Somalia: The Painful Road to Reconciliation

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Somalia represents one of the great tragedies of our times. It is a humanitarian situation so grim, and a political reality so anarchic that the United Nations found it necessary to broadly interpret its narrow mandate to justify intervention. Even the United States, better known for interventions spurned by self-interest than altruism, was compelled to intervene militarily. Since the ouster of President, General Siad Barre in January 1991, approximately 300,000 Somalis have died due to violence, famine and disease.[1] Inter-clan and intra-clan fighting and looting had decimated the Somali landscape. The entire economic infrastructure has been destroyed, political institutions no longer exist, but perhaps most detrimentally, the social fabric of Somali society has been torn apart.

The Writing of a Tragedy

Contrary to belief, this conflict has not emerged because of some inherent Somali predisposition toward violence, chaos, or barbarity. Neither is the conflict epiphenomenal, unique to the current context. Rather, a thorough understanding of the conflict can only be wrested from an extensive historical evaluation of traditional Somali society and the superimposition of Western and Eastern influences since colonial times. While such an in-depth investigation lies beyond the scope of this study, a few themes should be briefly mentioned.

The Somali people, unlike most of the African continent, belong to one ethnic group and share one religion. The unsuspecting Westerner might therefore assume that the formation of a modern liberal democratic nation-state would pose little problem for Somalia. Such has not been the case. In Somali society, clans (based on lineage and kinship) provide the fundamental basis for identity-formation. Pre-colonial sociopolitical organization was highly decentralized, lacking formal centralized political institutions.[2] But to imply that Somali society was anarchic is far from the truth. There existed

1. Theodore S. Dagne, "Somalia: War and Famine," Congressional Research Service Issue Brief, (Washington, D.C.: CRS/Library of Congress, March 1, 1993).

2. Traditional Somali social and political organization was typical of what Evans-Pritchard termed stateless societies. These societies, most often pastoral and nomadic, were organized by lineage and kinship. The term "stateless" is used to refer to societies where no formal central political institutions existed. However, definite legal and social norms existed, and were implemented by elder councils. When disputes occurred between smaller sub-clan units, they were most often settled peacefully through arbitration or extended negotiations. Since these intra-clan conflicts involve disputants from the same direct lineage, non-violent channels are pursued. Warfare, however, was not uncommon between larger clan units, where conflicts led to violent quests for retribution.

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well-developed and functional legal norms and dispute settlement mechanisms. And while isolated violent confrontations between clans sometimes occurred in the struggle for extremely scarce resources in that hostile climate, most disputes were peacefully settled by *guurti* or elders assemblies. These elders, serving as the legitimate representatives of their clans, sub-clans, or sub-sub-clans, would typically sit around in a room for hours, days or months hashing out items of contention until they reached consensus.

Contact with the West and East introduced European institutions and guns, two novelties which profoundly damaged the traditional Somali system. Colonialism (British in the north, Italian in the south) superimposed centralized European government and court institutions on traditional Somali society. John Paul Lederach attributes "centralization in governance" as a "root cause of Somalia's breakdown."[3] At the local level, conflicts continued to be settled by *guurti*, but slowly the authority and legitimacy of "uneducated" elders was undermined. A new political elite, young and western-educated, was nurtured by the colonial administration until the formal transfer of power at independence in 1960. Although this account is caricatured and oversimplified, the point is clear: the combination of the modern and traditional proved a lethal mixture, effectively thrusting Somalia into sociopolitical purgatory. The old structures of order and governance had been compromised and the new systems were fragile and insufficiently institutionalized. As a result, both of these systems have essentially collapsed. And yet, the tension between "modern" and "traditional" would have had much less disastrous consequences had it not been for the massive influx of modern weaponry.[4] Somalia was one of the most blatant victims of the Cold War. First, as a Soviet client, and later switching over to the American bloc, Somalia was armed to the teeth, a time-bomb waiting to explode.

Thus, it was not merely the despotic and tyrannical rule of General Siad Barre which triggered the ruthless struggle for power, but also the historical context wherein traditional peaceful dispute settlement mechanisms had been undermined and replaced by rule of the gun. Bearing these factors in mind, this study will focus on the Somali conflict and reconciliation efforts since January 1991. First, an overview of the major actors and issues will be provided. Second, the rules and structure of the conflict will be assessed.

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3. John Paul Lederach, "What Should Have Happened: An Interview with John Paul Lederach," **Middle East Report** (March-April 1993) pp. 38-42.

4. Soviet arms transfers to Somalia in the 1970s were among the highest per capita on the continent (more than $20 per capita, as compared to Ethiopia's $4.47 per capita). From 1976-80, however, Somalia received a total of about $750 million (less than one-third of the Ethiopian total). That discrepancy grew in the period 1981-87 as Somalia received a mere $456 million dollars from the US compared with Soviet military aid to Ethiopia of $5,782 million. Samuel M. Makinda, "Security in the Horn of Africa" **Adelphi Paper** no. 269, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Summer 1992).

Third, the phases of the conflict will be outlined and the various third party interventions analyzed. Finally, the influence of elders, women, and intellectuals on the reconciliation process will be investigated.

Actors

General Siad Barre came to power in a bloodless coup in 1969, and ruled the country until he was deposed in January 1991. As Makinda notes, his reign had been disastrous:

> Barre had maintained a centralized and authoritarian regime that had literally ruined the country. The economy was in a shambles, political institutions had collapsed, corruption was rampant, morale in the civil and armed services was low and clanism was at its height.[5]

The major resistance groups were also clan based, and extremely hostile toward one another. The first real threat to Barre came in April 1978, when a group of Majerteen officers, responding to Barre's failure to defeat Ethiopia in a confrontation over the Ogaden region, unsuccessfully attempted a coup. Having failed to overthrow Barre, they formed the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in opposition to the government. Ten years later, the Somali National Movement (SNM), an Issaq clan-based group, reacted violently to Barre's signing a peace agreement with Ethiopia which essentially renunciated the Somali claim to Ogaden. Amnesty International reported gross human rights abuses by government forces perpetrated against opposition clans, culminating in the massacre of "tens of thousands of Issaq clan members" in 1988.[6] Then, in August 1990, the SNM joined forces with two other recently formed opposition groups, the Ogadeni-based Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) and the Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC). It was this alliance which ousted Barre in January 1991.

The USC's hasty announcement of Ali Mahdi as the interim president resulted in an immediate split of the USC along sub-clan lines. The Habar Gedir-based faction, led by General Mohammed Farah Aideed and the Abgal-based group led by Ali Mahdi thus began a brutal intra-clan struggle for power. As Makinda asserts, an already desperate situation further deteriorated for the following reasons:

> First, the operation forces had only one thing in common: the defeat of Barre. Beyond that, they hated each other virtually as much as they did Barre. Second, when Barre was overthrown, power was immediately assumed by the Hawiye, a clan that had played virtually no role in the anti-Barre struggle until

5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

6. **Amnesty International Report** (London: Amnesty International, 1992), p. 4.

a few months before his fall. Third, the USC's unilateral appointment of an interim President went against the August 1990 agreement to consult with other groups.[7]

The battle has continued, albeit intermittently ever since.[8] While Aideed and Mahdi, the major forces in the capital Mogadishu, are undoubtably the two most powerful players, 13 other clans and sub-clans are also engaged in the struggle.[9]

It is very significant that these clan-based politico-military groups have long been regarded as *the* major actors in the conflict. Throughout numerous third party mediated negotiations in 1991-92, only these groups and their leaders have been consulted, lending them considerable legitimacy. Domestically, however, these leaders' legitimacy is derived primarily from the barrel of the gun, for they have illegitimately circumvented the traditional clan leadership (elders). Lacking legitimate support among their own people, these politico-military groups have wreaked utter havoc upon Somali society. The leaders of these groups have been obstinate and intransigent, most often resisting reconciliation, and at other times, flagrantly disobeying cease-fire arrangements. Most third party interveners have seriously erred, bee-lining straight to the source of the *problem* (warlords), while neglecting to see other potentially influential actors who would likely be part of the *solution*.

Since only 5 percent of the Somali population has been involved in the perpetration of violence, it was a dire mistake to solely focus reconciliation efforts around them. Accordingly, a host of other actors have recently been recognized and included in the dialogue. Vayrynen asserts that new actors "transform the conflict by expanding the domain of the conflict resolution and by changing the rules of the coalition building in the conflict. The recognition of new actors may make the conflict resolution more realistic and open new space for political action."[10] In Somalia, a few insightful mediators, namely chief UN envoy Mohamed Sahnoun and US special envoy Robert Oakley, realized the inefficacy of top-down reconciliation. Perceiving the need for a broader-based regeneration of civil society, these mediators sought to empower local leaders and prominent citizens. As a result, a number of local

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7. Makinda, *op. cit.*, p.31.

8. As Africa Watch reported in a Jan 30, 1992 Congressional hearing, May-November of 1991 was relatively quiet, as hostilities lessened due to temporary settlements brokered by clan elders. Then, from November 1991 to March 1992, fighting resumed between Mahdi and Aideed, this time with greater intensity and ferocity than ever before. It has been estimated that at least 30,000 people were killed in that period.

9. Most powerful among these other factions are a coalition led by General Mohammed Hersi Morgan, the son-in-law of former President Siad Barre. General Morgan's stronghold has been in the south, around Bardera. His group has been in a continual and bloody struggle over Kismayu with Colonel Omar Jess (an ally of Aideed). Morgan violated the January cease-fire accords, attacking Jess and assuming control of Kismayu. Responding to Morgan's obstinance, coalition forces have engaged him in a number of attacks aimed to elicit his compliance with the cease-fire accords. Dagne, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-12.

10. Raimo Vayrynen, "To Settle or to Transform," in Raimo Vayrynen, ed. **New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation** (London: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 4-5.

and regional peace conferences have been held. The participants have been clan elders, religious leaders, women, intellectuals and business people. Broadening the scope of actors has enabled Somalis to begin taking control of the process of rehabilitation and reconciliation.

Issues

The initial post-Barre conflict concentrated largely upon issues of territory and power. The two USC factions (Aideed and Mahdi) have continuously battled for control of the capital, Mogadishu, in order to set up a government. In other regions, clans have fought for control of major cities. Even the presence of the Unified Task Forces (UNITAF) has not been able to prevent General Morgan from continuing his push to capture Kismayu (see footnote 9).

As conditions worsened, and the horrors of famine began to obliterate the Somali people, foreign relief and aid poured into the country. Since January 1991, the United States has been the largest bilateral donor, providing over $210 million of humanitarian assistance, including 300,000 metric tons of food aid.[11] Most of this was channeled through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for by this time, no operational government existed to administer an aid program. Among these NGOs, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been the most active, spending 30 percent of its global budget on Somalia.[12]

While the struggles for land and power continued, the looting of relief shipments came to constitute a third focus of the struggle. Storage facilities were ransacked, caravans en route to delivery were attacked and heisted, and even distribution centers themselves experienced looting. The humanitarian efforts of the West were being held hostage, as aid workers were intimidated and violently attacked. These clan activities indicated the worsening of conditions and intensification of desperation, as well as the warlords' utter disregard for the lives of their people. Ultimately, it was this systematic siege on humanitarian efforts which triggered a more aggressive response in the form of military action by the United States and United Nations.

Placing these issues of clan conflict in broader perspective, the irony of clan power struggles becomes apparent. These clan groups are not fighting over ideology, religion, values or any other fundamentally substantive bones of contention. They are primarily fighting over power. The civil war has totally destroyed the country; the economy has been utterly decimated and

11. Dagne, op. cit.
12. Dagne, *op. cit., p.14.*

there is practically nothing left to fight over (except handouts from the west). The Somali civil war has been an exercise in self-destruction. Deutsch observes: "Some conflicts appear to take on a life of their own. They continue even though the issues which initially gave rise to them have been forgotten or become irrelevant."[13] If the clan warlords take a look around them, they will see the rotten fruits of their violent labors. For the victors there will be no spoils, but rather the arduous and difficult tasks of rehabilitation: comprehensively rebuilding the country from the bottom up. This will be less a position of privilege and perks, than one of base-level nation-building and reconciliation. Somalia's rehabilitation process will be a slow and cumbersome one; the most pressing issue at the moment is to determine who is capable of guiding the process.

Rules

The conspicuous absence of conventional rules and norms indicates that the Somali conflict has been largely anarchic. Until December 1992, the situation was characterized by total chaos. There were blatant human rights violations by all the clans (rapes, torture, mass murders). Even the international community and humanitarian aid shipments, which are most often exempt from the perpetration of brutality, were affected. As previously mentioned, through rule of the gun, force became the ultimate arbiter. The rules traditionally set and enforced by clan elders were severely compromised in the southern and central portions of the country. The north, having unilaterally declared independence (as the Republic of Somaliland) in May 1991, has been more successful in maintaining and operationalizing traditional rules and dispute settlement systems. In this region, cross-clan and intra-clan meetings and elders conferences have been held to peacefully mediate local disputes.

A turning point in the south and central areas occurred when rules were essentially imposed by the UNITAF multinational force in December 1992. Operation Restore Hope sought to restore order and stability to the country in the interest of protecting and facilitating humanitarian aid flows. At that point the norms of clan interaction were transformed, albeit coercively. Vayrynen refers to this type of change as *rule transformation*.[14] The mere presence of well-equipped and massive peace-keeping forces was incentive enough to stop most of the looting and greatly reduce fighting. There has been a considerable decline in the level of violence since these forces intervened, although localized hostilities and power struggles have by no

13. Morton Deutsch, "Subjective Features of Conflict Resolution: Psychological,Social and Cultural Influences," in Raimo Vayrynen, ed. **New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation** (London: Sage Publications, 1991) p. 47.

14. Vayrynen, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

means ceased. The imposed order has acted as an additional incentive to work out a cease-fire, for the incentives of mass looting have essentially disappeared. The disarmament process has also begun, and although all 15 major clans and sub-clans have agreed to comprehensive and transparent disarmament, this will be a delicate matter. If even one of the groups (overtly or covertly) refuses to comply, the entire agreement could easily fall apart and the country plunge once again into anarchy. Additional comments on the role of third parties in ensuring compliance will be provided later in the paper.

The inclusion of a broader section of civil society, and especially traditional leaders (clan elders) has also altered the rules. To some extent, traditional Somali rules and norms are being restored and regenerated in the hope of facilitating agreement. There has been increasing public pressure, by women's groups and intellectuals, to bring an end to the violence. It is to these changes in the structure of the conflict to which I now turn.

Structure

Since December, the structure of the conflict has been altered; however, these changes are currently fragile because they are all somewhat dependent upon the order imposed by foreign military forces. Let me offer an example. The inclusion of women, elders, religious leaders, traders, and intellectuals in the negotiation process has been an overwhelmingly positive development. In order to assess the implications and possibilities presented by the re-empowerment of prominent citizens, we must first assess how they had originally been silenced. Due in large part to colonialism and the repressive policies of post-independence governments, state-civil society relations in Africa have been tenuous; and Somalia is no exception.[15] However, traditional clan leaders (elders) did continue to play an important leadership role in the local areas. Women and traders were also very important community level actors. The onslaught of an all-pervasive and brutal rule-by-force situation created a psychology of fear, effectively dismantling and silencing these important groups in civil society. As Margaret Wilde reports from an interview she had with a traditional clan leader: "I can't control my

15. As Michael Bratton asserts, strong civil societies have arisen as a response to "weak" states in Africa. However, much of the activity has been "disengaged" from the state, autonomous attempts to meet development needs. While there are also some attempts by groups in civil society to "engage" the state in pursuit of their interests, the broader interface between civil society and the *central* government has been weak. During both the repressive Barre regime and the civil war since his ouster, previously strong elements of civil society were either forced underground or eliminated altogether. In this section, I assert that reconciliation efforts must include the secure and permanent resurrection of these segments of society. Michael Bratton, "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa," **World Politics** vol. 41, no. 3 (April, 1989), pp. 407-430.

own son—because he has a gun."[16]

The re-emergence of these groups has been facilitated by the restoration of some level of order and stability by foreign troops. What would happen if the UN peace-keeping forces leave the country? Although there are no current plans for a UN withdrawal, it is the fragility of the current arrangements which pose a constant threat to lasting, durable peace. Warlord power has not been reduced by an organic movement of the Somali people, but rather been temporarily silenced by an external force. The inclusion of groups from civil society into the peace process is critical, for only Somalis can rebuild their country. Robert Oakley warned that a purely top-down approach would most certainly represent a recipe for failure: "We're not trying to impose something external or something from above on the Somalis but (to) help them develop their own institutions...The administrative bodies that will emerge in the countryside—and ultimately in Mogadishu—will include a lot more elders, religious leaders, professionals, intellectuals and women's groups."[17]

How will it be ensured that the same type of vicious anarchy does not return? Even if a comprehensive disarmament process is undertaken, Somalia will surely seek the formation of a national army. Military wares continue to be readily available on the international market for all who are interested. While it appears that the structure of the conflict has been significantly altered by the inclusion of new actors, their appearance is fragile and retractable. As long as third parties maintain a secure and safe atmosphere, these groups will not be silenced; however, in the event of an international withdrawal, preventive mechanisms will be necessary to guarantee the peace. Otherwise, a return to violence would risk renewed intimidation and silencing of the people. It is for this reason that all agreements should be organic, domestically-generated (without foreign pressure) and internally-implementable to ensure a more permanent stability and durable resolution.

The structure of the conflict was also changed by the West's placement of the aid issue on the agenda. Just before the March negotiations, the western countries met and approved a rehabilitation and reconstruction aid plan of $142 million. However, announcements of this aid package were delivered concurrently with a warning. Expressing frustration with the intransigence of the warlords, and repeated violations of cease-fires, donors issued an ultimatum of sorts: the new aid package would be contingent upon substantive progress in the reconciliation process. When the "interest structure" changed, the disputants gained a concrete "commonality of interests" and "expansion of interdependence," both of which were incentives to move the conflict in a "more peaceful direction."[18] This form of

16. Margaret D. Wilde, "Needed in Somalia: Vision and Patience," unpublished manuscript, (1993) p. 2.
17. Mark Fineman, "Next Step: Can Somali Warlords Make Peace," **Los Angeles Times** (March 9,1993), p. 1.
18. Vayrynen, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

manipulation positively encourages disputants to become more serious about negotiations, but presents dangers as well. Agreements reached primarily under the auspices of outside pressure will tend to be fragile. The risk is that the parties will fail to confront their disputes and merely reach a weak agreement in the interest of obtaining the "carrots" of massive foreign assistance.

The previously discussed imposition of new rules of conduct by UN/US forces is the final structural alteration which deserves mention. Once again, there remains the dangerous potential for breakdown of the imposed order in the event of a troop withdrawal. Only an organic and authentic Somali-centered negotiation process will bear sustainable fruits of reconciliation.

Conflict Phases

Emergence. The most recent stage of internal conflict in Somalia, the focus of this study, began with General Siad Barre's ouster in January 1991 and has continued until the present time. However, as previously mentioned, clan infighting dates back to pre-colonial times and a comprehensive understanding is only possible if this most recent stage is placed in proper historical context. The initial struggle for power in January 1991 was characterized by confusion, for most of the opposition forces had not greatly considered the next step. Having solely oriented and dedicated themselves to the task of ejecting Barre, none had adequately elaborated a post-Barre agenda. Intermittent fighting began, and political and social institutions progressively collapsed as the situation deteriorated. Fearing for their safety, the international community withdrew embassy personnel and the United Nations mission was closed. It was lingering bitterness among Somalis, the perception that the UN had abandoned them at their neediest hour, which caused Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to encounter such a hostile response and protests on his recent journey to Addis Ababa.

In 1991, the international community took little notice of the impending anarchy, famine and tragedy. In May, the north seceded, declaring an independent state of Somaliland, but has still not been recognized by any country. Following a mediated settlement by clan elders in April 1991, the situation temporarily improved. The ensuing detente did not indicate an impending resolution, but rather embodied the deceptive calm before the storm.

Escalation. A new and much more intensive chapter of conflict began in November 1991 and lasted until a cease-fire in March 1992. During this period, supporters of Mahdi and Aideed fought viciously, leaving at least 30,000 dead and many more wounded and displaced. Since the fighting began, approximately one million Somali refugees have fled to Ethiopia

(500,000), Kenya (300,000), Djibouti (105,000), Egypt (13,000) and the Yemen (50,000).[19] As conditions worsened, the international community began to take notice. The US Congress held hearings in January 1992, and initiated UN action in the Security Council. Throughout 1992, the UN monitored the Somali conflict, and issued a series of progressively more strongly worded statements condemning the brutality and calling for an end to the bloodshed.[20] Intervention appeared problematic, however, for the UN mandate only authorizes action with regard to international conflict. Somalia by this time is essentially a non-state, and clearly in the midst of what can only be described as a treacherous civil war. In January, UN special envoy James Jonah was sent to Mogadishu for a one day fact finding mission. Meeting only with Aideed, and failing to consult with Mahdi and other groups, the mission was criticized as partisan and counterproductive.

In spite of the cease-fire arrangement in March 1992, sporadic and occasionally intense fighting continued. Of apparently greater concern to the international community, the looting of aid shipments had intensified. A famine of proportions rivaling that of Ethiopia in 1984-85, was predicted. Eventually, in November, serious discussions of a direct military intervention began.

De-escalation. The conflict began to wind down with the arrival of American troops on December 8, 1992. The first group of UN peace-keepers, a unit of Pakistani troops, arrived in Mogadishu in August 1992, but were immediately cornered and neutralized by clan groups. UN peace-keeping troops were essentially powerless due to notoriously restrictive missions and rules of engagement. The UN provided the US-led UNITAF forces with a broader mandate, authorizing "the use of all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations." (UN Security Council Resolution 794) Operation Restore Hope sought to establish order, after which time the predominantly American forces would be replaced by a multinational UN peace-keeping force. By March 1993, the allied coalition included approximately 32,000 troops (about one half Americans) from 23 countries. This allied intervention forcibly pushed the disputants toward de-escalation and negotiation by eliminating the few remaining incentives to continued fighting. Looting was no longer possible, and no faction could expect to attain power or considerable land by military means without risking the reprisal of coalition forces. As a result, the fighting declined and efforts at a negotiated settlement intensified.

19. Dagne, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

20. I am speaking here of UN Security Council Resolutions 733 (1/23/92), 746 (3/17/92), 751 (4/24/92), 767 (7/27/92), 775 (8/28/92), and 794 (12/3/92).

Third Party Involvement

> "The predominant discourse on conflict resolution tends to be premised on three major assumptions. First, conflicts are reduced to ethnic or border conflicts. Second, the decisive actors in conflict resolution are considered to be external forces that intervened in the conflict. Third, and relatedly, whatever secondary role is relegated to internal forces, it is exclusively left to state-led initiatives, i.e., to only those who wield state power and those who aspire for it. In this note, it will be argued that a lasting resolution will have to give predominance to internal initiatives, a process of reappropriation of the region's destiny by internal social forces."[21]

Tadesse's argument is compelling, identifying some important weaknesses in conventional conflict resolution theory and methodology. Tadesse underestimates the importance of third party involvement, but is correct in pointing out that academic analyses often overshadow the important contributions of internal actors. The remainder of this study will focus upon these two areas, the nature of third party involvement, and an assessment of internal actors. The former will explore the numerous forms of intervention attempted by outsiders and assess the outcomes. The latter will asses the impact of previously excluded insider groups (clan elders, women, intellectuals) upon negotiations at both the local and national level.

A great deal can be learned from the experience of third party mediation efforts in Somalia. Since 1991, countless mediation efforts have been attempted, but few have ended in success. The Italians tried to broker an agreement between the Barre regime and opposition coalition in early January 1991. Barre had begun to institute multiparty reforms, and Italy perhaps anticipated the chaos which would result from an opposition military victory. On the verge of ousting Barre after a long and bitter struggle, the opposition categorically rejected Italy's gradualist (and less certain) proposals. Princen asserts that the "timing" of third party intervention bears implications for the level of mediator control and on likely outcomes.[22] I would argue that the Italian intervention occurred too late in the day to affect the outcome of the anti-Barre struggle.

Following Barre's ouster, USC self-proclaimed interim President Ali Mahdi sought to convene a national reconciliation conference. After a few postponements, the conference was held in June and July 1991 in Djibouti, and mediated by that country's President Hassan Gouled. Despite the attendance

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21. Zenebeworke Tadesse, "Limits and Possibilities of Externally Negotiated Settlements," in Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, ed. **Conflict in the Horn of Africa** (Atlanta: African Students Association Press, 1991), pp. 167-168.

22. Thomas Princen, **Intermediaries in International Conflict** (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 51-54.

of many major political groups (USC, SPM, SSDF, SDM) the clans remained so far apart on key issues that broad agreement was virtually impossible.[23] In the meantime, three attempts at averting secession of the north (mediated by Egypt, Djibouti, and Italy) failed to reconcile the positions of the Issaq-based SNM and the Mahdi government. Accordingly, SNM leader Abd ar-Rahman Ahmad Ali Tur declared the independence of the Republic of Somaliland on 18 May 1991.[24]

In 1992, numerous other mediation efforts were attempted. United Nations (UN), Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Organization of African Unity (OAU) initiatives all failed to reach settlements. Additionally, Eritrea sent a mediation delegation in January 1992; however, this attempt, along with six other bilateral mediation initiatives likewise failed. Makinda attributes the poor performance of third party mediation to the following factors: "the various clans and sub-clans still hate each other vehemently; the clan leaders have virtually no legitimacy and their supporters are likely to abandon them at any time; and the number of clan militias keeps rising."[25] I would add that all of these mediation exercises failed to alter the rules, issues and structure of the conflict. Remembering the warlords' legitimacy is derived primarily from their military might, it becomes obvious that short of some transformation of the conflict structure, these leaders would remain obstinate and unwilling to pursue negotiated approaches. None of the aforementioned neutral mediators could sufficiently influence the "disputants' interaction" to entice leaders whose sole power is the gun to put their guns down.[26] Neutral mediators can potentially help alter perceptions of the conflict and perceptions of reward structures, but not in this case. Although these groups had already decimated their country, they were not yet prepared to *voluntarily* and seriously pursue nonviolent negotiations.

Only after Operation Restore Hope altered the conflict structure were the warlords compelled to put down their weapons. The United States-led UNITAF military intervention thereby laid the groundwork for the pursuit of a negotiated settlement. The reward structure had been sufficiently altered to the extent that the clans could no longer hope to attain their goals by violent means. However, it took a total "carrot and stick" approach to provide ample incentives to engage the disputants in serious reconciliation efforts. The military provided the "stick" while the "carrot" of $142 million in foreign assistance for reconstruction was held out in Addis Ababa, only to be committed if agreement on a reconciliation plan were reached. By significantly altering the "disputants' incentive structure," Operation Restore

23. Makinda, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
26. Princen, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Hope has functioned much like a "principal" mediator.[27] It is also important to note the timing of these interventions. By the time the military arrived, little worth fighting for remained. Once such a stage is reached, the likelihood of commitment to alternative solutions should increase.

The West's "carrot and stick" strategy alone might not have resulted in serious negotiations had it not been for the tireless efforts of chief UN envoy Mohamed Sahnoun and US special envoy Robert Oakley. These two men contributed significantly to the broadening of the definitions of "actor" in the Somali conflict. Refusing to restrict their efforts to the warlords who have essentially caused these problems, Sahnoun and Oakley insisted on the inclusion of other prominent groups as a critical component of an organic, Somali-focused solution. These mediators met often with Aideed, Mahdi and other clan leaders, but also met regularly with women, clan elders, religious leaders, and intellectuals. Donatella Lorch reported that Oakley "believes the Americans' greatest success has been in reducing the power of the warlords and bringing into the peace negotiations everyone from elders to intellectuals to women."[28]

The mediator's approach is a major determinant of the type of outcome which will be achieved. Fischer asserts that the most effective negotiators are skilled, knowledgeable (about the people and interests involved), and establish good working relationships.[29] In Somalia, UN special envoys James Jonah (January 1992) and Ismat Kittani (October 1992-March 1993) employed less successful strategies. These envoys displayed insensitivity and a poor understanding of the Somali people and culture. As a result, they quickly lost the respect of the people. Sahnoun and Oakley, both well-tuned in to local realities, were well received and respected by both the disputants and the larger population. Lederach describes Sahnoun's approach:

> [G]et in there and understand the country. He got around, dealt with a broad spectrum of Somalis directly, working to win the respect of the military leaders but not concentrating on them exclusively. He met with elders, women's associations, with tradesmen and professionals and intellectuals. The gist of his plan was more of a bottom-up approach, regional conferencing leading to a major national conference.[30]

Oakley employed a no-nonsense approach to dealing with intransigent and manipulative warlords:

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27. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25.

28. Donatella Lorch, "U.S. Envoy to Somalia says American Mission has been achieved," **New York Times** (March 3, 1993), p. A6:1.

29. Roger Fisher, "Negotiating Power," **American Behavioral Scientist** vol. 27, no. 2 (November-December, 1983), pp. 153-156.

30. Lederach, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

> Mr. Oakley has juggled the carrot-and-stick approach in his dealings with the two main warlords, Mohammad Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi, in an effort to avoid playing favorites. At times the Somali clans seem to act like petulant children. In January at the first Somalia reconciliation conference, Mr. Aidid tried to convince the other Somalis that the Americans backed only him and refused to go along with the cease-fire agreement. The same day, the American forces used massive firepower to take over an Aidid compound near Mogadishu full of weapons, simultaneously warning Mr. Ali Mahdi that there was no favoritism. Almost immediately, Mr. Aidid agreed to meet with the other factions. Mr. Oakley denies any connection between the two incidents. Later in the month in Kismayu, Mr. Oakley and American forces repeatedly and unsuccessfully warned Mohammad Hersi, who is also known as Morgan and is a son-in-law of the ousted dictator, to stop his soldiers from approaching the city. Helicopter gunships attacked part of the group. "We were obliged to teach Morgan a lesson," Mr. Oakley said. "He wouldn't listen. We told him to stop."[31]

Although these heavy-handed approaches appear to have been effective in stemming some warlord violence, they are fragile and temporary, only viable if backed by external force. The durability of the peace has already come into question, for once the UNITAF presence in Kismayu was reduced, Morgan attacked.[32] In March, additional attacks on Kismayu stalled the national reconciliation conference as Aideed temporarily withdrew in protest. As a result, 500 American soldiers returned to the city to assist the 900 Belgian troops in restoring control.

The situation in Somalia has remained volatile since the transfer of military control from US-led UNITAF forces to the multinational UNOSOM forces in May. The long-term inefficacy of militarily imposed solutions became brutally apparent on June 5 when 23 Pakistani UN Peace-keeping troops were killed in an ambush in Mogadishu, allegedly by forces loyal to Aideed. Following the attack, a series of US-led air strikes sought to punish Aideed, destroying his military caches, radio station and headquarters. Pakistani troops also sought retribution, violently confronting protesters with sprays of gunfire, killing and wounding tens of Somali civilians in the process. As UN and US forces themselves become directly embroiled in the conflict, their legitimacy and neutrality are coming under more intense scrutiny. It is somewhat ironic that the very humanitarian agencies Operation Restore Hope aimed to protect have been forced to temporarily suspend relief activities and evacuate personnel in the face of renewed violence. The short-term success and security imposed by Operation Restore Hope appears to be giving way to a longer-term reality of continued insecurity and uncertainty. The logistical

31. Donatella Lorch, "U.S. Envoy to Somalia..." *op. cit.*

32. **Chicago Tribune Wires**, (March 18, 1993).

challenges of disarmament and the intricacies of authentic reconciliation lie beyond third party control. Third party attempts to forcefully impose peace will prove unfeasible in the long-term; rather, the process must be initiated, implemented and monitored by Somalis. The US and UN will necessarily play active roles, assisting and supporting the peace process but not controlling it.

The other important third party mediator has been Ethiopia. The active involvement of Ethiopia is quite a surprise, in light of the history of conflict between the two countries over control of the Ogaden region. Still, Ethiopia has played an enormously productive role in the January and March 1993 negotiation rounds. Both of these conferences were hosted by the Ethiopians in Addis Ababa. The March National Reconciliation Conference (NRC) began with an immediate stand-off and a first week plagued by interruptions and intransigence. From the outset, the UN seemed unable to manage and facilitate the negotiations (largely due to continued bitterness on the part of many of the delegations toward the UN). Ethiopia stepped in immediately and brought back the conference from the verge of collapse, pushing the Somalis vigorously toward a negotiated settlement. On what was scheduled to be the last day of the conference, Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi intervened to avert failure, "summon[ing] faction leaders to his presidential palace separately for private talks aimed at ending the impasse."[33] While the substance of these discussions was not made public, President Zenawi did successfully coerce each of the leaders to stay in Addis until an agreement had been reached.

The first priority of the Addis agreement signed on 27 March 1993 is said to be a "complete, impartial and transparent" disarmament within 90 days, assisted by the United Nations and United States Troops.[34] As previously mentioned, disarmament is of critical importance, but presents a logistical nightmare. The transitional mechanism has both central and regional components. A Transitional National Council (TNC) of 74 representatives will govern the country for the next two years, and set up four central administrative departments (civil, social, economic, humanitarian).[35] At the conclusion of this transition period, it is hoped that more permanent

33. **Press Association**, (March 22, 1993).

34. Donatella Lorch, "Somalia's Leaders Reach Settlement," **New York Times** (March 29, 1993), p. A5:1.

35. Reid G. Miller, "Somalis Receive news of Peace Accord with Hope, Skepticism," **Associated Press** (March 29, 1993), p.m. cycle.

governmental structures will be set up.[36] The TNC will consist of three representatives (including one woman) from each of the countries' eighteen regions, plus five from Mogadishu and one from each of the political factions.[37] Critics point out that this plan is extremely centralized, and that factional power struggles will likely overshadow some of the more productive reconciliation processes occurring at the grassroots.[38]

The Addis agreement holds promise, but leaves considerable room for skepticism. As the New York Times reported, heavy handed diplomatic pressure was applied throughout the talks:

> Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent telegrams to the Somali leaders warning of the consequences if they failed to come to an agreement. President Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia spent marathon sessions behind closed doors with the Somali leaders. And in a show of force, meant as a warning to troublemakers on all sides, the United States military sent 2,000 soldiers to Kismayu last week to maintain order.[39]

These third parties seemed intent on getting an agreement—any agreement. But, Kelman is correct in asserting that: "negotiations need to go beyond the achievement of a political agreement to a resolution of the conflict —a process conducive to structural and attitudinal change and eventually to reconciliation between the parties and to a transformation of their relationship."[40] In this case, very strong third party pressure was placed on the disputants to arrive at a solution. Such "principal" intervention forces an agreement, but detracts from authentic substantive interactions.[41] In essence an agreement has been forged without the disputants having confronted and resolved their conflict.

New Actors: The Influence of Elders, Women and Intellectuals

> Negotiating with those who carry guns and claim political prominence is crucial for immediate concerns of cease fires and food delivery but is not exclusive nor ultimately the key to long-term peace. Rather, the fundamental priority for

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36. As the Somali people organically reconstruct their society, they must carefully consider what form new political organizations and institutions will take. In the process, they should not forget that the superimposition of western political institutions upon Somalia's decentralized sociopolitical system wrought disastrous consequences (see discussion on p. 54) An acknowledgement of this historical reality has potentially broad-reaching implications, bringing into question the appropriateness of traditional western "nation-state" political organization to many African contexts. An indepth discussion of political organization lies beyond the scope of this study. However, the lessons of the past are clear: western models of governance, development, and conflict resolution should not be selected by default. Rather, alternative forms of social, political and economic organization should be explored, informed by both traditional and modern Somali realities.

37. Miller, *op. cit.*

38. John Paul Lederach, Interview, University of Notre Dame, Hesburgh Center, April 30.

39. Lorch, "Somalia's Leaders...," *op. cit.*

40. Herbert C. Kelman, "Interactive Problem-Solving: Social-Psychological Approach to Conflict Resolution," in John Burton and Frank Dukes eds. **Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990) p. 200.

41. Princen, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

> long-term transformation is creating a *Somali peace constituency* that serves as an *infrastructure for reconciliation.* In the Somali society, that infrastructure lies in the foundation of clan elders, intellectuals for peace, religious leaders, poets, traders, and women.[42]

As Tadesse stated earlier, all too often, unitary and static conceptions of "disputants" (as state actors or group representatives) prevents the emergence of other important voices from within dynamic and diverse conflict groups. Disputant heterogeneity has critical implications for the utilization of different strategies when dealing with inter-group conflict than would typically be used for inter-personal conflict. The Life and Peace Institute (LPI) in Uppsala, Sweden has been holding a series of consultations on the Somali conflict. Composed of both western and Somali scholars, activists, and some international organization-affiliated delegates, the working group has focused to a large extent upon people-centered reconciliation strategies. Rejecting the conventional approaches which had only included the politico-military groups in negotiations, LPI has sought to broaden participation. They have also been active with regional and local reconciliation efforts by clan elders and women.

The philosophy behind the LPI strategy is one of bottom-up, participatory reconciliation. If only the perpetrators of violence are legitimated and empowered by negotiations, the peace will be a shallow one. On the other hand, if broad sectors of Somali civil society are included in the process, reconciliation will be more durable and permanent. Throughout the past two years, Somalis have helped each other cope with the ravages of war, often across clan lines:

> Many Somalis are opening their homes, and cupboards, to neighbors when a nearby house is destroyed by random shelling. Such quiet sharing often extends across the lines of warring ethnic clans. "There are a lot of cases where members of the Abgal clan help the Habre-Gedir if they are neighbors," says Somali doctor Mohammed Dahir....Sharing is part of Somali custom, says Mohammed Hussein, whose brother was recently injured in the war. "They help each other. When I'm starving, I go to my brother, and he helps me"[43]

This type of informal, mutual support has been occurring throughout the civil war.

More formal local reconciliation efforts have also been influential. Traditionally, clan leaders convened *guurti* or "assembly of elders" conferences to settle disputes and build peace. These old mechanisms are being revived in order to decentralize the reconciliation process. Such efforts have been much more successful in the north (Somaliland) than in the more violent

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42. John Paul Lederach, "A Call for Sustainable Reconciliation," unpublished manuscript, (December 2, 1992), p. 2.
43. "Civilians Reach Across Ethnic Clan Lines," **Horn of Africa Bulletin**, vol. 4, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1992), p. 2.

southern and central areas of the country. While many of these *guurti* have been very localized and small scale, a regional elders conference with 250 delegates was recently held for six weeks in Borama.[44] Lederach believes these local and regional meetings, based on intensive discussions and consensual decision making, hold much greater promise for peace than do larger, formal national conferences.[45]

Women have not traditionally played an active role in Somali politics. However, their placement within society had the potential to mend many of the wounds across clan lines. Since cross-clan marriages are common, many women have experienced the horrors of watching their immediate relations in conflict with one another—brothers and fathers fighting husbands and sons.[46] Women have pushed very hard for reconciliation, even standing in solidarity and with supportive placards outside of *guurti* conferences. Prior to the National Reconciliation Conference, the UN convened a Humanitarian Conference to evaluate the first 100 days of its operations and look to the future. A large delegation of women played prominent roles in the deliberations.[47]

Elders, women, intellectuals and other groups in civil society are playing a critical role in the reconciliation process. However, most of their activities are small-scale and take place behind the scenes in local contexts which receive little publicity. The role of these groups, at the March 1993 national reconciliation conference, has received considerable attention. John Paul Lederach, an observer at the conference, reported that more than half of the 250 or so Somali participants came from these groups (75 community leaders - elders and religious leaders, 50 - 26 men, 24 women - representatives of voluntary organizations, and another 24 women).[48] This large delegation of Somali citizens was not directly influential in the formal proceedings, but was able to put considerable pressure on the faction representatives. Perhaps more importantly, these non-political delegates actively participated and shaped the smaller committee proceedings (e.g. Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Committee, Committee on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes). The inclusion of non-political delegates at the conference is a step in the direction of broad-based participatory reconciliation. As such, these local leaders and prominent citizens are just beginning to make their peaceful presence felt.

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44. Lederach, "What Should Have Happened...," *op. cit.*, p. 40.

45. Lederach, Interview..., *op. cit.*

46. Lederach, "What Should Have Happened...," *op.cit.*, p. 39.

47. Lederach, Interview..., *op. cit.*

48. Lederach, "Somali National Peace and Reconciliation Conference -- Daily Reports," (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 15-20, 1993) p. 1.

Observations and Conclusion

The March Addis agreements need to be put in proper perspective. Although the stated purpose of the conference was "national *reconciliation*", the reality was one of posturing, rhetorical speeches and constant arguing. The warlords' interactions indicate they have not been able to transform their competitive orientations in the interests of finding cooperative solutions.[49] These behaviors indicated that the factions are far from ready to resolve their differences. While *resolution* has not occurred, *management* of the conflict is in process. However, considerable power struggles lie ahead as the leaders return to Somalia to begin working out the details. There have been reports that issues of contention have already surfaced, and bickering over the vaguely-worded agreements has already begun. Meanwhile, the complex struggle over Kismayu has continued, in spite of the January cease-fire and March agreement. The formal transfer of power from US-led UNITAF forces to the multi-national UNOSOM II peacekeeping troops took place in early May. Attributing the increased stability and confidence to the United States presence, some Somalis worry that the fighting will resume under less aggressive UN Peace-keepers. General Aideed has already begun to test UN troops, attacking Pakistani UN Peace-keepers involved in routine inspections of weapons storage facilities. The disarmament process presents the first major challenge to UNOSOM II, now under the direction of chief UN envoy Jonathan Howe.

United Nations involvement in Somalia is unprecedented. The UN mandate, a relic of the Cold War, authorizes intervention only in circumstances where there exists a threat to international peace and security. Bilder notes that Article 38 of the UN charter clearly states: "absent consent of all parties to the dispute, the Organization has no general authority to intervene to bring about a settlement of international disputes which do not involve either coercion or a threat to international peace and security."[50] The Somali case is a prototypical civil war. There are no other countries directly involved, and the fighting, while terribly disastrous for Somalia, poses no threat to surrounding nations.[51] Yet, all six 1992 Security Council measures related to the Somali crisis mention grave concern "that the continuation of the

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49. Deutsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

50. Richard Bilder, "An Overview of International Dispute Settlement," **Journal of International Dispute Resolution**, vol. 1 (1986), p. 10.

51. The only manner in which the Somali conflict can be perceived as an international threat is in terms of the refugee problem. The burden on surrounding countries has been considerable. However, nowhere have I seen the refugee issue offered as an explanation or justification for the UN intervention. And, Operation Restore Hope has not been geared toward the repatriation of Somali refugees. Therefore, I believe the refugee issue, while very important, is not a plausible explanation for the UN action.

situation in Somalia constitutes a threat to international peace and security." The nature of this "threat" is never broached, for it is a tenuous assertion at best. Somalia signals a new era for the UN, one in which its mandate will likely be vastly broadened to meet the demands of international peace in the post-Cold War era.[52] It is a mandate based on collective security, and more progressively on humanitarian collective action. There is growing consensus that the gross perpetration of violence, whether international or domestic, demands a global response. Somalia was the first domestically-oriented intervention, a relatively easy choice since no government was in existence. Bosnia may be the next case; allied consultations are currently in progress, trying to determine the feasibility of potential interventions.

What will be the international role in Somalia over the coming months? On March 26, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 814, dedicating the organization to a number of longer-term commitments:

> These include the provision of assistance in rehabilitating political institutions and the Somali economy, as well as the leading role in promoting a political settlement and national reconciliation. The United Nations will assist in the reestablishment of the Somali police; in the development of a program for removing mines; and in establishing public information activities.[53]

The prominence of the UN role has caused concern that there will be over-reliance on foreign elements. There is speculation that as the Transitional mechanism becomes operational, the international community will start to show support for one of the leaders, thinking that "it is better to back somebody than nobody."[54] Other scenarios include the emergence of a possible coalition government, or a continuation of the power struggle (political and military).

The Somali case bears particularly important lessons for those interested in the evolving role of the UN. The organization's new role will be one in which peace-keeping activities will need to be balanced by equal dedication to peace-making and peace-building efforts.[55] Additionally, a broader mandate systematizing proactive and preventive interventions should be instituted. Care must be taken to ensure universalist solutions are not imposed from above, but rather are context-appropriate. When defining the conflict "actors", the international community should lend legitimacy to larger segments of civil society; this will give reconciliation processes more momentum and enhance the likelihood that solutions will be durable.[56]

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52. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Empowering the United Nations," **Foreign Affairs** vol. 72, no. 5 (Winter, 1992/3), pp. 89-102.

53. Raymond W. Copson and Theodore S. Dagne, "Somalia: Operation Restore Hope," **Congressional Research Service Issue Brief** (Washington, D.C.: CRS/The Library of Congress, April 6, 1993), p. 11.

54. Lederach, Interview..., *op. cit.*

55. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, **An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-Keeping** (New York: United Nations, 1992).

56. Lederach, Interview..., *op. cit.*

Finally, the UN will need to guarantee the peace it has negotiated. Disastrous situations have recurred in Angola and Cambodia where UN disarmament agreements have been flagrantly violated to the detriment of the other parties. In Somalia, as the disarmament process begins, the UN should closely monitor and enforce the agreement, utilizing other organizations (NGOs) for implementation if necessary.

In undertaking this broader mandate, the UN will be treading on uncharted territory; however, the enormous complexity and proliferation of conflict in the post-Cold War world present challenges which demand increasingly rapid and comprehensive responses. Throughout the UN's Somalia operations, serious questions have been raised concerning the organization's capacity to undertake such highly demanding tasks. Bureaucratic inefficiency, resource constraints, and over-reliance on the leadership of the United States are legitimate concerns. As the UN mandate is reevaluated and restructuring considered, these internal limitations will need to be addressed. While the future role of the UN in international affairs continues to be discussed, Somalia does seem to have ushered in the beginning of a new era in UN peace-making intervention.

The conflict in Somalia has left the country totally decimated. The entire economic, political, and social infrastructure has been ravaged by civil war. Recent developments, both foreign intervention and internally-generated conflict transformation, have provided a ray of new hope. The peace is a fragile one, however, and the road to reconciliation and rehabilitation will be long and arduous. Many questions will be answered as events unfold in the coming months and years. Will the factions resist conflict resumption and fully implement the Addis agreements? Will a comprehensive and transparent disarmament be achieved? Will "peace constituencies" (women, elders, intellectuals) play an increasingly important role in the reconciliation process? Will the peace prove to be durable yet resilient, even after the UN troops withdraw in a few years? Or, are new ties of dependency being forged —dependency on troops to maintain stability and humanitarian assistance to avert starvation? The future holds great uncertainty. And yet consensus does seem to be emerging around one critical point: if the peace is to be durable, it must be organic, inclusive and become deeply rooted within the broader constituencies of Somali civil society.