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U.S. Government Decisionmaking Processes During Humanitarian Operations in Somalia

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The development of the Somalia humanitarian crisis in 1991–1992 found the United States poorly positioned to follow events and to plan and implement an appropriate response. The embassy had been evacuated and looted in January 1991, when the civil war came to Mogadishu and forced President Siad Barre to flee to his tribal base in southwestern Somalia. The U.S. diplomatic presence in Somalia was nonexistent (indeed, only the Egyptian embassy remained open), and only the barest of local intelligence assets were still available. In Washington, the substantial strategic interest in Somalia that had characterized the 1980s had given way to a new attitude approaching indifference. With the Russians and Cubans gone home from East Africa and the Red Sea littoral, the Cold War won, and the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia on the ropes, there was little need or value seen in retaining any positive involvement in Somalia. Somalia was accordingly assigned only a modest priority at the policy, operational, and intelligence desks in the interagency community.

Nevertheless, the disintegration of Somalia political and economic structures—especially after the fall of Mogadishu to the forces of General Aided in January 1991—had led to the progressive development of an ominous disaster situation. The Department of State and the Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance were following this trend as closely as possible given the lack of official presence and hard information.

Initial Humanitarian Involvement (February 1991–April 1992)

Based primarily on reports from neighboring posts and the ever more involved PVO (private voluntary organization)-NGO community at work in Somalia, the State Department had moved as early as February 1991 to begin extending

extraordinary assistance to Somalia, and on March 25 Assistant Secretary Herman Cohen made a formal declaration that a state of disaster, originating in civil strife, existed in Somalia.

Over the next year and a half, the State Department and AID would undertake an ever-lengthening list of emergency response measures in an attempt to contain and correct the Somalia disaster, with money and food flowing to Save the Children Fund (U.S.-UK), Médecins Sans Frontières (Holland), CARE, UNICEF, the World Food Program, the International Medical Corps, World Concern, the UN high commissioner for refugees, the UN Children's Fund, the ICRC, Catholic Relief Services, and Action International Contre la Faim.

Formal involvement by the UN and its specialized agencies was, however, slow in developing. Despite deteriorating political, security, and economic conditions throughout 1991 and the emergence in late summer and fall of reliable reports of a developing famine, the world declined to give much priority to Somalia. Then, in November 1991 and continuing for four months, heavy and very destructive fighting broke out in Mogadishu between the forces of General Aideed and those of Interim President Ali Mahdi. Thousands of Somalis died and at last the international community was obliged to pay attention. Following Boutros-Ghali's installation as the new secretary-general on January 1, 1992, one of his first acts was to receive the report of Undersecretary James Jonah, just returned from a fact-finding mission to Somalia. Jonah had met with both Aideed and Ali Mahdi, but—apparently because of objections from Aideed—did not recommend that the UN involve itself in trying to arrange a cease-fire. Indeed, in subsequent remarks to journalists, Jonah declared the situation to be one of "total anarchy."¹

Boutros-Ghali, however, reacted to Jonah's report by urging a more proactive UN policy. He faced substantial resistance in the Security Council, especially from the United States and Russia. As summarized by Herman Cohen, writing after his retirement from the State Department,

Among the council's permanent members, the United States and Russia were the least enthusiastic about UN involvement in Somalia beyond that of humanitarian relief. A dozen UN peacekeeping operations had been authorized in the previous twenty-four months, and costs were mounting at extraordinary rates. The Cambodia operation alone was budgeted for \$2 billion. . . . Both the United States and Russia were running considerable arrears in their peacekeeping accounts even before Somalia's crisis appeared on the council's agenda. Hence, both governments insisted that UN involvement in Somalia in early 1992 be limited to humanitarian operations, which are financed within the regular UN budget.²

Up to this point, there was no widespread press or public clamor in the United States for official action; some interest had developed in the Congress, but the only direct calls for action had come (in early January) from two proactive members of the Senate Africa Subcommittee: Senators Paul Simon and Nancy Kassebaum. Although State, AID, and the U.S. mission at the UN were devoting

substantial time to the crisis, it was still a third-tier issue in the Washington scheme of things, and there existed a hope at intermediate and high policy levels that the United States could avoid the costs and complications of a deeper involvement.

On January 23, 1992, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 733; the council urged an increase in humanitarian aid to Somalia and recommended appointment of a "special coordinator" to oversee delivery. It also urged the secretary-general and concerned organizations to work with the warring factions to facilitate the delivery of food. The UN, with tepid support from the Security Council, had opted for limited involvement with emphasis at this point only on expanded humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. The United States had gone along without enthusiasm given the lack of priority accorded Somalia, other pressing problems (for example, Bosnia), and domestic and UN funding problems. Nor at this point had the U.S. official community begun to organize itself for extraordinary or emergency actions on Somalia. All of this was to change over the next six months.

Initially, the UN's diplomatic efforts, strongly encouraged by the United States, seemed to be bearing fruit. Aideed and Ali Mahdi sent assurances to New York that they would organize a cease-fire. After intensive negotiations in Mogadishu—with substantial international presence—the two sides signed a cease-fire agreement on March 3. The UN-led joint delegation also achieved an agreement among several of the factions to organize a national reconciliation conference and undertook measures to increase food deliveries to the main ports. But in fact conditions inside Mogadishu remained tense, and outside the capital armed bands roamed freely, often preying on food convoys and distribution points. In a further report to the Security Council in mid-March, the secretary-general painted a generally gloomy picture and argued that UN military monitoring would be essential to ward off famine.

The Security Council responded with a further resolution, UNSCR 746 of March 17, 1992. Its main emphasis was an appeal to all Somali factions to cooperate in honoring the cease-fire of March 3. Within the U.S. government, increasing emphasis was now being placed on the growing crisis in Somalia, but it was still only looking to enhance diplomatic and humanitarian efforts. In March, the United States signed an agreement with the ICRC to provide 24,270 metric tons of food aid to Somalia; in April, the United States announced a pledge of 20,000 metric tons of sorghum to the World Food Program for Somalia. Despite its reservations on expanding the UN's involvement in Somalia, the United States had become and would remain by far the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia.

Deepening Involvement: UNOSOM I and Operation Provide Relief (April 1992–December 1992)

Despite active UN diplomacy (appointment of David Bassiouni as the UN's coordinator for humanitarian assistance to Somalia and dispatch of a technical team

to Mogadishu to discuss cease-fire implementation), the situation continued to deteriorate. Serious security problems continued at the Mogadishu docks; a World Food Program ship was shelled in the harbor in early March and departed without unloading. Food deliveries in the outlying areas were disrupted by banditry and racketeering. In effect, the relief effort had begun to generate its own pernicious dynamic; food had become the main item of commerce, to be commandeered at the point of a gun without regard to the effects on the general populace. Aid workers were harassed and in some cases killed as security deteriorated. And even more ominous reports were coming in from Somalia's richest agricultural area, to the south between the Jubba and Shabelle Rivers. If these estimates of a general crop failure (80 percent drop in 1991, even worse predicted for 1992 due to pilferage and lack of planting) were accurate, a potentially catastrophic famine would come later in the year and carry into 1993.

Against this backdrop, the UN technical team in Mogadishu negotiated, after considerable difficulty with the Aided faction, an agreement that the UN would be allowed to deploy up to fifty unarmed military observers along the "green line" dividing Mogadishu between Aideed and Ali Mahdi. This recommendation was subsequently endorsed in UNSCR 751, passed unanimously by the Security Council on April 24. The resolution established the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), or as it later was sometimes called, UNOSOM I) and called for the introduction of a 500-person armed security force in addition to the cease-fire monitors—a proposal not endorsed by Aideed. Mohamed Sahnoun, an experienced UN diplomat who had recently been in Somalia on a fact-finding mission for the secretary-general, was named head of UNOSOM.

But again the actual effective engagement of the UN faltered; the limited progress made by UNOSOM lagged behind the acceleration of the humanitarian crisis in the countryside. Deployment of the fifty monitors authorized by UNSCR 751 took three months (from April 24 to July 23; an advance party of four observers had arrived on July 5). Although the cease-fire was generally holding in the cities—in no small measure owing to the personal diplomacy of Sahnoun—banditry in the countryside remained rampant. And overall food deliveries and any other form of practical international assistance were slow to materialize. Various study and technical missions and local reports had established a clear and pressing need for urgent and massive action, but even by June there had been very little follow-through, and concern was mounting among both the international community representatives in the country and those monitoring the situation from their national capitals or in New York. On June 25, Sahnoun sent a lengthy and bleak report to the secretary-general, describing the massive problems facing him in Somalia and urging the UN to accelerate its assistance.

In response, the secretary-general recommended sending yet another technical assessment team to Somalia. The Security Council, on July 27, endorsed the recommendation in UNSCR 767, directing two tasks for the team: (1) determine how UN "security guards" could be used to protect relief workers, and (2) convene a conference to work for political reconciliation. The resolution also asked the

secretary-general to mount an airlift of food supplies—an action especially necessary to reach remote areas where food supplies were unavailable owing to the lack of security at the ports and along the distribution routes. Four days later the United States authorized an additional emergency food commitment of almost 24,000 tons to the World Food Program.

Indeed, in the United States, pressure for a more proactive stance toward the Somalia crisis was steadily growing. Staff-level activities had intensified; although the technical planning and operations were still focused at AID-OFDA, there was growing interest and involvement by State, DOD (OSD and Joint Staff), National Security Council (NSC) staff, and intelligence community officers. Interest on the Hill had also evolved, and a stream of hearings had gradually moved the crisis near the front burner. Over the January-June period, State officials had been called six times to give formal testimony before House and Senate committees. In addition, there were numerous informal meetings and briefings with Hill principals and staff.

This growing congressional interest, and the ever-rising flood of reports that the UN mission was so far utterly failing to meet the needs of Somalia, had also begun to have an impact on the White House. It was made known that President Bush had taken a personal interest and was following events with growing concern. Within DOD, a Somalia task force was established by order of the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. The issuance of UNSCR 767 on July 27 gave the United States a set of more specific proposals to rally behind. On the same day the Department of State made a public statement in favor of dispatching armed UN security elements to Somalia; as Herman Cohen later noted, this was "the first US 'pro-security' statement since the crisis began."³ A briefing by OFDA's Jim Kunder the following week reemphasized the gravity of the situation, with an estimated 1,500,000 Somalis—one-quarter of the population—at risk of starvation, one-fourth of all children under the age of five already dead, and 800,000 Somalis displaced or refugees.

At this point, there was extensive U.S. interagency discussion of how best to deal with the crisis. On August 13, the president, having sorted through the options and arguments presented, announced several forward-leaning decisions that would propel the United States substantially deeper into direct engagement:

- The United States would offer to transport UN security forces to Somalia (the 500-man Pakistani contingent).
- DOD was ordered to begin an immediate emergency food airlift to Somalia and to refugee camps in Kenya.
- The UN would be asked to convene a donors' conference.
- An additional 145,000 tons of food would be made available.

And on August 16, the president designated Andrew Natsios (AID assistant administrator) as his special coordinator for Somali relief.

On August 18, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) announced the formation in Mombasa of Joint Task Force Operation Provide Relief to implement the airlift

ordered by the president. For better or worse, the United States was clearly moving into the lead on Somalia. The airlift was in fact quickly established, consisting both of DOD assets and OEPDA civil charter aircraft and coordinated by a U.S. Air Force team on site in Kenya. From its inception in late August until it was terminated the following February, Provide Relief aircraft flew some 2,500 missions, carrying 28,000 tons of relief supplies to airfields in some of Somalia's hardest-hit areas (Baidoa, Bardera, Belet Weyn, Oddur).

On August 28, the Security Council, responding to a further recommendation from the secretary-general, passed UNSCR 775 authorizing the expansion of the UN's protective force in Somalia from 500 to 3,500. This action, however, caused a serious backlash from General Aideed (and indeed from Mohamed Sahnoun toward his own UN leadership), who had not been informed of the proposal and apparently felt he had been deceived in negotiating a just-concluded agreement with Sahnoun for deployment of the 500-man Pakistani contingent. This incident was to poison Aideed's future relationship with UNOSOM, keep the Pakistani battalion penned up at the airport, and contribute to Sahnoun's own resignation in October.

Meanwhile, the overall situation in Somalia continued to deteriorate. Humanitarian and logistics planners realized that to effectively address the general problem of starvation there would have to be substantial movement of food through the ports and along major highways; dependency on the airlift alone could never do the job, and in the meantime the death rates in the interior were still rising. But lack of security at the ports and along the roads either made movement impossible or created opportunities for bandits or factions to seize shipments in transit. As noted, the 500-man Pakistani battalion (delivered by the U.S. Air Force in November) was unable to obtain the cooperation of General Aideed and never got beyond its camp at Mogadishu airport. Clearly, more would need to be done. But what, and by whom?

Throughout fall 1992, interagency efforts to devise a more effective strategy were substantial. The problems of Somalia were subject to extensive analysis in the various concerned agencies, and a network of planning and coordination groups was built up that would be used even more intensively in the UNITAF and UNOSOM II phases to follow. As the responsible command, CENTCOM (and its army, navy, air force, and marine components) worked intensively to draft concepts and courses of action and possible operations plans. The Joint Staff (especially J-3/Operations and J-5/Plans and Policy—but with substantial inputs from the J-4 logisticians and other specialized staffs) interfaced with the field commands but also with the interagency policy mechanisms in Washington. At the top level, although formal National Security Council (NSC) meetings were very rare, the secretaries of state and defense, the national security adviser, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) conferred frequently and at length on Somali courses of action and apparently had full access to the president when needed.

This does not mean that there was agreement on all major points. Generally, there was not full agreement even within particular agencies given the magnitude

and complexity of the problems—substantive, bureaucratic, political, and fiscal. But after several months of intensive consideration in the August–mid-November time frame, several conclusions had essentially been arrived at in “the interagency”:

1. The expanded humanitarian effort was failing. Interference from the warlords at Mogadishu port and on the highways was preventing food from getting through in quantities adequate to turn the corner. The airlift, even with DOD planes flying ten or twelve missions a day, would never in itself be able to bring starvation under control.

2. The UN emergency intervention had essentially failed. The Pakistani battalion remained at the airport, endless debate continued in New York about augmentation forces, Mohamed Sahnoun had resigned in disgust, and it was obvious that—whatever the longer-term possibilities—the UN offered no immediate solutions to Somalia's crisis.

3. An effective short-term solution, one that would bring dramatic improvement in a matter of weeks, could be mounted only by the United States, alone or leading a coalition (the success of Desert Storm being very much in mind). But this would heavily involve the U.S. military and in general give the United States a broad overall responsibility; and many in the executive branch and in Congress remained very uncomfortable with this approach.

4. If the United States were nevertheless to leap into the fray, the operation would perforce be a very “heavy” one, probably a “2-division plus” force, heavily armed and inevitably with huge logistics support requirements. This meant that the locus of the main effort would be Mogadishu, and the operation would necessarily be heavily involved in getting the ports open and working, as well as the road network into the countryside. Alternative scenarios that would have avoided or minimized the use of Mogadishu were discarded by military planners in these weeks. In particular, the ideas of Fred Cuny⁴ to introduce a much smaller and more flexible force operating outside of Mogadishu through the small ports and augmented by over-the-beach and some airborne-helborne deliveries were decided to be inadequate for the type of intervention required. Although this concept, or variants, had generated considerable interest in Washington—and in DOD, particularly among the Special Operations community—by November it failed to meet the U.S. military's new insistence on the application of massive, overwhelming force and also because of the military's determination that only a heavy logistical operation based through Mogadishu could work.

With these considerations in mind, the NSC Deputies Committee fashioned a presentation of options for the president in Thanksgiving week 1992. According to press reports at the time, the options were basically to (1) proceed with the augmentation of UNOSOM to 3,500 in the hope that this could force cooperation from the warlords; (2) sponsor a very substantial UN force augmentation with a mandate to use force to carry out the mission and with U.S. quick-reaction forces in armed support; or (3) have the United States lead an immediate, large-scale intervention to aggressively fix the problem. The president's decision was made the

day before Thanksgiving. The United States would ask the UN to authorize a large-scale coalition effort, led by the United States, to relieve the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. On Thanksgiving Day itself, Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger went to New York and obtained Boutros-Ghali's agreement to the undertaking, confirmed by UNSCR 794 on December 3.

The authoritative explanation for this U.S. decision to lead a major humanitarian intervention into a failed state where the United States had no important political or strategic interests will probably have to await the publication of George Bush's memoirs or release of his papers. What seems clear is that it was truly his personal decision, based in large measure on his growing feelings of concern as the humanitarian disaster continued to unfold relentlessly despite the half-measures being undertaken by the international community. Presumably, growing criticism from the numerous involved NGOs, from the Hill, and from the Clinton camp was a contributing factor. Objectively, the interagency analysis (mentioned previously) that only a major U.S. intervention could quickly turn things around provided a planning rationale and ruled out other approaches. A coalition approach presumably was appealing in principle and also because of the warm afterglow of Desert Storm.

But probably the clinching factor was the contribution of the Joint Staff, which finally, in November, gave the interagency a course of action that it felt could work if the president decided to intervene. As Bob Oakley and John Hirsch report in their recent monograph, "On November 21, [interagency deputies] committee vice chairman Admiral David Jeremiah, Powell's representative, startled the group by saying, 'If you think U.S. forces are needed, we can do the job.'³⁵ He then outlined a two-division coalition force concept developed by Central Command, and this concept provided the basis for the "heavy option" in a three-options paper sent to the president after that meeting. Again, however, the decision was the president's, especially since no recommendations accompanied the options paper. The interagency, without much enthusiasm, had given the president the opportunity to make a definitive choice, and to the surprise of some he quickly chose the maximalist course of action with the United States boldly in the lead.

On November 27, the full-time Somalia Working Group was formally established at State, with Ambassador Brandon Grove as director and Ambassador David Shinn as deputy director. On December 4, the president announced to the nation his decision to send in U.S. armed forces, a decision generally popular with the public and with the majority in Congress—and also one immediately endorsed by President-elect Clinton. The same day, the president announced the appointment of former (retired) ambassador Bob Oakley to replace Ambassador Pete de Vos as U.S. special envoy for Somalia. Oakley left immediately for Somalia, arriving and plunging into his diplomatic work a day ahead of the arrival of the first marines on December 8. The stage was now set for speedy and spectacular success in ending the humanitarian crisis, to be followed by almost equally speedy and spectacular disappointment and failure in finding a lasting solution to Somalia's continuing political crisis.

The U.S.-Led Coalition: UNITAF (December 1992–May 1993)

The U.S.-led coalition was anchored by marines from Camp Pendleton and army troops from Fort Drum. The force, under the command of Lt. Gen. Bob Johnston, was designated UNITAF: Unified Task Force. From the approved "concept of operations," its goals were clear and limited: Seize Mogadishu port, airfield, and environs and prepare them for a major logistical throughput; seize airfields and place coalition security elements at a number of regional hubs in the hunger zone; open the roads for truck transport; and provide adequate security throughout the operational area for the safe conduct of humanitarian operations, including the transport of humanitarian supplies.

UNITAF was not committed to rebuilding infrastructure, although it did considerable work in repairing roads and bridges; it was not committed to enforce any kind of general disarmament, although it did require that heavy weapons and technicals be stored or removed from the operational area and did confiscate several thousand small arms and automatic weapons found in prohibited areas; it had no mandate to organize or revive local security forces, although it did recruit a substantial number of personnel, including former police, to perform local security functions that directly supported the command's operations. And it had no mandate whatsoever to intervene in Somalia's politics, public administration, or justice system. There was no imposition of martial law, no establishment of a UNITAF political command structure. The entire UNITAF operation was to be short term and highly focused only on accomplishment of the humanitarian mission; it was, in addition, to make essential preparations for relief by and turnover to follow-on UN peacekeeping forces.

In fact, UNITAF succeeded in its assigned tasks quickly and well and with minimal casualties. Notwithstanding the predominant U.S. role, intensive diplomatic and parallel military-to-military talks produced a wide-ranging set of credible coalition partners, especially tough French and Belgian units. A separate fund was established under the UN to help defray some of the costs, with an immediate contribution of \$100 million from Japan—to prove, alas, also the only substantial contribution, although Saudi Arabia did subsequently provide \$10 million.

When challenged by the warlords, the UNITAF forces showed no hesitation in using measured force to destroy technicals and illegal weapons caches. Within a few weeks of the initial landing, the port was open, major highways were opening, several of the major regional cities were occupied and at peace, a truce was in place between Ali Mahdi and Aideed, and in general the UNITAF operation was well on its way to accomplishing its mission. Indeed, in accordance with President Bush's initial announcement of a very short term operation, 1,500 U.S. troops were actually withdrawn before January 20, 1993—President Clinton's inauguration day.

Once U.S. forces were committed, lead responsibility for implementation of the agreed strategy passed to the military chain of command, from General Johnston

on the ground through CINCENT General Joe Hoar to the Joint Staff and especially the chairman, Gen. Colin Powell, and thence through the secretary of defense to the president. A half-dozen specialized working groups and task forces were active, and their work continued to come together at the NSC Deputies Committee. Throughout the planning and conduct of the Somalia intervention, the Deputies Committee would be the single most important mechanism for the fashioning and fine-tuning of U.S. policy and tactics in all aspects to include—selectively—some military matters as well.

It is not my purpose here to review in depth the activities and accomplishments of UNITAF, and of Ambassador Oakley's parallel diplomatic efforts. Suffice it to say that within ninety days UNITAF had accomplished its mandate and was ready to withdraw. Within that time, the famine in Somalia had been brought under control, a measure of tranquility restored, and some important first steps taken to start the process of reconciliation. However, although it was not yet glaringly evident, other decisions had been made, other things had not been done, that would doom the follow-on UN-led operation to failure.

Turnover to the UN: UNOSOM II and the Hunt for Aideed (May 1993–October 1993)

It had been the firm intent and expectation of the U.S. forces to turn over the operation in Somalia to an expanded UN force within a few months. No one had expected the U.S. force, or substantial elements of it, to be out of Somalia by January 20 (although, as noted previously, a token withdrawal was achieved, probably in part for political effect). But a turnover within four to six months was considered achievable and reasonable. As events transpired on the ground, a turnover date of April 1 would have been warranted had the UN been willing and, more important, organized to assume responsibility. But already two tendencies had become manifest that were to portend the failure of the UNOSOM II operation to follow:

- UNITAF's refusal to take on expanded tasks, despite the urgings of the secretary general, to make UNOSOM's follow-on job more manageable.
- UN slowness, verging on foot-dragging, in mounting that operation and critical associated activities in the civil, police, and justice sectors.

Both problems were fundamental to the ultimate failure of the UN mission. But one must observe a critical distinction. With respect to UNITAF's refusal to take on expanded responsibilities on behalf of the UN (expand the areas of operation to include even the North; engage in general disarmament; destroy or seize weapons caches known to exist in the remote countryside), the U.S. refusal was firmly based in the restrictions of the formal mission and also in continuing political guidance from the National Command Authorities. As noted, the UNITAF mission was not to deliver humanitarian services, not to engage in activities designed to affect the political power structures in Somalia, not to disarm except as

essential to accomplishing the assigned mission; that mission was to establish, only in designated geographic areas, a situation of general security in which the UN, NGOs, and other agencies could accomplish their work in peace. It is true that on its own volition, UNITAF did go far enough in some collateral areas that U.S. command echelons and policy circles did worry, from early on, about functional or geographic "mission creep," and a considerable effort was exerted to fend off or contain such tendencies.

From Washington's perspective, this constant reaffirmation of the limited nature of UNITAF responsibilities was also necessary to fend off continuous efforts by the UN to get UNITAF to do what Washington felt should properly be left to the follow-on UN forces themselves. There was also concern that substantial involvement in such activities could delay the departure of U.S. units and give the UN further opportunities for delay in bringing in its own peacekeepers. Although an argument might have been made (indeed, the secretary-general repeatedly attempted to make it) that the UNITAF forces, with their much greater firepower and general capabilities, should do more to ensure the subsequent success of smaller and weaker and less well organized UN forces, U.S. authorities were quick to reject this approach wherever it reared its head.

So UNITAF came, accomplished its assigned mandate quickly and well, and then waited, with considerable impatience, to be withdrawn. It would leave the UN—in a transfer that was supposed to be "seamless" but fell well short of that standard—in a country that was economically prostrate and still awash in weapons and with the warlords unbroken and recalcitrant.

What of the new, expanded, and improved UNOSOM II force (UNOSOM II), authorized by the UN on March 26? To get on top of its responsibilities, two requirements were basic. The first was to persuade or force the warlords—especially General Aideed—to accommodate to a process of reconciliation and shared power. The second would be to get UN structures and processes to perform adequately and in some reasonable time frame. It is hard to calculate in which aspect the UN failed more miserably.

At the policy level, there was little disagreement between the United States and the UN on what would be required, including the force needed to carry out the expanded UN mandate. UNSCR 824 of March 26 had provided for a large (28,000) force with a robust Chapter VII mandate. The entire operation would be under the watchful gaze of an American, retired admiral (and, more important, former deputy national security adviser) Jon Howe, who had in March replaced Ismat Kittani as the secretary-general's special representative. The Turkish general in command of UNOSOM II, Cevik Bir, had been selected with the approval of the United States. And after exhaustive military planning and diplomatic discussion, the United States had committed a very substantial follow-on troop effort to UNOSOM II, including critical supporting logistical elements and also a potent quick-reaction force with armed helicopters and on-call C-130 gunships. There was a keen recognition that the job would be difficult and an expectation that the warlords, or at least General Aideed, would present the UN with an early challenge.

This probability existed notwithstanding notable political progress among Somali factions starting in March to include steps toward comprehensive disarmament and the restoration of Somali political and administrative capabilities at national, regional, and local levels. There were high hopes that UNOSOM II could build on this progress but also apprehension that the path would soon be blocked in a challenge from, most probably, General Aideed.

This was not long in developing. Aideed had not been pleased with the UN intervention from the beginning. He had reacted badly to the UN decision to augment its original force above the 500-man level negotiated by Sahnoun. His forces had been manhandled on several occasions by UNITAF (technicals destroyed, arms caches seized or destroyed). In the South, UNITAF had not prevented General Morgan from making inroads into territory controlled by Aideed's ally, Colonel Jess. And in general, Aideed seemed to feel the United States and especially the UN were biased in favor of his arch rival, Ali Mahdi. He also was growing nervous and suspicious of UNOSOM activities, which seemed to be showing undue interest in his command and radio facilities.

On June 5, 1993, fierce fighting broke out between Aideed's militia and supporters and the Pakistanis, triggered by an earlier Pakistani search of an Aideed weapons site colocated with his radio station. By the end of the fighting, twenty-four Pakistani soldiers were dead. The UN reacted with UNSCR 837 on June 6, condemning the attack and asking the secretary-general, under Chapter VII, to take "all necessary measures" against those responsible, to include arrest, detention, trial, and punishment.

On June 12, UNOSOM forces, including U.S. AC-130 gunships and helicopters, attacked Aideed weapons-storage sites in Mogadishu. On June 17, in another firefight, Aideed's forces killed one Pakistani and four Moroccan soldiers, including the Moroccan force commander. On June 27–28, two more Pakistanis were killed; on July 3, three Italian soldiers; on July 7, six Somali UN employees. On July 12, UNOSOM struck back, this time harder. Attacking Aideed's main command and control site violently and without warning, UNOSOM killed over twenty of Aideed's followers. Aideed claimed a higher number of deaths among civilians caught in the raid. In effect, and regrettably for the operation and for Somalia, UNOSOM and Aideed were now at war.

Also regrettably, the new focus on armed confrontation with Aideed took the impetus out of other promising initiatives that were getting under way, often after months of agonizingly slow UN activity. Especially significant were agreements (at the national reconciliation conference held in Addis Ababa in late March) to reconstitute political and administrative authority, an agreement (in March, prior to Ambassador Oakley's departure, and thereafter strangely neglected) for a general plan of disarmament to implement agreements reached in Addis Ababa on January 15, and the beginning of efforts to reconstitute Somali police forces and a court system. These undertakings, promising in March-May, were on hold from June on and in most instances failed to progress substantially for the balance of the UN intervention. They too had fallen victim, more by neglect than design, to

the preoccupation with the armed struggle with Aideed and its debilitating consequences, as well as to initial hesitancy followed by demonstrable inadequacy on the part of the UN's civil components.⁶

These developments had been followed with increasing concern by the new Clinton administration Somalia team (the Deputies Committee was now being chaired by Sandy Berger; other agency principals usually included Frank Wisner from Defense, Peter Tarnoff from State, and Admiral Dave Jeremiah representing the Joint Staff). In its deliberations and in the myriad details of its work in these months, the U.S. community was almost schizophrenic in its pursuit of two very different courses of action. On the one hand, vast energy was expended in trying to persuade, cajole, and assist the UN to energetically fulfill the broad mandate of UNOSOM II, including effective actions to fill important posts in Somalia, get a police assistance operation in place, and accelerate activities to empower local and regional structures. There were arguments and sharp disagreements on many matters, not all issues of detail (for example, as to whether a top-down or a bottom-up approach should be the basis of political revitalization efforts, surely a critical issue). But there was a broad consensus that if Somalia were to be rebuilt, all of these elements would need to be put in place quickly; there was a growing realization that this was not happening.

At the same time, and contrary to later assertions from critics of the operation, the United States was deeply and—in a technical sense at least—enthusiastically engaged in the military confrontation with Aideed. Partly this reflected the animosity created by the provocative actions of Aideed, animosity fanned by the increasingly frustrated communiqués of Admiral Howe; partly it reflected the frustrations of the UNOSOM military command as it saw its patrols and facilities mocked, harassed, and ambushed with no relief in sight; and formally it reflected the perceived obligation to do what was required to support the UN politically, especially after passage of UNSCR 837 on June 6. In spring, suggestions had been made that the United States should bring in special elements, later described generally as Rangers, to hunt down and capture Aideed. This recommendation had more support in the field than in Washington and from the beginning was resisted by the U.S. military leadership, which viewed this as yet another, and very long, step down the slippery slope—and as an operation with high risk and very modest chances of success. There was particular concern when Admiral Howe issued, on June 17, an arrest warrant for Aideed and posted a \$25,000 reward for his capture. Many U.S. analysts and policymakers felt the policy train was off track and threatening to carry the United States no one knew where in an increasingly militant and personalized vendetta against Somalia's premier master of urban warfare. But as pressures grew and Aideed emerged as a mocking and elusive media personality, visibly twisting the UN and U.S. tails on the world's stage, the decision was reluctantly approved in August, and the Rangers were sent in.

Interestingly, there was a concurrent effort to wrench the policy train back onto a more constructive track. Having concluded that U.S. as well as UN policy was drifting without apparent cohesion, and cognizant of growing congressional and

public apprehension, Secretary of Defense Aspin had directed his staff, working with the Joint Staff, to come up with a public presentation setting out an integrated strategy to salvage a deteriorating situation. In an August 27 major policy address, speaking on behalf of the Clinton administration, Aspin called on the UN to pull together urgently a cohesive and better-focused program of action, to include attention to the need for police, and a coordinated economic-political-security approach. He urged revitalization of the peace process and emphasized the necessity of bringing all the parties to the table.

Had there been time and a U.S. commitment to vigorously assist the UN to pursue the broad Aspin agenda, the unfavorable drift of events might yet have been reversed. The Aspin plan was broad and demanding and in most respects constituted a belated acknowledgment that the UN operation was failing to unfold in all of the key sectors, in many cases because the essential initial planning had yet to be completed. The following are extracts of Aspin's prescriptions, constituting in a sense a remarkable indictment of the lethargy of the collective effort up to that point:

First, we should bring UN combined troop strength up to planned levels. The United States has recently added 400 more combat troops to its Quick Reaction Force. UN-OSOM II, however, is approximately 5,000 troops short of its planned complement of 28,000. We fully expect others to do their share, as they have promised.

Second, additional efforts to set up a police force should begin immediately. . . . Third, we should continue removing heavy weapons from the militias and begin planning for implementation—in conjunction with Somali police—of a consistent weapons control policy. . . . Fourth, the United Nations must develop a detailed plan with concrete steps that will put together its economic, political, and security activities into an overall strategy. And it must provide adequate staff and budget to make progress on its political and economic objectives in Somalia. Fifth, the United Nations should draw on the experience of its success in Cambodia to form a core group of nations to support and speed its work in Somalia. . . . Sixth, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity should act now to bring the parties back together on the peace track. They might use the promising model of two previous conferences on Somali national reconciliation held in Addis Ababa.⁷

But even as efforts to implement this agenda proceeded, the orders to the Rangers stood; the hunt for Aideed was being intensified, and the possibility of having time to pursue the Aspin strategy was about to be extinguished.

Catastrophe and Retreat (October 1993–March 1994)

For all practical purposes, the U.S.-UN effort to impose any external vision of reconciliation and nation building on Somalia ended on October 3, 1993. Shocked by the death of eighteen U.S. Rangers (seventy-eight more were wounded) and hundreds of Somalis in a bitter fight with Aideed's followers in southern

Mogadishu and inundated with public and congressional criticism, the Clinton administration immediately abandoned the ongoing policy and adopted a policy looking to minimize any further casualties while seeking a formula for early U.S. withdrawal under circumstances other than humiliation. Orders went out at once to the troops to desist in the hunt for Aideed or any further attacks on his infrastructure and to "bunker down" to enhance security. In statements and briefings running from October 6 to 13, the administration announced that it would bolster the security of the forces in Somalia by dispatching heavy armor and other combat elements (which it had earlier refused to send in the hope of avoiding a further militarization of the situation). The brunt of the ensuing congressional and public criticism for the failure to send armor fell on and was accepted by Secretary Aspin, and that decision came to be symbolic of perceived drift, weakness, and confusion in the administration's Somalia policy, as well as contributing directly to the Ranger debacle. I find the general criticism warranted but see little direct connection to the fate of the Rangers. Even if the additional tanks had been sent, they would not have headed off the shootdown of the two helicopters and the ensuing firefight, which entailed substantial loss of life. Indeed, even if Aspin had approved sending the tanks, it is unlikely that they would have been on the scene by October 3. The fact of the matter is that neither the Congress nor the public, and perhaps not the higher levels of the White House, adequately understood that the Somalia operation had been for several months a volatile and high-risk military endeavor. The loss of the eighteen Rangers was truly an accident of war waiting to happen; equally plausible and probably more substantial loss of American life could have occurred on any day if Somali gunners had been able to bag an American transport plane or if one of Aideed's mobile 160mm mortar shells had actually detonated inside the UNOSOM compound, where several had landed. The inherent and continuous great risks of ongoing operations were neither highlighted to nor at all understood by the home front.

The administration defended its policy of engagement in Somalia but acknowledged that "personalizing" the quarrel with Aideed and neglecting the possibilities for a political solution had gotten the policy off track. To give the UN a reasonable chance to salvage the operation, the president said U.S. forces would remain until March 31. After that, the UNOSOM contingents would remain but without the presence of the U.S. military.

These announcements, essentially unilateral, seemed to threaten the entire operation with unraveling. But the prompt dispatch of the promised reinforcements, congressional acquiescence (after emotions had cooled somewhat) to the March withdrawal deadline, and a stabilization of the political situation in Mogadishu engineered by again-dispatched presidential emissary Oakley gave the operation time to recover. Attempts were once again launched to bolster the political reconciliation process, to expand and accelerate the humanitarian assistance program, and to build up the skeletal Somali police elements. It was, of course, too late. Although gratified by the new U.S.-UN approach and publicly pledging cooperation, General Aideed made it clear by his actions that he had no intention of

allowing any activities that would reduce his power or displace him. Violence returned gradually to the countryside, significant progress on the UN's ambitious agenda failed to materialize, and when U.S. forces in fact departed Somalia in late March, the prospects for a peaceful evolution were minimal.

Failure and Withdrawal (March 1994–March 1995)

And so it was. Despite some reinforcements and the arrival of heavier combat equipment for force protection, the will of the UNOSOM II leadership to actively pursue its mission had been broken by the U.S. abandonment. The effort was to continue, pro forma, for another year, but at ever-decreasing force levels. In July 1994 the UN announced a major, phased reduction of UNOSOM forces; in August the United States announced closure of the U.S. liaison office in Mogadishu together with its fifty-eight-man marine FAST (Fleet Anti-Terrorism Support Team) security force. Emboldened by the progressive enfeeblement of UNOSOM, Somalis increased their attacks against both peacekeepers and the NGO community, leading to a dynamic of ever-diminishing presence and capabilities to fulfill any of the plans laid out only a few months earlier by the UN. Thanks to prudent military management and the return of heavily armed U.S. forces to guard the final phase of the UNOSOM withdrawal, no major catastrophe befell the final UNOSOM elements, even as Somali looters closed in on the heels of the evacuees, carrying off the abandoned debris of the once-ambitious operation. The humiliation was complete.

Did We Accomplish Anything? Did We Learn Anything?

As Bob Oakley and John Hirsch have reminded us, at least the UNTAF phase of Somalia operations succeeded—within its mandate—exceedingly well, enabling humanitarian operations to resume to end the famine within a few weeks, thereby saving hundreds of thousands of lives; in brief, the UNTAF phase constituted an incredible achievement. One can also argue, and U.S. authorities have, that the operation gave the Somalis new opportunities to find peace among themselves and put in place some structures and agreements—local, regional, and national—among the Somali parties that still offer hope for the future. I consider this argument also quite valid as far as it goes.

Beyond these achievements, the first substantial, the second less so and as yet unfulfilled, the argument has been made that all concerned have learned a great deal from the Somalia operation. This dictum, however, cuts in two directions. On the positive side, certainly the UN learned (if it did not already know) just how feeble are its organizational staffing and procedures to deal with this type of massive operation. The United States—and other contributing nations—learned how to help the UN improve and apply these capabilities in a myriad of practical ways, and some of these technical lessons learned have subsequently been applied (the

careful and successful planning for Haiti is probably the best example). Everyone involved was also reminded sharply, as crises repeatedly overtook the process, of the need for effective programs of political consultation, of dialogue with national legislatures, and of a forthcoming and proactive public affairs posture. The Somali operation was poorly understood in large part because it was very poorly explained, whether to the public or the U.S. Congress or the German parliament.

But these truths, simple and powerful, should not have had to be relearned in Somalia. The new, and much more important, truths revealed in the Somalia operation (and to be repeated thereafter in Rwanda, Bosnia, perhaps yet in Haiti, perhaps yet in Burundi, perhaps yet in a dozen other places) are more sober: The UN is not up to such tasks and needs to be vastly improved and much more adequately financed if it is going to take on problems such as failed/failing states, genocide, and civil war or anarchy. This is not merely a matter of improving its military or peacekeeping and peacemaking capacities; it is a matter of improving performance—especially timely response—of all involved agencies, across the board, by several orders of magnitude. Regrettably, however, the United States, and probably other important international actors and donors, are not in the near term going to give the UN the kind of charter, assistance, and funding needed to raise it to such standards. Although the United States (possibly alone in the world) has the capabilities and resources to undertake such missions with good prospects for success, it has at least temporarily lost the will and therefore the capacity to lead internationally. In part this arises because there is no longer even the semblance of consensus among the public and between the Congress and the administration as to what its broad international interests and responsibilities are in the post-Cold War period. This confusion did not occur because of Somalia but was revealed by the stress that the Somalia operation put on the U.S. system. More specifically, the international community, and certainly the U.S. leadership, knows how to deal with armed and violent oppositionists but generally now lacks the will or motivation to do so; this will apparently not soon change, particularly where poor and backward lands are involved. This was actually first revealed starkly not in Somalia but in the collapse and destruction of Liberia starting two years earlier.⁸

Thus we will probably have more, not fewer, Somalias until the international community matures in its sense of responsibilities or until U.S. leadership finds its true bearings on international issues again. Those in the United States who oppose such interventions in the first instance will continue to find much comfort and advantage in raising the banner of nationalist sentiment with such slogans as “No U.S. troops under UN command,” as though this had actually occurred in Somalia or as if some of the more disastrous events had been committed by other than U.S. troops, under U.S. command, following U.S. policy.

Reflections on U.S. Government Decisionmaking Processes

The preceding narrative has unfolded along a time line and with limited attention to the details of U.S. government decisionmaking processes. In my view, in the

Somalia case there was little of great interest or importance in the mechanics of those processes. They were, in a word, adequate. The effort focused on Somalia was massive, dedicated, and well organized. The interagency perhaps got off to a bit of a slow start (outside of AID-OFDA and some of the State desks) and suffered throughout from inadequate hard information from the field, but there is little doubt that it developed reasonably accurate estimates of the situation, proposed reasonable courses of action, and in myriad ways coped with the tasks of coordination with hundreds of diplomats and bureaucrats around the world involved in various aspects of the Somalia operation.

The key players in the interagency structure, and those sent to lead the U.S. and UN efforts in the field, were almost without exception among our best and brightest. Talented staffs worked nights and weekends to feed the appetites of interlocking circles of agency and interagency study groups, working groups, and task forces, capped by the very active—and I would add on the basis of attending numerous sessions, very thoughtful—Deputies Committee. Some commentators have found a significant weakness in the process of transfer of responsibility from the Bush to the Clinton administrations, characterizing the former as experienced, focused, and generally on top of the operation and the latter as—to put it charitably—markedly less so. I find little merit in this argument. After all, the staffs remained essentially the same; the same key military players, all the way to the chairman of the JCS, stayed in place; and the previous key NSC player—Jon Howe—was repositioned in an equally critical position as the UN's (and for that matter, the U.S.'s) leader in the field. And on the face of it, the policies stayed the same. So in fact there was a great deal of continuity—of personalities, of process, of structure, of policy.

The important differences were twofold: (1) the nature of the challenge as the humanitarian mission gave way to the agreed follow-on mission of reconstituting Somalia (what came to be sneeringly identified as “nation building”) and (2) the fact that now the UN and not the United States was in the lead. It is my conclusion, looking backward, that there was no way the operation could have succeeded in any case because it was built on false premises, premises that became policy dictates in shaping and circumscribing both the U.S. and UN interventions. Those premises were that the operation could be politically neutral, that the major Somali political actors and warlords could be persuaded or forced into a process of reconciliation, and that a UN-led international operation could restore the basic structures of Somali society in a time frame adequate to capture and sustain the momentum of the initial UNITAF phase and then to consolidate those gains to prevent backsliding into renewed strife and anarchy.

These assumptions were highly dubious, and some skeptics had noted this from the first days of the operation. Most notorious was the acerbic observation of Ambassador Smith Hempstone, whose (promptly leaked) message from Nairobi warned Washington that the operation was ill fated, that “if you liked Beirut, you’ll love Mogadishu,” and that the United States should “think once, twice and three times before you embrace the Somali tarbabay.”⁹ Washington told Hempstone, not

nicely, to shut up; as it turned out, Hempstone was very much on target. The sharpness of the Washington response, I believe, had only a little to do with the Hempstone challenge to the wisdom of the decision and more to do with the nagging doubt that not only was he possibly right but, in particular, he should not be raising problems that could be, should be, left to the incoming administration and to the UN. The silencing of Hempstone, and other doubters, at this early point in the drama was mainly a decision, by reflex, to kick these basic concerns downstream to those who would later be responsible. Coupled with the narrow focus placed on the UNITAF operation, this reaction would also complete the formula for near-certain failure. In essence, and contrary to hopeful premises, the Somalis would not be tractable and the UN would not be capable. But this was not known at the time and would ultimately and reluctantly be accepted only after energetic attempts to prove the opposite.

The main Somali warlord, to the surprise of some and the frustrated non-surprise of others more familiar with Somalia, would not be co-opted, would not yield on his key demands, and would struggle bitterly to hold on to the gains he and his followers had won in Mogadishu in the final death struggle with Siad Barre. But whereas General Aided had tested UNITAF and, meeting quick and forceful responses, thereafter acted with professional restraint, he calculated correctly that UNOSOM II could be confronted with less risk and—as he was reported as telling his followers—with sufficient casualties could be driven into the ocean. When this violence brought the U.S. Rangers in search of him, he continued to fight bitterly, accepting heavy losses but ultimately breaking the will of U.S. authorities to persevere in the face of mounting American casualties and public and congressional outrage. From Aided's perspective, the UN had invaded Somalia, had sought by innumerable actions to diminish his stature and power, and in June had declared war on him; another battle to the death followed, and the UN—with the United States finally sounding retreat—lost the war. From October 3 on, there was no “UN solution” realistically available for Somalia.

Those who argue that the Somalia operation under guidance from the Bush team was sound and successful, whereas the operation under the Clinton team was unsound and disastrous, seem to me unwilling to confront the main point: The policy stream was continuous, and the complete seeds of disaster were put in place by decisions and guiding principles and assumptions carrying over from the beginning of the operation. The fruit was bad because the seed was bad. The fundamental flaws in the policy seed were several: (1) we were there only to restore security, not to decide a political outcome (later recast into the catchy not-out-problem-after-all phrase, “African solutions for African problems”); (2) we had no obligation to and would not defang the warlords and gangs; and (3) it was up to the UN to put quickly in place the broad institutional capabilities and resources needed to revitalize at least the minimal elements of a functioning Somali society and government. As to the final point, and confirming suspicions that had been widely shared in interagency planning sessions from the earliest months, the UN would prove utterly incapable of doing this, a fact that in and of itself was probably

enough also to doom the operation in the midterm had the failure not already been complete in the short term.

It should be observed that the United States, when confronted with the undeniable evidence that the UN was neither organized nor staffed to actually fulfill the mandate it had given itself in Somalia, chose not to rally round with new heroic measures of support. There was a tremendous amount of diplomatic effort and technical staff work expended, but the emphasis was on somehow forcing the UN to perform without substantially raising the level of U.S. effort within the UN system. For example, there was a readily apparent need for U.S. civil affairs officers, in large numbers, to strengthen the UN's field operations. There was a desperate need for public safety advisers and technicians to actually help implement the sensible plans to restore the police and court systems that had been worked out with the Somalis. The United States did not offer to fill these and other critical voids, partly for reasons of cost, partly for reasons of concern with personnel security, partly because neither the Department of Defense nor the White House wanted to increase the number of military personnel in Somalia, in whatever status. But mainly, the United States refrained from offering to do more because of the fear of blurring the handoff of responsibilities to the UN. UNITAF had been a U.S. responsibility, but UNOSOM and the parallel UN civil operations were not, and the United States did not want to do anything that would tarnish the purity of the transfer of responsibility, especially with an increasingly hostile Congress nipping at the policymakers' heels. In terms of the UN's existing institutional capabilities and available personnel resources, the effect was on a par with turning over the helm of a ship in boiling waters to a five-year-old with an admonishment to sail safely. The ensuing shipwreck was both inevitable and predictable. But at least the United States could identify it as a UN failure.

The UN failure in Somalia was not a failure of policy, of process, of personalities, or of tactics. It was in part a failure of strategy, in part a failure of capabilities, and mainly a failure of collective will and leadership. Those most astutely aware of the limitations of international collective action, and of the shallow support such actions enjoy with the public and with national legislative bodies, had cautiously stayed on the sidelines two years earlier as Liberia self-destructed, finally finding small comfort in assisting the efforts (also futile) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to find a West African solution to a West African debacle. After failure in Somalia, the international community would again sit by as Rwanda imploded with a minimum of a half-million persons slaughtered in an orgy of genocide. Today, a similar delicate unwillingness to be excessively involved continues to drive Western policy on the catastrophe in Bosnia and the impending ethnic slaughter in Burundi.

Thus the Somalia operation was for a time a potential important exception to normal practice, perhaps even a precedent—an actual attempt to leap into and resolve a vicious internal situation verging on or perhaps gone beyond civil war. But even as the operation went through its gargantuan labors, it narrowed down its

objectives and responsibilities in a way that made the event into an exercise in irrelevancy, or perhaps irreality.

Any operation like the UNITAF-UNOSOM intervention in Somalia is by nature political and will involve the intervening powers intimately in all the dynamics of the situation. If the base cause of conditions requiring intervention is political and it is therefore deemed essential to correct it, then the will to frankly identify the problem and to follow through with strong corrective action needs to be in place from the beginning. The public and the legislatures concerned need to be brought into the game plan and their understanding and support put on a solid basis. There must be a willingness to be frank about the facts of the situation and about the costs that will probably come, including substantial loss of life. And whereas there is need for skillful and active diplomacy and political consultation on the ground, there must also be a willingness and capability to deal with great force, when necessary, with those who stand forcibly in the way of implementation of the international mandate, whatever its flaws. These factors were never firmly in place for UNOSOM II, although there was much huffing and puffing about them, thereby encouraging U.S. officials to delude themselves about the depth and seriousness of the national commitment—but apparently never fooling General Aided.

If the formidable energies and talents of the Somalis can be focused and harnessed, through their own volition, on reconciliation and reconstruction, a vibrant Somalia could quickly rise from the present ruins. If the focus remains on confrontation and violent quarrels over diminishing scraps of piratical opportunity, it is all too likely that the miserable conditions of 1991 will return, then confounding the international community with yet another massive crisis that it will, understandably, hesitate to address. Perhaps the Somali leadership fully appreciates this and will accordingly redouble its efforts toward reconciliation. Perhaps.

Notes

1. Keith Richards, "Envoy Finds Somalia in Dissolution," *Washington Post*, January 7, 1992, p. A1.
2. Herman Cohen, "Intervention in Somalia," in Allan E. Goodman, ed., *The Diplomatic Record, 1992-1993* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 54.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
4. Cuny was well known for his active involvement and expertise in humanitarian operations as president of the NGO Intersect Relief and Reconstruction.
5. John Hirsch and Robert Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1995), p. 43.
6. *Ibid.*, chaps. 5, 6.
7. Les Aspin, "Remarks Prepared for Delivery by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., August 27, 1993," Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), news release no. 398-93.

8. There is little doubt that the U.S. naval-marine task force dispatched to Liberia could have intervened decisively to bring an early end to the Liberian civil war precipitated by Charles Taylor. Instead, the Bush administration denied responsibility for resolving the crisis and limited the task force's functions to emergency evacuations and protection of the U.S. embassy compound. The task force remained offshore for months, "sailing and sailing," as one Liberian put it, while doing nothing to stop the slaughter or to end the conflict that would over the next several years destroy the country.

9. See *U.S. News and World Report*, December 14, 1992. Hempsstone's document deserves now to be given the serious attention denied to it at the time.

10

Relations Between the United States and United Nations in Dealing with Somalia

JONATHAN T. HOWE

Of all the relationships between member countries and the organizations they create, the one between the United States and the UN is perhaps the most unique, complex, and important. Both the United States and the UN will be critical actors in defining any future role the world organization may play in dealing with massive humanitarian catastrophes resulting from ethnic cleansing, genocide, or man-made starvation. Therefore, it is important to examine U.S.-UN relations during these entities' demanding and unprecedented joint effort to help the failed state of Somalia from 1992 to 1995.

The UN and the United States approach problems from different perspectives. The interests, obligations, and capabilities of the organization of nations are not the same as those of an individual member country. A nation's first loyalties, for example, are to its own constituency. A democracy must satisfy the requirements of its citizens. If a nation experiences severe internal criticism, its government may not be able to sustain an institutional commitment even if the leadership is willing to do so. The UN answers to member nations—not to an electorate. When blame is spread among the 180 member nations of this institution, it is more easily diffused. Conversely, since the UN has no domestic constituency, it may become a convenient scapegoat for nations that do.

Those who work for the UN understandably put priority on protecting the institution and meeting the wishes of a broad consensus of nations. They must respond to pressures from many different directions. For example, the UN may look at a particular crisis in the context of a global balancing act in trying to meet worldwide demands. A single success or failure among a dozen tests does not necessarily look the same to the UN as to the principal nations involved in a particular mission. The UN may be willing to trade a nation's assistance in one crisis situation for its help in filling a larger gap somewhere else. Preventing further