

Somalia: An Illusory Political Nation-State

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The current political turmoil in Somalia has stunned foreign governments, disappointed experts on Somali affairs and seems incomprehensible to non-Somalis. Most non-Somalis regard Somalia as a state consisting of a homogeneous people who speak the same language, adhere to the same religion (Islam) and culture. Indeed, to some extent this is all true. Yet, when the tyrannical regime of Siyad Barre was driven out of power by militias of the SNM (Somali National Movement) and USC (United Somali Congress), the country broke up into Somaliland (northern Somalia) and Somalia (southern Somalia). Moreover, southern Somalia descended into anarchy perpetuated by internecine clan wars, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians. The carnage in southern Somalia, together with the starvation in the Mogadishu-Baydhabo (Baidoa)-Kismayo triangle shown nightly on television screens, presumably led the United States Government to launch Operation Restore Hope when it became evident that the United Nations was unable to deliver its humanitarian aid to those who needed it most. This intervention, we were told, was purely humanitarian, having but a single purpose: to deliver food to a starving public (principally in the Mogadishu-Baydhabo-Kismayo triangle). Operation Restore Hope, dubbed humanitarian by the architects of this television-driven foreign policy, transformed itself into "Operation Destroy Aidiid," and the humanitarian mission became a military mission. Furthermore, the United Nations peace-keeping mission in Somalia, backed by an international community ignorant of the internal factors at play in the country, was transformed into the United Nations peace-enforcing mission. Both Operation Restore Hope and the United Nations operations in Somalia (UNISOM)

were disastrous ventures. They swiftly, if unwittingly, dragged to the mortuary the policies of the UN "Pasha," Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, which seem designed to dwarf nations of lesser stature in front of the UN and force them to kneel down to the authority of the Secretary-General and Western nations. Many Somalis and others of wider vision view this as neo-colonialistic both in intent and in action.

Let us try to answer why a humanitarian endeavor such as Operation Restore Hope would be such a dismal failure. The answer to this question is to be found in the analysis of two wider problems stated in the beginning of this paper. For purposes of clarity the two questions are:

1. Why did Somalia break up into two states, Somalia and Somaliland?
2. Why are tribal wars still raging in Somalia and obstructing foreign efforts to piece together the Somali state?

The answer to the first question is rather straightforward but it is the second question that bedevils the mind somewhat.

The Somali Nation and Socio-Economic Background

The Somali people, who have strong traditions of nomadic pastoralism, had no central rule of their own before 1960. They were always clan-structured and were spread over a vast territory for which they did not have any common name, even though they always knew themselves as Somalis. Each clan (and sub-clan) inhabits a certain grazing area or sometimes farm land, which is its tribal land. Tribal settlement areas were recognized by all tribes, though livestock raiding and fighting for territorial expansion were and still are commonplace. The manner in which each clan uses its tribal land or how it as-

sociates with neighboring clans is regulated through the *Heer*, Somali customary law. Tribal land is communally owned but the *Heer* does permit certain private ownership of land, specifically for cultivation or for water wells. Tribal lands are to be used by the owning tribe and crossover is not permitted except in case of drought, during which time the immigrant tribe is viewed to be sojourning in the host tribe's land for the drought period only, usually until the next rainy season. The immigrant tribe must engage in good neighborly relations and abide by the *Heer* of the host tribe. Ordinarily, however, different clans do not settle in the same area. This practice spilled over to Somali cities and towns: each clan congregates in a section of the town or city.

Since tribal ownership of land confines each tribe to a particular area, Somali society is very compartmentalized, though relatively unstructured by class. This compartmentalization makes it easier to understand why clans whose tribal lands are far apart do not think they share anything in common. They may not even have heard of each other. This is why Virginia Luling, in studying the Geledi, could assert that the Geledi of Afgoi (30 kilometers southwest of Mogadishu) never heard of the Issaq of the north or the Majerteen of the east. Even when they had heard of them (and they certainly do today) Geledi do not regard themselves as sharing anything in common with the Issaq or Majerteen, and *vice versa*.

The European colonialists of the 1800s were able to exploit with ease this clan phenomenon. Entering into treaties separately with each clan, Britain, Italy and France were able to carve up the vast Somali territory into five colonies. Fragmented though they were, the Somalis were not easy to govern, to the dismay of the colonial powers. Clan loyalty has precedence over everything else, even the state. Thus, whenever a clan felt that the state was ill treating it, that clan rebelled, sometimes violently. For example, there were Bimal and Wa'dan clan uprisings in 1896 against the Italian colonialists, the Issaq rebellion of 1981-90 and the Hawiye uprising of 1985-90 against the Somali dictatorship.

Nomadic, clan-oriented culture predominates in Somali society. Admittedly, Somali is spoken throughout the Somali-inhabited lands of the Horn, but significant linguistic variations can be discerned. There are, in fact, several Somali languages. Three languages in southern Somalia exemplify some of the linguistic differences. The Rahanweyn tribe speaks Mai (or Mai-Mai). This agro-pastoral

clan is fairly large and has tribal lands radiating out of Baydhabo (Baidoa). Their language is not spoken by any other Somali group and the Rahanweyn feel that they have too often been unfairly required to speak other Somali languages at the expense of their own. Two other languages in southern Somalia are those of the Barawani and the Bajouni. The former is spoken by the inhabitants of the Indian Ocean town of Brava and its environs, some 240 kilometers south of Mogadishu, while the latter is spoken by the Bajoun Islanders south of the port town of Kismayo. Both Barawani and Bajouni languages are akin to Swahili. In Somali-inhabited territories of Kenya, Ethiopia, and the Republic of Jabouti, some languages other than Somali are spoken. In Jabouti (once French Somaliland) two major languages are spoken: Afar and Somali.

To summarize so far: the cohesiveness of Somali society is fragile because of clan loyalty, cultural variations and language differences, among other factors. History is another element dividing Somalis.

The Formation of the Somali State

When Italy lost World War II, the United Nations had to dispose of the Italian colonies. It granted independence to Libya, asked Ethiopia to administer Eritrea and placed Italian Somaliland (southern Somalia) under a ten-year UN Trusteeship (1950-1960) but under Italian administration. (To revert the colony to a defeated Italy may seem somewhat strange but that is what the UN opted for). In 1956, a Constituent Assembly was elected in Italian Somaliland. The Constituent Assembly was entrusted with making the constitution and other legislation needed for the realization of full independence. Meanwhile, agitation for independence had started in British Somaliland in the north. Since Britain, unlike the Trusteeship Administration in Somalia, was not mandated by the United Nations to meet any deadlines, Somalilanders were obliged to negotiate their own independence with Britain. Finally, Britain conceded to the demand of the Somalilanders in the north and allowed them to elect a parliament of 55 members, assuring full independence on June 26, 1960, four days before the already-scheduled independence of Somalia in the south. From there on, the development of events was at a fast pace.

The Run Up to the Union and the Short-Lived Experimentation with Democratic Rule

When Britain announced its willingness to grant independence to Somaliland in the north, a fervor for unity spread throughout Somaliland and

Somalia, although there always were a few rejectionists. It may seem strange for a tribal society accustomed to wander with its livestock to seek the formation of a political state. But it is exactly their ignorance of the intricacies of a state that enabled the Somalis to agree to a unitary state which, as we shall see later, some embarked on dismantling immediately after the initial euphoria subsided. In any case, both Somaliland and Somalia decided to form a union. In the run up to the union, however, the Parliament of Somaliland and the Constituent Assembly of Somalia approached the issue in divergent ways.

In the short period of February through mid- April 1960, the Somaliland Parliament passed important legislation, including an Act of Union, Somaliland and Somali Laws, laws of citizenship and international obligations, laws regarding treaties entered by the colonial administrators on behalf of Somaliland, boundary laws, and laws on a host of other issues. These were indeed remarkable achievements in such a short time, and indicate that Somalilanders wanted to have their own mark on the legal foundation for the subsequent union.

The Somali Constituent Assembly in the south, however, did not prepare the legal basis for a union with Somaliland. Five years of internal rule and two elections seemed to have taught southern Deputies only the privileges of power and the richness of the exploits of office for the politically corrupt. Rather than enact an Act of Union and other laws for uniting two sovereign states whose legal, financial and administrative systems were different, the Deputies of the Constituent Assembly were more preoccupied with securing apportionments to cabinet posts for clan members and other senior government posts in the nation to be proclaimed on July 1, 1960. In the Mogadishu Conference of April 16-22, 1960, the Somaliland Parliamentary Committee unveiled to their southern counterparts the Somaliland Act of Union. Deputies of the Constituent Assembly were embarrassed by this and resolved to make their own Act of Union. A Joint Committee of the two Parliaments was to have reconciled the two acts of Union thereby completing the legal union of the two states. Unfortunately, Somalia's Constituent Assembly never prepared its own act of union. It did, however, include in the transitory articles of its constitution provisions for a joint session of the two parliaments to elect a President and provision for a referendum on the constitution. From a legal point of view, then, the Union was never consummated. Nevertheless, Somaliland and Somalia were *de-facto* united on July

1960 to form the Somali Republic. It is worth noting at this point that the absence of a legally binding act of union gave Somalilanders a cause to argue for secession as early as 1961, and in 1991 this became the legal justification for withdrawal from the union and the refounding of the Republic of Somaliland.

As Saadia Touval succinctly explains in his book *Somali Nationalism*, the Issaq of Somaliland were well aware that they would lose political power by joining Somalia, but everybody thought problems could be worked out with parliamentary democracy and elections. This hope was short-lived. As we shall see soon, tribal interests and those of the state do not necessarily converge. In any case, when the state of the Somali Republic came into being in July 1960, two-thirds of the National Assembly were southerners, and they elected a southerner as President of the Republic. The President in turn appointed a fellow southerner as Prime Minister. The Prime Minister formed a government dominated by southerners and all important portfolios like interior, foreign affairs, treasury and commerce, were given to southerners. This ushered in the initial dismay of Somalilanders with the union. Though Somaliland parted with its independence to integrate the two systems of the north and south, union was not to be easy. Major difference existed in the two systems. Somaliland practiced free trade, had a legal system based on Somali Customary Law, English Common Law, and the Indian Penal Code. Further, it had a well-structured financial system, an excellent civil service system and a small, well-disciplined army. Somalia, on the other hand, had a legal system modeled on Italian law, state-regulated trade with monopolies and parastatals set up for Italian settlers, an Italian type of financial system, an ill-disciplined and underpaid labor system, and no army of its own before the union day. These differences increased the disgruntlement of Somalilanders. The growing mood of discontent and even resentment was clearly expressed in the national referendum on the Provisional Constitution held in June 1961. The major political party in Somaliland, the Issaq-dominated Somali National League (SNL) boycotted the referendum. Accordingly, the majority of voters in Somaliland rejected the Provisional Constitution, but it was approved anyway by a landslide in southern Somalia, albeit through stuffing of ballot boxes in several districts. It was the view of the northerners that the union was already legally dead. The outcome of the referendum polarized the two states-in-union and brought to the fore tribal dissatisfaction with the

state. Not surprisingly, therefore, in December 1961 (only six months after the referendum on the constitution) young army officers of the north who were unhappy with their untrained southern commanders staged an abortive secessionist coup in Somaliland. The public and northern politicians, though sympathetic to the officers' grievances, did not support the forceful break-up of the Republic and the rebellion was easily put down. No attempt at redressing northern grievances was made. Rather, in 1968 the higher taxation rates of Somalia were imposed on Somaliland in an attempt to integrate the two systems. This incited the Tax Revolt of 1968 in which some Hargeisa residents were shot to death by the police.

Events of 1961 and 1968 opened the way for clan-based political parties and further political polarization. While northerners' (and more specifically the Issaq's) discontent with unification was simmering, the Majerteen Darod-led government unleashed the state police against the Habar Gidir of Central Somalia under the pretext of restoring law and order to a region where a disgruntled clan was fomenting insurgency against the state. The Majerteen Darod clan used the cloak of government to settle old scores with Habar Gidir, the traditional enemy of the Darod in that area. Traditionally, clans wrangled and fought over water and grazing rights. However, a new phenomenon without basis in *Heer* was instituted, one that could trigger further hostility among clans through governmental action: this was the creation of a central government that legally controls all clans and has "legitimate" claim on all resources and institutions.

In spite of many difficulties, most Somalis were still willing to continue the experiment with elective government at the time when Siyad Barre overthrew the government.

The Siyad Barre Oppression and Armed Insurgency

Shortly after parliamentary elections were held in 1969, President Abdirasheed Ali Sharmarke was assassinated, allegedly by a soldier acting alone. As parliament was busy choosing a new president, Major General Siyad Barre, Armed Forces Chief of Staff, was plotting the overthrow of the government. On October 21, 1969 Siyad Barre together with 20 military officers and five police officers successfully staged a bloodless coup d'état and ended the government of Prime Minister Egal, the only union government ever headed by a northerner. Siyad Barre and his co-conspirators, nearly half of whom were drawn from his Darod clan, became the

Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). The SRC arrested the Prime Minister, his cabinet, and the President of the Supreme Court and immediately suspended the constitution and parliament, banned political parties, associations, lawful assembly, industrial action, and even held a symbolic burial of tribalism.

During the first six years of his 21-year rule, Siyad Barre and his SRC followed a three-pronged program:

1. Education and social work programs;
2. Building a huge and well-armed military establishment;
5. Building a Marxist state with a built-in cult of Siyadism.

While greatly consolidating his grip on state rule, Siyad Barre started an education expansion program. A massive school-building program was undertaken, giving remote villages access to primary education. Free universal primary education for Somali children ages 6-14 was mandated (but not enforced) by the government. In addition, a massive literacy campaign was conducted throughout the country, over and above regular adult schools. To further expand educational opportunities, for the first time a university was founded.

In parallel with the educational development program were health and rural development programs. Both preventative medicine and curative medicine were expanded and improved upon. Rural health centers and family health centers were also built. Finally, a rural development program and guaranteed employment were major programs of the SRC.

Programs of the above type would have earned any government a lot of support from its citizens. Not so when the noose is tightened on the liberties of the people. By 1970, Siyad Barre had announced his socialist political philosophy, executed three of his senior SRC members (General Ainanshe and Colonels Gabayreh and Dheel) and arrested two others (Generals Qorsheel and Qorwayne), but it was not until 1976 that the machinery of oppression was fully set in place. On July 1, 1976 the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party was formed together with its subsidiary organizations, like the Somali Women's Democratic Organization, Somali Youth Revolutionary Organization, Somali Federation of Labor Organizations, and Flowers of the Somali Revolution. In addition, an elaborate security apparatus was instituted. The most important security organizations were:

a) National Security Service (NSS)-headed for the most part by Siyad's fellow Darod and son-

in-law Ahmed Sulaiman Abdalla, and from 1982 on by fellow Darod, General Mohamed Jibril Mussa.

b) Party Bureau for Security-headed by a Darod.

c) *Guulwadayaal* or the Victory Pioneers-headed by Siyad's son-in-law.

d) *Hangash*, Military Security-headed by a Darod.

e) *Dhaba IJ.ebinta*, "Back-breakers"-headed by a Darod.

f) Red Berets, the Presidential Guard-headed by a Darod.

g) National Security Court. This court, whose verdict could not be appealed, was headed by a marine officer, General Mohamed Gaileh Yussur, also a Darod. What is so remarkable about this appointment is that Mr. Gaileh had no legal training whatsoever.

These security organizations and others of lesser stature had a free reign in oppressing the public and freely carried out extra-judicial executions and arrests on suspected opponents of the government. The German Democratic Republic's development aid concentrated on funding and building state-of-the-art, efficient prisons throughout the country, or as Somalis preferred to describe it: a pair of hand-cuffs for every Somali.

Members of the SSRP were preponderantly Siyad's Darod clan and were empowered to safeguard the "fruits of the Revolution." So were the labor, women, youth, and student organizations. Moreover, *Guulwadayaal* (Victory Pioneers) were set loose on the public to ascertain that everyone went to their neighborhood Orientation Center and participated in community programs, such as cleaning the streets so as to humble everyone docilely to obey state authority. A dilapidated military training school south of Mogadishu Airport was converted into the Halana Ideology Training School. All government employees were required to attend the school for at least three months of training in "scientific socialism." Indoctrination of civil servants was a primary aim of this school, but it also acted as a weeding-out center of civil servants: those deemed anti-revolutionary (including many Majerteen and Somalilanders) or who belonged to the "wrong" clan (e.g., Issaqs) lost their jobs.

Apart from the mechanisms of oppression built into the government, Siyad Barre built a political and administrative system revolving around himself and his Darod clan. With the founding of SSRP, Siyad Barre became the Secretary-General of SSRP as well as President of Somalia, thus concentrating the executive power and the power of the party in him-

self. Moreover, he appointed all high-ranking positions in the civil service, the Defense Ministry, and emissaries to foreign countries. Cabinet posts were also dominated by his clan, with key portfolios going to his family members or sons-in-law. Financial institutions and parastatals were concentrated in the hands of his clansmen, thereby securing the financial resources of the nation for his family. Feeling secure, Siyad Barre bestowed upon himself such grandiose titles as Father of Knowledge, Father of the Nation, Teacher of the Nation, and Victory Pioneer Siyad, to name only some. All schools, workplaces, military bases, and orientation centers were ordered to start their morning by the recital of *Guulwade Siyad*, an ode in praise of Siyad.

Independence transformed the cultural Somali nation into a political nation-state of precarious existence. Siyad Barre, on the other hand, created a central government that legally controlled all the citizen clans and that had "legitimate" claim to all resources. Thus, he further transformed the fledgling political nation-state into a clan-controlled state requiring all other clans (the majority) to respect this central rule under the guise of the state. Little wonder, therefore, that a Siyad Barre minister and a fellow clansman could in the late 1970s boastfully confide to an Italian journalist that his clan would in three decades rule Somalia forever. In those crucial three decades, he predicted, rule would be sustained by the barrel of a gun at first, then by amassing wealth in the second decade, and finally by becoming the educated elite during the third decade. Intoxicated by the belief that all Somalis had been subjugated to Siyadism, the minister unfortunately could not see the obituary of his government that was circulating among the Somalis.

Siyad Barre's regime built a formidable military and police force to defend the state against any aggressor. The Federal Republic of Germany specialized in training and arming the police while the Soviet Union trained and equipped the military. Despite the professed socialism of Siyad Barre, the Soviets abandoned him, however, when against their advice he waged a disastrous war on Ethiopia in 1977. Cold War trade-offs paid well those days, and the United States replaced the Soviet Union at once. Siyad Barre leased the Soviet-built base in Berbera on the Red Sea to the US Government for its Rapid Deployment Force, and also gave the US direct access to the long coast of Somalia. In return, the US started training and rearming the Somali Army and increased its economic assistance to Somalia. Further assistance for the Siyad regime was secured from the oil-rich Arab Gulf states.

With the founding of the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1976, hope of Somalia returning to an elective government faded away, but it was not until 1979 that the regime was formally challenged. Recall that in 1977 Somalia invaded Ethiopia, and despite initial success, the Somali Army suffered a humiliating defeat under the hands of Soviet and Cuban-backed Ethiopians. Siyad Barre lost no time in striking at the defeated Somali Army. Blaming the defeat on the Army itself, he court-martialed and executed a number of senior military officers, thus reducing the morale of the military further. Therefore, some military officers of the Majerteen sub-clan of the Darod felt the time was opportune for a palace coup. Accordingly, on April 1978, these officers tried to overthrow the regime but the rebellion was easily crushed and many of the plotters were rounded up and executed. However, some of the plotters and sympathizers escaped to Ethiopia and started the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), the first armed political opposition to the regime. Siyad Barre ordered surgical reprisals against the Majerteen in their tribal settlements in the northeast and within three years effectively neutralized SSDF operations.

SSDF failed to dislodge Siyad Barre from power mainly because:

1. SSDF never built a strong armed militia.
 2. The Majerteen were as much part of the regime as Siyad Barre's sub-clan of Marehan. They therefore defended the regime more than they tried to fight against it.
 3. Siyad Barre opened the state coffers and Mogadishu real estate to the Majerteen, including those in their militia. As a result, most of the militia "redefected" to the regime.
- Long before SSDF took up arms against the regime, the government started weeding out Issaqs from the civil service and the armed forces. This was being done discretely until 1981 when the Issaq in the diaspora founded the Somali National Movement (SNM). After the establishment of the SNM the government systematically purged the Issaq from the civil service, the military, and foreign service. Worse, however, the government subjected the Issaq in their own homelands to a wide range of abuses, including but not limited to imprisonment and detention without charge, extra-judicial executions, confiscations of businesses and properties, expulsion from schools, rape, demolition of water wells, public humiliation of clan chiefs and elders, exile to Mogadishu, denial of financial services and import-export licenses, and confiscation of livestock. As if these were not enough, soldiers

freely helped themselves to the merchandise and cash of Issaq businesses and relatives of detainees were forced to buy the release of their dear ones.

Student unrest erupted throughout Somaliland in 1984, particularly in Hargeisa, the second largest city in the country. Consequently, brutal reprisals were unleashed by the government against the Issaq, and by 1985 martial law was proclaimed in the northern regions. A wide range of atrocities, including summary executions, torture, prolonged detention without charge, extortion, rape, destruction of water wells and water catchments, confiscation of property and livestock, and punitive economic measures were undertaken by the government in an attempt to deny the SNM grass-roots support from the public. Unfortunately, such measures had the opposite effect on the public, and in turn generated more brutal governmental reprisals. Thus, in 1985, forty-five civilians accused of being SNM sympathizers were executed in Burao, to be followed by several others in Oodweyne. Government services including utilities were either canceled or scaled down.

The administration of these regions was given to Martial Law Executor, General Mohamed Hashi Ganni, a Siyad Barre clansman and Commander of the 26th Division of the Somali Army. Ganni imposed a dawn-to-dusk curfew on principal towns and limited internal travel by using a "pass system." To be specific, "the Military, Security Forces and curfew patrols have become a law unto themselves and created a climate of unrestrained violence. The existence of the SNM has provided a pretext for President Siyad Barre and his military deputies in the north to wage a war against peaceful citizens and to enable them to consolidate their control of the country by terrorizing anyone who is suspected of not being wholeheartedly pro-government. Years of sustained state violence have created a serious level of political unrest in the region."

When these harsh policies made the Issaq more mettlesome, Siyad Barre replaced Gen. Ganni with his son-in-law and clansman General Mohamed Siad Hersi, *nom de guerre* General Morgan. In an attempt to outdo Ganni's "toughness," General Morgan advanced the curfew to 8:00 p.m., restricted internal travel further, engaged in massacres and indiscriminate killings of members of the public, and denied burial of dead without a permit from the army. Morgan brought to the region hundreds of his Majerteen cousins who were ex-SSDF recruits to intimidate the public and to enrich themselves by pilfering Issaq wealth. Morgan's in-

famous program for the Issaq land of northern Somalia consisted of, *inter alia*:

- a) An unusual level of state violence including summary executions, torture, imprisonment and detention without charge, extortion, rape, burning of villages and destruction of water wells, confiscation of property and livestock, planting of land mines, and psychological humiliation.
- b) Demographic adjustment coupled with economic deprivation. After the disastrous 1977-78 Somali-Ethiopian war, nearly half a million refugees from Ethiopia were settled in refugee camps on Issaq land. These refugees were led to believe by Morgan's policies that any and all Issaq land was theirs. Moreover, real estate in major towns was sold at nominal prices to southern Somalis and non-Issaqs. This was a concerted effort by the government to alter the demographic composition of the region. As part of this policy, business concessions were given to southerners and loans from government-owned banks were denied to Issaq businesses. The northern region became a bonanza for get-rich southerners, particularly military officers and Siyad Barre's clansmen.
- c) Tribal Militia. The harsh policies of the government further polarized the Issaq and swelled SNM ranks. The military was unable to quiet the political unrest in the cities, much less stop SNM raids from the Ethiopian border. To reinforce its army and its demographic program, the government adopted the so-called "Sandwich Principle." The government armed to the hilt non-Issaq tribes in the region the Warsangeli and Dulbahante of the east and Gudabursi of the western tip. Attacking from the eastern and western flanks, these tribal militias were to sandwich the Issaq between themselves. The scope of the above policies is graphically detailed in Morgan's infamous "Death Letter" written to President Siyad on January 25, 1987, in which he describes the punitive measures he intended to implement, methods for the "purification" of the district leadership, a wealth redistribution scheme, planned confiscation of 557 buses and other transport, the reconstitution of the militia of the Western Somali Liberation Movement, and establishment of militias from among the members of other clans.

Notwithstanding the government crack-down on the Issaq, civil disobedience in cities and towns as well as SNM cross-border raids from its bases in

Ethiopia increased dramatically and the government became apprehensive of the sustainability of its authority in the northern regions. Coincidentally, Ethiopia's strongman, Mengistu Haile Mariam, was facing a strong, internal armed insurgency. Therefore, the two beleaguered heads of state met in neighboring Jabouti and on April 5, 1988 signed a peace accord which, among other things, included restoration of relations ruptured during the 1977-78 Somali-Ethiopian War, exchange of prisoners, cessation of propaganda, cessation of assistance to each others' rebels, and demilitarization of the borders. Thus confronted with the loss of its sanctuary in Ethiopia, the SNM waged a carefully planned attack on Burao on May 27, 1988, and four days later on Hargeisa. In their preemptive strike, the three to five thousand SNM guerrillas routed the Somali Army, capturing Burao and Hargeisa. However, with external assistance, massive internal reinforcement, employment of non-Issaq clan militias and the arming of the Ogadeni refugees, the government was able to regain control of both cities by the end of July. In fact, "with the morale among government conscripts plummeting, Barre's regime must work extra hard in coming up with resources to finance its war economy. South Africa and Libya have provided assistance over the past year [1989], including mercenary pilots conducting the government's aerial campaign. The United Arab Emirates and Italy have also provided economic and military aid. The government has resorted to the European black market to do its arms shopping."⁵ Furthermore, at the height of the conflict the United States shipped much-needed weapons to the Somali Government and repaired the Military Communication Center in Hargeisa, knocked out by the SNM when it stormed that city. "The shipment, initially authorized in November 1986, was repeatedly delayed due to the reluctance of carriers to transport small quantities of low density ammunition to Somalia. It finally arrived on June 28 at the port of Berbera and was used by the government at a critical point in the conflict...A senior Somali military official confirmed that the US equipment was distributed to troops in the north and was used during the conflict."⁶

While the arrival of US weapons and financial assistance from other countries was timely for the government, the government also rushed army units and fresh recruits from the south up to the north, and hired South African mercenaries to pilot Hunter jets provided by the government of the United Arab Emirates.⁷ In an attempt to dislodge

the SNM, the government pounded Hargeisa and Burao indiscriminately with heavy artillery, anti-tank shells and aerial bombardment, putting to flight residents of the two cities. Much of Burao was destroyed and more than seventy percent of Hargeisa was pulverized from aerial bombardment, artillery barrages, antitank fire, bulldozing, and dynamiting. Moreover, thousands of Ogadeni refugees, armed by the government, and non-Issaq tribal militia members were unleashed to fight against the Issaq alongside the army. Although the Ogadeni refugees became party to the conflict and were thus ineligible for UN assistance under its own rules, the UN and other international agencies nonetheless continued to deliver assistance to these belligerent refugees until late 1989. Much of that assistance was diverted by the Somali Army for its own use.

The government's response to the SNM attack on Hargeisa and Burao was brutal and put to flight the residents of those towns. Nearly 400,000 took refuge in Ethiopia and perhaps three times that number sought sanctuary in the mountains and countryside, but many were not so lucky. About 50,000 people were killed by government troops dislodging the SNM from Hargeisa and Burao alone. In addition, "thousands of civilians fleeing Hargeisa were deliberately killed by government artillery bombardment. Hundreds of other civilians, including prisoners, were reportedly extra-judicially executed in the north over the following months, particularly in Burao and Berbera areas...In El Afwein district, about 100 kilometers east of Hargeisa, more than 100 civilians were extra-judicially executed in October and December by government troops. In Gebileh, a small town near the Ethiopian border, the army rounded up hundreds of elders, farmers and nomads in mid-March after SNM attacks in the area. Many were reportedly tortured for suspected links with SNM. Twenty-two were summarily tried, condemned to death and immediately executed."⁸

These are only a handful of illustrations of the atrocities carried out on peaceful citizens in the north. Thousands also lost their lives to the many land mines planted by the army or from aircraft strafing fleeing refugees. But even those far away from the conflict did not escape the wrath of the government: Issaqs in southern Somalia were arrested at will, tortured, and executed. When the army clashed with demonstrators after Friday prayers in Mogadishu on July 14, 1989, the Issaq in the city were singled out. "That night the army began searching houses in the Medina district of the

city. Hundreds of civilians were rounded up and taken to prisons and detention camps. Among this group, forty-six men of Issaq origin are reported to have been singled out and taken separately to Jezira beach, just outside Mogadishu, and massacred."⁹ The massacre of the Issaq was undertaken in the name of the Somali state, strange as this may sound. What is even more peculiar is the fact that none of the Somali people, individually or collectively, has voiced opposition to or shown remorse over the attempted annihilation of a whole section of the population.

Ironically, the successful SNM attack on Hargeisa and Burao and the subsequent stalemate in the conflict spurred two other clans to set up their own anti-government organizations, the brutal response of the government notwithstanding. In January 1989 the Hawiye, the largest clan in southern Somalia and possibly the entire country, founded the United Somali Congress (USC) in Rome. Like SNM, USC was both a political and military movement, and set itself the task of attacking the regime first in central Somalia and then in Mogadishu. General Morgan's debacle in Hargeisa did not deter Siyad Barre from rewarding his son-in-law by appointing him Minister of Defense. Despite the failure of Morgan's scorched earth policy in the north, as Defense Minister he introduced military harassment to Hawiye land, especially the towns of Galkayo and Beletwejn, making the relatively pacific Hawiye more restive. Thereafter, many of them joined USC. At this crucial point, USC split into two factions: a Rome-based faction (a political nuisance in the eyes of the regime), and an Ethiopian-based guerrilla faction led by General Mohamed Farah Aidiid. In a year, with daring raids into the central regions, Aidiid's wing of USC contested the government for the control of central Somalia.

Meanwhile, disgruntled Ogadeni officers in Hargeisa mutinied, led by Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess. They were subsequently joined by other Ogadeni mutineers from southern army garrisons and formed the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). The SPM's early successes were in the extreme south of the country, particularly along the Kenya border.

As evidenced above, Siyad Barre's regime was now being attacked from three fronts: the north and central regions and the extreme south. In September 1990, the three principal liberation movements (SNM, USC, and SPM) reached an accord in Ethiopia in which they planned a coordinated attack

on the regime. This paid off and Siyad Barre fled Mogadishu on January 26, 1991.

The Downfall of the Regime and Subsequent Turmoil

By November 1990, General Aidiid's USC guerrillas were driving the Somali Army out of the central regions and the regime's defense lines were concentrating on Mogadishu. USC success in the central regions encouraged the Hawiye in Mogadishu to openly challenge the regime in its seat. Thus, fighting broke out in Mogadishu on December 30, 1990. Siyad Barre, cognizant of his armed forces' successive defeats at the hands of the liberation movements, supplied arms to Darod clansmen living in Mogadishu, which is predominantly a Hawiye city. This strategy inadvertently forced any Hawiye capable of fighting to rise against the government. Moreover, General Aidiid moved towards the city from Beletwein further north, while Omar Jess pushed his way in via Baydhabo, northwest of Mogadishu. With all the non-Darod Somalis deserting their army units it was impossible to defend the regime. The demise of the regime could not have been postponed and, as noted, Siyad Barre fled Mogadishu on January 26, 1991.

With the defeat of the vicious regime, most Somalis and the liberation movements were hoping for a representative government. Yet, the country slid into anarchy, internecine clan fights, mass starvation, followed by the disastrous UN/US intervention. Surely there must be a more profound explanation for this than the oft-suggested warlord and armed teenagers phenomenon. This brings us to the question of the dismemberment of Somalia and the current turmoil in the south, highlighted at the start of this paper.

Some days before Siyad Barre was forced to flee, his government consulted with the so-called Manifesto Group in an attempt to end the fighting in Mogadishu. Although it was hopeless to reverse his military situation at that time, Siyad Barre named Omar Arteh Ghalib as his Prime Minister. A few days after Siyad Barre's flight from Mogadishu, the Rome faction of USC and the Manifesto Group named Ali Mahdi as President and Omar Arteh Ghalib as Prime Minister respectively. Their "interim government" turned out to be the Trojan Horse of Somalia. After the initial euphoria of unification in 1960, most northerners, and particularly the Issaq, felt that their state had been engulfed by the more populous southern state of Somalia, and Siyad Barre's naked oppression of the Issaq made many

Issaq yearn for the pre-union *status quo*. With the formation of an "Interim government" in Mogadishu in 1991, the SNM felt the political door had been slammed in its face. Consequently, Somalilanders reclaimed their independence and proclaimed the Republic of Somaliland.

While USC was engrossed in how to salvage the accords reached in Ethiopia by the liberation movements, and in the problem of the "interim government," Siyad Barre attempted to recoup his defeat by reorganizing an army of Darod. By April 9, 1991 Siyad's forces reached 19 kilometers outside of Mogadishu and positioned themselves to try to recapture the city. This brought to the open the role of the clan *vis-a-vis* the state and ushered in the tribal slaughter that took place in southern Somalia. Threatened again by Siyad Barre, the Hawiye temporarily buried their differences and counter-attacked the Darod forces, whom they easily routed. However, as General Aidiid was chasing Siyad Barre's forces towards the Kenyan border, the "interim government" and its Manifesto Group alliance encouraged armed conflict between the two USC factions. This was quickly resolved but the two groups drifted further apart. Nevertheless, the Hawiye elected General Aidiid as a president of USA in a USC convention held in Mogadishu in June 1991.

Meanwhile, the Siyad Barre forces regrouped a second time, occupied much of Rahanweyn land and looted their stored grain. Worse still, the agro-pastoral Rahanweyn entirely missed the two planting seasons of 1992, mostly as a result of these occupying forces. Hence, starvation became a serious problem in the Mogadishu-Baydhabo-Kismayo triangle.

Many Somalis believe Siyad Barre's forces were able to regroup and rearm a second time through external assistance, with neighboring Kenya being the conduit. Italy, Egypt, and Kenya are the major culprits in this regard. In any case, Siyad Barre's forces were again poised to threaten Mogadishu and many parts of Hawiye land. This was a fatal gambit, however. In early 1992, Aidiid's USC, Jess' SPM, and the Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM) formed an alliance called Somali National Alliance-SNA. Together, they dashed Siyad Barre's hope of a come-back. In a well-planned counter-offensive in April 1992, the SNA defeated Siyad's forces and drove him into exile, first to Kenya and later to Nigeria.

The US/UN subsequently intervened under the pretext of stopping starvation, with secondary objectives of requiring the militias to disarm and restructuring Somalia. US/UN support for the

"interim government" is viewed by many Somalis as a root cause of the turmoil in Mogadishu. Aidiid, Jess, and Ali Mahdi initially agreed to US/UN proposals and placed their weapons in UN-designated and monitored compounds. Yet Siyad Barre loyalists did not cooperate and in fact captured Kismayo in March 1993 under full view of the US and UN forces, and more vexingly, the same forces prevented Jess from defending his home region. To humiliate SNA further, Admiral Howe, the then American Special Envoy to the UN, flew to Kismayo and conferred with the supporters of the renegade General Morgan-the Butcher of Hargeisa. In any event, it did not take long before US/UN forces waged open warfare against SNA and fought for Siyad Barre's clan the war that it had failed to fight on its own. In light of this, it is not surprising that most Somalis (excepting the Darod, of course) vehemently opposed and fought against the US/UN forces.

To summarize, the dismemberment of Somalia began right after the hasty and legally unconsummated union of Somaliland and Somalia in 1960. The brutal slaughter of the Issaq by Siyad Barre's government encouraged them to revolt against the authority of clan government shrouded in the supremacy of the state. Thus, northerners reestablished their state in 1991.

The reasons for the turmoil in southern Somalia are more complex. While Siyad Barre's policy of subjugating other clans to the authority of his clan was not as blatantly harsh towards the Hawiye as it was towards the Issaq, nevertheless, age-old animosity between the two clans came to a new pitch when Siyad Barre's clan regrouped to attack Mogadishu and the Hawiye. This was further exacerbated by the US/UN bombardment of Mogadishu. Many Somalis believe the US/UN were conspiring to reimpose Siyad Barre's regime, albeit perhaps without him.

Two other factors also contribute to the civil strife in Somalia, namely the political rift within USC and the presence of Darod immigrants in Hawiye land. Recall that shortly after USC was formed in Rome, it split into two factions. With the formation of the "interim government" the split became further polarized along sub-clan lines. Armed clashes between the two USC groups in Mogadishu have been frequent the last three years. Furthermore, over the last 60 years a large number of the Majerteen Darod had immigrated to Mogadishu and the Benadir coast, but more recently have been displaced by the civil war. These displaced Majerteen are determined to return to the Hawiye and

Dir lands where they had property and land holdings, despite the Hawiye's desire not to have "foreigners" in their lands.

In the absence of nationhood, a clan-dominated state is likely to fall apart. Nevertheless, Somali clan structure has its own mechanisms of resolving tribal conflicts and, barring foreign intervention, it may well be that genuine Somali solutions will ultimately emerge out of the ashes of the Somali state.

Notes

1. Stuffing ballot boxes for a constitution expected to lay the legal foundation of the nation was incomprehensible to Somalilanders. Further, it was because of this that Somalilanders named their southern brothers as "Walaweyn" after the town bearing that name where a million "yes" and zero "no" votes were counted. Also "Aadanyabaalays" (rigging through stuffing) was coined that year for the incredible (to northerners) favorable returns from the town of Adan Yabal.
2. In the eyes of the Somalis this was government for the family and by the family.
3. Human Rights Watch *Testimony of Aryeh Neier*, Vice Chairman, before the Africa Subcommittee on *Human Rights In Somalia*, July 14, 1988, p. 15.
4. For text of actual letter see the *New African* (July 1987), p. 12. The Siyad Barre government's policy was deliberately formulated to oppress the Issaq as a clan. I had the misfortune to listen to Siyad threaten an Issaq audience on "how he would reduce them to a lower caste" and "how he would make them into beggars and refugees."
5. *Horn of Africa Report*, vol. 1, no.1, June 1990.
6. Joseph E. Kelley, *Somalia: Observations Regarding the Northern Conflict and Resulting Conditions*, Washington, DC, United States General Accounting Office, Report to Congressional Requestors, May 1988, pp. 8-9.
7. Many of these draftees--5 called *Lomaoooyaan* (Unbemoaned)--were forcibly recruited but many more joined the army under the delusion of defending their government or to partake in the looting spree on Issaq property spearheaded by the military and government authorities, evidenced in the "Hargeisa markets" in Mogadishu and other towns in southern Somalia specializing in the booty from the north.
8. *Amnesty International Report*, /989, (Baltimore: John D. Lucas Printing Company) p. 8+.
9. Africa Watch, *Somalia: Tiananmen Square Revisited. Soldiers Shoot Demonstrators: Reprisal Killings and Mass Arrests Follow* (Washington, DC: News From Africa Watch, July 21) p. 5.
10. The Manifesto Group refers to 11+ individuals (and their supporters) who in April 1990 sent a manifesto to President Siyad. The manifesto, *inter alia*, suggested transitional government, national reconciliation government, and return to 1960 form of parliamentary government. The Manifesto Group was almost all southerners, and predominantly Darod with significant Hawiye membership. They were supported by the United States and Italian embassies in Mogadishu in a vain attempt to convince Siyad Barre to accept some political liberalization.

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