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Somali Land Resource Issues in Historical Perspective

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One of the driving forces behind the civil war in southern Somalia was the competition for access to natural resources—notably productive farmland, dry-season pastures, and fuelwood reserves—in the Shabelle and Jubba River valleys and adjacent interriver regions. Initially, this dimension of the conflict received scant attention; most of the news coverage and commentary on Somalia in the two years after the fall of Siad Barre in 1991 focused on the struggles between factional militias for power and for geopolitical advantage in the key cities of Mogadishu and Kismayu. The emphasis was on clan recriminations, warlord rivalries, and the seemingly universal looting of property and productive assets by gangs of armed youths.

As the war continued into 1993, observers began to take note of what seemed to be a much more systematic takeover of valuable farmland by the dominant warlords and their supporters. The territorial map of Somali clans was being redrawn as armed Hawiye and Darod factions moved in and established *de facto* authority over “minority” communities and farming districts where previously they had enjoyed scant presence or influence. This war for land has only begun to inform analyses of the Somali conflict,¹ and as a result its impact on the success or failure of Operation Restore Hope has yet to be appraised. That the contending factions might have had long-term strategic objectives in the resource-rich areas of southern Somalia does not appear to have figured significantly in the planning or deployment of international peacekeepers. Nonetheless, an appreciation of the land resource issues at stake in the civil war seems absolutely critical not only for understanding Somali militia movements during the course of the war but also for assessing the likelihood of renewed conflict in the postintervention era.

In this chapter I argue that the transfer of southern land resources from local clans to other, favored ones was on the agenda of Somalia’s national leaders at

least from the early 1970s but that this agenda was obscured for outsiders by international preoccupation with a succession of other, more visible conflicts: the Ogaden War in 1977–1978, the Barre government's efforts to quell opposition movements in the Northeast and North in the 1980s, and, after Barre's ouster in 1991, the Hawiye factional struggle for control of the capital city of Mogadishu. The land war accelerated after 1991 with the expulsion from most of the Shabelle valley and Bay region of Darod clansmen and their replacement by well-armed militias of other clans (predominantly Hawiye) who claimed to have "liberated" the land from the former dictator.

The long and still active history of this war for land may well undermine any agreements reached in coming years regarding power sharing at the national or regional levels. For purposes of this volume, it is also important to ask whether a greater awareness in 1992–1993 of the "land resource" aspect of the civil war could have affected U.S. and UN decisions about where to deploy peacekeepers, when and where to begin efforts to establish local police forces, and how best to have reduced refugee flows from the country's most productive agricultural districts. I offer some speculations on these matters in the concluding section.

Evidence for a Land Resource War

One is hard pressed to find in the thousands of pages of coverage of the war in Somalia any analysis of underlying patterns in the deployment of Somali militias in the rural areas apart from their obvious attempts to drive rival forces out of these areas. As the warlords attempted to mobilize urban and rural backers along lines of clan solidarity, it was easy for observers to confuse the form the conflict took—clan against clan—with its motives and objectives.

However, evidence for these objectives is certainly there in the record of recurrent militia movements into settled farming communities such as Afgoye, Bur Hakaba, Shalambood, Jilib, and Jamame. Even after UNITAF forces had helped stabilize a general territorial equilibrium among the major players early in 1993, the Shabelle and Jubba valleys continued to be zones of instability. This was not simply because they served as strategic corridors to the contested ports of Mogadishu and Kismayu; the fertile valleys were targets for occupation in their own right. In the early months of the civil war, the riverine farming districts provided the mobile armed gangs with food and with materiel (pumps, plumbing, tools) that could be plundered and sold as scrap for hard currency. However, after the first cohort of victorious fighters had been rewarded with the expropriated urban properties of Darod clansmen fleeing Mogadishu, Hawiye military leaders needed to continue to recruit new supporters; only the prospect of expansion into new territory could satisfy this dynamic.

In retrospect, it is easy to see the factional battles for Merka and Brava and for Jilib and Jamame (not to mention Kismayu and Bardera) as part of a cumulative effort by armed clans to consolidate their hold over districts that had proven commercially viable in the past and might be expected to be in the future. The early

1995 "banana wars" in the Merka-Shalambood area reveal how quickly those who gained control of the productive plantation zones and their adjacent ports could reestablish (and compete over) the banana export business, even in the absence of a functioning central government. We now see why the recurrent battles in 1993–1994 for control of Merka amongst local Bimaaal clansmen, the Southern Somali National Movement, and the various components of the Somali National Alliance were so important to the contending parties—or at least to their leaders, who must have anticipated the future value of a revived export economy.

Despite their considerable successes, what UNITAF and UNOSOM II were not able to do was curtail the steady penetration of armed militia influence into the local economies of the southern fishing and farming communities, the majority of them "minorities."² Despite occasional charges that the militias had as their goal the forcible expulsion of these minorities—a form of "clan cleansing"³—the occupying forces more typically sought to intimidate and co-opt the local leadership. The short-term objectives were to appropriate portions of the harvest (a form of agricultural tribute), to skim off any NGO aid directed toward the local population, and to pressure local elders into offering public support and legitimation to the occupiers. These techniques of forced compliance took on added significance when UNOSOM began to establish district councils with the aim of identifying "representatives" of local interests.

In the longer run, the infiltration of outside clans raised the possibility that entire sets of rights in local resources might ultimately be transferred to the newcomers. There is, for example, evidence from the Bay region that armed outsiders sought to marry into locally established lineages.⁴ Internarratives between formerly belligerent clans can in some instances contribute to local reconciliation processes, as was seen in the northern Somaliland peace negotiations. But in the context of clan expansion, as is occurring in the South, such marriages can ultimately lead to the loss of local control over inheritance rights and resource allocation. The occupying clans appear to be positioning themselves to have a say should land claims ever become an issue in a reconstructed Somali state.

If outside analysts failed to notice the systematic expansion of armed clan militias into districts where they previously enjoyed no rights, Somalis themselves were quite aware of these underlying trends. Two respected Somali scholars have argued that "the Somali conflict has been and is a conflict between the southern agropastoral groups and the northern nomadic groups. More specifically, it has been a conflict between Darod and Hawiye for the control and domination of the interriverine region." They further argue that the Barre regime's decision after 1969 to administratively subdivide the interriverine area into several new regions was intended "to create regions for favored clans [and] was merely a pretext for division and re-appropriation of the farming lands of the interriverine region by more nomadic groups of the country."⁵ Currently "the struggle continues to replace Darod hegemony with a Habargidir one."⁶

However much this may sound to outsiders like Somali clan paranoia, it is central to Somalis' analyses of their situation and shapes both their perceptions of

and prescriptions for collective action. I have heard no more succinct (and accurate) analysis of the late Mohamed Farah Aideed's military strategy than the one proposed to me by a Benadiri refugee in April 1994: "General Aidid has been stalemated in Mogadishu by the Abgal, in Bardera by the Marehan, in Bardo by the reinvigorated Rahanweyn, and in Kismayu by the Harri. All he has left to try and dominate is the Shabelle valley and its unarmed minorities."⁷

There were, to be sure, foreign observers who pointed to the vulnerability of the country's "minority" riverine farmers and to the systematic efforts by militias to appropriate their land. As early as July 1991, Ken Menkhaus called attention to the special plight of Somalia's Bantu farmers:⁸ and African Rights issued a working paper in October 1993 that argued that land resources lay at the heart of the bloody factional confrontations along the Jubba and Shabelle.⁹ But such appeals do not seem to have visibly influenced U.S. or UN policy. One can only speculate on the reasons: Somalia's riverine farmers were minor players in the political negotiations aimed at national reconciliation. They had few arms at their disposal and hence no real leverage on the negotiating front. Abandoning them and their land resources to the more powerful factions seemed a small price to pay if such concessions could bring the major warlords to the peace table. It was really a question of political priorities with potential national-level reconciliation taking precedence over issues of local economic justice and (I would argue) longer-term economic viability.

Origins of the New "War for Land"

One of the singular features of the Somali case is that those clans which traditionally occupied the country's richest agricultural districts have enjoyed only a marginal role in the country's national politics over the course of the twentieth century. Consisting predominantly of minority communities¹⁰ of heterogeneous origins that speak a variety of distinctive dialects, Somalia's southern farmers had been targets for labor conscription in colonial times and victims of social discrimination by the country's pastoral majority. Their exclusion from any significant role in Somalia's public sector was sealed after 1955 when the Italian Trusteeship Administration abandoned its support of the southern regional political parties in favor of rapprochement with the Somali Youth League (SYL). The SYL had its strongest support among Darod, Hawiye, and Isaaq clans, and it was these groups who came to dominate the national army, police force, and civil service as Somalia moved toward independence in 1960.

The interest of Somalia's new political elites in appropriating rural assets for their own use had precedents in the 1950s and 1960s,¹¹ but national competition for the resources of the southern riverine areas began in earnest in the early 1970s. Land and water rights, always objects of contestation at the local level, now became embedded in state policies and programs. This phenomenon appeared to coincide with the accession to power of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1969, but his takeover was not, in my view, the cause of this new national agenda. Rather, what

transformed the struggle for land resources from a local to a national one was the convergence of several trends that initially had little to do with the 1969 military coup. However, once these trends became apparent, Barre's regime was well positioned to exploit the possibilities and to use land as a tool for building domestic political support. The patterns established during the Barre years continued when the civil war erupted in 1991.¹²

The first trend to affect the distribution of land rights in the South was the planned resettlement of nomads that followed the severe drought of 1974–1975 and the Ogaden War of 1977–1978. In each case, several hundred thousand displaced Somalis from resource-poor regions were resettled in relief camps or planned villages. This required the appropriation by the state of substantial tracts of productive land in Middle Shabelle (Jalalqsi), Lower Shabelle (Kurtun Waarey and Sablaale), Middle Jubba (Dujuna), and several districts in Hirran and Gedo. Although many of the displaced nomads eventually left the resettlement sites to return to their home districts or to seek employment in the Persian Gulf, the land remained in state hands. Many men who left their wives and children in the new southern settlements later returned to reassert their claims to the land there. Some of the earliest cases of land disputes between local residents and "outsiders" resulted from these refugee-resettlement schemes.¹³

A second key trend and one that continued to inform the behavior of the major players in the post-Barre era was the rise in agricultural land values. Whereas the process was somewhat belated in the Somali case (farmland had been the object of political contestation in most African countries since the 1950s), a series of events in the 1980s—high inflation rates that encouraged investment in durable assets, a decline in the overseas markets for Somali livestock, the return of Somali laborers from the oil fields of the Middle East with capital to invest, the abolition of price controls on grains, and the growing demand for fruits and vegetables in Somalia's burgeoning urban centers—prompted an unprecedented land rush in Somalia. When plans for building a large dam on the Jubba River above Bardera were disclosed, there was a flood of land speculation.¹⁴

The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed an accelerated process of class formation in Somalia, fueled by the influx of new wealth in the form of foreign refugee and development aid, overseas remittances from the Gulf, livestock export earnings, and Cold War military and economic subsidies. Although Somalia has relatively few multimillionaires, its class structure definitely became more pronounced in these decades. One indicator of favored status—apart from the ability to build a villa in the capital and to educate one's children overseas—was title to a piece of fertile riverine land, which provided rental income, collateral for bank loans, and a source of speculation. Those Somalis who got rich quick during the Barre years set an example for all future power seekers. The current array of "warlords" is striving to reproduce for its own kin and clientele the kind of lifestyle—including absentee ownership of expropriated land—that enabled Siad Barre to make his supporters a privileged class in a country where neither traditional wealth nor noble ancestry guaranteed prosperity over the long haul.

Perhaps because Siad Barre could never effectively capture the wealth generated by Isaaq and Mijerteen livestock exporters and *qat*'s importers—since this wealth was largely monopolized within the overseas trading networks of these diasporic clans—his government concentrated increasingly on controlling the fixed assets of land and water *within* the country. The Land Registration Act of 1975, ostensibly a “modernizing” tool, played a key role in this strategy. It made all collective land the property of the state and facilitated titled access to those who supported the regime. State courts were given the authority to adjudicate inheritance claims, and favored clans were armed to enable them to seize land from rival clans—the Ogaden occupation of Isaaq lands in the North being the most obvious example. Finally, the Jubba Valley Ministry was created to plan and promote the building of a large hydroelectric and water storage dam above Bardera, which although promising to supply the capital with a cheap source of energy also gave Barre’s Marehan kinsmen in Gedo a potential bonanza of irrigated farmland and grazing reserves.

Barre’s aims may have been first and foremost to win political allies; but the cumulative effect of these policies was to bring resources previously in the hands of local communities under the control of the national leadership, where they could be parceled out to relatives and potential allies. That he did this parceling out along lines of kinship gave precedence to clan-based analyses of Somalia’s crisis; but in fact, it was the control of new resources that undermined the system of favoritism and rewards. Valuable farmland was high on the list of these new resources, and much of the best land was transferred through title registration to those around the president. The vast numbers of weapons in the government’s arsenal eventually were turned on domestic foes, thus further militarizing the process of resource control. It was only to be expected that the regime’s opponents, once victorious, would replace his force with their own.

The final trend that contributed to the intensification of the land war was urbanization. The phenomenal growth of Mogadishu from a city of 50,000 in 1960 to one of over a million by the mid-1980s was the most dramatic manifestation of this process, which also included the sedentarization of tens of thousands of nomads in refugee camps and agropastoral settlements. Such rapid urbanization was accompanied, as elsewhere in Africa, by increased demands for meat and vegetables and for fuelwood for cooking. The need for charcoal presented another challenge to traditional resource-management systems; resettled refugees and government agents began to lay claim to communal wood reserves in the Bay region and along the Jubba and Shabelle.¹⁶ State farms, which officially were established for the production of rice and sugar for the nation, became (in a way that should now seem familiar) the private preserves of regime allies.

The outbreak of civil war following the overthrow of the dictator did, to be sure, display elements of clan vendetta as old scores were settled and members of clans privileged by the expelled regime were systematically hunted down. But below the surface of militia mobilization was a struggle by the new “warlords” to seize landed resources in an economy where most other avenues of accumulation

had been shut off. Along with the extortion of food relief, the plundering and sale of movable assets, and the protection racket, Somalia’s wartime political economy included the imposition by armed militias of predatory regimes in the main farming districts of the country. The war for land had entered a new phase, one that continues in the post-UNOSOM era.

Lessons for History, Lessons of History

What are the implications of this analysis for the conduct of Operation Restore Hope?

One is that U.S.-UN preoccupation with the struggles for turf in Mogadishu and Kismayu obscured the many smaller battles for control of land in the countryside—notably along the Shabelle and Jubba valleys and on the peripheries of the Bay region. The displacement of thousands of riverine farmers to relief centers in Mogadishu and Kenya should have clued observers to the seriousness of the rural disruption caused by the disparities of power between the mobile militias and the unarmed farming communities of the interior. A longer-term war was being fought beyond the sight of international monitors.

It also seems clear that UN attempts to establish representative councils in the riverine areas concentrated on mediating among the various armed factions that were present in these districts, usually to the neglect of the interests of local minorities. Adjudication of land claims was not on UNOSOM’s agenda, and for good reason. As Menkhaus’s chapter shows, efforts to sort out Somali claims to political representation at the district level required a knowledge of local history and politics that was beyond the expertise of most outsiders. To have included questions of land allocation or compensation in the negotiations would have almost certainly scuttled the entire project. As it was, Somali participants recognized that political legitimization as district representatives was the first step to advancing claims to local resources. The long-term stakes were high; dealing with tenure issues required a vision and commitment that went beyond the goal of filling seats on a district council.

Because indigenous farmers, ousted members of the old regime who had obtained written titles, and the new militia “liberators” all had an interest in the outcome, UNOSOM’s only recourse would have been to establish a mechanism whereby the multiplicity of claims to productive assets could have been heard before an impartial body—a land claims tribunal, perhaps, as the first step toward the creation of a postwar land claims court. Early attention to the tenure security issue in these contested rural districts could have provided UNOSOM with a clear objective around which to justify its presence and to mobilize its energies. Legal procedures backed by an international military presence might have stemmed the forcible takeover of land and commercial property by armed outsiders.¹⁷

There is no underestimating the difficulties that such a strategy would have entailed under the conditions of near anarchy that prevailed in 1993–1994. Deployment of peacekeepers to other agricultural areas (as was done in Bay and Bakool)

might have significantly reduced the displacement of local farmers and facilitated a more rapid recovery of the agricultural sector; but wider dispersal of peace-keeping forces would have exposed them (at least initially) to greater risks and probably would have posed a logistical nightmare. Defending Digil, Raanaweyn, and Bantu lands from the predatory militias might also have raised the cost and reduced the incentive for young Somali recruits initially drawn by the prospects of easy territorial aggrandizement; but it would ultimately have entailed the arming for self-defense of protected "minority" communities and thereby probably hindered longer-term goals of reconciliation in the country.

Whether the deployment of UN forces to prevent land grabbing could have been justified under the terms of the "enforcement" provisions of the initial mandate to protect relief operations is another question. It is possible that such deployment could have been justified under the provisions of Resolution 814 (March 26, 1993), whatever one thinks about the wisdom of that resolution, which called for the "expansion and maintenance of a secure environment throughout Somalia." However possible or desirable such actions might have been, they presume an understanding of the underlying dynamics of the civil war in the South that, as seems clear, was simply not available or not sufficiently acknowledged at the outset of the international mission. The result was the continuation of this war behind the war throughout the UNTIAF and UNOSOM periods.

In retrospect, there is probably little that Operation Restore Hope, given its limited mandate and time frame, could have done to halt the land grab in southern Somalia. The harsh reality in the Somali case is that the process of land expropriation by the powerful at the expense of the less powerful had been going on well before the collapse of the Barre regime. Local lineages and communities along the Shabelle and Jubba Rivers had already begun to lose their role as the primary repositories of land rights. The anarchy of the post-Barre period only accelerated the occupation of southern farmlands by clans (Habr Gedr, Hawadle, and Ogaden) that were expanding well beyond their previous home territories. For a historian, it appears as a familiar process, one that had in fact been occurring in Somalia for centuries. In the sixteenth century, Abgal pastoralists (whose descendants now inhabit northern Mogadishu) drove the Ajuran out of that city's hinterland and toward the Jubba; in the nineteenth century, Ogaden refugees from Ethiopia crossed the Bay region and occupied portions of the Lower Jubba, displacing the previous Oromo residents. The process of "pastoral" expansion is a deeply rooted pattern in Somali history, and in one respect the events of the recent war are only the latest manifestation of this territorial imperative.

History also shows that, over time, the "invaders" tend to settle down and establish relations with the existing inhabitants—sometimes as their dependents, sometimes as allies, sometimes as overlords. In Somalia's current situation, expanding Hawiye militias have tended to seek alliances in the Raanaweyn-dominated Bay region and to assert hegemony over the local communities of the Lower Shabelle and Jubba regions. In both instances, they have sought to gain access to local resources and, in doing so, will probably eventually acquire an interest in

protecting rather than pillaging them. In the course of infiltrating these areas, the "invaders" have used a combination of armed force, marriage alliances, and promises of security and stability to assert their presence; the indigenous inhabitants have in many instances become clients of the new overlords either as tenant farmers or as reluctant business or marriage partners. This may not be an outcome that justice and humanitarian sentiment would prefer; but if history is any guide, it does represent an established "Somali solution" to the struggle for land.

To avoid such a solution, international peacekeepers in Somalia (or in any other collapsed state) would have had to make a priority of protecting the vulnerable, nonbelligerent parties in the conflict—which in the Somali case happened to be the most productive segments of society. However, crisis intervention in conditions of civil war make it extremely unlikely that nonbelligerents can expect anything more than a cessation of overt conflict through brokerage with the belligerents. Peacekeeping operations—at least as currently conceived—must invariably put their resources into dealing with those who are most capable of and prone to disturbing the peace—that is, those with weapons. In the Somali case, it was unfortunate but perhaps inevitable that in attempting to bring the warlords together for national-level negotiations, the United States and the UN also effectively legitimated their authority and gave them added leverage in their local wars for land. Until peacekeeping mandates include a component that commits military and legal resources to the protection of land and other productive assets, the most we can expect is a superficial peace.

Notes

1. See, for example, African Rights, "Land Tenure, the Creation of Famine, and Prospects for Peace in Somalia," discussion paper no. 1, London, October 1993; John Prendergast, *The Bones of Our Children Are Not Yet Buried* (Washington, DC: Center of Concern, January 1994), esp. pp. 5–12; Catherine Besteman and Lee Cassanelli, eds., *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: The War Behind the War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996). For a parallel analysis of the resource issues behind the recruitment of clan militias in the pastoral regions of northern and central Somalia and around Afmadow, see African Rights, *Grass and the Roots of Peace: Pastoral Resources, Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Somalia and Somaliland* (London: African Rights, April 1994).
2. The situation of Somalia's minorities during the war, and the reasons for their particular vulnerability, are discussed in Bernhard Helander, "Vulnerable Minorities in Somalia and Somaliland," *Indigenous Affairs* (Copenhagen) no. 2, 1995, pp. 21–23.
3. Claims of genocide and "clan cleansing" are discussed by Prendergast in *The Bones of Our Children*, pp. 7–8. See also Mohamed H. Mukhtar and Abdi M. Kusow, "The Bottom-Up Approach in Reconciliation in the Inter-River Regions of Somalia," unpublished visiting mission report for the Peace Institute of Scandinavia, August 18–September 23, 1993. Refugees from the town of Brava whom I interviewed in Mombasa in November 1993 were convinced that the recurrent rapes, house searches, and beatings visited on their community by occupying militias were aimed at shaming uncooperative family heads to the point that they would choose to abandon the town to the newcomers.
4. Mukhtar and Kusow, "The Bottom-Up Approach," p. 18.

5. My understanding is that Gedo, for example, was designated as a region to be controlled administratively by the Marehan, the Middle Jubba by the Ogaden, the Lower Jubba by the Mijerteen, and so on.
6. Mukhtar and Kusow, "The Bottom-Up Approach," pp. 5–6, 11.
7. General Aideed's claims to these riverine districts, advanced at the Addis Ababa conferences in 1993, seem to have been based primarily on his militias' success in ousting the Darod forces previously in control—that is, his legitimacy derived from effective armed occupation. Some Habr Gedr nomads were resettled at Sablaale on the Lower Shabelle following the 1974–1975 drought, but this seems a rather tenuous basis on which to assert rights to sovereignty in the area. Whereas it is true that most Hawiye were excluded from the southern land rush during the Barre years, and a few individual families have marriage ties to local residents, claims by Habr Gedr and other Hawiye clans to collective land rights in Bay, Lower Shabelle, and Lower Jubba have little historical foundation.
8. Kenneth Menkhaus, "Report on an Emergency Needs Assessment of the Lower Jubba Region (Kismayu, Jamaame, and Jilib Districts), Somalia," submitted to World Concern, July 1991.
9. African Rights, "Land Tenure."
10. As currently used by both Somalis and foreigners, the term "minorities" refers to any clans or communities in the country that do not belong genealogically to one of the four major "noble" clan families of Darod, Hawiye, Isaaq, or Dir. Although some of the minority clans are in fact small, the agro-pastoral Rahanweyn centered on the Bay region consist of some three dozen clans and number over a million—hardly a numerical minority. In fact, collectively the so-called minorities probably make up over one-third of the total Somali population, but until the civil war they had no sense of political solidarity or common "minority" consciousness.
11. Investments by urban elites in cement water reservoirs, enclosed fodder reserves, and uncleared riverine land marked the earliest signs of privatization of rural productive assets. Some well-connected politicians bought banana plantations from departing Italians after independence.
12. The following argument is presented in greater detail in Lee Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis," in Besteman and Cassanelli, *The Struggle for Land in Somalia*, ch. 2.
13. See, for example, Allen Hoben, "Resource Tenure Issues in Somalia," prepared for USAID, Boston University African Studies Center, 1985, esp. pp. 32–39.
14. See Besteman and Cassanelli, *The Struggle for Land in Somalia*.
15. *Qat* is grown in the highland regions of Yemen and northeastern Africa. Its leaves are chewed as a stimulant by large numbers of Somalis.
16. Examples of pressures on local controllers of wood reserves can be found in Gill Shepherd, "The Reality of the Commons: Answering Hardin from Somalia," Social Forestry Network paper, Overseas Development Institute, London, May 1988; and Thomas Zielman, "We Have Nobody in the Agencies!" Somali and Oromo Responses to Relief Aid in Refugee Camps (Hiraan Region/Somali Democratic Republic)," *Sozialanthropologische Arbeitspapiere* (Berlin) no. 17, 1989, esp. pp. 17–19.
17. Colonel Michael Kelly, who was part of the Australian UNOSOM contingent in Somalia, is preparing a research thesis based on his unit's experience in Baidoa, where at least a segment of the Habr Gedr clan to take over local businesses were exposed through court hearings and the perpetrators expelled from the region through the cooperation of local authorities and international peacekeepers.

5

Humanitarian Relief Intervention in Somalia: The Economics of Chaos

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Doctrines develop in foreign affairs as a response to challenges. The doctrine of humanitarian interventionism has developed as one response to the rising tide of ethnic and religious conflict spreading through much of Africa, the Arab world, the Balkans, and the former Soviet states. Of all the humanitarian interventions undertaken since the end of the Cold War, Somalia was one of the most visible, expensive, and debated. A good deal of the Clinton Administration's reluctant response to complex emergencies generally has issued from its unhappy experience with Somalia. Measured by the number of lives lost in a relatively small geographic area in a relatively short period of time, Somalia was the worst humanitarian tragedy since the Ethiopia famine of 1984–1985. In fact, the Center for Disease Control reported that in the greater Baidoa area, the death rates were proportionally the highest in recorded famine history.¹ Somalia has engaged the attention of the senior foreign policy leadership of the U.S. government through two presidencies.

I will argue in this chapter that, judged by the more limited objectives set forth by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and by President Bush in his television address announcing the Somalia intervention in early December 1992, the effort was a success. These limited objectives included restoring enough order that the relief operation could be conducted without large loss of relief commodities through theft and the restoration of food security so that people could supply their own needs. The difficulty is that other actors involved in the undertaking, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali among others, had other objectives that were much more elusive and much more difficult to measure, such as disarmament, restoration of the Somali state, political reconciliation, and formation of a coalition government. Doctrines are beginning to form around our perceived experience in Kurdistan, Somalia, Bosnia, and a dozen and