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## Failed Visions and Uncertain Mandates in Somalia

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Conventional foreign policy wisdom tells us that the armed multinational humanitarian intervention in Somalia, which began in December 1992, was a humanitarian success in the short term but became a political and military failure after the operations were turned over to the United Nations in May 1993. Like Vietnam long before it, Somalia has become a "syndrome," held by many to have been a naive attempt to implement benevolent interventionism in a marginal Third World state and doomed to failure. The specter of Somalia has loomed above every world crisis since mid-1993, inhibiting debate and limiting options. In the misery of Bosnia prior to the late 1995 IFOR (Implementation Force [of NATO]) intervention, UN forces under fire or taken prisoner by Serbian forces were expected to turn the other cheek for fear of "crossing the Mogadishu line." This expression was reportedly coined by former UNPROFOR (UN Protection Force [in the former Yugoslavia]) commander Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose to describe the supposed need to maintain absolute neutrality in the face of all provocation for fear of becoming unwilling participants in a civil war.<sup>1</sup> With all due respect, General Rose was incorrect in his interpretation of events in Somalia, just as he may have underestimated UN tactical possibilities in Bosnia.

### The Flawed Paradigm

Obstinate notions of external force neutrality, coupled with unquestioning respect for state sovereignty where clearly none exists, can effectively negate the potentially beneficial effects of multilateral armed humanitarian intervention. A passive or benign military force in a lawless environment inevitably affects the political dynamic of regions in which it is operating, and the force cannot avoid the political impact of its own presence. A military force committed to the maintenance of abstract

political passivity quickly becomes an easy mark for unprincipled local gang leaders and warlords. Inability or unwillingness to discern the essential political dynamics of the country and to effect remedial measures to foster civil society—out of expedience, disinterest, or naive “neutrality”—lie at the root of the world’s failure in Somalia.

With the potential for more state breakdowns caused by ethnic and regional stresses, it must be recognized that Cold War etiquette no longer provides the basis for relations with distressed states. Internationally mandated political action, backed by military force, may be the sole formula to halt or blunt chaos and the endless cycle of violence brought on by complex manmade disasters. Doctrine is not needed for a return to trusteeships or “recolonization”; political-military interventions should normally end when political processes are satisfactorily on the mend.

The first step in planning for a humanitarian peace enforcement-operation must be the articulation of an integrated humanitarian-political-military strategy that responds to the immediate humanitarian crisis while outlining a longer-term process designed to resolve the underlying political issues that may have brought on the crisis in the first place. These actions must be consistent with international values and standards of conduct. In failed-state situations, or when the functions of a state are sharply curtailed or neutralized, with accompanying wide-scale human suffering, the world must be prepared to offer political and military assistance in an imaginative, constructive, and decisive manner. Political solutions are complicated, elusive, and usually long term; international intervention ultimately is sustainable only when there is an agreed political end result of the intervention.

The initial intervening force in Somalia avoided the establishment of a political agenda for its actions. It had no definition of what it hoped Somalia would look like at the end of the intervention. Rather than facilitating the work of the follow-on UN political and military force, the initial intervention force maintained, at least at command levels, an adversarial attitude toward the UN force that would relieve the UN-mandated United Task Force (UNITAF). Lacking political purpose, UNITAF focused its tactics on force protection rather than the achievement of strategic goals. Much loss of time, money, and domestic U.S. commitment to multilateral action resulted. The collapse of the subsequent UN political and military efforts was probably rendered inevitable by the narrow construction of the UNITAF mandate.

## The Dynamics of the Failed State

Although usually considered a nation with a common language and religion and common social traditions, Somalia has a political history determined by its highly segmented clan structures. Composed of six main clan families, Somalia’s social structure is subdivided into dozens of subclan groups and hundreds of smaller units. There are many mixed cultural zones within regions, especially in larger cities, and most geographical localities have specific clan identifications; the mixed areas tend to be the most heavily contested zones.<sup>2</sup> With the disappearance

of the state after Siad Barre’s retreat from Mogadishu in January 1991, power and leadership naturally drifted to local communities and subclan-level leadership. The two Somali militia leaders best known to the world in 1992 represent specific ethnogeographical interest areas: Mohamed Farah Aided’s irregular forces were primarily composed of Hawiye Habr Gedr nomadic groups from the Mudug region north and west of Mogadishu; Ali Mahdi Mohamed, not a military leader, was spokesman for the tradespeople and native Hawiye Abgal, who were the majority population in the pre-civil war Mogadishu (Benadir) region.<sup>3</sup>

The internal population movements, sparked first by the war against Siad Barre and accelerated by the civil war and power struggles that followed, created multiple humanitarian disasters: (1) displaced city dwellers and native rural agriculturalists congregated in the Mogadishu-Baidoa-Bardera “triangle of death”; (2) these unfortunates consequently became hostage to militia leaders who established and maintained control of ports and highways by Habr Gedr militiamen and local surrogates; and (3) refugees and internally displaced persons were blocked by the warlords from returning to their places of residence, which were controlled by victorious nonlocal clan groups. At the time of the initial UNITAF deployment in December 1992, warlords had extended their personal and clan influence into many areas occupied by smaller, weaker, and marginal clan groups. This contentious zone coincided almost precisely with the operational areas of the intervening UNITAF forces, thus setting the stage for confrontations between the warlords and the occupying forces. Reluctant to take on UNITAF, Aided assembled a force to attack the second United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) just one month after UNITAF’s departure.

What the world generally judged was a clash of personalities and ambitions between Hawiye/Abgal leader Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Hawiye Habr Gedr champion Mohamed Farah Aided was far more complex. Aided believed that the collapse of the Somali state provided him and his numerous subclan members with the license to extend their influence from their barren, arid central region into Mogadishu and the rich Shabelle and Jubba valleys. Aided’s lust for personal power was not tempered by any squeamishness about human rights or the effects of his operations on the innocent. The group that gathered around Ali Mahdi shared his fear and antipathy toward his country cousins, especially his distrust of the Habr Gedr leader. The Mahdi political faction also tended to attract groups fearing the extension of Habr Gedr hegemony over their houses and property in the hinterlands.

Aided’s force included more aggressive, better-armed but essentially undisciplined militia.<sup>4</sup> His force played a significant but not solo role in the final months of the successful struggle against Siad Barre. Aided opposed UN intervention because he feared that it would ratify Ali Mahdi’s questionable election as president in a UN-supported conference in Djibouti in mid-1991. The fighting between these two groups between November 1991 and March 1992 caused 30,000–50,000 noncombatant deaths and nearly completed the destruction of the city.

Contrary to conventional belief in late 1992, Aideed's Habr Gedr political base was far from secure. In haste to convert his military force into a political party, Aideed established the Somali National Alliance (SNA) only in October 1992. The post-UNOSOM II split between Aideed and his erstwhile deputy and financier, Osman Hassan Ali 'Ato, demonstrates the intrinsic cleavage between expansionist and pragmatic elements within the Habr Gedr.<sup>5</sup> At the time of the initial UNITAF deployment, these internal stresses may have been less clear than they are today, but without political guidelines and objectives, neither UNITAF nor UNOSOM had the option to exploit these vulnerabilities in the interest of the broader Somali community.

## The Failure of Diplomacy and Mediation

However one views military intervention, conventional diplomacy and mediation remain the first line of attack in response to likely failed-state situations. During the December 1990–January 1991 battles in and around Mogadishu, which led to the shattering of the central government and the departure of dictator Siad Barre, nearly all foreign diplomatic officials and international agency representatives departed the capital and the country. Apart from the journalists,<sup>6</sup> Somalia's agonies Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF) and a handful of courageous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The UN was conspicuous by its absence. It was only in his final four days as secretary-general that Javier Pérez de Cuéllar informed the Security Council (December 27, 1991) that he proposed to send Undersecretary for Political Affairs James O.C. Jonah to Somalia to explore the opportunities for a cease-fire.<sup>7</sup>

As the first secretary-general inaugurated in the post-Cold War period, Boutros Boutros-Ghali strongly believed that the United Nations emerged as the "central instrument for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the preservation of its Cold War constraints, and its new leader to act aggressively to restore order to a troubled community."<sup>8</sup>

In the new secretary-general's first report to the Security Council on Somalia,<sup>9</sup> doctrinal and procedural difficulties that were to plague the UN operation right to the end were already apparent: (1) Credentials issues – Who represents which group? The United Nations, contrary to usual diplomatic conventions but following standard peacekeeping practice, made no judgments other than to accept the invariably overblown claims of the individual warlords. (2) Venue issues – None of the militias wanted to meet in Somalia. To do so would give a symbolic advantage to one group or another. The preferred sites were Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and Asmara.<sup>10</sup> There was no serious consideration of any political track other than accommodation.

The significance of the Jonah visit was not lost on Aideed. To develop tactics to thwart the new UN interest in Somalia, Aideed called a meeting of his coalition at

a settlement in the Shabelle valley. Attending were Aideed for the United Somali Congress (USC), Ahmed Omar Jess for the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), Mohamed Nur Aliyow for the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), and Abdi Warsame Isaw for the Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM). This meeting of the "hard core" members of Aideed's group was to decide strategies and to demonstrate solidarity in the face of the UN-sponsored cease-fire talks that were soon to begin in Mogadishu.<sup>11</sup> This meeting established a pattern of opposition to external intervention that Aideed maintained until his death by a stray bullet in Mogadishu in August 1996.

Following the signature of a cease-fire agreement on March 3, 1992, that satisfied the desires of both sides to maintain an armed status quo, the secretary-general requested Mohamed Sahnoun to undertake a fact-finding mission to Somalia. The highly skilled and reputed Algerian career diplomat knew the Horn of Africa well; he had served as deputy director of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa for several years. He visited Mogadishu and found that most of the city's inhabitants had fled into the surrounding countryside, where they lived in the most pitiful conditions. Soon appointed special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG) to Somalia, the Algerian career diplomat brought great sensitivity to the job, and he was the first major foreign actor to attempt to reassemble Somalia. He believed that Somalia's problems could be resolved through effective diplomacy. His book describes his efforts to rebuild confidence in legitimate political processes by contacting the warlords, intellectuals, and elders—a broad swathe of Somali society.<sup>12</sup> Sahnoun made no secret of his belief that "if the international community had intervened earlier and more effectively in Somalia, much of the catastrophe that has unfolded could have been avoided."<sup>13</sup> But just as Ambassador Sahnoun believed that the UN had been too late in bringing to bear its political and humanitarian resources in Somalia, it was also too late to rely on traditional diplomacy and accommodation to solve the crisis.

In the same United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) that spelled out Sahnoun's formal mission to Somalia (UNSCR 751, April 24, 1992), the first UNOSOM was established, and a force of fifty UN technical observers to monitor the cease-fire in Mogadishu was authorized. Sahnoun secured grudging acceptance by Aideed to UNOSOM's military expansion. Ambassador Sahnoun's diplomatic efforts to obtain Aideed's agreement to the deployment of uniformed UN observers in mid-1992 quickly dissolved when it became known that the same UN-chartered aircraft used for transporting UN officials around the country was found to have accepted a side contract from Ali Mahdi to transport new Somali shilling notes for distribution in his area of influence. Aideed seized this incident as a pretext to "suspend" the arrival of the final forty-six UN military observers.

By mid-1992, Somalia appeared ready again to explode all over the landscape. Troubles erupted in the Northeast with Islamic zealots, there was growing repression in the South as local peoples resisted their new overlords, and Mogadishu was still a tinderbox. Security Council Resolution 767 (July 27, 1992) further raised

the UN silhouette in Somalia. An additional 450, now-military, forces were deployed. A national conference was also envisaged. A decentralized zonal approach for the UN intervention in Somalia was mandated. Accommodation mixed with persuasion remained the underlying philosophy of the UN operation. Aideed's rejections of UN initiatives were vociferous, and he demonstrated his power by blocking several hundred Pakistani peacekeepers within the premises of the airport, where they would not be relieved until the arrival of UNITAF in December.

By mid-1992, thanks to a media aroused by angry humanitarian groups that pointed to the starvation in central Somalia, the drastic humanitarian problems of Somalia were well known. General Aideed's continued truculence called for more resolute action. After Aideed's initial refusal to accept UNSCR 767, the world should have been aware that a more forceful UN mandate would be needed. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 775 on August 28, authorizing an additional 3,000 armed troops to protect food aid convoys, without previously informing Sahnoun. Aideed was livid; with the expectation that his military strength would bring him the presidency of Somalia, Aideed was the warlord most affected by any external intervention.

If political doctrine on international humanitarian intervention had been available at the time, it would probably have indicated that mid-1992 was the proper time to introduce a substantial military force. Many more lives would have been saved, and opposition to effective international political action would have been weaker. In the absence of a doctrinal basis for Sahnoun's operation, his disagreement with the UN Headquarters staff and subsequent dismissal by the secretary-general in October 1992 were probably inevitable. Sahnoun's efforts were not diminished by his summary dismissal; the irony is that by mid-1992, diplomatic efforts to resolve the Somalia problem were already too late.

## UNITAF, UNOSOM II, and the Failure of U.S. Resolve

The humanitarian disaster in Somalia was on all the television screens in the United States by August 1992. A sense of urgency about Somalia within the U.S. Congress and public significantly raised the pressures on the U.S. administration. Using the awesome logistical resources under its command, the U.S. military established an emergency airlift from Mombasa, Kenya. In the six months of the military and civilian flights by the U.S. Air Force and the State Department Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance out of Mombasa, nearly 45,000 metric tons of food were delivered to Somalia and northern Kenya. But few people were satisfied with the airlift. It is an expensive way to deliver bulk food and medicine.<sup>14</sup> Without some military support on the ground, the unarmed U.S. transports were vulnerable to ground fire. It would be necessary to break the warlord blockade closing the surface flow of relief supplies to the interior.

U.S. voters appeared to have forgotten the euphoria of the military victories in the Gulf War when they entered the ballot booths in early November 1992. In an

effort to leave office on a high note, President Bush finally decided that something had to be done about the humanitarian disaster in Somalia. In the limited space of this chapter, I cannot recount the background to the "Thanksgiving decision" to intervene in Somalia, which is described very well elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> However, to appreciate the special shape of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, one must realize the extent to which the Somalia humanitarian enterprise was developed as a purely military operation.<sup>16</sup> After the interagency process in Washington reviewed three force recommendations made by the Pentagon, the president approved the strongest option, which called for a two-division joint task force to be deployed to open the Mogadishu warehouses and the highways into the Somali interior for food shipments. Operation Restore Hope's political guidance, coordinated with the appropriate agencies and approved by the president, was duly forwarded to Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters in Tampa, whose theater includes the Horn of Africa.

As the document was translated into military tasking orders for the joint task force, CENTCOM carefully removed the critical civil affairs and military police training components from the package.<sup>17</sup> This was unusual; civil affairs officers are specialists in foreign cultures and are used for liaison with local communities. The U.S. military deployed approximately 1,000 civil affairs officers to Panama in December 1989 and about 300 to northern Iraq after the Gulf War. Under UNITAF, the numbers ranged from 7 to 30. Although they were deployed to Somalia, UNITAF decided not to use the army military police (MP) units that were part of the original staffing plan for Restore Hope. The restoration of the Somali National Police Force was a very high political priority, but instead of using the MPs to help retrain the Somali police, UNITAF turned this matter over to the warlords for action, with predictable results.<sup>18</sup>

CENTCOM changes to the agreed political guidance, however unusual such changes may have been, were based on several apparent concerns: (1) The original concept of the operation was that it would be over within weeks ("out by inauguration day"). CENTCOM wished to ensure that no encumbering activities developed during the operation to prolong its stay. (2) The U.S. Marine Corps is an expeditionary force that specializes in short-term, high-intensity combat operations. It is not trained or equipped for longer-term occupation-type operations. (3) CENTCOM wished to ensure that no encumbering requirements would be placed on the mission by the United Nations or other agencies of the U.S. government. In a virtually unprecedented development for the United Nations, the first drafts of UN Security Council Resolution 794 (December 3, 1992), which authorized UNITAF, and later Security Council Resolution 814 (March 26, 1993), authorizing the expanded mission of UNOSOM II, were written in the Pentagon.<sup>19</sup> There were several modifications during the Security Council debates on these resolutions, but the essential substance of the resolutions was designed to satisfy the concerns of CENTCOM.

The U.S. military opposed disarmament during the debate between Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and the White House in December 1992 because it pictured

an effort to root out arms on an impossible house-to-house search basis. In a proactive political reconciliation program, other incentives would have been devised for the *mooryaan* to lay down their weapons.<sup>20</sup> What was clearly lacking was a coherent overall humanitarian-political-military game plan to provide the parameters for a more powerful UN mandate to establish a secure environment. As such, the UNITAF deployment provided the force necessary to impress the warlords, but it lacked the political objectives to cause them to back down.

## The Inapplicability of Traditional Peacekeeping Doctrine in Troubled States

The nonexistence of the state or situations in which the normal functioning of the state is impaired through civil war or other human-created disaster change the relationship between the intervening force and the community it is empowered to assist. There being no legally sanctioned authorities or state structures to provide legitimate consent, the actions of the international force are governed exclusively by the United Nations, normally authorized by a resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This can give the intervening force the power to compel compliance to Security Council resolutions. In Somalia, both UNITAF and the UNOSOM II force that followed it were authorized under a Chapter VII mandate. The administration of George Bush, which wrote both the UNITAF and UNOSOM II mandates, chose to restrict the rules of engagement of the U.S. expeditionary force to little more than those that would apply in a Chapter VI situation. This decision had a profound influence on the logical development of Operation Restore Hope, with repercussions that fostered the political and military confrontations that plagued the UN successor force.

Analysis of the various Security Council resolutions and periodic secretary-general reports on the situation in Somalia to the Security Council demonstrate that traditional peacekeeping doctrine had little utility in securing the cooperation of Somalis and was probably counterproductive. In the "failed state" environment of Somalia, the UN embarked for the first time in its history on a peace-enforcement situation in which there were no legitimate authorities to provide consent. Experience was not a good guide, and there was an almost irresistible impulse on the part of UN personnel and foreign civilian and military authorities to confer legitimacy on one or more participants in the ongoing Somali political crisis. The UN pursuit of impartiality among the various factions led to a kind of "collective legitimacy" consecrated by the various Addis Ababa and Nairobi conferences. The political results were negative and, because of the exclusive nature of the results, distorted political rehabilitation. The warlords successfully played to the desire of UNITAF to have the least amount of trouble before getting out.<sup>21</sup> International organizations and nongovernmental agencies remained subject to the predatory activities of warlords holding their own communities hostage.<sup>22</sup>

A number of respected authorities and observers object to the use of the word "warlord" on the ground that it attaches a pejorative characterization to leaders

who are indisputably part of the political environment.<sup>23</sup> It was my impression in Somalia that most "warlords" were rather proud of the title because it implied strength and leadership. For the purposes of this chapter, a warlord is a leader of a local or regional military organization or militia that operates independently of sanctioned national authority and projects its political influence primarily through armed force. By this definition, the leaders of all of the various armed clan elements that formed in Somalia before and after the fall of Siad Barre are warlords, including the leaders of the defeated Siad forces.

In terms of relations between intervening forces and warlords, it seems contrary to accepted international humanitarian values and U.S. basic beliefs to cede authority to one or another warlord simply because that person has more men, more guns, or a more effective media apparatus. Yet as I will discuss further on, the international community treated certain warlords as though they were legitimate political authorities when it was patently clear that they were not. It was perfectly understandable that Special Presidential Envoy Robert Oakley, named in late November 1992 by President Bush, would wish to arrange a peaceful military entry in early December. It is less understandable that these early gestures were permitted to develop into a one-sided relationship favorable only to a communal leader whose crimes against his own people were well known.<sup>24</sup>

Before I review potential peace-enforcement doctrine, it may be useful to look first at the areas of distortion created in the Somalia intervention by adherence, more or less, to traditional peacekeeping techniques. These techniques favor unscrupulous leaders who are prepared to throw their countries into chaos in order to profit personally and in the name of their ethnic group from the virtual impunity that follows the collapse of public order.

*Gaining legitimacy from the intervening force.* In a failed-state environment, by definition, no local leader can claim authority on the basis of legitimate selection by the broader national community. An intervening peace enforcement entity, however, brings with it a mantle of legitimacy accorded by its Security Council mandate. No matter how circumspectly it may interact with local militia leaders, the intervening force leadership will find itself under pressure to confer some kind of legitimacy by words, symbols, or deeds on warlords. In peace enforcement, a military commander must be as resourceful in political and media tactics as he is on the traditional battlefield. If the intervening foreign commander permits himself to be drawn into protocol charades with local potentates, he will quickly lose moral authority and credibility.<sup>25</sup>

*Maintenance of local power bases.* Local leaders will attempt to derive whatever advantages they can from proximity to the intervening authority. Dependence on Mogadishu for logistical support led the United States and the UN into a pattern of frequent meetings with Aided. He used these meetings to convince his own sometimes skeptical clan supporters and clan allies that he was duly sanctioned as the next leader of Somalia. If a warlord can control, or better yet divert, the

distribution of humanitarian food and medicines to his own partisans at the expense of the general community, he gains power and resources that can be used immediately against his enemies and ultimately the intervening force. One should never assume that warlords share an interest in a return to stability and law and order. Ali Mahdi generally supported the intervention force because he thought it would at least maintain the status quo in the face of Aided's growing force. Aided and his small coalition would have accepted a return to stability only if it meant that their enemies had been thoroughly neutralized with themselves securely in control.

*Neutralization of enemies.* Warlords naturally prefer to have the intervening forces fight their battles for them whenever possible.<sup>26</sup> If a local warlord perceives he is losing authority over conquered territories, he will insist that the intervening force provide assistance either to retain the status quo or to return to an earlier situation more favorable to the warlord. When Omar Jess's forces were driven out of Kismayu in March 1993, the Aided coalition not only blamed UNITAF but demanded that UNITAF drive the offending force out of the city. In a stateless situation, every use of force by the intervening powers is guaranteed to favor one side or another. In cases that clearly require the use of force, such as the need to deliver a riposte to the ambushers of the Pakistanis on June 5, 1993, the intervening force must ensure that it is not being lured into combat for reasons other than for self-defense or to accomplish the broader political goals of the operation.

*Enhanced credibility through special relationships.* High-level exchanges with senior officials and officers in the intervening force were used by warlords in Somalia to demonstrate their credibility through the media. The most effective Somali warlord in exploiting such opportunities was Mohamed Farah Aided, who always had a cameraman ready to record the visits to his office of senior U.S. and UN officials. The nearly daily calls on Aided by diplomats on Oakley's team and often slavish kowtowing by local UN figures and international visitors to Aided was baffling to most Somalis.

*Continued free hand in areas of influence.* In Somalia, the UNITAF-UNOSOM zones of operation fell astride the most hotly contested areas of the country. This directly affected the internal lines of communication of clan militia leader Mohamed Farah Aided in late 1992 at a time that he believed he was consolidating his faction's power over a number of weaker clans in the South. Aided's petty harassment of UNITAF activities was a prelude to later full-scale attacks on UNOSOM.

*International standing and recognition.* This warlord goal was amply met by the UN decision to support conferences restricted to a few factions in the elegant hotels and conference sites in Addis Ababa and Nairobi. The ability to stage-manage the visits of international personalities is also a favored technique for warlords. Access to the international media is also an advantage more easily met in the

relative luxury of neighboring capitals. Part of the importance of being able to demonstrate international standing is to show your clan supporters that their investment in maintaining you and your force is reaping desired political dividends.

Some pressure to accommodate warlords is generated by the entirely legitimate concerns of all military commanders to protect their forces, particularly in the opening phase of a deployment. The Somalia experience demonstrated that warlords were initially prudent in the face of UNITAF's overwhelming force. This respect rapidly dissipated when it was seen that UNITAF would not intervene in Somali-on-Somali violence. When UNITAF took steps to support the establishment of the local police force, it was the UN's turn to abstain from decisive action.<sup>27</sup> Later tragedies might have been avoided if UNITAF had been authorized to use its overwhelming advantages in military force, command and control, logistics, and communications to support a political agenda. This would have required political tactics to undercut the power of the warlords in favor of normal Somalis who were striving against mighty odds and a lot of firepower to reinstate local authorities, create self-help groups, open schools, reopen farms and shops, and restore community services.

### Intervention Doctrine

The simple dynamics in Somalia in 1992 point to a political solution built around loose federal structures.<sup>28</sup> This was the objective of U.S. and UN planning for the March 1993 Addis Ababa national reconciliation conference. This idea was such an anathema to the warlords' club that they effectively hijacked the conference from the UN. Lacking a clear political vision of the necessary political process, the UN later improvised a process to establish local and regional councils. Working within a tight calendar and eager to show political progress, the leaders in this process succeeded only in creating new cleavages at the local level. What was needed was a national conference that would have permitted everyone, including the warlords, an opportunity to play a role in the system.

The poverty of existing protocols and the inability to develop new doctrine for application to failed states are manifest in each of the seventeen operational Security Council resolutions developed for the combined humanitarian and political crisis in Somalia, 1992-1994.<sup>29</sup> An arms embargo was proclaimed in UNSCR 746 (January 23, 1992), but it was unenforceable. As noted previously, Aided openly defied UNSCR 751 (April 24, 1992) and UNSCR 775 (August 28, 1992), which established and expanded the UN observer force. Empty resolutions create disdain. In formulating effective international-intervention doctrine, policymakers should address the following points:

*Formal intervention doctrine must accommodate the requirements of "hard" cases.* In territories where there is no state, as in Somalia, or where there is disputed, ineffective, or unclear sovereignty, as in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Liberia, responsible countries of the world must be prepared first to offer their good offices to

mediate political solutions and provide resources to facilitate the return to order. If, in time, these peaceful efforts are unavailing and it is perceived that substantial portions of the populations of the afflicted territories are suffering from unacceptable inhumanities, common morality then requires that responsible states, preferably in coalition, mount a coordinated political-military intervention to create the conditions that may lead to the restoration of civil order. Intervening forces must have the mandate to take those measures necessary to promote public safety, including the use of force against recalcitrant members of the society. Whenever possible, the local police and justice system should be restored early in the engagement.

It is important to keep in mind that military intervention is not necessary or desirable in every complex humanitarian emergency. Just doing it correctly once or twice might serve to create a new body of credible doctrine that would provide warnings to potential warlords and examples for leaders in faltering states not to resort to chaos in the pursuit of their ambitions.

*The underlying political issues must be addressed.* The fundamental issues underlying the Somalia starvation emergency in 1992 were political and not the results of natural disaster. There were elements in Somali culture and tradition—not to mention the availability then of thousands of well-intentioned and hopeful Somalis—that could have been liberated by the international intervention forces to provide the framework for a meaningful political restoration process. Neither the UN nor the U.S. administrations involved recognized the special characteristics of the failed Somali state and therefore failed to develop those measures to facilitate the restoration of Somali civil society. The lack of political vision on the part of the international actors in the Somali drama was in large part willful, in the case of the U.S. government, and international civil servants and the professional peacekeepers were blinded by their traditional political passivity. The international force must make clear that it is not bound by arbitrary decisions of local leaders until some form of legitimacy is developed by the larger community.

*Military tactics must support the political agenda.* Although the ultimate responsibility for restoration of their state was always the responsibility of the Somali people, in 1992 an outside military force was almost certainly necessary to act as catalyst to neutralize the hold of warlords on local communities in order to permit the traditional problem-solving mechanisms of Somali culture to flourish. The *shir*, or *guurti*, as it is known variously in Somalia, consists of meetings of elders to discuss political or economic matters of particular interest to the community.<sup>30</sup> All members in such convocations are equal, and their decisions are binding on all involved.<sup>31</sup> Such meetings were not theoretical in the Somalia situation in 1992. The principles of the *shir* were later employed with relative success at the Borama conference in "Somaliland" in March–May 1993, in Kismayu throughout most of 1993, and at the Benadir conference process in Mogadishu, which began in 1994 and was still viable in the early months of 1995.<sup>32</sup>

*Political conciliation techniques must spring from the society under stress.* Had there been a political strategy involved in the UNITAF operation, the planners would have focused on Somali cultural traditions and political techniques to facilitate reopening civil society. Fundamental to all such plans is the need to establish a political dynamic that seizes political initiative from warlords and other miscreants and places it under the control of positive elements of society. In Somalia, there were four significant groups that would have cooperated in such an endeavor: (1) Somali women who, overwhelmingly and courageously, demonstrated by their actions their commitment to peace and a return to civil society; (2) traditional elders and other local leaders who resented the actions of the warlords and would have provided the basis for restoration of local government legitimacy; (3) downtrodden agriculturalists and other southern minorities who saw no difference between the stranglehold of Siad's army and secret police on their communities and the warlords; and (4) tradesmen, intellectuals, and other urban elites who wanted the nomadic militiamen and *mooryaan*, the heavily armed teenagers who formed the base of General Aideed's forces in 1993, out of their homes and business sites. Just as humanitarian policy must focus on the victims of chaos, so must international political doctrine be just and favor political victims rather than their oppressors.

*The agreed political objectives should broaden the political base.* Under UN leadership, the people of Somalia should have been invited to choose their representatives to be sent to a national conference within the country. The favored conference sites, Addis Ababa and Nairobi, were expensive and favored deals between warlords and their henchmen. For many reasons, it would have been necessary to hold such a conference outside any of Somalia's major cities. In early 1993, most major Somali cities and towns were incapable of supporting a large meeting. The intervening force would have been obliged to create a conference village. If such a conference had been held in Somalia, participation would have been greater and the deliberations could have been observed by a larger number of citizens. A national *shir* would have been expensive, but even if it lasted a year, it would have cost the UN forces a lot less than sponsoring an armed conflict.

*The military force should be ready to protect the political process.* For obvious psychological and political reasons, a Somali reconciliation conference should have been held in a geographically neutral zone, that is, a site in which the ethnic group did not have a champion vying for national power. This was one of the factors that led the minority Gadaboursi people in Somaliland to call a "national conference" in their hometown of Borama.<sup>33</sup> Not a serious contender in Somaliland politics, the Gadaboursi provided a safe and effective place for a "national" meeting. In parallel fashion, the primarily agricultural Ranhanweyn people of Baidoa would have also been good hosts for a national conference. Baidoa had been one of the sites of greatest human suffering in the starvation crisis of 1991–1992. Symbolically, the intervening force could have focused the aspiring political leadership of a



new Somali state on the humanitarian issues of the civil war by establishing, maintaining, and protecting a national conference tent village on the outskirts of Baidoa. Some military means would also be required to ensure safe passage for delegates to a national conference in order to avoid efforts by certain groups to prevent attendance by opponents. Warlords, naturally, would also be welcome to take part in the national conference. No arms would be permitted in the national conference village, and it would be necessary to set up some kind of internal police to ensure that "accidents" did not take place.

By following these strategies, the intervening force could have facilitated reconciliation and taken the initiative away from the troublemakers. It is important to remember that in 1992–1993 in Somalia, no warlord could have maintained power without powerful support from his own ethnic group. A conference in Somalia outside the main Hawiye cultural zone would have pressured Aided to join internationally sanctioned moves toward a return to civil society. The true center of gravity in Somalia was the nexus of warlord-ethnic group ties.

## Lessons for the Future

Many U.S. political figures look at the world's experience in Somalia and decide that the United States should not be involved in peace enforcement. It is hard, expensive, and dangerous. The public is ambiguous: It generally supports UN efforts but is reluctant to place U.S. military forces in harm's way. U.S. military leadership fears that peacekeeping does not fit the missions for which U.S. forces have been trained.

In my view, peace operations require the highest level of political-military skills. No one should suggest that the U.S. soldier or marine lacks resourcefulness or courage. Since the original Somalia deployment, the U.S. military has taken great strides to understand and prepare for peacemaking operations. The idea that some military objectives can be achieved through nonmilitary means in a peace-enforcement operation is a notion that is gaining greater respect within the U.S. military. The special skills and equipment of U.S. forces are particularly adaptable to peace-enforcement operations, and they can be expected to respond to the most difficult situations that draw the attention of the U.S. public.

Effective application of integrated military and political policies in the multilateral arena is one of the most important tasks now challenging policymakers around the world. The world cannot back away from the moral challenges inherent in ministering to the distressed, defeating chaos, and facilitating the restoration of states. There is a peculiar irony in the fact that many of the top policy architects of the Cold War era now appear agape and witless in the face of these new political-military challenges. Convincing evidence of the passing of the Cold War strategic mentality can be found in recent comments of no less a student of strategy and defender of U.S. national interests than former secretary of state Henry Kissinger. In a 1995 interview while in India, Kissinger noted that he opposed sending U.S. peacekeepers to Somalia, believing that diplomatic rather than military

pressure should be brought to bear to work for peace. Kissinger observed, modestly, that "once upon a time, we had all the answers to world problems—today we don't. . . . In 1962, I lauded India's role as a non-aligned nation—today, we prefer to be non-aligned ourselves."<sup>34</sup>

As a responsible leading member of the world community, the United States cannot remain neutral before disorder and suffering. Even as an isolationist surge laps at the foot of Capitol Hill, most opinion polls show that the U.S. public supports continued U.S. engagement in peacekeeping activities. If the U.S. role is properly articulated by national leaders, the public is willing to pay the price of global leadership. The U.S. public intuitively appreciates that the ability to project power for humanitarian purposes over long distances is the singular mark of a world power. The experience of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, no matter how painful the memories of the loss of U.S. service personnel, can be positive if the proper lessons are drawn from it.

## Notes

1. John Darnton, "U.N. Buildup in Bosnia Eyes 'Mogadishu Line,'" *New York Times*, June 7, 1995, p. A18.
2. See the collection of essays by Ioan M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994).
3. For a stimulating examination of Somalia immediately before the fall of Siad Barre, see Anna Simons, *Networks of Dislocation: Somalia Undone* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).
4. See "Somalia: A Fight to the Death? Leaving Civilians at the Mercy of Terror and Starvation," *Africa Watch* 4(2), February 13, 1992, p. 10.
5. For an excellent summary of developments after the departure of UNOSOM II in March 1995, see Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast, "Governance and Economic Survival in Post Intervention Somalia," *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 172, May 1995.
6. Of particular note is the series of excellent articles by the *New York Times's* Jane Perlez, who served as the newspaper's correspondent in central and eastern Africa during all of 1991–1992.
7. UN Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and the Situation in Somalia* (New York: UN, March 1994), p. 1.
8. See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace* (New York: UN, June 1992).
9. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia* (S/23693) (New York: UN, March 11, 1992).
10. Boutros-Ghali, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia* (S/23693), p. 12.
11. "USC, SDM, SPM, SSNM Issue Communiqué," Radio Mogadishu in Somali 1700 GMT, February 29, 1992, FBIS-AF-92-041 (March 2, 1992), pp. 6–7.
12. Mohamed Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1994), p. 15.
13. Sahnoun, *Somalia*, p. xiii.
14. John G. Sommer, *Hope Restored? Humanitarian Aid in Somalia 1990–1994* (Washington, DC: Refugee Policy Group, Center for Policy Analysis and Research on Refugee Issues, November 1994), pp. 22–23.



15. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–33.

16. A well-placed contact in the Pentagon told me in early 1994 that the essential understanding between the Pentagon and the National Security Council in November 1992 was that the military would begrudgingly accept the Somalia mission "so long as the State Department and the United Nations kept out of the way."

17. This information comes from several military participants in the planning phases of Operation Restore Hope.

18. See Martin Ganzglass's Chapter 2 in this volume.

19. At the Princeton conference, a senior UN official described UNSCR 814 as "the mother of all resolutions." The UN remains nettled by the fact that it is blamed for introducing "nation building" into Operation Restore Hope; the original authors of the resolution belong to the "member-state" that most criticizes the action.

When I admonished a senior official about the negative ramifications of UNSCR 814 on U.S. multilateral policy, he remonstrated that when it was originally drafted in the Pentagon, "well, no one expected the UN to be able to do it!"

20. At one point, a Somali women's group proposed an effort to entice the rootless teenage *mooryaan* fighters off the streets by offering to exchange their weapons for an opportunity to attend school to learn a trade. Initial planning efforts were discussed, but events soon intervened to frustrate another potentially useful Somali initiative.

21. See Ken Menkhaus, "Getting Out vs. Getting Through: US and U.N. Policies in Somalia," *Middle East Policy* 3(2–3), March–April/May–June 1994, pp. 146–162.

22. This is the idea behind the title of the recent book by Mariam Arif Gassem, *Hostages: The People Who Kidnapped Themselves* (Nairobi: Central Graphics, 1994). Gassem is a lawyer, accountant, and banker and a native Mogadishu. Her book describes the civil war and its effects on her family and the people of Mogadishu.

23. See Alex Shounatoff, "The US, the U.N. and Aidid: The 'Warlord' Speaks," *Nation*, April 4, 1994, pp. 442–450.

24. See "Somalia Beyond the Warlords: The Need for a Verdict on Human Rights Abuses," *Africa Watch* 5(2), March 7, 1993, p. 29. It was clear from the information contained in this report and many others that Aided and several of his allies had dubious human rights records.

25. Many serious authorities continue to confuse "impartiality" and "neutrality," which are not synonymous. Laws must be applied *impartially*; but one is not *neutral* in the face of lawbreakers. For more on this ambiguity, see the otherwise excellent recent doctrinal publication, U.S. Army Headquarters, FM [Field Manual] 100–23: *Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: December 1994), 123 pp.

26. The publicly declared decision of Ambassador Robert Oakley to shun General Mohamed Said Hersi "Morgan" because of the latter's leadership role in the destruction, at great cost in civilian lives, of Hargeisa in 1988 removed any pretense of impartiality in dealing with Somali warlords. When Morgan regained control of Kismayu in March 1993, UNITAF was nonetheless accused by Aided of partiality in its dealings with his opponents.

27. See Philip Johnston, *Somalia Diary: The President of CARE Tells One Country's Story of Hope* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1994), pp. 97–101. The police initiative founded on the grounds that the UN had never financed a police force. Aided and Ali Mahdi quickly volunteered to set up their own police forces, which they did with the help of Robert Oakley and UNITAF resources. These policemen were highly selective in applying local laws.

28. The generally muddled agreements made by the warlords during and after the March 1993 Somali reconciliation conference in Addis Ababa included a mandate to establish local and district councils. Unfortunately, this was accomplished through the imposition of such councils by itinerant UNOSOM officials. This was probably better than nothing, but the process would have been more credible if there had been time to let the local communities make their own selections.

29. See the appendix to this book for a list of UN Security Council resolutions on Somalia.

30. Problem solving at the national level in a segmentary lineage society is a difficult, though not impossible, matter. It is a subject well studied in anthropological literature on Somalia. See the excellent review article by Erika Pozzo, "Customary Law of Somalis and Other African Peoples," in Hussein M. Adam and Charles L. Geshlechter eds., *Proceedings of the First International Congress of Somali Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 277–288.

31. Margaret Castango, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), p. 142.

32. See Menkhaus and Prendergast, "Governance and Economic Survival in Post Intervention Somalia." Also see Menkhaus's Chapter 3 in this volume.

33. The Somaliland National Conference was held in Borama from February through April 1993 and led to the election of Mohamed Egal as president of the aspiring new state.

34. Reuter, New Delhi, March 22, 1995.