

Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.)

Post-Conflict Peace-Building in the Horn of Africa

A Report of the 6th Annual Conference on
the Horn of Africa, Lund, August 24-26, 2007

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
LUND UNIVERSITY

SOMALIA INTERNATIONAL
REHABILITATION CENTRE

**Research Report
in Social Anthropology**

2008:1

African Solution to African Problems: The End of the Mogadishu Syndrome¹

The fall of Mogadishu on New Year's Eve to the allied forces of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Ethiopia will not hurt the Union of Islamic Court's (UIC) jihad on Ethiopia, nor will it automatically bring stability to war-torn Somalia. It is unlikely that the UIC will lay down their arms and surrender their militias, or that the TFG will be able to extend its authority outside of Mogadishu. This is the general opinion among many Somalis and friends of Somalia, largely because Somalia's past 16 years have shown so many tangible examples of unsustainable transitions.

However, this latest transition could be an opportunity to close a chapter of instability and anarchy in the Somali peninsula. If successful, it may bring the end of lawlessness and of Somalia's stigma as the only failed state on the globe. In the longer run, it may help to restore the unity of Somalia and to curb the war on global terror. Since the collapse of the state in January 1991, Mogadishu has experienced a number of disastrous transitional authorities which have left their mark on the Somali psyche as well as on that of the international community. During Ali Mahdi's interim government (1991-92), the city was turned into rubble because of indiscriminate shellings between Mahdi's militia and rival forces led by General Muhammad Farah Aideed. Mogadishu was divided by a de facto "Green Line", where Mahdi's militia controlled the northern portion of the city and Aideed's the southern.² The post-Arta settlements of May-August, 2000, brought about the Transitional National Government (TNG) with Abdulqasim Salad Hassan as President.³ The TNG could not establish its authority over even one sector of Mogadishu. Then the Mbeghathi⁴ Peace and

- 1 Parts of this article is published originally in *African Renaissance*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Quarter 1, 2007, under the title "Somalia and the End of Mogadishu Syndrome?" pp.22-27.
- 2 Hirsch, John L, and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1995), 14-16.
- 3 Arta is a summer resort in the Republic of Djibouti, where the reconciliation conference was held. See details in Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia, New Edition* (Lanham, M.D.: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 41-42.
- 4 Another resort in Kenya. It is noteworthy that the duration of Somalia Reconciliation Conferences was extending astronomically, from one week (June 5-11, 1991) in Djibouti, which is known as Djibouti 1 -where Ali Mahdi's interim presidency was endorsed- to almost a month (dec.-January 3, 1997) in Sodere, Ethiopia, another resort. Then four months in Arta (May, June, July and August, 2000), and two years in Kenya (2002-2004).

Reconciliation Conference of 2002-2004 produced the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The new president Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and the majority members of his parliament failed even to "put their feet" in Mogadishu because of fears for their security. Now after more than two years of brief sojourns in Jowhar (2005) and Baidoa (2006), the TFG has taken over Mogadishu with Ethiopian support and without resistance. The UIC who controlled the city from June 2006 withdrew and their leaders are on the run.

For the past 17 years, Mogadishu's residents have lived under different reigns of terror. More than 10 warlords split the city into enclaves. Their "isbaro," checkpoints, limited the mobility of the local residents as well as the flow of goods and services. Each enclave controlled aspects of the city's security and economic resources i.e. ports, airports, airstrips and leading roads to the rest of the country. Since 1990 all attempts to establish an autonomous administration for Mogadishu city have failed. The city became a safe haven for criminals. Assassinations of Somali peace-makers, educators, medical doctors as well as international humanitarian providers were common; victims included Ali Iman Sharmarke (August 11, 2007), Mahad Ahmed Elmi (August 11, 2007), Mohamud Ali Ahmed Elman (March 1997), Ayub Sheikh Yerow Abdiyow (September 19, 1999), Abdulqadir Yahya (July, 2005); Dan Eldon (1993), Sister Leonella Sgorbati (2006), and Kate Payton of the BBC (February 9, 2006). In June, 1993, it was in Mogadishu where dozens of UN peacekeepers were murdered while guarding an outside soup kitchen for the malnourished and victims of the famine.⁵ Moreover, the massacre of Black Hawk Dawn cost 18 US troops in Operation Restore Hope their lives (1993).⁶

As a result of the power struggle between self-appointed administrations, clan based warlords and fanatic Islamists, thousands of innocent Mogadishans were killed from the indiscriminate shellings and crossfire and hundreds of thousands displaced. Somalis in general and Mogadishans in particular were murdering the very individuals or groups who were attempting to help them. For reasons only a psychiatrist, perhaps, could explain, Somalis in general and Mogadishans in particular became their worst enemies.

It is obvious that Somalis failed to help themselves and recover from the abyss, and the international communities seemed unable to tackle the root causes of the problem. Somalia needed to root out weapons and militias or faction leaders in order to promote reconciliation and effective governance. According to the UN/World Bank's Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) in 2005, the total estimated number of militias is 53,000. Of them 15,000 militias are controlling Mogadishu. Unfortunately, efforts towards disarmament have failed during the past 17 years.

There are a number of lessons to be learned from Somalia's past, when the country was devastated by similar crises. In the post World War I era, 1923-27, armed Somalis returning from the war zones started vandalizing the region. The Italian administration succeeded in "pacifying" them and controlling a territory even vaster than Somalia today (called "la Grande Somalia", the greater Somalia) by introducing a serious policy of disarmament.⁷

Similarly, after World War II, the British Military administration (BMA), 1941-50, faced the same question. The defeat of Italy in the Horn of Africa by the Allied Forces left Somalia in a political vacuum, because Italy had earlier destroyed the Somali lines of authority. Moreover, thousands of young Somalis armed by the Italian were left behind with their weapons. These young men, mostly recruited from the nomadic clans turned the country into a scene of pillage and plunder. The BMA had no clear mandate to govern Somalia. Its responsibility was a transitional one, to keep Somalia as an "Occupied Enemy Territory" until the Allies—the Four Powers—decided the future of such areas, but the situation gave new incentives to the Somali pastoral propensity for property looting and inter-clan feuds. The BMA had no other choice but to disarm the Somalis.⁸ While the means and goals of the colonial power in Somalia were not precisely the same as those of today's multinational troops, the circumstances and clan intrigues of the Somalis are quite similar.

For example, when inter-clan war spread throughout the country and caused famine in the inter-riverine region in 1991-93, the US-led Operation Restore Hope (ORH) was essential to keep Somalia's brigands and their weapons at bay while relief aid was being delivered. During the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) which followed ORH, Somalia began a tentative recovery. Baidoa, which the media in 1992 had called "the City of Walking Dead," reclaimed its historic name "Baidoa Jinay" the heavenly city; and the inter-riverine region that was labeled as "the Triangle of Death" became one of the most peaceful regions of the country.⁹ However, immediately after the withdrawal of the international authority ORH and UNOSOM, new forms of anarchic authority emerged in the region. The Republic of Somaliland which had seceded in 1991 was joined by the autonomous Riverine State in Baidoa (formed in March 1995, and overthrown by Aideed in September, 1995) and by the regional authority of Puntland State in Garowe in 1998. Thus, Somalia went back to square one.

Operation Restore Hope and UNOSOM will be remembered widely as a success story in Somali history. The missions alleviated an unimaginable tragedy among the devastated Somalis. But its success would have been more lasting if the rescued Somalis had been helped towards a workable political solution in a parallel effort to the humanitarian cause, and if the international community had been more aware of the real causes behind the Somali tragedy.

5 John Drysdale, "Foreign Military Intervention in Somalia: The Root Cause of the Shift From UN Peacekeeping and its Consequence." In *Learning From Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention*, edited by Walter Clarke and Jeffery Herbst (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 132.

6 Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 261-326.

7 De Vecchi di Val Chismon, *Orozzonti d'Impero: Cinque Anni in Somalia*, (Milan: A Mondadori 1934), 25-27.

8 Sylvia E. Punkhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951) 164-69.

9 Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, "The Plight of Agro-Pastoral Society of Somalia." *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 70, (1996), 552.

Recent examples also might shed some light on the necessity of international intervention in Somalia's affairs. Since leaving Nairobi in November 2004, the TFG has failed to achieve a quorum for a meeting. Some of the TFG parliamentarians went to Mogadishu, arguing that the seat of the government should return to the old capital, while others refused to go Mogadishu believing it could not provide the necessary security. They agreed instead on Jowhar, 90 km north of Mogadishu as an interim capital until Mogadishu was secure. None of the group could have a quorum and this kept the TFG dysfunctional for over a year. In February, 2006, the two groups agreed to convene in Baidoa, 250 km West of Mogadishu. This would have been impossible without UN facilitation. The UNDP provided some basic operational funds, including infrastructures, services and some basic security.

On 28 February, 2006, the 275 members of the parliament convened and called for the necessity of international involvement in Somalia.¹⁰ It became clear that the TFG would remain handicapped without international assistance. No progress whatsoever could be achieved without rigorous deployment of international troops to tackle the issue of disarmament, which is essential to sustainable peace and reconciliation in the country. It is also obvious that without stability no meaningful reconstruction is possible and all social and economic progress will remain doomed.

The TFG invited the international community to take action, this time not to rescue Somali people from famine or to restore its failed state, but rather to prop up the faltering government and prevent the establishment of a Taliban-style state that might provide a safe haven for al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups in Somalia. The African Union (AU) authorized deployment of troops for this endeavor.¹¹ Ethiopia was the first to heed the call, initially providing trainers and more recently sizeable numbers of troops, following the UIC attacks on Baidoa, the headquarters of the TFG. The UIC are backed militarily by Eritrea and Egypt, the archrival of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa, financed by Iran and Saudi Arabia, and has the overwhelming support of the global jihad movement. In Baidoa the UIC staged some serious suicide bombings. In September, 2006, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed president of the TFG, survived a devastating attack where eight of his bodyguards were killed. Baidoa also experienced some heinous assassinations. In July, 28, 2006 Abdalla Derow Issaq, Minister of Federal Affairs, and other dignitaries were shot at point blank range; the assassins were never captured. These are just some examples of al-Qaeda style of actions in Baidoa. In Mogadishu and elsewhere, where the Islamists established control since June 2006, they introduced practices that are antithetical to Islamic values such as chopping off hands of thieves or generally applying "hudud" laws when there is no functioning state apparatus; laws forbidding women from riding in cars with men even when there is no transportation capable of supporting that segregation; and introduced regulations that men cannot shave beards or watch television. No women were included in their Shura and Executive Councils.

The UIC showed themselves to be insensitive about Islam in the Horn of Africa. Almost half of the Ethiopia population professes Islam and most of the time live harmoniously with the other Christian half. This is true of Eritrea as well. If the Somali Islamists are in pursuit of establishing an Islamic state they should have been passionate about Ethiopia's legacy on Islam. When companions of the Prophet Muhammad were persecuted by their own clansman, the Meccans, the Prophet suggested they go to "Abyssinia", Ethiopia: "There... you will find a king under whom non are persecuted. It is land of righteousness..." Indeed, the companions were given asylum and safe haven and were protected from Meccan retrieval.¹² It is believed that Islam came to Somalia from this migration. And Somalis are proud of claiming that they became Muslims even before Medina.

The outcome of the Ethiopian interventions and the eventual empowerment of the TFG should be looked at by both Somalis and the international community as potential blessing in disguise. Somalia has lacked governance for the past 17 years and it is ranked at the bottom of the development index. The masses have been yearning to have their state back, to have some semblance of dignity. Now that the TFG is functional, Somalis should welcome and work towards the success of the TFG. The armed Somalis are the problem. For a sustainable peace and stability, they must voluntarily give up their guns. It would have been ideal to disarm without foreign intervention. Somalis should first and foremost do their homework. Building roads, schools, hospitals and other basic civic infrastructures is impossible if builders are at gun point or infrastructures are bombed at any moment. The Somali people should put down arms and the government should find alternatives for the armed youth. We need to give peace a chance.

The international community should commit itself more than ever. Multinational troops must be deployed immediately, first for helping the disarmament process in year, and then for training the Somali police force. The task of reconciliation and reconstruction is more than Ethiopia can do alone. In fact the continued presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia would inflame tensions. Genuine reconciliation should start and grievances should be settled. Again, international assistance is crucial, a only neutral parties, without clan links, can settle long standing tensions. It is necessary to bring the war criminals to justice. It took Liberia many years to nail Charles Taylor. After Taylor was indicted, not only Liberia, but many countries of Northwest Africa were able to restore peace.¹³ Similarly, the Democratic Republic of Congo is expected to be at peace after putting the infamous warlord Thomas Lubanga in the International Criminal Court's custody. The international community must ban Somali warlords, and Islamicists alleged to have ties with international terrorism from coming to their countries. Stop issuing visas, and freeze and shut down their bank accounts.

10 Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 116, *Can The Somali Crisis be Contained?* (August 10, 2006), 7-8.

11 In January 2005, leaders of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development IGAD authorized the deployment of a peace support mission known as the IGASOM to help the TFG on disarming militias, training police force and maintain law and order in the country.

12 Abi Muhammad Abdulmalik Ibn Hisham al-Ma'afiri, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, vol. 1, (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 1996), 266-81.

13 Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, "Somalia: Trampling the Grass." *The World Today*, Vol. 63, No. 2, (February, 2007), 16-17.

This opportunity may not last long. The UIC may be retreating for tactical reason, and though they have restricted freedoms, they brought some degree of stability not seen before in Somalia. If the TFG cannot bring about better stability and tangible progress in the near future, this might invite insurgencies and the Somali crisis could overflow and turn the entire region into a battlefield, and Somalia might descend into chaos again.

Abdi Ismail Samatar

Ethiopian Occupation and American Terror in Somalia¹

Abstract

This essay assesses the nature and the objectives of the illegal Ethiopian invasion of Somalia and America's misguided support for it. America's war on terror has imposed a reign of terror on the Somali people which has destroyed a third of the Somali population, killed 7000 people in the last ten months and displaced over half a million people from Mogadishu and surrounding areas. There are credible reports that the Ethiopian occupation has induced near famine conditions in several parts of the south and the international community remains silent about the horrific plight of the people. American and Ethiopian euphoria surrounding the defeat of the Islamic Courts was short-lived as a fierce national resistance movement has reemerged. The long-term effects of these developments for Somalia and the region are alarming. Paradoxically, it seems likely that Islam will play a greater not lesser role in the civic reconstruction of Somalia.

Introduction

The United States-sponsored Security Council resolution, 1725,² to lift UN sanctions on Somalia and allow the military forces of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states to intervene in that country, ratified on September 6, 2006, became a prelude to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. A pretext for pushing this resolution through the Security Council was that the "nationally legitimate" government of Somalia needed international military support since it was in danger of being overtaken by radical Muslims. The Islamic Courts, supported by the population, who drove out the warlords and restored peace

1 A slightly different version of the essay was published in the *Review of African Political Studies* (34, 111, 2007). Permission granted.

2 Somalia: Resolution 1725 (2006) adopted by the Security Council at its 5579th meeting on September 6, 2006 (S/RES/1725).