰ [CIA, 2008]

⁹⁷¹ [Abdallah, 2008]

⁹⁷² [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁷³ [Armee Francaise, 2014]

Power relations

Background: In general, the "divide and rule" colonial policies practiced by France has had tremendous influences over the salience of ethnic identities in Djibouti. Historically, the Somali population had enjoyed an advanced position (in terms of access to education and positions in the administration) in the "Cete francais des Somalis" by virtue of their demographic majority in Djibouti-city, the French administrative seat for most of the colonial period. In addition, the need for Labor forced the French to encourage Somali immigration from neighboring Ethiopia and British Somaliland.⁽⁹⁷⁴⁾, 211,215; ⁹⁷⁵, 271) However, the independence of Somalia and its goal of unification of the Somali people, led the French colonial government to alter its policies and favor the Afar people in 1963, in order to defend its interest and preserve the maintenance of a French outpost in

⁹⁷⁴ [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁷⁵ [Abdallah, 2008]

the Horn of Africa. The Afars were perceived to be generally against independence, while the Somalis did support pan-Somalism (⁹⁷⁶, 213.) Apart from renaming the territory into "Territoire francais des Afars and Issas", the chief policies implemented by the French were the redrawing of the electoral map in order to favor the Afar population and the denying of voting rights to newly emigrated Somalis (⁹⁷⁷). Yet, the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia and cold war politics, led the French to swap their support once again shortly before independence in favor of the Somali ethnic group, this time. As a result, they acceded to the demands for independence, but not before changing again the electoral rules and recognizing the political rights of Somali immigrants, which brought about a new legislative assembly this time dominated by the Somalis (⁹⁷⁸, 216-9).

⁹⁷⁶ [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁷⁷ [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁷⁸ [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

Developments since independence: At independence, a power-sharing government between the Somali/Issa and the afar ethnic groups took over the country (⁹⁷⁹, 221). Key in the architecture was a provision for a dual executive, with the Somali, Hassan Gouled Aptidon, as President and the Afar, Ahmed Dini as Prime minister (⁹⁸⁰, 220; ⁹⁸¹, 273). The Somalis are therefore coded as being Senior Partner and the Afar as Junior Partner for the year 1977.

⁹⁷⁹ [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁸⁰ [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁸¹ [Abdallah, 2008]

1978-1994: However, just a few months after independence, President Gouled proceeded to strengthen Somali/Issa control over the national executive by dismissing Afar officials in the security forces, nominating kin Somali from his Manmassan clan in key position, as well as strengthening the office of the President at the expense of the office of the Prime Minister. These events led to the resignation of Prime Minister Ahmed Dini (⁹⁸², 221, ⁹⁸³, 273). Hassan Gouled further strengthened his position in 1981, by banning all opposition parties, a measure which was primarily intended to target the Afar parties. As a result of Afar exclusion, political violence was on the rise during the 1980s. Confronted to the government unwillingness to respond to Afar grievances, the "Front pour la restauration de l'unité et la démocratie" was formed in August 1991 out of several Afar opposition groups and proceed to launch an armed insurrection later in the year (⁹⁸⁴, 276). The civil war lasted until 1994 and saw the FRUD controlling large segments of the country, before gradually being pushed back by the government (⁹⁸⁵, 276). A peace agreement was finally signed by the Government of Djibouti and the rebels in 1994, which among others comprised provisions in favor of a power-sharing government with the Afar population, including cabinet positions for members of the FRUD, and a decentralization process (⁹⁸⁶, 277). The government had previously lifted the ban on opposition parties in 1992 (⁹⁸⁷). In light of continued exclusion of the Afar people during the period extending from 1978 until the peace agreement the 1994, the Afar are coded as Powerless and the Somalia as Dominant. This coding is warranted as a few Afars remained in the Djiboutian executive during this period, such as the long-time

⁹⁸² [Shemim and Searing, 1980]

⁹⁸³ [Abdallah, 2008]

⁹⁸⁴ [Abdallah, 2008]

⁹⁸⁵ [Abdallah, 2008]

⁹⁸⁶ [Abdallah, 2008]

prime minister, Barkat Gourad Hamadou, but without any effective decision-making power (for the ethnicity of the prime minister, see 988).

1995-2013: As a result of the 1994 peace agreement, the share of Afars in the cabinet increased and the FRUD was legalized as a political party. In particular, from the outset two former FRUD leaders joined the government (Department of State 2000). Significantly, a radical faction within the FRUD, led by Ahmed Dini, rejected the peace agreement and vowed to fight on. Recurrent fighting lasted until 2000 and the signing of another peace deal with the radical fraction of FRUD, along the line of the previous 1994 agreement, which reiterated the call for power-sharing, decentralization and the integration of former rebels in the security sector (⁹⁸⁹, 277). Based on data from the US Department of State, the 1994 and 2000 peace agreements did indeed result in a power-sharing arrangement, although systematic data is for the major part of the period is not available. The cabinet was composed of at least five afar members in 2007 –including the prime minister, the minister of defense, the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of agriculture and the minister of labor-, the share of Afar in the cabinet was later increased to 8 in 2013 against 11 Somalis (⁹⁹⁰). Significantly, the moderate FRUD fraction joined the ruling party "Rassemblement populaire pour le progres" in a coalition called the "Union pour la majorite presidentielle" in the run-up to the 2003 legislative elections. The electoral alliance has been maintained ever since (⁹⁹¹). As a result of the peace agreements, the Afars coded are being included in a Junior Partner power status for the period extending 1995 to 2013 periods, while the Somalis are coded as being Senior Partner. There remains nonetheless some uncertainty regarding the location of effective executive powers, i.e. in the cabinet or within a small group of close advisor to the Presidents Hassan Gouled and Ismael Omar Guelleh (at least when it comes to security issues). However given the extent of power-sharing between Somalis and Afar (as reflected by composition of the cabinet for the period), it is appropriate to code the Afars as "junior partner" and not as "excluded" from executive power.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that despite the integration of the Afar in the executive, they remain victim of significant socio-economic marginalization. In addition to the failure to implement a meaningful decentralization and regional autonomy for the Afar as provided by the peace agreements, these grievances have led to occasional outburst of political violence, most recently in 2010 (⁹⁹²).

⁹⁸⁹ [Abdallah, 2008]

⁹⁹⁰ [United States Government State Department, 2000]

⁹⁹¹ [Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2014]

⁹⁹² [Voice of America, 2010]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Djibouti

From 1977 until 1977

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Isaas (Somali)	0.55	SENIOR PARTNER
Afar	0.36	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1978 until 1994

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Isaas (Somali)	0.55	DOMINANT
Afar	0.36	POWERLESS

From 1995 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Isaas (Somali)	0.55	SENIOR PARTNER
Afar	0.36	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 225: Political status of ethnic groups in Djibouti during 1977-1977.



Figure 226: Political status of ethnic groups in Djibouti during 1978-1994.



Figure 227: Political status of ethnic groups in Djibouti during 1995-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Djibouti

From 1977 until 2013

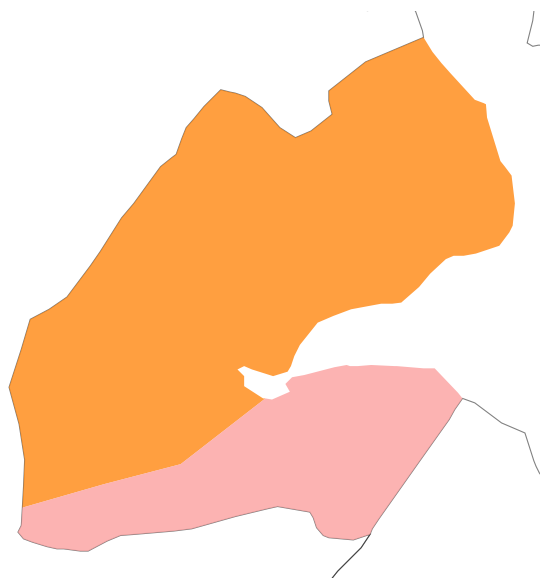


Figure 228: Map of ethnic groups in Djibouti during 1995-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Afar	15 947	Regional & urban
■ Isaas (Somali)	5572	Regional & urban

Table 67: List of ethnic groups in Djibouti during 1977-2013.

Conflicts in Djibouti

Starting on 1991-11-12

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Djibouti	FRUD	Afar	1991-11-12	Explicit	Yes	
Government of Djibouti	FRUD - AD	Afar	1997-09-01	Explicit	Yes	

Starting on 2008-06-10

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Djibouti	Government of Eritrea		2008-06-10			