

Aisha Ahmad

# Agenda for peace or budget for war?

*Evaluating the economic impact of international intervention in Somalia*

In 1992 United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali drafted his landmark report, “An agenda for peace,” which boldly reasserted the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and proposed a set of recommendations on how the UN could respond to new international security threats posed by secessionism, ethnic conflict, and civil war. The report envisioned a collective international effort aimed at reducing human suffering, upholding human rights, and resolving the underlying causes of violent conflict between and within states.

The mandate was vast. “An agenda for peace” conceptualized peacebuilding as large-scale, well-financed, long-term, internationally led interventions in conflict-affected states, which “may include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and

*Aisha Ahmad is a research fellow in the international security program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She is a doctoral candidate in political science at McGill University and will be an assistant professor at the University of Toronto as of September 2012.*

training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting both formal and informal processes of political participation.”<sup>1</sup> Over the past two decades the international community has invested significant financial, military, and civilian resources into complex, multidimensional peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives designed to rescue states from internal strife and political failure.

However, as I show in the case of Somalia, these international interventions can sunder the very state they seek to resurrect. In a civil war, large-scale international interventions infuse enormous sums of money into the informal economy, making local security providers stronger and more financially independent of their domestic constituencies. In this way, the introduction of significant resources into the informal economy affects the relationship between warlords and their subjects, often increasing both the level of predation against the populace and the duration of conflict. International interventions also transform the informal economy so that spoiler activity becomes more lucrative than peacebuilding. By warping the informal economy, international interventions can therefore have devastating state-destroying effects by arresting domestic processes of state formation and perpetuating internal armed conflict.

Faced with the serious regional and international security threats presented by failed states, the international community has invested hundreds of billions of dollars into complex, multidimensional nation-building initiatives designed to centralize political power and reconstruct domestic national institutions. Though well intentioned, I argue here that this sweeping agenda can actually inadvertently undermine the domestic processes of political order-making that occur naturally within failed states, thus increasing predatory violence and prolonging civil war.

Somalia provides an excellent case study of how large-scale international intervention affects the informal economy and perpetuates state failure. After the state collapsed in 1991, Somalia fell into a brutal civil war and suffered a famine that sparked international outcry and prompted a multilateral international intervention. As the United Nations operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) arrived on the beaches of the capital city of Mogadishu, Somalia became the first practical test of Boutros-Ghali’s agenda for peace. From 1992-95, the UN operation in Somalia evolved from a limited humanitarian

1 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “An agenda for peace,” United Nations, New York, 2002, article 55.

assistance mission to a heavily politicized military intervention aimed at restoring peace and political stability to the country. UNOSOM failed in this expanded mission. As the last of the international forces withdrew from Somalia in 1995, the UN intervention left a legacy of criminality and warlord power that perpetuated the civil war for another decade.

The international operation in Somalia was a multibillion dollar initiative. According to UN department of peacekeeping operations reports, the UN spent a total of \$1.68 billion on the UNOSOM I and II efforts and the United States invested \$2.2 billion more.<sup>2</sup> International aid agencies invested billions more in food aid to counter the famine. This article illustrates how these resources directly financed the fragmentation of Somalia and drove local security providers to engage in increasingly predatory behaviour against the Somali populace. When the international community withdrew in 1995, it left Somalia aid-dependent and politically fragmented. The mission had transformed the informal economy into a militarized, criminal enterprise with the power and interest to perpetuate state collapse indefinitely.

The article draws upon original field research that I conducted between 2007 and 2012, including interviews with dozens of elite members of the Mogadishu business community and key Mogadishu-based warlords who were active during the UNOSOM mission. I also draw on interviews with members of the unrecognized de facto independent government of the peaceful northern region of Somaliland, including former militia commanders, as well as interviews and observations with local humanitarian workers based in the strategically significant Afgooye corridor who remained in Somalia for the entire duration of the civil war period. I treat all respondents as anonymous, except in cases in which the interviewee specifically declined anonymity.

The first section of the article outlines the theory of the article and situates it in the relevant literature on state failure and state formation. The second addresses the case of Somalia and the expanded peacebuilding mandate of UNOSOM. The third uses case study evidence to show exactly how the expanded mission inadvertently led to the transformation of the informal economy, making warlords dependent on aid and independent of the local population. Finally, the article concludes with implications of this research and recommendations for more effective peacebuilding in failed states.

2 “Somalia: UNOSOM I” and “Somalia: UNOSOM II,” [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

#### AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF STATE FAILURE AND INTERVENTION

Charles Tilly's seminal work illustrated how war-making centralized state power in early modern Europe through two key processes—taxation and conscription.<sup>3</sup> In order to effectively tax and conscript to fuel a war effort, the state must create strong centralized institutions that can penetrate into the countryside and extract resources from its domestic population. Through the development of these centralized institutions, the modern state creates and consolidates its political power.

In contrast, failed states are exemplified by breakdown of central governing institutions and the absence of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.<sup>4</sup> Failed states are also often subject to violent competition among warlord-led factions, which seek control over part or all of the state. For the purpose of this analysis, I define a warlord as an individual who exercises autonomous political authority and a monopoly on the use of physical force over a sub-state territorial unit, but who is not legally recognized by the international community as a legitimate governing actor.

Warlords in failed states extract resources from their populations in a similar manner to the rulers of early European states. Tilly's description of the state as a protection racket is analogous to the relationship between a warlord and his constituents in a failed state. First, warlords must extract resources from their domestic populations in order to consolidate their hold over their territory and defend their turf against incursions from neighbouring groups. Second, akin to Tilly's model, warlords extract resources from their domestic populations in exchange for security from violence, often from violence perpetrated by the warlord himself. In a civil war competition, the very survival of a warlord protection racket is often contingent on its ability to extract rents from its subjugated population.

In a failed state, this taxation-protection relationship restrains the violence of warlords and creates pockets of political order. In fact, when a warlord relies on the local population for cash, his constituents have a greater ability to negotiate the terms of their repression. As Robert Bates explains, political order occurs at an equilibrium at which both the security provider and his constituents agree on the rate of taxation and the quality of protection. In other words, when a warlord is financially dependent on the

3 Charles Tilly, "War making and state making as organized crime," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

4 Max Weber (edited by Talcott Parsons), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: The Free Press, 1947), 154.

local community, both the warlord and the citizen alike must at some level agree to the terms of subjugation.<sup>5</sup>

However, when warlords do not rely on the local population to maintain political power, this relationship changes fundamentally. The magnitude of predation by a warlord against his constituents is directly affected by the source and volume of resources available to him. Jeremy Weinstein explains that groups that have external sources of funding are more likely to engage in violence against the civilian population than those that rely on the local population for resources.<sup>6</sup> The civil war literature clearly shows that groups that have access to natural resources engage in different types of violence than groups that depend on other sources of income.<sup>7</sup> If a warlord no longer needs to extract resources from his domestic population, the taxation-protection relationship no longer exists. The warlord regime begins to act less like a protection racket and more like an authoritarian rentier state.<sup>8</sup> The local economy is no longer the warlord's economic base, and therefore the interaction between the warlord and his constituents shifts from an embedded autonomy to a predatory relationship.<sup>9</sup> The availability of external rents makes it possible for a warlord to exploit and repress his population with far greater impunity and reduces the necessity of disciplining rank-and-file militia who may abuse the populace.

International interventions have a similar effect. By infusing large amounts of cash into the informal economy, international interventions fundamentally transform and dominate the local economy. From the moment international organizations arrive in a country, the biggest source of income for the local population becomes the intervention itself. The sheer force of the economic disruption of bringing billions of dollars of project money and thousands of foreign nationals into a failed state has a direct impact

5 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jean-Paul Azam and Alice Mesnard, "Civil war and the social contract," *Public Choice* 115 (2003): 455-75; Robert Bates, Avner Greif, and Smita Singh, "Organizing violence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 5 (2002): 599-628.

6 Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

7 Michael L. Ross, "What do we know about natural resources and civil war?" *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (May 2004): 337-56.

8 Douglas A. Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1996).

9 Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

on the informal economy. Gentrification in major cities and shocks to local markets happen overnight. The best jobs and biggest contracts come from international organizations. The presence of well-paid international workers warps local prices of property, goods, and labour. The larger the mandate and organization of an international intervention, the more substantial and devastating is the economic impact of its presence.

The infusion of this much cash into the local economy provides immediate incentives to exploit the international intervention. However, capitalizing on these foreign resources requires that warlords find local partners. Unlike natural resources, which a warlord may be able to exploit independently, generating revenue from an international intervention requires a more complex business model that includes obstruction, racketeering, and fraud. These actions are best accomplished with the help of local business partners that have bought into the warlord protection racket. Elite members of the local business community in failed states are well positioned to engage in criminal exploitation of foreign aid resources, whereas warlords are able to provide an accommodating security environment in which businesspeople can operate. Together, warlords and the business community can collaborate to capitalize on the corruption opportunities created by large international interventions and that can finance state failure for years.

Aid diversion in conflict environments is a well-known problem. Mary Anderson's influential field manual identifies some of the many ways that aid can inadvertently finance conflict, including theft, co-option, and disruption of the local economy.<sup>10</sup> Peter Andreas's book provides a detailed empirical account of how aid diversion from the UN intervention in Bosnia inadvertently funded the siege of Sarajevo, extending the war for years longer than it would otherwise have lasted.<sup>11</sup>

The idea that aid has unintentional consequences in conflict zones has long been the subject of much discussion among scholars and policymakers alike. This article builds on these contributions and argues that the way that aid diversion exacerbates conflict is by replacing the taxation-protection social contract between security provider and constituency with a warlord-business relationship that serves the interests of a small group of elites in the failed state. By infusing cash into the informal economy, international

10 Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

11 Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

interventions change the relationship between society and local power-holders from reciprocal to predatory.

The Somali case provides a useful opportunity to explore these changing relationships. Somalia has been a failed state for 21 years and has experienced various degrees of international intervention, ranging from minimal engagement to large-scale international intervention. Through this lengthy period of state failure, the Somali business community has become a political force in its own right, with significant ties to powerful Mogadishu-based warlords.<sup>12</sup> Over the course of the civil war, international resources in Somalia have fluctuated in volume, type, and regional distribution. This variation has led to political change over both time and space. As the following two sections illustrate, the greater the volume of international resources available to Somali warlords, the less they have to rely on a taxation-protection relationship with their constituents and the more they forged elite-level relationships with the local business community.

#### CRISIS, COLLAPSE, AND INTERVENTION: SOMALIA 1969-95

The US-Soviet rivalry during the Cold War actively created the specific domestic economic crisis that led to state collapse in 1991. Starting in 1969, Soviet-backed authoritarian president Siad Barre sought to appease his communist sponsors by adopting a policy of “scientific socialism.” Under these radical socialist reforms, state control of industries led to underutilization of the manufacturing sector and drastic inefficiencies in the market.<sup>13</sup> Then, in 1974, when the Marxist Derg overthrew US-backed Emperor Haile Sellasie of Ethiopia, the Soviet Union shifted its material and political support from Somalia to Ethiopia. As Barre found himself abandoned and betrayed by his Soviet allies, he expelled all Soviet advisors from Somalia in 1977 and promptly established a new alliance with the United States. In 1980, Barre abandoned the socialist model, imposed liberal economic reforms, and structural adjustment programs.

The result was disastrous. The Barre government failed to effectively implement the liberal economic reforms and instead created chaos in the

<sup>12</sup> Stig Hansen, “Civil war economies: The hunt for profit and the incentives for peace—The case of Somalia,” AE working paper no. 1, department of economics and international development, University of Bath, UK, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Peter T. Leeson, “Better off stateless: Somalia before and after government collapse,” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 35 (2007): 689-710.

market.<sup>14</sup> According to Jamil Mubarak, “macroeconomic policy was erratic, inconsistent, and often moved from one set of objectives to another, thereby confusing the market.”<sup>15</sup> When these failed economic reforms left the state cash-strapped, the Barre regime printed money to finance the government. Inflation rates in the 1980s were staggering. According to Peter Leeson, “between 1983 and 1990, average annual depreciation of the Somali shilling against the US\$ was over 100%.”<sup>16</sup> Corruption also hampered growth. Businesspeople who owned firms in Mogadishu explained that before the fall of the state, it was extremely difficult to get import-export permits, thus limiting business opportunities to a handful of elites. These obstructions had a devastating impact on the national economy: “Public sector foreign debt-service over exports and the total outstanding foreign debt over GDP were 240% and 177% in 1988 and 1990, respectively.”<sup>17</sup> Faced with debilitating bureaucratic obstacles, many businesspeople turned to the informal economy and the black market, which grew increasingly powerful.

Increased repression of domestic uprisings from both the north and the south also increased defence spending at an unsustainable rate. Political repression of rival clan groups, coupled with a devastating economic crisis, created a perfect storm for violent rebellion against the state. By 1986, Somalia was already in a state of civil war, with armed opposition groups across the country mobilizing against the Barre regime. As the state went bankrupt, the power of the regime also crumbled. In January 1991, anti-government groups succeeded in overthrowing the government and then turned against each other in a bitter civil war along clan lines. The violent political crisis was matched by an equally devastating drought. The resulting famine claimed 300,000 lives.

These compounded crises in Somalia prompted an international outcry. In response to the famine, the International Committee of the Red Cross began delivering emergency food aid to internally displaced Somalis. The aid arrived amidst a fierce ongoing battle in Mogadishu between the Somali National Alliance leader, General Muhammad Farah Aideed of the Habr

14 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, “Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 67 (2008): 657-70.

15 Jamil A. Mubarak, “The ‘hidden hand’ behind the resilience of the stateless economy of Somalia,” *World Development* 25, no. 12 (1997): 2027-40.

16 Leeson, “Better off stateless,” 694.

17 Mubarak, “The ‘hidden hand’,” 2028.



Gidir clan, and United Somali Congress head, President Ali Mahdi of the Abgal clan. As the aid arrived on the beaches of Somalia, it was pilfered by these groups and obstructed from being delivered to its intended recipients. In response, on 24 April 1992, the UN security council unanimously passed resolution 751, which dispatched a small contingent of UNOSOM peacekeepers to monitor a paper ceasefire between Mahdi and Aideed and safeguard the delivery of humanitarian supplies to UN distribution centres. Less than three months after it was penned, Somalia had become the first field test of “An agenda for peace.”

The immediate impact of UNOSOM was insignificant. Violence raged on in spite of the peacekeeping mission, and aid continued to be pillaged and blocked. Therefore, on 3 December 1992, the security council decided to invoke the chapter VII clause of the UN charter in resolution 794, authorizing peacekeeping troops to use force to restore peace and security in Somalia. The United States took the lead in this expanded UN-sanctioned mission, taking command of the multilateral unified task force (UNITAF) operation in Somalia.

UNITAF was first charged with protecting aid convoys to famine victims, a mission that is widely considered to have been successful.<sup>18</sup> However, UN protection of aid resources actively empowered Mahdi’s faction, which had won the lion’s share of aid distribution contracts. This led to a perceived politicization of the aid mission as supporting the Abgal sub-clan against the Habr Gidir. Accordingly, Aideed’s opposition to the international intervention grew stronger and more aggressive, driving UN peacekeeping forces to use their chapter VII licence. Faced with threats to its troops and mission by Aideed’s forces, UNITAF became increasingly politicized, engaged in active combat operations, and mired in complex clan rivalries.

Amid this escalating confrontation between peacekeeping and Aideed’s Somali National Alliance forces, on 26 March 1993 security council resolution 814 authorized a transition of leadership from the US-led UNITAF to the new UN-commanded UNOSOM II mission. Resolution 814 not only called for a general disarmament of all armed factions in Somalia, but also proposed that “restoration of law and order throughout Somalia would contribute to humanitarian relief operations, reconciliation and political settlement, as well as to the rehabilitation of Somalia’s political institutions

<sup>18</sup> John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995).

and economy.”<sup>19</sup> While UNOSOM I began as a limited operation to protect the delivery of humanitarian aid supplies, UNOSOM II now covered a wide range of peacemaking activities, including humanitarian aid, disarmament, state-building, and active combat. As the intervention grew larger, journalists and analysts began to talk of “mission creep.”

This expanded mandate proved disastrous for UNOSOM forces. The brutal murders of Pakistani and American soldiers in the streets of Mogadishu, in June and October of 1993 respectively, marked the beginning of the end of the UN mission. By spring 1994, the last of the UN peacekeeping forces had pulled out of the country, leaving Somalia in a state of enduring civil war. Many questions followed. Should the international effort have done more or less? Was the failure of UNOSOM due to too broad a commitment or too weak a resolve? Where did the spirit of “An agenda for peace” go wrong? As the following section illustrates, the expansive UNOSOM mission inadvertently created a powerful business-warlord alliance in the Somali civil war, which made warlords independent of their domestic constituencies. After the UNOSOM withdrawal, the continuous supply of food aid donations allowed this business-warlord alliance to perpetuate state failure for more than a decade.

#### ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION

State collapse had a profound impact on the local economy. The absence of government put an end to nepotism, taxation, industry regulations, and crippling bureaucratic red tape. This opened the door to new businesspeople who wished to capitalize on tax- and regulation-free trade opportunities in both licit and illicit goods. Amid the chaos of the early war period, looting and smuggling created a windfall for a new group of criminal entrepreneurs in Mogadishu. The aggressive and illicit nature of these new business entrepreneurs required that they establish relationships with local warlords who could shield them from economic and political rivals. Longstanding members of the Mogadishu business community were pushed out. As Mogadishu-based businessman Haji Ibrahim “Tajir” explained, “I was in business around 40 years, from when I was 16 years old. After the fall of the Siad Barre regime, a new phase of business started, which was very dangerous. All rules governing business were destroyed. All illegal business was possible [and], with no taxation, people got rich.”<sup>20</sup>

19 Resolution 814, S/RES/814, 26 March 1993.

20 Interview with Haji Ibrahim “Tajir,” 2009.

Tajir and several other Mogadishu businesspeople explained how new businessmen who sought to dominate the failed state economy allied with local warlords to specifically target the established business class and to push them out of the market. A prominent Mogadishu-based warlord from the early civil war period explained: "After the civil war, all the businesspeople were thrown out. Property was looted and stolen. The old business community left the country with whatever they had. The new businessmen supported and gave money to the warlords so that they could secure their transactions."<sup>21</sup>

The aid resources created an extraordinary boon for this new criminal class. A prominent trader from the Yaqshiid district Su'uq Ba'ad market in Mogadishu explained: "UNOSOM brought heavy investment and money. After 1990, the greatest opportunity was UNOSOM. Many businesspeople got contracts. There were contractors for everything. Without UNOSOM, the business community couldn't make any money. Small businesspeople became millionaires. Aid helped the humanitarian and the business side too."<sup>22</sup> My interviews with two dozen of the largest business owners in Somalia all revealed that virtually all of the biggest businesspeople in Mogadishu made their first fortunes from international aid contracts during the UNOSOM mission.

Local business entrepreneurs exploited UN aid in two key ways that have been overlooked by the traditional analysis. First, warlords and the new business class profited from food aid delivery contracts. Second, warlords and businesses colluded to create fake NGOs to acquire cash and food resources from the international community. Both of these opportunities solidified the elite business-warlord alliance, which financed warlords to be independent of their domestic populations and thus perpetuated the civil war.

First, the most lucrative international contracts were for food aid delivery, worth hundreds of millions of dollars. During the famine and civil war, demand for food was extremely high. As such, the large influx of food donations turned food aid into a liquid asset. Food aid thus became the informal currency of Somalia. "Food aid is the only source of revenue for the majority of society," explained frontline humanitarian medical doctor Deqo Mohamed from Afgoye. "In the whole country, there is no income except food distribution. Everyone is trying to make money on this food

21 Anonymous interview #1, 2009.

22 Anonymous interview #2, 2009.

distribution. If you are living in the bush and you want sugar or cloths, you have to sell half your sack so you can buy something else. Where are you going to get money to buy the gun? There is no bank to steal. There is only WFP [the World Food Programme].”<sup>23</sup>

Those businesses that had the strongest ties to warlords were best positioned to take advantage of the full range of opportunities to exploit food aid. Because warlords controlled security on the roads, contractors who had relationships with warlords were able to demonstrate that they could get aid into the otherwise inaccessible countryside, for a price. A Mogadishu-based businessman who worked in water distribution described how this aid distribution worked: “Say they want aid delivered from point A to point B. The contractor tells them that it is too dangerous on the road, so he says that he is forced to take a much longer off-road path to get to point B.” As the businessman drew a map of this long and unnecessary side-trip, he clarified, “Because the aid agencies can’t independently verify the security on the road, they must pay this extra transportation expense.”<sup>24</sup> Importantly, these aid contractors were not actually inhibited on the roads, nor did they take the longer side routes. In fact, what these businesspeople did was forge agreements with local strongmen to ensure delivery into the countryside, and then charge very high fees to include the fake extra transportation and a security risk premium. The premium on delivery was used primarily to finance the security relationship with warlords and to make a profit.

The 2009 UN monitoring group report identified the three largest corporate beneficiaries of food aid as the companies owned by Mohammed Deylaf, Abukar Omar Adaani, and Engineer Enow. My interviews with the leaders of these businesses revealed that they each first made their fortunes during the UNOSOM operation, through the establishment of elite-level security arrangements with local warlords. One executive officer boasted, “We were one of the three major World Food Programme contractors. WFP operations are everywhere and in contact with everyone. We could work anywhere and with everyone unimpeded.”<sup>25</sup> With this foreign aid, warlords secured sufficient financial resources to maintain their political power, without needing to establish taxation-protection relationships with their domestic constituents. Instead, they focused their efforts on developing their elite-level relationships with powerful and influential businessmen.

23 Interview with Deqo Mohamed, 2012.

24 Anonymous interview #3, 2009.

25 Anonymous interview #4, 2009.

Second, the fake NGO industry provided a highly lucrative cash-grab opportunity for both businessmen and warlords, which further solidified their elite-level partnership. The international intervention directly created the conditions for this industry to develop. When UNITAF ground forces cleared the roads of checkpoints to facilitate the delivery of aid, they prompted Aideded to find a new source of income. In response, the Somali National Alliance initiated a new business model that quickly became popular among Somali factions of all stripes—the “suitcase NGO.”

Three parties are involved in the suitcase NGO business model: the warlord, the businessman, and the Somali official working for the international aid organization. To start, the warlord enters into an agreement with a member of the business community with whom he has established a relationship. With the help of a skilled professional, they draft a proposal requesting support for an imaginary camp of internally displaced people somewhere in the interior, particularly in a location that cannot easily be verified. The businessman then sends one of his employees to pose as a local NGO representative and to present the proposal to the Somali official within the international aid organization. The Somali official approves the bogus request in exchange for either a percentage of the aid profits or a flat-rate fee. Once approved, the businessman collects the aid resources, pays his warlord security-provider the agreed-upon percentage, and transports the remaining supplies to the market for sale.

Physician and internationally renowned humanitarian Hawa Abdi Diblaawe bore witness to the phenomenon of suitcase NGOs during the UNOSOM era. The Dr. Hawa Abdi Foundation is the largest and most enduring humanitarian operation in southern Somalia. In 1983, Dr. Hawa, as she is known internationally, built a small medical clinic on her family-owned land in the Afgooye corridor, 15 kilometres along the main road from Mogadishu. When the Siad Barre regime fell in 1991, her clinic became a frontline hospital for civilians fleeing the violence of the civil war. Using the agricultural revenues from her family farm, Dr. Hawa single-handedly provided free medical care, water, and refuge to tens of thousands of internally displaced persons. Over the past 20 years, the number of residents at the camp has reached a record-high 90,000, and Dr. Hawa has become one of the world’s only eye-witnesses to every stage of the Somali civil war.

Dr. Hawa explains: “At the time of UNOSOM, the fake NGOs were a business. They used to write a good proposal saying they are running a camp, school, everything. Then they take the money. Some of them disappear and never come back. They call it, ‘Hit one time and leave.’ There were three

angles [to the fake NGO business]: connection to warlords because they needed to access the roads; connection to business people because they had to sell to them; and connection to head of international organizations in Somalia, so that they could continue to get the aid.”<sup>26</sup> These suitcase NGOs became an industry during the UNOSOM mission and provided a quick source of cash for new businessmen and warlords alike.

The revenue-generating opportunities of aid delivery contracts and the fake NGO industry created a marriage of convenience between warlords and the new business elite. This elite pact continued long after UNOSOM and has kept Somalia in a state of perpetual state failure. After the final withdrawal of UNOSOM II in March 1995, the World Food Programme remained in Somalia as the only countrywide aid operation. Without the military presence, this continuous supply of food aid empowered the Mogadishu business community and their warlord backers. As UNOSOM withdrew, the number of armed groups proliferated across the countryside as larger clan alliances fragmented and new sub-clan groups established their own turf. Food aid financed these new factions.

Not only did pilfering of World Food Programme aid finance the elite alliance between criminal businessmen and warlords, but the program has also systematically destroyed the Somali agricultural economy. Farmers have alleged that for the past 20 years, the aid has consistently arrived at the time of harvest. Dr. Hawa, who owns a large family farm and has worked with farming communities in the Afgooye region, relates her experience: “It was always during the harvest. The maize is worth \$300 when they are preparing the farm, but then when WFP comes in it is worth \$100. Every time during the harvest, WFP would bring 100 tonnes [of food aid] to us. So the market for beans, maize, oil—everything was a low price. So the farmers stopped producing. The famine [in 2011] was caused by the destruction of the farming. They were bringing porridge of poor quality with no nutritional element. We can grow much better food.”

The complaints by farmers that food aid was consistently delivered at the time of harvest are serious and require thorough investigation. Farming communities claim that they have consistently informed the World Food Programme about the growing season and have repeatedly asked that aid not be delivered during the harvest. However, food aid continues to ebb in planting season and arrive at prime harvest time, a phenomenon that Dr. Hawa’s foundation field teams reported to have happened again during

26 Interview with Hawa Abdi Dibwaale, 2012.

this year's harvest. "They will hold the food for a while, so the farmers start harvesting, and whenever the crops are ready, the WFP food arrives," explained Dr. Deqo. "There was a long process to break down the farmers. They now harvest only for themselves and their own families. They don't even try. We all think it is deliberate. This is bigger than Adaani and Deylaf. If it was dependent on Adaani, he would deliver food everyday. They [WFP] broke the farmers. One time, it's an accident. Two times, fine. Three times, OK. But every single time, that is suspicious."

Food aid directly empowered the business-warlord alliance and bankrupted and enslaved the local population. With the systematic destruction of farming communities, the entire country is now dependent on food aid and beholden to the business elites and warlords that control its distribution. The power of local communities, which stemmed from their economic productivity, has been completely eradicated. The business-warlord power alliance that was created by the UNOSOM mission has been perpetually financed by the international aid industry. After 20 years of failed international engagement, the business class are the only group in Somalia that warlords bother to appease. As a result, Somalia has become a failed state governed by powerful business elites and local warlords who have a material interest in maintaining international aid dependence and perpetuating state failure indefinitely.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ambitious mandate of "An agenda for peace" sought to improve international peace and security and focus international attention on human security within the state. However, the types of large-scale interventions that it envisions can actually destroy the state that they seek to save. A comparison between the northern and southern regions provides a striking illustration. When the state fell in 1991, the northern region of Somalia broke away from the rest of the country. On 18 May 1991, the northern region declared itself an independent state called the Republic of Somaliland. Though legally unrecognized as a sovereign state, over the past 20 years Somaliland has constructed a peaceful and functioning democratic government, with a disciplined national army and free market economic system. Leaders of the Somali National Movement faction and members of the former Barre regime that brutally repressed that faction now work together in the democratic government. Two former fighters from rival factions told me laughingly, "We

used to shoot at each other, but now we are good friends.”<sup>27</sup> While southern Somalia has burned in turmoil, the north has become an oasis of security, reconciliation, and cooperation.

Why have the north and south experienced such different results? “We were very fortunate,” explained Minister of Finance and former Somali National Movement leader Mohamed Hashi Elmi. “Somaliland was without international interference. Freedom from foreigners caused our success. Our [peace] meetings took places in broken buildings and under trees.”<sup>28</sup> Minister of State Mohamed Rashid added, “Our peace conference in Borama took five months because we wanted time to convince and persuade each other to reach an agreement. There was little help from the international community. There were no resources, so people were relying on the hospitality of the Borama community.”<sup>29</sup> Mohamed Kahin Ahmed, or General Kahin, as he is known, stressed the absence of foreign resources in the success of the peace talks: “One key factor was that there was no foreign intervention. The SSDF [Somali Salvation Democratic Front] didn’t have foreign intervention and the SNM [Somali National Movement] didn’t have foreign intervention. We didn’t even ask foreigners for help.”<sup>30</sup> Government officials and citizens alike boast about the success of the Borama conference, and insist that local ownership of the reconciliation process and the absence of international interference explain why Somaliland has found peace while the south continues to fester. As the chairman of the ruling Kulmiye party and former Somali National Movement fighter Muse Bihi said, “Our unique success was because we had no interference.”<sup>31</sup>

In the face of enormous human suffering, the international community’s desire to act and intervene can be profound. However, this article has shown that large interventions introduce enormous sums of money to the local economy, which can make the local security apparatus independent of its domestic constituency, thus allowing it to be more violent and predatory toward civilians. This is not a phenomenon that can be controlled by limiting harm. It questions the very concept of international intervention, as outlined in “An agenda for peace,” as an appropriate approach to engaging failed and failing states.

27 Anonymous interview #6, 2011.

28 Interview with Mohamed Hashi Elmi, 2011.

29 Interview with Mohamed Rashid, 2011.

30 Interview with Mohamed Kahin Ahmed (General Kahin), 2011.

31 Interview with Muse Bihi, 2011.



The international community needs to realize is that it has largely been an agent of war-making, not peacebuilding, in failed states. Though the sentiments of “An agenda for peace” are seemingly humanist, they are also inherently arrogant. Poor states that are struggling with internal strife are often in that position because of the past interventions of the UN security council permanent members through colonialism and the Cold War. The permanent members of the security council lack both the moral authority and the practical capability to save failing states. However, if the international community is sincere in its wish to contribute to the promotion of human security in the world, my research in Somalia suggests that a simpler, humbler set of policy recommendations should be considered.

First, the international community should stop actively destroying poor states. Specifically, the five permanent members of the security council and their allies should stop illegally channelling arms, guns, and supplies to their political favourites in a civil war competition. Most importantly, they should stop covertly overthrowing governments that they do not like. For example, in 2006, Somali businesspeople, civil society actors, and local Islamic courts worked collectively to create a new government called the Union of Islamic Courts that successfully reconstructed the state for the first time since the collapse. The Courts were multi-clan and broadly popular. In 2007, a US-backed Ethiopian invasion violently overthrew them and installed the warlord-dominated “transitional federal government,” creating a new wave of violent extremism that continues to this day. This intervention was categorically state-destroying.

Second, the international community should stop food-aid dumping to countries that have predominantly agricultural economies, especially in failed states. Poor farmers are often desperate for a chance to engage in international trade. Making markets freer, fairer, and more accessible for these farmers requires that large, powerful countries stop deliberately distorting world prices. Therefore, if the permanent members of the security council are sincere in their desire to improve human security, they should stop subsidizing their own agricultural industries in such a way that makes it impossible for farmers in poor countries to compete on the international market. These subsidies produce an agricultural surplus that is then often used as food aid, which destroys the local agricultural industry and empowers warlords to engage in more rampant acts of violence and predation. A thorough, independent, third-party investigation of World Food Programme practices in Somalia is imperative. This investigation must be significantly more transparent than the highly opaque 2010 “World Food Programme

policy for disclosure of internal audit reports to member states.”<sup>32</sup> It must directly address the allegations of the farming communities that have repeatedly complained about ill-timed food dumping and fully disclose the internal audits of the past 20 years that continue to be kept secret by the organization today.

Third, the permanent members of the security council can contribute to international peace and security by working to offset the damage that they have caused to the global environment. For the Horn of Africa, climate change will be the most serious security problem of the 21st century. As the frequency and intensity of drought is expected to increase over the next 30 to 50 years, it is imperative that countries like Somalia develop practical solutions to ensure food security and food independence. Security council permanent members can help to mitigate this crisis by investing in research and development and technology transfers to climate change-affected states. For example, they can invest in the production of an assortment of genetically drought-resistant agricultural crops, such as varieties of *Moringa Oleifera*, which can help ensure food security in drought-stricken regions. They should not patent these varieties, nor should they push them onto local farming communities. They should simply invent them, vet them honestly within their own countries, and then make them freely available abroad.

On 23 February 2012, world leaders gathered in London to once again decide what to do with Somalia. Representatives of 55 countries convened to discuss the international security crisis of state failure and insurgency in Somalia. The conference members agreed to a seven-point plan that included a larger international troop presence to fight Islamists and support the transitional government, along with a long-term strategy for supplying humanitarian aid to Somalia.

Five days after the conference, Dr. Hawa Abdi was nominated for the Nobel peace prize for her unparalleled success in humanitarian and peacebuilding work in Somalia. Her conversation with me that week was harrowing. “I have little expectation of this meeting in London because British people destroyed us centuries ago,” she said. “Somali peace is not in London. They have caused so much pain.”

What then, if anything, should the international community do in Somalia and what does this imply for a new agenda for peace? “Stop making peace negotiations,” Dr. Hawa replied. “Stop making this forced government

32 “Policy for disclosure of internal audit reports to member states,” World Food Programme, executive board, second regular session, Rome, 8-11 November 2010, 4.

that you are making for us. Somalis themselves can solve their own problems sitting under our own trees. We can make our own peace.... We don't want their relief. We don't want their advice. We don't want their political help. The international community—let them leave us. If they leave us, within two years I am sure that we will have our peace among Somali people. We will put our effort among our people. We will sit and discuss. Everyone can understand each other. We have intermarriage. We are friends. We are one nation. Leave us alone. Somali peace is underneath our own trees.”

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