



## **WRITENET Country Papers**

### **SOMALIA: CIVIL WAR, INTERVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL 1990 - 1995 (July 1995)**

**By Gérard Prunier - WRITENET (UK)**

---

THIS ISSUE PAPER WAS PREPARED BY WRITENET ON THE BASIS OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION, ANALYSIS AND COMMENT. ALL SOURCES ARE CITED. THIS PAPER IS NOT, AND DOES NOT PURPORT TO BE, EITHER EXHAUSTIVE WITH REGARD TO CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY SURVEYED, OR CONCLUSIVE AS TO THE MERITS OF ANY PARTICULAR CLAIM TO REFUGEE STATUS OR ASYLUM.

WRITENET IS A NETWORK OF RESEARCHERS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, FORCED MIGRATION AND ETHNIC AND POLITICAL CONFLICT. WRITENET IS SUBSIDIARY OF PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT (UK)

---

#### **1. A NATION IN SEARCH OF A STATE (1885 - 1992)<sup>1</sup>**

##### **1.1 The Peculiar Nature of Somali Society**

Somalia is not a 'country' like any other. And in many ways, it is neither 'African' nor 'Arab', although it is located on the African continent and has often been considered 'Arab' in some ways. In 1974, Somalia joined the Arab League of which it is still formally a member. The Somali people, or the Somali nation, is an unquestionable reality. But the Somali state is a much more ambiguous notion which has for the time being receded into the gray zone of a legal abstraction, probably for a good many years to come. This situation is all the more puzzling since at the time of its independence in 1960 Somalia was described as one of the few mono-ethnic states in Africa, one with a common language, a common culture and a single religion, Islam. While this was probably an exaggeration, it was substantially true<sup>2</sup>. In any case, the challenge to the existence of the Somali state did not come from the non-Somali people of the South, but from the very core of the mainstream Somali-speaking society, that is the very society which had hitherto been described as one of the most homogeneous on the continent. This phenomenon obviously begs for an explanation. And the explanation is not too complicated, since it lies in the very nature of Somali society itself.

Somali society, like many nomadic societies of arid and semi-arid lands, is largely a product of its geographical and climatic environment. The land is very dry and it generally does not permit sedentary agriculture, except in the South, between the Juba and Wabi Shebelle rivers. Hence the social differences between 'pure' Somali and the Southern Peoples. As a result, people move, with their herds of camels, goats and sheep, forever in search of good pastures and water. Such a world is not conducive to any form of economic surplus or economic accumulation. Without economic accumulation, there are no possibilities of permanent settlements, of cities and of the distinct political structures we have called 'the state'. In such societies, politics are diffused throughout the whole social body and not separated, specialised so to speak, in a 'state' form, since people are forever moving. And since their movements imply frequent frictions in the competition over the control of

pastures and wells, several consequences arise:

Firstly - blood ties are the only connections a man is sure of. One's kin group makes the only tangible social reality which explains the enormous, overpowering importance of genealogy and the lineage system.

Secondly - armed conflicts between roving groups, usually representing distinct kinship groups, are frequent.

Thirdly - since the 'state' per se does not exist, some sort of mechanism has to be found so that the conflicts do not degenerate to the point where they would be threatening the very survival of the kin groups. The only basis for such a mechanism is the lineage system itself. In Somali, these group-conflict rules are called *xeer*<sup>3</sup>, and their supporting genealogical network *jiffo*.

Nomadic groups move and they fight. After a while the groups stop, meet and hold a *shir* (palaver), they agree on compensation and the payment of blood-price (*mag*). They may remain at peace for some time or ally with another kin-based related segment against other enemies. And life goes on. It is that 'classical' society we find so well described in the works of Professor Lewis<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.2 The Colonial Inheritance (1885 - 1960)

During so-called 'scramble for Africa' of the nineteenth century, this lineage-segmented but culturally homogeneous population was arbitrarily divided into five distinct colonial units:

- Côte Française des Somalis - colonized by France, this is today the Republic of Djibouti, independent since 1977.
- British Somaliland - colonized by Great Britain, it became independent in June 1960 and joined three days later with Somalia Italiana to create the Somali Republic as it existed between 1960 and 1990.
- The Ogaden - conquered by Ethiopia between 1887 and 1895, it became an integral part of the Ethiopian Empire. It is now the so-called 'Region Five' of present day Ethiopia.
- Somalia Italiana - colonized by Italy. After Italy's defeat in 1941, it was under a British military administration until 1948 when the United Nations gave back a quasi-colonial mandate to Rome over its former colony. The territory was then ruled between 1948 and 1960 by the Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana (AFIS) before becoming independent in June 1960 and immediately being joined by the northern British Somaliland territory to form the Somali Republic, which lasted until 1990.
- The Northern Frontier District - colonised by the British as the northeastern corner of Kenya's Crown Colony. In 1963, at the time of Kenya's independence, the new government in Nairobi refused the local Somali demands for detachment from the new state and reunion with the Somali Republic<sup>5</sup>.

This five-fold division became a sort of obsession for the Somali people, especially since the Somali had been generally 'united' in one form or another between 1936 and 1948<sup>6</sup>. Later, this dream of unity became a mainstay of the Somali

independence movement<sup>7</sup>. After two of the five Somali 'parts' had indeed become united in 1960, regaining the other three became a national goal which had precedence over any other. This almost obsessive driving force led to refusal of the Somali Republic to sign the 1963 OAU charter which stated as one of its guiding principles the respect of the borders inherited from colonization<sup>8</sup>. It also had a rather disastrous political effect.

The Somali people, as shown above, had been an essentially stateless society. Their vision of unity led them to rush unquestioningly forward into independence without a thought as to how their government was going to be organised. The state was thus both a foreign and an unquestioned entity. It was perceived as being two completely heterogeneous things - a direct continuation of the colonial state, and, at the same time, a tool for the 'reconquest' of the lost Somali territories.

Neither of these two functions of the state were obvious. Even the first one was much more ambiguous than in most post-colonial African countries. The post-colonial state was heir to two completely different colonial traditions: the British administration in the North, which had barely imposed itself on its Somali subjects and had for the most part left the traditional customs of *xeer* untouched, and the Italian fascist colonial rule in the South whose extremely authoritarian philosophy had led to the nearly complete destruction of indigenous forms of political and social control<sup>9</sup>.

Initially, this duality of political traditions was completely overlooked in the 'unitary' enthusiasm of independence. This did not last long. As early as 1961, Northern military officers tried to carry out a military coup d'état in the former British Somaliland with the aim of breaking away from the recently achieved union. And the unravelling of the Somali Republic down to its present fragmented state could later be traced to the guerrilla war initiated by the Northern (misleadingly called) Somali National Movement (SNM) which fought its way to independence between 1981 and 1991.

'Somali-ness' was perceived in the 1940s and 1950s as a quasi-mystical quality which would enable the Somali people to override the difficulties both of creating a modern state in a Muslim stateless nomadic society and of creating that state from two distinct and almost totally antagonistic European traditions. This led to a constant emphasis on the role of the state as a tool for the 'reunification' of all Somali territories under one government. Obsessed with this national aim, the Somali people gave scant regard to their domestic politics, an oversight which was to prove costly.

### 1.3 Post-Independence Politics (1960 - 1978)

The regime adopted for the unified Somali Republic of 1960 was a parliamentary democracy. It lasted from June 1960 to October 1969 in a constant state of confusion. There were up to 60 political parties, all expressions of the various clans and sub-clans. But as soon as the elections were over, they all rallied to the dominant Somali Youth League (SYL), the nationalist party which had been nurtured by the British Military Administration between 1941 and 1948. Since the SYL was the only 'national' party with a support that was relatively broadly based across the clans, the various other parties which were in fact clan-based interest groups, rallied to the SYL dominated government in order to be able to 'benefit' from the state. Thus the country lived both with a myriad of parties and a de-facto single party. This system led to massive corruption and a strong disenchantment on the part of the public towards its government. In October 1969, a group of 'progressive officers' in the Nasserian tradition took power in a bloodless coup d'état.

The new government had all the trappings of the then fashionable 'socialist' military

regimes: a single party, a single trade union, a strongly controlled press, close ties with the USSR, and mass organizations for women, youth and 'workers'. Given the emphasis on the 'reunification of the Somali people', it also had an aggressive foreign policy and spent a massive share of its budget on military expenses. Since the regime's potential foes (Ethiopia, Kenya and France) were all, in the Cold War context of the time, close American allies, Somalia entered into very close relations with the USSR and the government declared itself to be an adherent of 'scientific socialism' to please its new Soviet friends. 'Progressive' foreign intellectuals duly tried to discover the social and economic basis for a 'road to socialism' in this nomadic culture<sup>10</sup> and Mogadishu received massive military help from the Eastern Bloc.

In some ways, the regime did try to foster national unity across the clans. The introduction of the written Somali language in 1970, a near prohibition of the mention of clans (all Somali were *jaale* to each other, i.e. 'comrade' and asking a person's clan affiliation was an offence which could lead to prosecution) and a programme of road-building designed to link together the various areas of the country, all contributed to a form of national unity. But the monolithic vision of the state derived from the communist model was also in many practical ways a carbon-copy of the fascist colonial state which had ruled Southern Somalia for so long<sup>11</sup>. This, and the general preference given to Southerners in the administration, tended to antagonise the British-trained northern elite.

Ever mindful of the need to flatter public opinion on the question of Somali unity, General Siad Barre supported the various movements which were challenging the ruling powers holding sway over Somali-populated areas outside the country. In Kenya, the *shifita* movement of the 1960s was slowly dying out. But Mogadishu helped the nationalist movement in Djibouti<sup>12</sup> in the hope that the small territory could be united with Somalia if independence came. And it supported the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in the Ogaden province of Ethiopia. With the beginning of the Ethiopian revolution (1974), Addis-Ababa's hold over the Ogaden weakened noticeably as Ethiopian army units converged on the capital to take part in the revolution. This encouraged the WLSF to step up its guerrilla operations, and in 1977, regular Somali troops invaded the area. This precipitated one of the most sudden and violent re-alignments of the Cold War: the Ethiopian revolutionary leadership called for help from Moscow and Soviet authorities quickly decided to change sides. In the middle of the battle the USSR dispatched a massive contingent of troops and armour to the Ethiopian side, backed by a large Cuban expeditionary corps (15,000 men) and by military technicians from various Eastern Bloc countries, mainly South Yemen and East Germany. Within a few months they rolled back the Somali invasion and won the war (1978).

This defeat was to have tremendous consequences for the apparently totalitarian state built by Siad Barre and his military establishment. It revealed its basic weakness (absence of a cultural and social base) and its complete dependence on the Army and the ideology of a 'Greater Somalia'. Both these last two entities were now in a rout, the Army physically (thousands of soldiers fleeing in disarray from the advancing Soviet-Ethiopian forces) and the myth of 'Greater Somalia' symbolically. Deprived of any foreign support<sup>13</sup>, and faced with a combined military, economic, ideological and political crisis, the Siad Barre régime was going to revert to the only political resource it had left, the clan system.

#### 1.4 The Politics of State Disintegration (1978 - 1990)

In the spring of 1978, as the Somali army fell back in defeat, a group of Majerteen officers tried to stage a coup d'état and to overthrow the now weakened Siad Barre dictatorship. The coup d'état failed and was drowned in blood. Not only were the coup-makers shot, but the whole clan was made responsible for what had

happened: for about a year, the Northeastern area of the country, home to the Majerteen (who had occupied a prominent place in the 'democratic' system of the years 1960-1969), was subjected to looting, rape and murder. Siad Barre now felt them to be a global threat to his power. Many young men of the clan fled to Ethiopia where one of the leaders of the coup d'état, Colonel Yussuf Abdullahi, organised an opposition guerrilla front, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). Due both to the Cold War context and to the traditional Somali-Ethiopian rivalry, the SSDF received support from President Mengistu and his communist allies.

It was then that in order to counter what had now become a clan-based political threat, President Siad Barre resorted to clan-based answers. His régime, which in its 'socialist' heyday had prided itself on a unitary anti-clan ideological position now began to systematically use a clan system of political patronage in order to strengthen itself. If we keep in mind the deeply clan-based nature of Somali traditional society and the lack of any form of 'national' foundations for state structures, this was a dangerous game to play in the long run, even if short term benefits could be alluring.

In order to counter the Majerteen threat, President Siad Barre relied mainly on three clans: the small Marehan, his father's clan, the large Ogadeen clan (his mother's clan) whose members lived mostly in the Ethiopian Ogaden province, and the medium-sized northern clan of the Dolbahante. The patronage system thus constituted was nicknamed MOD (short for Marehan-Ogadeen-Dolbahante) and soon MOD civil servants, superior officers and businessmen began to occupy the top ranks of Somali society. Since all three clans belonged to the same clan-family (the Darod), this tended to alienate not only the Majerteen, but also members of the other large clan families, especially the northern Issaq, who make up about 80 per cent of the population of the former British Somaliland, and the centrally-located Hawiye.

Although President Siad Barre was careful to keep a few token Issaq and Hawiye in a handful of lucrative positions, he was also careful about excluding them from political or military positions of importance. The Issaq, particularly, were in a difficult position vis-à-vis the régime. The 1978 defeat had caused large numbers of Ogadeen Somali to flee the advancing Ethiopian armies sent to reconquer the Ogaden province. Later, further communist-inspired policies of compulsory settlement and villagization forced new waves of refugees over the border. It was very difficult to accommodate these refugees since the country had only limited means<sup>14</sup>. But the Somali regime quickly realised that they could in fact become an economic resource, and exploiting the support available through the international community became a national policy.

Meanwhile, the actual fate of the refugees became the object of a political tug of war. President Siad Barre, with his dislike for the Issaq, organised Ogadeni settlements in the North. Since the Ogadeen were considered to be supporters of the régime, they were systematically armed and a number of them became militiamen in charge of 'keeping order' in the former British colony. Given the differences of education and lifestyle between the newcomers and the urbanised residents of a number of northern Somali towns, tensions developed. The Issaq had traditionally been very adventurous. Most of the Somali expatriates in the Arab petromonarchies were Issaq and their remittances supported a fairly prosperous economy in the North. In the rural areas, armed clashes multiplied (especially in the Hawd border area) between Issaq pastoralists and their Ogadeen rivals who felt they had the backing of the government. These clashes quickly degenerated as the government tried to play a double game: if the Ogadeen won, the government would treat the military confrontation as a 'law enforcement problem' and pretend to be agents of a neutral entity called 'the Somali Republic'; if they lost, they would pretend that the problem was traditional fighting between nomad groups and try to extricate themselves from it by paying the customary *mag* (blood money) of the



xeer system. As a result, both the 'modern' legitimacy of the state and the 'traditional' legitimacy of the clan-based xeer were undermined, opening the door to a cynical form of anomic gun rule which was later to become prevalent throughout the Somali space<sup>15</sup>. One result of the alienation of the Issaq clans caused by these policies, was that Issaq exiles in Great Britain in 1981 created the Somali National Movement (SNM), a guerrilla front dedicated to the overthrow of the Siad Barre dictatorship. In spite of its pro-western liberal membership, SNM leaders soon moved to Ethiopia where they joined the SSDF in challenging the régime through Ethiopian-supported armed action. The two organizations, the SSDF and the SNM, remained separate and mostly rival organizations, narrowly organised along clan lines and competing for Ethiopian backing. Both, the SSDF and SNM, denied this and pretended to have ambitions of 'national' reform. To support this myth both included a few non-Majerteen or non-Issaq among their official leadership, but the fighters themselves belonged to their respective 'nucleus' clans and the real operational leaders were chosen exclusively along clan lines. Thus, from the beginning, the opposition to a clan-based regime was itself clan-based.

The turning point in the armed opposition to the dictatorship of Mohamed Siad Barre came in 1988. In that year, after suffering a major defeat in the war against the Eritrean independence movement at the battle of Afabet, Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam decided to make peace with Somalia in order to free his troops, which were still involved in the aftermath of the conflict with Mogadishu in the East, although the war had ended in 1978 without any sort of formal peace agreement being signed. As part of an eventual peace agreement between the two régimes, both agreed to stop supporting the other's opposition.

The SSDF had disintegrated since 1985 due to internal strife caused by Colonel Yussuf Abdullahi's violent authoritarianism. But the SNM was very much in battle order. When it realized that 'peace' between Mogadishu and Addis-Ababa would mean an end to its activities, it launched a desperate all-or-nothing offensive against the major towns of northern Somalia, briefly taking Hargeisa and Burao. The counter-attack by government troops was extremely violent. Hargeisa, which lies in a valley at the foot of high hills was shelled with heavy artillery and bombarded day and night from the air<sup>16</sup>. There were thousands of civilian casualties and a massive stream of refugees towards Ethiopia. The SNM fought stubbornly on and the war reached a high pitch of intensity. Given the clan-support system of the regime, the Dolbahante and Gaddabursi clans in the North were encouraged to organise their own militias to support the 'national' army. Since the SNM was not a 'national' guerrilla front but 'the armed expression of the Issaq people'<sup>17</sup>, the government's counter-guerrilla policy in fact generated increasing levels of clan strife.

Non-MOD elements of the 'national' army began to have strong reservations about the northern war and Hawiye officers started to desert. In the South, sensing that the regime was weakening, the Hawiye clan had started to organise its own dissident movement, the United Somali Congress (USC) by late 1989. Since this movement was short of military capacity it 'recalled' a former hero of the 1977-78 war, General Mohamed Farah Aydeed, from his position as Somali Ambassador to India. General Aydeed answered his clansmen's call and went to Ethiopia to help organise the armed wing of the USC, thus spreading the war to the provinces of Galgudud and Hiran.

By 1990, the Ogadeen, fearing that they might go down with the regime, also decided to create their own 'opposition' front, the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), which started to operate against what was left of the 'national' army in the southern provinces of Bay and Lower Juba.

Towards the end of 1990, the government did not control more than 10 or 15 per cent of the 'national' territory and doom was in the air<sup>18</sup>. The rest of the country was

in the hands of a variety of clan-based political movements, the SNM in the Northwest, a revived SSDF in the Northeast, the USC in the Centre and the SPM in the South. In January 1991, several irregular units of these various movements converged on the capital which quickly fell into their hands. On 27 January 1991, former dictator Mohamed Siad Barre fled in a tank, taking with him the gold and foreign currency reserves of the Central Bank, worth an estimated US\$ 27 million. A new era was about to start.

### 1.5 The Disappearance of the State (1991)

The violent takeover of the capital was due to the fact that it had not been possible to negotiate any political solution during the dying days of the dictatorship. Efforts had been made in that direction, though, and they were to leave consequences behind. In the spring of 1990, a group of politicians had published a manifesto, calling for President Siad Barre to resign and for a national conference to be convened. Their call had gone unheeded - in fact several had been detained by the sinking regime, thereby preventing any last chance of an orderly transition of power. The initiative had at any rate been rather ambiguous: on the one hand, it attracted moderates who rightly feared the consequences of an armed takeover of Mogadishu, but, on the other hand, it also attracted members of the Siad Barre régime who were trying to secure their own survival. Since both Italy and Egypt had supported to the very end the idea of a 'reconciliation conference' in Cairo, the Manifesto group had gathered around itself a number of 'moderates' or 'survivors' who were looking for a way out. They rapidly found common ground in late 1990 with the Rome branch of the USC. Since early 1989, the USC had been split between an 'external' branch based in Italy and an 'internal' branch based in Ethiopia. The 'internal' branch was under the control of General Mohamed Farah Aydeed and was the only one which was physically involved in the fighting against the Siad Barre regime. In October 1990, the 'internal' USC, the SPM and the SNM had signed an agreement not to negotiate with the régime and not to act to create a new political leadership without consulting each other. But in the confusion following the fall of the dictatorship, a leader of the 'external' USC who was also a Manifesto signatory, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, was proclaimed 'president' by his close associates. Ali Mahdi was a relatively unknown figure, owner of one of Mogadishu's best hotels and married to one of the former President's advisers on public health matters. He was surrounded by several veterans of the former régime, such as the long-serving Finance Minister Mohamed Sheikh Osman and Ahmed Jilow, a former head of the Secret Police. General Aydeed, the SPM and the SNM refused to accept the 'election' of Ali Mahdi, and the civil war among the victors started almost immediately after the fall of General Siad Barre (29 January 1991). It was to last for over 18 months and eventually lead to foreign intervention.

It is perhaps useful at this point to review the array of clan political organizations which by then had divided the country among themselves<sup>19</sup>. These should be seen neither as 'traditional' clan structures (most of them had appeared only since 1990) nor as 'modern' political organizations. They were 'bastardized' entities, based on clan recruitment (although far from including all clan members), trying to pass themselves off as 'popular organizations'. They all operated more or less well armed militias and tried to trade the local nuisance capacity they had in their home areas against access to foreign aid. Some were mostly defensive (in the South especially, among the sedentary peoples of the inter-riverine region), but most were offensive and represented a sort of cutting edge of their clan as well as a fixation point for the disaffected anomic young fighters called *mooryaan* ('dispossessed ones'), who were feared almost equally by friend and foe alike.

**The Somali National Movement (SNM)** One of the oldest organizations, having been created in 1981, it is the political expression of the Issaq clan family. By the time the dictatorship fell, it had acquired military control over the whole of the former British Somaliland (former provinces of Northwest, Togdher, Sanag and part

of Nugal) where it was to proclaim an independent state in May 1991. The SNM was indisputably the most 'democratic' of all the fronts, since it had five elected presidents since its creation, all of whom had served a full term in office, to be replaced by an elected successor.

**The Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)** The first of all organizations, since it was created in 1978, the SSDF had been revived in 1989 after an eclipse of almost four years. A direct expression of the Majerteen clans, it acquired control of the Northeast at the fall of Siad Barre (former provinces of Galgudud and Mudug, the eastern part of Nugal and the former Eastern Province). Its leadership was divided into three, following the lines of the three major Majerteen clans: Colonel Yusuf Abdullahi represented the Omar Mahmood clan, General Mohamed Abshir the Isse Mahmood and Yusuf Omar al-Azhari the Osman Mahmood.

**The United Somali Congress (USC)** This was not a unified organization for very long. As early as 1990, even before the Siad Barre regime fell, it had split into a moderate external branch based in Rome and a military internal branch, with rear bases in Ethiopia. In January 1991, the external branch 'elected' Ali Mahdi Mohamed as 'President of Somalia', an act which reflected the increased antagonism between two of the main Hawiye clans making up the USC, the Abgal (Ali Mahdi's clan) and the Habr Gidir (General Aydeed's clan). The reason was clan rivalry, but it was also social antagonism. The Abgal had been the native Mogadishu city-dwellers, but they had dragged their feet, for fear of seeing their city suffer the fate of Hargeisa in 1988, while the rural and rougher Habr Gidir were in the forefront of the armed struggle. In January 1991, the Habr Gidir 'invaded' Mogadishu, not only taking their revenge on supporters of the former regime but also looting a lot of Abgal properties. This resulted in the USC becoming in fact two distinct organizations, an Abgal USC supporting Ali Mahdi and a Habr Gidir USC supporting General Aydeed.

**The Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)** This movement was created at the initiative of Colonel Omar Jess early in 1990, when he realised that the Siad Barre régime was going to fall. The SPM is the political expression of the Ogadeen clans. It was at first led by its founder. But Colonel Omar Jess was soon joined by former Defence Minister Adan Abdullahi Nur 'Gabeeyow', a long-time Siad Barre stalwart who had been dismissed by the dictator. After January 1991, the two men radically diverged, Colonel Jess joined forces with General Aydeed while 'Gabeeyow' allied himself with his former colleague and rival in the Siad Barre entourage, General Mohamed Said Hersi 'Morgan', the SNF leader.

**The Somali National Front (SNF)** This was not, unlike the other fronts, an organization formed to fight against the dictatorship. Instead it was an umbrella organization to join former luminaries of the régime in a common fight against the newcomers. Since the S.Barre régime, especially in its latter days, had been closely identified with the Marehan clan, it remained its main supporter. But the SNF later drew around itself a number of disparate allies, such as General Adan Abdullahi Nur's Ogadeen relatives, a number of Harti and Bimaal from the Lower Jubba and some Kenyan and Ethiopian Ogadeen. In April 1992, with General 'Morgan' at its head and in the company of the deposed Siad Barre, this coalition almost recaptured Mogadishu. It was vanquished by a temporarily reconciled USC and pushed back to the Kenyan border. It later survived in a diminished form in and around Kisimayo.

**The Somali Democratic Movement (SDM)** Created in 1989, it was an anti-Siad Barre front of sorts. But its *raison d'être* was essentially to protect the sedentary peasants of the Digil and Rahanweyn clan families living in southern Somalia from the violent depredations of the warring factions. Due to a lack of weapons and the fact that, traditionally, Digil and Rahanweyn had never been fighters, the SDM did not succeed very well in its task. The warring armies crossed Digil and Rahanweyn



territory three times between early 1991 and mid-1992, causing massive destruction. This was the area affected the most by famine area by mid-1992, due to the inability of the SDM to stop the attacks on the villages and the looting of the grain reserves.

During the UNOSOM intervention, the SDM split into a faction led by Mohamed Nur Aleeyow which supported General Aydeed, and another, led by Abdi Mussa Mayow, which decided to cooperate with the United Nations. The SDM is politically important, because of the size of its constituency (the Digil and Rahanweyn together probably account for up to 40 per cent of the population of Somalia), but it is militarily weak.

**The Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM)** This is essentially a Bimaal front (the area directly north of Kisimayo), which was created in 1991 under the sponsorship of General Aydeed to support Colonel Omar Jess in his fight against the SNF in the area. Later, it split during the UNOSOM period into a branch led by its former leader, Abdi Warsame Issaq, who deserted General Aydeed to join the UN, and a branch which remained faithful to the Somali National Alliance (SNA)<sup>20</sup> under minority leader Abd-el-Azziz Sheikh Yusuf. The SSNM is a small front because of its limited clan base. But it occupies a strategic area in case of renewed conflict in the South.

**The United Somali Front (USF)** This is a marginal front which purports to be the political expression of the Issa clans. Based in the extreme northwest (i.e. the Westernmost part of the self-proclaimed Somaliland Republic), it is supported by the Republic of Djibouti which is also politically dominated by the Issa. The USF did not fight during the civil war. Since the war ended in the North in 1991, it has several times tried to detach the Issa-populated area (the Loyada-Garissa-Zeyla triangle) from the rest of 'Somaliland'. Each time it has been swiftly crushed by SNM forces.

**The Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA)** This is a fighting front representing the northwestern Gaddabursi clans. During the civil war, it fought on the government side against the SNM. Since the self-proclamation of independent 'Somaliland', the SDA has split in two. A faction of the Alliance has become reconciled with the Issaq-SNM-dominated 'government' and worked within its framework, while another, based partly in London and partly in Ethiopia's 'Region Five', remains hostile to the new secessionist authorities in Hargeisa. In spite of this, the SDA never got involved in the two bouts of fighting which rocked 'Somaliland', first during 1992 and later between November 1994 and present (July 1995). Both of these pitched various Issaq clans against each other.

**The United Somali Party (USP)** The USP is not a fighting front but a political party of very old standing. The USP was created in the late 1950s in British Somaliland by the northern populations belonging to the Darod clan family (Dolbahante and Warsangeli), who realised that they were likely to be in a minority situation vis-à-vis the Issaq if the territory became independent within its then borders. The unification with former Somalia Italiana in the South made the USP somewhat redundant, since the majority of the clans of the new unified Somalia belonged to the Darod clan family. Banned, as were all other political parties, after the 1969 Siad Barre coup d'état, the USP resurfaced in 1991, more or less in its former capacity, since the new self-proclaimed independence of 'Somaliland' had brought the old pre-1960 borders back into relevance.

Like the SDA, the USP is divided into 'collaborationists' who accept the role of the new Hargeisa authorities and 'opponents' who refuse it and plead for the Eastern part of 'Somaliland' to be linked with the SSDF-controlled Northeast, populated by the Darod-related Majerteen clans. During the UNOSOM period, the 'opponent'

faction of USP received support from the United Nations<sup>21</sup>.

**The Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU)** This is a very small front created in 1992 to represent the two small Lekasse and Ortoble clans (Darod clan family) of Central Somalia. It was created because their area was the battlefield between General Aydeed's forces and the SSDF, which were fighting each other shortly before the 1992 UNITAF intervention. The SNDU leader, Ali Ismail Abdi, allied himself with the Ali Mahdi loose coalition and was thus invited to the various meetings of the United Nations in spite of his organization's small size.

**The Somali African Muki Organization (SAMO)**<sup>22</sup> This is a defensive front created by the Southern negroid people who live in the Juba and Wabi Shebelle valleys<sup>23</sup>. Despised by the 'real' Somali, who call them *adon* ('niggers'), they suffered terribly from the civil war. Sedentary agriculturalists, they have saw their villages burnt down, their grain robbed and their women raped. The SAMO is weak because, even more than the SDM, it lacks weapons and trained military cadres.

**The Somali National Union (SNU)** Like SAMO, this is an organization of the non-Somali people of the Lower Juba. However, its social base is more the coastal people such as the Barawa Swahili traders, the Bajuni fishermen of the southern Benadir coastline and some Harti groups. Small and without military means, it is led by Mohamed Rajis Mohamed and Said Omar 'Marino'.

The total number of such clan-based political organizations currently stands at 13<sup>24</sup>. This 'encyclopedia' of organizations may contribute to an understanding as to how, in the years that followed, these non-governmental actors related to each other and later to foreign intervention.

## 1.6 Renewed Civil War (1991 - 1992)

The situation in the North differed greatly from that in the South. In the former British colony, the SNM was quickly forced by popular pressure to proclaim independence in May 1991<sup>25</sup>, and the situation settled somewhat into a form of impoverished quasi-government. The northeast area, under its SSDF leadership, stayed largely out of the fray, except for some skirmishes with Aydeed's branch of the USC around Belet Weyn. This did not last very long as all the way down south to the Kenya border, the whole country exploded in violence.

The first explosion came immediately in the wake of the fall of Mogadishu, when the victorious Hawiye started to kill all non-Hawiye residents of the capital, including the Issaq who, by no stretch of the imagination could be considered supporters of the now defunct regime. Most of the victims were people belonging to the various clans of the Darod family (Ogadeen, Marehan, Majerteen, Dolbahante, etc.). This bout of killing brought into the spotlight for the first time the activities of these delinquent teenage soldiers who were popularly known as *mooryaan*<sup>26</sup>. The slaughter was so wide-spread that Colonel Omar Jess, who was among the 'liberators' but who, as an Ogadeen Darod could not condone the wholesale massacre of his kinsmen, had to turn against his former 'friends'. He was beaten in Afgoye and had to retreat southwards under strong Hawiye pressure. This situation forced him to join forces with his former SNF enemies against his erstwhile USC allies (April 1991) and they counter-attacked northwards. Both waves of fighting devastated the inter-riverine areas, destroying crops and causing numerous people to become refugees. After the front was stabilized between Gedo (which stayed in the hands of the SNF-Siad Barre forces) and Bay (which came under an SDM-USC-Aydeed alliance), Omar Jess became reconciled with General Aydeed in order to get his backing against General 'Morgan' and his forces. This allowed Omar Jess to reoccupy the southern harbour of Kisimayo.

With the South more or less stabilized, tension flared up again in the capital, between the two rival branches of the USC which had been forced to bury their differences in order to confront the SNF threat. A conference convened in Djibouti (15-21 July 1991) in order to 'stabilise' the political process resulted in what 'Somaliland' President Abd-er-Rahman Ali 'Tur' called 'a surrealistic construction which could never be put into practice'. The 83-man 'government' which came out of the conference was placed under the authority of 'President' Ali Mahdi Mohamed, but it was one which existed on paper only<sup>27</sup>.

Siad Barre's overthrow had taken place during the Gulf War military operations and had gone largely unnoticed by world public opinion. Later, in early 1991, fighting had taken place in the Bay, Lower Shebelle and Lower Jubba provinces, far away from the world's attention, since there were no foreigners left in the area, and especially no journalists. It was the 'Mogadishu War' (17 November 1991 - 26 February 1992) which finally brought the Somali conflict to the attention of the world<sup>28</sup>. The root-cause of the explosion was the competition for the control of the capital between two overarmed and underfed rival groups of related clans. The spark which caused the final explosion was linked to minor clan rivalries over the control of the airport. The fighting lasted for over three months under conditions of incredible savagery. Both camps routinely used heavy artillery in the streets of the capital, without any thought to the civilian population. Prisoners were systematically shot and field ambulances were regularly fired at. There were at least 14,000 casualties, while the capture of the capital by anti-Siad Barre forces a year before had caused only about 4,000 deaths<sup>29</sup>. In the end, there was no clear advantage for either side and the fighting progressively died down, leaving the capital lastingly divided between the northern Ali Mahdi-controlled zone and the southern zone controlled by General Aydeed and his allies.

Since the violence of this last bout of fighting had considerably weakened the USC, that is the various segments of the Hawiye clan, the pro-Siad Barre SNF forces in the south took heart. After acquiring new weaponry from South Africa through Kenya<sup>30</sup>, the forces of the former régime under the command of General Mohamed Said Hersi 'Morgan' launched a big attack northwards in March 1992. By April, they had reached the capital, forcing 'President' Ali Mahdi and General Aydeed to become reconciled, at least temporarily, in order to face this renewed threat. The pro-Siad Barre forces were defeated and forced southwards, with General Aydeed in hot pursuit. The fleeing SNF troops were chased all the way back to the Kenyan border and the two struggling armies looted once more the inter-riverine area, causing a new exodus of refugees.

By the summer of 1992, the situation had reached a peak of chaos. Over one and a half million Somalis were displaced<sup>31</sup>, either internally (in 'Somaliland', in Mogadishu and in the far South) or externally (in Ethiopia, in Yemen, in Kenya and even, in the case of the wealthiest ones, in Europe and North America). The food situation had become catastrophic, especially in the Bay and Lower Shebelle provinces, with a 90 per cent child malnutrition rate and a 16.5 per cent death rate among the displaced in June 1992<sup>32</sup>.

It is against this background of humanitarian catastrophe - and international neglect - that one must see the event which triggered foreign intervention. In September 1992, General Mohamed Said Hersi 'Morgan' launched a counter-attack against General Mohamed Farah Aydeed's SNA forces. After his victorious offensive in the spring of 1992, General Aydeed had created a loose federation of organizations under the umbrella of his USC faction. It grouped together Omar Jess' SPM faction, the SSNM, the SDM and, for a while SAMO, and the SNU. The counter-offensive was partly successful and General 'Morgan', who had been considered a spent force, reconquered most of Gedo province and pushed forays all the way down to

the outskirts of Kisimayo. From a humanitarian point of view, his success was a catastrophe. His ruffian troops committed atrocities as they moved along, and not only did they contribute to creating more refugees, they also caused NGOs and especially the Red Cross to flee from their advance. This left the large refugee camps of the South without any assistance and the casualty rate became appalling. This situation was abundantly documented in the press, especially the U.S. press, during the autumn of 1992<sup>33</sup>. Since it looked like the UN '100-day Emergency Plan for Somalia' was turning into a complete fiasco, with only 9 per cent of the food distributed after 40 days of implementation<sup>34</sup>, there was a general feeling that some more radical form of action was required.

## **2. FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN THE SOMALIA CRISIS (1992 - 1995)**

United Nations involvement in the Somalia crisis had started in January 1992 with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 733, which called for an arms embargo, UN humanitarian assistance and a cease-fire. However, there was little implementation of this resolution in practice.

The subsequent Resolution 751 on 24 April 1992 had created the United Nations Somalia Mission (UNOSOM), which was to send 50 military observers to monitor a cease-fire accepted by the warring parties on 3 March 1992. The first observers (Pakistani soldiers) had been deployed, with very limited efficacy. Permanently threatened by all warring parties, somewhat lost and isolated in a hostile environment, they had remained holed up at the international airport, doing very little. In an effort to break this deadlock, and as a result of the alarming deterioration of the humanitarian situation after an offensive by General Mohamed Said Hersi's, the UN Security Council voted Resolution 775 (28 August 1992), which was to provide for an increase in the number of observers and the creation of four 'zones of intervention'. The resolution called for a humanitarian airlift but remained rather vague as to what the contents of the 'intervention' should be. The United Nations was hesitating on the verge of full-scale involvement.

The reason which finally prompted U.S. President Bush to announce a major American military intervention was said to be related to securing the distribution of humanitarian aid in the worsening crisis, and there is no reason for believing that this was not the case. But there were several other considerations which contributed to this momentous decision:

Firstly - with the end of the Cold War, large spending cuts were unavoidable in a now oversized military-industrial establishment. President Clinton, who had just been elected, was rumoured to be preparing a new Social Security Plan which he was likely to try to finance out of spending cuts in the Pentagon budget. For supporters of a large defence budget, the Somalia Operation was attractive.

Secondly - there was an image component: Desert Storm, although very successful, had also drawn a great deal of criticism. By contrast a large military intervention in order to save starving children in an under-developed African country would be a very good image-building device in a predominantly Muslim area where the U.S. and the West in general were far from being liked.

Thirdly - the U.S. Army, after some initial reluctance, was finally happy to test on a real scale, real life basis the efficiency of its Rapid Defense component, especially since it involved activating the military base on the island of Diego Garcia, never used for this kind of operation.

The problem with the way the whole operation was conceived is that while the

technical details were very carefully thought out, its general policy framework was completely neglected. The U.S./UN forces, grouped under the United Nations International Task Force (UNITAF) banner, walked into Somalia almost completely unaware of what awaited them. This naiveté was not an American exclusivity. As the U.S. announced its decision to engage its forces in Somalia on the eve of Thanksgiving (25 November 1992), many Western nations jumped on the bandwagon, without any more serious planning than the Americans themselves. Bernard Kouchner, founder of Médecins Sans Frontières and subsequently French Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs declared:

*'The international intervention will succeed very quickly because we are faced here only with young teenagers with machine guns who are just going to run away.'*<sup>35</sup>

His unfounded optimism was at the time widely shared. Those voices who seemed to doubt that all was well were not heeded. Veteran diplomat Henry Kissinger had asked:

*'Could somebody explain in details what exactly is it that we are trying to do, for how long and what are the limits to our involvement?'*<sup>36</sup>

Jane Perlez, one of the few journalists who had stayed behind in Somalia and who had monitored closely the first rather inefficient moments of UNOSOM involvement, had written:

*'What many aid and UN officials here (in Mogadishu) do not understand is why Washington did not prod the United Nations to sharpen its flailing military operation in Mogadishu before making the quantum leap of committing large numbers of American troops.'*<sup>37</sup>

In fact, if we think about Bernard Kouchner's remark, there seems to have been a fair amount of western arrogance in the attitude which conditioned the whole thinking about Operation Restore Hope. The idea was that the whole Somali confusion was caused by a bunch of primitive teenage gangsters with automatic weapons who were going to vanish into thin air as soon as western troops with a vast amount of firepower would arrive on the scene. Then food could be peacefully distributed and, presto, the state itself would be restored. None less than the French Minister of Defence Roland Dumas thought along those naive lines:

*'the first phase of the action consists in opening up humanitarian access corridors, by force if necessary ... once this is done ... once the bands have been chased away and disarmed ... in a second phase, the Blue Helmets will criss-cross the country and prepare the third phase, the national reconciliation and the rebuilding of the state.'*<sup>38</sup>

The transitions are rather astonishing: first, force 'opens up humanitarian corridors'. And somehow this results in 'the bands' being disarmed. This was a basic misconception since the U.S. had absolutely no intention of being drawn into the dangerous business of disarmament. The UN Security Council Resolution 794 of 3 December 1992, which had created UNITAF, was very clear on that issue. The U.S. Government had been adamant in ensuring that any mention of disarmament would be kept out. The aim of UNITAF's mission was described as 'a return to normal conditions', an expression which could be taken to mean almost anything. The confrontation between the U.S. Representative to the United Nations and the UN Secretary General had been rather heated and Mr Boutros-Boutros Ghali was in fact going to try, at least for the first weeks of UNITAF deployment, to get the mission to move towards disarmament. But even had 'the bands' (a rather inaccurate way to



refer to the clan-based political militias we have described above) been disarmed, it is difficult to see how this simple disarmament would have brought about the next two successive steps, the national reconciliation - of whom and with whom? - and then the 'rebuilding' of a state, when the root cause of the Somalia problem was that it had never had any cultural, social or political basis for a state. Experts who at the time had the temerity to question the whole non-political approach to an eminently political problem<sup>39</sup> were dismissed as hard-hearted cynics who could not understand the nobility of this 'purely humanitarian' operation.

There have been and there will still be many different assessments of what was to become the largest military-humanitarian operation ever, and we do not plan to present here a full and complete evaluation of the 27 months of direct foreign intervention in Somalia<sup>40</sup>. But we will try to provide both a chronological framework for studying the operation and a set of questions in order to think critically about its purposes and actual functioning.

## 2.1 The UNITAF Period (December 1992 - May 1993)

From the beginning, the UNITAF intervention displayed its main strengths and weaknesses in full view. Its main strength was the speed with which humanitarian aid was deployed throughout the area of intervention. One should clearly keep in mind that the UNITAF intervention took place in seven of Somalia's fifteen provinces with about 35 per cent of the country's territory and about 60 per cent of its population. Mogadishu was quickly secured, the provinces of Hiran, Baqol, Bay, Lower Shebelle and Lower Jubba were brought under partial but sufficient control for food distribution and conflict and starvation quickly receded<sup>41</sup>. From that point of view, after a period of a few months, one could cautiously say that the operation had been a success.

The problem comes when one tries to look at the political framework within which this healthy change in the humanitarian situation had occurred. As outlined above, the U.S. decision (and the agreement of America's allies to join in) had been made in a very hurried manner<sup>42</sup>. There was no political planning before the landings and political improvisation was the rule from day one. On top of this, this improvisation took place without any input from knowledgeable persons, Somali, European or American<sup>43</sup>.

As a result, the first political steps taken by the intervention forces were highly counterproductive. As we have seen, the main fighting in Somalia had been between the faction led by 'President' Ali Mahdi Mohamed and the other USC branch under the leadership of General Mohamed Farah Aydeed. Both had allied themselves in turn with other major provincial warlords (Omar Jess, General Mohamed Said Hersi, Colonel Yussuf Abdullahi, Mohamed Abshir), who themselves had their own local clan alliances. It was the 'inter clan' violence spurred and used by these men which had destroyed whatever state there had ever been, ruined the already insufficient infrastructure, and led to the looting of property, especially food, which had caused hundreds of thousands of refugees to flee and tens of thousands to starve to death. These men were modern-day Attilas, scourges of God and Man, and, if not the real cause, at least the main perpetrators of the catastrophic violence Operation Restore Hope had come to suppress.

Contrary to what was then often said or written, these men were not 'clan leaders'. As we have seen above, Somali clans were leaderless<sup>44</sup>. They functioned according to a system of extreme democracy verging on anarchy. But strong leaders could temporarily emerge in times of war. Such were the men UNITAF had to deal with. Their authority owed nothing to tradition. They were just warlords, a pure product of the disintegration of the state since 1978, an expression of the anomie of a society where traditional values had disintegrated and modern ones had failed to take hold.



The Somali public expected naively that 'the Europeans' would hang them all or at least arrest them and throw them in jail<sup>45</sup>. Renowned international experts had warned about the danger of dealing with those men. For example, the respected Somalia

historian I.M. Lewis had rather accurately predicted the shape of things to come during the next two-and-a-half years when he had written:

*'America must be aware of the dangers it faces. Peacemaking between Ali Mahdi and Aydeed and any of the other warlords can only be a short-term expedient and cannot in itself lead to the formation of a viable Somali government .... As long as military support is available, the UN could organise clan assemblies and interclan meetings .... This of course assumes an enlarged UN Administration. It also presupposes that these developments take place gradually, against an expanding background of peace and may require years rather than months. Somali elders' deliberations are always protracted and require great patience from those awaiting their outcome .... If however the effect of U.S. intervention is to shore up the power of Aydeed, Ali Mahdi and other dubious figures ... who many Somalis consider to be war criminals, that will be disastrous and add further misery to the country's long catalogue of man-made calamities.'*<sup>46</sup>

And indeed, clan assemblies and inter-clan meetings are time-consuming and rather trying for the limited patience of 20th Century western man. But the alternative adopted by U.S. Special Envoy Robert Oakley and endorsed by the rest of the international community, i.e. to have Ali Mahdi and General Aydeed theatrically embrace in front of the CNN cameras two days after the landings, could not and did not lead anywhere.

The U.S. Government did not seem to have any long-term strategy. Their main preoccupation was to stay out of trouble, ensure the distribution of humanitarian aid, have no contacts with the local population, pack up and go home as soon as possible. The U.S. started to hint that it would like to be out of Somalia when the new President was due to be inaugurated, which meant a matter of a few weeks<sup>47</sup>. This position, reflecting the lack of a global agenda for Somalia, clashed sharply with the UN position. On the question of an eventual disarmament of the fighting factions, the differences were well apparent. Thus the UN Secretary-General could declare that 'disarmament of the armed factions in Somalia remains an absolutely necessary condition to restore normal security conditions'<sup>48</sup>, while on the same day U.S. Forces commander General Robert Johnston could say that 'my aim is not to disarm Somalia'<sup>49</sup>. At the same time, U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger reinforced the same message by declaring: 'The purpose of the U.S. military presence in Somalia is to bring in humanitarian aid for those who need it and not to become a permanent police force or a permanent pacification force'.<sup>50</sup>

With such reservations on the part of the U.S., which was both the main financial backer and troop supplier of the whole operation, things quickly started to go wrong. The UN organised two 'reconciliation conferences' in Addis-Ababa, in January and March 1993. Those were vitiated from the start because they did not respect the Somali ways of peacemaking (*shir*) and tried to push through quickly arranged 'solutions' without really considering how representative the participants were or what motivated them<sup>51</sup>. I.M. Lewis' warning had not been heeded and the UN was struggling to achieve too much, too quickly and by the wrong methods. This, in fact, reflected a sort of cultural gap. Elegant, well-paid and highly educated UN officials were not about to bend to the ways of a bunch of savage African nomads. The nomads, who should be glad that the world community had decided to 'help' them, had to adapt to Western ways and make peace in a civilized fashion, i.e. not by reclining for months under trees composing poems and talking about past wars, but

by sitting at tables in air-conditioned rooms and putting their signatures at the bottom of a little piece of paper. The trouble was that the wild nomads had absolutely no idea, intention or even understanding of what the 'international community' was so keen on. The lack of what a Western magistrate would call 'proper procedure' invalidated in their eyes the meaning of the whole process. They collected their *per diem* for sitting in Addis-Ababa, went shopping, met their friends living in exile in the Ethiopian capital and then went home. As one of the participants in the March 1993 conference was to remark: 'The speeches were nice, the slogans were really good but the whole thing was quite meaningless.'<sup>52</sup> Participants in these conferences had no feeling that they had actually pledged anything by putting their signature on the UN-sponsored document they had been asked to sign. Thus, trying to create a network of local administration committees on the basis of these 'agreements' was like building on sand.

In the meantime, the warlords and their associates had developed highly sophisticated techniques for siphoning off large amounts of money from UNITAF. UN personnel were housed and worked in expensively rented premises which belonged to prominent leaders of the various warring factions. The office personnel they employed, the guards who escorted their convoys, the drivers who drove their trucks, were all selected by the local armed factions and had to pay part of their earnings to their organizations. Thus, on many occasions when fighting did occur during that period, it was because of quarrels over UNITAF spoils. UNITAF unwittingly became the main financier and equipment provider (through massive theft) for the warlords.

Meanwhile, the U.S. was growing impatient. U.S. Special Envoy Robert Oakley had declared as early as January 1993 that late March should be considered the deadline for American withdrawal<sup>53</sup>. On 31 January, the U.S. Military Command announced the first troop reductions. The United Nations was trying to preserve U.S. involvement and, by early March 1993, relations were getting tense between the U.S. Government and the United Nations. Special Envoy Oakley explicitly reproached the UN for 'dragging its feet'<sup>54</sup>. Americans started to withdraw unilaterally, and by late March 1993, when Resolution 814 was voted, U.S. troop strength was down to 1,400 from a maximum of 26,000 at the beginning of Operation Restore Hope.

## 2.2 The First UNOSOM 2 Period (May 1993 - March 1994)

If U.S. troops had mostly gone home by the time UNOSOM 2 began in early May 1993, America's allies had kept their forces on the ground, even if some, like the French, had discreetly scaled down their level of participation<sup>55</sup>. UNOSOM 2 was coming empowered with authority under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to use force. This was going to cause a great deal of trouble in a context where the United Nations had started to play politics without really knowing what it was doing.

If the UN had no more notion of how to tactically approach the Somali political conundrum than the U.S. had demonstrated, then, unlike the U.S., it had a grand strategic view. The UN basic idea was that it was necessary to restore some sort of a working Somali state and that this implied, among other things, a reunification of the country. The various warlords had different views on this UN perspective. 'President' Ali Mahdi, definitely the better diplomat, had understood the advantage he could obtain from playing along with this generous UN illusion. As a result, during the UNITAF period, numerous links had been forged between Ali Mahdi and his friends, always careful to humour the powerful foreigners and United Nations personnel. The presence of several well-known figures from the previous regime around Ali Mahdi was an element boosting this relationship, as they were experienced in dealing with foreigners and were already personally known to many powerful UN figures. Correspondingly, tension grew between the UN and the

Aydeed camp, which more and more came to consider the 'foreigners' as the allies of their enemy.

Tensions came to a head over the question of local councils and local negotiations. General Aydeed had started his own round of consultations and negotiations, all the while loudly proclaiming that he should be left in charge of this process and that peace in Somalia would be achieved by Somali and not by foreigners, however well-meaning they were<sup>56</sup>. At the end of May, he called a 'Peace Conference' in Mogadishu without the authorization of the UN<sup>57</sup>. Three days later, UNOSOM 2 organised a local 'Peace Conference' in the southern harbour of Kisimayo, to which it invited Ali Mahdi and from which it excluded the local Aydeed representative, warlord Omar Jess<sup>58</sup>. General Aydeed of course saw this move as another hostile act from the UN authorities, even more so when, on the same day, he was told by UNOSOM 2 that the financial support given to his 'unauthorised Peace Conference' would be withdrawn and that he would have to somehow manage to pay for the delegates' bills<sup>59</sup>. In this tense climate, the pro-Ali Mahdi radio issued a perfectly explosive broadcast where it said:

*'Since the objective of the organizations [the various factions Ali Mahdi had rallied to his USC branch] and UNOSOM is to establish a Somali Republic, it is necessary that all national assets and state institutions in the hands of individuals, groups and organizations should be handed over to UNOSOM .... These include especially the mass media such as radio, centres of information and national institutions which are the causes of present instability.'*<sup>60</sup>

The UNOSOM authorities had of course never officially stated that their aim was to 'establish a Somali Republic', even if in fact this policy had by now become common knowledge in Somalia. But in its unabashed support for UNOSOM and this policy, the ventriloquism of Ali Mahdi's radio was to have graver consequences. At the very moment the broadcast was being aired, UNOSOM 2 Pakistani troops were trying to occupy General Aydeed's radio and ammunition store, neither of which the warlord was likely to 'hand over' as he was called upon to do by his 'enemy'. The 'coincidence' seemed very strange indeed. But the operation did not go very well and 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed in the fighting. Within 24 hours, the UN had voted Resolution 837, authorising military operations against 'those responsible for armed attacks against UN Forces.' What the Somali quickly came to call 'the UN War' had started and UNOSOM 2 had become just another clan, with its allies and its enemies, fighting to impose its supremacy. This war was to last for four months and cause thousands of casualties<sup>61</sup>.

The vote of Resolution 837 had been railroaded through the General Assembly by painting a picture of General Mohamed Farah Aydeed deliberately attacking UN forces unprovoked and 'murdering' 24 soldiers. An unpublished UN independent inquiry was much more prudent on the matter<sup>62</sup>. Paragraphs 81-93 of the document describe the growing rift between General Aydeed's forces and the UN, and paragraph 94 prudently states about the 5 June operation:

*'Opinions differ, even among UNOSOM officials on whether the weapons inspections of 5 June 1993 was genuine or was merely a cover-up for reconnaissance and subsequent seizure of Radio Mogadishu.'*

A number of other mistakes are also chronicled, such as the refusal to take into account the Pakistani position (paragraph 100), or the failure to notify the Aydeed leadership of the intended 'inspection' (paragraph 101-102). But this inquiry occurred months after the events. At the time, the UN plunged into a war at least partly of its own making, which led to such extremes as putting a US\$ 25,000 price on General Aydeed's head in an embarrassingly ridiculous parody of the Wild

West<sup>63</sup>, and the UN Secretary-General calling for General Aydeed's physical elimination<sup>64</sup>. Worse even, the whole confused attempt at full-scale war was to end up in military failure in spite of overwhelmingly superior UN firepower<sup>65</sup>.

The increase in firepower was due to a U.S. return to the military scene, a fact which might be surprising if we keep in mind the hurried withdrawal only three months earlier. But much had changed during these three months, and for President Clinton re-intervention in Somalia could be seen, especially through the advice of Presidential Security Adviser Anthony Lake, as a way of recuperating international standing at low domestic and financial cost<sup>66</sup>. So the U.S. Armed Forces had come back into the new 'War', even if at lower strength than in December 1992<sup>67</sup>. But this time, unwittingly, U.S. forces had to take sides even before they arrived. The Aydeed camp was solidly set against what it now termed 'imperialism' and 'neo-colonialism', i.e. foreign intervention, while in North Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi's supporters demonstrated in favour of UN military operations which, they hoped, would crush their rival<sup>68</sup>.

Throughout the summer of 1993, fighting escalated to more and more violent levels, to the point where by the autumn the U.S. Congress was beginning to voice some doubts about the place of the U.S. in the Somalia tragedy<sup>69</sup>. The UN Secretary-General was desperately trying to keep the U.S. forces in, conscious that their withdrawal this time would be final and would put an end to the whole UN political project in Somalia<sup>70</sup>.

In spite of the fighting (which was limited to Mogadishu and did not extend to the interior), the UN was still trying to push its political agenda. UN Special Representative Leonard Kapungu had flown to the breakaway 'Somaliland Republic' in the Northwest and deliberately tried to interfere in the situation by playing groups such as the USP, the SDA and the USF against the ruling SNM. The result had been a complete fiasco and Leonard Kapungu was expelled from Somaliland after several tragi-comic episodes<sup>71</sup>.

The climax came on 3 October 1993, when a major assault on General Aydeed's positions in Mogadishu resulted in the shooting down of a U.S. combat helicopter whose pilot was taken prisoner, while another crew member's dead body was dragged through the streets of the Somali capital. The gruesome video of that event was repeatedly displayed on television screens throughout the U.S. during the next 48 hours. The U.S. Government's decision was quickly made: U.S. troops would withdraw.

At the global political level, the situation had become extremely difficult for the United Nations. Already, on 22 September 1993, Resolution 865 had called for a detailed plan, clearly setting out UN priorities and tactics. Resolution 878 (29 October 1993), passed in the aftermath of the 3 October military defeat prudently extended UN presence only to 18 November 1993, i.e. for three weeks. On that date, however, the mandate was extended to 31 May 1994, i.e. for six months. But there was a definite feeling of exasperation among the participants. Most European countries announced plans to scale down their presence. By degrees, all European troops started to withdraw, a situation which was tacitly accepted by Resolution 897 (4 February 1994), which mentioned a scaling down of forces to a figure of 20,000.

At the civilian level though, the UN Administration was still trying very hard to push the District Councils system it had started to work on before the military crisis had broken out. This had mixed success. In some areas of the South, it worked quite well and helped people get control of their own local affairs with the UN's financial help, even if the clan factors remained essential<sup>72</sup>. But further north, in the Benadir and Hiran areas, the councils were largely taken over by agents of the various

militia groups who used them for their own ends.

### 2.3 The Second UNOSOM 2 Period (March 1994 - February 1995)

This was largely an anticlimactic period. By late March 1994, all European forces had been withdrawn, leaving the UNOSOM exclusively manned by Third World contingents<sup>73</sup> whose governments had little or no interest in the Somalia situation. Initially, there were fears that Somali militias would attack these troops for which they had no respect<sup>74</sup>. In fact, these fears proved unfounded. What did happen, however, was that these very poorly-paid troops started to sell the expensive stores and equipment over which they had control, thus contributing further to the reinforcement of the various clan militias<sup>75</sup>. This behaviour also progressively turned the UNOSOM presence into an increasingly unreal setup.

UNOSOM's mandate had been renewed on 31 May 1994 for another four months by Resolution 923. When this period came to an end, the U.S., which had already withdrawn all its troops and even civilian personnel, insisted on an end to the operation for financial reasons<sup>76</sup>. After a diplomatic struggle, the mandate was extended for one month by Resolution 946. But the whole operation was now clearly petering out and on 4 November 1994, a last and final resolution (Resolution 954) extended its mandate until 31 March 1995, with a clear proviso that this extension was final and that upon or before that date, the whole operation would be shut down.

At the political level, the situation had not changed very much. The various faction leaders had once more signed a worthless paper agreement, this time in Nairobi (24 March 1994), but they had not been either able or willing to reach any kind of real understanding. The clan division of the country remained, roughly as it had been before the international intervention of December 1992. In October 1994, feeling that UN withdrawal was imminent, General Aydeed had tried to convene a 'National Convention' in order to quickly put together some kind of a 'national' executive which could try to inherit UNOSOM's dubious 'legitimacy'. But, for reasons which we will examine in the next section, his faction was so weak internally that he never managed to bring his 'National Conference' together and thus failed to have any sort of government before the final UN withdrawal.

By late February 1995, ahead of schedule, international forces had withdrawn from Somalia's soil.

## 3. SOMALIA SINCE THE END OF THE UNOSOM OPERATION

### 3.1 General Assessment

The first and most spectacular event which followed the UNOSOM 2 withdrawal was a non-event: Somalia did not in fact blow up and revert to the pattern of wild clan fighting which had existed during the January 1991 to December 1992 period. Life went on pretty much in the same way as it had gone on during the late UNOSOM 2 period, i.e. with a rough sort of peace disturbed by the occasional short bout of fighting between militias and, more frequently, by bandit attacks.

What is the reason for this non-violence, which should not be confused with 'peace'? Basically, it has to do with the interaction between three factors: economic resources, forms of political authority and group military control. As two very qualified observers, Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast, recently noted:

*'In the past (i.e. before 1991) the centrifugal tendencies of clan politics were overcome through a combination of foreign aid-fuelled patronage and military coercion. While militia leaders still have the ability to intimidate local*



*community leadership, they are nowhere near to possessing the kind of well-funded and intrusive security apparatus of the Siad Barre regime ....  
Politically, there continues to be powerful vested interest in statelessness.*<sup>77</sup>

So the present state of non-violence should not be confused with the restoration of any form of centralised authority, which has neither the financial nor the military means to exist and which, as we have repeatedly pointed out, has no basis in Somali culture, tradition or political consciousness. But, as the same observers remark further,

*'a growing number of Somali entrepreneurs are perceiving that their business interests will now be better served by the creation and recognition of some sort of authority, though one which will co-exist rather than challenge the mafia-based economy on which these merchants profit.'*<sup>78</sup>

We are thus beginning to see the new parameters under which the post-UNOSOM Somali society operates. During the heyday of international intervention, clan militia leaders had made a lot of money. Several of them invested this money in trade rather than in weapons. With the stabilization of the situation in the Northwest ('Somaliland') and with the virtual loss of border control by the Ethiopian Government in Ethiopia's Region Five (the Ogaden), a truly 'national' trade network began to develop throughout all the Somali-populated areas. By 1994, this trade network had become very profitable. It was fuelled by two factors, livestock exports to the Gulf Countries, and remittances from refugees abroad (mostly in Europe and North America) and from migrant workers in the petro-monarchies. A new brand of businessmen, the warlords-turned-entrepreneurs, had developed. Although they cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered as 'modern' entrepreneurs, they are in many ways reminiscent of the early European merchant capitalists of the 13th-14th century who combined piracy, trade and extortionate money-lending to build the basis of Europe's capitalist economy in the late Middle Ages.

The question of the state is therefore approached from a very different angle. The UN was aiming to rebuild some kind of a Somali state in order to be able to fit Somalia back into the system of nation-states which has been the very basis of the UN concept since 1945. But the UN was the only actor in the confused Somali situation of 1992-1995 pursuing this goal for its own sake. Somali warlords had nothing against something called 'the state' if they could control it and use it to control the rural areas by force and to siphon off large amounts of 'foreign aid'. But they had no interest in a 'state' in the sense of an abstract entity devoted to the public good. So they fought alongside or against the UN inasmuch as the UN seemed to help them or prevent them from furthering their own goals, just like they had fought among themselves in 1991-1992, when they still thought that they could recreate and control by themselves the 'state' entity as it had existed in the Siad Barre days.

By the end of UNOSOM 2, many of the warlords realized both that there would not be any 'state' to conquer and rule in the foreseeable future and that some kind of order was needed nevertheless to carry out their activities. Not all of them went through this change in perceptions, as became obvious when Osman Atto, formerly the financial power behind General Mohamed Farah Aydeed, rebelled against his former leader and went his own way. Although clan considerations of course did play their role, the main cause of the split was a basic difference in outlook as to what the future would be like. General Aydeed still dreamt of military victories and political power based on force. Osman Atto, not because of any innate love for peace, believed that this was not possible any more and that any attempt at military domination over the other clans would end in further economic disaster.

A very important factor in this change was the fact that UNOSOM was no longer



present. With the departure of UNOSOM, the strength of the factions immediately weakened. UNOSOM money had been their financial base. They were now left with the prospect of either starving and fighting wildly among themselves over diminishing resources or else to establish some kind of a mutually acceptable way of doing business. This, one should always keep in mind, has very little to do with text book economics. As the paper we already quoted aptly and amusingly says:

*'It would not be too inaccurate to compare these initiatives to a meeting of the heads of Mafia families in New York City.'*<sup>79</sup>

Keeping in mind several new factors we have the basis for what Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast call 'the radical localization of Somali politics'. These factors are:

- the weakening of the factions after UNOSOM 2 left;
- the birth of a new group of pirate-entrepreneurs;
- an upsurge in inter-Somalia trade;
- lack of interest in the re-establishment of a 'normal' state;

Thus, for the first time since 1991, Somali politics do not operate as a contest for 'national' political control but rather as a contest for local political and economic influence. As a result, the various regions within the geographical space previously called 'Somalia' therefore present very different pictures.

### **3.2 The Case of the Self-Proclaimed Republic of Somaliland in the Northwest**

As we mentioned above, the region of the former British colony of Somaliland proclaimed independence on 18 May 1991<sup>80</sup>. After an initial period of calm between May 1991 and early 1992, there were repeated clashes between the government forces of Abd-er-Rahman Ali 'Tur' and rebels backed mostly by the Habr Ja'alo and some sections of the Habr Awal clans<sup>81</sup> starting in January 1992. Although the fighting was eventually settled by a large peace *shir* held in the town of Sheikh in August 1992, many politicians in the North, aware of the fissiparous tendencies of Somali clan politics, felt that their 'state' needed to be put on a firmer footing. This led to a long (March to May 1993) and well-organised *shir* in the town of Borama, during which delegates from all over Somaliland elected a new president in the person of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal<sup>82</sup>.

From May 1993 onwards, President Egal tried to stabilise Somaliland's difficult economic and administrative situation. His election had brought back a measure of political calm, and business, especially in the form of livestock exports, started to flourish again. In 1993 to 1994, livestock exports through the harbour of Berbera were estimated to be around US\$ 140 million, a figure which compared favourably with pre-war export levels<sup>83</sup>. A small tax base was slowly built back through export taxes in Berbera and semi-voluntary contributions from the wealthiest of the businessmen. At the end of 1994, the 'government' had collected US\$ 13 million and was hoping for US\$ 20 million in 1995. The capital Hargeisa, entirely destroyed during the 1988 terror bombings and the subsequent fighting of 1988-1991, began to be rebuilt. Smaller towns such as Burao and Sheikh re-established modest local tax bases in the US\$ 10,000 to 20,000 range.

Yet President Egal is a Habr Awal and his election had disappointed the previous clan coalition which had held power under Abd-er-Rahman 'Tur'. Trouble started brewing in April 1993 when, with the support of UNOSOM 2, the former president

declared from his self-imposed exile in London that he was still head of the Somali National Movement<sup>84</sup> and that he had renounced the idea of independence for Somaliland. A UNOSOM 'grant' of US\$ 200,000 and a promise of help from General Mohamed Farah Aydeed seemed to have greatly helped him change his mind<sup>85</sup>.

This was in fact partly the result of a reversal of alliances in the South. General Aydeed, the former arch-enemy of UNOSOM, had understood that the United Nations still believed in the possibility of bringing together some kind of a 'national government' as a face-saving device before withdrawing. Trying to reposition himself in the good graces of the UN, General Aydeed developed the scheme of 'resuscitating' 'Tur' and using him so as to appear himself as a 'national' leader in UN eyes, one who would oppose the secession of Somaliland which he had previously accepted. This was designed to take the wind out of the sails of his political rival 'President' Ali Mahdi before the departure of UNOSOM forces, since both were competing first for the material leftovers of the international operation and later for the continuing political support of the international community.

UNOSOM support for Abd-er-Rahman Ali led to the expulsion of all UN personnel from Somaliland in late August 1994<sup>86</sup>. A few days later, on 30 August 1994, the former Somaliland president arrived in Mogadishu where he met with Mohamed Farah Abdullahi, leader of the anti-SNM branch of SDA, and with Abd-er-Rahman Dualeh Ali, the USF President. The meeting was sponsored by General Mohamed Farah Aydeed and the SNA<sup>87</sup>, and it meant a clear declaration of war against the Egal government.

The situation soon became complicated by a distinct (if not completely unrelated) development in Somaliland itself. A group of Eidagalley fighters had been occupying the Hargeisa Airport for the last year, demanding extortionate landing fees from aid aircraft and passengers and pocketing the money under the pretext that 'Hargeisa belongs to the Eidagalley'. President Egal had asked them to return control of the airport to the government but to no avail. In desperation, he had even gone as far as building a small airstrip 35 km from the capital and asking aid flights to use it instead of the 'National Airport'. In late September, he threatened armed action<sup>88</sup> and the climate became very tense.

This was all the more so because the situation in the South was moving towards a widening of political alliances, as both Ali Mahdi and General Aydeed tried to get together 'National Governments' before UNOSOM was to leave<sup>89</sup>. All political forces in former Somalia took sides in this race, even those in areas far removed from the authority of the Mogadishu warlords. Given the fact that Aydeed had now decided to challenge Somaliland's independent existence for his own tactical reasons, President Egal felt compelled to enter the fray. In October 1994, he refused to recognize the election of Colonel Yusuf Abdullahi by the SSDF Congress, simply because he felt that Yusuf Abdullahi was now an ally of Farah Aydeed and therefore a danger to him<sup>90</sup>. Thus, tension spread over the whole territory of the former Somalia.

In these circumstances, President Egal could no longer tolerate the occupation of Hargeisa Airport by the Eidagalley militia, even if they were not under the orders of former President Abd-er-Rahman 'Tur'. On 16 October 1994, Somaliland government troops stormed the airport, thus starting a new war<sup>91</sup>. The conflict started badly for the Government side. On 21 October, rebel troops entered Hargeisa town and started indiscriminate shelling. The Central Bank was looted<sup>92</sup> and thousands of refugees streamed out of the city where violent fighting raged until early December<sup>93</sup>. As the battle gradually spread to the countryside around Hargeisa, the refugees fled all the way to Ethiopia, where about 80,000 had arrived by Christmas of 1994<sup>94</sup>. Fighting finally slowly abated during January 1995<sup>95</sup>.

But to the west of the capital, USF forces, manipulated by Djibouti, took advantage of the battles between the various pro and anti-government Issaq clans to try to wrench the Issa-populated areas away from Hargeisa's authority<sup>96</sup>. Their attempt ended in failure and their troops were badly mauled by forces loyal to President Egal, as had been the case in the past when other similar attempts had been made.

Skirmishes went on between government forces and the rebel Eidagalley - Habr Yunis coalition during most of early 1995. But the fighting moved progressively away from the capital, first to Salahley<sup>97</sup> and then to the eastern part of the country<sup>98</sup>. It was there, near the town of Burao, the local capital of the Habr Yuni clan, that a major eight-day battle was fought in late March and early April 1995. Both sides used significant force, including heavy artillery and tanks. There were at least 1,000 dead and the rebels suffered a defeat<sup>99</sup>.

Refugees started cautiously to come back to Hargeisa, which in July 1995 was back to 80 per cent of its November 1994 population. Economic activity slowly returned to near normal levels<sup>100</sup>. The rebel leaders (Abd-er-Rahman 'Tur', Ismail 'Buuba', General Jama Qualib) were all in Mogadishu and none had dared come back to the North, even at the height of the fighting which was carried out, in a sense, independently of them. This is an important political point: there is no doubt that President Egal has acted undiplomatically in terms of clan sensibilities and alienated the various Habr Garadjis sub-clans. But this does not mean that these same clans sympathize with the reunification platform supported by the 'official' rebel leaders. Those who fought against the Egal government did so in their own name and not in support of the exiled leaders. Even President Egal's opponents support the secession, a fact Abd-er-Rahman 'Tur' and his friends are so well aware of that they do not dare to return to Somaliland for fear of being killed or arrested, even by their own 'supporters'.

In May 1995, the *Guurti* (National Assembly of Somaliland) decided to extend Mohamed Egal's presidential mandate for another year. Even those MPs who where opposed to the President voted for the extension, because of a feeling that the situation, although stabilised, was still too precarious to allow a major political change just then. Although the war has damaged the economy (the 'New Somali Shilling' has slipped from 50 to 80 in relation to the U.S. dollar and estimates of government tax revenue had to be scaled down from US\$ 20 million to US\$ 15 million), livestock exports are still strong. The major obstacle to full stabilization of the country is that it is not recognized by the international community.

### 3.3 The Northeast

The Northeast is nearly homogeneously populated by Darod of the Majerteen clan. There are a few Warsangeli-related Darod sub-clans in the Northwestern corner of the country, although they do not make up more than about 5 per cent of the population. The fissiparous tendencies of Somali clan politics are at work here as elsewhere, with the main tensions being between the Omar Mahmood, the Issa Mahmood and the Osman Mahmood sub-clans, the three main sub-clans. The other smaller sub-clans such as Ali Gibrail, Siwakroon or Ali Suleiman, located in the extreme north of the country, do not have an independent political stance.

Since the end of the anti-Siad Barre civil war, the Northeast has lived in relative peace. The only fighting to take place occurred in early 1992, when the SSDF strongman Colonel Yusuf Abdullahi<sup>101</sup> expelled the radical islamist group linked to the *Ittihad*<sup>102</sup>, which had taken over the Northeastern 'capital' and main harbour of Bosasso. In the last two years, however, the leadership situation of the SSDF, which ran the Northeast, has been uncertain due to a rivalry between Colonel Yusuf

Abdullahi and former Police Chief General Mohamed Abshir Muse. In order to defuse their confrontation, they had agreed to a tripartite leadership structure, putting between them the rather lacklustre figure of Yusuf Omar al-Azhari, an intellectual of the Osman Mahmood sub-clan. As in all triumvirates, the weaker of the three tended to be crushed by his two colleagues. Tensions grew at the top. An SSDF Congress was agreed upon but postponed again and again throughout the first part of 1994, finally convening after many difficulties at Gardo in August 1994. Colonel Abdullahi could count on the support of his fellow clansmen in the Mudug and Bari areas and of some of the SSDF old guard, with their rather secularist and 'progressive' outlook. More than anything, he could count on the support of most of the militia. General Abshir was backed by his fellow clansmen in Nugal and had the discreet support of the *Ittihad* islamists. In 'international' terms, Colonel Yusuf Abdullahi was close to General Aydeed's SNA while General Abshir had links with Ali Mahdi's SSA<sup>103</sup>. The Osman Mahmood camp, who felt certain to loose in any case, used the danger potential of these outside connections to scare the traditional leaders into swinging the congress vote towards Abdirazzak Haji Hussein<sup>104</sup>. But, at the last minute, the ageing politician declined to take up the appointment and when a new vote was taken, it went overwhelmingly (by 120 votes to 10) to Colonel Yusuf Abdullahi.

This could only scare President Egal of Somaliland because of Colonel Abdullahi's SNA connection, since Abd-er-Rahman Ali 'Tur' had rallied to the Aydeed camp. As a result, he wrote to the UN Secretary General saying that he refused to recognize the validity of the vote since it was fraudulent and General Abshir had been 'unanimously elected by a superior council'<sup>105</sup>. Neither the Congress nor President Egal's reactions had any immediate consequences because fighting between the Habr Gidir and the Hawadle drew General Aydeed's forces into the area<sup>106</sup>.

The continuing overall peace remained an essential factor in the northeastern situation, and led many to want to follow the example of Somaliland and proclaim formal independence<sup>107</sup>. But this was impossible because of the continued involvement of the Majerteen in the destiny of the related Harti clan further south, as we will see in the next section.

As a last point we can mention a very peculiar aspect of the Northeast economy - piracy. As in Somaliland, the livestock trade is the main source of export earnings. But piracy is a flourishing second source due to the fact that the coastal waters of the area are rich in fish. A number of Majerteen, under the leadership of Abdullahi Boqor Muse, whose physique earned him the nickname of 'King Kong', have found it more expedient to capture and ransom foreign fishing boats than to go into fishing themselves<sup>108</sup>. Foreign fishing companies from Italy, Taiwan, Pakistan and the Yemen end up either paying ransom or making arrangements with the pirates to pay 'protection money' in order not to be attacked - in either case payment is regarded as a kind of fee for fishing rights.

### 3.4 The Central and Benadir Regions

Somaliland and the Northeast may have problems concerning the exercise of political power, but this is within a context of general public agreement on independence or quasi-independence, and both regions enjoy accepted and clearly defined borders. In contrast, the Central and Benadir Regions<sup>109</sup> are extremely unstable from every point of view: politically, militarily and even geographically, since, if they are relatively clearly bounded to the north by SSDF territory, their southern limits are unclear. Also, as it contains the former national capital, this is the area which has been at the heart of most of the fighting since 1991. It is also the very centre of the SNA/Aydeed - SSA/Ali Mahdi split, since Ali Mahdi controls the north of Mogadishu town while General Aydeed controls the south.

Towards the end of the UNOSOM presence, both rivals were keen to try to put together some kind of a 'national' government in the hope of obtaining international recognition before the UN left. While calling his own 'government' conference<sup>110</sup>, 'President' Ali Mahdi was denying General Aydeed's right to do the same thing<sup>111</sup>. Both conferences were in fact postponed because fighting broke out between the Abgal and the Murosade sub-clans of the Hawiye after Murosade leader Mohamed Qanyare Afrah had changed sides by switching from SSA to SNA<sup>112</sup>. At times, had it not been for the frequent clashes and killings, the whole thing would have looked farcical. Soon after the Murosade had betrayed their erstwhile allies, the Habr Gidir turned on the Hawadle in Hiiran, which led to violent fighting around Belet Weyn<sup>113</sup>. The Lelkasse and Ortoble clans of northern Hiiran organised within the SNDU structure for their part were trying to extract advantages from both sides while remaining neutral<sup>114</sup>.

Neither side was able to establish anything approaching a viable 'government', and, as the time for the UNOSOM departure drew closer this led to renewed fighting between SNA and SSA forces in December 1994 and January 1995<sup>115</sup>. Then, in a good illustration of the phenomenon, remarked on earlier, of clan fighting being superseded by business interests, members of both camps got together and created a Joint Committee to manage the harbour during a lull in the fighting<sup>116</sup>. Soon, this Joint Committee became the basis for signing a 'Peace Pact'<sup>117</sup> and the hostilities came to a stop. Within the next few weeks, the 'Peace Pact' and the Joint Harbour Management Committee had been expanded to create a 'Benadir Authority' which was supported by very influential members of both the SNA and the SSA. Neither 'President' Ali Mahdi nor General Mohamed Farah Aydeed were very sanguine about the whole setup<sup>118</sup>. And it was interesting that the initiative's main supporters, both in the SSA camp (Mohamed Dheere) and in the SNA camp (Ali Osman Atto) were the main financial backers of the warlords. The 'money men' had begun to tire of the continuous wars and were looking for some kind of an arrangement between their conflicting political interests and their partially converging business ones.

This eventually led to further major political splits, first of all between General Aydeed and his former main financial backer Osman Atto<sup>119</sup>. Although the 'Benadir Authority' did not actually become operational as a 'local government', it nevertheless somehow served as a clearing house between the two sides to prevent renewed fighting. Osman Atto was then able to consolidate his advantage by taking the USC Presidency from Farah Aydeed through an Extraordinary Congress<sup>120</sup>. General Aydeed retaliated by getting himself 'elected' by his partisans to the head of a 'government' which remains largely on paper<sup>121</sup>, and which enjoys little recognition or support<sup>122</sup>.

In order to reassert their declining powers, the two main warlords desperately looked for new tactics. Ali Mahdi had introduced Islamic Law (Shari'a Courts) in the North Mogadishu area under his control<sup>123</sup>. This had two advantages: firstly it gained him a certain amount of conditional support from the Islamist groups, and, secondly, this rather rough-and-ready system of justice managed to curb the high crime level in North Mogadishu, while the situation in non-Islamic South Mogadishu remained chaotic<sup>124</sup>. But it also generated opposition, especially when he tried to extend this system to 'allied' SSA areas<sup>125</sup>.

This apparent 'Islamist' stance of Ali Mahdi got General Aydeed the sympathy of President Gaddafi, himself the target of more and more frequent radical Islamist plots aiming at his overthrow. The Libyan leader sent money and military experts to South Mogadishu to shore up what he saw as a bulwark against the radical Islamism supported by Saudi Arabia and the Sudan, two countries not on very good terms with Libya<sup>126</sup>. The move was denounced by Osman Atto, who, as formal head of



USC and informal leader of the anti-Aydeed forces in the region, had in the meantime concluded a tactical alliance with Ali Mahdi.

But neither radical Islam nor Libyan support can act as substitutes for internal balance. The question of who will impose his will is no longer between Ali Mahdi and General Aydeed, as has been the case in the past, but between either (or both) of them and the new political forms which the 'Benadir Authority' has begun to develop<sup>127</sup>. A balance of fear can hold things together in Mogadishu and Benadir proper. But political change is essential for the northern area (Hiiran), where fighting is still sporadically going on in spite of a Hawadle victory in late 1994<sup>128</sup>. This is even more true for the Lower Shebelle area to the south, where the local populations have often suffered enormously from being the site of other people's battles, and where they now seem ready to try to take their destiny into their own hands<sup>129</sup>.

### 3.5 The Riverine Area Around the Wabi Shebelle and Jubba

Covering the former provinces of Bay and Baqol, as well as the south of the Lower Shebelle and the north of the Lower Jubba, this is the martyr area of Somalia. Populated by the large Digil and Rahanweyn sedentary peasant clan families, it was looted and trampled upon in every possible way by the invading Somali nomadic armies during 1991-1992. If we accept a global figure of 300,000 deaths in the Somalia crisis since 1989<sup>130</sup>, most of the casualties, perhaps as much as 80 per cent, took place in that area. Villages were burnt, food was looted, women were raped, sheep and goats were eaten, and the local population, with few or no weapons, was not able to defend itself. Worse - when the killing and looting was over, the militiamen came back as agents of the powerful Central Region warlords, confiscated the lands and put the surviving population to work as quasi slaves. Often, these farms were shown to UN and NGO personnel as 'development achievements' and got financial support from the foreigners<sup>131</sup>.

By late 1994, as things were changing, it became obvious that the local populations were no longer prepared to accept the horrors they had suffered at the hands of both SNA and SSA militiamen. Thus, while Ali Mahdi and General Aydeed in Mogadishu were trying to put together some kind of 'national government' for international consumption, there were collective protests in the inter-riverine areas - not by the organizations like SDM, SSNM or SNU which obeyed either SNA or SSA (or both when they had split into rival branches) -but directly by the ordinary population<sup>132</sup>.

This led to a growing organization of the settled farmer populations, especially since, in the areas still under SSA or SNA control, the banana plantations of the pre-war period had been put back into production with a view to export. The situation had been complicated by the arrival on the scene of the U.S. fruit company "Dole" which had created a Somali branch company called SOMBANA in order to benefit from the banana import quotas into the European Union under the Lomé Agreement, something it could not do from its Central American base. This led to serious fighting with the old Italian 'banana lords' running SOMALFRUIT. Soon SOMBANA-supported SNA gunmen were fighting it out with SOMALFRUIT-supported SSA forces<sup>133</sup>. An Italian TV cameraman eventually died in the crossfire, a fact which drew attention to this dubious business, especially when the slave-like working conditions on the plantations of both companies became known after peasant leader Ibrahim Mohamed Diriye organised a press conference in Mogadishu<sup>134</sup>.

On 25 May 1995, a 'Supreme Digil-Mirifle Council' was created in Baidoa<sup>135</sup> under the leadership of Abd-el-Gadir Mohamed 'Zoppo'<sup>136</sup> and Hassan Sheikh Ibrahim<sup>137</sup>,



two men whose past does not put them above a banana deal. But they intend at least to organise the relatively undefended riverine populations, with the support of the Ali Mahdi alliance but not automatically of Ali Mahdi himself. A few days after the creation of the Council, when General Aydeed was considering his stance as regards this new entity, the warning not to attack came not from Ali Mahdi, but from Osman Atto<sup>138</sup>. And characteristically, he threatened Farah Aydeed with action not from the SSA, but from himself and from General Mohamed Said Hersi 'Morgan', the SNF leader. To understand why, we should now examine the last of the epigone statelets left in the wake of Somalia's shipwreck.

### 3.6 The Far South

This is certainly the least known of the various regions. It covers all of Gedo and most of the Lower Jubba. It is largely under the control of warlord Mohamed Sai Hersi 'Morgan', nicknamed 'the butcher of Hargeisa' for his role there in 1988, a son-in-law of the late Siad Barre and the present SNF chief. As a Harti (i.e. a southerner related to the Northeastern Majerteen clans) he has been involved in the coastal affairs of Kisimayo. As a Marehan ally, he has led the Marehan component of SNF in Gedo. And for quite a while he enjoyed two other important sources of support: from several of the Ogadeen sub-clans through his SPM ally, former Siad Barre defence minister Mohamed Aden Nur 'Gabeeyow'; and from the Kenyan Government through his links (dating back to the Siad Barre period) with the Kenyan Army chief of staff, General Mohamed Mahmood, himself of Somali Ogadeen origin of the Aulihan sub-clan. He later lost both through a variety of circumstances we will not examine in detail. As a result, his fighting capacity was greatly diminished, a dangerous situation since he faced in his own backyard Colonel Omar Jess who led the SNA-affiliated branch of the SPM. In June 1994, he signed a major agreement with General Aydeed which gave him breathing space and bought him the neutrality of Omar Jess who knew he would not get SNA support for his private war with General 'Morgan'.

Of course, this agreement was a sheer tactical move and in the autumn of 1994, when Farah Aydeed failed to get his 'national government' project off the ground, 'Morgan' began to distance himself from the South Mogadishu warlord. With Osman Atto's open rebellion and General Aydeed's loss of control of the USC, 'Morgan' switched sides. And in order to court favour with the new post-SSA realignment in the region, he gave his support to the newly-created 'Digil Mirifle Supreme Council'. Still, this does not mean that he has recuperated the strength which made him one of the top warlords in 1991-1992 because, even if Omar Jess is now extremely weakened, the loss of the allegiance of many of his partners of his once powerful alliance (some of the Marehan sub-clans, most of the Ogadeen, the Southern Dolbahante) leaves him pretty much with his own Harti group, a very narrow power base<sup>139</sup>.

The far South is probably the most desolate of all the various post-Somalia statelets since, after being almost as badly mauled as the inter-riverine areas, it is now in the hands of some of the roughest and most ruthless warlords, who do not have control, who are weak and divided and all competing against each other. It is thus an area where the 'business' evolution we mentioned above has not yet taken place and where combat remains very likely to take place in the near future.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The present situation in Somalia is not simply the result of 'anarchy' and 'a collapse of the state'. It is a logical consequence of the vulnerability of the state in a society where it had no traditional roots. An artificial state existed for 30 years and fell apart when the foreign resources which had held it together disappeared at the same time that a clan-based (i.e. non-state) opposition was growing. What is a product of

history will only change with history itself. The United Nations policy of helping the victims of the conflict was reasonable. But the same cannot be said of its clumsy and ill-informed attempts at 'rebuilding' a Somali state which was, in its projected shape and in the methods used to attempt its resuscitation, largely a product of the developed world's imagination.

The political ineptness of UNOSOM did not prevent it from having a number of positive if unintended effects. Among those were an end to active combat in the 40 per cent of the 'country' where it had been the most violent, and the creation of relative peace where new piratical but functional forms of business could develop. Contrary to the state envisaged by the UN, which could have had no economic basis apart from large habit-forming doses of ill-managed foreign aid (as in the 1970s and 1980s), the new epigone statelets which are developing in the aftermath of UNOSOM have, at least in part, a native home-grown economic rationale, even if it is very far from orthodox economics. Increasingly, this new 'business logic' is contradicting the 'warlord logic' of 1989 - 1992. This translates itself into the creation of limited 'coordination authorities' and into a growing challenge to the power of the 'old' warlords. One should not be deceived into seeing the new 'entrepreneurs' as straight businessmen: they are likely to retain a militia component for many years to come. Although further fighting is unavoidable, it is doubtful that it will have the intensity and cover the same broad geographical area as in 1989 - 1992. It will therefore produce fewer refugees, and these refugees are more likely to return home relatively rapidly, as we are seeing now in the last bout of fighting in Somaliland. Southern Benadir, Gedo and the Kisimayo area are the most likely candidates for medium-scale refugee-producing military operations. This means that the large refugee population now in Kenya, which the Kenyan Government is keen to repatriate, is unlikely to find a very settled environment in the near future. The prospects are definitely better for the refugee populations that are in Ethiopia, whether in the Northern or in the Southern Ogaden. The present stability of the epigone statelets is extremely variable, running from reasonably good in Somaliland and the Northeast, to very poor in the far South and the Southern Benadir Coast, by way of average in the Center and parts of the Somali riverine area. Economic aid should be channelled not according to criteria of international standing but according to criteria of internal performance, with a premium going to those areas where political leaders arrive at some form of agreement, even if very imperfect, and aid should be withheld from fighting areas. By providing help to the refugees at some distance from the disturbed areas, it would be possible to assist those in need, while avoiding a return to the appalling exploitation of the UN by the militias during 1992 - 1994.

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Africa Confidential*. Various dates

Africa Watch. 'Somalia: a fight to the death?'. *News from Africa Watch*. Vol 4. No 2 (13 February 1992)

\_\_\_\_, 'Somalia: beyond the warlords'. *News from Africa Watch*. Vol. 5. No 2

\_\_\_\_, *A Government at War with Its Own People*. London. 1990

*Agence France Presse*. Various dates

Ahmed, Ahmed Jimale. *The Invention of Somalia*. Lawrenceville N.J.: The Red Sea Press. 1995

*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*. Various dates

Braumann, Rony. *Somalie: le crime humanitaire*. Paris: Arléa. 1993

Bryden, Matt. *Mission to Somaliland 6-20 May 1995*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia. 28 May 1995

\_\_\_\_, *Update on the Situation in Muqdisho*. Addis-Ababa: United Nations Special Emergency Unit for Ethiopia. 29 March 1995

\_\_\_\_, *Report on the Camaboker and Rabasso Camps*. Addis-Ababa: United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia. February 1995

Cassanelli, Lee. *Shaping of Somali Society (1600-1900)*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1982

Cerulli, Enrico. 'Gruppi etnici negri nella Somalia'. *Archivio per l'antropologia e l'etnologia*. Vol. 64 (1934)

Clarke, Walter. 'Uncertain mandates in Somalia'. Paper presented at conference on 'Restore Hope Revisited', Woodrow Wilson Center, Princeton University, 21-22 April 1995 (publication fc)

*The Daily Nation* [Nairobi]. 3 January 1995

Declich, Francesca. 'I Goscia della Regione del Medio Giubba nella Somalia Meridionale: Un gruppo etnico di origine Bantu'. *Africa*. Vol. 42, No 4 (1987)

Decraene, Philippe. *L'expérience socialiste Somalienne*. Paris: Berger-Levrault. 1977

Drysdale, John. *Whatever Happened to Somalia? A Tale of Tragic Blunders*. London: Haan Associates. 1994

\_\_\_\_, *The Battle for Mogadishu: Root-causes of the Conflict*. London: Africa Centre. 1992

\_\_\_\_, *Somaliland: The Anatomy of Secession*. Hove: Quantum Books. 1991

\_\_\_\_, *The Somali Dispute*. London: Pall Mall Press. 1964

*The Economist*. Various dates

Fitzgibbon, Louis. *The Betrayal of the Somalis*. London: Rex Collings. 1982

Frachon, Alain. 'Washington estimait indispensable de marquer le coup'. *Le Monde*. 13-14 June 1993

Galaydh, Ali. 'Notes on the state of the Somali State'. *Horn of Africa*. Vol. 13, No 1-2 (1990)

Gersony, Robert. *Why Somalis Flee*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Refugees Program. 1989

Hansch, Steven (et al.). *Lives Lost, Lives Saved: Excess Mortality and the Impact of Health Interventions in the Somalia Emergency*. Washington D.C.: Refugee Policy Group. 1994

Helander, Bernhard Helander and Mohamed Haji Mukhtar. *Building peace from below? A critical review of the District Councils in the Bay and Bakool Regions of Southern Somalia*. Uppsala: Life and Peace Institute. April 1995

Hélène, Jean. 'Mogadiscio, capitale à deux visages'. *Le Monde*. 17 June 1993

Hess, Robert. *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1966

Hirsch, John and Robert Oakley. *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace. 1995

*Indian Ocean Newsletter*. Various dates

*Jeune Afrique*. 10-16 January 1993

Laitin, David and Said Samatar. *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*. Boulder: Westview Press. 1987

Laitin, David. *Politics, Language and Thought: the Somali Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1977

Lefebvre, Jeffrey. *Arms for the Horn: US Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia (1953-1991)*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1991

Lewis, I.M. *Understanding Somalia*. London: Haan Associates. 1993

\_\_\_\_, 'Pacifying the warlords'. *The Times*. 12 December 1992

\_\_\_\_, *A Pastoral Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1961

*Libération*. Various dates

Marchal, Roland. 'La guerre à Mogadiscio'. *Politique Africaine*. No 46 (June 1992)

\_\_\_\_, 'Les mooryaan de Mogadiscio: formes de la violence dans un espace urbain en guerre'. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*. Vol. 33, No 2.

Médecins Sans Frontières. *Populations en danger*. Paris: Hachette. 1992

Melander, Göran. *Refugees in Somalia*. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies. 1980

Menkhaus, Ken and John Prendergast. *Political Economy of Post-intervention Somalia*. Washington D.C.: The Center of Concern. April 1995

Mohamed, Mohamed Abdi. 'De l'Islam traditionnel à l'Islam intégriste en Somalie'. (Unpublished paper). Besançon, February 1995

*Le Monde*. Various dates

*New York Times*. Various dates

Patman, Robert. *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1990

Pestalozza, Luigi. *Cronaca della Rivoluzione Somala*. Bari: Dedalo Libri. 1973

Petrides, Pierre. *The Boundary Question between Ethiopia and Somalia*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House. [1980]

Petrucci, Petro. 'Un genocidio piccolo, piccolo'. *Nigrizia* (March 1995)

Physicians for Human Rights. *No Mercy in Mogadishu*. London: Physicians for Human Rights. March 1992

Prunier, Gérard, 'The experience of European armies in Operation Restore Hope'. Paper presented at the 'Operation Restore Hope Revisited' conference, Woodrow Wilson Center, Princeton University, 21-22 April 1995 (publication fc)

\_\_\_\_, 'Somaliland: birth of a new country?' in Charles Gurdon (ed). *The Horn of Africa*. London: UCL Press. 1994

\_\_\_\_, 'La Corne de l'Afrique' in Pascal Boniface (ed). *Atlas des Relations Internationales*. Paris: Dunod. 1993

\_\_\_\_, 'L'inconcevable aveuglement de l'ONU en Somalie'. *Le Monde Diplomatique*. November 1993

\_\_\_\_, 'La politique bafouée'. *Le Monde des Débats*. January 1993

\_\_\_\_, 'A candid view of the Somali National Movement'. *Horn of Africa*. Vol. 14, No 1-4 (1991)

\_\_\_\_, 'Somali clan organization and the problem of state power: the case of the Ogaden' in USSR Academy of Sciences. Africa Institute (ed). *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*. Moscow: Nauka Publishers. 1988

\_\_\_\_, 'Structures de clan et pouvoir politique en Somalie'. *Cultures et Développement*. Vol. 17, no 4 (1985)

Rake, Alan. 'Somalia: still struggling'. *The New African*. June 1995

*La Repubblica*. 17 July 1993

*Reuters* [Mogadishu]. 7 June 1995

Sciolino, Elaine. 'UN Chief warning U.S. against pullout of force in Somalia'. *New York Times*. 30 September 1993

Smith, Stephen. *Somalie: la guerre perdue de l'humanitaire*. Paris: Calmann-Levy. 1993

*Somalia News Update*. Various dates

Sommer, John. *Hope Restored? Humanitarian Aid in Somalia (1990-1994)*. Washington D.C.: Refugee Policy Group. 1994

Touval, Saadia. *Somali Nationalism*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. 1963

United Nations. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 885 (1993) to Investigate Armed Attacks on UNOSOM II Personnel ....* New York: United Nations, 24 February 1994

\_\_\_\_, *United Nations 100-day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance for Somalia*. Geneva: United Nations. 6 October 1992

United Nations Special Emergency Program for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA). *Updated Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal*. Geneva: United Nations. July 1992

'USAF Special Operations in Somalia'. *Air Forces Monthly*. January 1995

*USAID/OFDA Situation Report*. No 13 (September 16th 1992)

## NOTES

1. I have borrowed this apt expression from the title of David Laitin's and Said Samatar's book *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), a very good introduction to Somalia and its problems. For a more culture-centred approach, see I.M. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia*, (London: Haan Associates, 1993)

2. This monolithic view of the Somali people was due to two factors. Firstly, the strong propaganda value of such an approach in nationalistic terms, a fact which was not lost on the Somali nationalist parties, especially since they were then claiming large segments of Somali-populated lands belonging to neighbouring countries, and, secondly, it was due to the work of the great scholar of Somali culture, Professor Ioan Lewis. Professor Lewis, a fluent Somali speaker, former colonial civil servant and distinguished scholar, propagated an erudite and informed vision of the Somali culture which was largely based on his extensive study of the (dominant) northern nomadic Somali world. But it was not until Professor Lee Cassanelli published his *Shaping of Somali Society (1600-1900)*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) that foreign observers began to realize that a fair section of the 'Somalis' was neither Somali nor nomadic. The two Afmaymay-speaking southern clan confederacies of the Digil and Rahanweyn as well as the other Southern peoples of Somalia (Swahili, Wagosha, etc) had been up to then largely overlooked. There is now among modern Somali scholars a healthy movement of reassessment of the 'unity' of the Somali nation, as exemplified by the recently published and provocatively-titled book edited by Ahmed Jimale Ahmed, *The Invention of Somalia*, (Lawrenceville N.J.: The Red Sea Press, 1995).

3. The written Somali language was only introduced in 1970, an event of enormous magnitude for the Somali culture (on that subject, see David Laitin's seminal and insightful work, *Politics, Language and Thought: the Somali Experience*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). The alphabet used is the Latin alphabet with a few modifications: the letter x stands for the arabic *kaf*, sounding not unlike the Spanish *jota* or the German *ch*; there are many long vowels written *ii*, *aa* or *oo*, and the typically arabic 'ayn (glottal stop) is written *c*.

4. See his seminal work, I.M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961)

5. It is not easy to understand the complicated border quarrels resulting from this colonial division of the Somali people. The most objective work is John Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964). Louis Fitzgibbon, *The Betrayal of the Somalis*, (London: Rex Collings, 1982), takes a strongly pro-Somali position, while Pierre Petrides, *The Boundary Question between Ethiopia and Somalia*, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, [1980], gives the Ethiopian point of view.

6. At first, most of the Somali were brought together within the area known as Africa Orientale Italiana (Italian East Africa), and later they were ruled together by the British Military Administration between 1941 and 1948. The declaration by the British Foreign Minister Bevin during the UN debate concerning the Somali mandate made things worse as he advocated the creation of a 'United Somalia', something which none of the colonial powers, including his own government, were ready to support. Bevin became a Somali hero and his failure to achieve his stated aim was ascribed to dark American manoeuvres.

7. The flag chosen at independence (a white five-pointed star over a blue field) embodied this feeling since the five points of the star were to symbolize the five 'parts' of the Somali people, three of whom were then controlled by foreign powers



(France, Ethiopia and Kenya).

8. For a good evaluation of this problem (at times wrongly called 'Somali irredentism') at the time of independence, see Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).
9. The standard work on the issue of Italian rule in Somalia is Robert Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
10. See for example Luigi Pestalozza, *Cronaca della Rivoluzione Somala*, (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1973) and Philippe Decraene, *L'expérience socialiste Somalienne*, (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1977).
11. President Maxamad Siad Barre never hid his admiration for Benito Mussolini whom he called 'my former commander' (he had served in the Italian colonial *carabinieri*). He did not seem to feel any contradiction between this nostalgia for fascism and his later 'progressive' stance.
12. France had renamed the territory Côte Française des Afars et des Issas, to avoid evoking the idea of 'Somali' through its name. It became the Republic of Djibouti upon independence in 1977.
13. In spite of the Russian withdrawal, the U.S. was not very keen on supporting the Somali regime which had to rely on - meagre - help from the Arab League states, mostly from Egypt. See Robert Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Jeffrey Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: US Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia (1953-1991)*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).
14. For a review of the refugee problem at that time, see Göran Melander, *Refugees in Somalia*, (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1980).
15. For descriptions of this anomic phenomenon of social disintegration, see Gérard Prunier, 'Structures de clan et pouvoir politique en Somalie', *Cultures et Développement*, vol. 17, no 4 (1985), 683-97 and Gérard Prunier, 'Somali clan organization and the problem of state power: the case of the Ogaden' in USSR Academy of Sciences. Africa Institute (ed), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*, (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1988), vol. 2, pp 101-108.
16. For detailed accounts of the situation in 1988, see Robert Gersony, *Why Somalis Flee*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Refugees Program, 1989), and Africa Watch, *A Government at War with Its Own People*, (London, 1990).
17. Gérard Prunier, 'A candid view of the Somali National Movement', *Horn of Africa*, vol. 14, No 1-4 (1991), 107-120.
18. See Ali Galaydh, 'Notes on the state of the Somali State', *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 13, No 1-2 (1990), 1-28.
19. There is no published synthesis of the politico-clanic division of Somalia since 1991. The list I provide is the result of personal research. It has been briefly summed up in Gérard Prunier, 'La Corne de l'Afrique', in Pascal Boniface (ed), *Atlas des Relations Internationales*, (Paris: Dunod, 1993)

20. The SNA was a loose alliance of clans put together by General Aydeed in 1992 to counter a similar (but nameless) grouping of his rivals under 'President' Ali Mahdi. During the fight against UNOSOM between June and October 1993, the SNA was the basic operational structure of the anti-UN forces.

21. See *Somalia News Update*, 27 January 1994.

22. The *muki* is a tree typical of Southern Somalia.

23. Since the Somali have deliberately cultivated the myth of their racial, linguistic and cultural unity, the southern negroid populations of Somalia have been systematically understudied. For good evaluations refer to Enrico Cerulli, 'Gruppi etnici negri nella Somalia', *Archivio per l'antropologia e l'etnologia*, Vol. 64 (1934), 177-84 and to Francesca Declich, 'I Goscia della Regione del Medio Giubba nella Somalia Meridionale: Un gruppo etnico di origine Bantu', pp 101-108, *Africa*, Vol. 42, No 4 (1987), 570-99.

24. During the UNITAF/UNOSOM period, UN-organized 'peace conferences' always mentioned 'fifteen Somali political organizations'. This number was arrived at as follows: the SNM never took part and was never counted; the two SPM branches (Omar Jess and 'Gabeeyow') were counted separately; the two USC branches (Aydeed and Ali Mahdi) were also counted separately; the two SDM branches (Abdi Musa Mayow and Mohamed Nur Aleeyow) were counted separately too; only the anti-Aydeed SSNM branch (Abdi Warsame Issaq) was allowed to participate in the talks. Thus, with three of the thirteen movements duplicated and one not being present, plus one duplicated being admitted under one faction only, it came to fifteen.

25. For assessments of the 'Somaliland' independence process, see John Drysdale, *Somaliland: The Anatomy of Secession*, (Hove: Quantum Books, 1991) and Gérard Prunier, 'Somaliland: birth of a new country?' in Charles Gurdon (ed), *The Horn of Africa*, (London: UCL Press, 1994), pp 61-75. The notion that the SNM leadership at the time favoured secession is a common misconception. In fact, during the war the majority of SNM cadres were strongly against secession and it was the population which favoured it. See Gérard Prunier, 'A candid view of the Somali National Movement', pp 118-120.

26. See Roland Marchal, 'Les *mooryaan* de Mogadiscio: formes de la violence dans un espace urbain en guerre', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 33, No 2, 295-320.

27. The conference had been largely a self-congratulatory affair since neither the SNM nor the Aydeed faction of USC had agreed to attend and furthermore the SNF had been banned because of former dictator Siad Barre's presence in its midst. Without the presence of these key players, the conference was meaningless. Author's field notes, Djibouti, July 1991.

28. For evaluations of the 'Mogadishu War' see Roland Marchal, 'La guerre à Mogadiscio', *Politique Africaine*, No 46 (June 1992), 120-25; John Drysdale, *The Battle for Mogadishu: Root-causes of the Conflict*, (London: Africa Centre, 1992); 'Somalia: a fight to the death?', *News from Africa Watch*, Vol 4, No 2 (13 February 1992); Physicians for Human Rights, *No Mercy in Mogadishu* (London: Physicians for Human Rights, March 1992).

29. The casualty figures are given in Physicians for Human Rights, *No Mercy in Mogadishu*, and can be considered as relatively reliable since they were compiled by doctors who were physically present in Mogadishu during the fighting.

30. 'Somalia: Beyond the warlords', *News from Africa Watch*, Vol. 5, No 2, p.6.

31. This should be seen as being out of an estimated population of at most seven million people. The figures which can be computed are of course imprecise. They are drawn from the following sources: Médecins Sans Frontières, *Populations en danger*, (Paris: Hachette, 1992) pp 58-65; United Nations Special Emergency Program for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA), *Updated Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal*, (Geneva: United Nations, July 1992); *USAID/OFDA Situation Report*, No 13 (September 16th 1992); and *United Nations 100-day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance for Somalia*, (Geneva: United Nations, 6 October 1992). This was probably the highest percentage of refugees in relation to total population for any crisis point anywhere in the world, not to be equaled before the Rwandese exodus of 1994.

32. Médecins Sans Frontières, *Populations en danger*, p. 61.

33. Two reporters from the *Houston Chronicle*, Dudley Althaus and Anna Puga, had published an excellent series of well-illustrated reports on the situation in Somalia in November 1992. Given the strong presence of the subject on TV coupled with the syndication system of the American press, their articles were reprinted in about eighty local newspapers throughout the U.S. during November. The effect on public opinion was massive.

34. Author's interview with UNHCR personnel, Geneva, 15 November 1992.

35. *Agence France Presse*, 3 December 1992.

36. *New York Times*, 1 December 1992

37. *New York Times*, 28 November 1992

38. *Agence France Presse*, 14 December 1992

39. See Gérard Prunier, 'La politique bafouée', *Le Monde des Débats*, (January 1993). The author was vilified both in private and in public (on the French national program of France Culture), accused of desiring the death of small children and of giving vent to 'a pathological anti-americanism'. None of the criticism addressed the basic issue, i.e. the problem of having to face the complexities of Somali political problems in order to succeed in a humanitarian intervention.

40. The first systematic major assessment will come from the publication (planned for late 1995) of the papers presented at the conference 'Operation Restore Hope Revisited' (Woodrow Wilson Center, Princeton University, 21-22 April 1995). In the meantime, one has to rely mostly either on hostile assessments such as the book by John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia? A Tale of Tragic Blunders*, (London: Haan Associates, 1994), or on self-serving memoirs such as John Hirsch and Robert Oakley's *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1995). One of the best objective accounts, a bit short on the political side, can be found in John Sommer, *Hope Restored? Humanitarian Aid in Somalia (1990-1994)*, (Washington D.C.: Refugee Policy Group, 1994).

41. On the delicate question of human losses and lives saved, one should refer to Steven Hansch (et al.), *Lives Lost, Lives Saved: Excess Mortality and the Impact of Health Interventions in the Somalia Emergency*, (Washington D.C.: Refugee Policy Group, 1994).

42. Between 1992 and 1995 this author has had occasion to consult most of the main U.S. Somalia experts with whom he had been in professional contact (Charles Geshekter, Lee Cassanelli, Said Samatar, Kenneth Menkhaus, Peter Schraeder). None had been consulted before the establishment of UNITAF and few were contacted before the situation became unworkable.

43. From this point of view, the memoirs of Robert Oakley who was Special Envoy to Somalia for both President Bush and President Clinton, are very revealing. In his chapter devoted to 'Political Consultations on the US Intervention', he mentions the UN, various African ambassadors at the United Nations and 'European Heads of State', but no Somali or Somalia experts. (Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp 44-47).

44. See section 1.1 "The peculiar nature of Somali society".

45. Author's interviews with many Somalis from all walks of life, between December 1992 and the present. Later, in a rather astonishing flight of honesty, notorious warlord General Aden Abdullahi Nur 'Gabeeyow' was to publicly declare that he and his fellow militia leaders 'should be arrested if there is to be any hope for the country' (*Somalia News Update*, 11 July 1994).

46. I.M. Lewis, 'Pacifying the warlords', *The Times*, 12 December 1992

47. Secretary of State for Defense Dick Cheney: 'US troops should pull out by the end of January'. *Agence France Presse*, 20 December 1992.

48. *Agence France Presse*, 14 December 1992.

49. *Agence France Presse*, 14 December 1992.

50. *Agence France Presse*, 14 December 1992

51. For a criticism of this inappropriate peace-making approach, see Gérard Prunier, 'L'inconcevable aveuglement de l'ONU en Somalie', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1993.

52. Interview with General Aden Abdullahi Nur 'Gabeeyow', SNF leader, Addis-Ababa, April 1993.

53. Interview in *Jeune Afrique*, (10-16 January 1993).

54. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 3 March 1993.

55. See Gérard Prunier, 'The Experience of European Armies in Operation Restore Hope'. Paper presented at the 'Operation Restore Hope Revisited' conference, Woodrow Wilson Center, Princeton University, 21-22 April 1995 (publication fc). German troop deployment more than made up for the partial French withdrawal.

56. The growth of the tension between Aydeed's forces and the UN can be followed almost day by day through Radio Mogadishu's broadcasts. See *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 16, 17, 22 and 23 May 1993.

57. *Agence France Presse*, 29 May 1993.

58. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Agence France Presse*, 3 June 1993

59. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 5 June 1993

60. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu* [Pro-Ali Mahdi], 5 June 1993

61. It is this aspect of the UN's involvement which was to draw the strongest international criticism. See for example Stephen Smith, *Somalie: la guerre perdue de l'humanitaire*, (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1993) and Rony Braumann, *Somalie: le crime humanitaire*, (Paris: Arléa, 1993).

62. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 885 (1993) to Investigate Armed Attacks on UNOSOM II Personnel ...*, (New York: United Nations, 24 February 1994).

63. *Le Monde*, 26 June 1993

64. *La Repubblica*, 17 July 1993

65. For a technical analysis of the increased UN firepower see 'USAF Special Operations in Somalia', *Air Forces Monthly*, January 1995.

66. Alain Frachon, 'Washington estimait indispensable de marquer le coup', *Le Monde*, 13-14 June 1993

67. There were 4,700 at their peak during this second period according to *Somalia News Update*, 5 October 1993.

68. Jean Hélène, 'Mogadiscio, capitale à deux visages', *Le Monde*, 17 June 1993

69. *Agence France Presse*, 25 September 1993

70. Elaine Sciolino, 'UN Chief Warning U.S. Against Pullout of Force in Somalia', *New York Times*, 30 September 1993

71. See *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, No. 590 (18 September 1993) and No. 592 (2 October 1993).

72. See Bernhard Helander and Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, *Building Peace from Below? A critical review of the District Councils in the Bay and Bakool Regions of Southern Somalia*, (Uppsala: Life and Peace Institute, April 1995).

73. The main contingents were from India and Pakistan. The other large ones were from Malaysia, Bangladesh, Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

74. Author's interviews with former UNOSOM French officers returning from Somalia, Paris, May 1994. There were some attacks against Indian troops in mid-1994, but these remained limited.

75. *The Economist*, 24 September 1994.

76. Walter Clarke, 'Uncertain mandates in Somalia'. Paper presented at conference

on 'Restore Hope Revisited', Woodrow Wilson Center, Princeton University, 21-22 April 1995 (publication fc).

77. Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast, *Political Economy of Post-intervention Somalia*, (Washington D.C.: The Center of Concern, April 1995), p 3.

78. Menkhaus and Prendergast, *Political Economy*, p 4.

79. Menkhaus and Prendergast, *Political Economy*, p 12.

80. See Gérard Prunier: 'Somaliland: birth of a new state?'

81. The government was supported by a Habr Garadjis alliance, i.e. the Eidagalley, Habr Yunis and Arap clans.

82. A Habr Awal of the Issa Musa sub-clan, Egal was a former Prime Minister who had spent thirteen years in prison (1969-1982) under Siad Barre. After briefly becoming President of the Mogadishu Chamber of Commerce after his release, he had chosen to live in self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia for ten years.

83. Interview with John Drysdale, Diplomatic Adviser to President Egal. Princeton, 21 April 1995.

84. In fact, the SNM had dissolved itself as an organization after independence had been proclaimed. Even Abd-er-Rahman 'Tur' had to admit that its Central Committee had not met for months, either inside or outside the country.

85. For a detailed account, see *Somalia News Update*, 14 December 1994.

86. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 27 August 1994.

87. As already mentioned the Somali National Alliance (SNA) was a structure created by General Aydeed in 1992 in order to regroup the factions of the various organizations which supported him. This was necessary since most of the organizations (SDM, SPM, SSNM, USC, etc) were split in two, with one faction supporting him and the other supporting 'President' Ali Mahdi. Ali Mahdi in turn came out with a federation of *his* factions, called the Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA). We will henceforth refer to the 'SNA' to mean the pro-Mohamed Farah Aydeed camp and to the 'SSA' to mean the pro-Ali Mahdi camp.

88. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Hargeisa*, 22 September 1994.

89. It is the failure of this attempt (which we will analyze in the section on the Central Region and Benadir) which eventually led to the 'let's-do-business-with-local-coordination-but no-national-state' situation which we have described above.

90. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 8 October 1994. The danger was of course partly due to geography. General Aydeed had no point of physical and therefore possibly military contact with Somaliland territory. The Northeastern Region, on the contrary, had a long common border with Somaliland.

91. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Hargeisa*, 16 October 1994.

92. President Egal had started to circulate a new currency a few weeks before. These new shillings, printed in Great Britain, were quite well accepted by the



population. By early 1995, they had completely replaced the former Siad Barre currency which still circulates in the South. (Interviews with John Drysdale and with Matt Bryden, Princeton, 21 April 1995).

93. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 11 November 1994; *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 18 November 1994).

94. Matt Bryden, *Report on the Camaboker and Rabasso Camps* (Addis-Ababa: United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia, February 1995).

95. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Hargeisa*, 4 January 1995.

96. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 4 February 1995.

97. *Agence France Presse*, 28 February 1995.

98. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 25 March 1995.

99. *Agence France Presse*, 29 March 1995; interview with John Drysdale, Princeton, 21 April 1995; Matt Bryden, *Mission to Somaliland 6-20 May 1995*, (Addis Ababa: United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia, 28 May 1995).

100. See *The Economist*, 8 April 1995.

101. Colonel Abdullahi had led the failed 1978 coup d'état. After fleeing to Ethiopia, where he created the SSDF, he fought for a number of years against the Siad Barre regime. Due to his increasingly authoritarian attitude which led to intra-organizational killings, he was arrested on President Mengistu's orders in October 1985. He remained in detention until May 1991, when he was freed after the fall of the communist regime. He went back to the Northeast and quickly regained a measure of control over his former organization.

102.. This is the largest of the four or five Islamist groupings who are competing to reorganize Somali politics along radical Muslim lines. See Mohamed Abdi Mohamed, 'De l'Islam traditionnel à l'Islam intégriste en Somalie', (Unpublished paper, Besançon, February 1995).

103.. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 23 July 1994.

104.. *Somalia News Update*, 27 August 1994. A former prime minister in pre-Siad Barre times, Abdirazzak Haji Hussein had become ambassador to the UN in 1974 and subsequently asked for political asylum in the U.S. in 1979. Since that date he had lived in America as a private citizen. But he was an Osman Mahmood.

105. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 8 October 1994.

106. See next section on Benadir and the Central Region.

107. See the Manifesto signed by 139 Majerteen intellectuals in early August 1994, to try to influence the coming SSDF Congress to adopt a declaration of independence (*Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 27 August 1994). This author has seen 'official' SSDF letterhead printed as 'Government of the Northeastern State of Somalia'.

108. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 17 September 1994.

109. By Benadir and Central Region we mean the former provinces of Hiiran, Middle Shebelle, Benadir proper and Lower Shebelle down to Brava harbour.

110. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 14 October 1994.

111. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 15 October 1994. See also *Africa Confidential*, French Edition, 10 October 1994.

112. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 26 October 1994.

113. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 20 November 1994. The Hawadle are a Hawiye clan which, like the Murosade, had for a long time been considered as 'neutral' in the Ali Mahdi - Aydeed quarrel. The clash with Aydeed's Habr Gidir led them to create by mid-1994 a third branch of the USC called United Somali Congress-Peace Movement (USC-PM), led by Abdille Osoble Siad.

114. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 8 October 1994.

115. See *Le Monde*, 10 December 1994; *The Daily Nation*, 3 January 1995; *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 16 January 1995.

116. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 16 February 1995.

117. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 22 February 1995.

118. Matt Bryden, *Update on the Situation in Muqdisho*, (Addis-Ababa: United Nations Special Emergency Unit for Ethiopia, 29 March 1995).

119. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 13 May 1995; *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 36, No 10 (12 May 1995).

120. *Le Monde*, 14 June 1995.

121. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 19 June 1995.

122. A few days later, in spite of his boasts, the SNA leader failed to obtain the Somalia seat at the next OAU meeting in Addis-Ababa. See *Agence France Presse* [Addis-Ababa], 20 June 1995.

123. *Libération*, 15 November 1994.

124. *The Economist*, 4 March 1995.

125. See for example the report of an attack on the Shari'a Court set up in Buurhakaba (Bay Province) by the pro-Ali Mahdi faction of SDM. (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 21 March 1995).

126. Ali Mahdi had attended the radical Islamist Khartoum conference in April 1995. Alan Rake, 'Somalia: Still Struggling', *The New African* (June 1995). See also *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 7 July 1995 and *Libération*, 20 July 1995.

127. This is the argument put forward by Menkhaus and Prendergast, *Political Economy*, pp 6-7.

128. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 29 December 1994.

129. See Petro Petrucci, 'Un genocidio piccolo, piccolo', *Nigrizia* (March 1995), about the fate of the town of Brava since 1991.

130. See Steven Hansch (et al.), *Lives Lost, Lives Saved*.

131. This is why at the end of their investigation Menkhaus and Prendergast, are careful to caution explicitly that: 'under no conditions should donors and NGOs assist in major agricultural projects if land has been usurped by force from the original owners ... it is imperative that aid agencies do not become (as they were during the war) a funding arm for an extortion and militia-based economy.' (Menkhaus and Prendergast, *Political Economy*, pp 18-19). We will come back to this point in the discussion of the so-called 'banana wars'.

132. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Mogadishu*, 23 November 1994.

133. See *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 11 and 18 February 1995.

134. *Agence France Presse* [Mogadishu], 23 June 1995.

135. *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 8 July 1995. Mirifle is the old colonial name used for the Rahanweyn.

136. A member of the Elal Rahanweyn clan, this veteran politician was a keen collaborator of the Italian AFIS administration in the 1950s. Later, as leader of Hizb Digil Mirifle (HDM), the southern party, he was a minister of finance in the Abdirazzak Haji Hussein cabinet. Turned businessman during the Siad Barre years, he was in 1991 a founder of the SDM and later led its pro-Ali Mahdi faction.

137. A Giron Rahanweyn, this middle-aged lawyer had been in his youth a member of HDM and more recently one of the leaders of the pro-Ali Mahdi faction of SDM.

138. *Reuters* [Mogadishu], 7 June 1995.

139. See Menkhaus and Prendergast, *Political Economy*, p 5.

