

The Somali Conflict: Root causes, obstacles, and peace-building strategies

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Unlike many African populations, the overwhelming majority of the Somalis are part of a single, homogeneous ethnic group. All Somalis are Muslim and share the same language and culture. Nevertheless, one of the most terrible civil wars in Africa has been waged in this country for more than two decades. Somalia has been without a functioning central government since the late dictator General Mohamed Siad Barre was ousted in 1991. This essay examines the root causes of the Somali conflict and analyses some of the obstacles that have plagued peace efforts for the last fourteen years. Finally, it identifies peace-building strategies that could help establish durable peace in Somalia. We argue that competition for resources and power, repression by the military regime and the colonial legacy are the background causes of the conflict. Politicised clan identity, the availability of weapons and the presence of a large number of unemployed youth have exacerbated the problem. With regard to the obstacles to peace, we contend that Ethiopia's hostile policy, the absence of major power interest, lack of resources and the warlords' lack of interest in peace are the major factors that continue to haunt the Somali peace process. Finally, we propose ambitious peace-building strategies that attempt to address the key areas of security, political governance, economic development and justice in order to build a durable peace in Somalia.

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Introduction

The Somali people have suffered from prolonged oppression and violence at the hands of their fellow Somalis. They have lived in difficult and harsh conditions under both democratic and military regimes. During the democratic era (1960-1969), independence and newly established state institutions failed to meet people's expectations. Poverty increased and security deteriorated. Moreover, corruption, nepotism and cronyism characterised state institutions.

The military regime took power in October 1969, but only made the situation worse. Siad Barre's government used indiscriminate killing, burning of villages and torture as instruments of control. Armed factions used the same tactics. As a result of the war and war-related causes, hundreds of thousands of Somalis lost their lives, and many more became displaced internally and externally. In this paper, we attempt to answer the following three questions:

- What are the causes of the Somali conflict?
- What explains the perpetuation of the civil war, or the failure of previous peace efforts?
- How can the Somali conflict be resolved?

Root causes of the Somali conflict

The Somali civil war has multiple and complex causes including political, economic, cultural and psychological. Various external and internal actors have played different roles during the various stages of the conflict. Based on our observations and readings of peace-building literature, we argue that the root causes of the Somali conflict were competition for resources and/or power, a repressive state and the colonial legacy. We also regard as contributing causes the politicised clan identity, the availability of weapons, the large numbers of unemployed youth, and certain aspects of the Somali culture that sanction the use of violence.

The most important factor that has created and sustained the clan-based militias' conflicts is competition for power and resources. As literature in this area suggests and the collective memories of the Somalis attest, Somali clans had often clashed over resources such as water, livestock (camels) and grazing long before Somalia became a sovereign country.¹ Using the widely accepted Somali traditional legal system (*Heer*), historically traditional leaders settled these conflicts.

However, after Somalia gained its independence, many Somalis moved to urban areas, so the types of resources that are needed and the means used to obtain them have changed. Political

leaders realised that whoever controlled the state would control the nation's resources. Access to government resources, recruitment of civil servants and control of foreign aid replaced control of water wells and access to grazing issues in the countryside. For instance, Mohamed Jama Urdoh, a Somali journalist, observed Somalia's police forces in 1967. He revealed in an investigative report that more than 70 per cent (51 out of 71) of police-station chiefs were members of the same clan as the then police chief.² Moreover, the police chief was just one example of how government officials were misusing their power. Besides the political patronage appointments that characterised the civil service, corruption affected all levels and departments of the government. With regards to government policy, the frequently cited examples include the use of Somalia's police and army forces for clannish reasons. Within two clans, the Lelkase and the Ayr, there is a widespread belief that the government of the day and the police used excessive force against them.

As corrupt as it was, Somalia's first government was democratic. It had checks and balances and people could talk and address the corruption. The Somali leaders of the time were poorly educated novices with little experience in running a government. Nevertheless, the former prime minister, Abdirizak Haji Hussein, had some success in dealing with security and corruption problems during his reign.

However, when General Mohamed Siad Barre took over power in October 1969 things changed. For the first few years the revolutionary council built new institutions and wrote down the Somali language. However, the general's obsession with controlling and consolidating his power to the benefit of members of his clan became clear to all Somalis. Opposition groups were outlawed and no one could criticise the military leaders.

Since elites from specific clans controlled all levers of state power and the economy, the leadership of the opposition capitalised on this opportunity. After the 1977/1978 war between Somalia and Ethiopia, a number of military officers attempted to take over the government. When this coup failed, the Siad Barre regime started to use excessive force against the Majerteen clan (the clan to which most of the officers belonged). This event was the beginning of Somalia's civil war. Other clans such as the Isaaq, Ogaden, Hawiye and Digil and Mirifle also started opposition groups in order to seize power.

Current realities confirm this assertion that competition for power and/or resources was the leading cause of conflict among clans and militia groups. The civil war within the Hawiye, the Darod, the Digil and Mirifle, and the Isaaq clans was a resource- and/or power-motivated conflict. For instance, the Abgal and the Habargidir clans had never fought throughout their history and in fact belong to the same clan (Hawiye) and sub-clan (Hiraab). However, when Mogadishu fell to the United Somali Congress (USC) (to which they both belonged) a power struggle broke out between General Mohamed Farah Aided and Ali Mahdi Mohamed. In addition, people interviewed confirmed that

the civil war between the Habargidir and the Hawadle clans started in Kismayo over the control of Kismayo port (when the USC controlled the city). Then there were other conflicts over the state farms in Qoryooley district. Finally, this war spread to the Mogadishu and Hiiraan regions.

The war between the Darod clans was similarly motivated. First, the Absame and the Harti militias fought over the control of Kismayo. Then the Mareehaan and the Harti clans clashed over the same issue. The recent civil war between the Majerteen sub-clans in Puntland was also motivated by power and resources. When Abdullahi Yusuf was voted out in 2001, he refused to accept his defeat and sought to retain control of the government by force. The same kinds of events occurred during the civil violence between the Isaaq clans in Bur'o and Hargeysa, and the continuing clashes between the Digil and Mirifle clans in the Bay and Bakool regions.

Looking at both past and present Somali conflicts, we think the most determinant and persistent factor that has ignited and/or sustained the violence has been competition for resources and/or power. As a result, control of a key city (Mogadishu, Kismayo or Baidoa), key ports or airports, important checkpoints, the resource-rich regions, banknotes, foreign aid or 'technicals' (the cars that carry heavy weapons) became closely contested resources among militia groups and various clans.³

State repression was the second major cause of the civil war. The Somali people experienced 21 years of a repressive military state (1969–1991). The military regime used excessive force and collective punishment to suppress opposition. The people had no mechanisms for registering their discontent. The system did not allow opposition forces to exist, let alone have a voice in important issues. When, in 1978, some military officers attempted to overthrow the military regime, the Siad Barre government used the national army and police to punish civilian members of the Majerteen clan. The military subsequently was involved in the killing of civilians, mass abuses and the destruction of areas inhabited by that clan.

The 1978 failed coup set a precedent for attempts by other Somali groups to challenge the regime. In 1981 some politicians of the Isaaq clan established an opposition movement (the Somali National Movement, SNM) in London, England. Again, the military government started to punish civilians. The Siad Barre regime destroyed Hargeysa and Bur'o and murdered many innocent civilians when the SNM attacked these cities in 1988.⁴ Human rights organisations reported that more than fifty thousand people were killed in these conflicts.⁵ As Fearon and Laitin wrote: "The more the collateral damage, the easier it will be for rebel leaders to recruit new members."⁶ The greater the number of innocent civilians the government leaders killed or imprisoned, the more people rebelled and joined the opposition forces.

When the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) (the Majerteen clan's opposition party) and the SNM (the Isaaq clan's opposition party) started their armed struggle against the military regime,

Somalia and Ethiopia had hostile relations, so Ethiopia welcomed and armed all opposition groups fleeing from the repression in Somalia. Other opposition groups, such as the USC (the Hawiye clan's opposition party) and the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) (the Ogaden clan's party) organised their military activities from Ethiopia. Somalia's military government denied people the opportunity to participate in governing. Denied all other avenues to affect the change of the regime, opposition groups resorted to violence. The state's repression, violence and excessive force justified the power-hungry opposition leaders when they crossed the border and attacked Somalia from Ethiopia.

The third major cause of Somalia's civil war was the colonial legacy. The European powers (Britain, Italy and France) partitioned what some would call greater Somalia into five parts. Britain took two, Italy one and France one. The European powers gave the Somali region of Ogaden to Ethiopia's King Menelik to appease him. As Gesheker noted, from 1891 to the present, Ethiopia has been expanding to the east.⁷

The partitioning of Somalia permanently damaged the Somali people. Hadrawi, a great Somali poet, argues persuasively in several poems that most of the malaise in today's Somalia stems from the colonial system. He claims that the colonial powers destroyed Somalia's socio-economic system.⁸ In addition, most of the resources of Somalia's weak and poor government were used to reunify the Somali people. The effect of the partition continues to haunt the Somali people since, according to this view, two Somali territories remain under the control of Ethiopia and Kenya. In addition, the two regions that formed independent Somalia are experiencing serious problems and the northern region (former British Somaliland) wants to secede from the south.

Competition for resources and power, military repression and the colonial legacy were the long-term or background causes of the Somali conflict. In addition, misuse of clan identity, the availability of weapons, the large number of unemployed youth, and some features of Somali culture that reward the use of violence significantly contributed to the formation and escalation of the conflict. We think of these factors as 'contributing causes'.

Contributing causes

Mere differences in clan identities themselves did not cause the conflict. Clan identity is not static, but changes depending on the situation. One can claim to be 'Somali' if doing so serves one's interests or wish to emphasise the link between two clans at national level. That same person may claim to be 'Irir', 'Hawiye', 'Hirab', 'Habargidir', 'Sa'ad' or 'Reer Hilowle'. These terms involve an example of descending levels of one's clan identity. The same is true of other clans regardless of whether they are in the north or the south. Clan identity is flexible. The emphasis on one level

over another reflects the interests and goals of the elites of that level. For example, when opposition leaders wanted to mobilise forces, they emphasised the most inclusive identities: the SNM leaders emphasised the grievances of the Isaq clan, whereas the USC leaders mobilised the Hawiye clan. The Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), on the other hand, organised the Digil and Mirifle clans in the south.

General Mohamed Siad Barre depended heavily on his own Mareehan sub-clan of the Darod clans. Opposition leaders from the Darod clan could not use the Darod banner because General Siad Barre was himself a member of the Darod clan. Therefore, the SSDF leaders depended on the Majerteen sub-clan of the Darod clans, while the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) drew its supporters from the Ogaden sub-clan of the Darod clans.

After 1992 the emphasis changed from inclusive clan identities (for example Darod or Hawiye) to sub-clan identities such as Harti, Mareehaan, Habargidir or Mudullood. For instance, when the power struggle broke out in 1991 between Ali Mahdi Mohamed and General Mohamed Farah Aideed (who both belong to the Hiraab sub-clan), the clan identities that mattered became those of the Muddullood and the Habargidir (their respective sub-clans). These clan identities fuelled the conflicts in Somalia, but did not, by themselves, cause the war. In other words, clan identity became an instrument for mobilisation.

The availability of weapons exacerbated the Somali conflict. The Somali people were well armed. There were two major sources of weapons. Because of Somalia's strategic location, the two superpowers of the time (the former Soviet Union and the US) competed to arm the former dictator. The second source was the Ethiopian regime, which was arming opposition groups. The availability of weapons, combined with all the above grievances and disputes, resulted in all-out civil war in 1988.

Somalia's large number of unemployed youth added fuel to the conflict. In the 1970s the Somali population was estimated to be about 5 million. Although no credible census has been taken, Somalia now has an estimated population of about 9-10 million. In the 1980s this increase created a young population with no employment opportunities. Somalia's government could not provide employment or a meaningful education. The private sector was under-developed as well. As a result, many young men were in a hopeless situation. Their despair provided the greed-driven elites, who wanted to pursue their own interests, with readily available human resources with grievances in a collapsed state context. Ultimately, the elites capitalised on this opportunity and organised the young men in a way that appealed to them.

Finally, some features of Somali culture played a significant role in providing the rationale for creating or perpetuating the conflict. As Kriesberg notes, people use their culture as a "standard

when judging what is fair and just”.⁹ In addition, Galtung argues that cultural violence legitimises other forms of violence (direct and structural). He writes, “Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right – or at least not wrong.”¹⁰ He identifies four classes of basic needs: survival needs, wellbeing needs, identity needs, and freedom needs. If some aspects of Somali culture entail or encourage the use of force, it does not mean that Somali culture is violent as a whole.

We argue that three features of Somali culture reward violence, namely clan rivalry, collective punishment and negative competition. At times, a destructive conflict between clans starts over a mere expression of hostility. One may kill a member of another clan simply because the victim’s clansmen have killed a person from the perpetrator’s clan. The situation between the Dir and the Mareehaan clans in the Heraale district in 2003 is a recent example of such conflict. A member of the Mareehaan clan had killed a businessman from the Dir clan about thirteen years before. The victim’s son took revenge by killing a wealthy businessman from the Mareehaan clan in 2003. Unfortunately, this conflict exploded and many people (some estimated about four hundred) lost their lives, while thousands were displaced.¹¹

In addition to such expressions of hostility, most Somalis witness people using violence and benefiting from it. In the countryside, young men used to attack other clans and steal their camels. In the cities, the thousands of armed men benefit from using violence to force people to pay them illegally, and then justify their aggression by arguing that Somali clans have been fighting and robbing each other since time immemorial. Moreover, Somali literature provides many examples of poets defending the use of violence against other clans, or at least attempting to legitimise stealing their camels.¹² Use of force as an acceptable strategy is therefore rooted in Somali culture. In fact, one could argue that some features of Somali culture reward criminals who engage in violent activities.

Both greed¹³ and grievances are present in the Somali conflict. Somalia’s political elites were driven by greed for power and resources, as Abdi Samatar has rightly observed.¹⁴ However, most of Somalia’s people have legitimate grievances. The state failed to provide basic services such as security, education, healthcare and jobs. Moreover, the military government used force to repress people.

Obstacles to peace

Fourteen peace conferences have been held in different cities at different times. Five of these (Djibouti 1991, Addis Ababa 1993, Cairo 1997, Arta 2000 and Eldoret/Mpegati 2002-2004) were major conferences to which the international community lent its support. Each produced some sort of peace agreement and a new government. However, all of the agreements failed except for the recently

concluded Mpegati conference, which faces serious challenges. Why is making peace among Somali factions so difficult? Why, whenever they sign a new peace accord, do they fail to implement it?

Downs and Stedman, two leading scholars in this field, have identified eight determinants that affect the implementation of peace accords, namely “the number of warring parties; the lack of either a peace agreement before intervention or a coerced peace agreement; the likelihood of spoilers; a collapsed state; the number of soldiers; the presence of disposable natural resources; the presence of hostile neighbouring states or networks; and demands for secession”.¹⁵

All eight factors, and others peculiar to this conflict, are present in the Somalia case. However, we will limit our discussion to the four most important factors: two external and two domestic. We argue that Ethiopia’s meddling, the absence of a major-power interest, the warlords’ determination to maintain the *status quo*, and lack of resources continue to haunt the Somali peace process.

The Ethiopian factor

Ethiopia’s meddling is the most important and persistent factor in the perpetuation of the Somali conflict. This meddling has given shelter and arms to all spoilers (groups and individuals). It has undermined the two most important peace accords (Cairo Accord 1997, and Arta Agreement 2000) and has manipulated the Somali peace process in Kenya and the transitional government that was formed. Ethiopia has frequently sent weapons over the border and at times has occupied several towns in southern Somalia. In other words, Ethiopia, a powerful and well-positioned state, is a hostile neighbour that aims to maintain a weak and divided Somalia. A brief history of the relationship between the two countries and an analysis of Ethiopia’s efforts to undermine peace-building efforts in Somalia will support our assertion.

Throughout history Somalis and Ethiopians (particularly Highlanders) have had unstable and poor relations. The two peoples have ethnic and religious differences. From the Somali people’s perspective, Ethiopia is one of the colonial powers that partitioned Somalia into five parts. As Geshekteer notes, Ethiopia’s King Menelik wrote a circular in 1891 to the European forces that were dividing Africa among themselves and demanded his share. King Menelik wrote: “Ethiopia has been for fourteen centuries a Christian island in a sea of pagans. If the Powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, I do not intend to remain an indifferent spectator.”¹⁶ The European powers gave the Somali region of Ogaden to King Menelik to appease him and in 1954 Britain gave Somalia’s Hawd and Reserve Area to Ethiopia.¹⁷ As a result, two major wars occurred in 1964 and 1977, and hundreds of skirmishes have taken place along the border between Ethiopia and Somalia. The source of the conflict was the Ogaden region, which is controlled by Ethiopia. Somalia has supported and armed opposition groups trying to overthrow Ethiopia’s government, and Ethiopia has supported Somali opposition movements (SSDF, SNM, USC and SPM). All of

the opposition groups have started their wars from Ethiopia in order to fight against the military government of Siad Barre, and Ethiopia has been the major actor in perpetuating Somalia's civil war, particularly over the past fourteen years.

Ethiopia openly and effectively destroyed the Cairo Accord in 1997 and the Arta Peace Agreement in 2000. Twenty-eight Somali warlords and faction leaders agreed on a power-sharing formula in Cairo, Egypt, in 1997. They also decided to form a national government. At the time, Somalia's warlords and faction leaders were divided into two camps: the Ethiopian-supported Somali Salvation Alliance (consisting of fifteen factions called the Sodere Group or SSA) and the Somali National Alliance (SNA), which consisted of 13 factions and received limited support from Libya. Ali Mahdi Mohamed led the SSA, and Hussein Mohamed Aided was chairman of the SNA. These two groups controlled most of Somalia, and both participated in the Cairo Conference. In many cities, including Somalia's capital Mogadishu, the Somali people welcomed the Cairo Accord by holding rallies and demonstrations supporting it.

Ethiopia actively recruited two of the twenty-eight warlords that were meeting in Cairo. It encouraged Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed (the current Somali president) and General Adan Abdullahi Nur to leave the meeting and reject its outcome. From Cairo they went directly to Addis Ababa. Ethiopia started to openly support these two faction leaders militarily and politically. Ethiopia and these two warlords effectively undermined Egypt's efforts to end Somalia's civil war.

Somalia slipped back into violence and a number of cities changed hands. The UN and Western governments showed no interest in intervening in the conflict, while Ethiopia became more openly involved: its army occupied some of the major cities in the southern Somalia. In addition, regardless of Security Council Resolution 733, adopted in January 1992, which imposed a comprehensive arms embargo against Somalia, many factions were receiving ammunition and sometimes direct military assistance from Ethiopia, for example the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) in Baidoa, the SNF in the Gedo region and the USC in Mogadishu and Hiraan.

Against this background, President Ismail Omar Gheulle of Djibouti developed a peace initiative in 1999. He made a speech at the UN General Assembly in September 1999 in which he outlined his plan for addressing the Somali conflict. Gheulle promised to hold a national reconciliation conference in which civil society and traditional leaders would participate. He asked the international community to support his initiative. If the warlords rejected his plan and stood in the way of peace, Gheulle proposed that the international community should consider them 'criminals'. He did give the warlords an opportunity to participate, provided that they respected the outcome of the conference.

As a result, the Djibouti (named after the city of Arta) Conference became the largest Somali-owned peace conference ever held, with more than 3,000 Somalis in attendance. Traditional leaders, civil

society organisations, intellectuals and businessmen came together to forgive one another and to establish a national government. The conference elected over 900 delegates, who later appointed a 245-seat Transitional National Assembly (TNA), whose members enacted the Transitional National Charter (TNC). The TNA elected a president, who then appointed a prime minister.

This open and transparent reconciliation conference received far more international and Somali support than the Cairo Conference. The regional organisation, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), endorsed it. Arab countries gave some financial assistance. The ARABSAT satellite played a positive role, as it broadcast conference proceedings to Somalia and the region through television and radio. The UN, the USA and the European Union (EU) also publicly supported the Djibouti initiative. Furthermore, more than three thousand Somalis, including some warlords, participated, whereas only twenty eight warlords and faction leaders had been invited to the Cairo Conference. The result of the conference was surprising. Somalis finally created a national caretaker government that was widely accepted and welcomed. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis throughout Somalia welcomed the outcome, with the exception of the self-declared breakaway region of Somaliland, which still had substantive issues with the rest of Somalia.

Even though Ethiopia had initially supported the conference and its prime minister attended the inauguration ceremony, it was reluctant to accept and support the outcome of the conference. After the TNA had elected Abdiqasim Salad Hassan and even before he had nominated a prime minister, Ethiopia convinced Colonel Hassan Mohamed Nur 'Shatigudud' of the RRA to abandon the TNG (Transitional National Government). Shatigudud and several other warlords had been sent to the Arta Conference by Ethiopia in the first place. He had received military assistance from Ethiopia in order to capture Baidoa from Hussein Aideed's SNA faction. Knowing what happened to the factions that directly opposed Ethiopia, he was not in a position to challenge it. Therefore, Shatigudud abandoned the TNG, going directly from New York as a member of the president's delegation to Addis Ababa. He subsequently became one of the staunchest opposition leaders against the TNG.

When Dr Ali Khalif Galaidh, the first prime minister of the TNG, formed his government in October 2000, Ethiopia's opposition to it became clear. Ethiopia publicly stated that the Arta process was not complete, and organised all the factions, regions and personalities that had opposed the Arta conference. Ethiopia also recruited some Arta participants who were not satisfied with the posts for which they were nominated, brought them together in the city of Awasa, and helped them create the SRRC. Bertrand Rosenthal of Agence France Presse (AFP) wrote: "By hosting a group of Somali warlords and other dissidents who this week joined forces in calling for the new regime in Mogadishu to be replaced, Ethiopia has once again shown itself to be a key player in Somalia's political turmoil."¹⁸ Rosenthal noted: "With much of the population of its south-eastern Ogaden region being of Somali origin, Ethiopia is wary of advocates of a 'Greater Somalia' as well as of Islamic extremist groups."¹⁹

Moreover, the Ethiopian government started to openly send landmines, ammunition and weapons to groups that were opposing the TNG in Mogadishu, Lower Jubba, Bay and Bakool, Gedo and Hiran. Ethiopia also strengthened the Puntland regional state. The UN became concerned as Ethiopia's intimate involvement became clear. The Security Council passed a presidential statement condemning those countries that were sending weapons to Somalia and then demanded that all governments that were in breach of the resolution cease their activity. The Security Council's Expert Panel on Somalia also released a report, confirming that Ethiopia was sending weapons to Somalia regularly.²⁰

Ethiopia started an international campaign against the TNG. After the 11 September 2001 attack on America, Ethiopia attempted to label TNG leaders as pro-Bin-Laden extremists and eventually succeeded in undermining the TNG, albeit other factors (internal fighting, corruption and lack of resources) contributed to its demise.

Whatever its motives, Ethiopia is an important actor in blocking peace-building efforts in Somalia. Since the beginning of the civil war Ethiopia has been playing with Somali factions: supporting one, destroying it and then supporting it again. This process of balancing factions has become very obvious over the past ten years. Hussein Aideed, who lost Baidoa because of Ethiopia, became its friend and spoiler in destroying the Arta Peace Agreement. Even more disturbingly, the Ethiopian regime has always helped any destabilising forces or actors in Somalia (particularly in the southern part). When Ali Mahdi was chosen to head an interim government in 1992, Ethiopia supported his main rival, General Aideed. When Aideed became stronger and created his own administration in 1994, Ethiopia supported Ali Mahdi and his groups. When all Somali groups signed the Cairo Accord, Ethiopia recruited Abdullahi Yusuf and Adan Abdullahi Nur. When Somalis formed the TNG, Ethiopia organised all the opposition, helped them create the SRRC (Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Committee) and provided military aid to subvert the TNG.

With respect to the peace conference in Kenya, Ethiopia initiated this peace process and has controlled it for two years with the help of Kenya; together they produced a charter, a parliament and a government of their design. When the heads of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states met in Khartoum in 2001, Ethiopia pressured other IGAD countries and insisted that the Arta process was incomplete. Then Ethiopia forced a resolution calling for another peace conference in Kenya. At the beginning of this conference Ethiopia started to manipulate the peace process by controlling the agenda and forum. With the help of the host country Ethiopia gave absolute power to the warlords it supported. Ethiopia and Kenya have also marginalised traditional, religious and civil society leaders.

By keeping the Somali people divided and weak, the current regime in Addis Ababa believes it can eliminate any threat from Somalia. Moreover, Ethiopia intends to retain for many years the

Somali territories that it has colonised, and tries to gain unlimited access to Somali ports by signing agreements with the clan chiefs on unequal terms.

Warlords: determined spoilers

Warlords who are benefiting from the *status quo* lead most of Somalia's factions. Some have committed heinous crimes and therefore feel uncertain about their futures. These warlords have used violence and intimidation after peace accords were signed. For instance, General Morgan refused to accept a parliamentary seat and attacked Kismayo in 2001.²¹ Muse Sudi, Hussein Aideed and Osman Ato used violence to undermine the TNG (Muse Sudi in 2001, Hussein Aideed and Osman Ato in 2001). Colonel Shatigudud and Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf also engaged in violence in their respective areas. The recent example of Mogadishu warlords' determination to undermine Ali Gedi's government illustrates better how Somalia's spoilers are committed to keep the status quo. Mahomed Qanyare, Muse Sudi, Omar Mohamud Finish, Botan Alin and Osman Hassan Ali Atto have done everything they can to undermine the transitional government, even though they remain members of the cabinet. In fact they attempted to create parallel administration in Mogadishu and they started to openly denounce Abdullahi Yusuf and Ali Gedi.

Somalia has had many internal spoilers. General Aideed, for example, challenged and effectively undermined the ill-fated UN efforts to restore peace in Somalia in 1993, despite wide support for the UN presence and activities. He wanted to nominate the agreed-upon Transitional National Council members in the areas he controlled, whereas the UN endorsed the local people's wish to elect their own representatives. The presence of internal spoilers²² who are willing to use violence and intimidation, as well as a hostile neighbour determined to help or sponsor them, makes forging and implementing an agreement almost impossible.

Lack of resources

Besides Ethiopia and the warlords, the most important factor that has prolonged the conflict is a lack of resources. Menkhaus (1998) wrote: "It is not simply a lack of goodwill on the part of the factions that prevents implementation – it is a lack of capacity."²³ Somalia has never had an effective, self-sufficient government. Most of the state's resources have come from foreign aid, mainly as bilateral or multilateral assistance. The civil war has not only destroyed the internal domestic sources that generated an already insufficient income, but has made the whole country dependent on foreign aid and remittances. The Cairo Conference and the Arta peace process in Djibouti both had significant financial problems. To build peace in Somalia state institutions must be created, but doing so requires resources. For the first few decades, generating significant internal revenues such as those from taxes and fees will be out of the question, as most of Somalia's people are

refugees (some are in neighbouring countries, while most are displaced internally). To implement any peace accord, the international community and the Somalis, particularly those living overseas, must address this problem.

Absence of major-power interest

Winston Tubman, the UN Secretary-General's political representative to the Somali peace conference in Kenya, was quoted as saying: "One of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – China, Britain, France, the US and Russia – could make a difference in Somalia ... The African Union can be interested, the European Union can help, but what you need is some driving force (by a big power) in my experience."²⁴ Many experts on peace-building agree with Tubman's observation that Somalia has no friends internationally.²⁵

During the Cold War, the US had strategic interests in Somalia. While ignoring its human rights record, the US deliberately supported the former military regime that led the country into this protracted civil war. Lyons and Samatar noted that "[f]rom 1983 to 1990, the US committed almost \$500 million worth of military resources to Somalia".²⁶ The US also led an international intervention into Somalia in early 1992, when the combination of civil war and drought caused tens of thousands of deaths from starvation. However, after General Aideed's faction killed eighteen American troops and wounded another hundred, the US decided to withdraw from Somalia. Afterwards, the US position on Somalia was not clear, for it has adopted a 'wait and see' attitude.

Since the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, the US has again shown an interest in Somalia. It has frozen the assets of the largest money transfer and telecommunication company (Al-Barakaat) in Somalia, even though an investigation by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States did not find evidence that linked this company to terrorist organisations.²⁷ The US has also listed about twenty Somali companies and individuals as 'terrorists'²⁸ and repeatedly said that it is interested in Somalia because of the war on terrorism. However, the Bush administration's actions and the statements are obviously contradictory. The US argues that without a functioning state, Somalia could become a breeding ground for terrorism, yet the US supports the forces that created and perpetuated the chaos in the first place.

The level of American commitment to helping create a stable regime in Somalia is not sufficient. Somalis widely believe that Ethiopia had a green light from Washington to spoil Somalia's peace efforts. Most Somalis believe that if the US commits itself to Somalia again, it will have an easier time than before for two reasons. First, most Somalis are tired of the senseless civil war. Warlords and faction leaders have failed to bring peace and development. Second, Ethiopia, which receives American assistance, is the most important factor that undermines peace-building efforts in

Somalia. US pressure on Ethiopia to stay out of Somalia's internal affairs would solve much of the problem. Overall, Ethiopia's hostile policies, the warlords' unwillingness to accept the popular will, lack of resources and the absence of major-power interest are major factors that have perpetuated the Somali conflict.

Strategies for comprehensive peace-building

Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peace-building as the "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict".²⁹ He argues that processes of building peace require addressing the root causes of conflict. Ali and Mathews argue that a comprehensive peace-building strategy must include security, political arrangement, economic development and justice components.³⁰ Using Boutros-Ghali's definition as well as Ali and Mathew's framework, we will explain below how we think would-be peace builders could help to create a peaceful environment, build political institutions sensitive to the Somali condition, revitalise the economy, and deal with justice issues resulting from Somalia's civil war.

Creating a peaceful environment

Creating a peaceful environment is the prerequisite for the other components of peace-building. Two main sources of violence exist in Somalia. The first is political in nature. At the time of writing this piece the active civil war has subsided in most of the country. The northern part has established peace and has a functioning administration that intends to secede from the rest of the country. Somaliland and the Puntland regions have clashed several times over the ownership of Sool and Sanaag Bari provinces. There have also been instances of fighting in the Jubba Valley, Bay, Bakool and Banadir regions. Both internal and external actors, with different intentions, were involved in these conflicts. Ending this type of violence requires political solutions.

The criminal activities of freelance militias constitute the second source in insecurity. After the civil war many irresponsible militias obtained all kinds of weapons which are now used to commit criminal offences against civilians, including murder, robbery, rape and kidnapping. The politically motivated and purely criminal sources of insecurity should be separated. Perhaps local security guards, the shari'a courts, the business groups and the elders could deal with the criminal activities if these groups were encouraged and supported. Certain clans established their own shari'a courts for security reasons. These courts were effective in curbing the violence in Mogadishu and its surrounding regions, but Ethiopia and its warlords succeeded in labelling the members of these courts as 'radical fundamentalists' and are determined to dismantle them without providing an alternative security system. Regardless of the system used, we strongly

believe that ending the impunity with which criminal gangs operate is necessary if security is to be established.

Disarmament of groups that control the weapons is also important if security is to be established. But one must be clear about the types of weapons that have to be collected. There are heavy and light guns. We believe that it is not practical to collect all the light weapons from the Somali people. However, the heavy weapons have to be collected and placed under the control of the transitional government. As far as we know, there are three groups that are armed with heavy weapons.

The warlords constitute the first group. This group's motive in stockpiling and using these weapons is to achieve political power. Most, if not all, of the warlords are members of the current transitional government that was established in Nairobi. In fact, most of them are in the cabinet. Therefore, warlords are expected to voluntarily give up their weapons since they have achieved their goal. Unfortunately, this is not happening at all; Somalia's warlords are rearming themselves even after they became cabinet ministers.

The second group that have amassed a significant amount of heavy weapons are the Somali merchants, who have heavy weapons in order to protect their properties and businesses. Although they are one of the groups that have been marginalised from playing a role in the Kenyan-hosted peace process, they are expected to cooperate if their businesses and properties are protected.

Finally, the local security groups and shari'a courts control a significant number of the heavy weapons in the country. They have collected these weapons in order to provide the security services that no one else supplies. These local security forces and shari'a courts were not invited to the peace conference in Kenya. Therefore, the transitional government must negotiate with these groups like other stakeholders, such as the business community and the warlords, and address their political and security concerns.

With respect to international forces, we believe that using international peacekeeping forces to monitor and train the Somalis during the implementation period would be necessary to build the confidence of the various groups. These forces must not include Somalia's neighbours, however, as these countries have vested interests in the conflict.

President Abdullahi Yusuf has asked for a 20,000-strong African peace enforcement force (including units from Somalia's neighbours).³¹ We have reservations about the utility of bringing in African forces, including Ethiopian and Kenyan troops. First, all of the warlords are officially in the government and parliament, and they control most of the weapons. If the warlords cooperate, a peaceful environment can be created with little outside support. Moreover, the AU has limited capacity; right now the UN Secretary-General is actively lobbying to replace the African forces

in Darfur with international peacekeeping forces because of capacity-related problems.³² Besides, there are questions of neutrality, particularly with Ethiopia and Kenya. Many Somalis believe that allowing Ethiopian and Kenyan armies into Somalia would exacerbate the whole problem.

Political institutions

Abuse of power is one of the major causes of the Somali conflict. Therefore, designing political arrangements that could regulate the exercise of power is crucial for building a durable peace. Since a one-person, one-vote democratic governance is not practical at this time, any meaningful peace agreement in Somalia must include an acceptable power-sharing formula for the various clans. Power sharing, according to Sisk, refers to “the practices and institutions that result in broad-based governing coalitions generally inclusive of all major ethnic groups in society”.³³

The Somali case is complex, as Somalia has no clear-cut ‘government’ and ‘opposition’ parties. Moreover, there are no disciplined and organised political parties. Instead, there are clan-based political factions that are owned by their leaders. Some clans have factions while others do not. Moreover, as stated earlier, clan identity is fluid. The challenging question then is what political institutions would accommodate these contradictions. Warlords have repeatedly shown that they are not interested in sharing power among themselves or with other stakeholders. On the other hand, traditional leaders and civil society groups have proved that they can compromise. However, most of them do not have real power. Foreign-backed warlords control the militia groups and most of the weapons. They also have their own factions that include only those who support them within the clan.

During the transitional period, a clan-based formula would be more appropriate for governing Somalia than a faction-based formula. Former democratic and military leaders have always practised some form of balancing act among the clans in Somalia. Moreover, since clan identity is strong among Somalis, the way they perceive representation is important. Our observation reveals that most Somalis feel ‘represented’ when a member of their clan is included in the decision-making process. The Somali collective punishment/reward culture reinforces this perception. Therefore, the most appropriate way to enlist the support of the general public and create a broad-based government is to use clan representation.

However, using the clan system as a basic unit comes with its own challenges. The fluid nature of Somalia’s clan system does not produce stable clan parties. The last two reconciliation conferences (Arta and Mpegati conferences) endorsed a parliamentary system. There seems to be a mismatch here between the system that was adopted and the realities on the ground: parliamentary systems require some form of organised and disciplined political parties and the Somali context does not provide this, at least not yet. As a result, during the period of the TNG (2000-2004) there were three

prime ministers. Former president Abdiqasim Salat Hassan could easily manipulate the parliament to obtain the results he wanted. The current Transitional Federal Government (TFG) faces similar challenges. If the parliament meets, Prime Minister Ali Gedi might lose a confidence vote. The same will be true of any government that meets under the current arrangements.

Peace processes that produce transitional governments and the appropriateness of the endorsed governance models for the Somali context have to be revisited. For a peace process to produce a legitimate and broad-based government, the Somali people must first own the process. Somalia's hostile neighbours manipulated the Mpegati Conference to the extent that they marginalised the Somali people completely. We also recommend the establishment of a bicameral system in which traditional leaders and religious scholars are given a formal role in the management of society. We think there is a need for an independent executive (presidential or prime ministerial) with the stability to govern.

Somaliland and Puntland are good examples of how such a system could work in Somalia. In both cases the clan system has been used, and the traditional leaders play a significant role in creating and maintaining both administrations. The executive branches of these administrations have enjoyed some stability during the period they have been in office. These administrations are not ideal governance systems at all, but as far as we know there is no other practical alternative system that can address the representation and governance issues, at least for now.

In addition, Somali groups have often endorsed the federal model as an appropriate system for governing the country because of outside pressure. From the first reconciliation conference in 1992 to the one in Kenya, they agreed to establish an undefined form of federal system. We believe federalism does not address the Somali conflict, as almost all of the conditions that necessitate federation are absent from the Somali context.³⁴ Instead, we think a modified form of the consociation model or a decentralised unitary state model (where the central government determines the powers of the regions and districts) is more suitable for the Somali context than the proposed federal system.

According to Lijphart, a consociational approach is a group building block which relies on four principles. It encourages building grand coalitions; it protects minorities by providing a minority veto; it guarantees the representation of all groups by employing proportional representation; and it provides segmental autonomy, particularly if there are religious or language segments.³⁵ Lijphart, who is considered the pioneer of this model, identified nine favourable conditions that, if they exist on the ground, would help the consociational model succeed. These are the absence of a majority group; segments of equal size; small number of segments; small population; external threat; overarching loyalties; tradition of elite accommodation; socio-economic equality; and geographical concentration of segments.³⁶

We think a thorough debate in all levels of society is necessary before any of the above systems could be prescribed. A few self-appointed politicians and neighbouring countries, with their own interests, should not decide this fundamental question.

Justice issues

Most of the Somali reconciliation conferences avoided the question of how Somalis should deal with their past. We believe this issue is important because it affects people's trust and confidence in the government. How can one trust the same leaders who have committed heinous crimes as leaders of the nation? Other countries that have experienced a civil war or major change have approached this question differently, using one of two general approaches: amnesty or punishment. Amnesty ranges from giving blanket amnesty to those who are alleged to have committed human rights violations to the creation of some form of truth and reconciliation commission. Punishment may also vary in degree. Some countries have prosecuted and punished alleged criminals harshly, while others have only limited their political rights.³⁷

If Somali elders, religious scholars, intellectuals and genuine leaders come together and debate this issue, we believe that they can agree on a formula that will accommodate the security demands of the newly created weak institutions and the rights of the victims of past atrocities. There is no simple solution. We believe that a balanced combination of these approaches may produce an acceptable agreement on the question of dealing with the past. Some of the warlords may have to be prosecuted, while many other leaders would have to be lustrated (limiting political participation). A general amnesty among the public may also be encouraged.

Economic development

The capacities of the country and its people are limited for the present time. Most Somalis are displaced internally or are refugees outside the country. The civil war has destroyed much of the domestic sources of revenue. In addition, the scarcity of Somalia's resources is one of the driving forces of the conflict, as different groups compete for these limited resources. Therefore, Somalis cannot be expected to recover from this long civil war by themselves. We believe the international community has a major role to play in helping to redevelop Somalia's economy and institutions.

First of all, implementing any agreement among Somalia's groups would cost a huge sum of money: the reconstruction of state institutions; the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the militia groups; the return of refugees and others would require significant and timely assistance from the international community. One reason that the Arta TNG failed was its lack of resources. The TNG leaders became vulnerable to the abuses of businessmen who had their own agenda. We believe that timely and sustained outside assistance is crucial for Somalia's peace-building efforts.

The role of Islam-informed peace education in Somalia's peace-building

As a result of the civil war, *de facto* clan borders exist all over Somalia. After safety became dependent on clan membership, people moved to areas where they thought they would be safest. Creating a secure environment, establishing the appropriate political institutions, addressing justice-related issues and revitalising economic development are necessary but not sufficient to rebuild trust and confidence among Somali groups and individuals. The current *de facto* clan borders will help create and maintain stereotypes and prejudices between clans. In this context, Islam-informed peace education programmes become necessary.

Since the overwhelming majority of Somalis are Muslims, any peace education efforts should draw upon Islam, which revolves around peace. According to the teachings of Islam, a Muslim consciously submits to the will of God and subsequently gains internal and external harmony, synchronicity and peace. 'Internal peace' refers to one's psychological wellbeing as a result of lack of conflict within the self, while 'external peace' stems from a harmonious and loving relationship with God as well as the social, physical and spiritual environment.³⁸

Islam-informed peace education would stress the kinds of values and behaviours that would unite the Somalis as Muslims in a bond of brotherhood, mutual love, sympathy, help, care and fellow-feeling. These are some of the important social rights among Muslims. Being a Muslim thus obliges one to avoid transgressing boundaries and infringing on the rights of the self and others.³⁹

Islam-informed peace education would also aim at eradicating *Thulm* (oppression or aggression). As the above analyses indicate, Somalis have failed to respect the above unifying Islamic values, and the rights of fellow Somalis have been violated. Social values and behaviours that damage Muslim social unity include fighting, unlawful competition for resources and power, mutual envy, jealousy, suspicion, stereotyping, spying, hostility, oppression, hatred, humiliation, despising, prejudice, discrimination, exploitation and abuse.⁴⁰

Any peace-building efforts that attempt to address the Somali conflict should draw upon Islamic teachings. Islam provides one of the identities that unify Somali clans. It also has conflict-resolution mechanisms that resonate with the conflicting parties. Abu-Nimer identified 17 Islamic values that can be used for peace education programmes, including the pursuit of justice, social empowerment by doing good (*Ihsan*), the universality of dignity and humanity, equality, sacredness of human life, a quest for peace (peacemaking), knowledge and reason, creativity and innovation, forgiveness, importance of deeds and actions, involvement through individual responsibility, patience (*Sabar*), collaborative actions and solidarity, the concept of *Ummah*, inclusivity and participatory processes, as well as pluralism and diversity.⁴¹ The concept of *Ummah* refers to the world-wide community of Muslims; it transcends tribe, race, ethnicity, nationality, and class.

Somali culture and literature can offer useful tools and techniques for attaining and sustaining peace. For instance, Somalia's poet and composer Mohamed I Warsame 'Hadrawi' launched his peace caravan on 1 July 2003. Hadrawi told the Somali media that he wanted to travel to as many cities and towns as he could. He stressed that he would like to share a message of peace with his people, regardless of the part of the country in which they are living.⁴² Hadrawi is known for his bravery and principled position against the former military regime. He was imprisoned for composing poems and plays that criticised former military leaders.

Hadrawi's peace caravan came at a time that the Somali conflict was 'ripe for resolution'.⁴³ He employed relevant and homegrown values and delivered his message through poems and speeches.⁴⁴ The peace caravan had all the necessary features because it addressed the important issues that Somalis face in a way that did not provoke or invite violence. Building on the strengths of the peace caravan is important. Hadrawi has shown that if the content and the pedagogy of peace education programmes are consistent with Islamic values and Somali culture, these programmes will succeed. This lesson is very important, because the perceptions of local groups are crucial. In addition, as anthropologists and historians have documented, Somalis put a high value on literature, particularly poems. The Somali people have been called "the nation of poets".⁴⁵ Literature has been an important tool in Somalia for wars of liberation and for peace activists. Using literature as the pedagogy of peace is helpful in changing the Somali people's attitudes and behaviours. Finally, we believe that peace education programmes promoting Islamic values such as tolerance, respect, care and empathy that employ an appropriate pedagogy might produce positive results.

Conclusion

In the first section of this article we outlined the background causes of the Somali conflict. We argued that competition for power and resources, the colonial legacy and state repression were the long-term causes of the Somali conflict. We also noted that clan identity, the availability of weapons and the presence of unemployed youth have exacerbated the civil war. While we recognised the importance of clan identity within Somali society, we argued that the politicisation of this identity is merely a guise for the elites' pursuit of power and economic interests.

In the second part we identified the main factors that have sustained the conflict for 14 years. We argued that Ethiopia's hostile policy toward Somalia, the warlords' lack of interest in peace, Somalia's meagre resources and the absence of major-power interest are the major factors that have plagued peace efforts in Somalia.

In the final section we proposed peace-building strategies that we thought would help the search for peace. To end politically motivated clan skirmishes and organised crime we suggested that

using homegrown values and employing the assistance of all types of forces including international peacekeeping forces, local militia groups, shari'a courts and traditional leaders would help create a secure environment. For the area of political institutions we posited that a clan-based power-sharing formula would produce a broad-based legitimate regime in Somalia. But we questioned whether the often-endorsed parliamentary system can produce a stable regime. To address justice issues we suggested that a combination of strategies is necessary to deal with past human rights atrocities. Since this important issue has been neglected, we advocate that it should be addressed formally in peacemaking processes. We also suggested that timely economic assistance should be provided when various groups sign a new peace accord.

Finally, we examined the roles that Islam and education can play in confidence-building measures. Somalis are fortunate to have a unifying identity that can be emphasised, and that has its own conflict-resolution mechanisms. Using Hadrawi's recent peace caravan as an example, we suggested that appropriate peace education programmes should be designed and delivered formally and informally.

We believe that Somalia's protracted conflict has multiple and complex causes. The combination of external intervention, the elites' greed and the people's legitimate grievances resulted in an all-out war. Since the synergy of factors and actors we have identified in this paper are too numerous, we believe that comprehensive strategies that deal with all of them at different stages are necessary for creating a durable peace in Somalia. We believe that most Somalis realise they share a common destiny. Moreover, the reality of hostile ethnic politics in the Horn of Africa region – a common religion, language, culture and identity, and the presence of an external enemy that is determined to exploit their weaknesses – has convinced the Somali people that ending the protracted conflict and creating a united and strong Somali government is necessary for their survival in that part of the world. Further research is needed in order to provide policymakers and stakeholders with practical suggestions for addressing these problems.

Notes

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3 See Markakis, op cit (Introduction).

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