

Removing Barricades in Somalia

Options for Peace and
Rehabilitation

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Summary

In summer 1997, a team of four Somali intellectuals and two American Africanists spent three weeks in Somalia on behalf of the United States Institute of Peace. The Somalis represented different clans and professional perspectives—one is a medical doctor, another an economist, another a political scientist, and the fourth a professor of literature. A Somali advisory committee supported the work of the field team, bringing comparable diversity in clan, professional specialization, and gender.¹ The purpose of the visit was to assess the present circumstances and future prospects for peace and reconciliation in Somalia and to recommend how it might be appropriate for the United States, working with colleagues and institutions in Somalia and neighboring countries as well as within the larger donor community, to play a constructive role in promoting peace.

Although most of the material for this report was gathered during the 1997 visit, the team is confident, through continuing monitoring of events in the region, that its conclusions are as relevant and valid today as they were then.

The major causes of fragmentation in present-day Somalia are twofold. One is recent, the second centuries old. The former stems from the oppressive, capricious, and clan-based autocracy of the late dictator, Siyad Barre, who used his interpretation of clan institutions for his own ends, to oppress political opponents, create inequality, and promote conflict and violence. So great was his malevolence and abuse of power that virtually all Somalis now hold a deep-seated fear and distrust of any centralized authority. The older source of discord is the profound Somali individualism and resilience, rooted in a clan structure that, though it has sustained them in a harsh environment for centuries, makes it difficult to create and sustain a centralized state. These two powerful forces have created a setting in which Western concepts of the nation-state are unlikely to work, at least not in the next decade or so.

With such roadblocks to defining a new state, what are the alternatives? There are no appropriate models elsewhere in Africa, perhaps nowhere. Yet international agencies keep pushing Somali groups to come together in some unitary structure, at least partly because it is easier for them to deal with a single entity than with the competing clamors of faction. The donors' goals are understandable and logical. Yet it may be that the donor-driven attempts to bring unity, linking international promises of aid to unitary governance and thereby increasing the amount of spoils to compete for, actually have increased Somalia's fragmentation.

What to do? This report recommends the support and development of ten "enabling conditions," based on assumptions other than those of conventional unitary states. The conditions depart from approaches attempted over the past five years and suggest that a Somali government, at least for the next decade, may have to be based on different concepts of governance, here defined as "decisionmaking within a group." The conditions are not necessarily new, nor do we suggest that by themselves they are sufficient to restore peace. And they are not wholly absent in Somalia—on the contrary, there are many instances in

which they are already well developed. Taken as a whole, these enabling conditions reflect a new spirit that is building in Somalia—one which is prepared to accept a shorter-term modus operandi at regional levels as an efficient and necessary step toward building the national coherence that donors—and virtually all Somalis—seek. We suggest that the time is ripe to take steps toward creating a decentralized sociopolitical environment in which discussions toward an interim set of local and regional agreements and understandings might continue. Within these regional understandings order can prevail, and Somalis pursue their time-honored livelihoods. The prospect of a future state, perhaps federal or confederal, can then be considered after the modus operandi has taken effect and its short-term goals are achieved.

This report, supported by the enabling conditions and demonstrated by suggested “leverage points” to initiate action, argues that decentralized, local action is the primary means through which some of the barricades have been removed in Somalia, and can be the organizing principle around which permanent reform can be built. This does not preclude some form of central governance in Somalia, but it argues that the place to begin restoring peace is with local and community-based institutions, rather than at the top.

Enabling conditions upon which sound governance for Somalia can be built include:

1. *Local autonomy.* A spirit of local autonomy pervades Somali society and ought to be enhanced and formalized.
2. *Powersharing.* People seek broad-based powersharing both as an echo of the past and as a key to a more participatory future. External groups should join with local communities to reinforce quests for powersharing.
3. *Decentralization.* People favor decentralization and devolution of power. Many examples have already emerged in local settings. These models should be examined for possible adaptations to other situations.
4. *Role of women.* Women are playing an increasingly prominent role in Somali civil society. These initiatives have won respect among men and women alike and offer a means to build bridges between hostile clan groups. Women’s groups require special support and consideration for any lasting peace.
5. *Islam.* An Islamic revival is evident. It reflects core values, based on Somali tradition rather than on the fundamentalist political forms seen elsewhere in the Middle East. Somalia’s Islamic revival promises to strengthen institutions of civil society and should be reinforced.
6. *Market economy.* A free and unregulated market economy has emerged and its growth should be encouraged.
7. *Local adaptation.* Somalis have been ingenious at adapting external technologies and management systems to meet needs at local levels. The spirit of innovation and creativity ought to be encouraged at regional and national levels as well.
8. *Traditional institutions.* Somali culture is rich in traditional institutions evidenced in systems of land management, agricultural and grazing systems, conflict mediation, legal adjudication, and many related functions. These traditional practices

are part of the support system needed to make any new settlement effective and sustainable.

9. *Free press.* Somalis have a tradition of speaking frankly on any issue. At present, several informal newspapers, mostly in Mogadishu, present various perspectives on the current situation. Many of these views are highly critical of established political authority. Free speech and open debate need to continue if there is to be a lasting peace.
10. *Regional links.* Relations with neighboring states are improving and need to be nurtured.

Introduction

Somalia and the Somali people are an enigma to much of the world. How can the Somalis have journeyed to the eve of the 21st century and have no modern state—no laws, no government, no courts, no taxes, no social services, no trash collection, no public schools, no post office, no official currency, no means to settle defaulted business contracts, no public health system, and no police? Do they exist, as Robert Kaplan's "The Coming Anarchy" would have us believe, in the depths of anarchy or even nihilism?² There are many opinions about Somali identity. Our 1997 fact-finding mission heard them all.

Are the Somalis an entrepreneur's dream? Rudimentary yet efficient local banks, linked to large overseas institutions, now dominate the Mogadishu banking sector. Private phone systems in several of Somalia's larger cities may be more efficient and cheaper than any phone system in Africa. Private clinics and schools are springing up all over the country, with new equipment and supplies, trained staff, and clean facilities. Several new Somali-owned airlines fly regularly into the larger cities, keeping generally reliable schedules. While some use older prop jets of questionable safety, others operate newly refurbished jets with well-maintained equipment and efficient crews.

Joint ventures with Malaysian and Gulf business enterprises offer to rehabilitate airports and ports, institute new banking and fishing arrangements, and launch companies to export fruit and livestock to European and Asian markets—all at no cost to the public sector or the donor community. Are the Somalis at the forefront of Africa with their privatization enterprises, business acumen, investment strategies, and economic growth? Have they carried out structural adjustment to such an extent that such aid-giving groups as the World Bank have nothing more to tell them?

Or are the Somalis the last of the great outlaw nations? They expelled the United States and other external militaries and the United Nations between 1993 and 1995. Crimes of violence and retribution go unpunished by any formal state authority—only family and clan alliances work to maintain the uncertain balances of power among factions. The arms trade flourishes in Somalia, with automatic weapons and light assault ordnance readily available for sale in most of the larger towns. This equipment finds its way into the Somali hinterlands and probably to other parts of Africa and beyond.

Will Somalia turn out to be the environmental nightmare that panics the entire globe? Asian and European companies are reported to be dumping toxic waste off the Somali coast because there is no formal body to take police action. Other groups plunder the Somali fishing grounds—one of the few remaining global resources still teeming with fish. Rangelands are overgrazed with little restraint because no one is in charge of water or pasture access. Wind erosion and deforestation in some parts of the former nation are among the most severe in the world.

Are the Somalis simply a peace-loving and innocent people who suffer the abuse of power-hungry, capricious leaders playing international agencies against one another? Is the impasse among Somali factions perpetuated by ambitious leaders who receive unprecedented attention in the media and expense-paid travel to peace conferences in comfortable hotels around the world—who enjoy power and attention far beyond the fruits of their own labors?

Are the Somalis harbingers of a new, decentralized, participatory, and democratic future for Africa? Are they the first to incorporate traditional law and governance into modern economic structures? Are they the leading African nation to encourage women's groups and to recognize specific formal authority for women in commerce, reconciliation, and peacekeeping? Are Somalis breaking new ground in localizing planning, decisionmaking, monitoring, and accountability in water development, agriculture, credit, health services, livestock management, and export promotion?

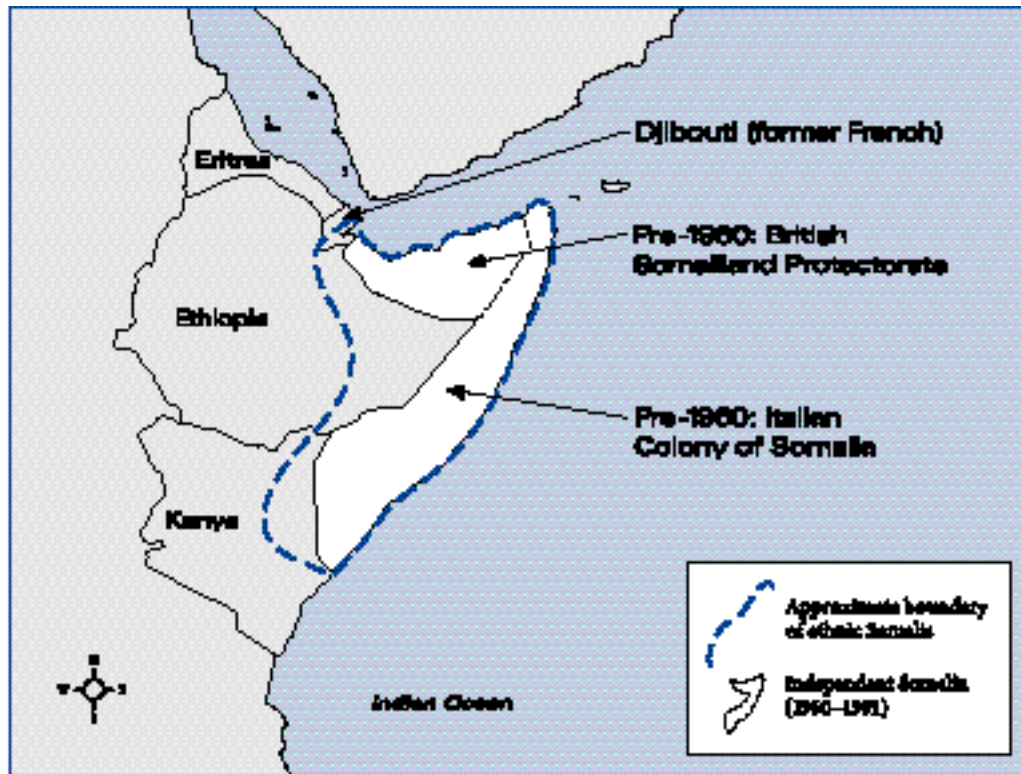
Probably all of those broad-brush characterizations contain elements of truth. Certainly the many voices we heard suggest that there are many Somalias. The task is to identify which voices represent the most important aspects of what is happening in Somalia and how a Somali leadership, working with external facilitators, can create an environment in which peace can return, economic growth can blossom, human rights and social equity prevail, and the productivity of Somalia's cultures and natural resources be sustained.

This narrative offers a brief excursion into the state of Somalia and Somalis in mid-1997. It explores how the situation has developed over the past few decades; what has caused the current difficulties in negotiations; what steps can be taken in the next few months and years; what enabling conditions will help restore peace; what points of leverage may help to reopen discussions; and what lessons can be learned from the Somali experience. The primary goal of this document is to consider the possibilities for peace and reconciliation and how such steps might be taken.³

Background to the Conflict

Europe's partition of Africa affected the pastoral communities of Somalis more deeply than any other African ethnic group. By the beginning of the twentieth century, when the European-defined Somali borders had taken shape, there were five Somalias: one each under the control of France, Italy, and Ethiopia, and two for Britain, one ruled indirectly through Kenya. Attempts in the 1960s to unify them did not succeed. The French, Ethiopian, and Kenyan-British segments could not join with the two larger groupings—Italian in the south and British in the north—to form a new nation, and despite independence for the Republic of Somalia in 1960, the Somali nationalists' dream of unity remained unfulfilled. The initial independence leaders of 1960 tried to fill it, and when they failed, became content to live with an incomplete nation. The new socialist and military regime of Siyad Barre was not. Army General Siyad seized control in an officers' coup on October 29, 1969, and proclaimed a new revolutionary socialist government.

Initially, Siyad set out to build a socialist-oriented republic with the help of the Soviet Union, then Somalia's closest ally. His vision was bold. The regime's early initiatives included creating a written Somali language and declaring it the official national language in 1972; launching national urban (1973) and rural (1974) literacy campaigns; instituting



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massive crash programs, including tree planting, to combat sand dune encroachment; constructing schools, health clinics, hotels, stores, offices, and roads; and promoting women's equality through a radical application of modern legislation, including controversial marriage and family laws. However, by the mid-1970s, the government had become much less popular and more dictatorial. It manifested the worst features of both personal rule and military command.

In an attempt to regain popularity and legitimacy, Siyad cynically manipulated the surviving elements of his version of Pan-Somali nationalism. In 1974–75, massive drought had weakened Ethiopia and pushed Emperor Haile Selassie's government to a state of collapse. To liberate the Somali-speaking peoples of Ethiopia, Siyad acted. In a bold, even brilliant, military maneuver, he invaded the Ethiopian Ogaden in 1976. Then the Soviet Union, pursuing an opportunistic Cold War strategy, ruptured its long-term relations with Somalia to give full political, diplomatic, and military backing to its new Ethiopian ally, the revolutionary leader Mengistu Haile Mariam, who had toppled the Emperor. With the help of thousands of Cuban troops operating sophisticated Russian weapons, the Ethiopians ejected the Somali army from the disputed territories.

Ethiopia's victory was no small accomplishment. At independence, the Somali army had numbered 5,000; the Russians helped increase it to 20,000 and Siyad continued to build it up to 37,000 strong on the eve of the Ethiopia-Somali war. Paradoxically, after the

crushing defeat in the Ogaden, Siyad continued to increase the army to a staggering 120,000 by 1982—that is, somewhat larger than the army of Nigeria, a country of about 100 million. The large army became a symbol for Siyad, suggesting that even though he had failed in Ethiopia, he could still field one of the best armies in Africa. Fearing loss of power after his defeat, anticipating rebellious factions within Somalia, and with few options to strengthen his weakening political base, Siyad began a protracted and savage war against his own people.

Siyad's Ethiopian invasion had been intended as the first step in reuniting the "old" Somalia of the 18th and 19th centuries. Instead, it led to the disintegration of the new. With the Soviet departure, Siyad's Somalia came under the patronage of the United States and the rich Arab states. Reverting to a negative use of 19th century strategies, Siyad employed clanism to replace socialism. For example, he used his army to conduct punitive raids against so-called hostile clans; later his troops armed and encouraged the so-called loyal clans to wage wars against rebel clans. The stage was set for one of post-independence Africa's most savage and senseless wars.

Practicing a strategy of "divide and rule," Siyad first waged war on the Majerteen, then on the Isaaq, and then on the Hawiye clans. Siyad's uneven persecutions forced the opposition to utilize its own clans as organized, armed forces. Beginning in 1978, the Majerteen clans rose in opposition under the banner of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF); early in 1981, northerners established the Somali National Movement (SNM) in London. They soon moved what would become highly effective military operations to the Ethiopian and Somali towns and villages close to the border with the former British Somaliland. The SSDF in the northeast and the SNM in the northwest began military raids against the regime. The primarily Isaaq SNM bore the brunt of Siyad's war machine, and in 1991, when the Somali government collapsed, the SNM declared the north independent, calling it the Somaliland Republic.

Meanwhile, a group of Ogadeni soldiers and officers defected from Siyad's army in 1989 and formed the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). Another group, the Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC), appeared in late 1989. The death of its charismatic founder Ismail Jiumale, in mid-1990, left a bitter conflict between the leader of its military wing, General Mohamed Aidid (a Hawiye of the Habar Gedir clan), and its Mogadishu "Manifesto" representative, Ali Mahdi (a Hawiye of the Abgal clan).⁴ Within less than two years, the USC was able to expel the exhausted and weakened Siyad regime from Mogadishu. Yet conflict between the two USC factions led to internecine wars as soon as Siyad fled. These conflicts have continued off and on ever since. The primary problem seems to be that the USC attained victory without the benefit of a fully developed and politically mature program and organization.

Intensification of the military battles exacerbated what normally would have been a manageable drought emergency in 1991–92. Given the political factionalism and havoc, along with attempts to use food aid as political weapons, the drought led to severe famine. Many died, especially in the Baidoa region and Mogadishu. The inability of the donor community to provide food assistance in the midst of hostilities contributed to a crisis of international proportions. Intensified by the media and accelerated by the warring clan factions, the famine became unmanageable. In November 1992, President George Bush

determined that U.S. military intervention was the only means to stem the famine. Operation Restore Hope was born, and the U.S. military landed on Somali beaches on December 12, 1992. The plan called for the United Nations to take over the peacekeeping role when sufficient order had been restored and the famine curbed. U.S. troops became symbols of peace and progress as they cleared roads, restored health clinics, and rebuilt communication systems. More important, they ensured that food aid would reach its targeted constituency.

Few disagree that the first few months of 1993 were a success. While there were many small incidents of violence and isolated hijackings of food and medical supplies, the overall conduct of Operation Restore Hope went smoothly. Given this encouraging beginning, command passed in May 1993 from the U.S. military to the United Nations under the leadership of General Cevik Bir, with U.S. Admiral Jonathan Howe assuming overall control of the UN operations in Somalia.

It is not entirely clear what happened or whose initiative led to the next steps. The UN security forces were less well equipped than the U.S. military had been, and even units of the U.S. military that remained under the new UN command were lightly armed. Despite requests from U.S. field commanders for heavy armor to back up their patrols, Washington refused. Further, the informal discussions and coordinating structures that the U.S. military-political units had maintained among the stakeholders in Mogadishu during early 1993 fell away when the United Nations took over. In June 1993, one faction—Aidid's USC/SNA—had a confrontation with UN forces. Aidid's militia ambushed a lightly armed UN patrol of Pakistani soldiers in a crowded Mogadishu neighborhood next to Aidid's radio station. Twenty-four Pakistanis died in an act of brazen—and ironic—defiance of the United Nations, which had assumed that the Somali militias would welcome the Pakistani troops as fellow Muslims.

The radio station ambush immediately hardened the lines among individual Somali groups as well as between factions and the UN command. The United Nations placed a bounty on Aidid's head and launched a fruitless five-month campaign to capture him. The final blow to UNOSOM II, the UN Operation in Somalia, was the downing on October 3, 1993, of two U.S. Special Forces helicopters and the deaths of 18 U.S. military personnel and between 700 and 1,000 Somalis in the Mogadishu street encounter that followed. The five months between the May ambush and the October U.S. military humiliation irreparably changed the course of events in Somalia. A halfhearted attempt to keep UNOSOM II going, conflicts among the donors and within the United Nations, and changes in UN leadership led to a profoundly dysfunctional command situation and, after more than two years of indecision and inept management, UNOSOM II withdrew in March 1995. Somalia was on its own.

Somalia since 1995

The period since the end of UNOSOM II has ushered in an unprecedented era for Somalia. It has been a time of interminable visiting missions (such as our own); a proliferation of donor efforts to stimulate peace, reconciliation, relief, or rehabilitation; and sponsorship of several regional conferences to bring all groups and interested donors together to work out details for peace. There have been major leadership changes—after General Aidid was

killed in action in August 1996, his son Hussein Aidid took his place. The number of factions has grown as well. In 1993–94, there were fifteen significant factions; by 1997, that number had risen to twenty-seven. Although by summer 1997 there had unquestionably been progress toward restoration of peace and stability, the formal mechanisms of a ratified peace agreement were no closer.

Prospects for Peace

The informal progress, however, should not be overlooked. Our meetings and conversations, discussions, and reports from more than 200 people we met on our mission, suggested eight fundamental, recurring issues in current Somali thinking about the prospects for peace.

Without question, peace is the most important goal of the majority of people we met. Somalis want peace. Again and again, in interviews and meetings, people stated that the war had gone on too long, with too much suffering and loss; most agreed that the time had come to make agreements and develop governance structures to provide basic security. While there was no agreement on the shape of the peace process or its resulting structure, people said they were tired of war. Their proposals ranged from clan-managed confederations to clan-free redistricting with rotating presidents, three capital cities, and small local security forces. No one proposed a return to the pre-civil war structure. All sought increased balance or separation of powers.

Our visit was preceded by or coincided with several externally initiated peace meetings—in Nairobi in October 1996; in Sodere, Ethiopia, in January 1997; in Sana'a, Yemen, in May 1997; and in Cairo in May–June, 1997—between such faction leaders as Hussein Aidid, Ali Mahdi, Osman Atto, Mohamed Abshir, Abdulahi Yusuf, Abdulkadr Zobbe, and others. The people we spoke with told us that these recent conferences differed from earlier efforts. When we asked how, many cited a higher probability of implementation because of pressure from members of civil society—especially women—and from all of the clans to come to an agreement. One immediate, positive, and frequently mentioned expectation was a more stable political environment in Mogadishu, including initiatives toward the creation of a Mogadishu joint regional authority.

An Internal Settlement

While the assistance of many external agencies and friends of Somalia is greatly appreciated, and the external talks are important, actual solutions must come from the Somali people. The details of these agreements must respond to Somali needs and be “owned” by all parties involved in the discussion as Somali solutions. On several occasions, our hosts pointed out that while ultimate blame for the violence lay with the Somalis themselves, earlier colonial and subsequent Cold War politics were major contributors to the institutional structures that led to the violence. Because external influences created major havoc in the past, there is a strong sentiment that any new structure must reflect the priorities and needs of the Somali people if it is to work.

For example, many were quick to point out that Cold War politics created a huge army for Siyad—120,000 soldiers in a nation of seven to eight million people. It was the donor community that paid the salaries of a government that became increasingly detached

from the people. It was global politics that contributed to the start as well as the conclusion of Siyad's 1976–77 campaign in Ethiopia. And it has been donor pressure, from both governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), that offered humanitarian assistance as a step toward creating a unitary government.

Further, the intensity of the violence and brutality of the post-civil war period was, people said, exacerbated by outside influences. For example, during and after Operation Restore Hope, donor payments to factions to buy protection for food deliveries often went directly to purchase additional arms; the donor-driven search for Aidid also hardened lines between Somali groups and, according to several commentators, intensified and extended the violence.

Institutions Emerging in the Economic Sector

Even though no formal governance, planning, or financial management structures are currently in place, the economy is not idle. An energetic and creative spirit has prevailed in Somalia for many generations. It is reappearing in the form of a new *laissez-faire* posture for private initiatives. Trade between regions in Somalia is developing; exports are picking up in some of the traditional products, including livestock and bananas; hotels, restaurants, and small shops are appearing.

Yet there is a danger in the unrestricted environment in which this growth is taking place. In Mogadishu, Bosaso, Gardo, and Garoe, for example, home and commercial construction is booming—but without any plan or coordination. There is no regulation of what is happening, and the benefits of growth seem to be going to a very small percentage of the people. The potential for a new economic ruling elite, possibly as indifferent to the needs of the people as the previous political elites, is real. But even with the need for regulation, the economic changes of the past several years are undeniably impressive.

Airlines are flying—three Somali-owned carriers (Daallo, African Air International, and Kilimanjaro) fly to three different airfields near Mogadishu, bringing passengers and freight, mostly from Nairobi and Djibouti. There is a flight almost every day, more than in the 1980s when Kenya Airways and Somali Airlines each had one flight a week. Bosaso, previously without air service, has three or four flights a week, mostly from Djibouti and Dubai. In addition, all airports in Somalia receive frequent flights bringing khat from Kenya and Ethiopia.⁵

Consumer goods are generally available. Virtually any food, clothing, or electrical good one could hope for is available in Mogadishu and sometimes in Bosaso. These include fabrics, radios, stereos, building supplies, air conditioners, tools, clothing, steel sheets and rods, batteries, cigarettes, videotapes and cameras, books and newspapers, and even computers and disks.

Food is available. Basic foods are fully available in the major cities. While much is imported, there appeared to be no shortage, so long as one can pay. Bottled drinks (except for beer) were readily available as well. During the week we were in Bosaso, bananas were just beginning to appear from the Lower Shabelle farms in the south. While it was not exactly clear how they were being shipped, it appeared that they were coming up by truck rather than by sea.

Financial transfers are possible. The banking sector was active, in Mogadishu especially, but also in Bosaso. Because there is no official currency, the banks play little role in formal exchanges from dollars to local shillings. Instead, they deal largely in U.S. dollars. Working mostly through telecommunications facilities, the banking transfers, loans, and letters of credit are facilitated through intermediary banks, usually in the Gulf. We learned that the banking division of Barakaat Telecommunications handles about U.S. \$500,000 a month in transfers. Somali Telecommunications has banking branches in several cities in the south and handles about \$300,000 in transfers per month.

Telephone and communication systems are operating, as well as computers. Somali communications are among the most efficient and inexpensive in Africa. The technology is fully satellite-based and allows instant contact with any part of the world. Barakaat, the largest of the Somali companies, has 59 stations in Mogadishu, 400 mobile phones, and 60 satellite lines for overseas calls. It works through the U.S. communications company ITT and employs 350 people. Another firm, Somali Telecommunications, has 1,000 private phones installed in and around Mogadishu and handles about 5,000 outgoing calls daily. Rates are competitive, largely because of the intense competition among several suppliers of communications services.

Fuel is available—as long as one can pay. Diesel fuel and gasoline are fully available in most cities and towns. Pumped from 55-gallon drums, the fuel powers many trucks and cars that move people and goods around the country. Fuel is also available for generating electricity from local stations maintained throughout Mogadishu and in Bosaso, all under the management of local entrepreneurs. Charges seem to be about \$4.00 per month per fixture (light, radio, or fan) used, which compares favorably with other parts of Africa and Europe. In Bosaso, the power plant linked to the city “government” generates 661 megawatts per day and charges consumers U.S. \$1.80 per kilowatt hour. In both Bosaso and Mogadishu, the power plants run most often from 6:00 p.m. to midnight.

Political Institutions Appearing

Organized governance is emerging though for the moment it functions only at local and regional levels, probably the only model that will be effective for at least the next few years. The continuing discussions toward a comprehensive peace agreement must include consideration of the types and scale of political institutions to be adopted. Whether the next set of discussions and possible agreements will focus only on local and regional models is not yet clear. What is clear is that any form of national institution will have only limited power and authority. The wounds and scars of the past ten years are too great at this point to think of a unified and centralized entity. It is therefore ironic—and not very practical—that many of the UN and bilateral agencies find local governance institutions of only minor interest and that centralized national institutions continue to receive the primary attention of donors and international bodies.

Even so, there are a number of encouraging examples of progress in local governance. Limited taxes are being collected, although tax collection continues to be an enormous problem. At present, though the economies of many localities are prospering, there is little revenue coming into the public treasury. The port of Bosaso collects customs duties, though they represent only a fraction of what should be paid. Airport landing fees are

also collected but, as with the ports, are incomplete and may not find their way to public expenditures. Thus while there has been progress with some tax collection, it is probably the largest single impediment to moving beyond the current subsistence level in which many Somalis find themselves. For example, while we were staying in Bosaso, the regional governor resigned because he was unable to collect taxes from some of the more influential and powerful business interests, especially at the port, because his political power base in the Bari regional parliament was insufficient to oppose the economic and military power of the sub-clan factions. And while there is no way to track diverted (rather than uncollected) funds, it is assumed that they find their way into private hands.

Regional parliaments sit in Bari and Nugal regions; elections were scheduled for the Mudug region. There have been elections in the Northeast Region and members of parliament designated. Yet the lack of formal authority leads to situations such as the governor's resignation. Power in Somalia still resides in combinations of the clan-based parties and the militias. In some cases, militias work directly for the political groups and are paid on the basis of services rendered. In others, the militias work for such private entities as banks, telecommunications, or trading companies, and are loaned, when convenient for the business enterprise, to political groups, usually clan-based.

Importantly, a collaborative committee for North and South Mogadishu is meeting on sectoral issues. The greatest impasse to creating a lasting peace has been in Mogadishu, where the famed "green line" delimited the zone of Ali Mahdi to the north and Aidid to the south. Yet even this line is fading and barriers disappearing. Business and women's groups are cooperating across the line. A North/South Mogadishu committee, representing needs in education and health, meets periodically to discuss collaboration across zones. Business and commercial interests on both sides are also talking. While the Mogadishu airport and port are not yet open, there is still marked progress in reconciling priorities among different parts of the city.

A police academy is open in Bosaso, with refresher courses for former police officers. A training program is under way to rebuild the old Somali police force. The Bari Parliament has empowered officers to enforce local laws. In Bosaso our group visited a training group of about 125 police officers with the mandate to enforce the laws of Bari region; a problematic task because there are no formally enacted statutes. Instead, the laws are a combination of ordinances left over from the earlier government and the Islamic sharia law. Some of the police said they were enforcing sharia, but there was little evidence to substantiate the claim. Yet despite the fragility of local statutes and lack of money to pay police, these are concrete steps toward restoring local law enforcement.

Local government is beginning to function. Village development committees, councils of elders, and district administrative offices are starting up. For example, in Iskushuban, a District Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Committee has grown out of a PRA training course. The district committee plans to organize basic services such as health and education, as there is little prospect that the regional government will have the resources to do so in the immediate future.

Still, while some health providers are present in Mogadishu and Bosaso—and perhaps elsewhere—and a few schools are open and active, there is no structure within which these institutions function. Many of the staff are working as volunteers; standards are informal

and opportunities for career development nonexistent. Yet some remarkable insights into new institutional forms have emerged that suggest that social and human services can be provided in partnership with government or external sources in ways that are sustainable, productive, and equitable. In the Bari region, there is a homegrown flowering of small project activity in areas of education, health, agriculture, conservation, and reforestation. More needs to be learned and understood about these efforts, especially in health, education, police, and the judiciary. Means should be considered to entice overseas and highly skilled Somalis to return home. Raising financial support from the private sector and overseas Somalis is another high priority, and methods should be considered to share what is learned with other parts of Somalia.

Somalia Still a Cohesive Society

Though torn to shreds by clan hostility, the basic Somali identity, religion, and culture remain resilient. Loyalties to the literature, poetry, and art of Somali culture remain as strong as ever, perhaps in some cases even stronger because of the recent ordeals. Identification with Islam remains strong, and commitment to regaining respect for Somalia in the Horn of Africa is as important now as it was a generation ago. Somalis have learned the bitter lesson that no clan can impose its hegemony on others and that, historically, Somalis have survived precisely through decentralized powersharing politics and systems which have emphasized checks and balances. This cultural cohesiveness forms a substantial foundation upon which to rebuild. Though the shape and structure of the new Somali society is yet to be defined, though the style of decentralization is still emerging, and though the means of maintaining the economy and resource base are yet to be agreed, the will to do so is present.

The Role of Donors

As Somalis struggle to create a polity that matches their relatively decentralized and energetic civil society, donors should consider ways to assist, facilitate, and catalyze responsible decentralization without suffocating it with inappropriate “help.” There have been a number of encouraging precedents: European Community projects; jointly funded European Community, United Nations, and bilateral projects such as War-Torn Society activities; UN Development Program projects; several different NGO efforts; UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offerings; the NGO program of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); and German Aid’s community-based assessment and action program have all made important differences in local communities.

Future donors need to understand that earlier forms of “aid through the center” were part of the problem of the old regime and that Somalia’s future well-being lies in seeking balance between the center and the periphery. Unfortunately, donors, including NGOs, have very little experience with decentralized development. Major changes and restructuring of donor procedures will be required to accommodate small projects managed by local institutions. Donor efforts to train and develop local institutions are very important, and will be of value to all members of Somali society.

Signs of a New Civil Society

Somalia is a different society than it was three years ago. While major problems continue and security issues are always smoldering just below the surface of daily life, things have changed greatly. At 10:00 p.m. in Bosaso, the streets are packed with people and the tea shops filled with conversation. In a random and informal survey on a thirty-minute trek through the market, one team member did not see a single automatic weapon other than those of the security guards who still accompany almost every vehicle and patrol most residences and places of business. This is a major change from a similar trek three years ago, when two team members were in Bosaso and saw dozens of guns in the street, day and night.

Perhaps even more striking, in Mogadishu arms were carried only by security guards and the political militia. Private citizens apparently no longer feel the need to go about armed. In another new development, a Mogadishu women's group is emerging as a powerful force, working in collaboration with elders, to bring together competing political factions. It suggests that most of the conflicting parties have agreed that Siyad's ways are unacceptable and the violence of the post-Siyad era is destroying the nation and the culture. Yet at present, progress is episodic. One promising exception has been the European Union's discussion seminars, which explore models of decentralization and suggest alternative modes of governance for Somalia to consider. A more systematic assessment of what is now working would be of enormous value.

Three

Facilitating Peace

The obvious importance of these eight themes, which recurred frequently during our conversations with groups and individuals in Somalia, suggests to us that a set of “enabling conditions” for a settlement that ensures sustainable peace and productive development will include at least ten elements.

These enabling conditions must take into account two persistent characteristics of Somali politics—abhorrence of centralization and fierce individualism. We do not intend to suggest that these are the only factors to be considered, nor that external groups such as our own visiting team should attempt to develop concrete proposals for a new government. Rather, they are the themes that seemed to be most pervasive during the team’s conversations and that need to be discussed among the stakeholders in the new Somalia.

1. *Local autonomy.* A spirit of local autonomy pervades the society and ought to be enhanced and formalized.

During the height of Somali nationalism, there was pressure for strong centralization and expansion of the state. Because of the appeal of a reunited Somalia, people found this prospect acceptable, despite the age-old Somali traditions of clan autonomy and decentralized management of natural and productive resources. The Siyad regime carried the nationalist theme to excess through highly centralized military unification and appeals to Somali patriotism and nationalism. Repression accompanied centrism, especially in the last years of the Siyad regime.

The current theme of anti-centralization comes as a direct reaction against the excesses of Siyad’s oppression. The opposition movements that destroyed the regime were themselves based on highly decentralized structures, relying on segmentary clan and geographic divisions of Somali society. Therefore, the new post-Siyad environment reflects the pervasive spirit of local autonomy, stressing cultural autonomy, pastoral lifestyles, and rugged individualism. With all its positives, it must be noted that decentralization will create an enormous challenge for the new vision of constitutionalism and for the maintenance of security and the provision of human services.

The most extreme reaction to Siyad has been the assertion of the right to self-determination by some regions, particularly the creation of the Republic of Somaliland. More recently, the leaders of the Northeast Regions have declared internal autonomy as the Puntland Federal Somali Republic.

2. *Powersharing.* People seek broad-based powersharing, both as an echo of the past and as a search for a more participatory future. External groups should join with local communities to reinforce quests for powersharing.

Historically, Somali politics were based on the sharing of power among clans, families, and elders, and the tradition runs very deep. Clans would bicker and, if necessary, fight for the preservation of their land access, water rights, and grazing territory. Yet no elder

believed that he could impose a military or political hegemony on the others. Instead, each sought only to preserve access to and control of the clan's livelihood resources, within a system of reciprocity.

The clans were more or less equal in power and practiced a time-honored give-and-take, obeying traditional rules and agreements. In short, they shared power. We heard repeatedly during our mission about the need for separation of powers as well as checks and balances to preserve options for shared power, fluid and shifting alliances, negotiation of positions, and availability of political choices and options. The experiences of Bari region and its recently elected parliament were often brought to our attention as examples of community-based approaches that seemed promising.

Any new model of governance must include powersharing. Yet it should be made clear that powersharing does not automatically equal clan rule. While clans are an important force in Somalia and must be included in governance structures, they are not the only constituency. Other important considerations, among others, are gender, economic role, profession, political ideology, and religion.

3. *Decentralization.* People favor decentralization and devolution of power. Many examples have already emerged in local settings. These models should be examined for possible adaptations to other situations.

We encountered everywhere a spirit favoring decentralization and devolution of power. The United Nations learned this lesson in a pragmatic way in 1992–93. The original donor vision had imagined reestablishing some form of autonomous state. But fierce resistance to such principles pushed UNOSOM toward regional councils as decision-making units, though there are virtually no models for such a confederation system anywhere in Africa. While the EU, influenced by the writings of Ahmed Yusuf Farah and I. M. Lewis, has explored a model for decentralization on a theoretical basis, work is needed on the grass-roots implications of such approaches in Somalia. A second encouraging example is a model, now in use in more than 100 Bari communities, which German Aid (GTZ) introduced in Jeded (Gardo district) in 1994. The approach involves persons in the community in structured and systematic participation to rank community priorities and create action plans. NGOs and UN units are now scaling up this model to work at the district level. A third model calls on elder councils, augmented to include sometimes overlooked constituencies such as women's groups, in local decisionmaking.

4. *Role of women.* Women are playing an increasingly prominent role in Somali civil society. These initiatives have won respect among men and women alike and offer a means to build bridges between hostile clan groups. Women's groups require special support and consideration for any lasting peace.

Siyad defied Somali and Muslim tradition, treating it with disdain. He put many traditional and religious leaders on the defensive, even executing some. His early strategy was to use the women's issue as an example of his progressive attitudes and practices to win kudos from the Soviet Union, proclaiming in 1975 a new Family and Marriage Law, parts of which seemed to contradict Islamic law. When a few religious leaders protested, he arrested eighteen and executed ten. Given the animosity Siyad aroused, current leaders have tried to distance themselves from his perceived antitraditionalist behavior. For example, the elders

have urged that issues such as elimination of female circumcision be addressed through an educational campaign rather than through legal sanctions.

Many people thought that when Siyad fell there would be a return to Somalia's previous positions on issues such as religion and gender. While there has been significant resumption of religious practices, there seems to be little negative fallout on women's rights. The truth appears to be the opposite: Women leaders in Mogadishu have become a major force in pressuring men to stop fighting. They are speaking out on political, religious, and even economic issues. They are building alliances across clan lines in Mogadishu to foster cooperative programs in education and health, telling the men that their children have been deprived for too long.

In the past few years, women have assumed new roles in the economy, including taking jobs in retailing, money-changing, and local distribution of imported goods. Somali women have adopted these practices as one of the few ways they can earn livelihoods for their families in the midst of the collapse of more traditional forms of agricultural and rural vocation. Given these new roles for women and women's groups, such a focus on gender represents an essential and serious element to incorporate into eventual peace strategies.

5. *Islam.* An Islamic revival is evident. It reflects core values based on Somali tradition rather than on the fundamentalist political forms seen elsewhere in the Middle East. Somalia's Islamic revival promises to strengthen institutions of civil society and should be reinforced.

Though women's roles have persisted throughout the 1990s in nontraditional forms, religious groups seem to have resurrected some of their pre-Siyad influences. Partly as a backlash against Siyad's attack on Islam, many in the late 1980s had become more religious. Their motivation was to demonstrate their anger and carry out protests, yet still fall short of formal political dissension. In the 1990s, Somalis are involved in a reaffirmation of Islam—more people are going to mosques, women are less likely to wear Western clothes, and more people are fasting during Ramadan. There is a small minority of Somalis whose desperate struggle against the regime has led them to an extreme position, asserting that Somalia must become an Islamic state. These groups are especially strong in Gedo; they have had periods of strength in the Bari area, and they hold other pockets of strength and activity in other parts of the country. Nevertheless, at present it seems unlikely that there will be an Islamic state imposed on Somalia, though some are actively pursuing that objective.

Regardless of the subtleties of Islam in Somalia, it is one of the few elements that virtually all Somalis support to some degree. It provides a code of moral and ethical behavior, it bolsters Somali cultural tradition by offering a system in which the rulings of elders are accepted, and it brings a tradition of continuity greatly needed in Somalia's struggle to bring order out of the last decade of chaos. The presence of traditional Islamic ethics, codes, and laws of conduct offers one piece of a foundation upon which the new Somalia can be built.

6. *Market economy.* A free and unregulated market economy has emerged and its growth should be encouraged.

As described earlier, there is now a thriving free-market economy in many Somali cities. Investments during the past few years have produced a solid foundation upon which to

expand. Yet there are three critical needs in the private sector. One relates to the security and transport of goods produced. Crops of maize, bananas, and grapefruit are not safe in the fields, and the security of goods in transit cannot be guaranteed. The port and airport of Mogadishu are not yet open. So improved means are needed to protect and ship goods out of the country. At present, large producers provide their own militias—an inefficient and sometimes volatile arrangement in which dozens of small yet well-armed private armies float through the urban and rural landscapes.

The second problem is taxation. Successful producers need to share their income with the citizenry in the form of support for social and human services. At the moment, this is not happening and, without significant change, is almost certainly not going to happen soon. But generating public revenue is essential. If the present private sector is unable or unwilling to pay taxes, new and creative means will be needed.

The third issue involves setting standards or acceptable terms of practice in the Somali private sector. Competition promotes efficiency and fair prices. Unregulated, it also encourages ruthless and sometimes destructive behavior and unprincipled practices. Such ills, derived from excessive competition and the dominance of an uncontrolled private sector, require regulation and monitoring.

7. Local adaptation. Somalis have been ingenious at adapting external technologies and management systems to meet needs at local levels. The spirit of innovation and creativity ought to be encouraged at regional and national levels as well.

Somalis have always been creative adapters. The extreme challenges of the past decade have elicited amazing technologies and systems, based mostly on the imaginative use of available resources. For example, many gasoline stations function efficiently though they are pumping with only gravity and a siphon system. Lack of electricity is not an insurmountable problem. The phone system generally works well, even though there are no wires, through high-tech satellite systems. Somali entrepreneurs have skillfully negotiated agreements with high-tech international corporations and have set precedents for new communications systems for much of Africa.

These phone companies have carried their creativity into the banking sector, negotiating arrangements with Gulf banks and operating essentially as branch banks. Most of the local airlines also benefit from Somali entrepreneurship, which took advantage of the demise of the Soviet Union to buy grounded Soviet planes and hire out-of-work Russian pilots. To meet their fixed expenses, the planes fly khat from Kenya or Ethiopia to several towns and cities. This core subsidy is much like the airmail contracts in other parts of the world—it pays the bills when passenger revenues falter. The result is a reasonably reliable infrastructure of local air service.

Any agreement for Somalia's future must consider how it can focus on and benefit from the remarkable creativity and resourcefulness of its people.

8. Traditional institutions. Somali culture is rich in traditional institutions evidenced in its systems of land management, agricultural and grazing systems, conflict mediation, legal adjudication, and many related functions. These traditional practices are part of the support system needed to make any new settlement effective and sustainable.

Somalis are not lacking in traditional skills and institutions concerned with peace and reconciliation. For example, many clan traditions prohibit marriage within the sub-clan.

This institution is not designed to protect against inbreeding but to ensure that each clan will always have close and personal linkages and lines of communication with many other clans. In times of conflict between sub-clans, if there is a husband-wife combination that represents the two disputing groups, communications can be sent through the respective families in full assurance that the messages will be delivered and that they will be taken seriously. These links of trust between sub-clans are extremely important when disputes over water, grazing land, livestock thefts, or tree ownership arise.

There are also traditional mechanisms by which offenders who have committed crimes against the clan are punished by their immediate families. This is achieved by clan elders meeting and then putting pressure on the offender's family to keep the offending member in line, even, if the crime warrants, executing him. This approach avoids the cycle of reprisals that may arise should an external clan administer "unjust" punishments—the classic feud hazard of a tribal or clan system of justice.

Other examples exist of the Guurti (body of clan elders) forming clan-based councils to make policy or decisions that will affect many sub-clans. The months-long 1993 meeting in Borama that eventually set a constitution for the northwest was precisely this type of council meeting. This council included groups from three different major clans—Isaaq, Dir, and Darood—in the northwest and succeeded not only in creating a constitution but in appointing the government of the newly proclaimed Somaliland Republic. In this arrangement, the government is accountable to a multiclan council rather than to a particular clan. Other councils of elders have been just as successful in their areas, creating, for example, the Gardo Council of Elders. The institutions that have both mandates for and experience in conflict resolution have valuable and continuing responsibilities in establishing peace.

Many people throughout Somalia assured us that these institutions are alive and well and continue to enjoy great respect. While Western constitutionalism and legal proceedings are important in any settlement, so are the traditions that people already value and honor.

9. *Free press.* Somalis have a tradition of speaking frankly on any issue. At present, several informal newspapers, mostly in Mogadishu, present various perspectives on the current situation. Many of these views are highly critical of established political authority. Free speech and open debate need to continue if there is to be a lasting peace.

There is an active, influential, bold, and generally free press in many parts of Somalia, publishing in the Somali language and criticizing virtually all those in economic, political, and military power—domestic and overseas. Papers print many stories that would probably be judged libelous by standards of Europe and the United States. Yet Somalis tolerate and even encourage the criticism. The press provides a means of expressing new ideas and voicing opposition to the practices of some of the leaders.

The journalists have become increasingly skilled and perceptive in recent years. While there has been a long tradition of keen journalistic reporting in Somalia, during Siyad's latter years many writers went underground, left the country, or joined the opposition.

In the chaos of the immediate post-Siyad era, the press was weak and in some cases simply printed partisan tracts. But by the mid-1990s, a combination of computer technology and archaic mimeograph machines breathed new life and energy into the Somali press. The papers circulate widely, are consumed by several readers per copy, and are certainly

widely read by those most active in commercial, political, and professional circles. The Somali press is one of the most reliable forums for exchange of political and policy ideas. It enables virtually anyone to express opinions and views. Such a vehicle of expression is not available in many parts of the world. That the press flourishes in Somalia provides a welcome opportunity to debate governance models and ways in which different sectors and constituencies view options. The press needs to be given a prominent role in the continuing debate about Somalia's future.

10. *Regional links.* Relations with neighboring states are improving and need to be nurtured.

Because of pan-Somali nationalism, Somalia's continuing relations with its neighbors have generally been sticky, even belligerent. Somalia supported a limited guerrilla war in northern Kenya in the late 1960s, which British troops eventually quelled. There have been several border conflicts with Ethiopia, beginning in 1964 and concluding with the full-scale war in 1976–77. Given this legacy of Somali-Ethiopian hostility, it was little wonder that those opposed to Siyad's rule sought and received refuge from the Ethiopian government so they could conduct guerrilla warfare across the border. Many opposition raids were carried out from bases protected by Ethiopia's Dergue government. In the case of Djibouti, even though there has been no formal Somali military action, relations between the two have been perpetually unstable. Partly as a result of the collapse of the Siyad regime, recent relations have had a fresh start—for example, Djibouti tried to convene a Somali peace conference after Siyad's fall, and though the attempt failed, relations between the two remain good.

With Kenya, renewal of trust took a few years because General Aidid had accused Kenya of assisting General Morgan and other remnants of the Siyad forces. At present, relations with Kenya are quite good, and Kenya is gaining a lucrative economic windfall from NGO and international organizations based there to manage Somali programs. Hussein Aidid relies on Nairobi as the main base of his external political and commercial transactions.

Perhaps most remarkable has been the emergence of generally good relationships between Somalia and Ethiopia. This is why Ethiopia was able to convene, with the support of UNOSOM, several major Somali peace conferences in Addis Ababa. At present, however, there are some clouds hanging on the Somali-Ethiopian horizon. Ethiopia is angry with the Somali Islamic fundamentalists, especially those of Gedo, because of the impact they are having on the Somali-speaking region of Ethiopia. Ethiopia has therefore sent several military parties across the Somali border, at the invitation of some of the Somali clan factions, to combat the fundamentalists. This has produced a minority anti-Ethiopian sentiment among some sectors of Somali society. Despite this minor blip in external relations, for the first time in history Somalia and its neighbors enjoy generally good relations.

There are no shortcuts and no simple solutions for Somali reconciliation. Our visit suggested that peace is possible, that the vast majority of Somalis vigorously seek it, and that clear and systematic steps to build toward it can be identified. Given the present political climate, peace will probably not come through a single agreement. Rather it may come through stages of agreements and a continuing dialogue that civil society organizations have already begun—elders' groups, women's groups, community and neighborhood organizations, religious groups, interclan alliances for peace, NGOs, and the newer community-based organizations emerging in places such as Bari region.

Four

Proposed Organizing Perspectives

How does one implement these enabling conditions? Is there a role for outsiders? Many of our conversations indicated that Somalis were not the only ones contributing to political instability in the region. Conversations revealed that the politics of the Soviet Union and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s assumed that development involved building up the national, centralized infrastructure. To this end donors worked for more than twenty years expanding ports, harbors, and airports; building capabilities for government-based planning and action; emphasizing the export sector, especially high-value crops and livestock; and strengthening the military. Mogadishu, and to a lesser extent Berbera and Kismayo and the irrigated stretches of the Shabelle and Juba Rivers, became focal points for investment and development. Much of the northeast was utterly ignored and many of the important yet remote interior regions neglected because they had low strategic advantage and little potential for producing high-value surplus for export.

During the same period external development funding became by far the largest single source of revenue for the government budget. It is therefore little wonder that the principal locations of conflict in the post-Siyad era have been in Mogadishu and Kismayo, and to some extent in Berbera, the very sites where donor capital was invested in development and infrastructure. This is not to suggest that Baidoa, Merca, or Bosaso have had no conflict. But it does signal that one of the major disputes has been over controlling the fruits of centralized development investments as well as controlling possible new aid funding.

These local conflicts have created a second level of dispute, this one internal to the clans. Where three decades ago Somali governance was in the hands of elders, today it is not. Siyad worked vigorously to weaken the power of traditional institutions, in many cases quite successfully. Donor groups dealt with the government, not the elders.

In the post-Siyad era, leadership has passed to still another group, generally referred to as faction leaders or “warlords.” They are generally not religious (with a few notable exceptions); they are certainly not clan elders. Instead they tend to have backgrounds in business, the military, or politics. They rely for their strength on a complex alliance of commercial interests (for example, Malaysian joint ventures); aid agreements (for example, several people we met commented that “protection” payments for food deliveries during the war were one of the primary means by which faction leaders financed their war machines); and young, urban-based militia members, who tend not to be influential leaders in clan affairs but young men looking for adventure, money, and a fast life.

To an outsider, it is a sobering thought that resources designated for emergency food, health, and related relief supplies were one of the principal reasons for both the perpetuation of the conflict and the proliferation of factions. While there is no way to track the flow of these resources or to document how these funds were spent, it is abundantly clear

that many of the people we met believed they had been diverted, though they wished to express such thoughts anonymously. Further, locally produced plays and poetry suggest that faction leaders enjoy the many conferences on peace and reconciliation of recent years as they keep the donor resources flowing in ways they can control.

In short, perhaps the most significant conflict in Somalia at present, one that is rarely mentioned, pits warlords, faction leaders, and a rising commercial elite against traditional religious and clan leaders as well as women's groups that seek to maintain order and stability. It is a conflict between political entrepreneurs representing a new macropower and people's organizations drawn from the clans, religion, and women.

If there is a place for outsiders in Somalia to build peace and create a setting for development, it is to strengthen capacities among local groups, Islamic institutions, and women's groups. Such capacity building creates opportunities for leveraging the peace process from a grassroots perspective and promises to bring energy and activity to the very groups that have already provided leadership to support peaceful integration. This approach through local institutions places emphasis on development rather than on narrow political power and gives priority to human and social services rather than simply making money. There are at least three specific leveraging tools that outside groups can consider.

Tool 1: Decentralization and Local Autonomy

Total decentralization is chaos, as events of the past five years confirm. But greater local authority is fundamental to the development of sufficient local capacity to check autocracy. Local arrangements underpinning a sustainable autonomy have sprung up already in dozens of ways throughout the country. Our visit made us aware of many examples. Some are experimental and revised almost daily; others draw on well-established Somali procedures of conflict resolution and resource access management; still others draw on community-based initiatives from other parts of Africa.

Some of the needed decentralizing tools include:

- strengthening local groups in data collection and analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring;
- providing training in local-level conflict resolution;
- encouraging local alliances that cut across clan, gender, age, and political ideologies;
- devising local techniques to manage and account for money;
- building capacities for transparency in decisionmaking;
- offering training in technical skills pertinent to local needs in agriculture, water, credit, veterinary medicine, health, and education, as well as small finance and marketing;
- strengthening capacities of local leaders in skills such as running meetings, deciding on action, building local alliances, and implementing project activity;
- opening research efforts on scaling up local priorities and resource contributions to district and regional levels; and
- introducing community-based monitoring and evaluation.

Tool 2: Islam's Role and the Peace Process

There are three compelling reasons why Islam is an important component of any Somali peace effort. First, it provides a well-established and highly respected ethical and value system for carrying out social programs. Second, it is the spiritual foundation for all of Somali society and is therefore trusted and supported at every level. Third, it is one of the few cultural forces in the country that cuts across lines of clan, gender, age, and social class.

Partly as a result of Siyad's religious persecutions, there is a new spirit of Islamic revival. One aspect is the growing popularity of Islamic symbols and rituals. During the colonial and postcolonial periods, Somalis regularly practiced Islamic family law but avoided Islamic penal codes. Recently, a few enclaves within Somalia began to practice the penal code as well. This was the case, for example, in North Mogadishu for more than two years, although it was suspended just before our visit. Many people with whom we spoke noted that even if the principles of the penal code were adopted, the punishments would require modernization. There is also the longstanding need to harmonize Islamic codes with the principles and practices of Somali traditional law (*xeer*).

Donors and other external actors should be careful not to confuse legitimate Islamic revivalism with the destabilizing qualities of Islamic fundamentalism, which is to be found mostly in marginal regions such as Gedo and isolated areas of the northeast. Knee-jerk reactions against these pockets of fundamentalists could end up radicalizing ordinary Islamic revivals. Adventurist policies of this type—such as the Ethiopian military actions in Gedo—should be avoided at all costs. Instead, there is need to look upon Islam as a mediating, maturing, reconciling, and peace-building force. Traditional Islamic values of peace, fairness, justice, and human solidarity form a solid basis for the spiritual and moral uplifting of the emerging society. Islam can build cultural cohesiveness and solidarity without relying on a strong or autocratic state.

It is not clear whether donors and other outsiders need to act in support of Islamic revival. Probably they do not. Instead, the most important donor action is simply to be supportive of Islamic family law, to recognize ways that some of the penal codes can be modernized and integrated with the *xeer*, to consider how such codes can become effective forces in regulating business and commercial enterprises, and to incorporate principles of Islam into constitution building, governance, and conflict management.

Tool 3: The Role of Women

In Mogadishu, committees of women are leading NGOs and other groups toward reconciliation. They have organized committees for improved health and educational services, some of which have been collaborating across the Green Line. They are among the most visible, articulate, energetic, and respected of the groups working to eliminate barriers such as the Green Line. They have been able to win the support of groups of elders of all political, clan, and factional perspectives. Their persistent efforts, complemented by other domestic and external pressures, have helped bring about the present situation in which the barricades are being removed. Today, Mogadishu is largely unified on a day-to-day, operational level. Relations between Ali Mahdi, Hussein Aidid, and Osman Atto are the best they have been since 1992. While the airport and port of Mogadishu still remain closed,

despite signed agreements, the direction toward clan and faction reconciliation in Mogadishu is positive. Women are not the only pressure group responsible for such change. Yet they are among the core groups and should be so recognized.

In other parts of the country, women are performing similar roles. Women are organizing in Bosaso and the Bari region, building coalitions across faction lines, and supporting health and nutrition programs. They are getting schools going again. Women are an important and, in an ironic and Somali way, a significant force of neutrality in what otherwise is a highly politicized social environment. The reasons for this neutrality are both traditional and modern.

Traditionally, Somali women were not expected to represent their clans. That was a job for men. The clan system has tended to marginalize women, almost to the point of treating them as outsiders in clan public or political decision-making events. As a result, women's identities and activities have tended to transcend some of the more destructive elements of Somali clanism. For example, in Baidoa, during the worst days of the violence, UN staff were surprised to see women readily bury all of the dead, regardless of clan or sub-clan. The men would bury only members of their own immediate clans and sub-clans, but women, who belong to their birth clans, identify as well with their marriage clans, facilitating their bridging roles.

Modern roles have also placed women one step outside the clan system. Somali women are perceived both in nurturing roles and as earners. For example, when the civil war destroyed earlier livelihoods and the men were called away for militia duty, the women assumed new commercial roles to support their children and relatives. Dozens of anecdotal references from Somali refugees abroad also indicate that women benefit more from educational opportunities and job training, and are more successful at locating and maintaining a job. The special adaptability and resilience of women and women's groups suggests a vital and generally overlooked role for women in bringing about reconciliation.

Special support should therefore be given to women's organizations so that they can assume prominent roles and continue their constructive influence in rebuilding civil society. Women should be supported for active participation at every level in the emerging democratization process.

Five

Some Thoughts for the Future

Several steps need to follow if the leveraging tools are to have impact. Many efforts that are already under way require continued financial support. These include:

- ▶ instruction in democratic processes, civic education, voter/balloting procedures, and reconciliation activities, as currently supported by groups such as the Life and Peace Institute, the War-Torn Societies Project, ANAPAEST, UNICEF, UNESCO, and others;
- ▶ expanded support to Somali NGOs that have been spearheading much of the civic education efforts;
- ▶ more attention to converting humanitarian programs and civil society training into explicit community-based development planning and action;
- ▶ scaling up local community action plans to formulate district and regional rehabilitation and development plans;
- ▶ managing and regulating commercial entrepreneurship;
- ▶ ensuring independence of legislative action, policy, law, and court systems;
- ▶ supporting freedom of movement, including peaceful reentry of refugees, even if their homes are located in areas controlled by other clans;
- ▶ reestablishment of interpersonal relations that cut across clan lines; and
- ▶ resuscitation of local economies, with people able to reclaim their assets and to engage in their customary occupations.

These activities are already under way in small-scale operations. Methods are known, and institutions are in place to implement them. One needs only to consider gradual expansion of this work.

To carry out such work involves new planning, reinvigorated alliances across clan and faction lines, new policy efforts on the part of donors, and new and creative sources of funding. Our brief report therefore concludes with two new points of special importance.

United States Reengagement

The United States should reengage Somalis and Somalia. In U.S. diplomatic circles, mention of Somalia provokes embarrassment and avoidance behavior. During the five years since the withdrawal of American troops, the United States has minimized its involvement in Somalia and maintained a low profile. There has been no clear policy regarding Somalia, with an inclination to let other nations (particularly Ethiopia) take the lead. While the

United States continues to finance humanitarian assistance, no longer-term strategy for peacebuilding or reconstruction has been formulated.

This policy, largely a reaction to an intervention in Somalia that went awry, may have had some justification in the past, but the time is ripe for reassessment and for the United States to contribute to peace in Somalia. This would enable the United States to complete what it started in late 1992.

The United States need not assume the role of peacemaker or peacekeeper. Too many states have been playing this role, including Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Yemen, and Italy, all of whom seem eager to be seen as midwives of a Somali peace. While Egypt, at least recently, seems more successful than the others, Somalis suspect all these states of being driven primarily by their own national agendas. Moreover, the United Nations has been largely discredited in Somalia because of its mistakes in 1993–95. In contrast, the United States still maintains considerable credibility; Somalis lament the current lack of U.S. interest.

American encouragement of the peace and reconciliation process now under way could make an important contribution. Longer-term commitments to support local reconstruction and reconciliation processes are equally essential. American involvement will also encourage other donors to reengage.

Paying for Somali Rehabilitation

Most external agencies are suffering from severe cases of donor fatigue in Somalia. It is unlikely that donors will come forward with significant funding for new peace or rehabilitation initiatives until concrete and positive changes are discernible. To date, donors have defined “concrete progress” in terms of signed national agreements and formally negotiated “treaties” among the numerous self-proclaimed factions. While there is no reason to stop these negotiations, it seems unlikely that such signed agreements will have any lasting impact on bringing peace to Somalia. Instead, we believe that progress should be measured by the degree to which significant portions of the recommended decentralized programs are self-financed.

The concept of self-financing of peace and reconciliation is not a conventional proposal. But Somalia is hardly a conventional situation. We believe that among Somalia’s single greatest problems is lack of local “ownership” of the peace process. Until national as well as local initiatives for peace are genuinely Somali-owned, externally negotiated alliances will continue to evaporate. Partial self-financing will greatly increase local ownership. The most logical sources of local revenue are the commercial entities that have been springing up. Literally millions of dollars of revenue are lost because these groups do not pay taxes. And when a few make at least token payments, the revenues do not necessarily go to construct the physical and social infrastructure required to get Somalia back on its feet.

The absence of tax-base support has contributed to Somalia’s current condition of private prosperity and public squalor. With the gap of ten years since normal government services have functioned, there is a general lack of experience and commitment to public needs, and desire among the new business elite to remedy this situation is low indeed. Nor is there any encouraging sign that the new entrepreneurs will soon start paying taxes. The power of any public body to exact revenue is too limited, and the current climate that infrastructure is the responsibility of donors is too prevalent. A change of tactics is required.

One possible solution would be a three-way funding alliance for local microprojects. One-third of the funds could continue to come from the traditional donor groups—UNDP, bilaterals, NGOs, and others. The second third could be leveraged as matching funds from the overseas Somali community. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of overseas Somalis who now send money to family, clan, and Muslim societies throughout Somalia. While these funds are important and valued, they generally only benefit narrow circles of relatives. If these funds could be focused, in part, on matching amounts for local community development funds, there would be a double value: assistance to local groups and capacity building for the community-based institutions that manage them.

The overseas contributions would accomplish an additional goal. They would become a means to pry loose taxes from the in-country entrepreneurial elite—the source of the third tranche of community development funds.

The plan would, of necessity, start slowly. Perhaps an NGO might announce to a district or other local area that it would match community-raised funds in the amount of the three-thirds formula. Communities could also reach out to known allies—family, clan, or others—as well as to figures in the commercial sector. While there would be some lost energy and time at the beginning, there would also be some success.

Once word of the matching funds began to circulate through the highly efficient Somali network, others would join in. Properly managed, such a matching fund program could accomplish six steps toward building peace in Somalia. It would:

- ▶ greatly increase community investment, literal and figurative, in the local planning and action process—community institutions could set local action plans, select indicators to monitor progress, and make changes if needed;
- ▶ strengthen financial management oversight, because pressures from overseas Somalis and the commercial sector would greatly outweigh any financial accountability compliance that donors or NGOs could provide;
- ▶ build or restore financial responsibility among Somali community institutions because social and financial obligations would be established and enforced through traditional management systems;
- ▶ engage overseas Somalis in a development dialogue—while there is extensive interest among diaspora Somalis in political agendas, there is not now a significant presence in direct development. Expansion of development support to overseas Somalis would utilize a substantially overlooked resource for Somali rehabilitation;
- ▶ set a precedent for and publicize the social obligations of commercial entrepreneurs, noting that they do have social responsibilities and that there are financially prudent ways to meet them; and
- ▶ send a message to donors that Somalis care. At present, levels of donor frustration and cynicism about the large number of false starts and failed initiatives in Somalia have led to reductions in funding and donor withdrawal.

Perhaps most important, the three-way partnerships would bridge gaps and build alliances among groups not currently cooperating. While a new Somali financial alliance

would not solve all problems, it could be an important step toward building grassroots capacities and confidence that will generate substantial local development. It would also draw into development decisionmaking and action several new groups, including the local institutions noted earlier: decentralized institutions, Islamic organizations, and women's groups. Broadening participation and showing that such participation draws resources into enhancing livelihoods, we believe, is the only way to build a lasting peace in Somalia.

Notes

1. Advisory Committee: Jawahir Adam, Hargeisa, Somaliland; Ahmed Q. Ali, Mogadishu, Benadir Region; Omar Eno, Kismayu, Juba Region; Dahabo Farah, Bosaso, Northeast Region; Col. Abdullahi Farah Holif, Bosaso, Northeast Region; Mohamud Jama, Burao, Somaliland; Mohamed Hajki Makhtar, Baidoa, Bay Region; Ms. Qamar Osman, Borama, Somaliland; Dr. Ahmed Samatar, Borama, Somaliland; Amina Sharif, Afgoi, Benadir Region; Ms. Fadumo Ahmed Alim "Ureji," Harardhere, Mudug Region; Mahamud Abdi Ali "Bayr," Las Khorey, Somaliland; Ibrahim Meygag Samater, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

2. Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, pp. 44–76.

3. The experience of the Somaliland Republic (former British Somaliland) is treated in a separate report to be completed in early 1999.

4. On May 15, 1990, an unarmed opposition group consisting of more than 100 prominent personalities based in Mogadishu issued a manifesto criticizing the Siyad regime. The signers came to be referred to as the "Manifesto Group."

5. Khat is a mildly hallucinogenic leaf that, when chewed, produces a temporary state of euphoria. Habitual khat chewers often state that they can create new plans and programs when stimulated by the drug.

About the Team Members

The initiative for the mission grew from a proposal of two of the team members, Hussein Adam and David Smock, to bring together a representative group of Somali intellectuals. While none of the Somali team members represented any political group or party, all had long and deep-rooted experiences with Somali political issues. The team included:

Ali Jimale Ahmed is a widely published poet and literary critic who is recognized worldwide for his contributions to Somali literature. His cultural roots are in Mogadishu, Benadir Region. He is currently a professor of literature at Queens College, New York City. Dr. Ahmed focused on cultural and educational themes during the visit.

Abdinasir Osman Isse is a physician from Garoe, Nugal Region, in the northeast. He practiced medicine for several years in Mogadishu and now makes his home in Toronto, where he is a community health consultant. He was concerned primarily with health and education during the visit.

Nur Weheliye is an economist who previously worked in the Somali Ministry of Finance and Planning, where he was head of the government's Statistical Department. He now makes his home in Germany and works with a number of NGOs and donor agencies on economic policy for Somalia. His roots lie in Galbayo, Mudug Region. He focused on economic issues during the USIP mission.

Hussein Adam is a political scientist who previously was founder and executive director of the Somali Unit for Research on Emergencies and Rural Development. His cultural roots lie in Hargeisa, Somaliland. He currently is professor of politics at the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts. He served as team leader for the Somali mission and looked after political, policy, and constitutional questions.

David Smock is director of the Grant Program and coordinator of Africa activities at the United States Institute of Peace. He has devoted a lifetime to research, writing, and program management on themes of African politics and development. He served as principal policy analyst for the team.

Richard Ford is professor of history and international development at Clark University in Massachusetts. He has worked in Africa for 30 years on issues of community-based decision making and resources management. His responsibilities on the team focused primarily on models of community-based decision making and decentralized institutions.

Institutions and People Visited

In Nairobi

EEC: Sigurd Illing, Special Envoy for Somalia; Alexander Yannis, Technical Assistant; Karin von Hippel, EU Special Consultant

U.S. Embassy First Secretary (Political)

United Nations Political Office for Somalia

UNOPS (War-Torn Societies Project)

Several former Somali ministers and ambassadors

UNDP Information Officer

Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC)

Mohamed Warsame “Kimiko,” former minister, currently advisor to Hussein Aidid

Saafia M. Jama, UNICEF Nutrition Consultant

Fatima Jibril, Horn Relief

War-Torn Societies Project

In Mogadishu

USC-SSA: Cabinet and advisors of Ali Mahdi Mohamed; Deputy Chair Musa Sudi; Deputy Chairs Hussein Bod and Ali Ugaas

Government ministers of Hussein Aidid: vice president, minister of state of the presidency, minister of the interior, minister of planning, vice minister of foreign affairs, permanent secretary of foreign affairs, director general of the presidency

Mohamed Farah Jimale, advisor to Hussein Aidid

Ambassador Ahmed Mohamed Darman

USC/UJ: General Secretary Ahmed Omar Gagale

USC/SNA: Osman Ali “Atto,” two vice chairs, and one advisor

SDM/SSA: vice chair and two members of executive committee

United Peace Party: founder and president

Important figures in religious, cultural, and secular affairs

Leaders of women’s organizations, professional associations, and local NGOs from north, south, and southwest Mogadishu

Ismail Jiumale Human Rights Center

Somali Independent Journalists Union

Somali Peace Line

Medical and educational institutions

Shelters for displaced persons

Life and Peace Institute

Women's Training Project

CARE

African Refugee Foundation

Ocean Training Promotion

In Bosaso

SSDF: Chairman Mohamed Abshir Musa, Mohamed Ali Yusuf "Gagab," Mohamud Jama Afballar, Abdulahi S. Samater, Abdullahi Musa Ali, Adam Jama Bihi, Abdirahman Said, Ahmed Farah Mahamud, Hassan Abshir Farah, Said Mohamed Hirsi, Said Artan, Said Salah, Ibrahim Umar Musa, Abdi-said Ali Suryan, Ali Nuuh Mohamed "Madobe," Yusuf Ali Hersi

Bari Deputy Governor

Deputy Chair of Bari parliament Hussein Gacayte

Somali Welfare Society

Combined UN Committee (UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOPS)

Chamber of Commerce

Health officers

Women's groups

Education officers

Displaced persons

Committees of elders

Police Training School

Al-Bashit Vocational School

Rahmo Rehabilitation Organization

Shilalle Rehabilitation and Ecological Concerns

Somali Relief Society (SORSO)

AICF/USA

Africa 70

Appendixes Available

Documents on educational institutions, the medical situation, and the economy, which form appendixes to this summary report, are available. They can be obtained by writing to:

David Smock
United States Institute of Peace
1200 17th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-3006

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- Creative Approaches to Managing Conflict in Africa: Findings from USIP-Funded Projects*, edited by David R. Smock (No. 15, April 1997)
- Police Functions in Peace Operations*, by Roxane D. V. Sismanidis (No. 14, March 1997)
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- Sources of Conflict: G. M. Tamás and Samuel Huntington on "Identity and Conflict," and Robert Kaplan and Jessica Tuchman Mathews on "The Coming Anarchy" and the Nation-State under Siege* (No. 4, August 1995)
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