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The Somalian Crisis: A Legacy of Colonialism?

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Mamman Musa Adamu - Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

E-mail: mammanmusa2003@yahoo.co.uk

Phone No. 07056275560

Abstract:

The Somalian crisis seemed to have defied all solutions since its inception in 1991. The country had become increasingly ungovernable and the condition had been described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Somalia is considered by many to be a 'failed state' being the only state in the world with a vacant seat at the United Nations. It is not that it has been abolished but that it has entered what some analysts have called an undetermined 'Gray Zone'. All these have been as a result of the crisis that engulfed the country since the fall of the regime of Siyyad Barre almost two decades ago and further complicated by the Ethiopian /American invasion of 2006. This paper examines the roots of the crisis, the attempts made at reconciliation as well as the role of international bodies in averting or escalating the crisis. The paper also looks at the possibility of finding a lasting peace in the country. It is argued that the Somalian crisis should be largely seen as a legacy of colonialism in the country as well as the misdeeds of some people like Siyyad Barre. The paper shows that the only way to peace is to allow the Somalians to determine the manner in which they want to be ruled.

Roots of the crisis:

One of the most favourite but disturbing explanations in the discussion of the roots of the crisis in Somalia is that the crisis was an ethnic or tribal war

between the various clans and ethnic groups in the country. The major advocates of this argument are Kinfe Abraham (2000), Hussein M. Adam (1997), Hirsch and Oakley (1995) and other media outfits and correspondents. Kinfe, 2002, has viewed the Somalian crisis as part of what he referred to as a “culture of ordered anarchy which prevails among pastoral nomads”. He largely saw the conflict as a clan war between the Darood clan of Siyyad Barre and other clans such as the Majerteen, Hawiyee, Isaaq and Digil- Mirifle. Noel Mwakugu and David Aweis of the BBC News also presented the war as ethnic between the Mogadishu’s dominant clan, the Hawiyee against the Darood clan of President Yusuf Abdullahi. The Hawiyees fighting because of their fear that Abdullahi’s administration was only aimed at ending their traditional dominance in government (www.bbcnews.com 26th April, 2007). Aweis was specifically of the opinion that the likelihood of Somalis moving beyond their clan outlook and uniting behind one leader was slim and that ‘everyone’s agenda comes down to clan in the end’(ibid). This kind of explanation seems to be popular with the western media based on their perception of African societies as being ethnic and tribal conglomerations. The same description was given in the case of many other conflicts in Africa such as that of Darfur (Mamman, 2008). This line of thinking, however, incapacitates us from going beyond the categories of these clans to the real issues that led to the crisis. Moreover, it should be noted that the Darood, Majerteen, Hawiyee or the Isaaq clans would not be fighting just because of their ethnic identities.

Scholars like Thomas Walkom and Amina Mire were also of the opinion that the crisis especially in its later form was a religious war between Christians as represented by Ethiopia and the US and muslims in Somalia. Thomas Walkom noted that “American backed, foreign Christian troops intervened in a Muslim civil war to unseat the winning islamist side” while Mire called it a “Christian colonial crusade” and concluded that “this is a Christian unholy crusading war against the muslim nation of Somalia” (www.somaliacrisis.com). It should be noted however, that both Ethiopia and the US went to Somalia not to Christianize anybody but to protect their security, political and economic interests as we shall see later in this discussion.

The colonial roots of the crisis:

The Somalian crisis had its roots in Somalia’s colonial past. Just like Shillington, (1994) argued, most of the post- independent conflicts in Africa

could be traced to its colonial experience and the corruption or incompetence of its leaders. He noted that:

“The problems which Africans and their governments have had to face since independence have very largely, been the product of their history. This is not to suggest that the misdirection, corruption or incompetence of some African leaders or even ecological factors have not been partly to blame for Africa’s continuing underdevelopment. But the roots of many of Africa’s recurrent problems in the final decades of the 20th century are to be found in the period of colonial rule..... (Shillington, 1994 p.408).

The crisis could also be seen to be an excellent example of a colonial legacy in all of its ramifications. The Somalian people had enjoyed relative peace for most of the period before the colonial infiltration. In fact (Lyons and Samatar, 1995) have shown that their kinship and homogeneity was a major source of stability during the pre- colonial period. (Hirsch and Oakley, 1995 p.3) have in the same way shown that the uniqueness of the Somali state in the sub- region was based on a single ethnic group, their identity was defined by a common language (Af-Somali), a pastoral economy, adherence to Islam (Sunni) and a patriarchal clan based political system. The people believed that they descended from the same male ancestor and his two sons Somali and Sab. The Somali or Somaale group constituted about 80 percent of the population and occupied the northern part of the country while the Sab took the remaining 20 percent and were based in southern Somalia. The two groups’ basic identity was in their economic activities with the Somaale being predominantly nomadic while the Sab were mostly agriculturalist. The communities were also united into a larger social and political unit called a (ren) each with its own leader (“Somalia culture” www.arab.net.). Both Anna Simons (1998) p.57 and Mohammed (1997) have indicated that there were six kin- based clan families to which the whole people belong, namely the Dir, Isaaq, Darood, Hawiye Digil and Rahanwein which are again divided patrilineally into smaller sub- clans. Lyons and Samatar, 1995 have given a more complex division in their book. They mentioned three clan families namely the Saar, Irir and Darood. The Saar comprised of the Rahanwein and the Digil, the Irir sub- divided into the Dir, Isaaq and Hawiye while the Darood were made up of five clans namely the Ogaden, Majerteen,

Warsangali, Marchan and Dalbonte. These bonds managed to cement Somali cohesion in the period before the arrival of the Europeans and served as shock absorbers in crisis situations.

The European infiltration of the area, however led to the balkanization of the country thus sowing the seeds of discord and dissensions that manifested after independence. This started with the British occupation of Aden on the Arabian coast in 1839 and some towns on the Somalian coast in 1882 under the guise of safe guarding the route to India through the Suez Canal which had been opened in 1869. It followed this with the declaration of a protectorate over the area and known as British Somaliland under the administration of the British foreign office in 1898 and of the colonial office in 1905. Italy was the next country to be in Somalia and it signed treaties with native Somali sultans and acquired a foothold along the coast of the Indian Ocean by 1889 (Fage, 1988 p.377). It then extended its control over the area inland by the treaty of London which was signed in 1915 and via other post war agreements. This area became the Italian Somaliland. The French acquired part of the Somali area around Obok on the Afar coast in 1862, developed the port of Djibouti in 1884 and made it to become the French Somaliland (ibid p. 378). A part of Somalia, known as Ogaden also came under Ethiopia while another part was carved into northern Kenya. Hence, the land traditionally occupied by the Somali people was balkanized into five states by the colonialists during the colonial period. It was this division that should be taken to be partly responsible for what was to follow after independence and to ultimately lead to the Somalian instability and crisis. This division seriously militated against the tendency of unity as each of the territories was administered independent of the other in a grand divide and rule style.

The British used the so- called indirect rule system which ruled through the traditional rulers of the people. The Italians on the other hand used the direct system in which it brutalized the people and made them to submit their customs, rights and economic preferences to the conquerors ways. Nomadic customs and laws were abolished and Roman law was instituted in its place. . This fact made the south to be more nationalistic and radical in its independence struggle than the north. According to Lyons and Samatar the three colonial traditions that operated in these places led to 'split national personality' and divided loyalties affecting the post- colonial Somalia (Lyons and Samatar, 1995 p. 10-11).The first repercussion of this was that it made

the people to be introspective and derive their national inspiration from their clan enclaves. Clan dissention, discord and factionalism were therefore not a result of the civil war but were entrenched from the colonial period to the post 1991 period. At the time of their independence, the two regions were rushed headlong into immediate and unconditional unitary form of association in 1960 for which they were poorly prepared and not based on the will of the majority of the people. The UN had moved the independence date of Italian Somaliland from 2nd December to 1st July, 1960 while the British fixed the date for its own colony on 26th June, 1960, a five days interval. No time was provided for the two territories to appoint committees that could draft the legal instruments of the union or consultations. As Paul 2004, showed the success of uniting the former Italian and British colonies nourished an appetite for the unification of all Somalis under a single flag. The flag which was designed at independence had a five- pointed star, with the first two representing the British and Italian colonies, already unified and the other three symbolizing Somalis still under 'foreign' rule in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. But while the claims over Djibouti proved difficult as a result of the determination by France to protect its own perceived strategic interests in the Red Sea, the Somali people struggled to re- unite with their people abandoned in Kenya and Ethiopia after independence. This led to the Somali guerilla war in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya (NFD) from 1963 to 1967 and another uprising in the Ogaden region by the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) leading to a brief confrontation between the Ethiopian and Somalian forces in 1963 and finally culminating into the Ogaden war of 1977-1978 between the two countries. All these attempts, however, did not come into fruition and thus made the country to start on a very shaky note. It is significant to note that these events were instrumental in the fall of the first republic with the assassination of President Ali Sharmake in 1969 and the military coup that brought Siyyad Barre into power.

Another direct outcome was the secession of Somaliland from the union with Somalia rejecting the agreement that united the former colonial territories of British and Italian Somaliland.

The fall of the government of Siyyad Barre witnessed the beginning of serious agitation by the northerners in British Somaliland for a referendum on the constitution as well as campaigning and advocating for its boycott (Lewis, 1965 p.172, 219). They made a unilateral declaration of separation on 18th May, 1991 and sought an international recognition. Mr. Egal noted in

a letter to the OAU summit of 24th May, 1997 that they needed political separation in accordance with the charter of the OAU and be recognized as a state within their old colonial borders (Cited in Kinfe p.439-440). The Puntland state of Somalia was also created in July, 1998, but unlike the Somaliland it held the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the Somali nation to be inviolable and did not believe in any form of secession, disunity or the breakdown of the Somali nation.

The Role of Siyyad Barre:

Another contributory factor to the degeneration of the crisis was the role played by President Siyyad Barre from 1969 to 1991. Barre was said to have unleashed a well-orchestrated campaign of terror with surveillance, interrogation, mass detention, torture, harassment and arbitrary trials through a secret police known as the Gudwadhayan or youthful victory. He was thus blamed for the death of more than 2000 people in the Mudug region for participating in an abortive coup in April 1978 and the disappearance of young people in Hargeisa in the 1980's (Kinfe 2002). Barre was even said to have dropped bombs on Somali citizens after they demonstrated against his 20 year despotic rule in May 1988. Many politicians, businessmen, religious leaders and young students simply vanished or were butchered. On one occasion in July 1989, on a Moslem holiday, government forces swooped down and arrested six prominent imams and whole sections of worshippers were gunned down. So many other innocent people were rounded up and imprisoned without the benefit of legal procedures and many were murdered and buried on the Jasira beach. Over 1000 died that day (www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-205.html). In 1990 the Newyork-based human rights organization; Africa Watch charged Barre's regime with responsibility for the deaths of 50,000 to 60,000 civilians since hostilities broke out between the government and rebels from the Somali National Movement (ibid). It should be noted, however, that the picture that is presented that Barre targeted some clans for elimination as argued by Kinfe and Hussein M. Adam, is not correct. Barre targeted political opponents either perceived or real and did not care where they had come from or what clan they belonged to or even what faith they professed. It was only accidental that the opposition would come from one single clan. It should also be noted that the excesses of the Barre regime were not an exception in Africa. In the late 1980,s many African governments including those of the Cameroons, Chad, Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sudan, Uganda, Togo and Zaire

declared war against their own citizens in their mad obsession with political power.

Hence the Somalian crisis should be seen as the outcome of the division of that country into five different territories by the colonialists and the misdeeds of Siyyad Barre and his cohorts and not because of ethnicity or tribalism or even religious sentiments. The suggestion that is being made that it was the kinship system that was largely responsible for the horrors committed during the civil war is also far from the truth. This is because these factions transcended their clans and splintered into numerous sub-groups, all struggling to control the scarce resources in the country. A political document allegedly smuggled out from the inner circle of the Aideed group, had made it very clear what this group was fighting for. The group was fighting for the control of the water in the two rivers of Shabelle and Juba as this would ensure the control of the economic might of Somalia as a nation. Secondly, it also wanted the control of Juba River to include the capture of the city of Kismayo as a means to control the resources of the country ("Out Somalia", 14th June, 1996). The Somali National Movement of Somaliland had an ambition of re-establishing access to the Haud grazing area in Ethiopia which was ruined by the defeat of Somalia in the Ogaden war of 1977/78. It realized that cooperation rather than confrontation with Ethiopia held the key for access to the Haud which was ceded to Ethiopia in 1954 (Kinfu, 2002, p.398-399). It also opposed the inadequate political representation, unequal distribution of development resources and government regulation of business particularly the livestock and qaat trade (Copson, 1994 p.50).

Attempts at National Reconciliation:

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia had once said that Somalia did not suffer from lack of agreements signed and sealed among the various factions but that the problem was one of implementation (Kinfu 2002). This fact is a truism when one examines the number of attempts that were made to reconcile the warring factions from the inception of the crisis in 1991 to date. A breakdown of these would suffice here. The first of the meetings was held at Djibouti and came to be known as Djibouti One. This was followed by Djibouti Two held between 15th-21st July, 1991 attended by many African leaders and representatives from other countries and other organizations like the Arab League, OAU, OIC, EEC and IGAD. Another meeting on national reconciliation was held on 27th March, 1993 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with

the 15 southern factions in attendance. Other meetings were held in Cairo from 1st to 7th March, 1994 and Nairobi from 11-13 March, 1994. Similar conferences were held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Cairo and Sana'a, Yemen but all failed to make a difference in Somalia. Another meeting in Nairobi was called by the Kenyan President from 9- 16 October, 1996 and was attended by both the Mahdi and Aideed factions. The Sodere meeting was spearheaded by Ethiopia which had the mandate from both the OAU and IGAD to assist in the search for peace in Somalia as mentioned above. The meeting was held in January, 1997 and was able to bring together 27 Somali leaders representing 26 political factions. It led to the signing of the Sodere Declaration in which it was agreed to establish a joint municipal police force and to reopen the Mogadishu seaport and airports but was not effective. Again the new chairman of IGAD and President of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelleh organized a meeting at Arta in eastern Djibouti with nearly 2000 delegates in attendance on 24th July, 2000. A power-sharing arrangement and a national constitution to see Somalia through a three-year transitional period was adopted but Somaliland and Puntland leaders and some other politicians boycotted the conference labeling it as unrepresentative and externally imposed (Kinfe, 2002, pp342-343). The meeting all the same had a transitional parliament in place which elected Abdallah Deerow Isaaq as its speaker and elected Abdilkassim Salat Hassan as President of Somalia in August, 2000. The two regions of Somaliland and Puntland were, however, opposed to the new authority viewing it as a threat to their relative stability and autonomy. The composition of the government officials, however, became a matter of concern to the international community and countries like Ethiopia and Kenya. Their fears were mainly derived from some of the officials having an affiliation with some Islamist fundamentalist organizations in Somalia such as Al- Ithihad, Al- Islah, Al- Ikhwan, Al- Tablik, Al- Majma, Al- Takfir with international ties in the Gulf, Sudan, Djibouti, Egypt, Afghanistan and Iran (Kinfe, 2002, p. 369). The dreaded Osama bin Laden was further said to have a branch in Somalia, established by his people who entered the country in 1998 and had since then made the country the hub of his activities. Al- Ithihad was alleged to serve as the surrogate for bin- Laden's organization and conducting training on how to wage holy wars. The President and the Prime Minister were even accused to have connection with Al-Islah. Some of the factional leaders were also mentioned to have some links with these organizations but this was difficult to prove. Libya, Sudan and Egypt were suspected to harbour and sponsor some of these organizations (Kinfe, 2002, pp.469-470). In 2002, a

conference was convened in Embagathi in Kenya with the backing of the US and the EU who were not comfortable with the TNG under Abdilkasim Hassan. The conference spearheaded the selection of a parliament which would in turn elect a president who would appoint a government. The TFG came into being after two long years of unseemly haggling and maneuverings by the warlord participants, a parliament drawn from representatives of the Somali clans was established and Abdullahi Yusuf, the warlord ruler of the autonomous region of Puntland, who had secured the backing of Ethiopia for his presidential bid and said to use cash inducements, appeals to kinship, promises of position and threats of force, was duly sworn in as the president of the TFG in 2004. The stand-off and acrimonious rhetoric between the factions has continued to this day (www.somalilandradio.com/index.php).

The International Role in the Crisis:

The US and the former Soviet Union spent most of the 70's and 80's building up the military forces in both Somalia and Ethiopia, each switching sides in the mid 70's. The second time the international organizations played a role in Somalia was after the ouster of Siyyad Barre from power in 1991. His ouster was followed by a major crisis that was akin to a civil war causing a lot of hunger, suffering and displacements. The early responses to the crisis was that provided by the international NGO's and the ICRC which established emergency medical and feeding operations early in January and February 1991. The UN followed 18 months later by stationing lightly armed troops of 500 Pakistani peacekeepers under the remit of UN operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) as a buffer between the warring factions after a ceasefire agreement was negotiated. The peacekeepers had a restricted mandate and could only use force in self defense. By this time, however, an estimated 300,000 had died of starvation and hunger-related diseases, some 500,000 people had fled to Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, and as many as 3,000 people, mainly women, children and the old were dying daily (Kinfe, 2002 p.86-89). Aideed viewed the presence of the international force as an obstacle to the realization of his political ambitions of becoming the president of Somalia and hence challenged them. A major combat on 5th June, 1993 between Aideed fighters and the forces of the UN led to the death of 24 Pakistani peacekeepers and 34 Somalis during a weapons search at Aideed's radio station, Radio Mogadishu. Another 18 US soldiers and 500- 1000 Somalis were killed by Aideed's militia on 3 August, 1993 when two US helicopters were shot down in Mogadishu. By September, 1993 at least 56 UN soldiers and hundreds of Somalis had died in clashes between the UN

and Aideed's forces. These incidents made the US government to withdraw all of its troops from Somalia in September, 1994. This marked the end of UNOSOM's 3 year operation period in Somalia which saw an estimated 6000 Somalis and 83 peacekeepers killed in clashes between Somali militia and the UN (Hirsch and Oakley, 1993 p.115-147). The United Nations operation in Somalia failed largely because of what the UN Secretary General special envoy to Somalia, the Algerian diplomat, Ambassador Mohammed Sahnoun referred to as the belated and hastily organized intervention. Sahnoun was optimistic that if the UN had acted promptly in Somalia hundred of thousands of lives would have been saved (M. Sahnoun (1994) p. xi). The mission was also blamed for failing to disarm the factional leaders and was more concerned for the security of its own forces than bringing peace in Somalia. But worse still, it sought the cooperation of the factional leaders thus conferring on them the badge of legitimacy (Kinfe, 2002). Somalia had since then been considered as a no-go zone and a dangerous place for the UN and other international organizations because of the level of violence. The UN and other organizations had stopped any further attempts to restore peace in the country till the emergence of the Union of Islamic Courts in 2006.

The Role of OAU:

The OAU has variously been described as a toothless bulldog that can bark but cannot bite or a feeble regional body that produces more invective than action. Abbatey has noted that in its entire history the OAU has not succeeded in mediating an end to a single conflict in Africa (www.cato.org/pubs/pas). This fact could also be seen in the case of the way it handled the Somali crisis. The first major blunder committed by the O.A.U. was when it assigned Ethiopia through its newly established Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (MCPMR) to be the one to broker peace in the country in June 1993. It was a mistake because Somalia in the past had fought several wars with Ethiopia for the restoration of its territory, the Ogaden region. Hence Somalia had by this time become an arch enemy of Ethiopia and was not likely going to respect or honour any agreement reached. It is of no wonder that Ethiopia did little or nothing in the restoration of peace between the major combatants up to 2006 when it invaded Somalia. The Aideed and Mahdi groups had in protest to Ethiopian mediation involved other Arab countries from the Middle East as mediators notably Egypt, Yemen, the Arab League and the League of Islamic Countries in a bid to weaken the OAU'S initiative (Kinfe, 2002 p.54-55).

Somalia as a Victim of ‘War on Terrorism’:

Somalia had not known peace for 16 years until the emergence of the Council of Islamic Courts who ruled Mogadishu and much of Southern Somalia for 6 months in 2006. The Islamic Courts government was said to be popular in Mogadishu after bringing relative order and driving out clan war lords responsible for all the years of death and mayhem. They were, however, overthrown by the Ethiopian army with US backing in December 2006. Ethiopian tanks supported by US AC 130 helicopter gun ships invaded Somalia in order to install the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) under Abdullahi Yusuf. The Ethiopian government claimed to be in Somalia for two reasons, the first being at the ‘invitation’ of the Interim National Government headed by a former war lord, Abdullahi Yusuf to help bring stability to the country and secondly to avert the threat posed by the Union of Islamic Courts(UIC) which had declared jihad war on it. Ethiopia was, however, seen as America’s new puppet and an accomplice, fighting a proxy war on behalf of America. While the white house failed to convince India or Pakistan to rent their troops for occupation duty in Iraq, it succeeded in using Ethiopia’s army in Somalia duplicating the British and German empires’ wide scale use of native troops like the ‘Sepoys’ in India or the ‘askaris’ in East Africa during the First and Second World Wars (Shillington 2004). This was for the purpose of receiving large infusions of aid from Washington. It is significant to note that the US regarded Ethiopia as a strategic partner in the so-called global war on terrorism on the Horn considering the fact that it had problems with Sudan over Darfur and its relations with Eritrea was equally not at its best. Ken Ulende and Charlie Kimber noted as follows:

“Ethiopia’s rulers ordered the war on behalf of George Bush in order to prosecute their own regional interests, to deflect western criticism of their own repressive regime, and to collect the pay off from being a top US ally in a strategically crucial area” (somaliacrisis@yahoo.com)

It should be noted, however, that as (Lyons, 2007) pointed out, Ethiopia also had its own very specific national security interest to protect by its presence in Somalia. This is in connection with the disputed Ogaden region. It would not like to loosen its grip on Somalia so as to be able to contain separatist forces in the region. When the Islamists were in control in Mogadishu, their influence stretched to the Ogaden providing cultural and ideological succour to separatist rebels there. Hence, Ethiopian support of the interim

administration was seen as a way of getting a partner that could counter the activities of the rebels in Ogaden region. According to Ahmed Egal, Ethiopia by its action was seeking for a government in Somalia that would not pose a security threat to its borders and which would not encourage and support either the guerilla fighters of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) or the jihadists of Al Ittihad or even the al- Shabab jihadists who were trained in places like the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Toronto. (www.radiosomaliland.com/index.php 8th February, 2006).

The US had not been in Somalia since 1993 when they were forced out by the warlords particularly, General Aideed. American interest was renewed as a result of the actions of the Islamic courts whose ban on music, dance and the qat narcotic made the US to label them as Taliban, extremists, islamists, jihadists and seen as sympathetic to al- Qaeda and not because of advancing freedom and democracy in the region. Amina Mire described their presence as predicated on lies and deceit for there was no shred of evidence that Somalia's Islamist had any link to terror groups such as al- Qaeda (Somalia's crisis- somaliacrisis@yahoo.com). She was very emphatic that Ethiopia's occupation would continue for as long as possible because it served the US imperialist objectives to gain total control over Somalia's unexplored energy and other natural resources and as a geopolitical outpost in support of other US imperial projects in Africa and the Horn of Africa in particular (ibid). Ethiopian Prime Minister had confessed himself that the government would withdraw its forces anytime it deemed it necessary or 'as long as the cost was bearable' (The Reporter, 24 May, 2008). Somalia was also referred as the third target of George W. Bush's 'global war on terrorism,'(the two others being Afghanistan and Iraq) or the 'long war' which is an escalation of the long- running, bipartisan foreign policy of the 'National Security State' that has ruled America for 60 years (Cindy 2006). The occupation was illegal and a violation of the principle of state sovereignty enshrined in the UN charter as well as UN resolution 1725, which forbids neighbouring states from deploying troops from Somalia. The occupation was also a violation of the African Union charter. It could be seen that this occupation was threatening to further destabilize a region which had repeatedly been torn apart by war and famine.

The Impact of the War:

Somalia had been turned into an arena of lawlessness, no effective central government, no authority, everyone seemed to carry a gun and everything

had turned upside down since 1991. This situation was worsened by the Ethiopian and US invasion of the country as the vast majority of moderate Somalis were turned into fundamentalists. By May 2007, the UN said an estimated number of 400,000 people had fled Mogadishu. Up to 18,000 of these ended up in a district called Bulla Hawa on the Somali- Kenyan border and were mostly without food, medicine and shelter (News Africa Aljazeera.NET 8th May, 2007). The number of displaced people rose to 850,000 by November, 2007 with about 3000 people dead (News Africa Aljazeera.NET) 14th November, 2007). Displacements were reported to top those in Iraq, Darfur or Srilanka. (www.bbcnews.com 27th April, 2007).

The UN humanitarian chief said that in terms of the numbers of people displaced and their access to them Somalia was a worse crisis than Darfur or Chad or anywhere else (www.telegraph.co.uk 15th June, 2007). More than a third of Somalis were also reported to be relying on food aid to survive. Similarly, the officials of education agencies noted that more than 30,000 students lost school education due to insecurity and targeting of students and teachers since the Ethiopian and Somali government forces ousted an Islamic administration in south and central Somalia (allafrica.com 20th October, 2008). The crisis also led to kidnapping and brigandage and looting. Five Ugandan peacekeepers had lost their lives and another eight injured since they entered Somalia under the auspices of the African Union. The peacekeepers were attacked because they were seen as protecting and supporting the TFG. Somalia and the Gulf of Aden had witnessed an increase in piracy in the past two years. The International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre (P.R.C.) had in its annual report noted that 111 of the 293 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in 2008 took place in Somalia and the Gulf of Aden (allafrica.com 16/01/2009) The International Maritime Organization had in a similar vein reported more than 120 acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia where an approximate 20,000 cargo ships each year sail to and from Egypt's Suez Canal carrying a tenth of world trade. More than 35 ships were seized by pirates and approximately 600 seamen were kidnapped and held for ransom (allafrica.com 15th January, 2009).

The war has also destabilized the region. There were reports in September 2007 indicating that Eritrea was behind arms shipments to Somalia, providing military assistance to the Islamic courts regarded as affiliated with al- Qaeda and that the US was considering designating Eritrea as a state

sponsor of terrorism (www.allafrica.com 6th September, 2007). Eritrea and Ethiopia fought a brutal border war from 1998 to 2000 and left a lot of the issues unresolved. The peace agreements which were meant to end the conflict were not implemented leaving Eritrea to be frustrated. One direct manifestation of that frustration is that it began to send insurgents and support anti Ethiopian groups in Somalia and within Ethiopia. Eritrea holds the US responsible for not implementing the peace agreement that would award Eritrea the symbolically important town of Badme to its side of the border which the UN backed Ethiopia- Eritrea border commission had awarded Eritrea. Ethiopia had been reluctant to comply with that border agreement. Eritrea expected the US which was a guarantor of this agreement to compel Ethiopia to adhere to it. The US refused to intervene because of its multiple interests with the Ethiopians. So Eritrea was enormously angry with the US for that reason and resorted to insisting on US diplomatic pouches and arresting US Foreign Service Nationals who work at the embassy in Asmara (www.cfr.org/publication/14074). This is the background within which Ethiopia sent its troops into Somalia in 2006 because it saw the ICU in Somalia as being linked to its rivals in Eritrea and that being a real threat to the Ethiopian state and region (www.cfr.org/publication/14074). Events had heated up considerably since the Ethiopian incursion into Somalia due to the activities of the ONLF with an increase on its attacks like when it attacked an oil exploration facility and killed nine Chinese oil workers in April, 2007. Ethiopia responded with a really fierce campaign leading to further bloodshed and displacements adding to the tension in the region (www.cfr.org/publication/14074).

The recent invasion of Djibouti by Eritrea seemed to have been fuelled by the former's intention to host peace talks between the rival factions in Somalia. It should be noted that Eritrea and Djibouti were in a border standoff over a hill called Gabla or Ras Doumeira and a small island called Doumeira traced back to the colonial period when France occupying what is now Djibouti and Italy controlling what is now Eritrea agreed in 1901 that no third country could rule the Doumeira area and that specific border issues would be dealt with later. The question was then left unattended to. Djibouti on the other hand claimed that an 1897 treaty between Ethiopia and France clearly stated that the Doumeira area was French. Hence relations between the two countries became strained with Djibouti backed by France which has a defense agreement with Djibouti and the US which uses Djibouti as hub for its Africa operations. Actually many countries had shown concern here

because fighting at the narrow mouth of the Red Sea could threaten oil supplies from the Persian Gulf to much of the industrial world (The Reporter, 31st May, 2008). Egypt was also said to have a central national security concern namely the sharing of the Nile waters. Ethiopia had made clear its intention to build dams in its northern mountains where the Nile rises in order to generate hydro electric power which it desperately needed. Egypt viewed Ethiopia's dam building plans with great trepidation as it had embarked upon an ambitious plan to build a man made river fed by Nile waters several thousand kilometers into its western desert in order to create arable farmland to feed its rapidly growing population. It had therefore seen a united Somalia friendly to it, while hostile to Ethiopia as an important bargaining chip in its negotiations with Addis Ababa (www.radiosomaliland.com/index.php). Italy was said to have joined Egypt in strengthening the position of Mogadishu because of its historical links with Southern Somalia. In addition to this colonial affinity and linkage, Italy was also anxious to retain some influence on developments in Somalia and was not willing to surrender its position to regional players like Egypt, Ethiopia and Yemen (ibid).

The Road to Peace:

Somalians would love to solve their problems themselves. This was indicated in the way they received the UN peacekeepers in 1992 and the way they attacked the Ugandan AU peacekeepers in 2007 on arrival. A hard-line Islamist leader linked to al- Qaeda, Sheikh Hassan Abdullahi Hersi al- Turki reportedly warned that rebels would continue to attack foreign troops active in Somalia including the AU peacekeepers (The Monitor, Kampala, 28th May, 2008). The transitional government of Abdullahi Yusuf was formed in 2004 after peace talks but had failed to take full control of the country since then largely because it did not have popular support among Somalis. The Somalis formed the Union of Islamic Courts on the other hand and was in power for only six months but was able to re- unite the capital for the first time since 1991, children went back to schools and people lived their normal lives because they had the support of the majority of Somali people. Even the UN officials had conceded that the country was in a better shape during the brief reign of Somalia's Islamic movement. Mr. Laroche said it was much easier for them to work as the Islamists didn't cause them any problems. Mr. Ould- Abdallah described the period as Somalia's golden era (www.nytimes.com/2007/11/20/world/africa/20somalia.html). Somalia reverted to the killing, rape and robbery due to American intervention. As Ahmed Egal said, the international community had to accept the simple and

obvious fact that the solution to the collapse of the Somali state lied with the Somali people and nowhere and with no one else (www.somalilandradio.com). Ayitteh in a similar way had noted that outside forces cannot provide an enduring solution to Somali's difficulties. Africans themselves bear the ultimate responsibility for solving their problems. Indeed they are the only ones capable of providing a lasting solution (www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-205.html). It is recommended that the Ethiopian government, America and other interest groups should leave the Somalis to choose the form of government under which they want to live. Hence as a prerequisite to finding a lasting peace, Ethiopia should withdraw all of its troops from Somalia. The TFG also do not seem to be popular with the Somalian people and so should immediately organize another election that would lead to the appointment of popular candidates into office in the true spirit of democratization.

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