



RESEARCH PAPER 08/86
25 NOVEMBER 2008

Interlocking crises in the Horn of Africa

This paper looks at recent developments in the Horn of Africa, where there are a number of protracted and interlocking crises at work, and briefly discusses some of the main factors that have been described as 'root causes' of conflict in the region. The insurgency against the Transitional Federal Government and Ethiopian forces in Somalia is rapidly gathering momentum as efforts continue to form a more inclusive and viable government. There is a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions, with about 40 per cent of the population needing assistance. Almost unnoticed, there are ongoing tensions between neighbouring Somaliland and Puntland over disputed border areas. Meanwhile, the possibility remains of a resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea over their long-running border dispute. In the Ogaden, which is part of Ethiopia's Somali regional state, there has also been a humanitarian crisis as a consequence of ongoing fighting between Ethiopian troops and insurgents. Finally, earlier this year Eritrea launched an incursion into Djibouti and is yet to withdraw its forces.

Piracy is not covered in this paper. For a discussion of piracy issues, including with regard to Somalia, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/BT/3794, [Shipping: piracy](#).

Jon Lunn

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE SECTION

HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY

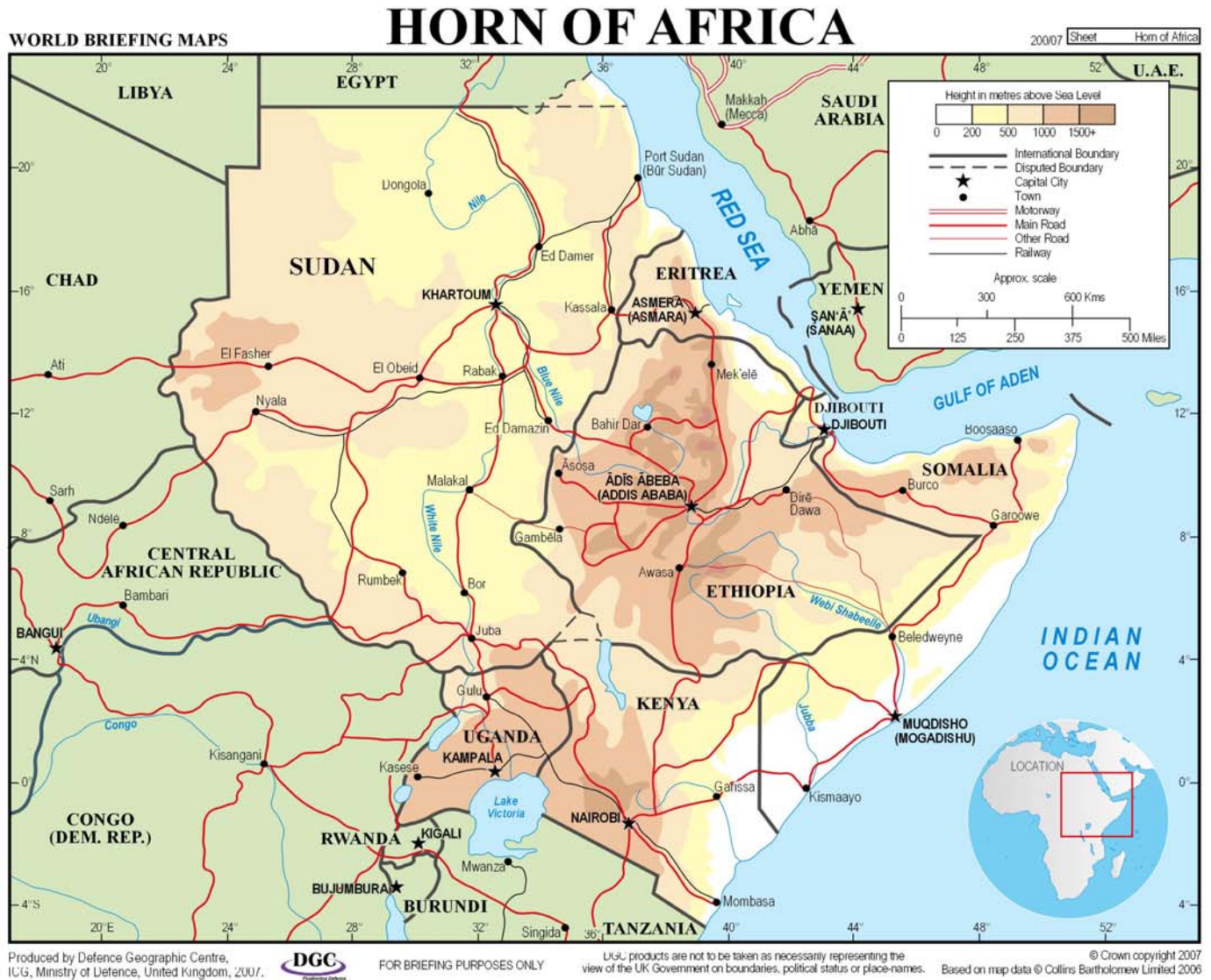
Recent Library Research Papers include:

08/01	Economic Indicators, January 2008	07.01.08
08/02	Social Indicators	11.01.08
08/03	European Union (Amendment) Bill [Bill 48 of 2007-08]	15.01.08
08/04	Unemployment by Constituency, December 2007	16.01.08
08/05	Energy Bill [Bill 53 of 2007-08]	16.01.08
08/06	Planning and Energy Bill [Bill 17 of 2007-08]	21.01.08
08/07	National Insurance Contributions Bill: Committee Stage Report	24.01.08
08/08	Aviation and Climate Change	24.01.08
08/09	The Treaty of Lisbon: amendments to the Treaty on European Union	24.01.08
08/10	Special Educational Needs (Information) Bill [Bill 26 of 2007-08]	28.01.08
08/11	Local Government Finance Settlement 2008/09-2010/11	01.02.08
08/12	Election Statistics: UK 1918-2007	01.02.08
08/13	Economic Indicators, February 2008	05.02.08
08/14	Health and Social Care Bill: Committee Stage Report	11.02.08

Research Papers are available as PDF files:

- *to members of the general public on the Parliamentary web site,
URL: <http://www.parliament.uk>*
- *within Parliament to users of the Parliamentary Intranet,
URL: <http://hcl1.hclibrary.parliament.uk>*

Library Research Papers are compiled for the benefit of Members of Parliament and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public. We welcome comments on our papers; these should be sent to the Research Publications Officer, Room 407, 1 Derby Gate, London, SW1A 2DG or e-mailed to PAPERS@parliament.uk



Source: UK Ministry of Defence

Summary of main points

There are a number of protracted and interlocking crises at work in the Horn of Africa.

The nationalist and Islamist insurgency against the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Ethiopian forces in Somalia appears to be in the ascendant. The TFG now controls only parts of Mogadishu and the town of Baidoa. The Ethiopian Government is anxious to withdraw at the earliest juncture. The presence in the country of its forces has been a recruiting sergeant for the insurgents. Efforts are underway to form a more inclusive and credible government, but they are hampered by deep divisions both within the TFG between the President and the Prime Minister and amongst its opponents. Meanwhile, there is a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions, with up to 40 per cent of the population needing assistance.

Almost unnoticed, there are ongoing tensions between neighbouring Somaliland and Puntland over disputed border areas. Both countries are due to hold important elections in the coming months. In recent weeks, there has been a resumption of armed bombings in both Somaliland and Puntland by supporters of the insurgency in Somalia. Somaliland's quest for international recognition as an independent sovereign state continues but there is no sign of a breakthrough on that front. Puntland, which is a semi-autonomous region of Somalia, is highly unstable and has become the main locus of operations for the pirates that currently plague the Gulf of Aden.

Meanwhile, the possibility remains of a resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea over their long-running border dispute. For the moment, the UN – at the behest of the Security Council – has effectively withdrawn from the mediating and peace-keeping roles it has played since the end of the 1998-2000 war. Eritrea accuses the international community of failing to ensure that Ethiopia honours the 2002 decision of the border commission that was established to adjudicate on the dispute. Its 'spoiler' role across the region reflects this sense of betrayal. While neither country wants to return to conflict, the border area is heavily militarised and mutual mistrust could yet spark a renewed conflagration. Both parties view each other as illegitimate and are seeking to encourage 'regime change' in the other. They also continue to fight each other through proxies in Somalia. Both countries have experienced domestic political crises since the end of the war. In Eritrea's case, this has led to the abandonment of any democratic pretensions. Ethiopia, having experimented with a relatively fast-moving 'democratic transition' has, since the 2005 elections – in which the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, performed unexpectedly poorly – slowed it down again.

In the Ogaden, which is part of Ethiopia's Somali regional state, there has also been a humanitarian crisis as a consequence of ongoing fighting between Ethiopian troops and insurgents. The Ethiopian Government has been criticised by donors, including the UK, for placing obstacles in the way of distributing aid to those who need it. The Ogaden is one of the biggest tests of the ruling party's policy of 'ethnic federalism', under which political power is in theory decentralised to ethnically-based regional states. The Somali-inhabited areas of eastern Ethiopia have always been economically and politically marginalised, and despite increased investment in recent years, remain so. Nonetheless, it seems clear that support for the insurgency among Ethiopian Somalis is limited to two sub-clans of the Ogadeen clan. Eritrea is providing the insurgency with support.

Earlier this year Eritrea launched an incursion into Djibouti and is yet to withdraw its forces. Unless Eritrea's stance changes soon, it could find itself subject to both UN and African Union sanctions, although whether the UN Security Council has the appetite for taking such action remains in question. Djibouti's President Guelleh has called for sanctions if the issue is not resolved in the near future. This is another dimension of Eritrea's role as a regional 'spoiler', but it also feels threatened by the growing vibrancy of Djibouti port, while its own ports, Assab and Massawa, are currently heavily under-utilised.

A range of factors have been described as 'root causes' of conflict in the region by commentators and policy-makers. A common thread that runs through them all is their varying impact on the viability and legitimacy of the 'failed', 'emergent' or more established states that together make up the region.

With regard to Somalia, complex and perpetually shifting clan politics has often been given great importance as a cause of conflict. However, some analysts argue that its role can sometimes be exaggerated and that, beneath the surface, class and the struggle for control over resources are also important. On this view, one of the reasons why it has proven so difficult to rebuild the state is that competing factions all view the state as a vehicle for doing the same on a 'winner take all' basis. Moreover, the experience of Somaliland suggests clan politics are not, given the right conditions, intrinsically compatible with statehood and a degree of democracy. Ethnicity has also been cited as a root cause of conflict in the Horn. There is no doubt that ethnicity has indeed often played an important role, perhaps most of all in Ethiopia. However, ethnicity must be understood in a historical and political context. Ethnic identities are not 'primordial'. Indeed, many of them emerged and then hardened under colonial rule. Ethnicity – like clan in the context of Somalia – is rarely a factor by itself. It always combines with other affiliations and interests.

Environmental insecurity is also often cited as a root cause of conflict in the region. This insecurity is based on the increased degradation and scarcity of natural resources, falling productivity, population growth and increasingly unviable livelihoods. All this has led to conflicts between cultivators, conflicts between pastoralists and conflicts between cultivators and pastoralists across the Horn. Perhaps the most pervasive of these in the Horn is conflict between pastoralists, particularly over access to scarce grazing land and water. The impact of climate change is likely to intensify such conflicts. The current drought and famine in the Horn is reportedly having an immediate impact on relationships between pastoral groups. However, the link between environmental insecurity and conflict is not direct. A wide range of other political, economic and cultural factors influence how the environment affects conflict. As a result, although it is becoming an ever more important variable, it makes little sense to view environmental factors in isolation.

The 'failed state' of Somalia has often been described as a breeding ground for terrorist organisations, including al-Qaida. This has led to fears that parts of the Horn of Africa could become a heartland of militant Islam and that what might initially have been a symptom of conflict could metamorphose into a 'root cause'. However, many scholars are sceptical about such claims, arguing that al-Qaida has not found a promising base in Somalia. As for the Islamists who briefly held power in large parts of Somalia during the

second half of 2006, some analysts claim that, for a moment, they appeared to offer a potential escape from perpetual clan conflict in Somalia. The dominant tradition of Islam amongst Somalis has been the Sufi tradition. This tradition tends to be relatively relaxed on doctrinal matters and has a mystical orientation.

The ineffectiveness and inappropriateness of outside interventions in the Horn of Africa, allegedly based on a poor understanding of the dynamics at work across the region, has long been viewed by some commentators as a key promoter of conflict. There has been particularly strong criticism of the US role in Somalia in recent years, on the grounds that it has viewed developments excessively through the prism of the 'war on terror'. Ethiopia has also come in for much criticism from those who are sceptical about both the motivations behind and the likely fate of its military presence in Somalia. More broadly, some commentators have questioned why since 2004 the international community has allowed itself to become closely associated with a TFG which has a narrow clan base and which now seems close to collapse. Finally, analysts have also highlighted how the efforts of countries in the region to achieve policy objectives through the sponsorship of proxy forces has a long history in the Horn of Africa and needs to be given greater weight by outsiders who are seeking to shape the course of events.

In the short- to medium-term, the keys to peace and security in the Horn of Africa lie in: first, resolving the stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea over their common border; and, second, in constructing a durable domestic political and economic settlement in Somalia that is acceptable to the majority of Somalis and to external actors. Also crucial will be the outcome in Sudan, which has not been discussed in this paper, where an elusive quest for peace continues but is subject to powerful stresses and strains.

CONTENTS

I	Introduction	11
II	Recent Developments in the Horn	13
	A. Somalia	13
	1. Background and history	13
	2. Recent developments	18
	3. The role of the international community	28
	B. Somaliland and Puntland	31
	1. Somaliland – background and history	31
	2. Puntland – background and history	33
	3. The Somaliland/Puntland border dispute	35
	4. The role of the international community	36
	C. Djibouti	39
	1. Background and history	39
	2. 2008: recent Eritrean incursions	40
	3. The role of the international community	42
	D. Ethiopia	43
	1. Background and history	43
	2. The 2005 elections and their aftermath	45
	3. Crisis in the Ogaden	47
	4. The role of the international community	49
	E. Eritrea	50
	1. Background and history	50
	2. The role of the international community	51
	F. The Ethiopia-Eritrea border war and its aftermath	52
III	Overview: Understanding the root causes of conflict in the Horn	55
	A. Clan	55
	B. Ethnicity	57
	C. Environmental insecurity	60

D. Islamic militancy and terrorism	63
E. External actors	65
IV Conclusion	68
Further reading	71
1. Books	71
2. Articles and reports	71
3. Web sources	73
Map of Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland	74

I Introduction

It was the contours of Somalia's coastline on the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden that gave birth to the geographical term, 'the Horn of Africa'. However, in due course the term acquired a distinct political flavour too. According to one analyst, its legitimacy as a geopolitical term is largely because:

[...] there seems to be a history of common problems in the region: disputes over borders both between states and within them; widespread and prolonged civil war threatening not only governments but the survival of states themselves; economic regression that appears to owe something at least to domestic policy failure, as well as the vagaries of the world economy and environmental decay; in addition to the famines that seemed to grow in scale and regularity.¹

However, such commonalities should not obscure the fact that the region is also marked by powerful (but not immutable) cleavages – to name just a few, those between Islam and Christianity, those between clans, ethnic groups, states and competing ideologies, those between pastoralists and agriculturalists, not to mention a cleavage that is too often overlooked by analysts – that of class. Cleavages such as these have been deployed, sometimes singly, sometimes in combination, to explain the root causes of conflict in the Horn of Africa. Each cleavage has a significant impact on the viability and legitimacy of the 'failed', 'emergent' or more established states that together make up the region.

The geopolitical term first came to be used widely during the Cold War, when influence over the region was contested (through local proxies) by the United States (US) and the Soviet Union. In terms of state formations, at the core of the region were Somalia and Ethiopia, but as their fates became intertwined, Sudan also came to be included. Finally, Djibouti was included as part of the region (when observers remembered that it existed). Its primary significance was as a military base for first French and now US/allied forces in the 'global war on terror'.

The end of the Cold War contributed to a reconfiguration of the region, as Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia and Somalia collapsed as a state, leading in time to the emergence of two additional Somali polities, Somaliland and Puntland.² The Somali experience has done much to ensure that the region has recently become strongly associated with a sometimes misleading concept of 'statelessness' – misleading because the concept is equated in many minds with an apparently 'mindless' chaos or anarchy. In addition, the active role of Sudan in the region has decreased for the moment, but it remains important and could easily increase again in future.

Overall, usage of the term 'the Horn of Africa' is less pervasive today, although those focusing on international terrorism and environmental/humanitarian issues continue to

¹ P. Woodward, *The Horn of Africa. Politics and International Relations* (London, 2003), p. 1

² Somaliland has made a claim for full independent statehood. See Part IIB of this paper.

have regular recourse to it. In these regards Kenya and even Uganda are also sometimes embraced by the term. Occasionally, the term 'Greater Horn' is also used. Like the other regions within sub-Saharan Africa – for example, West, Central, East and Southern Africa, the Great Lakes – the Horn of Africa has its own bespoke regional intergovernmental organisation. However, perhaps symptomatically, it is the rather opaquely named Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Its membership reflects a 'Greater Horn' approach.³

To sum up, while the term 'the Horn of Africa' is undoubtedly ambiguous, fluid and shifting, it nonetheless retains validity and remains in use. For the purposes of this paper, a core definition of 'the Horn of Africa' is adopted, encompassing Somalia (along with Somaliland and Puntland), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan. However, the paper does not discuss Sudan in depth. While this is in part because its centrality to developments in the Horn has diminished somewhat over the past decade (a trend that could easily be reversed), it is also because Sudan has already been addressed in some depth in other Library Papers and Standard Notes.⁴

While the two superpowers undoubtedly led the way in making the term 'the Horn of Africa' common currency, it should be noted that they have been far from the only powers from outside sub-Saharan Africa to play a role in shaping the region. European powers – Britain, France and Italy – brought the states of the region (with the exception of Ethiopia) into existence and continued to be influential for the first two decades after 1945. Also influential over a much longer period, if at times imperceptibly to Western observers, have been the countries of the Arab Gulf and Egypt. For the countries of the Arab Gulf, engagement has been shaped over the centuries primarily by religious and trading interests. The rise of militant *jihadism* in recent years, amid fears that the Horn could become a breeding ground for terrorist groups, has intensified concern in many quarters about what these linkages, whether officially sanctioned or 'people-to-people', now portend. Egypt's engagement in the Horn of Africa has been rooted in its 'quasi-colonial' historical role in Sudan, its religious affiliations and (not least) in the fact that the headwaters of the River Nile are to be found in Ethiopia. Along with Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea are among the ten member states of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI). They are also involved in the NBI's Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Programme.⁵

The next part of this paper looks at recent developments in the states and polities of the Horn of Africa. It also provides some brief background and history for each as a foundation on which to build a better understanding of the distinct but overlapping crises that currently affect the region. The protracted Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute is discussed in a separate section. Part III then discusses a number of overarching themes that have often been deployed by analysts and policy-makers seeking to identify the 'root causes' of conflict in the Horn. In doing so, the explanatory power and value of these overarching themes is reviewed. Part IV offers some concluding observations.

³ Its membership is: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. The same countries are also signatories of the *Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa*. There is a Secretariat based in Nairobi.

⁴ For example, see:

⁵ See: [Nile Basin Initiative](#)

II Recent Developments in the Horn

A. Somalia

1. Background and history⁶

Somalia was one of three separate European colonies to be established in the Somali lands of the Horn of Africa in the late-19th century in the context of the 'Scramble for Africa'. Along with Eritrea, the southern Somali lands came under Italian control. Other Somali lands fell under British and French control. Ethiopia also incorporated Somalis into its westernmost region as part of the carve-up, while a substantial number of Somalis to the far south found themselves under British rule in Kenya. The population of Somalia today is roughly estimated at 7-8 million; it is over 20 years since the last official census.

Somalis are considered to be a single ethnic group. However, it is often said that the primary source of affiliation (and division) for Somalis is the clan, a kinship system based on common lineage – that is, descent from the same ancestor. The largest social unit is the clan family, a confederation of clans related by lineage. The highlighting of clan as the main component of Somali society can lead to oversimplification. Clan family loyalties can and do unite but, equally, major internal cleavages can also arise within those families at clan, sub-clan and lineage levels. Clan as a cultural force should also be distinguished from its role as a source of political action – what some analysts have called 'clannism'. According to one scholar, the key feature of clan politics in general is that it is

An unstable, fragile system, characterized at all levels by shifting allegiances. Power and politics are exercised through temporary coalitions and ephemeral alliances of lineages.⁷

It is important to note that other forms of identity and interest such as class and religion are also important sources of political action among Somalis. In practice, clan, class and religion often intersect.⁸

The major clan families in modern-day Somalia (that is, *de facto* excluding Somaliland) are the Darod, Hawiye, Dir, Digil and Rahanweyn. Unlike the other clan families, which are predominantly pastoralist, the Digil and Rahanweyn are predominantly agriculturalists concentrated in the centre and south of the country. They are seen by many as inter-related. The pastoralist clan-families view themselves as superior and of 'noble lineage'. The Hawiye clan family, which predominates in the centre and south of the country, has long had the greatest loyalty to the idea of a united Somalia. The Darod clan family, which predominates in many parts of the north of the country but which can

⁶ This section of the paper draws upon the chapter on Somalia in the *Europa Regional Survey for Africa South of the Sahara* (London, 2006), pp. 1054-64

⁷ S. Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil* (London, 1991), p. 13. Clan politics are discussed in greater depth in Part IIIA of this paper.

⁸ In terms of religion, Somalis believe in their common descent from the lineage of the prophet Mohammed.

also be found in significant numbers in the south, is the second most powerful clan family in the country. There is also a number of smaller, lower-status, 'minority' clans.⁹

Italian Somaliland was a vital base for Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in 1936. Following the capture of Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland by Britain during the Second World War, Italy renounced all rights to the latter. However, in 1950 Italy was given the administration of the United Nations (UN) Trust Territory of Somalia, mandated to oversee a ten-year transition to full independence. In 1960, Somalia united with British Somaliland (see below) and achieved independence. For Somali nationalists this was an important first step towards creating a single Somali state that would ultimately encompass all Somalis in Ethiopia, French Somaliland and northern Kenya. Dreams of a 'Greater Somalia' were crucial in sustaining the fragile civilian-led cross-clan coalitions that governed Somalia for the first decade after independence. The new government supported insurgencies in each of these areas. However, tensions between and within different clan families were present from the birth of the new state and grew in intensity as expansionist dreams ran aground. Following the assassination of the Prime Minister in 1969 during an outbreak of factional violence, the military, led by Major-General Mohammed Siad Barre, seized power, pledging to end "clan-based anarchy".¹⁰ Barre renamed the country the Somali Democratic Republic (SDR), establishing a Marxist one-party state, in the process forging an alliance with the Soviet Union, which offered it considerable military support.

When Ethiopia appeared to be in danger of collapsing following the 1974 revolution that overthrew Emperor Haile Selasse, the SDR revived its efforts to incorporate the main Somali-speaking area of Ethiopia, known as the Ogaden. This culminated in a full-scale invasion in 1977. The decision to invade ruptured the SDR's alliance with the Soviet Union, which opted to back Ethiopia in the conflict, and by spring 1978 its invasion had been decisively defeated. Following this defeat, the SDR turned towards the US.

During the 1980s, armed opposition to the regime of Siad Barre grew within the SDR. The regime had come to be seen as dominated by an increasingly small number of clans within the Darod clan family. Barre himself came from the Marehan clan. The resistance was led by the largely Majerteen (another Darod clan) Somali Salvation Democratic Front and the predominantly Isaaq Somali National Movement (SNM), reflecting disillusionment with how unification between British Somaliland and Somalia had turned out. State repression further deepened divisions and by 1989, the regime had been gravely weakened. In an attempt to reconstruct his power-base, Barre reintroduced multi-party politics. However, in January 1991, before elections could be held, he was forced to flee following an uprising in the capital, Mogadishu, co-ordinated by the Hawiye-dominated United Somali Congress (USC).

The victory in Mogadishu of the USC was viewed with suspicion by many non-Hawiye clans. In May 1991, the SNM declared an independent 'Republic of Somaliland' in the

⁹ C. Barnes, "Country Report – Somalia", 9th Country of Origin Information Seminar, Dublin, 26-27 May 2007, pp. 8-9. The Issaq is the sixth major Somali clan family, although it has been viewed by some as part of the Dir clan family. It is the dominant clan family in Somaliland, which separated from the rest of Somalia in 1991. See Part IIB.1. On 'minority' clans, see I. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland* (London, 2008), pp. 6-11

¹⁰ Woodward, *The Horn of Africa*, p. 65

north and began a long quest for international recognition of its sovereign statehood. By the end of the year, there had also been a major split within the USC between factions led by Ali Mahdi and General Mohammed Farah Aidid. As the situation descended into violence, the Hawiye broke up into an ever increasing number of factions and hopes that a new central government might be established began to evaporate. A final attempt to retake the capital by forces loyal to Barre was repulsed by Aidid. An era of 'warlord politics' began across much of Somalia. By mid-1992 an Islamic political group had also emerged, the al-Ittihad al-Islam, which represented the birth of organised radical Islamic politics in the country.

With the humanitarian situation deteriorating rapidly, the UN imposed an arms embargo on Somalia and sent in a small peace-keeping force in September 1992, but it struggled to win the stable consent of the main factions. The UN's humanitarian work was also widely criticised as too slow. In June 1993, what was by then known as the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was mandated by the Security Council to engage in peace enforcement, including the disarmament of the factions, without their consent if necessary. Within a few months, a 30,000 strong force (at full strength), which had heavy American representation, was engaged in major clashes with Aidid's forces, whose capture it now sought. Critics accused UNOSOM, as well as Aidid, of responsibility for widespread human rights abuses against civilians in the capital.

In late 1993, after suffering a series of reversals, the UN changed policy in favour of withdrawing most of its troops and encouraging negotiations between the warring Somali factions, including Aidid. During 1994 these efforts came to nothing. With violence continuing, UNOSOM withdrew the rest of its troops from Mogadishu in March 1995 with US support, once again leaving Somalia to its own devices. Arguments that the withdrawal of foreign troops would concentrate the minds of the Somali factions proved over-optimistic. When in June 1995 Aidid was elected 'President of Somalia' by a conference of his supporters, now known as the Somali National Alliance (SNA), other factions immediately rejected his authority. Sporadic fighting continued into 1996 and in August Aidid died as a result of injuries incurred in a skirmish. However, his death had little effect on the situation. His mantle was taken on by his son, Hussein Mohammed Aidid. With no progress being made towards resolving the wider differences between the SNA and its many enemies, attention turned in some parts of the country towards local efforts to end violence. One such initiative led to the establishment in 1998 of an autonomous government in Puntland region. However, unlike the Republic of Somaliland, it did not seek international recognition as a sovereign state.

From 1996 the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the main intergovernmental organisation in the region, with UN backing, became involved in efforts to mediate between the factions. In 1998 IGAD proposed holding a national peace conference. Similarly named initiatives had been tried on many occasions before and failed, but this one gathered some momentum and eventually a conference took place in May 2000 in Djibouti. There was an effort to ensure that as many parts of Somali society as possible were present, although it was only partially successful. Neither Somaliland nor Puntland sent representatives. The conference agreed that Somalia would adopt a federal system and set up a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) with a view to eventually establishing a Transitional National Government (TNG). In August 2000, the new TNA elected Abdulkasim Salad Hasan, a Hawiye, as the President of Somalia. He appointed a TNG in October. However, it quickly became clear that the TNG lacked

legitimacy and support. It had little presence in Mogadishu. The SNA rejected its claims. Opponents simply saw the TNG as the 'UN faction' and moved to set up an alternative 'national government' by forming the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC). By late 2001 what support the TNG had garnered was beginning to hemorrhage away. IGAD-led attempts to reconcile the TNG and the SRRC failed.

In March 2002 a new 'State of South-western Somalia' was announced by opponents of the TNG. Although this meant little in practice, Somalia's fractures appeared to be deepening rather than closing. With the TNG's original mandate approaching expiry, IGAD decided that there was no alternative but to return virtually to the starting-blocks by convening a new peace and reconciliation conference. It met for the first time in Eldoret, Kenya, in October 2002. Its first positive outcome was the signing of a ceasefire between the TNG and five Mogadishu-based factions in December. The TNG remained extremely suspicious of the process but could not escape the fact that its mandate ended in August 2003.

The effectiveness of IGAD's mediation was hampered by the rival agendas of key member states. Nonetheless, after numerous false starts, a relatively wide range of factions agreed to the establishment of a Transitional Federal Charter in January 2004 in Nairobi. It was also agreed that a new Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) would be created, comprising 275 members, 12 per cent of whom were to be women. The country's major clan families would receive 61 seats each, with a coalition of smaller clans receiving 31 seats. The TFP would then elect a President, who would appoint a Prime Minister mandated to appoint a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and prepare for elections in 2009, after which a new Constitution would be negotiated.

The TFP met for the first time in September 2004. In October it elected Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, a Darod and President of Puntland, as President of Somalia. In November he appointed Ali Mohammed Ghedi, a Hawiye, as Prime Minister. Both were known to be close to Ethiopia. The TFG was appointed in the following month. The key test was whether the new TFG would have more success than its predecessor in persuading the Somali factions outside it to co-operate. Unfortunately, despite widespread international support, it proved nearly as ineffectual and divided on this count as the TNG. A major split quickly emerged between President Yusuf Ahmed and what became known as the 'Mogadishu group', which was considerably less hostile than he was to the rising Islamist influence in the capital. As a consequence, the TFG proved unable to exert much influence over the warlords that had dominated Mogadishu since the collapse of the authoritarian regime of Siad Barre in 1991. They carried on largely unimpeded until early 2006 when they were successfully challenged by an entirely different and, as far as President Yusuf Ahmed was concerned, antithetical political force, the Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC).¹¹

The CSIC was a coalition of Islamists based in local sharia courts, some of them sympathetic to global *jihad*, supported by a range of clan militias. Its rise caused alarm in Western capitals. It emerged out of a major split within the 'Mogadishu group' between some of the warlords and the Islamists. With US support, these warlords created the

¹¹ Also called the Islamic Courts Union (ICU)

Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT). The US hoped that the Alliance would assist in capturing a number of al-Qaida operatives believed to be in Mogadishu as guests of the Islamists. However, the Islamists militarily defeated the Alliance in June 2006 and then established the CSIC. It subsequently increased the area under its control and brought a degree of order to Somalia not seen since 1991. The CSIC did gain considerable popularity among Somalis in those areas it controlled, although some of its restrictive social measures were resented. The US was highly suspicious of the CSIC but was initially prepared to accept that it had an important role to play in rebuilding Somalia. Neighbours such as Ethiopia and Kenya, both strong supporters of the TFG, took a similar position but also expressed concerns, not least when CSIC leaders called for a 'Greater Somalia'. The border between Ethiopia and Somalia remains a provisional boundary rather than an agreed international border. The CSIC was also reported to be supporting Ethiopian rebel groups. It received military support from a number of Muslim countries and was backed by Ethiopia's main regional opponent following their 1998-2000 border war – Eritrea (see below).

Enmity between the TFG and the CSIC also had a clan dimension, with the TFG viewed as having a strong Darod identity. The CSIC, although not primarily a clan-based movement, nonetheless brought many clan elders under its umbrella as it consolidated its power. Its opponents accused it of having a pronounced Hawiye character.¹² Matters came to a head between the CSIC and the TFG in December 2006. CSIC militias advanced to within a short distance of the town of Baidoa, where the TFG was based. Despite initial denials that it was doing so, Ethiopia moved a number of combat troops to Baidoa in support of the TFG.

On 6 December 2006 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1725 on Somalia. Resolution 1725, whose lead sponsor was the US, is a Chapter VII resolution under the UN Charter. It authorised IGAD and member states of the African Union (AU) to establish a "protection and training mission" in Somalia. Known as the Peacekeeping Mission of IGAD in Somalia (IGASOM), its protection mandate extended to the "members of the Transitional Federal Institutions and Government as well as their key infrastructure." It was expected to be about 8,000 strong. It was also agreed that states bordering Somalia should not deploy troops in the country.¹³ The international arms embargo in force against Somalia since 1992 (but widely disregarded) was revised to permit supplies to IGASOM. IGASOM was also mandated to facilitate dialogue between the TFG and the CSIC.

The response to the passage of Resolution 1725 was mixed. The CSIC warned that it would view the arrival of pro-TFG foreign troops on Somali soil as a declaration of war. The Arab League, which had also been attempting to mediate between the TFG and CSIC, had serious reservations about the revision of the international arms embargo.

¹² R. Marchal, "Warlordism and terrorism: how to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia", *International Affairs*, November 2007, p. 198. The CSIC has also been described as being particularly strongly supported by the Habar Gidir 'Ayr lineage of the Hawiye clan family.

¹³ According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), the UK declined to co-sponsor the first draft of Resolution 1725 because it did not specifically prohibit states that border Somalia from contributing forces to IGASOM. The final text of the Resolution included such a prohibition.

IGAD was divided, with Djibouti, Eritrea and Sudan reportedly unhappy about the terms of the Resolution. By contrast, the TFG and its regional allies warmly welcomed the Resolution.

Despite much bellicose talk by the rival groups, there were also some peace efforts. Representatives of the TFG and CSIC met twice for peace talks in Khartoum, facilitated by the Arab League, after the CSIC took Mogadishu. On 22 June 2006 the two sides agreed what is known as the Khartoum Declaration. Significant as this sounded, in fact it amounted to little more than an agreement to refrain from violence, recognise each other and to meet again. At a further meeting in September, the two sides did little more than reiterate these principles. A few days before Resolution 1725 was approved, the CSIC agreed a communiqué in Djibouti with IGAD (or, at least a faction within it) in which it promised to respect the territorial integrity of Somalia's neighbours and cease support to insurgent groups. It also condemned terrorism.

There were those who were relatively optimistic that talks could eventually bear fruit. The ICG argued that there were regional, ideological and clan-based divisions within the CSIC and that sophisticated and better coordinated diplomacy could both ward off war and preserve the TFG. The two sides were due to meet again in Khartoum in mid December 2006, but the scheduled talks were soon overtaken by events.

Radical elements within the CSIC leadership, who had been increasingly in the ascendancy, appear to have concluded that the real objective of the sponsors of Resolution 1725 was to engineer its destruction. This led it to decide that the best course was to strike against the TFG at its Baidoa headquarters as soon as possible. However, as many had anticipated, this quickly drew in Ethiopian forces on behalf of the TFG. It soon became clear that the CSIC had miscalculated. By launching a quasi-conventional attack on Baidoa, it left itself vulnerable to the Ethiopian military's superior capability. Within a week it had been defeated. Ethiopian and TFG forces rolled into Mogadishu and then began efforts to establish control over the south.

2. Recent developments

a. 2007

The CSIC effectively disbanded itself on 27 December 2006, handing back political leadership to the clan leaders that it had allied itself with as it consolidated its power earlier in the year. However, military elements within it, such as the militants of al Shabaab (the Youth), remained largely intact and threatened a long guerrilla war. They formed alliances with a number of clan interests, including Hawiye opponents of the TFG, who took on the mantle of Somali nationalism. There were credible reports from UN officials of continuing Eritrean support for these elements. Ethiopian and TFG forces, with US logistical (and, on occasions, direct military) support, pursued some of these elements south towards the Kenyan border and had considerable success in eliminating them. In February the UN Security Council further relaxed the arms embargo against

Somalia to allow for military support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and for the TFG's security sector institutions.¹⁴

There was a lull in the violence in Mogadishu after its fall, but from March 2007 onwards the level of attacks against Ethiopian and TFG forces began to rise, stoked by the TFG's unpopularity in the capital and considerable anti-Ethiopian feeling among the population. While the TFG moved to Mogadishu soon after its victory as a way of showing that it intended to turn itself into a genuinely national government, it was unable to establish full control. Efforts to promote disarmament made little progress. It was forced to promote the establishment of vigilante groups to supplement its efforts to gain control. These became a particular target of attacks by TFG opponents in Mogadishu.

Ethiopia, conscious of the ill-feeling against it, quickly announced that it would begin withdrawing some of its troops. Some troops did leave in January 2007, but it proved to be a token gesture. This was accompanied by efforts to get an AU peacekeeping force into Somalia quickly. The AU adapted the IGASOM concept, as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1725. It agreed a six-month mandate for the force, known as the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in January 2007. The UN Security Council endorsed it under Resolution 1744 of 20 February 2007, which was unanimously adopted.

Under Resolution 1772 of 20 August 2007, the Security Council mandated the UN Secretariat to begin the groundwork for a UN peacekeeping force to take over from AMISOM, probably in early 2008. At that time, there were hopes that the security situation could be stabilising. However, major doubts were expressed in many quarters about the feasibility of such a force, due to the deteriorating security situation. In a report to the Security Council later in the year, the UN Secretary-General, Ban ki-Moon, stated that it was currently too dangerous to send in a UN force, suggesting that a multinational force composed of a 'coalition of the willing' might be a better alternative, at least in the short-term. However, he was extremely vague about what its mandate should be. AU and UN capacities were already stretched to the limit and beyond by the demands of getting a joint force into Darfur.

It was also proving difficult to get African countries to honour pledges to provide troops for AMISOM. Although the first troops – 1,300 from Uganda – arrived in February 2007, it remained seriously under-strength. Uganda's presence subsequently edged upwards towards its pledge of 1,800. Nigeria and Burundi were due to send 1,700 troops each but there was still no sign of them by the end of 2007. Ghana and Malawi also agreed to send troops, although what they pledged and when they would arrive remained unclear. Even if all these contributions were to materialise, they would take the force to around 4,000 – 50 per cent of its planned ultimate strength.

AU troops on several occasions became targets of the insurgents in Mogadishu and had to fire back to defend themselves. In November 2007 a rebel leader called on insurgents to target peacekeepers. There was talk of Arab forces being sent to Somalia to supplement AMISOM, but this also came to nothing.

¹⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007) of 20 February 2007

By the end of the year it was clear that a prolonged and destructive 'low-intensity' war was now underway. It was affecting a growing number of regions across Somalia. Ethiopia reversed its plans for further withdrawals of its troops – despite knowing that their continued presence was a very effective 'recruiting sergeant' for the insurgents. In November 2007, after bringing 15,000 extra troops into Somalia to add to the 5,000 already on the scene, the Ethiopian forces, with the support of militias loyal to the TFG, launched a major offensive against the insurgents in Mogadishu in a bid to improve the security situation and create conditions under which a UN peacekeeping force might become viable.¹⁵ They were accused of employing indiscriminate and disproportionate military tactics, leaving many districts in the capital empty and devastated. The insurgents were also (and continue to be) accused of serious human rights abuses. Over 500,000 were estimated to have fled the capital, Mogadishu, by the end of 2007, leading aid agencies to speak of a humanitarian emergency equivalent to, or even greater than, Darfur. Approximately 1.5 million Somalis were by then dependent upon humanitarian assistance.

The international community viewed the defeat of the CSIC as a 'historic opportunity' for Somalia. It supported AU efforts to set up AMISOM – the EU initially pledged Euro 15 million – while pushing for moves towards a government of national unity based on 'inclusive dialogue' between all groups that had renounced violence. It had set up an International Contact Group, involving Italy, Kenya, Norway, Sweden, Tanzania, UK, US, UN, AU, EU, IGAD and the Arab League, in mid 2006. It now swung into action. However, relations were not always easy with the TFG. When a senior ex-CSIC leader, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed – believed by many to be relatively moderate – surrendered to the Kenyan authorities, the international community urged the TFG to begin talks with him. However, it was frustrated by the TFG's lack of urgency and enthusiasm for doing so. President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed demonstrated little practical enthusiasm for such a process. Critics viewed him more as a 'warlord' than a genuine President, sitting at the head of a fractious coalition of other warlords. The human rights record of the TFG during 2007 was also far from good. For example, there were incidents of harassment of the independent media, with four radio stations being closed down.

The international community condemned the sacking of the Speaker of Parliament, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, at the behest of President Yusuf in January 2007 as contrary to the 'spirit of reconciliation'. Adan had been involved in negotiations with the CSIC prior to December 2006. Soon afterwards, the TFG was prevailed upon by the International Contact Group to call a National Reconciliation Congress (NRC), set to involve over 1,000 representatives. It was initially due to begin in April 2007 in Mogadishu, with some ex-CSIC 'moderates' apparently due to take part. However, it was overtaken by an upsurge in fighting. The conference finally met in July-August but it was marked by the absence of any ex-CSIC leaders and some key leaders of the Hawiye clan, who said that Ethiopia's full withdrawal was an essential precondition for their abandonment of the insurrection and participation in talks with the TFG. They also called for the Congress to take place outside Somalia. The TFG refused to relax its control over

¹⁵ "According to the UN, the worst catastrophe in Africa is not taking place in Kenya, or even Darfur", *Independent*, 9 February 2008

the process, despite international calls for it to be placed on a genuinely independent footing. The 'national reconciliation' process is given a timetable of sorts by the fact that the TFG and its institutions, including the Parliament, are due to expire in November 2009. The international community hopes to see new elections and a new Constitution promulgated by then.

In September many of the TFG's opponents came together to form the Alliance for the Liberation and Reconstitution of Somalia (ARS) following a meeting in Eritrea. It was composed of the former members of the CSIC, a faction led by Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, representatives of the diaspora and some civil society groups that were sympathetic to the CSIC.

President Yusuf was viewed as relatively moderate compared with his Prime Minister, Ali Mohammed Gedi. Gedi, a Hawiye, was a close ally of Ethiopia and tarred as a 'collaborator' by many other Hawiye clan leaders. Among the many issues that Gedi and Yusuf had reportedly fallen out over were plans to co-operate with China over oil exploration (see below). Yusuf had taken the lead on the issue; Gedi argued that he and his government should be in control of exploration negotiations. However, in late-October Gedi resigned. This increased hopes that the 'political track' might now lead somewhere. In November, a new Prime Minister, Nur Hassan Hussein Adde (henceforth Nur Adde), also a member of the Hawiye clan, but hopefully more attractive to its other leaders, was appointed. 70 years old, Nur Adde, had been head of the Somali Red Crescent since 1991 and was described as coming to the job with "good contacts across the political spectrum and clan structures but little political baggage."¹⁶

In late November 2007 Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi acknowledged that his forces had become bogged down in Somalia. Attacks by insurgents prompted major operations by Ethiopian forces against them. Meanwhile the new Prime Minister named a new Cabinet. However, a significant number of ministers resigned in protest at its composition. Ethiopia declared itself dissatisfied with it and there were reports that western countries also regretted that an opportunity had been missed to bring in individuals currently outside the Transitional Federal Parliament, as recommended by the NRC. Nur Adde agreed to review the Cabinet again.

The main international player in Somalia during 2007 remained the US, which continued to view the situation there largely in terms of the wider 'war on terror'. It is not always clear how much attention it paid to the views of other members of the International Contact Group. The prospect of a radical Islamic state in Somalia was viewed with predictable distaste by the administration. Although there has been no definitive confirmation and Ethiopia itself has denied it, there were persistent reports during 2007 suggesting that the US had given Ethiopia the 'green light' to intervene on behalf of the TFG in late 2006.

The American experience of direct involvement in Somalia in the early 1990s ensured that it was not keen to allow its own forces to become embroiled there again. However, there were claims of American aircraft supporting military attacks by the TFG and

¹⁶ "Somalia: A new man in Mogadishu", 30 November 2007

Ethiopian forces against CSIC and jihadist elements in the far south of Somalia following the capture of Mogadishu in late 2006. For example, in January 2007 US helicopter gunships, flying from a base in eastern Ethiopia, attacked what the US claimed was a convoy of trucks containing al-Qaida leaders as it moved through Ras Kamboni, near the border with Kenya. US special forces based in Kenya were also involved. While the US declared the mission a success, local Somalis and aid workers claimed that only a group of pastoralists had been killed.¹⁷ In June 2007 the US Navy fired missiles at suspected al-Qaeda operatives in Puntland. US 'anti-terror' operations were assisted by the decision of neighbouring Kenya to close its border with Somalia soon after the fall of the CSIC. It remains closed to this day. In a move that caused much domestic controversy, Kenya reportedly also transferred a number of Somali militants in its custody to Ethiopian prisons for interrogation in what critics called another case of 'extraordinary rendition'. The US also warned Eritrea that it might declare it a state sponsor of terrorism unless it ended its support for the insurgency and foreign jihadists, some of which it claimed were involved in the attacks on US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Towards the end of the year there were reports of divisions within the US administration over future strategy, with the Pentagon shifting towards building ties with the Republic of Somaliland, which would require recognition of its independence, while the State Department remained wedded to trying to rebuild Somalia as a whole.¹⁸

The TFG called for US\$1 billion from the international community to rebuild Somalia. Its need for donor funds did give donors some leverage over the TFG. China's profile in Somalia rose rapidly during 2007, despite the continued turmoil in the country. Banking on the confirmation of reports that there are large oil deposits in Somalia, a state-owned Chinese oil company signed a production-sharing agreement with the TFG in mid 2007. Western companies with exploration concessions were invited to return but appeared to be waiting for the security situation to stabilise before doing so. China's support for the TFG meant that a clash with the US over policy on Somalia was highly unlikely. However, it was not to the fore of international efforts to encourage processes of 'national reconciliation'.

In September 2007, the UN Secretary-General appointed a new Special Representative to Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah. He replaced Francois Lonseny Fall. The Special Representative heads the UN Political Office for Somalia.

b. 2008

In January Prime Minister Nur Adde bowed to critics and appointed a new, much smaller but more widely accepted Cabinet. Nine of 18 ministers were to be non-parliamentarians. Nur Adde also pledged to begin extending the reconciliation process to grassroots communities and opposition groups willing to engage in dialogue. Also in January, 850 soldiers from Burundi arrived, bringing AMISOM's strength to 2,613. The UN continued to develop contingency plans for a possible UN peace-keeping force during the first

¹⁷ "According to the UN, the worst catastrophe in Africa is not taking place in Kenya, or even Darfur", *Independent*, 9 February 2008

¹⁸ "US debating shift of support in Somali conflict", *Washington Post*, 4 December 2007

quarter of the year, but there remained little sign that the Security Council had much appetite for it.¹⁹

In March 2008 the TFG unveiled a new reconciliation strategy that reflected Nur Adde's approach. It was unclear from the start how far President Yusuf Ahmed really backed it. Nonetheless, with the backing of the international community, Nur Adde began putting out feelers to the ARS, the main opposition coalition, and to bodies such as the Hawiye Council, established in Mogadishu by clan elders. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, helped to facilitate the process. At around the same time, the ARS issued its own 'road map for dialogue and reconciliation of Somalia', with the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces as an essential precondition of progress. A first round of talks between the TFG and ARS was held in Djibouti in May, with Ould Abdallah shuttling between the two parties. This culminated in a joint commitment to a peaceful settlement and a declaration calling on all sides to allow full humanitarian access and the delivery of assistance. Since then there have been talks between the parties about the implementation of the agreement.

However, it had become clear during the negotiations that there were tensions within the ARS as well as within the TFG. ARS moderates, led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, were being challenged, apparently with Eritrean support, by Sheikh Hassan Aweys, the militant Islamist founder of al-Shabaab, who attended ARS meetings at this time but without joining the coalition. A gap between militant Islamists and those opposition elements with a more moderate orientation appeared to be opening up. This did not prevent the TFG and ARS reaching an agreement in Djibouti on 9 June, which provided *inter alia* for an initial cessation of hostilities of 90 days and an eventual ceasefire agreement, a joint request to the UN Security Council to deploy an international stabilization force within four months, excluding neighboring states, as a prelude to a UN peace-keeping force, the concomitant withdrawal of Ethiopian forces and the convening of an international donors' conference within six months.²⁰ However, Aweys repudiated the deal and in July announced that Sheikhs Ahmed and Aden had been removed from their leadership roles in the ARS.²¹ Ahmed and Aden refuted Aweys' claims. Rival factions, the ARS-Djibouti and the ARS-Asmara, quickly coalesced. Al-Shabaab, while closer to the ARS-Asmara, retained considerable autonomy of action.

In March the US placed al-Shabaab on its list of terrorist organizations. Its leader declared this to be a badge of honour.²² Al-Shabaab did not seem to be set back much by the killing of its commander, Sheikh Aden Hashi Ayrow, by a US airstrike at the beginning of May. Ayrow, who had links with al-Qaida, had been in their sights for some time. There had also been an unsuccessful airstrike in March against an alleged al-Qaida operative, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, in the far south of Somalia.²³ The rebels have periodically been able to seize control of towns in central and southern Somalia, but have tended to cede them before they face frontal attack from TFG/Ethiopian forces.

¹⁹ *Report of the UN Secretary General on the situation in Somalia*, S/2008/178, 14 March 2008

²⁰ *Report of the UN Secretary General on the situation in Somalia*, S/2008/466, 16 July 2008. The Djibouti agreement was formally signed on 18 August 2008

²¹ "Hardline Somali leader 'elected'", *BBC News Online*, 23 July 2008

²² "UN urged to send more soldiers to Somalia", *Financial Times*, 21 March 2008

²³ "US fails a fourth time to hit al-Qaida suspect in Somalia"

Several attacks have been launched on Ethiopian military bases in Mogadishu itself. AMISOM has also come under regular attack. There has been a least one assassination attempt on President Yusuf Ahmed during 2008.²⁴

There have been claims that the rebels have been weakened in Mogadishu, but there is little firm evidence that this is the case. In July, the Mayor of Mogadishu, former warlord Mohammed Dheere, was sacked by Nur Adde (but against the wishes of the president) for his failure to improve security in the capital.²⁵ September and October saw more heavy fighting in the capital. For their part, TFG forces are weak, appear to have low morale and have at times not been paid for prolonged periods. Many of them act in practice as autonomous, freebooting militias. There have been many instances of them robbing civilians.²⁶ Without the presence of Ethiopian troops, it is unlikely that the deeply dysfunctional TFG would have survived.

The TFG suffered a major setback in August, when al-Shabaab took the southern port of Kismayo. However, this also set in train growing differences between ARS-Asmara and al-Shabaab. The ARS-Asmara criticised al-Shabaab's choice to head the new administration. In September it condemned al-Shabaab's announcement that it would shell Mogadishu's main airport if it was not shut down.

In late August the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, gave a first indication that the patience of his government might be running out. In an interview, he said that Ethiopia was prepared to withdraw troops from Somalia even in the absence of stable transitional arrangements. He stated that the operation had been very expensive, adding: "We didn't anticipate that the international community would be happy riding the Ethiopian horse and flogging it at the same time for so long... We had hoped and expected... that the international community would recognise that this was a unique opportunity for the stabilisation of Somalia and capitalise on it."²⁷ Notwithstanding such statements, when the ARS-Djibouti and the TFG met in Djibouti in September to resume negotiations on implementing the Djibouti agreement, the former refused to implement a ceasefire in the absence of a firm timetable for Ethiopian withdrawal. Some observers argue that, had it done so in this context, its credibility with the other nationalist and Islamist factions would have been fatally undermined.²⁸

All parties to the conflict have continued to be accused of serious human rights abuses during 2008. In May, Amnesty International declared that civilians were now completely at the mercy of armed groups in Somalia.²⁹ Human rights groups have been calling for the establishment by the UN Security Council of a commission of inquiry to investigate

²⁴ "Somali president targeted in bomb", *BBC News Online*, 18 June 2008

²⁵ "Somali mayor axed over insecurity", *BBC News Online*, 30 July 2008

²⁶ "In Somalia, government once hailed as best hope is teetering on collapse", *New York Times*, 29 March 2008

²⁷ "Ethiopia signals shift as Somalian war drags on", *Financial Times*, 28 August 2008

²⁸ "Ideological diversity in Country's Islamic Courts Movement [analysis]", *AllAfrica.com*, 26 September 2008

²⁹ "Somali forces 'out of control'", *BBC News Online*, 6 May 2008

violations of international law and to consider asking the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate.³⁰

The Djibouti agreement initially prompted hopes that, with the humanitarian situation exacerbated by high food and fuel prices, it would soon become easier for humanitarian and aid agencies to operate in Somalia. However, their workers were at growing risk either of abduction or execution. While anti-TFG forces were responsible for many of these attacks, a significant number appear to have been conducted by TFG ‘hardliners’, who view humanitarian aid as giving succour to the enemy.³¹ Since the death in May of the commander of al-Shabaab, Aden Hashi Ayrow, some of the groups affiliated with it have increased their targeting of aid workers and their local ‘collaborators’.³² In July, the head of the Mogadishu office of the United Nations Development Programme was killed by unidentified gunmen. The UN Political Office for Somalia has still not relocated to Mogadishu because of the security situation. Most international NGOs had withdrawn their staff by the middle of 2008.

Meanwhile, the UN reported that the prices of locally produced cereals had risen by up to 400 per cent between mid-2007 and mid-2008. The Secretary-General also stated in July that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance since January 2008 had increased from 1.8 million to 3.2 million – approximately 40 per cent of the population.³³ 750,000 people fled Mogadishu alone between March and July 2008, by which time well over 300,000 were living in tents on the outskirts of the city.³⁴

There was a small-scale addition to the complement of AMISOM in October 2008, with the arrival of 400 more Burundian troops. This brought the size of AMISOM on the ground to 3,400 – still under 50 per cent of the planned total when it was created. The appalling security situation makes it hardly surprising that other countries continue to hesitate, although Uganda said earlier this year that it would send more if the funding could be found. In recent weeks, Kenya has also expressed a willingness to send troops. This follows a marked increase in attacks across the Kenya-Somalia border by Somali insurgents.³⁵ Burundi has said that it is prepared to send another 850 troops. The UN Security Council, facing massive peace-keeping overstretch, is reluctant to move ahead with a force for Somalia, despite regular appeals by Ould Abdallah since March to do so, on the grounds that current conditions are not conducive.³⁶ Both he and the Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Minister, Seyoum Mesfin, have complained that the international

³⁰ “15 years after Black Hawk Down: Somalia’s chance?”, *Enough Strategy Paper 18*, April 2008, pp. 10-12

³¹ “Somalia: A country in peril, a policy nightmare”, *Enough Strategy Paper*, September 2008, p. 4

³² *Ibid*

³³ “Humanitarian situation in serious decline as security worsens, warns UN chief”, *UN News Service*, 20 November 2008

³⁴ “15 years after Black Hawk Down: Somalia’s chance?”, *Enough Strategy Paper 18*, April 2008, pp. 10-12. For details of the UN 2008 Consolidated Appeal for Somalia, see:

http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R5_A792_08112012.pdf

For details of the 2009 appeal, see:

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MCOT-7LJDGL?OpenDocument&RSS20=03>

³⁵ “Funding hamper deployment of more Ugandan troops to Somalia – defence minister”, *New Vision*, 8 March 2008

³⁶ “UN urged to send more soldiers to Somalia”, *Financial Times*, 21 March 2008

community is not doing enough to provide support to the TFG and the Ethiopian forces.³⁷ In August the UN Security Council renewed AMISOM's mandate for a further six months.³⁸ The Secretary-General continues to prepare 'contingency plans' for a UN force.³⁹ In recent days, the AU has again called for its urgent deployment.⁴⁰ With regard to the international community, one commentator puts it bluntly:

[...] widespread pessimism over the over the prospects of any peace process, the lingering trauma from disastrous past interventions, and the need to put out fires elsewhere – from Afghanistan to Congo – have snuffed out any real will to act.⁴¹

Given the deepening divisions that exist on both the TFG and ARS sides, the failure of the Djibouti agreement to quickly bring peace is unsurprising. On the ARS side, most of the weapons remain in the hands of 'rejectionists'. It is just about possible to envisage the ARS-Asmara faction joining a peace process, provided Ethiopia withdraws without delay. However, bringing an increasingly fragmented al-Shabaab on board would appear to be an increasingly difficult task. According to one analyst, some of the clan or criminal militias now using that label have little real commitment to an Islamist agenda. There have been numerous recent reports of different militias turning their guns on each other in some areas.⁴²

There was a flurry of renewed diplomatic activity in late-October. The ARS-Djibouti and the TFG met again under UN auspices in Djibouti to try and agree a firm timetable for Ethiopian withdrawal and implementation of the ceasefire. The talks took place with sides beginning to talk optimistically about a 'power-sharing' arrangement. On 26 October it was agreed to implement the ceasefire from 5 November, with Ethiopia beginning to withdraw its troops from Mogadishu and other areas from 21 November and completing a full withdrawal within 120 days. The TFG and ARS-Djibouti were to establish a joint security force and work closely with AMISOM to bring order to the country. However, this new agreement, like others before it, has not led to a reduction in levels of violence around the country. In recent weeks, Somaliland and Puntland have also been subjected to insurgent attacks (see below) and there have been attacks on a town on the Kenyan side of the Somalia-Kenya border, one of which led to the abduction of three Catholic nuns. There are calls on the Kenyan side for its forces to launch attacks back across the border against al-Shabaab militias.⁴³ The ARS-Asmara, al-Shabaab and Eritrea have all condemned the 26 October agreement. The Hawiye Council is reported

³⁷ "Ethiopian foreign minister accuses 'influential' nations of neglecting Somalia", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 30 March 2008

³⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 1831 (2008) of 19 August 2008. AMISOM's mandate next expires on 16 January 2008.

³⁹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia*, S/2008/709, 17 November 2008

⁴⁰ "AU appeals to UN to urgently deploy peacekeepers in Somalia", *Garowe Online*, 17 November 2008

⁴¹ "No quick-fix solution to Somalia instability", *Irish Independent*, 20 November 2008

⁴² "Somalia: A country in peril, a policy nightmare", *Enough Strategy Paper*, September 2008, pp. 6-7. For a useful discussion of the fault-lines within al-Shabaab, see: "Two brutal stalemates", *Africa Confidential*, 31 October 2008

⁴³ "Kenya hopeful calm to return to clash-hit town after 'foreign' militia captured", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 6 November 2008

to be trying to mediate between the ARS-Djibouti and those forces that have rejected the agreement.⁴⁴

It was also agreed in Djibouti on 26 October that a new unity government would be the subject of further negotiation under IGAD auspices.⁴⁵ Within days, political leaders from both sides were meeting in Nairobi. While there was no firm outcome, Prime Minister Nur Adde announced that he would announce the composition of a new, more inclusive, government by 12 November. However, with the mandate of the TFG having less than a year to run, there were reports that supporters of President Yusuf would not be included. The future of the President himself, whose health has been poor for a number of years, now looked under increasing threat. He swiftly began another rearguard action. Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, one of the top leaders of the ARS-Djibouti, has returned to Somalia.⁴⁶

One observer has recently argued that Ethiopia, which has about 4000 troops still in the country, “has reached the end of its tether in Somalia and will remove its forces from the country whether or not they are replaced by an unlikely UN stabilization mission and despite Western pressure to remain in the absence of such a mission.”⁴⁷ However, the TFG’s position grows weaker by the day. It now effectively controls only parts of Mogadishu and the town of Baidoa.⁴⁸ By mid November, a range of insurgent groups were in control of most of Somalia. This has led Ethiopia to delay withdrawing its troops for the moment. The establishment of a sufficiently credible unity government will be crucial if the situation is to be stabilised, but this continues to prove elusive. The 12 November deadline for agreeing the basis of a unity government has passed without success. Prime Minister Nur Adde has called upon the President to resign.⁴⁹

Given the many divisions that exist within the opposition to the TFG, its violent overthrow will not necessarily mean a return to the kind of ‘Islamist order’ which the CSIC was able briefly to establish in 2006. According to a Mogadishu businessman: “This time it will be worse [...] This time the Islamic groups will fight among themselves. This time we will have Islamic warlords. They will fight and there will be more difficult problems.”⁵⁰ Another observer paints this likely scenario in the event of an Ethiopian withdrawal without the creation of a sufficiently credible unity government:

An Ethiopian pull-out would leave the powerless TFG incapable of sustaining itself, setting the stage for a scramble for power among the fragmented factions, forcing each of them into a posture of pro-active self-defense. Should such a situation transpire, the greatest likelihood for Somalia would be a period of civil

⁴⁴ “Leaders of main clan in Mogadishu mediating between warring Islamist factions”, *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 4 November 2008

⁴⁵ “Ethiopian troops to withdraw from Somalia in two phases – agreement”, *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 27 October 2008

⁴⁶ “President to travel overseas for ‘routine’ medical check-up”, *Garowe Online*, 4 November 2008

⁴⁷ “Islamic courts fracture in Middle Shabelle [analysis]”, *AllAfrica.com*, 10 October 2008

⁴⁸ “Somali head admits militant gains”, *BBC News Online*, 15 November 2008

⁴⁹ “Q&A: The President is to blame for Somalia’s woes, premier says”, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 2008

⁵⁰ “Somalia sinks deeper into a state of total disintegration”, *Observer*, 23 November 2008

warfare preceding the emergence of a more stable configuration of power, the design of which is at present unpredictable.⁵¹

3. The role of the international community

The international community's role in Somalia has been and remains extensive. But its capacity to achieve positive outcomes remains in question. Many aspects of the interventions of the primary actors – the US, UN, AU and Somalia's regional neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea – have already been discussed in the preceding sections of the paper. The purpose of this section is briefly to outline some other aspects of current international involvement.

Immediately after the fall of the CSIC, the US Agency for International Development pledged a supplemental aid package of US \$40 million, with further funds to come. With many donor agencies and governments lacking a physical presence in Somalia due to the security situation, much international assistance to the TFG is being channelled through the UN Development Programme (UNDP). For example, a UN 'Rule of Law' Programme provides training for the Somali National Police. Concerns have been expressed that the UNDP's role in this regard undermines the ability of UN Special Representative Ould Abdullah to act as a credible mediator in peace talks.

A recent UN report made the following observations about international assistance to the TFG:

204. During the past 12 months, foreign contributions have likely represented the largest source of income for the Transitional Federal Government. However, there seems to be little evidence that donor funds are being invested for stated purposes, and no safeguards exist against the diversion of such funds towards the financing of arms embargo violations. Additionally, the allocation of bilateral aid is difficult to ascertain under current disclosure practices of the Transitional Federal Government regarding the purpose of expenditures and the precise identity of Somali recipients.

205. The Transitional Federal Government under Prime Minister Gedi received:

- (a) \$500,000 from the Republic of Yemen (as part of a commitment from the League of Arab States);
- (b) \$2 million from Algeria (as part of a commitment from the League of Arab States);
- (c) \$2 million from Kenya;
- (d) \$100,000 from the People's Republic of China.

An additional \$1 million was allegedly given directly to President Yussuf by the Government of the Sudan.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has made a significant commitment to the Somali reconciliation and reconstruction effort, in the form of \$150 million paid to Prime Minister Gedi. The money was expected to finance the refurbishing of Government buildings in Baidoa and Mogadishu, expenses for the national reconciliation conference, and expenses related to the interests of elders and

⁵¹ "Islamic courts fracture in Middle Shabelle [analysis]", *AllAfrica.com*, 10 October 2008

other facilitators advancing the reconciliation agenda. During the period of March and April 2007, deposits of \$6 million and \$26 million were made to a bank account in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, opened previously by the Minister of Finance of Somalia.

206. The manner in which these funds were withdrawn and used and the fact that proper accounting was not made have led to allegations, particularly against former Prime Minister Gedi, of corruption and the illegal acquisitions of arms and ammunition and payments to combatants.⁵²

The Arab League, while unhappy about the Ethiopian occupation, has proclaimed its neutrality and supports a negotiated solution. However, there are divisions between individual member states over Somalia that hinder its effectiveness as a mediator, with countries such as Egypt and Qatar cool towards the TFG and Ethiopia. Despite this, the body has called upon its members to provide assistance to the TFG. It has also provided some financial support to AMISOM. In August, the organisation opened an office in Mogadishu.⁵³

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has seconded a human rights adviser to the UN country team for Somalia. The OHCHR has conducted an assessment mission in Somalia, led by its Independent Expert for Somalia, Shamsul Bari.⁵⁴ The Human Rights Council has regularly considered the human rights situation in Somalia. In September the Independent Expert for Somalia reported to it in plenary session.⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch is calling for a special sitting of the Council to discuss the situation in Somalia.⁵⁶

The World Food Programme is the preponderant provider of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, with the vast majority of what it provides being delivered by sea. This is due to the security situation, with militias demanding bribes to move goods through a plethora of checkpoints on the roads. However, sea routes can themselves be hazardous due to the prevalence of pirates in the waters off the Horn.⁵⁷ The recent fall of the port of Marka to the insurgents is another blow to aid efforts. Donors were heavy users of the port.

While the UN arms embargo against Somalia allows for targeted measures against those who breach the embargo and who support such breaches, none have to date been introduced.⁵⁸ An Arms Embargo Monitoring Group reports periodically to the Security Council about violations of the embargo. Its most recent report was in April 2008. In it, while acknowledging that the arms embargo was largely ineffective, the Monitoring Group recommended the imposition of targeted measures against those violating it. It

⁵² See: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/mongroup.shtml>

⁵³ See: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808180126.html>

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Oral statement in response to the update of the newly-appointed High Commissioner of Human Rights", 8 September 2008. Available at: http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/09/08/global19801_txt.htm

⁵⁵ See: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MUMA-7JP45V?OpenDocument>

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Oral statement in response to the update of the newly-appointed High Commissioner of Human Rights"

⁵⁷ See House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/BT/3794, *Shipping: piracy*

⁵⁸ HC Deb 10 July 2008 c1828W

considers Ethiopia to be in violation of the embargo.⁵⁹ A step towards imposing sanctions was taken on 20 November, when the Security Council specified that travel restrictions and asset freezes would be imposed and encouraged Member States to submit names of individuals or entities to the Monitoring Group, which has now been given the power to designate those who should be subject to sanctions.⁶⁰ The TFG has regularly called for the embargo to be lifted against it but without success.

Following the creation of AMISOM, the European Council added it to a 'European Union (EU) civilian-military supporting action' originally established with regard to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Euro 30 million was contributed towards the costs of the mission by EU member states during 2007.⁶¹ However, the mandate of the supporting action expired on 1 January 2008, when AMIS was replaced by the UN peace-keeping mission in Darfur. No new mandate for a supporting action for AMISOM has been established.⁶²

The EU, while part of the International Contact Group, and keen to avoid public differences of opinion with the US, has appeared at points less than wholly comfortable with approaches to Somalia that have prioritised counter-terrorism or military action. The EU has supported training for the Somali National Police, which has been heavily involved in fighting. There were reports of an internal discussion within the European Commission in 2007 about whether it might find itself implicated in war crimes charges against members of the TFG.⁶³ Under the European Security and Defence Policy, the EU is now also set to join in the international task force that is currently engaged in wider anti-piracy actions off the coast of Somalia. The EU operation is known as Operation Atalanta and will be commanded from the UK's multinational headquarters at Northwood.⁶⁴

The donor community is currently based in Nairobi, as is the UN Political Office for Somalia, although the latter is said to be planning to relocate to Mogadishu as soon as the security situation permits. For some, this has damaged the ability of both to operate effectively.

During 2007 the British Government contributed funds to the AU planning cell, funded equipment for the Ugandan deployment as part of AMISOM and paid for a scoping visit by Burundian officials. In early 2007 the Stabilisation Unit, a joint operation of the Foreign Office, Department for International Development (DFID) and the Ministry of Defence, produced a 'critical path analysis' for Somalia, which "identified the milestones necessary to achieve interim stability including ensuring the cessation of hostilities, 'good enough' security in Mogadishu, only legitimate Transitional Federal Government counter-terrorist activity and unimpeded humanitarian relief in order to sustain an incipient political

⁵⁹ For the full text of the Monitoring Group's latest report, see:

<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/mongroup.shtml>

⁶⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 1844 (2008). Full text available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9504.doc.htm>

⁶¹ HC Deb 3 December 2007 c1061W

⁶² See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:346:0028:0028:EN:PDF>

⁶³ "EC complicit in Somali war crimes", *Independent*, 7 April 2007

⁶⁴ HC Deb 17 November 2008 c4WS

process.”⁶⁵ The Government has allocated £2 million to Somalia for financial year 2008-09 from the Conflict Prevention Pool. One focus is supporting donor co-ordination on security sector reform, which has been identified by many observers as inadequate.⁶⁶ Overall, DFID has pledged over £20 million in new commitments for Somalia, including £12 million to the WFP.⁶⁷ No money goes directly to the TFG. It is channelled through the UNDP and other donors to build budgetary and financial management capacity.⁶⁸ The Government strongly supports the Djibouti agreement and in its public statements continues to call for a national reconciliation process that includes all groups which reject violence.⁶⁹ There have been reports that Somalis based in the UK are an important source of financial support for the insurgents, including al-Shabaab.⁷⁰

B. Somaliland and Puntland

1. Somaliland – background and history

Following the collapse of the regime of Siad Barre in 1991 and Somalia’s slide into civil war, the northwestern region of Somalia set itself up as an independent state, the Republic of Somaliland. The majority clan family in the Republic of Somaliland is the Isaaq, which strongly supports Somaliland independence. Some observers include the Isaaq in the Dir clan family, although few Isaaq accept this designation. Other significant clans are the the Dulbahante and Warsengeli in eastern Somaliland. They are part of the Harti clan federation, which is in turn part of the wider Darod clan family. The Gadabursi and Isa, both part of the Dir clan family, are the other main clans in Somaliland. The population of Somaliland is estimated by the Government to be around 3.5 million. However, this figure has not been independently verified and others believe the figure is nearer to 1.5 million.⁷¹

Between 1884 and 1960 Somaliland was a British Protectorate. To its south, the rest of what was to become independent Somalia became an Italian colony. For seven months during 1940-41 British Somaliland also briefly fell under Italian control. British efforts after 1945 to unify the different Somali territories quickly foundered due to objections from other European states and Ethiopia, so Somaliland reverted to its previous Protectorate status. As nationalist movements grew in strength during the 1950s, Britain and Italy gradually began to synchronise plans for the independence of their respective Somali colonies. Somaliland became independent on 25 June 1960. Somalia became independent on 1 July 1960. The legislatures of the two countries met in joint session immediately and announced their unification as the Republic of Somalia. However, it quickly became evident that unification was not based on equal representation or status; the south was undoubtedly the dominant partner in the new Republic. This was the case

⁶⁵ To our knowledge, this document has not been placed in the public domain. See: Stabilisation Unit, “Stabilisation issues note: Human rights”. Available at: www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk

⁶⁶ HC Deb 15 September 2008 c2198W

⁶⁷ HC Deb 27 October 2008 c772W

⁶⁸ HC Deb 10 November 2008 c886-7W

⁶⁹ For example, see: HC Deb 1 July 2008 c781W

⁷⁰ “The terror connection. UK Somalis suspected of funding hardline Islamists”, *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 November 2008

⁷¹ See: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/OCHA-64C2VJ?OpenDocument>

both under civilian government up to 1969 and later under the military rule of Mohammed Siad Barre between 1969 and 1991.

During the 1980s, with the Isaaq to the fore, an armed movement dedicated to the overthrow of Siad Barre, the Somali National Movement (SNM), emerged in the north of Somalia. By the late-1980s there was full-scale civil war. With the Barre regime crumbling by January 1991, the SNM seized the capital Hargeisa. In May 1991 the Republic of Somaliland was declared. A long campaign for international recognition began.

While the rest of Somalia plunged into full-blown state failure during the 1990s, and despite occasional outbreaks of internal conflict between different clans of the Isaaq clan family, Somaliland began a process of reconstruction and state-building under the leadership (until his death in 2002) of President Mohammed Ibrahim Igal, himself an Isaaq. Many analysts have attributed Somaliland's stability as compared with Somalia as being down to an astute fusing of modern governmental forms with more 'traditional' modes of authority based on clan elders. Others have asserted that Somaliland's stability has been based on the political interventions of a dominant class of livestock traders within the primary clan family, the Isaaq, whose economic interests were being gravely threatened by internal conflict.⁷² However, some have argued that Somaliland's long-term political viability is far from guaranteed.⁷³

In May 2001, on the tenth anniversary of its declaration of independence, Somaliland held a referendum under which a new Constitution affirming its independence and establishing a multi-party electoral system was overwhelmingly approved. Since then Somaliland has moved towards direct election for the Presidency and its House of Representatives (*Golala Wakiilada*). There are currently three registered political parties competing for seats – the United Democratic People's Party (UDUB), the Kulmiye Party and the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID). All three have strong clan bases. The Kulmiye Party is strongly supported by some of the Darod clans. The other two parties are largely vehicles for competing sub-clans of the Isaaq. Membership of the House of Elders (*The Golala Guurtida*) is through nomination by clan structures. There was a presidential election in 2003, in which Dahir Rayale Kahin, a Gadabursi, was narrowly victorious. The Kulmiye Party was reluctantly persuaded by clan elders to accept the result. Parliamentary elections took place in 2005, formally completing Somaliland's transition to democracy. In these elections, UDUB, the party of the President, emerged as the largest party but did not command a majority – a potentially stabilising outcome, at least in the short-term, in which the winners did not win too heavily and the losers were not humiliated.⁷⁴

In April 2008 President Rayale successfully obtained a one-year extension by the Somaliland parliament to his term of office, which should have ended on 15 May 2008. The main opposition parties had opposed the extension and for a period retaliated by refusing to agree dates for municipal and presidential elections. For a while, political

⁷² A. de Waal, "Class and power in a stateless Somalia", 20 February 2007, p. 10. Available at: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/dewaal/>

⁷³ For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Part III of this Paper.

tension was high. However, in May agreement was reached for municipal elections to be held on 15 December 2008 and the presidential election on 15 March 2009.⁷⁵ An alliance between the Kulmiye Party and UCUD could spell danger for UDUB in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The presidential candidate of the Kulmiye Party will be Ahmed Mohammed Mohamud Silanyo. UCUD's candidate will be Faysal Ali Warabe. President Rayale will stand for UDUB.⁷⁶

There have been periodic allegations that the Somaliland authorities are guilty of human rights abuses. For example, in October 2007, a UNDP official was deported for criticising the Somaliland authorities for the alleged harassment of the unregistered Quran Party, an Islamist party, several of whose leaders had been sentenced to prison terms.⁷⁷ In early November 2007, in order to prevent the holding of planned anti-government demonstrations, the Somaliland authorities arrested at least seven officials of the Party.⁷⁸ Journalists have also experienced official harassment and the climate for the media has become tougher in recent years. Some voices within the country's small independent press argue that such abuses are undermining Somaliland's campaign for international recognition.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, a comparison with the situation in Somalia offers a stark contrast.

The limits of Somaliland's ability to insulate itself from the turbulence in the rest of Somalia was revealed on 29 October 2008, when three simultaneous car bomb attacks took place in Hargeisa, causing at least 23 deaths. At the same time, two car bomb attacks occurred in Bossaso, Puntland. Observers were quick to attribute the attacks to the armed Islamist group al-Shabaab.⁸⁰

Somaliland's relations with the TFG are predictably frosty. Somaliland did not send representatives to the July-August 2007 National Reconciliation Congress held in Mogadishu (see above). However, it is Somaliland's relationship with the neighbouring 'state' of Puntland that has recently been the cause of greatest instability (see below).

2. Puntland – background and history

Puntland declared itself an autonomous region of Somalia in 1998, at a time when the rest of the country was convulsed by internal conflict.⁸¹

The most powerful clan grouping in Puntland is the Harti clan federation. The Harti are part of the broader Darod clan family. The largest clan within the Harti clan federation in Puntland is the Majerteen. The two other main clans in Puntland are the Dulbahante and Warsengeli clans, which are also part of the Harti clan federation. The Puntland

⁷⁴ Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, pp 191, 208-9

⁷⁵ "Elections timetable consensus reached in Somaliland", *Garowe Online*, 21 May 2008

⁷⁶ "Somaliland – growing stronger as State within a State", *The Monitor*, 5 November 2008

⁷⁷ "Somaliland authorities deport UN human rights official", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 25 October 2007

⁷⁸ "Somaliland: police arrest officials, supporters of unregistered party", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 12 November 2007

⁷⁹ "The era of injustice, corruption and mismanagement in Somaliland must come to an end", *Somaliland Times*, 15 January 2008

⁸⁰ "Blast targets Somaliland leader", *BBC News Online*, 29 October 2008

⁸¹ Its formal designation is 'The Puntland State of Somalia'.

Government estimates that the population is 2.4 million but this figure has not been independently verified.⁸²

In 1998, local leaders agreed to bring order to the region by establishing a Puntland state, headed by a president, and a parliament and judiciary. There were some similarities with what had happened earlier in the decade in Somaliland. The main anti-Barre organisation in the region, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), working in partnership with clan elders, created formal political structures but much power continued to reside with traditional authorities known as the *issimo*. However, Puntland has not gone as far as Somaliland in terms of a 'democratic transition'. In 2001 the then President of Puntland, Abudullahi Yusuf Ahmed, refused to leave office in defiance of a decision by a clan conference to nominate a rival candidate for the post, leading to a brief civil war in which he was victorious. One observer called his rule a "clan dictatorship".⁸³ Unlike Somaliland, there is no second Chamber and no political parties to help act as a check on the government. As a state, Puntland is desperately short of resources. It has often struggled to pay government officials and its soldiers.

Puntland has consistently stated that it is willing to be part of a future federal Somalia, as provided for in Article 1 of Somalia's 'Transitional Constitution'.⁸⁴ Puntland's relations with the TFG have generally remained positive. This partly reflects the fact that current TFG President Yusuf Ahmed was President of Puntland until 2004. However, there have been (and continue to be) moments of tension between them.⁸⁵ There was a period of political instability during 2001-2 in Puntland, although calm was subsequently restored. Since it took over Mogadishu, the TFG has benefited from the support of Puntland militias, which make up the majority of its forces, in its efforts to secure the capital.

Most of the oil exploration that has taken place in Somalia has been in Puntland. President Mohamud Musa Hersi' Adde', the current President of Puntland, who was elected in 2005, took TFG President Yusuf Ahmed's side in a dispute during 2007 with former Prime Minister Gedi over oil exploration deals.⁸⁶ Puntland has passed its own petroleum law and does not recognise the bill passed by Gedi's Government before he was removed.⁸⁷

In November 2006 Islamic law was introduced in Puntland, in part to prevent some local Muslim and clan leaders from defecting to the CSIC.⁸⁸ Puntland did not come into direct conflict with the CSIC during its brief period of rule over much of the rest of Somalia. However, since the defeat of the CSIC, Puntland has been increasingly caught up in the wider insurgency against the TFG and the Ethiopian occupation. There have been

⁸² See: <http://www.puntlandgovt.com/profile.php#population>

⁸³ T. Hagmann and M.V.Hohne, "Failed state or failed debate? Multiple Somali political orders within and beyond the nation-state", *Politorbis*, 42, 1, 2007, p. 24

⁸⁴ See the Puntland State of Somalia's own website at: <http://www.puntlandgovt.com/profile.php>

⁸⁵ In July 2007 the Puntland Government signed an agreement with the TFG under which authority over the region's military was handed over to the TFG. However, there have been recent disagreements over who the new regional commander should be. "Puntland leader collides with Fed Govt over military authority", *AllAfrica.com*, 29 November 2007

⁸⁶ "How many states for the north?", *Africa Confidential*, 18 October 2007

⁸⁷ "Autonomous region rejects government's law on petroleum", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 4 March 2008

⁸⁸ See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/4276288.stm

numerous attacks in Puntland, including by groups affiliated with al-Shabaab.⁸⁹ By April 2008 Puntland was appealing to Ethiopia to send more troops to the region in the face of a deteriorating security situation.⁹⁰

Puntland has become the main base from which Somali pirates operate. While there have been claims that officials have links with the pirates, in October 2008 the authorities launched a number of successful operations against them.⁹¹ Protests about alleged plans to try one group of pirates led to a brief outbreak of unrest in Garowe.⁹² There has also been criticism by local businessmen of the decision of the Puntland Government to award a 15-year monopoly to a Saudi company for the export of livestock, which led to the closure of a competing locally-owned animal quarantine centre.⁹³

On 29 October 2008 two simultaneous car bomb attacks took place in Bossaso, causing several deaths. At the same time, three car bomb attacks occurred in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. Observers were quick to attribute the attacks to the armed Islamist group al-Shabaab.⁹⁴

Parliamentary and presidential elections are being held in Puntland in January 2009. Musa Hersi 'Adde' is being challenged for the presidency by a large number of candidates, most notably Abdirahman Mohamed, known as 'Farole'. A former ally of the President, he has promised to revise the Constitution and strengthen democracy in the region. Hassan Abshir, a former Puntland and TFG minister who is currently a member of Somalia's Transitional Federal Parliament, has also announced his candidacy.⁹⁵

3. The Somaliland/Puntland border dispute

There have been major tensions between Somaliland and Puntland over their common border since 2004, with both laying claim to the regions of Sanaag and Sool. On several occasions there have been military clashes. Relations between the two over the issue deteriorated again during 2007 and there were further military clashes.

The Dulbahante and Warsengeli clans of the Harti clan federation live on either side of the Somaliland-Puntland border in eastern Somaliland and western Puntland. They have felt politically and economically marginalised in both Somaliland and Puntland and the degree of effective control exercised in either Sanaag or Sool by what passes for 'central authority' has been limited in practice. Furthermore, local leaders have often changed their mind over which of the two polities deserves their allegiance. Shifts in loyalty appear to have played a significant role in triggering the 2007 crisis. There also remain significant constituencies within both clans for ultimate reunification with the rest of

⁸⁹ "Puntland minister says Islamists to blame for insecurity in region", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 17 February 2008

⁹⁰ "Puntland leader departs for Ethiopia", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 30 March 2008

⁹¹ "Somalia's semi-autonomous region vows to fight piracy in its waters", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 26 October 2008

⁹² "Riots rock Puntland capital" *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 20 October 2008

⁹³ "Puntland business leaders complain about livestock export monopoly", *Garowe Online*, 20 October 2008

⁹⁴ "Blast targets Somaliland leader", *BBC News Online*, 29 October 2008

⁹⁵ "Former Prime Minister to turn for Puntland President", *Garowe Online*, 5 November 2008

Somalia, which confirms that the fate of both Somaliland and Puntland is likely to remain unavoidably linked to what happens in the rest of the country.⁹⁶

In July 2007 local leaders in Sanaag, which until then had given its loyalty to Puntland, seceded from it and formed the new 'state' of Maakhir. Those behind it came from the Warsengeli clan. They strongly opposed TFG moves to undertake oil exploration in the area. They had also become resentful of the perceived dominance in Puntland of the Majerteen clan.

Then, in September 2007, following unrest in Sool – some of whose Dulbahante leaders had rejected the authority of the Puntland Government and talked about establishing another autonomous state, Daraawiish – fighting between Somaliland and Puntland broke out again. In October Somaliland troops occupied the capital of Sool, Las Anod. Somaliland claimed that its forces had been attacked first. Somaliland troops were reportedly within 35 kilometres of Puntland's capital, Garowe, at one point. A conference opened in late November to try and agree the future of the area but came to nothing.⁹⁷

During 2008 outbreaks of violence between Somaliland and Puntland over Sool and Sanaag have continued. Somaliland forces have pushed deeper into Sanaag, where there have been several instances this year of foreign aid workers being kidnapped for ransom. In July Somaliland forces claimed that they had taken control of the coastal town of Las Qoray in eastern Sanaag. Puntland swiftly claimed that it had retaken the town. Local Warsengeli clan elders called on both parties to withdraw their forces. In practice, neither Somaliland nor Puntland appear to have much political control over this area.⁹⁸

Since October 2008 there have been a series of attacks in parts of Somaliland-occupied Sool by a new organisation called the Somalia Unity Defence Alliance. Somaliland has accused Puntland of backing the group; Puntland has denied such allegations.⁹⁹

4. The role of the international community

Western donors and international NGOs have assisted Somaliland's reconstruction and state-building efforts. However, because foreign governments are unwilling to recognise Somaliland's independence, their aid does not go directly to its government. The international community, including the AU, primarily concerned with attempting to reconstruct Somalia, has so far refused to recognise Somaliland on the grounds that it is for Somalis themselves to sort out their future relationship. It is also argued that only once Somalia has been stabilised will it be possible for the issue of Somaliland to be addressed.¹⁰⁰ Western governments appear inclined to follow the lead of the AU on the

⁹⁶ M.V. Hoehne, "Puntland and Somaliland clashing in Northern Somalia: Who cuts the Gordian knot?", 7 November 2007. Available at: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hoehne/printable.html>

⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁸ "Somaliland and Puntland officials claim control of Sanaag town", *Garowe Online* 14 July 2008. Both Somaliland and Puntland have become major bases for bandits and pirates.

⁹⁹ "New rebel outfit to fight Somaliland security forces", *Garowe Online*, 10 November 2008

¹⁰⁰ ICG, *Somaliland: Democratisation and its discontents*, Africa Report No. 66, July 2003, pp. 2-7

issue of Somaliland. However, there is considerable respect in many Western capitals for Somaliland's achievements since 1991.¹⁰¹

Advocates for Somaliland point out that it fulfils the key requirements of international law with regard to statehood: a permanent population; a defined territory; a stable system of government; and the capacity to enter into international relations with other states. They argue that, far from being a new development, Somaliland has simply decided, as it is entitled to do, to reclaim the independence which it briefly enjoyed in 1960.¹⁰²

Advocates for Somaliland also argue that its democratic transition is a further justification for the international community to change its stance and recognise the country as an independent state. In December 2005 President Rayale formally presented Somaliland's application to join the AU. This followed an AU mission to Somaliland in 2004 and Rayale, since presenting Somaliland's application, has met with senior AU figures to discuss Somaliland's application. Writing in 2006, the International Crisis Group (ICG) quoted a regional diplomat who said: "The issue cannot be allowed to drag on indefinitely. It must be addressed."¹⁰³ Nevertheless, there have been few signs of progress on the issue in recent years. The TFG is adamantly opposed to the idea, as are the opposition ARS factions and al-Shabaab – this is one of the few things on which all the warring parties in Somalia agree.

Somaliland has bilateral relations with the AU, IGAD and the Arab League. Somaliland's relations with South Africa are cordial. Ethiopia has had good relations with Somaliland since independence, without moving to accord it recognition. There is ongoing counter-terrorism co-operation and it has opened up a trade office in Hargeisa.¹⁰⁴ Ethiopia also works closely with the Puntland Government.¹⁰⁵ One analyst has called them both "client states" of Ethiopia.¹⁰⁶ Their relations with Eritrea are predictably poor.

The EU has been the main funder of Somaliland's 'democratic transition'. Another relatively uncontroversial area where ties with Western countries can be deepened is in the sphere of culture – for example, France has supported projects to promote the teaching of French.¹⁰⁷

The British Government has on numerous occasions expressed its respect for the achievements of Somaliland since 1991.¹⁰⁸ Along with Denmark, it has signed bilateral

¹⁰¹ For examples of supportive civil society groups, see: <http://www.sirag.org.uk/> and <http://www.somalilandfocus.org.uk/>. The UK All Party Somaliland Group is another important example.

¹⁰² For the Somaliland Government's official website, see: <http://www.somalilandgov.com/>

¹⁰³ ICG, "Somaliland: Time for African Union leadership", *Africa Report No. 110*, 23 May 2006, p. ii. This report looks in some depth at the arguments for and against Somaliland's claim that the international community should recognise it as an independent state.

¹⁰⁴ "Ethiopian military delegation visits Somaliland for talks", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 3 March 2008

¹⁰⁵ "Puntland leader departs for Ethiopia", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 30 March 2008

¹⁰⁶ M.V. Hoehne, "Puntland and Somaliland clashing in Northern Somalia: Who cuts the Gordian knot?", 7 November 2007. Available at: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hoehne/printable.html>

¹⁰⁷ "France to improve 'cultural ties' with Somaliland", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 24 February 2008

¹⁰⁸ For a recent such expression, see the following statement in the House by Gordon Brown: HC Deb 9 January 2008 c298

agreements for the repatriation of failed asylum-seekers. A recent UN report made the following observations about the UK-Somaliland relationship:

The Monitoring Group has also received information that the Somaliland National Security Agency receives support in intelligence and security matters from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In this framework, the United Kingdom operates flights with military planes, landing at the Berbera airport instead of at the Hargeisa airport, without prior notification to the Committee (see sect. II.C and annex III) [...]

97. On 26 November 2007, a C-130 military aircraft with registration number XV308, using call sign RRR5308, operated by the United Kingdom Royal Air Force, landed at Berbera, Somaliland, Somalia, without prior notification to the Committee.

98. The Monitoring Group sent a letter, dated 30 November 2007, to the Government of the United Kingdom requesting information and details concerning the above-mentioned flight. In its reply of 28 December 2007, the Government of the United Kingdom confirmed the flight and further stated that "United Kingdom diplomatic staff in Addis Ababa maintain a routine liaison with the Somaliland authorities, and this flight was part of that liaison". With regard to the request of the Monitoring Group for information on the cargo, the Government responded that "As the crew were not required to hand over the airway bill to customs officials in Berbera, it was retained and subsequently destroyed on return to the UK in line with standard practice". Finally, in its reply, the Government informed the Monitoring Group that it expected that there would be further flights (see annex III).¹⁰⁹

In June 2008, Kim Howells, then the FCO Minister of State for Africa, stated – following a visit to Somaliland earlier that month – that he was "impressed with the work proceeding to ensure free and fair elections are held in early 2009."¹¹⁰ For a period, political turbulence about the elections led donors, including the EU, to withhold funds due to be provided towards the cost of voter registration. However, following the May 2008 agreement between the political parties about the dates of future elections, this funding was reinstated.¹¹¹ The British Council is also running educational link programmes in Somaliland.¹¹²

There is an active All Party Parliamentary Group on Somaliland, which was established in 2006.¹¹³

The international community has no formal relationships with Puntland as a state, although several UN agencies do have offices in Garowe. Puntland continues to be regarded as an integral part of Somalia. Nor has the international community appeared to play an active role with regard to the border dispute between Somaliland and Puntland, although were it to fester on, the instability it causes could damage the international reputation of both polities.

¹⁰⁹ See: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/mongroup.shtml>, paras 44, 97-98

¹¹⁰ HC Deb 24 June 2008 c282-3W

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

¹¹² HC Deb 11 November 2008 c625

¹¹³ The Chair is Rt Hon Alun Michael MP. The All Party Group has strong links with another UK-based group, Somaliland Focus. For further background, see: <http://www.somalilandfocus.org.uk/>

C. Djibouti

1. Background and history¹¹⁴

During the late-19th century 'scramble for Africa', Djibouti was a French colony, known as French Somaliland. Djibouti came late to political independence in 1977. It has an estimated population of 800,000. Approximately half of the population are Somali, coming predominantly from the Issa clan grouping, which is part of the Dir clan family. Other Somali clans are also present in smaller numbers. The second largest group in Djibouti is the Afar ethnic group. Both groups are Muslim and span the borders of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.

France's original strategic interest in the area arose from the control it gave it over the entrance to the Red Sea and the access it offered to the Indian Ocean. The French established a major naval base in the port of Djibouti, which remains to this day. The US now also has a military base in Djibouti. There is an important railway connection between Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, and Djibouti.

After 1945 there was a growing perception on the part of the Issa that the French favoured the Afar. As a result, Issa were in the vanguard of calls for independence by the late 1960s. Independent Djibouti's first president, Hassan Gouled Aptidon, was an Issa. He established a one-party state led by the Rassemblement populaire pour le progrès (RPP). Within a few years of independence, his governments came to be predominantly Issa in character.

In 1991, Afar opposition groups came together to form the Front pour la revision de l'Ordre à Djibouti (FRUD), with the goal of ending one-party rule, including by military means. In November of that year, FRUD led an insurrection, which rapidly made progress in the north of the country. Gouled accused Ethiopia of providing support to FRUD and called for French military assistance. France did not intervene on his behalf, although its troops did act as a buffer between the two sides. Efforts to broker a ceasefire foundered during early 1992, by which time FRUD controlled over half the country. Gouled attempted to take the sting out of the rebellion by promising a referendum on a new constitution which would introduce multi-partyism, albeit up to a maximum of four political parties. This took place in September 1992 and there was an overwhelming vote in favour. However, few viewed the referendum as credible. FRUD had called on its supporters to boycott it. Parliamentary elections were held in December 1992, which the RPP won decisively. Presidential elections, equally decisively won by Gouled, followed in May 1993. Afar turn-out was very low in both elections. However, Gouled was careful to ensure that Afar representation in Government was subsequently increased. In addition, the security forces were able to stabilise the military situation during the course of 1993.

¹¹⁴ This section of the paper draws upon the chapter on Djibouti in the *Europa Regional Survey for Africa South of the Sahara* (London, 2006)

Djibouti's political crisis appeared to be over. FRUD had been defeated. However, since then human rights groups have argued that Djibouti is a democracy only in name. In 1999 the RPP was able to ensure a smooth transition from Gouled, who had announced his intention to retire as President, to his nephew and chief advisor, Ismael Omar Guelleh. In 2002, the constitutional limit on the number of political parties that was permitted was lifted. Nonetheless, legislative elections in 2003 were widely regarded as rigged in favour of the RPP and its allies. Similar shadows hung over the 2005 presidential election, which the opposition boycotted: Guelleh was re-elected with 100 per cent of the vote.

While Djibouti is once again viewed as an oasis of relative stability in the Horn of Africa, it cannot insulate itself entirely from the surrounding conflicts, which often threaten to destabilise it. There are regular flows of refugees from other Somali lands into Djibouti. The Government has engaged in periodic waves of deportation of illegal immigrants, most recently in 2004 ahead of the presidential election. Djibouti borders Somaliland. Relations between Gouled and the SNM were poor in the late 1980s and there were border clashes in the early 1990s. Since then relations have waxed and waned. However, border tensions remain and Somaliland is always sensitive about Djibouti's periodic endeavours to promote a peace in Somalia that might ultimately threaten its survival. However, Djibouti has never subscribed to ideas of a 'Greater Somalia'. Relations with the TFG in Somalia are generally good. Djibouti has hosted talks between its representatives and the ARS. Djibouti is viewed with predictable hostility by al-Shabaab and its supporters. Another means by which Djibouti has sought to insulate itself from the threat potentially posed by its larger and turbulent neighbours is by hosting the headquarters of IGAD.

While there have been some disputes between the two countries, Djibouti's relationship with Ethiopia has generally been amicable since the fall of Mengistu in 1991. In the past, Guelleh has even talked about a possible confederation of the two states. However, relations with Eritrea have been more chequered (see below).

2. 2008: recent Eritrean incursions

Djibouti and Eritrea twice came close to war in the 1990s over their common border. During the Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 1998-2000, Djibouti gained economically from Ethiopia having to re-route its imports from Eritrean ports to Djibouti port. Eritrea accused Ethiopia of using Djibouti as a base from which to wage war against it and broke off diplomatic relations. Djibouti denied these allegations. Following the end of the war, relations between Djibouti and Eritrea improved again. However, as the Algiers peace agreements between Ethiopia and Eritrea faltered, Eritrean mistrust of Djibouti resurfaced.

In April 2008 Eritrean troops moved seven kilometres into Djibouti, seizing the Ras Doumeira peninsula, where the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden meet. There was considerable speculation about why Eritrea had made such a move, with some warning that it might seek control of a village called Moulhule, 30 kilometres further down the coast, from which it would be able to command the western shipping channel, which is heavily used by shipping moving in and out of the Mediterranean. The village has also been mentioned as the possible site of a proposed bridge between Yemen and Djibouti. Some have noted that Djibouti port, which is becoming an important "regional trans-

shipment hub” increasingly threatens the viability of Eritrea’s own ports at Assab and Massawa. The Eritrean incursion might have been designed to damage the prospects of Djibouti and its port. A further consideration may have been the fact that Ethiopia is a major user of Djibouti port; the Eritrean incursion came at a time when commentators were worrying that a new war between Ethiopia and Eritrea might be on the cards.¹¹⁵

The initial response to the incursion by Djibouti was low-key. It asked Qatar, which has good relations with Eritrea, to mediate between the two countries. However, Eritrea rejected Qatar’s approach, expelling its ambassador. Djibouti then sought to involve Egypt and the Arab League. However, Eritrea denied that it had occupied any part of Djibouti. Then in early May 2008 Djibouti called on the UN Security Council to take up the issue as a threat to international peace and security.

There was a build-up of forces on both sides during May 2008, with Djibouti moving 8,000 troops to the area. Eritrea, while continuing to deny it, placed about 4,000 troops in the area. Violence flared for several days in June, leaving at least 35 dead. It was reportedly triggered by the refusal of Djibouti troops to hand over an Eritrean deserter. On 12 June the UN Security Council issued a presidential statement condemning Eritrean actions, calling for a ceasefire and co-operation with diplomatic efforts to end the dispute.¹¹⁶ The IGAD annual summit during the same month also condemned Eritrea (although Eritrea had left the organisation in 2007 after it failed to condemn Ethiopia’s actions in Somalia), as did the AU and Arab League. Eritrea dismissed the situation as a “non-existent problem”, accusing the US of using the dispute as a pretext for increasing its pressure on Eritrea for opposing Ethiopian actions in Somalia and to disguise the failure of the international community to take steps to resolve the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute.¹¹⁷

Since the clashes in June, there has been a stand-off between the two sides on the ground. In early September a UN fact-finding mission visited the region. Djibouti co-operated with the mission, at the same time pulling back its forces. However, Eritrea did not. The fact-finding mission reported on 19 September that the situation threatened national, regional and international peace. It called upon Eritrea to co-operate with efforts to return to the *status quo ante* and demilitarise the border. It also pointed out that there was a need for both parties to agree which of several colonial era treaties and protocols – the 1897 Abyssinia-France Treaty, the 1901 France-Italy protocols, or the 1935 France-Italy Treaty – should be the basis for defining their common border.¹¹⁸

Unless Eritrea’s stance changes soon, it could find itself subject to both UN and AU sanctions, although whether the UN Security Council has the appetite for taking such action remains in question.¹¹⁹ Djibouti’s President Guelleh has called for sanctions if the

¹¹⁵ “Djibouti/Eritrea: A dangerous invasion”, *Africa Confidential*, 23 May 2008

¹¹⁶ “Shooting war in Djibouti”, *Africa Confidential*, 20 June 2008.

See also: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9353.doc.htm>

¹¹⁷ “Why dwell on a red herring?”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release*, 9 July 2008

¹¹⁸ “Djibouti-Eritrea border tension could escalate, warns UN team”, *UN News Service*, 19 September 2008

¹¹⁹ When asked about imposing an arms embargo on Eritrea, Gillian Merron, Minister of State at the UK FCO did not mention its incursion into Djibouti and stated that the British Government did not see “the need for a comprehensive arms embargo against Eritrea.” HC Deb 18 November 2008 c435W

issue is not resolved in the near future. The Security Council issued another statement on the matter on 23 October, in which it again called upon Eritrea to withdraw its forces and a peaceful resolution of the dispute.¹²⁰

3. The role of the international community

France continues to play a major role in Djibouti. It is the largest provider of aid and military assistance to the country. Approximately 3,000 French troops are permanently stationed there. In 2002 Djibouti sought to modify the terms of the 1999 defence agreement, which allows French forces to use Djibouti's port and airport in return for a French guarantee of Djibouti's territorial integrity, by asking France to pay for this access. France refused to do so but sweetened the pill by agreeing to review its aid programme. In 2004 France agreed to pay Euro 30 million per annum for the use of military facilities in Djibouti. France has provided logistical, medical and intelligence support to Djibouti in its ongoing dispute with Eritrea, but did not become militarily involved in the June 2008 clashes between the two countries.¹²¹

One source of tension with France has been Djibouti's insistence on maintaining its membership of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, which France views as an 'Anglophone'-dominated organisation. Djibouti joined largely in reaction to the dominance of Francophone West African states in the wider French-African relationship.

Since the attacks of September 11 2001, which increased the strategic importance of Djibouti to the US, the country has sought to be a reliable ally in the 'war on terror'. Immediately after the attacks, Djibouti offered access to its port and airfields to the US and its allies. In December 2002 the US Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF) began operating in Djibouti. Its mandate is, working with allies, to detect, disrupt and defeat international terrorism. In 2003 the CJTF moved to Camp Lemonier, a former French Legion post owned by the Djibouti Government. There are about 2,000 military personnel there from many different countries, although the vast majority of them are US personnel. The CJTF is now part of Africa Command (AFRICOM), which became operational on 1 October 2008.¹²² Since 2001 levels of US aid to Djibouti have increased dramatically. The US has strongly supported Djibouti in its current border dispute with Eritrea (see above). Britain has condemned Eritrea's military action and called on both sides to "enter into a bilateral dialogue to resolve peacefully any outstanding issues".¹²³

¹²⁰ See: <http://voanews.com/english/2008-10-23-voa55.cfm>

¹²¹ See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7453063.stm>

¹²² See: <http://www.africom.mil/hoa/>

¹²³ HC Deb 7 July 2008 c1334W

D. Ethiopia

1. Background and history¹²⁴

Unlike the other countries covered by this paper, Ethiopia has a long tradition of statehood. The first large-scale polity was the kingdom of Axum between the second and eighth centuries AD, whose heartland lay in what is today the regional state of Tigray but whose territory stretched far beyond. Ethiopian statehood has always had a strongly 'imperial' character. The country is home to many ethnic groups but the state has usually been dominated by one of them, rather than necessarily being representative of all. Ethiopia has an equally long tradition of agrarian crises and vulnerability to drought. Ethiopia has an estimated population of 82.5 million people. Although there are no reliable official figures, the population is estimated to be split about 50-50 between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The largest ethnic groups are the Oromo (at an estimated 32 per cent) and Amhara (30 per cent), followed by the Tigrinya and Somalis (both at around 6 per cent).

The era of modern Ethiopian statehood began in the late-19th century, when Menelik took the imperial throne. It coincided with the arrival of competing European colonial powers on the African continent. Menelik succeeded not only in reuniting under his control parts of the country where real power had shifted towards the provincial nobility but also in defeating the efforts of Italy to establish Ethiopia as a colony at the battle of Adua in 1896. However, Italy did succeed in establishing a colony, Eritrea, in the north of the country.

Menelik was an Amhara. The new Ethiopian state he created was dominated by the Amhara, a trend which deepened under his son, Haile Selassie, who succeeded Menelik on his death in 1913. Haile Selassie established an increasingly centralised autocratic state, although this process was temporarily disrupted by the Italian invasion and occupation between 1935 and 1941. In 1952, with UN backing, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia. His authoritarian rule was not well received there and the withdrawal of Eritrea's federal status in 1962 set off a long struggle for independence. Other non-Amhara ethnic groups also periodically engaged in protests against Haile Selassie's rule.

Meanwhile, Haile Selassie's reputation abroad rose. He was one of the architects of the Organisation of African Unity, which based itself in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. Staunchly anti-communist, Ethiopia under Haile Selassie became the US's biggest and most reliable ally in the Horn of Africa.

By the beginning of the 1970s various weaknesses in Selassie's regime were coming to the fore. It was positively 'anti-developmental' in its outlook, leaving the vast majority of its people impoverished. Between 1972 and 1974, there was a famine in Wollo province. Protests led by students, workers and army officers mounted, leading ultimately to the deposition of Haile Selassie in September 1974. He was replaced by a left-inclined military government known as the Derg (Committee). However, infighting rapidly grew

¹²⁴ This section of the paper draws upon the chapter on Ethiopia in the *Europa Regional Survey for Africa South of the Sahara* (London, 2006).

and by 1975 dozens of high-ranking civilian and military officials had been summarily executed. In the same year, Haile Selassie was murdered. Ethiopia became the site of internecine conflict between several Marxist-Leninist groupings with different visions of how the revolution should be conducted and what the role of the military should be in it. In February 1977, a military faction around Lt-Col Mengistu Haile Mariam, seized power. Over the following year, known as the 'red terror', he systematically eliminated the non-military Marxist-Leninist left while implementing many of its policies.

The atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia was further fuelled by the invasion in July 1977 of the Somali inhabited areas of eastern Ethiopia, known as the Ogaden, by Somalia. The rest of the year saw major military reverses for Ethiopia. However, Mengistu's consolidation of power by early 1978 was accompanied by a successful counter-offensive that, with Soviet and Cuban support, reclaimed all the lost territory. Mengistu also made major inroads in Eritrea, gravely weakening the Eritrean guerrilla movements operating there.

By 1984, when the Derg established the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, Mengistu's rule seemed, at least on the surface, to have stabilised. Ethiopia was recast along orthodox Soviet lines through programmes of nationalisation and collectivisation. Also an Amhara, Mengistu continued the imperial tradition of highly centralised rule from the capital. However, the political, economic and social base of the regime was always fragile. By the early 1980s, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had launched armed struggles against the regime. Both received support from neighbouring Sudan during the 1980s. In Eritrea, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) began to recover ground during the mid 1980s. All these movements espoused their own versions of Marxism-Leninism.

As had been the case with Haile Selassie, a disastrous famine between 1983 and 1985 exposed the weaknesses of the Mengistu regime, this time not just to Ethiopians but also to the wider world. By the end of the decade, the TPLF and EPLF were working together and the military balance in Ethiopia had shifted decisively against Mengistu. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Eastern European economic support fell away, sending the economy into freefall. Mengistu belatedly abandoned Marxism-Leninism but it was not enough to save him and in late May 1991, the TPLF and its political allies from other ethnic groups, now organised into the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), seized control of Addis Ababa. Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe, where he still lives in exile. In 2006, after a 12-year trial *in absentia*, he was convicted by an Ethiopian judicial panel on charges of genocide and sentenced to death.

The alliance between the TPLF and EPLF was based on the former's acceptance of Eritrea's right to secede from Ethiopia, which went ahead. More broadly, the EPRDF claimed that it would end Ethiopia's centralised state tradition by creating a federal system of regional states based around ethnic identity and by giving the right to secede to all 'nationalities'. The system is known as 'ethnic federalism'. Within what remained of Ethiopia, nine regional states ultimately emerged, along with Addis Ababa municipality and the administrative area of Dire Dawa. Although they are supposed to be largely self-funding, the bulk of revenue in practice continues to come from central government.

Ever since 1991, debate has continued over how far 'ethnic federalism' is a genuine aspiration or how far it is convenient camouflage for Tigrayan domination of the

Ethiopian state. The independence of Eritrea in 1993 seemed to confirm that the EPRDF was genuine in its claim to support 'ethnic federalism'; others were less sure, arguing that it was simply a reflection of facts on the ground. In July 1993 the two countries signed an agreement for the joint use of the Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa. This agreement was a *quid pro quo* for official Ethiopian acceptance of Eritrean independence. The OLF withdrew from the EPRDF after several years and has attempted, with limited success, to return to guerrilla war. There has also been small-scale armed opposition to the Government at points in Afar and Gambela regional states. The most sustained military threat to the Government has come from the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in Somali regional state, although this has never come close to threatening its rule (see below).

Once in power, the EPRDF was quick to shed its adherence to Marxism-Leninism (if not its 'democratic centralist' methods) after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Since 1991 Ethiopian politics has been dominated by the TPLF and Meles Zenawi, who was Chairman of the EPRDF and, since 1995, has been Prime Minister. Prior to the 2005 elections (see below), the biggest challenge to his authority came not from without but from within the ranks of the TPLF. Discontent over domestic policies designed to promote a degree of political and economic liberalisation and a serious food crisis in some parts of the country combined with opposition to the EPRDF leadership's decision to sign the Algiers peace agreements with Eritrea in December 2000 following a two-year border war between the countries (see below), led to a 'vote of no confidence' in Meles within the TPLF Central Committee in March 2001, which he only narrowly won. Many of his critics within the party were subsequently detained or otherwise sidelined. By October 2001, when the composition of a new Government was announced, it was clear that Meles had decisively won the internal power struggle. The policies of gradual political and economic liberalisation remained in place. By the time of the 2005 parliamentary elections, encouraged by the donors, the political playing-field was more open in Ethiopia than it had ever been.

2. The 2005 elections and their aftermath

Ethiopia was plunged into renewed political turmoil following parliamentary elections in May 2005. The outcome was a major reverse for the ruling EPRDF. The opposition won at least one-third of the seats in the House of People's Representatives and controlled many of the towns, including Addis Ababa.

For the first time since it came to power, the EPRDF faced a serious political opposition in the shape of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF). These forces co-operated during the election campaign. State-run television and radio gave fair access to opposition parties for the first time. The EU called the elections a genuine, if imperfect, demonstration of democracy. Nonetheless, there were allegations of counts being brought to a premature close, ballot stuffing and intimidation.

Ethnic differences and mistrust between the various political parties remained high throughout the campaign. The CUD had strong Amhara representation. The CUD not only opposed the EPRDF, but it also questioned the very legitimacy of the constitutional settlement it introduced after coming to power: the system of 'ethnic federalism'. The irony was that, while both government and large parts of the opposition instinctively

viewed the subsequent political crisis through this lens, it seems likely that voters defected to opposition groups as much, if not more, because of dissatisfaction with the government's record on poverty and unemployment.

The EPRDF, by all accounts, was stunned by the result of the election. It seems clear that it had over-estimated the strength of its political support in the country. As the scale of its reversal became clear, it was forced to scramble to regain the initiative. The opposition, by contrast was highly emboldened. When supporters of the opposition took to the streets in Addis in June 2005 to protest against alleged electoral fraud, soldiers and police responded with heavy force, leaving well over one hundred people dead. Thousands more supporters of the opposition were detained and there were credible reports that the authorities used torture against detainees.

Following the June events the clampdown continued. The UEDF and other small parties not affiliated to the EPRDF took their seats in parliament. However, the CUD launched a boycott of parliament. 40 people died in further street protests in towns across Ethiopia on 1-2 November 2005, taking the total of deaths to at least 76. Seven policemen were also killed.¹²⁵

In 2006 despite condemnation from the international community, 129 detained opposition leaders went on trial for treason and attempted genocide. 38 people were eventually found guilty in July 2007 of violating the Constitution and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, behind the scenes, under international pressure, the Government was seeking to negotiate a deal which might at least partially remove the deep shadow that was by now hanging over Ethiopia's 'democratic transition'. Three days after those found guilty had been sentenced, once they had signed a letter accepting responsibility for the riots in November 2005, the Government announced that it would pardon those found guilty and released them.¹²⁶

The EPRDF's past as a revolutionary insurgent movement meant that its conversion to democracy and pluralism was likely to be at best a gradual and uneven process. The 2005 elections suggested to some observers that the party remains unprepared to subject itself to serious challenge from political competitors.¹²⁷ Significant sections of the population, particularly amongst Somali-speakers and the Oromo, continue to withhold their support for the EPRDF.¹²⁸ However, since mid 2007 a fragile political 'normalisation' has been achieved. The EPRDF sought to strengthen its position through its orchestration of celebrations of the new Ethiopian millennium in September 2007. The CUD has imploded; it had always been a fragile coalition. Local council elections took place in early 2008. The EPRDF was largely unchallenged and swept the board. In October 2008 there was a government reshuffle. Over the last 18 months, the Government has indicated that it would be willing to hold peace talks with a faction of the

¹²⁵ *Africa Confidential*, 18 November 2005

¹²⁶ "The millennium deal", *Africa Confidential*, 3 August 2007. 71 people in total were covered by the pardon. It is difficult to view signature of the letter admitting responsibility as taking place under anything other than duress.

¹²⁷ S. Vaughan and K. Tronvoll, "Structures and relations of power: Ethiopia", SIDA, 2003, Executive Summary, pp. 15-16. Available at: <http://www.addisvoice.com/resources/Structure-of-power.pdf>

¹²⁸ Many Oromo remain loyal to the Oromo Liberation Front.

OLF that has said that it is prepared to accept the current constitutional framework in Ethiopia. Oromo elders are brokering the process. Another faction of the OLF has repudiated their efforts.¹²⁹

Continuing tensions with Eritrea, Ethiopia's military operations in Somalia (see above) and problems in the Ogaden have been at the top of the EPRDF's political agenda over the past year, although in recent months there has been concern about the humanitarian consequences of drought across the country, which the authorities estimate have left 4.6 million people needing food aid. International aid agencies have warned that the real figure could be more than 8 million. One of the key props of EPRDF legitimacy has been its claim that there has been no famine during its time in power.¹³⁰

3. Crisis in the Ogaden

Ethiopian control over the Somali-inhabited lands of eastern Ethiopia known as the Ogaden – named after the Ogadeen clan, which is part of the Darod clan family – has always been contested by Somali nationalists both within the region and in neighbouring Somalia.¹³¹ The Ogaden is now part of a broader Somali regional state.¹³² During 1977-8, an invasion by Somalia was bloodily repelled by Ethiopia, with the assistance of the Soviet Union and Cuba. In recent decades, armed resistance to Ethiopian rule has been led by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).¹³³ The Ethiopian Government has designated it a terrorist group. It has received support from Eritrea, which reportedly views the Ogaden as Ethiopia's "achilles heel", and a number of Gulf States.¹³⁴

The ONLF argues that the Somali-speaking areas of Ethiopia remain economically and politically marginalised under the EPRDF. Despite the introduction of 'ethnic federalism', under which Somalis were for the first time officially recognised as one of the country's 'nationalities', there remains some truth in this claim.¹³⁵ Formed in 1984, the ONLF joined the political system in 1991 but in 1994 was a split between those who wanted to go slowly on the issue of self-determination and those who did not. The minority favouring an immediate referendum returned to armed struggle. The majority later merged with the main non-Ogadeen political party to form the Somali People's Democratic Party.

However, impartial observers claim that the ONLF does not speak for all Somali-speakers. They assert that it cannot even be said that it speaks for all members of the Ogadeen clan, given that its support comes mainly from the Rer Abdille and Rer Issaq

¹²⁹ "Ethiopia said willing to talk to Oromo rebels 'without any preconditions'", *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 17 November 2008

¹³⁰ "Ethiopia appeals for urgent aid", *BBC News Online*, 12 June 2008; "Ethiopian need 'under-estimated'", *BBC News Online*, 12 October 2008

¹³¹ There is another Somali territory in Ethiopia, known as Dire Dawa, where the Dir clan family predominates.

¹³² Somali regional state is also called 'Region 5' by some commentators. However, the term 'Ogaden' is retained here because it remains by far the most familiar term to non-specialists.

¹³³ Its predecessor was the Ogaden Liberation Front, which was formed in 1963

¹³⁴ A. Mohammed, "Ethiopia's strategic dilemma in the Horn of Africa", 20 February 2007, p. 6. Available at: www.ssrc.org

¹³⁵ T. Hagmann, "The political roots of the current crisis in Region 5", 21 September 2007, pp. 3-5. Available at: www.ssrc.org

sub-clans. It has also been pointed out that the current regional President is of Ogadeen origin.¹³⁶

For Ethiopia's part, Somali regional state is a strategically important buffer between it and the threat of radical Islam based in Somalia. It also has oil reserves that many hope will eventually produce major revenues. The ONLF has demonstrated an ability to obstruct the development of the oil industry in the Ogaden. In 2006 it forced Petronas, the Malaysian oil company, to abandon plans to operate in the area.

There has been an upsurge in the ONLF's insurgency since the beginning of 2007, when Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia forced it to reduce the number of troops it had operating in Somali regional state. In April 2007 the ONLF attacked an oil exploration site at Abole, killing 74, including nine Chinese oil workers. The Ethiopian Government responded with a harsh counter-insurgency campaign in Ogadeen areas of the state. It supplied arms to non-Ogadeen clans and restricted the movement of basic foodstuffs into these areas. Human Rights Watch alleges that there have been grave abuses committed by the Ethiopian security forces and that western donors have maintained a "conspiracy of silence" about them. The Ethiopian Government accuses Human Rights Watch of swallowing ONLF propaganda wholesale.¹³⁷ Also conducting armed attacks in the Ogaden are the United Western Somalia Liberation Front, which is affiliated with the Ogaden faction of the al-Ittihad al-Islami, and groups linked to al-Shabaab.

There is an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the area. According to the UN, as many as 1.8 million people could be affected. In late July 2007 the Government expelled the International Committee of the Red Cross from the region. Medecin Sans Frontieres accused the Ethiopian authorities of preventing humanitarian aid from reaching those who need it in the region – an accusation that the Government denied. In October 2007 Ethiopia and the UN reached agreement on measures to be taken to ensure that food aid reached vulnerable people in Somali regional state. On 1 October 2008 the World Food Programme opened depots within the region from which food distribution can take place. It is hoped that this will improve poor distribution rates that are the result of insecurity and the logistical problems facing long-distance food convoys.¹³⁸ In October 2008, during a visit to the area, the UK's Secretary of State for International Development, Douglas Alexander, indicated that the British Government gave credence to allegations that the Ethiopian authorities were still obstructing aid efforts in the Ogaden and said that it would withdraw an offer of a multi-year aid commitment to Ethiopia.¹³⁹

It is very difficult for independent observers to gain access to the region. Journalists are refused official permission to visit. The UN managed to send in a fact finding mission in 2007. There have reportedly been divisions within the US Government over how far to

¹³⁶ "Ethiopia: The Ogaden's trickling sands", *Africa Confidential*, 21 September 2007. See also T. Hagmann, "The political roots of the current crisis in Region 5", 21 September 2007, p. 1. Available at: www.ssrc.org

¹³⁷ For example, see reports by Human Rights Watch in July 2007 (<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/02/ethiop16327.htm>) and June 2008 (<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/ethiopia0608/>).

¹³⁸ "Ethiopian needy 'not getting aid'", *BBC News Online*, 19 September 2008

¹³⁹ "Minister changes mind on aid after victims 'hidden': Ethiopia", *The Times*, 18 October 2008

criticise the Ethiopian Government for its policies in the Ogaden, with the Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer viewed as having taken a pro-Ethiopian position.¹⁴⁰ A March 2008 USAID report was highly critical of the Ethiopian Government. The threat by members of Congress to introduce legislation proposing to restrict military aid to Ethiopia because of its poor human rights record prompted the US administration to increase the pressure on Ethiopia to co-operate more with humanitarian efforts.¹⁴¹

Both sides to the conflict in the Ogaden have at different times expressed a willingness to seek a negotiated settlement. Initial discussions went nowhere in 2005. Since 2007 the Ethiopian Government appears to have committed itself to a 'military solution'. There appears little prospect of a resolution of the conflict. One analyst has written about the long term continuities that shape the region, which are derived from the fact that the Somali regional state is

[...] a frontier space where the state's judicial and bureaucratic forms of control have encountered rejection and outright resistance. The Somali Region is among East Africa's 'pastoral fringe regions' that continuously challenge the national political structures of the central state [...] Behind the curtains of decentralised democracy, federal authorities call the tunes, with the regional government as an involuntary conductor faced with an increasingly frustrated Somali audience."¹⁴²

4. The role of the international community

Meles Zenawi has been viewed by many Western leaders as one of a 'new generation' of progressive African leaders. He was a member of the British Government's Commission for Africa during 2003-4. However, the violence surrounding the 2005 elections led to a temporary reappraisal. For example, following the elections, the head of the EU Election Observation Mission, Ana Gomes, urged the EU not simply to carry on with 'business as usual'. For its part, during 2005-06 the British Government withdrew about £50 million in direct budget support. Overall, about £580 million in aid was frozen by donors.¹⁴³

Ethiopia's external relationships underwent gradual 'normalisation' during the course of 2006, as the domestic situation calmed down. For the US and its allies, Ethiopia's role as a vital partner in the global 'war on terror', including in Somalia since the end of 2006, has appeared to some critics to take precedence over concerns about the Government's domestic actions. Human rights groups have accused Ethiopia of holding without charge or trial for a significant period during 2007 a significant number of terrorist suspects originally detained by the Kenyan authorities following the fall of the CSIC, at the behest of the US, calling this "Africa's Guantanamo".¹⁴⁴ But Ethiopia and its Western allies do not necessarily always completely see 'eye to eye' in terms of the counter-terrorism agenda. As discussed above, the Ogaden has been one source of tension. Douglas

¹⁴⁰ "Ethiopia: The Ogaden's trickling sands", *Africa Confidential*, 21 September 2007

¹⁴¹ "Rice appeal to Ethiopia on Ogaden", *BBC News Online*, 7 December 2007

¹⁴² T. Hagmann and M.H.Khalif, "State and politics in Ethiopia's Somali Region since 1991", *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, Vol. 6, 2006, p. 11

¹⁴³ "Rejected ally says Britain cut off aid like an old colonial master", *Times*, 15 May 2006

¹⁴⁴ "Investigating 'Africa's Guantanamo'", *BBC News Online*, 1 October 2008; "More blowback from the War on Terror", *Salon*, 1 October 2008

Alexander's visit to the Ogaden in October 2008 has led to a further review of British aid commitments to Ethiopia (see above). The US is giving the equivalent of £230 million in aid during 2008, with Britain giving £130 million.¹⁴⁵

While during the first few years after the attacks of 11 September 2001 Ethiopia allowed US forces to set up their own camps in Somalia regional state, from where they sought to monitor al-Qaida in Somalia and the activities of militant Somali Islamists, since 2005 these camps have been closed.¹⁴⁶ However, close military co-operation between the US and Ethiopia continues, with the Joint Combined Task Force based in Djibouti playing an important role in the relationship.¹⁴⁷

Ethiopia broke off diplomatic relations with Qatar in April 2008. It has long accused Qatar of providing financial support to Eritrea, which has then provided money to the ONLF.¹⁴⁸

E. Eritrea

1. Background and history¹⁴⁹

Eritrea's fortunes have long been intertwined with those of Ethiopia, which historically viewed it as part of its territory. However, since 1993 Eritrea has been an internationally recognised independent state. Eritrea has an estimated population of 4.25 million people. The population is evenly divided between Tigrinya-speaking Christians, who mainly live in the highlands, and the Muslim communities which predominate in the lowlands and many coastal areas.

Modern Eritrea first came into being during the period of Italian colonial rule between 1889 and 1941. During this period, the territory developed characteristics that distinguished it markedly from those of Ethiopia. Industry was relatively more developed, as was civil society. A UN-mandated British military administration between 1941 and 1952 was brought to an end by a decision, endorsed by what nationalists claimed was a rigged vote by the Eritrean national assembly of the time, to create a federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, meaningful Eritrean autonomy was never implemented and, in 1962, Ethiopia simply absorbed Eritrea as a province. Predictably, this forcible absorption provoked an upsurge in Eritrean nationalism. Initially, the main vehicle was the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), which embarked on an armed struggle. However, internal organisational and ideological divisions led to civil war within the nationalist movement that took several decades to be decisively resolved in favour of a rival to the ELF, known from 1977 as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Mengistu's 'red terror' swelled the ranks of the EPLF in Eritrea and during the 1980s it showed itself to be a highly effective guerrilla army, assisted by its alliance with other Ethiopian anti-Mengistu forces. When Mengistu fell in 1991, the EPLF called in an EPRDF promise that

¹⁴⁵ "Ethiopia accused of hiding famine as millions starve", *The Times*, 18 September 2008; "Minister changes mind on aid after victims 'hidden': Ethiopia", *The Times*, 18 October 2008

¹⁴⁶ "The Ogaden's trickling sands", *Africa Confidential*, 21 September 2007

¹⁴⁷ See: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/camp-united.htm>

¹⁴⁸ "Ethiopia severs ties with Qatar", *BBC News Online*, 21 April 2008

¹⁴⁹ This section of the paper draws upon the chapter on Eritrea in the *Europa Regional Survey for Africa South of the Sahara* (London, 2006).

Eritrea would be able to vote on independence in a free referendum. That referendum, held in April 1993, produced a vote in favour of independence of 99.3 per cent. On 28 May 1993, Eritrea was recognised as a sovereign state by the international community.

The EPLF, which in 1994 renamed itself the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), had been quick to abandon its adherence to Marxism-Leninism following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. On taking power, it committed itself to building a pluralistic political system. However, like the EPRDF in Ethiopia, its organisational traditions were highly centralised and hierarchical. Processes of consultation on a new Constitution moved slowly under governments led by President Issias Aferwerki, who had previously been Secretary-General of the EPLF. A new Constitution was eventually adopted in 1997 that provided for a degree of political pluralism, but its implementation was put on ice following the outbreak of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998 (see below). The war ended, after much bloodshed, in June 2000. Following the Algiers peace agreements there was considerable criticism of President Aferwerki within the ruling party. He came under pressure when 15 members of the Central Council of the PFDJ (known as the G15) wrote an open letter calling on him to implement the Constitution and move towards the first multiparty elections in the country since independence. They were scheduled for December 2001. However, a major power struggle between reformists and those supporting Aferwerki ended in defeat for the reformists. There was a wave of detentions and the independent press was closed down. The last vestiges of an autonomous civil society came under increasing pressure. In February 2002 it was announced that the formation of political parties would not now be permitted and national elections were postponed indefinitely.

Eritrea is a strongly secularist (at least, at home), one-party state, whose leaders appear driven by a powerful sense of paranoia about the intentions of the outside world.¹⁵⁰ Eritrea is particularly motivated by its conviction that the international community has failed to put adequate pressure on Ethiopia to honour the terms of the Algiers peace agreements. Since 2002 Eritrea has become known as one of the world's most repressive regimes. It operates a system of compulsory military service for 18-40 year olds and retains a very large army for a country of its size. The country's economy is in a poor state. It is increasingly dependent upon remittances and distorted by the costs of perpetual military mobilisation. Its ports, Assab and Massawa, remain chronically underutilised. However, political opposition is weak and some of it is compromised by links with Ethiopia.

2. The role of the international community

Relations with the US were good during most of the 1990s. There was significant military co-operation between the two countries as the US sought access to the Red Sea ports of Assab and Massawa. However, Eritrea felt that the US took the side of Ethiopia during the course of the 1998-2000 border war (see below), rejecting its offers to assist in the global 'war on terror', in favour of its regional rival. In 2004 the US removed Eritrea from the list of African countries entitled to preferential access to its markets. The relationship

¹⁵⁰ A small radical Islamist grouping called Eritrean Islamic Jihad was formed in the 1980s and has since split between those willing to co-operate with secular opposition forces (the Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development) and those who will not countenance it (the Islamic Salvation Movement).

has gone from bad to worse since then.¹⁵¹ In 2007, angered by Eritrean support for Somali Islamist and nationalist insurgents in Somalia, the US threatened to put Eritrea on its list of state-sponsors of terrorism, although it has not yet done so. In May 2008 the US designated Eritrea as “not co-operating fully” in the global ‘war on terror’.¹⁵² The PFDJ’s domestic political clampdown since 2001 has also alienated other Western governments, including the UK.

In recent years Eritrea has sought to avoid international isolation by cultivating alternative sources of support, not least China as its footprint on the African continent has increased. Eritrea’s relationships with Libya and Iran have also become warmer. Eritrea has cultivated good relations with a number of Gulf States, most notably Qatar. Relations with Yemen have at times been chequered. In 1995 the two countries clashed over one of three disputed islands, Greater Hanish Island, in the Red Sea. The dispute was eventually referred to an international tribunal for independent adjudication after French mediation. In 1998 it ruled in favour of Yemen. Eritrea accepted the verdict.

F. The Ethiopia-Eritrea border war and its aftermath

Ethiopia’s border dispute with Eritrea is a running sore in relations between the two countries. They went to war over the issue between 1998 and 2000. Over 100,000 were killed. Each country accused the other of having started the war. The war was ended by the 2000 Algiers peace agreements, under which both sides agreed to accept as final and binding the decision of a UN-mandated boundary commission. A 25-km wide Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) was established along the border which would be monitored by a UN mission to the border area. In 2002 the boundary commission reached a decision about how the border should be demarcated, in the process awarding the village of Badme, which was the original source of the conflict, to Eritrea. Although Ethiopia won on other issues, the decision over Badme, which at the war’s conclusion remained in Ethiopian hands, met with considerable popular hostility in Ethiopia. However, in 2004 the Ethiopian Government accepted the verdict on Badme in principle. But it asked that a variety of practical issues, including security concerns, regarding demarcation be resolved before it implemented the decision. According to Ethiopia, these have still not been resolved.

Some Ethiopians have never accepted the fact or terms of Eritrea’s independence from Ethiopia in 1993, as a result of which Ethiopia lost its direct access to the sea. Popular dissatisfaction about Ethiopia’s alleged humiliation at the hands of Eritrea, having ‘won the war but lost the peace’, undoubtedly boosted the performance of the opposition in May 2005 elections, which plunged the country into political crisis. Given this context, it is perhaps not surprising that the EPRDF preferred to find ways of avoiding implementing the decision of the boundary commission.

¹⁵¹ For a recent statement of Eritrea’s position on relations with the US, see: “Eritrean foreign minister blasts USA for ‘meddling’ in the Horn of Africa”, *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 1 October 2008

¹⁵² International Crisis Group, *Beyond the fragile peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting new war*, Africa Report No. 141, 17 June 2008, p. 18

For its part, Eritrea became increasingly impatient at the delays in implementing the decision of the boundary commission and accused Ethiopia of bad faith. It began to suspect that it was destined never to gain the territory awarded by the boundary commission. It retaliated by restricting the work of the UN Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) and harassing aid agencies. It was particularly angered by UN Security Council Resolution 1640 (2005) of 23 November 2005, which threatened Eritrea with sanctions if it continued to restrict UNMEE but did not raise the possibility of sanctions against Ethiopia for its failure to implement the ruling of the boundary commission. Eritrea also increased its support to Ethiopia's enemies in the region, for example in Somalia and the Ogaden.

During 2005 and 2006, a dangerous and unstable impasse became entrenched. Since then the international community has sought unsuccessfully to find ways of breaking it that are acceptable to both sides. In late-2006, the boundary commission announced that, in the absence of moves by the parties to implement its decision on the ground, it would consider the line it had drawn as the border and disband. The date for its dissolution was eventually set as 30 November 2007. As the boundary commission's deadline drew near, tensions escalated further. Eritrea moved troops into the TSZ, prompting Ethiopia to move troops of its own up to the edge of the zone.¹⁵³ Ethiopia then said that it would not implement the boundary commission's decision until Eritrea withdrew from the TSZ. In late September 2007 Ethiopia announced that it was considering terminating the Algiers agreements. Eritrea called again for the UN Security Council to enforce the decision of the boundary commission. Efforts to broker a last-minute breakthrough failed. There were exchanges of fire between the two parties. Declaring the border demarcated based on its 2002 decision, the boundary commission then disbanded.¹⁵⁴

In response to the restrictions placed upon it by Eritrea, the military component of UNMEE was also scaled down during 2006 and 2007. By late 2007 Eritrea was blocking diesel fuel deliveries to the mission, thereby threatening its viability. In February 2008 UNMEE withdrew all its remaining personnel. High-level diplomatic exchanges produced no resolution of the issue, leading to a decision by the Security Council to terminate UNMEE when its mandate came up for renewal on 31 July 2008. Options put forward by the Secretary-General, including for the establishment of a small observer mission based in Ethiopia or the appointment of a new Special Representative were rejected.¹⁵⁵ Critics argue that the Security Council failed to support UNMEE when its authority was challenged by both countries. Despite earlier threats to impose sanctions on Eritrea, none have yet been introduced. Some go so far as to claim that the Security Council has simply sought to wash its hands of the issue.¹⁵⁶ The ability of the US, as the dominant

¹⁵³ The TSZ is entirely within Eritrean territory. Although it reluctantly accepted it under the Algiers Agreement, it nonetheless considers it an infringement of its sovereignty.

¹⁵⁴ International Crisis Group, *Beyond the fragile peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting new war*, Africa Report No. 141, 17 June 2008, pp. 2-4

¹⁵⁵ The post of UN Special Representative and head of UNMEE had been vacant since April 2006 because the two countries could not agree on who it should be. See also *Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea*, UN Doc S/2008/226, 7 April 2008

¹⁵⁶ International Crisis Group, *Beyond the fragile peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea*, pp. 4-6

foreign player in the Horn of Africa, to mediate does appear to have been affected by its growing proximity to Ethiopia.¹⁵⁷

There have been several points since 2005 at which a resumption of hostilities has appeared likely. Following the announcement that UNMEE was withdrawing, both Ethiopia and Eritrea stated that they did not expect a return to fighting.¹⁵⁸ This could be triggered not just by design but by an incident that escalates rapidly out of control. Ethiopia now has about 100,000 troops along the border. Eritrea has placed 4,000 inside the TSZ and 120,000 along the border as a whole. Nonetheless, it is hard to see how Eritrea would benefit from a resumption of hostilities. Its economic position is dire and most commentators believe that Ethiopia enjoys potentially decisive military superiority. Some suspect that Ethiopia may be tempted to sponsor a coup aimed at overthrowing the Eritrean regime, possibly supported by Ethiopian force of arms. Ethiopia gives support to Eritrean opponents of the PFTJ operating from the capital, Addis Ababa.¹⁵⁹

Ethiopia might calculate that its growing alliance with the US could insulate it from international condemnation if it pursued such a course. One restraining factor may be its continuing difficulties in Somalia and the Ogaden. However, the role of Eritrea in fomenting these troubles could equally constitute an incentive to act. Much would depend on the attitude of the US. Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, has said that Ethiopia has no plans to return to war with Eritrea unless it is attacked first.¹⁶⁰ That leaves open the question of what might be deemed to constitute an 'attack': would it have to be direct, or could it be via proxies?

However, according to *Africa Confidential* in August 2008:

Little is likely to change soon. Eritrea will keep its troops in the TSZ because it says demarcation has taken place. Ethiopia will not accept that demarcation because it is merely virtual, while physical marking of the border was a central issue of the Algiers Agreements. Ethiopia would likely accept an attempt to launch political dialogue if it addressed the disengagement of troops from the border, Eritrea's withdrawal from the TSZ, the normalisation of relations and an end to support of each other's armed opposition groups. Eritrea accepts none of these conditions. Until the two sides start talking, no settlement of the border issue is possible – and an exchange of fire is.¹⁶¹

The Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission, established under the Algiers Agreements, is due to rule in early 2009 on the issue of reparations for damage caused during the 1998-2000 war. Few expect either side to honour whatever decisions it may reach.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ For a recent statement of the position of the British Government, see HC Deb 20 October 2008 c96W

¹⁵⁸ "Eritrea allays fears over new war", *BBC News Online*, 31 July 2008

¹⁵⁹ Eritrea also provides support to opponents of the EPRDF based in Asmara.

¹⁶⁰ "Meles says no plan for another war", *AllAfrica.com*, 28 November 2007

¹⁶¹ "Bristling border", *Africa Confidential*, 22 August 2008

¹⁶² "Two brutal stalemates", *Africa Confidential*, 31 October 2008

III Overview: Understanding the root causes of conflict in the Horn

In this part of the Paper, the main causal factors that have been invoked by commentators and policy-makers to explain the root causes of conflict in the Horn of Africa are briefly evaluated. A common thread that runs through them all is their varying impact on the viability and legitimacy of the 'failed', 'emergent' or more established states that make up the region.

A. Clan

Conflict between and within clans has been the most common point of reference for much of the Western media and policy-makers as they have sought to identify the root causes of conflict in Somalia since 1991, conflict which has had major regional ramifications. In essence, it is argued that clan conflicts have consumed the Somali state and continue to obstruct efforts at reconstruction, leaving only chaos and anarchy. However, understanding of Somali clan structures and how they operate politically has often been lacking.

Here is a one general typology of how clan politics operates in Somalia:

A person, for example, gives political allegiance to his/her immediate family, then to his immediate lineage, then to the clan of his lineage, then to a clan-family that embraces several clans, including his own, and ultimately to the nation that itself consists of a confederacy of clan-families. Each level of segmentation defines a person's rights and obligations as well as his/her standing in relation to others. The segmentary law dictates, for example, that two lineages that are genealogically equidistant from a common ancestor should stand in an adversarial relationship to each other but should be drawn together as allies against the members of a third lineage whose genealogical lines fall outside of the common ancestor.¹⁶³

This was written in 1987. It should not be taken to mean that clan politics is static and unchanging. Some have argued that during the 1980s and since the collapse of Somalia clan politics has indeed become even more volatile and fragile. It has also been claimed that clan affiliations have come to be increasingly deployed by at least some of Somalia's 'warlords' in the context of perpetual struggles over economic and political resources.¹⁶⁴

For those who place emphasis on such struggles, the importance of clan politics in promoting conflict in Somalia can sometimes be exaggerated. Indeed, there are those who would go so far as to assert that the roots of current conflicts in Somalia might better be understood through the concept of class – albeit class refracted through the language and culture of clan. According to one observer, during the 1980s, as the Barre regime gradually unravelled, there was massive land-grabbing and accumulation across

¹⁶³ D. Laitin and S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State* (Boulder, 1987), pp. 30-31

¹⁶⁴ R. Marchal, "Warlordism and terrorism: How to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia", *African Affairs*, 83, 6, 2007, p. 1099

Somalia, including in the capital Mogadishu, particularly by those factions of an emerging mercantile class which had access to state power. Since 1991, as the context shifted to unrestrained plunder and looting, these assets have continued to be fought over, leaving an unresolved legacy that remains to this day. According to this view, one of the reasons why it has proven so difficult to rebuild a state is that competing factions all view the state as a vehicle for doing the same on a 'winner take all' basis. As a result:

The consistent pattern has been that any force or coalition of forces that came close to assuming state power conjured up an equal and opposite array of forces that succeeded in preventing this from happening.¹⁶⁵

So is the lesson of Somalia that clan and statehood are like oil and water? It is true that there is not much of a 'state tradition' in Somalia. Siad Barre claimed that his intention was to subordinate clan politics to 'nation-building'. However, he eventually became overly reliant upon repression and the narrow support of particular clans within the Darod clan family – above all, his own clan, the Marehan. His attempts to 'hold the ring' also collapsed because the resources available to him for patronage diminished as external backers withdrew. Nonetheless, Somalia did have a state of sorts under Barre during the 22 years he ruled. Some argue that it might have had a state of sorts again under the CSIC, strongly backed by business interests in Mogadishu, had its time in power lasted longer; an argument perhaps with analogies to debates about the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. Nor does pervasive clan-based 'warlordism' necessarily rule out subsequent state formation. Historically, many states experienced prolonged periods of warlordism before a more durable basis for the political institutionalisation of power and authority became possible.¹⁶⁶

The experience of Somaliland and, to a lesser extent, Puntland, also suggest that clan politics are not intrinsically incompatible with statehood, provided it is viewed pragmatically and not through didactic 'Western lenses'. An analyst has written of Somaliland:

Somaliland thus established a loose political structure which its supporters said offered a form of synthesis of national government on the one hand and local leadership on the other, rather than the schizophrenic relations between 'modernity' and 'tradition of the former parliamentary and socialist periods. A government executive in Hargeisa was maintained, and although its authority was relatively weak, it effectively shared power with guurti (Councils of Elders) at 'national', clan and in some cases sub-clan, level.¹⁶⁷

Those who espouse a more class-focused analysis argue that Somaliland "began as a commercial agreement" backed by a dominant class (livestock traders) within a dominant

¹⁶⁵ A. de Waal, "Class and power in a stateless Somalia", 20 February 2007, pp. 6-7. Available at: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/dewaal/>

¹⁶⁶ For a fuller discussion of issues surrounding state failure and state formation, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4110, *The International Development White Paper 2006: Failing and effective states*.

¹⁶⁷ Woodward, *The Horn of Africa. Politics and International Relations*, p. 81

clan family, the Isaaq. There were also relatively few unresolved property disputes in Somaliland on which conflict could feed.¹⁶⁸

Not everybody is convinced that a minimalist approach to statehood will work. In the case of Somaliland, sceptics wonder whether it can ever deliver anything more than minimal security or minimal development for a finite period.¹⁶⁹ They may yet be proven right. However, this does not mean that blueprints for a more formal and ambitious type of statehood, however well intended, might not bring about even worse ‘unintended consequences’. For some observers, this is precisely what has happened as a result of the international community’s sponsorship of the TNG and, more recently, the TFG.

The above discussion underscores why a better informed and more nuanced debate about the meaning and importance of clan politics in promoting conflict in the Somali lands of the Horn matters so much. It has major implications for those seeking to achieve peace, stability and security in Somalia. De Waal goes so far as to argue that attempts to reconstruct the Somali state should only begin after outstanding property disputes have been resolved, perhaps through the establishment of an independent arbitration commission, adding:

Arguably, the future economic dispensation in Somalia – control of the monetary authority, mechanisms for contracting, land tenure system – should be established before any political settlement is agreed. This will take some of the heat out of the current political competition.¹⁷⁰

This innovative re-conceptualisation of peace-making and peace-building in Somalia does indeed fly in the face of current orthodoxy on state reconstruction, in which political institution-building is given primacy. It also suggests that home-grown, ‘bottom up’ approaches of the kind seen in Somaliland might have a better prospect of success. But it does not by itself resolve key political questions such as: Who decides the shape of the economic settlement? How are decisions to be enforced, particularly in relation to those who lose out but who, given the scarcity of available resources, cannot be fully or even partially compensated? This suggests that an approach that combines orthodoxy and innovation as part of a sequenced process might, over time, have some chance of altering the character of clan politics in Somalia so that it ceases to be such a ‘zero-sum game’. If this seems like a highly tentative prognosis, it is. The experience of the past 17 years in Somalia hardly encourages confident prediction.

B. Ethnicity

Ethnicity is the category which much of the Western media and many policy-makers instinctively reach for when seeking to understand politics in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. All too often it appears self-evident that it is the primary cause of conflict across the sub-continent. There is no doubt that ethnicity has indeed often played an important role. However, ethnicity must be understood in a historical and political context. Ethnic

¹⁶⁸ De Waal, “Class and power”, p. 10

¹⁶⁹ Woodward, *The Horn of Africa*, p. 85

¹⁷⁰ De Waal, “Class and power”, p. 11

identities are not 'primordial'. Indeed, many of them emerged and then hardened under colonial rule. Ethnicity – like clan in the context of Somalia – is rarely a factor by itself. It combines with other affiliations and interests.

In the post-colonial context, ethnic politics has promoted conflict in sub-Saharan Africa when it has become the exclusive way by which ordinary people define themselves, when elites have deliberately deployed it as a vehicle for violent political mobilisation and when the political and economic resources being competed for have become increasingly scarce and the 'rules of the game' have shifted towards 'winner takes all'. Ethnicity becomes particularly dangerous when linked to a political ideology of hatred. Conflict can also be generated at times by intra-ethnic tensions within the ruling elite. Although not all have materialised in practice, such variables potentially apply as much to parts of the Horn of Africa as they do, say, to the African Great Lakes region.

In the Horn, ethnicity has played the strongest role as a driver of conflict in Ethiopia.¹⁷¹ Given the importance of Ethiopia in the region, the consequences of such conflict for the rest of the Horn have always been significant. Of course, the experience of Ethiopia is unusual in that it did not undergo a prolonged period of European rule. However, since the late-19th century, Ethiopia has been a multi-ethnic 'empire' ruled by regimes dominated to a greater or lesser extent by one 'indigenous' ethnic group. Under Haile Selasse, the Amhara were the dominant group. Many argue that since 1991 members of the Tigrayan ethnic group have been the dominant force within the Government.

However, with a view to ending this tradition, over the last 17 years the Ethiopian polity has been restructured by the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, along 'ethnic federal' lines. The regions it created were new constructions. The limits of success can clearly be seen in the Ogaden and elsewhere (see above). But most impartial observers do not consider that the experiment has simply been a sham. Debate continues to rage fiercely over how far 'ethnic federalism' has placed limits on the power of the Tigrayan elite, which still dominates the EPRDF, and may be creating the conditions for a more genuinely inclusive political system. The paper has already touched on this question, but it is of sufficient importance to be explored in greater depth here.

One author has asserted that the EPRDF has been genuinely committed to the success of ethnic federalism. Its track-record is nonetheless mixed, not least in Somali regional state:

EPRDF lost Somalis 'hearts and minds' by dishonouring the region's constitutionally guaranteed autonomy, by meddling in its internal decision-making, and by the ruthless conduct of its security forces [...] After taking power EPRDF sought to accelerate development in the country's marginalised lowland areas belonging to the Somali, Afar, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states. Despite their limited financial absorption capacity, federal budget transfers

¹⁷¹ As discussed above, ethnic affiliations also play a significant role in the politics of Eritrea and Djibouti. In Djibouti, the relationship between Somali Issa clan and the Afar has in the past been turbulent, although today a political modus vivendi appears to be in place.

to the so-called 'backward regions' steadily increased over the past decade. The granting of self-government and investments in human capacity-building for the first time in modern Ethiopian history enabled the emergence of an educated elite within the periphery. Region 5¹⁷² forcefully demonstrates that national identity cannot be decreed or engineered by financial subsidies, political quotas or the holding of elections.¹⁷³

Another analyst has asserted, with Somali regional state very much in mind, that inept and weak local elites are partly responsible for the failure of 'ethnic federalism' to realise its promise.¹⁷⁴

Finally, a commentator has claimed:

Given the ethnic federal arrangements, minority ethnic groups, even numerically small ones, are less marginalised at the national political level than ever previously before in modern Ethiopia's history. However, a number of occupational or clan minorities within ethnic groups continue to be marginalised, despised and disadvantaged, their political representation subsumed within the wider ethnic group. Such stigmatised groups (often craftsmen or hunters) exist among many of Ethiopia's ethnic groups, and a number have been encouraged by ethnic federalism to petition for separate representation [...] Ethnic federalism has, in some instances, added a new dimension to pre-existing local conflicts over land, water, government budgets and other resources, sometimes adding legitimacy and motivation to an 'ethnic rationale' for the dispute. There are confusing and contradictory processes at work: some inspired by 'rightful' or 'exaggerated' claims by local communities, others imposed from above; some driven by political entrepreneurs for their own purposes, others perhaps seeking to diffuse opposition.¹⁷⁵

It is, then, a complex picture. There are no guarantees that, in the medium- to long-term, ethnic federalism will be a successful mechanism for conflict resolution within Ethiopia. The Ethiopian state still lacks legitimacy among key ethnic groups. What is more, some analysts believe that it is a high-risk strategy to try and combine state-building and democratisation in African states with a history of ethnic division. It is true that democratic transitions can sometimes produce disastrous 'unintended consequences'. Rwanda is an extreme case in point. There, the ruling Hutu minority saw political liberalisation as a 'threat'. Fearing its consequences, parts of the ruling elite resorted to genocide to maintain Hutu power. Ethiopia is a very different case. However, the political crisis in 2005 showed that democratisation could have a destabilising impact on a still-fragile political system in Ethiopia. Since then, the EPRDF has taken steps to re-secure its power and authority across Ethiopia and has slowed the pace of democratisation – some would say, to a standstill.

¹⁷² As Somali regional state is called by some commentators.

¹⁷³ Hagman, "The political roots of the current crisis in Region 5", p. 4

¹⁷⁴ A.I. Samatar, "Ethiopian federalism: Autonomy versus control in the Somali region", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 2004, p. 1131

¹⁷⁵ Vaughan and Tronvoll, pp. 21-22

C. Environmental insecurity¹⁷⁶

There is a growing consensus that there is a correlation between environmental insecurity and conflict. The Western media and policy-makers have often had cause to make the link between the two in the context of the Horn of Africa over the past thirty years, although some analysts assert that there has been a tendency to do so only relatively late in the day, once a crisis has become extreme and visible – for example, where there is famine. Over the past year, the Horn of Africa has been experiencing severe food shortages again.¹⁷⁷

A 2004 report by the Partnership for African Environmental Sustainability (PAES), *inter alia*, on Ethiopia provides a description of growing environmental insecurity that broadly applies to the region as a whole:

Degradation of natural resources, particularly renewable resources, is widespread as evident from loss of forest, soil and water resources. These resources are increasingly scarce because of diminished supplies, increased population-induced demands, and inequality in distribution. The economic returns to these resources are low and falling as evident from diminishing productivity, declining livelihood and impoverishment. Population mobility in response to scarcity and impoverishment is common.¹⁷⁸

The report goes on to describe several types of “environment-induced conflicts”: conflict between cultivators, conflict between pastoralists and conflict between cultivators and pastoralists. Perhaps the most pervasive of these in the Horn is conflict between pastoralists, particularly over access to scarce grazing land and water. It has been a major problem in Somalia, in the border region between Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda called the Karamoja Cluster, and in Sudan.¹⁷⁹

Ethiopia, which has by far the largest population of the countries of the Horn, has a particularly serious problem with chronic food insecurity amongst cultivators in the north-eastern highlands.¹⁸⁰ These cultivators are seeking to grow food on plots that are small and declining in size and productivity. “Land fragmentation” has increased in recent decades. There is also increased landlessness.¹⁸¹ Whenever there is drought, large numbers can quickly become vulnerable to food insecurity. However, while there can be conflict between cultivators and the state, which remains the owner of all land in Ethiopia, it is less pervasive than that between pastoralists over access rights.

¹⁷⁶ This section of the paper includes contributions from Elena Ares of the Science and Environment Section, House of Commons Library.

¹⁷⁷ For up-to-date information, see: <http://www.fews.net/pages/region.aspx?gb=r2&l=en>

¹⁷⁸ M. Ejigu, “Deforestation, environmental insecurity, poverty and conflict in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes”, ETFRN News 43-44/05. Available at:

http://www.etfrn.org/etfrn/newsletter/news4344/articles/2_12_Ejigu.pdf

¹⁷⁹ For an interesting case-study of the Karamoja Cluster, see: P. Meier and D. Bond, “Environmental influences on pastoral conflict in the Horn of Africa”, paper given at an international workshop on human security and climate change, June 2005. Available at:

http://www.gechs.org/downloads/holmen/Meier_Bond.pdf

¹⁸⁰ See: <http://www.fews.net/ml/en/info/Pages/fmwkfactors.aspx?gb=et&l=en&fmwk=pop>

¹⁸¹ Ejigu, “Deforestation, environmental insecurity, poverty and conflict in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes”

The 2004 PAES report adds:

Conflicts are almost certain to arise where a weak state fails to deliver law and order, provide transparent and accountable administration, implement unbiased and fair policy, or effective mechanisms to address and resolve grievances and disputes.¹⁸²

While it is certainly possible to point to progress and positive achievements in this regard by those countries of the Horn which have a functioning state, it is fair to say that, nonetheless, they all continue to fit this definition of ‘weakness’.

Furthermore, the impact of climate change in an area that already suffers from significant environmental insecurities is likely to exacerbate any weaknesses. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on the expected impacts of climate change, published in 2007, summarised the impact in Africa as follows:

- Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change and climate variability, a situation aggravated by the interaction of ‘multiple stresses’, occurring at various levels, and low adaptive capacity.
- Climate change will aggravate the water stress currently faced by some countries, while some countries that currently do not experience water stress will become at risk of water stress.
- Climate variability and change could result in low-lying lands being inundated, with resultant impacts on coastal settlements.
- Human health, already compromised by a range of factors, could be further negatively impacted by climate change and climate variability, e.g., malaria in southern Africa and the East African highlands.¹⁸³

Climate change, and its associated unpredictability, is likely to aggravate existing environmental problems in many areas. For example, there are likely impacts on existing competition for limited resources and potential for increased migration that will further stretch the limited resources and infrastructure of the governments of the region.

There has also been much debate about how direct the link between environmental insecurity and conflict is. The 2004 PAES report on Ethiopia claims that the link is “never direct”:

A wide range of factors including governance, socio-economic variables, culture, level of technology and property rights influence how the environment affects conflict.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ejigu, “Deforestation, environmental insecurity, poverty and conflict in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes

¹⁸³ IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, [Working Group II Report "Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability"](#) Chapter 9: Africa, 2007

¹⁸⁴ Ejigu, “Deforestation, environmental insecurity, poverty and conflict in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes”

This is not to minimise its importance; all of the factors discussed in this part of the paper as possible ‘root causes’ of conflict in practice tend to create “feedback effects”.¹⁸⁵ For example, environmentally-induced migration, however caused, often alters the ethnic composition of receiving countries, with potentially destabilising effects.

Furthermore, analysts have argued that many analyses of conflict tend to highlight “ethnic and religious causes” which “may represent symptoms rather than underlying root causes”.¹⁸⁶ There has been a vigorous debate in recent years over how far ecological factors have been underplayed in analyses of the ongoing crisis in Darfur.¹⁸⁷ The current drought and famine in the Horn of Africa as a whole has reportedly “had an immediate impact on the fluid relationships between pastoral groups”.¹⁸⁸

The impacts of climate change in the Horn of Africa seem likely to ensure that environmental insecurity will become an ever more important variable in promoting conflict. Addressing them adequately will, by extension, be crucial in preserving and building peace. In this regard, the Horn of Africa is an interesting test case. A Christian Aid report has speculated whether the pastoralists of the Horn of Africa are likely to be the first people whose livelihood will be entirely destroyed by climate change.¹⁸⁹ A Conflict and Early Warning Response Network (CEWARN) was established in 2003 by IGAD. Since 2005 it has collaborated with IGAD’s Climate Prediction and Assessment Centre (ICPAC), with the aim of ensuring that conflict prevention and disaster management experts in both bodies develop a coherent, multi-dimensional approach to early warning efforts.¹⁹⁰

Finally, there is another type of ‘environment-induced conflict’ to add to the list offered by the 2004 PAES report. That is conflict between states. One of the most likely sources of inter-state conflict in the Horn of Africa is water. However, it is most likely to involve a clash between Egypt and Ethiopia. The headwaters of the River Nile are to be found in Ethiopia. Egypt, whose economy is heavily dependent upon the waters of the Nile, has always feared the consequences of Ethiopian control over the headwaters. At present, Ethiopia does not make heavy use of the headwaters for its own purposes. Were that to change, relations between the two countries could come rapidly under strain.¹⁹¹ Both countries, along with Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Eritrea, make up the ten member states of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), an organisation comprising the riparian states of the River Nile. Its goal is to develop the water resources of the Nile Basin in a sustainable and equitable way to ensure prosperity, security, and peace for all its peoples. As part of the NBI, there is also an Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Programme.¹⁹² The body is supported by the World

¹⁸⁵ P. Meier, “Networking disaster and conflict early warning systems for environmental security”, unpublished paper, 21 February 2007, p. 5. Available at: <http://conflict-reduction.org/meier/Networking%20Systems.pdf>

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5

¹⁸⁹ Christian Aid, “Life on the edge of climate change: The plight of pastoralists in Northern Africa”, London, 2006. Available at: www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0611climatechange2/kenya_climatechange.pdf

¹⁹⁰ Meier, “Networking disaster and conflict early warning systems for environmental security”, pp. 5-7

¹⁹¹ Mohammed, “Ethiopia’s strategic dilemma”, 20 February 2007, pp. 2-3

¹⁹² See: [Nile Basin Initiative](#).

Bank and other donors. Commentators believe that so far the NBI has made a positive contribution to resolving issues between member states, but it has not yet faced a major crisis.¹⁹³

D. Islamic militancy and terrorism

The 'failed state' of Somalia has often been described by parts of the Western media and policy-makers as a breeding ground for terrorist organisations, including al-Qaida. The rise of the CSIC, which included 'hardliners' with alleged links to al-Qaida, increased fears that parts of the Horn of Africa could become a heartland of militant Islam and that what might initially have been a symptom of conflict could metamorphose into a 'root cause'.

However, many scholars are sceptical about such claims. Significantly, so too are some analysts who are linked to the US Government. According to the Harmony Project/Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, al-Qaida has not found a promising base in Somalia and that, if anything, coastal Kenya has been more fertile territory for it. In a recent report which drew on declassified internal al-Qaida documents, the Center stated:

At one point, Al-Qaida operatives were so frustrated that they listed going after clan leaders as the second priority for *jihad* after expelling Western forces.¹⁹⁴

One author has concluded:

In Somalia, al-Qaeda members faced the same challenges that plague western interventions (extortion, betrayal, clan conflicts, xenophobia, a security vacuum and logistical constraints).¹⁹⁵

As for the CSIC, some analysts claim that, for a moment, it did appear to offer a potential way out of perpetual clan conflict in Somalia. One has stated:

Some detractors [...] argued that the movement was simply a Hawiye front; supporters [...] argued vigorously that the Islamists transcended clannism. The truth lies somewhere in between.¹⁹⁶

There were undoubtedly hardline elements within the CSIC's ranks. Perhaps ironically, they were the least 'clannish' parts of the CSIC, but also the least interested in prioritising political stability over ideology. Although it managed to become a genuinely 'big tent', some observers have argued that those hardline elements did gain the ascendancy in the months following the CSIC's take-over of Mogadishu in June 2006, pushing the movement into what could only be a disastrous confrontation with Ethiopia. According to this view, instead of focusing on institutionalising its power, the CSIC embarked upon a quixotic foreign policy that led to its downfall, reviving calls for a

See also the Nile Basin Discourse at: http://www.nilebasindiscourse.net/NBI_EN.php

¹⁹³ See: <http://hanan-revue.blogspot.com/2006/03/nile-basin-initiative-reduces-tensions.html>

¹⁹⁴ Harmony Project/Combating Terrorism Center, "Al-Qaida's (mis)adventures in the Horn of Africa", p. 6. Available at: [Al-Qaida's \(Mis\)Adventures in the Horn of Africa](#), p. 6

¹⁹⁵ R. Marchal, "Warlordism and terrorism: How to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia", *International Affairs*, November 2007, p. 1104

¹⁹⁶ K. Menkhaus, "The crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in five acts", *African Affairs*, July 2007, p. 373

'Greater Somalia' and providing support to the OLF and ONLF in the insurgencies against the Ethiopian state. The US Government lost patience with it after the CSIC failed to respond to calls to detain several al-Qaida suspects based in Somalia.¹⁹⁷

One commentator has claimed that overall Islam is a "veil lightly worn" in Somalia. It is important to note that the dominant tradition of Islam amongst Somalis has been the Sufi tradition. This tradition tends to be relatively relaxed on doctrinal matters and has a mystical orientation. There are three main Sufi brotherhoods in Somalia: the Qadiriya, Ahmadiya and Salihya. The Qadiriya is the most numerous and least inclined towards puritanism.¹⁹⁸ Nonetheless, there have been moments of 'home-grown' radical reformism in the past. The Salihya brotherhood, which was an off-shoot of the Ahmadiya, has a more fundamentalist orientation. It was the main force behind an armed *jihad* against Ethiopia and the British and Italian colonial powers between 1900 and 1920 which spread across what is modern day Somaliland, Puntland and Ethiopia's Somali regional state. This means that there is soil in which more militant, 'foreign' traditions can put down roots, as with Wahhabism and al-Ittihad al-Islam in the 1990s. Even so, radical reformism in Somalia has more often taken a peaceful form.¹⁹⁹

Western anxieties that Somalia is a breeding ground for international terrorism have also fuelled concerns about its place in global criminal networks that might be helping to sustain al-Qaida and its Somali allies. Following the attacks of 11 September 2001, the US Government led the way in seeking to block informal flows of money through the *hawala* system, on which many Somalis depended for banking and remittances. Critics have argued that such measures have usually done more harm than good, cutting off much-needed income flows and in the process alienating many Somalis. One observer has noted that, since the freezing of the assets of the Somali business known as al-Baraakat, which had been involved in money transfers and telecoms, no criminal action has been brought against anybody who worked for it.²⁰⁰ Overall, while Somali business interests have certainly sponsored home-grown Islamists such as the CSIC, the connections between them and al-Qaida, whether licit or illicit, appear weak.

Fears have been expressed that revenues generated by the export of the leaf known as *Khat*, which when chewed has a psychoactive effect, could help to fund terrorist activities in Somalia. *Khat* is hugely in demand in all the Somali lands and in the diaspora, including Britain. For example, one observer has claimed that Somaliland, where Islamic militancy has had some, albeit so far relatively limited, purchase, is in danger of turning into a "narco-economy".²⁰¹ *Khat* is now one of Somaliland's chief export crops. Livestock, its traditional main export, reportedly went into decline after Saudi Arabia, its biggest customer, imposed an embargo on the grounds that Somaliland's cattle were infected with Rift Valley fever. *Khat* is now a key source of government revenue in Somaliland, which could stand in the way of effective efforts to reduce production. However, as yet there appears to be little hard evidence to suggest that funds gained from the export of

¹⁹⁷ Menkhaus, "The crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in five acts", pp. 377-78

¹⁹⁸ Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*, p. 16

¹⁹⁹ Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*, pp. 17-19; Barnes, "Country report – Somalia", pp. 11-12

²⁰⁰ Marchal, "Warlordism and terrorism", p. 1104

²⁰¹ "Khat: Somaliland's export crop", *Africa Research Bulletin*, August 2005

Khat are being used to support international terrorism.²⁰² However, there are reports that in recent months al-Shabaab has sought to impose bans on the use of and trade in *Khat* as it has taken towns in central and southern Somalia.²⁰³

Puntland is currently the base for most of the pirates operating from Somalia. The only period in recent history when piracy virtually disappeared around the country was during the brief rule of the CSIC. Since its downfall, the phenomenon has reappeared on a rapidly growing scale. One report has discussed a “worst-case scenario” in which pirates develop links with international terrorism. It states that “there is no firm evidence of this happening.”²⁰⁴ In recent weeks, there have been reports that some of the pirates may be purchasing heavier weaponry from insurgent groups, although al-Shabaab has said that it will take steps to combat piracy.

As we have seen, Islamic militancy has its adherents in parts of the Horn other than Somalia, including Somali regional state in eastern Ethiopia and Eritrea. But Somalia (along with Sudan, which we have not discussed in this paper) has been the main base for Islamic militancy in the region and by far its most important site of activity. Nonetheless, it seems clear that, even in Somalia, Islamic militancy has been up to now more a symptom than a ‘root cause’ of conflict. One analyst has claimed:

[...] the global threat that an ungoverned Somalia poses seems somewhat exaggerated. Criminal and terrorist networks have not flourished in the absence of government. Indeed, the number of named individuals in Somalia suspected of terrorist links is fewer than in several Western countries.²⁰⁵

Others are still worried. In a speech in mid-November 2008, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency argued that al-Qaida is taking advantage of the success of the insurgency to “revitalise operations” in Somalia.²⁰⁶

E. External actors

Many different external actors have been cited by the Western media and policy-makers as playing a role in promoting conflict in the Horn of Africa today. There is insufficient space here to discuss every dimension of external involvement in the region.²⁰⁷ This section focuses on two interrelated issues: the recent record of Western powers and their regional allies in Somalia; and the ways in which countries of the region continue to seek to achieve their policy objectives through the sponsorship of proxy forces.

²⁰² “Khat: Somaliland’s export crop”, *Africa Research Bulletin*, August 2005

²⁰³ “Local militia violently oppose Islamist Khat ban, kill two”, *Garowe Online*, 12 November 2008. The CSIC clamped down heavily on both during its brief period in power in 2006.

²⁰⁴ R. Middleton, “Piracy in Somalia. Threatening global trade, feeding local wars”, *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, Africa Programme AFP BP 08/02. Available at: www.chathamhouse.org.uk

²⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, p. 244

²⁰⁶ “Bin Laden ‘cut off from al-Qaeda’”, *BBC News Online*, 14 November 2008

²⁰⁷ For example, some analysts have focused on the ideologies and networks of militant Islam such as al-Qaida, as discussed in the last section of the paper. Others have looked at the role of diasporas, arguing that “diaspora money helps to fuel conflicts that might otherwise be settled.” See De Waal, “Class and power in a stateless Somalia”, p. 6. There have been claims that elements within the Somali diaspora in Britain have been providing financial support for both the insurgency and piracy.

The ineffectiveness and inappropriateness of outside interventions in the Horn of Africa has long been the subject of criticism by commentators on the region. Recent actions are no exception. For example, Jonathan Steele has condemned the “inconsistencies in international policy-making” on Somalia since 2006. Writing in February 2008 he argued that the issue had “dropped off the radar, abandoned ...because it all seems so difficult.”²⁰⁸ Some might claim that the same has happened with regard to the Eritrean-Ethiopian border dispute; having invested in the Algiers agreements and UNMEE, it has been argued that the international community has failed to put sufficient pressure on both countries to resolve their differences, so increasing the prospect of a return to hostilities. This failure has been understood as a failure of both will and capacity.²⁰⁹

Steele was particularly critical of the role of the US in Somalia. He claimed that, obsessed with the ‘war on terror’, the US had colluded in the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006, without being challenged by other western governments – with disastrous consequences on the ground.²¹⁰ Not everybody is entirely convinced by conspiratorial arguments. Ken Menkhaus has claimed that

[...] while the US and Ethiopian militaries and intelligence agencies unquestionably collaborated closely, Ethiopia’s offensive would likely have occurred with or without US tacit approval.²¹¹

Many have also been critical of the effectiveness of US military operations against al-Qaida operatives in Somalia, which – as elsewhere in the world – do appear to have had mixed results. One European official, speaking in February 2008 after a further round of US air strikes, claimed: “They haven’t got anybody. It has been an absolute disaster.”²¹² The US disputes such negative views. In March 2008, Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, claimed that al-Qaida has been denied a foothold in Somalia as a result of the success of operations since December 2006. The successful attack on the leader of al-Shabaab, Sheikh Aden Hashi Ayrow in May 2008 marked a change in fortunes for US forces in the region.²¹³

US counter-terrorism co-operation with the TFG has also been criticised. It has been claimed that this co-operation is in practice with particular security officials who exercise a high degree of autonomy from the government, raising questions in some minds about

²⁰⁸ “Kofi Annan and the art of intelligent intervention: His mediation in Kenya – impartial and low key – shows up Washington’s disastrous meddling in neighbouring Somalia”, *Guardian*, 15 February 2008

²⁰⁹ See the ICG’s most recent report, “Beyond the fragile peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea” (June 2008) for such an argument.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* See also: “According to the UN, the worst catastrophe in Africa is not taking place in Kenya, or even Darfur”, *Independent*, 9 February 2008

²¹¹ Menkhaus, “The crisis in Somalia”, p. 378

²¹² “According to the UN, the worst catastrophe in Africa is not taking place in Kenya, or even Darfur”, *Independent*, 9 February 2008

²¹³ “Chaotic Somalia keeps US on terrorism watch”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 March 2008. The headquarters for US operations in the Horn of Africa is Camp Lemonier, a former French base near Djibouti airport, where the Combined Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa is based. 1,600 US military personnel are based there. The CJTF states that its mission is ‘non-lethal’, with a focus on training other armies in the region, including the Ethiopian Army. It has also provided advice to the US Government on what the needs of those armies are in terms of logistics, weaponry and ammunition.

how far the US approach on counter-terrorism is really contributing to wider peace-building and state-building agendas.²¹⁴

Ethiopia has also come in for much criticism from those who are sceptical about both the motivations behind and the likely fate of its invasion of Somalia in 2006. If Somalis generally mistrust foreign powers, they mistrust Ethiopia more than most. Memories of the 1977-78 war in the Ogaden remain strong on both sides. However, some observers deny that the EPRDF is in any way anti-Somali, pointing out that many of its leaders today received assistance from the Barre regime during the struggle against the Derg.²¹⁵ Some have also argued that Ethiopia overestimated its ability to “work the clan dynamics” in Somalia.²¹⁶ This is something that might plausibly be said of most of the external actors involved. Certainly, commentators have questioned why the international community, having backed the TNG, which had a pronounced Mogadishu and Hawiye character, between 2000 and 2002, has allowed itself since 2004 to become closely associated with a TFG which to some is largely the creature of certain lineages within the Darod clan family.

Seeking to achieve their policy objectives through the sponsorship of proxy forces also has a long history in the Horn of Africa. As Sally Healey has written:

Pursuing (regional) foreign policy through proxy forces in neighbouring countries has been the ‘normal’ pattern of relations for decades [...] The states of the region all act as enablers and multipliers of conflict to the detriment of their neighbours. This regional dynamic is sufficiently powerful to act as a cause of conflict in its own right, especially where so many problems of governance abound [...] In this context foreign policy, especially foreign policy, becomes an intimate part of the government’s strategy for internal stability.²¹⁷

The main examples of current proxy sponsorship, excluding any Sudan dimension, are: Eritrea’s support for nationalist and Islamist insurgents in Somalia, and its assistance to the ONLF and OLF in Ethiopia; and Ethiopia’s support for Eritrean opposition groups. Sympathisers with Eritrea might argue that the TFG in Somalia should also be considered an Ethiopian proxy. Healy concludes that the international community has not given adequate weight

to the ways in which countries joined in conflict actively destabilise one another and act as spoilers to derail peace processes. Understanding how security threats are perceived and articulated in the Horn of Africa could provide better insights into how the region actually works. The states of the Horn securitize events in relation to past events and present perceptions that might seem idiosyncratic if taken out of their context. But the context is vital for an understanding of how and why conflict occurs. How could Eritrea construe a shooting incident at Badme in May 1998 as an event that justified a full-blown

²¹⁴ “Somalia: A country in peril, a policy nightmare”, *Enough Strategy Paper*, September 2008, pp. 10, 15-16

²¹⁵ Mohammed, “Ethiopia’s strategic dilemma in the Horn of Africa”, p. 8

²¹⁶ “Ethiopian signals shift as Somali war drags on”, *Financial Times*, 28 August 2008

²¹⁷ S. Healy, “Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa. How conflicts connect and peace agreements unravel”, Chatham House/Centre of African Studies, University of London/Royal African Society/Rift Valley Institute, 2008, p. 39

military attack? [...] The ways in which 'amity and enmity' are constructed among the players has a rich history. Without grasping this, external players are liable to be baffled by the conflicts that repeatedly erupt and fuel one another in the Horn. Consequently, their interventions will be liable to miss the mark.²¹⁸

IV Conclusion

To many observers, conflict appears to be inscribed in the very DNA of the Horn of Africa. However, there are grounds for resisting fatalism. While Somalia remains convulsed by violence and misery, Somaliland appears to suggest that the institutionalisation of authority and establishment of accountability is not an impossible dream, provided that certain Western assumptions about what it should involve and how it can be constructed are put aside.²¹⁹ 17 years into an experiment in 'ethnic federalism', Ethiopia faces many problems, but the experiment is certainly not pre-ordained to fail – it may yet successfully create a new and viable political and cultural reality. Eritrea's role in the region as a 'spoiler' may be problematic and its democratisation at home indefinitely postponed, but its existence as a state is not seriously in doubt. Djibouti, although it is preoccupied as ever with avoiding the destabilisation that always threatens in such a tough neighbourhood, is domestically reasonably stable.

In the short- to medium-term, the keys to peace and security in the 'core' Horn of Africa lie in: first, resolving the stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea over their common border; and, second, in constructing a durable domestic political and economic settlement in Somalia that is acceptable to the majority of Somalis and to external actors. Also crucial will be the outcome in Sudan, which has not been discussed in this paper, where an elusive quest for peace continues but is subject to powerful stresses and strains.

Frustration over the unresolved border dispute is the main reason why Eritrea has taken on the role of a regional 'spoiler'. Yet the international community appears to have washed its hands of the dispute for now. The elements for a final deal exist but none of the stakeholders appear to have the will or desire to achieve it. For the ruling parties in both Eritrea and Ethiopia, the current stalemate arguably has benefits as well as costs, as it justifies a degree of coercive social mobilisation and limitations upon processes of democratisation. In the meantime, the two countries are fighting a proxy war in Somalia. Sally Healy goes so far as to claim: "The unresolved conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is helping to destabilise the whole region."²²⁰

Somalia poses an incredibly complex challenge. If a durable political and economic settlement is one where there is a relatively stable balance of power within society which offers those actors committed to state-building and development the means and the

²¹⁸ Healy, "Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa", pp. 40-41

²¹⁹ Bradbury argues: of Somaliland: "It is important to recognise that the SNM did not announce Somaliland's independence with a blue-print, a set of 'objectives', a 'road map' a 'logical framework', a 'plan of action', 'benchmarks' or a 'reconstruction and development plan'. Neither was the state created by building the capacity of 'civil society' organisations. State-building is not a simple technical process [...]", *Becoming Somaliland*, pp. 246-7

²²⁰ Healy, "Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa", p. 39

opportunity to do so, including sufficient security and minimally effective and legitimate public institutions, Somalia is about as far from this scenario as it is possible to be.²²¹ It seems likely that any durable settlement in Somalia will have to be federal in character, highly decentralised and constructed largely from below, as has been the case in Somaliland. The emergence of the CSIC in 2006 held out some promise for the stabilisation of Somalia but its foreign policy fatally de-legitimised it in the eyes of the US and Ethiopia, prompting an Ethiopian invasion which removed one ‘security problem’ while arguably helping to manufacture new ones. Potentially significant political negotiations and realignments are currently taking place within Somalia between Prime Minister Nur Adde and parts of the armed opposition, but there are few signs as yet of a durable and inclusive domestic settlement, which will have to involve, however carefully packaged, going well ‘beyond’ the TFG and the prompt withdrawal of all Ethiopian forces. Even then, such an outcome is likely to have many opponents.

One contentious decision which some observers believe could make a positive difference would be for the international community to give full diplomatic recognition – or, if that is politically impossible, something very close to it – to Somaliland.²²² Although it is true that many Somalis are vociferously opposed to increased diplomatic recognition for Somaliland, some have argued it might have a positive ‘demonstration effect’, providing an incentive to the warring clans of Somalia to reach a durable settlement. Others are less sure, given that it appears impossible that any government in Somalia could officially accept Somaliland as an independent sovereign state. However, various forms of greater recognition short of full diplomatic recognition might in the longer-term provoke new thinking.²²³

How, more broadly, can the international community assist in ending conflict in the region? Some analysts have claimed that it is vital that the international community ceases to compartmentalise the various conflicts of the region and acknowledge that they are intertwined. By this reasoning, the Horn should be viewed by outsiders as a “Regional Security Complex”, as the African Great Lakes region arguably has come to be, and regional ‘security architecture’ should be constructed. However, it is also accepted that efforts to intervene on this basis will continue to be hampered by the fact that IGAD, the international community’s main partner in the region, is heavily compromised by internal rivalry, and therefore a very weak vehicle for managing, reducing or ending conflict.²²⁴

²²¹ M. Khan, “State failure in weak states: A critique of new institutionalist explanations”, in J. Harris, J. Hunter and C. Lewis (eds), *The New Institutional Economics and Third World Development* (London and New York, 1997)

²²² In terms of measures short of full diplomatic recognition, options that have been raised include observer status at the UN and the AU.

²²³ Some commentators have speculated about circumventing the issue of the reunification of Somalia and Somaliland by working toward a looser form of political association, for example, confederation. Many analysts have also noted how prolifically, notwithstanding the many conflicts that affect them, Somalis continue to trade with each other enthusiastically and build businesses whose operations span borders. While this is true, it does not mean that building greater political co-operation in future will be straightforward.

²²⁴ Healy, “Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa”, p. 44. See also: House of Commons Library Research Paper RP06/51, *The African Great Lakes region: An end to conflict?*

Echoing current debates about the 'Responsibility to Protect', it has also been argued that a more positive contribution on the part of Western countries might arise from an approach which prioritises civilian protection over conflict resolution.²²⁵

Accepting that they have little possibility to end conflict in the Horn, Western countries should work to protect the people who are victims of violent conflict without discriminating between the victims of the Darfur conflict and the victims of the conflict in Mogadishu. They should also favour the governments and administrations, whether state or non-state actors, that protect their people rather than those that claim to protect Western interests.²²⁶

However, many experts believe that external actors are far more often part of the problem rather than the solution. One analyst has written that outside interventions "have only been unquestionably helpful in the humanitarian field."²²⁷ If true, might it be best for all concerned if the international community simply withdrew? However, even if it was desirable, it is impossible to envisage this happening, given the continuing strategic importance of the Horn of Africa. Resolution of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute and the achievement of a durable settlement in Somalia will surely require at least some external underpinning, even if it is only in the form of humanitarian and development assistance. As such, it may be more appropriate to work towards improving the quality and impact of outside intervention in the Horn of Africa, rather than simply abandoning the endeavour.

²²⁵ The 'Responsibility to Protect' is a UN-promoted moral and legal framework for the international community to respond to mass atrocities. For further discussion, see House of Commons Library Research Paper 08/55, *Reinventing humanitarian intervention: Two cheers for the Responsibility to Protect?*

²²⁶ Healy, "Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa", p. 45

²²⁷ Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*, p. xi

Further reading

1. Books

M. Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (London, 2008)

D. Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, 2000)

D. Laitin and S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State* (Boulder, 1987)

I. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland* (London, 2008)

P. Woodward, *The Horn of Africa. Politics and International Relations* (London, 2003)

S. Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil* (London, 1991)

M. Wrong, *I Didn't Do It For You. How the World Betrayed a Small African Nation* (London, 2006)

2. Articles and reports

Christian Aid, "Life on the edge of climate change: The plight of pastoralists in Northern Africa", London, 2006

www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0611climatechange2/kenya_climatechange.pdf

A. de Waal, "Class and power in a stateless Somalia", 20 February 2007

<http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/dewaal/>

M. Ejigu, "Deforestation, environmental insecurity, poverty and conflict in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes", EFRN News 43-44/05

http://www.etfrn.org/etfrn/newsletter/news4344/articles/2_12_Ejigu.pdf

Enough "15 years after Black Hawk Down: Somalia's chance?", *Strategy Paper 18*, April 2008

Enough, "Somalia: A country in peril, a policy nightmare", *Strategy Paper*, September 2008

T. Hagmann, "The political roots of the current crisis in Region 5", 21 September 2007

www.ssrc.org

T. Hagmann and M.V.Hohne, "Failed state or failed debate? Multiple Somali political orders within and beyond the nation-state", *Politorbis*, 42, 1, 2007

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi.Par.0215.File.2042.pdf>

T. Hagmann and M.H.Khalif, "State and politics in Ethiopia's Somali Region since 1991", *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, Vol. 6, 2006

Harmony Project/Combating Terrorism Center, "Al-Qaida's (mis)adventures in the Horn of Africa"

[Al-Qaida's \(Mis\)Adventures in the Horn of Africa](#)

S. Healy, "Lost opportunities in the Horn of Africa. How conflict connect and peace agreements unravel", Chatham House/Centre of African Studies, University of London/Royal African Society/Rift Valley Institute, 2008

M.V. Hoehne, "Puntland and Somaliland clashing in Northern Somalia: Who cuts the Gordian knot?", 7 November 2007

<http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hoehne/printable.html>

Human Rights Watch reports in July 2007
(<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/02/ethiop16327.htm>) and June 2008
(<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/ethiopia0608/>)

International Crisis Group (ICG), *Somaliland: Democratisation and its discontents*, Africa Report No. 66, July 2003

International Crisis Group, *Beyond the fragile peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting new war*, Africa Report No. 141, June 2008

R. Marchal, "Warlordism and terrorism: how to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia", *International Affairs*, November 2007

P. Meier, "Networking disaster and conflict early warning systems for environmental security, unpublished paper, 21 February 2007

<http://conflict-reduction.org/meier/Networking%20Systems.pdf>

P. Meier and D. Bond, "Environmental influences on pastoral conflict in the Horn of Africa", paper given at an international workshop on human security and climate change, June 2005

http://www.gechs.org/downloads/holmen/Meier_Bond.pdf

K. Menkhaus, "The crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in five acts", *African Affairs*, July 2007

R. Middleton, "Piracy in Somalia. Threatening global trade, feeding local wars", *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, Africa Programme AFP BP 08/02

www.chathamhouse.org.uk

A. Mohammed, "Ethiopia's strategic dilemma in the Horn of Africa", 20 February 2007

www.ssrc.org

R. Reid, "Old problems in new conflicts: Some observations on Eritrea and its relations with Tigray, from liberation struggle to interstate relations", *Africa*, Vol. 73, No. 3, 2003

A.I. Samatar, "Ethiopian federalism: Autonomy versus control in the Somali region", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 2004

S. Vaughan and K. Tronvoll, "Structures and relations of power: Ethiopia", SIDA, 2003
<http://www.addisvoice.com/resources/Structure-of-power.pdf>

3. Web sources

Office of the Presidency, Djibouti
<http://www.presidence.dj/>

Ministry of Information, Eritrea
<http://www.shabait.com/staging/index.html>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia
<http://www.mfa.gov.et/>

IGAD
<http://www.igad.org>

IGAD Conflict Early Warning System
www.cewarn.org

IGAD Famine Early Warning System
<http://www.fews.net/pages/region.aspx?gb=r2&l=en>

IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre
<http://www.icpac.net/>

Nile Basin Initiative
<http://www.nilebasin.org/>

Puntland Government
<http://www.puntlandgovt.com/profile.php>

Transitional Federal Government of Somalia
<http://www.presidence.dj/>

Somaliland Government
<http://www.somalilandgov.com/>

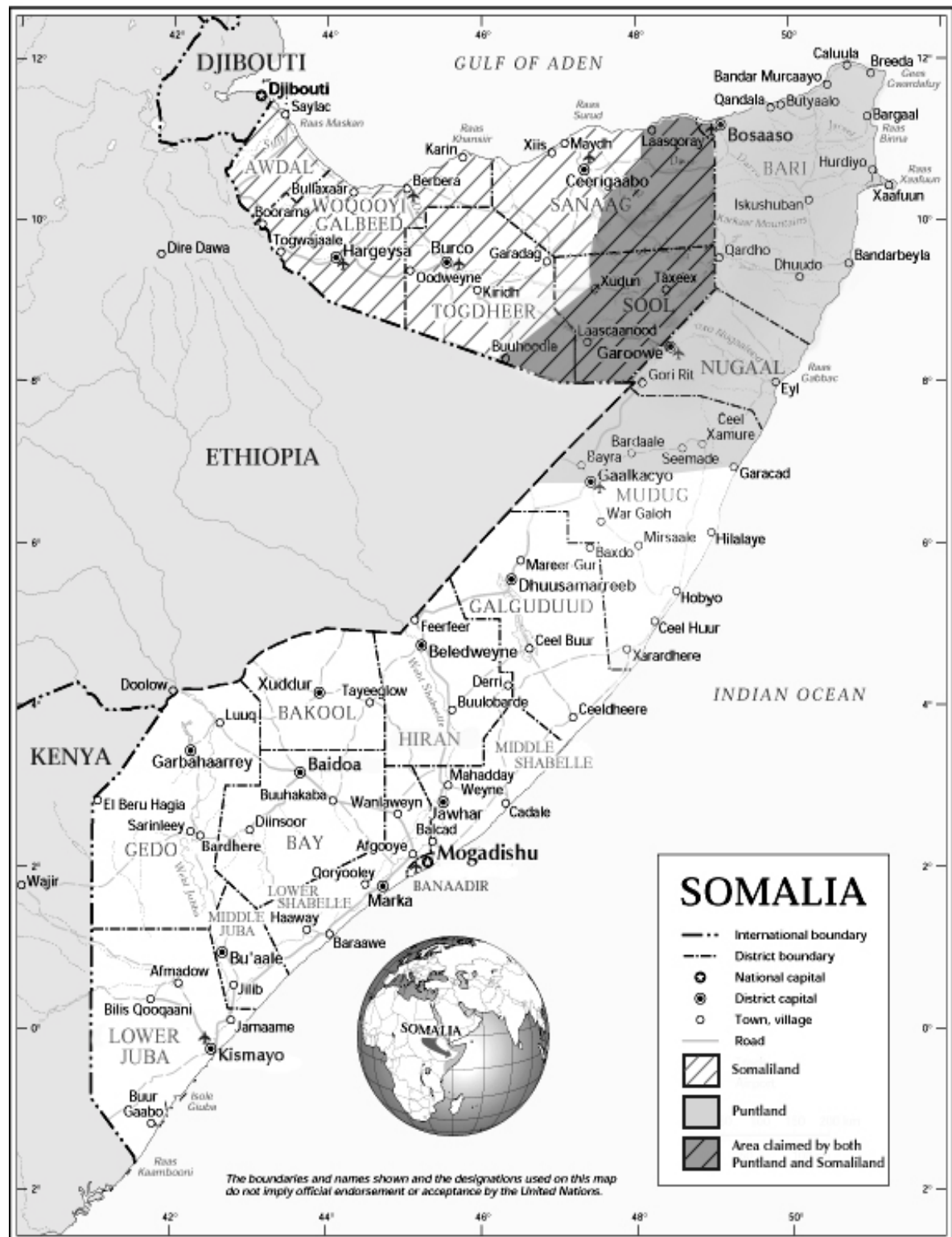
US Africa Command
<http://www.africom.mil/hoa/>

Somaliland Focus UK
<http://www.somalilandfocus.org.uk/>

Relief Web
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/hlp.nsf/db900ByKey/hornofafrica?OpenDocument>

UN Integrated Regional Information Network
<http://www.irinnews.org/Africa-Region.aspx?Region=HOA&Service=ENG>

Map of Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland



Source: International Crisis Group, "Somalia's Islamists", *Africa Report No. 100*, December 2005