

SECRET

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**THE LIGHT BRIGADE CHARGES AGAIN:
 UN Political Engineering 'For' Somalia**

Into the valley of death rode
 the 5,000...
 someone had blundered...
 out of the valley of death they rode
 but not, not the 5,000...

- Alfred Lord Tennyson
 "The Charge of the Light Brigade"

Why Write?

1. UNICEF's remit and competence do not extend to the macro-political. The author of this memo is not an expert on the macro/micro political dynamics of the Somali peoples nor of Somalia. Why then a memo?
2. The record to date of UN political engineering for Somalia and the somewhat cryptic pronouncements on its future course suggest knowledge, analysis, communication and common sense of the level of the more disastrous episodes of the Crimean War (and one might add of the botched unification of Somalia in 1960 and its consequences/dynamics ending in the accession to power in 1969 of one Mohammed Siad Barre in a coup which was very far from universally unpopular at the time).
3. UNICEF can hardly protect children and women's lives or enhance their livelihoods/welfare/access to services if personal security is not restored, still less if a faked 'national unity' and 'Government' of Somalia are followed by a quick pullout and a gradual or quick descent into a chaotic set of conflicts replicating 1991-92.
4. As a UN family member UNICEF cannot be indifferent to what such a trajectory and result would do to the UN's credibility in general, let alone in respect to post-conflict rehabilitation and conflict resolving 'exercises'.
5. And if such a scenario unrolls, the dead will be 99.5% Somali (no insult intended to the UNICEF, UNOSOM and NGO personnel who have and would lose their lives, but they would be at most scores, and the Somali dead at least scores of thousands). And the world will "wash his hands" of Somalia. (As well as losing faith in the UN.) A decent respect for human life forbids silence in the face of this apocalyptic prospect.

Background

6. Somalis are a people with a common culture, a believed common history, kinship ties - a feeling of oneness and a quite remarkable ability to arouse hostility in their neighbours. (It is no accident both colonial and independence period laws in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania when setting out preferential treatment for foreign or foreign born Africans add "but in no case including a Somali".)
7. What Somalis have rarely been is a nation. The brief periods when this has been true were all, or virtually all common unity against an external enemy (from across the water, or the highlands or the South or, after the mid 19th Century, from Europe) - irrespective of whether the enemy was on the offensive against them or the Somalis against him. These periods of unity have all disintegrated soon after the external threat ended. The last died with the first Somali Republic in 1969 which came after an increasingly vituperative and violent series of confrontations beginning at Independence (significantly the Act of Union has never been validly adopted). Indeed the only two states with Somali majorities to endure for a substantial period (up to 80 years) were the British Somaliland Protectorate and the Italian Colony of Somalia (successor to Benadir and Juba).
8. It is tempting to explain this history in terms of clans. Certainly Somalis feel greater loyalty to clans, to sub-clans and to "bands" of households within sub-clans than to any broader grouping. In a hostile environment, intense loyalty to an operational social-production-military-political unit was essential to survival. In the non-river valley areas (except the Northwest) territory was not the key sovereignty - water points were. Each water point was the property of a band; a fact very relevant to the claims of well field residents for economic benefits from the use of 'their' (to them it is their) water. Without water land was useless. Water points were jealously guarded, preserved and often improved. In the river basins land mattered too, but suzerainty over access to water (especially at key nomadic/agro-pastoral junction points like Afgoi) was an accepted and enforced fact. The Northwest - where in West Galbeed at least nomads usually have permanent base camps with significant agriculture and constructed houses, not only hartals, in which women, young children and aged persons live the year round - partook of both sub-systems.
9. But water rights were not something to be hoarded, but to be used. If there was surplus water bargained cross sharing agreements were common with other bands in the same sub-clan but also more broadly. And if sharing (especially during seasonal migration) was not feasible, use rights could be and were traded - for animals in the pre-colonial period. That 'tradition' too is relevant to well field residents' perspectives. To live around and to protect water gives rights; these rights are to be used to bargain for benefits (rents, jobs, schools and clinics depending on the context).
10. The clan system is both very complex (and disagreed among experts) or relatively simple (and slightly misleading). There are three (or four) broad clan clusters: Issak (Northwest), Darod (divided into Northern and Southern) and Hawiye (in between from Benadir and the Shabelles through Bay). But a little learning in this area is very dangerous:

- a. only the Issak clan family normally acts as a relatively united unit;
 - b. the other clan families can be at war internally; - e.g. the two 'regional proto governments' which meet in the middle of Mogadishu are both Hawiye;
 - c. alliances among clans from different families are not uncommon, e.g. the fragile groping for stability in the Northwest turns on incorporation of Northern Darod clans into an Issak led governance unit while the Aideed/Joss alliance is Hawiye-Southern Darod (Ogadeni);
 - d. sub-clans within a clan most certainly can and do engage in internecine strife - the actual fighting in Kismayu/Lower Juba appears to be largely intra-Ogadeni not among the Ogadeni and other Southern Darod clans;
 - e. adventurers (often of rather ambiguous clan ancestry) offering firm allegiance to no clan (or shifting among several and trusted by none) who have substantial bodies of men at arms can become dangerous 'independent forces' - e.g. Mohammed Said Hersi "Morgan" the son-in-law and presumptive political heir of ex-President Mohammed Said Barre who could be in the Mujertine, Ogadeni or Marehan camp but appears to be unwilling to offer allegiance to anyone except himself and to choose varying banners of convenience as he deems appropriate;
 - f. the nominal alliances of combatants and partially or wholly de facto non-combatants are (especially for the latter) very tactical based on a Somali "balance of forces" doctrine (thus the preference for Mahdi Mohammed over Aideed of several smaller groupings) and a desire among those able to do so to stay out of conflicts that could not benefit them (thus the Northeast's de facto non-aggression and trade passage agreement with the Northwest and also its reluctance to become seriously involved with any Southern fraction) and the counter efforts of military contenders to force them into altered and more substantial pacts - e.g. one element in the Galkaya zone;
 - g. Somalis are at one in distrusting foreigners and in wishing at the same time to use them. They believe a basically tactical and very shallow show of unity can sometimes see them off and allow the Somalis to get back to the serious business of intra-Somali quarrels. In respect to the USA this approach has, as they see it, worked and they expect the Addis talks to be a way of working it on the UN.
11. To memorise sub-class, present and recent past alliances (or to speculate on future kaleidoscope patterns) without recognition of these complexities and without at least a broad grasp of Somali history is exceedingly dangerous (not least to Somali lives) as a basis for political engineering. But it seems to be what the USA and UNOSOM are choosing as their cornerstone for analysis and action. If so, they are building on shifting desert sands (or post rain river basin quick sands).

And The Present

12. Somalia shows some signs of settling into four regions and a free fire zone.
- Northwest where a certain semblance - weak and shaky as it is - of governance by an Issak-Northern Darod alliance (helped by the 1880-1960 Somaliland Protectorate experience and the bitter memories both of 1960-1969, of the Barre regime in general and of Morgan's genocidal 1988-90 campaign to recapture the region in particular) makes establishment of recognisable civil governance a realistic goal;
 - Northeast (Bari plus some of the rather empty - even by Somalia standards - provinces south of it) which is homogeneously Northern Darod, basically at peace and highly desirous of remaining so;
 - Mogadishu/North (the Mahdi Mohammed zone) and
 - Mogadishu/South West (the Aideed Zone) which probably could agree to live and let live as neither has realistic hopes of overrunning the other and Hawiye clan/sub-clan elders are unlikely to favour a bloodbath of attrition;
 - the Kismayu/Lower Juba free fire zone in which Joss, Morgan and others clash in a war of all against all (with other clan contenders possibly waiting for them to debilitate each other before diving into the bloody cauldron). Realistically the least unlikely to create a semblance of a stable region is Joss - if Morgan's forces are taken out.
13. There is absolutely no sign of movement toward a genuinely agreed, potentially operational government of Somalia. A fake agreement cobbled up to get the UN out is a possibility (or rather a live danger) albeit the Northwest probably would decline to take part in such a sham. If the Somali fractions succeed in playing out that game and withdrawal happens, the war will resume very soon after the last UN armed forces pull out. In a real sense that would be a rerun of the 1957-60 history of pre-independence 'agreements' and the 1960-69 disintegration of surface unity into ever more ineffective and violence tinged political manoeuvres ended only by the Barre coup. Unfortunately it would assuredly not be history recycling tragedy as farce but as a much bloodier tragedy. The spectacle of Somalis outwitting the foolish foreigners may be amusing in and of itself, a recreation of 1992 would be so macabre as to forbid laughter.

Les Mains Salees

14. The external agency presence in Somalia appears desperately concerned both with keeping its casualties low and its hands clean. The former is fair enough - even UNICEF does not wish to have its staff lay down their lives for "children in especially difficult circumstances", however much that act testifies to their sincerity and commitment. The latter is quite another matter. Somalia today is no place for anyone or any organisation which wishes to keep its hands clean - or even clean of blood. There are, simply put, almost no clean hands to shake among those with significant fragments of power and relatively few hands without blood on them.

15. Sartre (Les Main Sallees) and Camus (La Chute) may not - for opposite reasons - resolve the moral issues of involvement in an immoral context and of what at best amoral means can be justified by moral ends. At least they face the issues.
16. Some, not all, NGOs see the issues but - correctly - perceive themselves as unable to influence power dynamics and interpret their role as helping some powerless people to survive and to claw back part of their livelihoods. (At least one revels in the twilight of the state since it does see states as the devil's work but seems not to notice that a rather bad state or states could hardly be worse than the present Hobbesian war of all against all.) The USA and UNOSOM have tried to keep their hands clean - to define their mission as humanitarian protection of food relief and diplomatic facilitation of an all Somali 'settlement' backed by emergency survival and limited reconstruction relief respectively. Both seem to wish to be taken for a cross among the Good Samaritan, the Delphic oracle and consultative (not operational) Platonic guardians. That is gross naivete and/or gross hypocrisy. In either case it leads to spilt blood - of ground level humanitarian workers, of a few armed patrol members but above all of innocent and less innocent (but hardly to capital punishment level) Somalis. Leads, not will lead. The dead of USA failure to disarm down to manual rifle level and to accommodate or take out Morgan's forces are facts even if in no way intended or foreseen ones.
17. To save Somalis and Somalia from the 'war lords' (who are not the only and not necessarily the most 'valid' or public spirited 'traditional' Somali leaders) requires bargaining, underwriting and guaranteeing, knocking heads together and at least threatening to deploy superior force. It also requires setting attainable objectives and flexible time scales based on substantial real or latent Somali support. To do that requires getting dirty hands and shaking bloody ones and being an actor not a stage manager or prompter. To pretend otherwise is to play a neo-Commedia del Arte role of Machiavelli wearing the mask of Mother Teresa - distasteful in itself and diabolical in its probable consequences.
18. Nor would Machiavelli (of The Prince at least) barefaced be much better - he never won the posts he sought and the man to whom he pandered verbally, Cesare Borgia, ended his life a spectacular failure as well as an historical byword. The computer game shuffling of clan names and the diplomatic minuets toward meetings - even with somewhat random threats of action by military commanders - may seem far removed from the Prince but one must wonder whether their substance (at least in likely results) is all that different and if not, whether the strolling (in and out) players are deceptive or self-deceiving - a dismal prospect in either event.

Morgan: To Be Or Not To Be

19. How to deal with Said Mohammed Hersi is an issue illustrating the curious paralysis of US and UN thinking (and consequently action). Morgan has the most professionally trained forces of the Somali 'war lords' - largely the remnants of his own division which was a genuinely crack unit. He also has - wherever they may be - supply, regrouping and rest bases. He - alone of the military leaders - appears to hold his forces by ties other than clan (like Conan Doyle's White Company of

medieval soldiers for hire perhaps). He has been loosely linked with at least two parties, but neither has accepted him as a political figure. But clearly his ambitions go far beyond being a second line politician's military commander. Therefore, he with his command are a loose canon on the Somali scene and would be even more of a rolling menace if his forces remained intact when external ones pulled out.

20. In particular - quite apart from lightning thrusts elsewhere - Morgan destabilises Kismayu/Lower Juba. In his absence Colonel Joss (whatever one may think of him and it is admittedly hard to think kindly or admiringly), probably could enforce a certain stability and complete a set of five potential regional 'local authorities'. Pretty clearly he has not the firepower to see off Morgan.
21. The USA/UN have only two choices: give Mohammed Said Hersi both a seat of his own at the political high table and a region (in practice Kismayu/Lower Juba or Gedo) or use their superior military power to destroy his military capability. Either option entails the use of force. Joss will hardly surrender Kismayu/Lower Juba nor Aideed give up Gedo, and the Northwest whatever its real views on tentative, quasi-confederal discussions will not deal with the former murderous viceroy of the north so that accommodation (apart from possible moral objections and doubts as to stability) would not be a force free choice any more than military neutering.
22. The stark problem is that the USA and UN are refusing to take either option and acting as if there were a third. Morgan is neither recognised as a major southern actor on a par with Aideed, Joss and Mahdi Mohammed nor hunted down as an outlaw (e.g. on 1988-90 war crimes which would be as respectable as and much more enforceable than the proto-processes launched vis-à-vis Serbian and Iraqi leaders). To refuse to take either of two (admittedly bloody) options is not to keep ones hands clean, but to wash them of the innocent blood shed by refusing to decide when that non-decision is in fact a decision to permit continued mayhem.
23. At a moral and practical level the war crimes prosecution with a consequential need to arrest him, and therefore to dismantle his military forces would on the face of it appear less unappealing. Fighting General Aideed and the Northwest to secure Morgan a fiefdom and a chance to regain power hardly seems moral, low cost or a highroad to stability and reconciliation. But at least it - unlike the present failure to choose - would be to act in a coherent way toward a possible (at least in the South and Centre) end result.

Disarmament/Demobilisation

24. Men (the gender specific term is deliberate) kill; the level of weaponry does not cause killing in and of itself. Historically Somalis killed 'efficiently' with steel and smooth-bore muskets (annihilating a British infantry square which even Napoleon did only once at Waterloo and the Zulu Empire did not achieve winning at Isandelwana because a proper square was never) while moving rapidly on camels. But mortars, machine guns and vehicle mounted light artillery move war faster, kill more people (and especially more innocent bystanders) and do far more damage to the physical fabric of the country than camels, rifles, spears and knives can.

25. Disarmament in respect to all weapons (including motorised transport) 'above' manually operated rifles would improve the prospects for peace:

- a. the scale, and breadth of movement, of death and physical destruction would be cut down;
- b. the psychological impact of seeing 'war lords' curbed would be positive;
- c. with only rifles and cold steel for weapons and camels for transport, the power balance between war-lords and elders plus religious leaders would be altered radically in favour of the latter.

(The definition of disarmament is deliberately limited - seeking to collect all rifles, let alone cold steel, is indeed not practicable. Still less could camel collection be a sensible gambit - not least because their milk is the largest component in nomadic groups' diets.)

26. This is not a soft option. Morgan, Joss and Aideed would oppose it because they are the best armed and the Northwest because it wishes to stay out of the South-Central cauldron and assert its own suzerainty (whether through independence or loose confederation is less clear-cut). Lives of enforcers would be lost. But in the absence of limited disarmament, the cover for freelance banditry and score settling and the risk of inherently minor incidents escalating uncontrollably appear rather hard to control, especially outside the Northeast and Northwest.
27. Demobilisation also poses stark choices - the NGO and UN Agency 'guards' problem writ large. There are 40,000 odd armed men linked more or less solidly to 'war-lords' in the South and Centre (and perhaps 10,000 in the two Northern 'Regions'). Even reduced to rifles and steel they are a threat to anyone being able to go about normal daily life and livelihood without literal fear for their lives. As their leaders have no resources to pay them, they must live by 'contributions' or extortions.
28. Demobilisation would cost money - substantial sums of it. To set up as a nomad costs - say - 50 sheep or \$2,000 and as a moderate scale trader at least as much. Job training - in the absence of guaranteed employment at wages not below \$100-150 a month - will not be attractive (pre-war wages even at skilled and professional level were almost all in the \$5-40 a month range). Given the desperate plight of much more innocent and more numerous Somalis \$100,000,000 for these men does look rather unappealing and, at best, of low normative priority.
29. But it is a simple fact that men with guns cannot be demobilised into poverty and insecurity while collecting their weapons. In the absence of acceptable alternatives, the gun is still their livelihood and their change of livelihood winning will be from semi-organised to freelance 'contribution'-collection-extortion-armed robbery. Perhaps the innocent bystander Somali cannot afford that result and buying out the armed combatants is a normative priority not for their own sake but for that of those they will otherwise terrorise, exploit, maim and kill?
30. The debate is a legitimate one - it was intense in Maputo (with the "we cannot afford not to" advocates rapidly winning near consensus even in

respect to ex-Renamo combatants). A major problem in Mogadishu is that there does not seem to be a serious, informed debate (or dialogue or examination of options) at all.

Military, Militancy and Melioration

31. In all fairness the UN - unlike the USA - has understood that disarmament was a precondition for achieving peace in Somalia. It has seen that cease fires with both sides still fully armed with plenty of ill-controlled armed men spoiling for fights (quite often on their own or 'family' account) are excessively fragile and that a backdrop of gunfire and casualties is hardly conducive to peace talks. Further, and quite reasonably, it hardly wants its forces to be in the middle (literally) of constant outbursts of fighting and plagued by a host of probably non-political armed robberies, rapes and killings with no end in sight.
32. Its military spokesmen - all too aware the Somalis (on past UN peace keeping force performance) expect UN forces to be a "soft touch" compared to the departing Americans - have taken a hard line in effect warning that they will enforce disarming and if fired on they will fire back until the threat to their safety is eliminated. To date, unfortunately, most Somalis appear to view that as bluster.

Combined with this weakness (the Somali perception is dangerous and will cost lives whether it is correct or false) is a certain lack of clear strategy and contextual tactics:

- a statement on the extent of and timetable for disarmament;
- a practicable set of modalities for carrying it out;
- an answer to the ex-combatant demobilisation conundrum;
- a workable answer to the challenge posed by Morgan;
- different approaches in relating to the armed forces of different 'local authorities' according to the situation in each region.

33. To date neither the USA nor UNITAF has put troops into the Northwest nor the Northeast. The reason appears to be that the vision of hell which galvanised public opinion and also led to President Bush's farewell gesture was from the Kismayu Bardhere-Belet Wein-Mogadishu quadrilateral and had no parallel in the Hargeisa-Berbera-Bosaso triangle. That is a perfectly valid reason and one which suggests that the use of armed force in the Northwest and Northeast may need to be on quite different lines from that in the Centre-South (just as both Kismayu/Lower Juba and Mogadishu pose special problems).
34. The UN seems to be saying it will send in forces to the Northwest in the same way it has in the South/Centre and if the 'local authorities' (now in the midst of an extended, broad based elders' assembly which may create a relatively stable as well as a relatively peaceful setting) object, they will be ignored and, if they resist, they will be subdued by force. Apart from being needlessly provocative, that seems an odd approach to keeping peace.

35. Nobody would describe the 1991-1993 experience of the Northwest as orderly and peaceful nor its 'local authorities' as effective or fully legitimate civil governance, but to elide them with the three South/Centre regions appears at least as grave a misperception. Further, to suppose they will not fight any unwelcome military intruder - and to some purpose - is wishful thinking and totally ignores the 1988-1990 revolution against the Said Barre Regime which made its overthrow possible.

The 'local authorities' in the Northwest have four basic problems:

- agreeing a coalition including both all groupings with the Issak clan family and the smaller Northern Darod sub-clans and keeping it functioning;
 - suppressing freelance banditry (demobilisation in 1991, next to nil resources and a partial coalition breakdown have opened the door to bands of mobile armed robbers quite outside the political spectrum);
 - securing resources to make the 'local authorities' able to provide a minimum of civil governance (law, order, veterinary services, primary education, health services, water, irrigation rehabilitation);
 - avoiding any commitment to a new unified Somali state and keeping all options open on future Hargeisa-Mogadishu political relationships.
36. That does provide a possible basis for agreement with the UN civil and military commands taken together:
- full scale UN agency entry into the Northeast with a rehabilitation agenda;
 - both financial and technical assistance to the 'local authorities' to empower them to build up basic urban and rural local governance functions;
 - providing military personnel specifically to engage in anti bandit operations in concert with a 'local authority' armed 'special police' unit;
 - putting in military engineering, communications and demining units;
 - demobilising those veterans of the war against the Barre regime not placed in the 'special police' unit including jobs or training or core livestock or irrigated farm restoration assistance as well as arms collection;
 - insistence on Northwestern 'local authorities' participating in Somalia wide dialogues but without setting preconditions on their outcome.
37. The above may not be an easy package to sell in Hargeisa, but it is not inherently unsaleable (at least confederationist tendencies do exist among 'local authority' leaders) and would, if achieved, deepen peace, lead toward rehabilitation, strengthen Somali run, Somali accountable governance at urban and provincial level for about a quarter of the overall territorial population. The alternative of a column blasting

its way to Hargeisa (or an opposed paradrop) would have the opposite results.

38. The Northeast (Bari plus) poses lower key, but not dissimilar, issues. It is relatively peaceful (indeed more so than the Northwest) with 'local authorities' who are broadly accepted as legitimate but have no resources to provide basic governance. In principle they accept UN civil and military presence and a new Republic of Somalia. In practice they are beginning to express doubts on the military presence though not the civil one and associated resource flows. And their verbal backing of Mahdi Mohammed appears to be precisely that - no action is taken and their border with the northwest is both peaceful and open to trade. Apart from the help in suppressing banditry, the package most appealing to the 'local authorities' and to the people of the Northeast would be one analogous to that outlined for the Northwest.
39. Certainly a credible UN military presence to create, keep, where necessary enforce, peace is needed. But what is needed to do that is not uniform throughout Somalia and is hardly likely to be best achieved separately from the civil and support side of the UN and external NGOs.

Political 'Quick Fix' or Process Facilitation?

40. The UN clearly has no desire (nor mandate at present) to recreate a Trust Territory (or territories) of Somalia. It might have rather more Somali support than supposed were it to do so effectively and with a clear set of parameters leading to immediate partial accountability to Somalis through rapid recreation of Somali governance functions and a set path to renewed independence, but whether the main UN funders would accept that burden is doubtful. Problematic, potentially beneficial, probably not fundable would seem to be the verdict.
41. The UN seems to want both to "do its job" and to "get out" relatively soon (1994/1995?). Neither "the job" nor the meaning of "get out" seems to have been defined, let alone articulated, clearly. A strand in both desires seems to be a desperate belief that a national governmental coalition capable of providing accountable and competent governance and can be agreed in 1993, empowered in 1994 and wished luck as a fully independent government in 1995. Is that desperate realism (forcing Somalis to make peace or perish) or a daydream likely to turn into a nightmare trajectory?
42. The likelihood of a national agreement before there are viable, relatively stable, territorially identifiable 'regional authorities' is very low. To achieve such a starting point - probably on a five region basis as suggested earlier - should be the UN's first political goal.
43. The assumption that the South/Centre war-lords are 'legitimate' can only be tested once disarmament makes it practicable for alternative voices (e.g. elders and religious leaders) to be heard and to be influential without the fear that force will terminate both dialogue and 'dissenting' participants. The Northeast and, perhaps, Northwest may be at or near that point - the rest of the country is not.
44. To build local (urban/provincial/specialised unit) governance capacity from the bottom up has both political and technical logic.
- that is the way Somali society and politics work;

- if an interim phase of five regions is desirable, there will for a time be no base for pan-territorial governance at technical level;
 - the actual functions most urgently needed can be carried out 'locally' (down to nomadic 'band' level in respect to health, education, water, veterinary services), at urban level, and regionally (Berbera, Bosaso and Kismayu are 'regional' ports; Mogadishu serves two 'regions');
 - qualified Somali personnel are available in all regions (perhaps least in Northeast and - until there is a less hellish situation - Kismayu/Lower Juba) partly because many have fled home (i.e. sub-clan home) and could be mobilised if there were resources to pay their salaries and to provide the mobility and materials to carry out their functions;
 - the erosion of national civil governance capacity dates to 1979 not 1989 - by 1987 health, education, and to a degree only relatively less water, livestock, urban services were largely empty shells heading for foreseeable collapse by 1990 even if there had been no war. No option of quickly recreating a working national basic economic and social governance capacity exists because there was no such system before the war.
45. If Somali political leaders/'local authorities' are to purge themselves of being marauders and to become service providers, they have to be empowered with resources and technical support (the former perhaps from an autonomous institution collecting a simplified tariff analogous to the pre-1980 "franco valuta" system) and to gain experience in (and legitimacy from) genuine civil governance activity.
46. This approach does not mean that Addis talks (subsequent rounds there or in Geneva, New York or Dar es Salaam) are purposeless. Building up communications, personal contact and dialogue is useful in itself. Further, the three South/Centre regions need to reach, at the least, 'live and let live' agreements with free personal and commercial relations across regions and certain 'joint services' however structured (notably in respect to Mogadishu).
47. It does mean that seeking to create a national government or an 'agreed' set of constitutional guide-lines now will be at best fruitless and probably dangerous. Confidence building by dialogue and small concrete, implemented agreements can have a positive, cumulative impact; continued deadlock on 'final solutions' precisely the reverse.
48. The UN has no very evident mandate to tell the peoples of Somalia they must again try to be one state nor whether such a state is to be unitary, federal or confederal. Nor, despite evident financial and maintenance of support constraints, is it in any position to lay down a timetable if its basic objective is to create a context within which Somalis can agree either on lasting arrangements or (probably more promising) on an initial modus vivendum which will be stable and provide a foundation for building.
49. Those premises suggest a trajectory and rough phase arrival dates (which may slip) of the following nature:

50. ■ 1993

- a. UN led survival programme;
- b. 'disarmament' and an agreed start toward demobilisation and reintegration of combatants;
- c. achieving five 'regional authorities' with relative internal peace not engaging in hostilities with each other;
- d. drafting a 1994-96 rehabilitation programme with substantial Somali input;
- e. broadening the UN presence to all of Somalia in ways acceptable to the 'regional authorities';
- f. 'solving' the 'Morgan problem';
- g. continuing a process of territorial leader consultative talks on "getting to know you" and explorational levels;
- h. initiating capacitation of Somali (or 'joint venture') institutions from 'band' through 'regional' levels.

51. ■ 1994-96

- a. UN led rehabilitation programme;
- b. capacitation of 'regional authorities' and conclusion of functional agreements among them (e.g. trade, customs, port use, quarantine, Mogadishu urban services, 'return home');
- c. completion of demobilisation and reintegration of combatants;
- d. use of Somali personnel in 90% of senior operational posts in international and 'joint venture' programmes;
- e. thinning out UN military presence with emphasis within remaining contingents on 'dual purpose' skills, e.g. engineering, transport, communication;
- f. achieving effective urban and 'regional' police forces including limited sized special 'armed police' to deal with freelance bandits;
- g. institutionalisation of the pan territorial consultative talks into an inter-regional consultative council preferably backed by an inter-regional advisory council of elders, religious leaders and - if acceptable - other civil society (e.g. women's group, business community) personalities still without any stress on agreeing final constitutional arrangements.

52. ■ 1997-1999

- a. phasing Rehabilitation II into a development support programme negotiated with 'regional authorities' and/or the consultative council;

- b. transfer of 'joint venture' (e.g. customs, ports, water, electricity) bodies to full Somali accountability and control;
- c. achievement of a confederal constitution with a limited central authority (however styled) handling foreign affairs (possibly excluding foreign economic affairs including aid or using for them negotiating teams including all five 'regions'), functional cooperation among regions, a currency issuing institution, a university which makes provision for regular (biannual?) review of possible extension of functions;
- d. formal, full international recognition of Somalia (unless this had been achieved for the "Consultative Council" in 1995 or 1996);
- e. reversion of the UN presence to that 'normally' existing in very poor countries in very difficult circumstances.

53. The evident obstacles to agreement on the above are:

- a. funding government reluctance to sustaining a UN presence at or near present cost levels for three to five years and an only moderately reduced one for seven on cost grounds;
- b. a similar concern with being so deeply involved in (and seen as responsible for) a country for that length of time;
- c. impatience (funding governments, UN and agencies, Somali leaders, Somalis) with the apparent slowness of change;
- d. the external (especially UN? or UN and Security Council?) preference for a quick, unitary constitutional settlement as a starting (for Somalia) and ending (for full UN presence) point.

54. The first two obstacles are facts, but it is hard to see how less resources and less involvement for a shorter period can serve the goal of making most Somalis whole again (which may or may not mean making the Republic of Somalia whole again as a unitary state). The third is a fact of life in all rehabilitation and development efforts. It is usually manageable if a succession of concrete events (not paper agreements and declarations) which embody positive changes is achieved and can be credibly presented as constituting a forward dynamic. The last problem is not unique to Somalia (nor to the 1990s) and can only be overcome by creating an awareness that forced unification of unwilling people/territorial units (and especially such unification by external pressure which is then withdrawn) is far from self-evidently a contribution either to stability or to international amity. Politics (and political economy) is an art of the possible. (Plato after all wrote The Republic to present his views on the ideal polity and The Laws to sketch out what he thought an attainable, viable second best.)

The Blind Gods - Ignored At Peril

55. To present the USA or the UN as malevolent figures with deep unprincipled interests in Somalia acting through evil human agents is nonsense. Apart from being libellous (and deeply discouraging to efforts to do better) it obscures the nature of the problems and problematics surrounding their interventions.

56. The USA intervention really was a stochastic event. Public horror at the television pictures of Centre/South Somalia created a public opinion base for humanitarian action. The absence of any domestic military capacity to resist a large scale military intervention provided a potential military support base. Outgoing President Bush, proud of his international affairs record and wishing to reaffirm his concern for suffering people was in the market for a time, role and cost bounded initiative to provide a popular, successful valedictory note to his term of office. And so the Marines came to Mogadishu. Nothing in that record is discreditable even if one may wonder whether it was adequately thought out - especially as to what was to happen later.
57. To argue - as is being done in some quarters - that "It's all about oil" is nonsense. The probability of a commercial oil field off-shore Somalia is low and of a really major one negligible even if tax regimes make it just worthwhile for oil companies to look. Quite a number of countries with massive civil disorder (or war) and with suffering people would rank far ahead of Somalia for intervention on either stability of real or potential US oil supply or protection of USA oil investment grounds, not least the Sudan and Angola.
58. The UN entered (rather late and hesitantly) for a similar combination of reasons. However, in one sense its involvement is unlike the USA's - the whole logic and practice of the UN made some response virtually inevitable:
- a. there has been an abiding commitment to save life and to relieve suffering within the UN family from its earliest days (doubtless varying in degree and form from institution to institution);
 - b. the UN had presided over the creation of Somalia, then an early triumph of peaceful, negotiated supranational decolonisation;
 - c. the UN has always had a vocation for peace keeping and with the running down of tensions along Northwest-Northeast lines perceived itself to have broader opportunities for fulfilling that vocation;
 - d. the relevant regional organisation (the OAU) was both horrified by the Somali descent into murderous, anarchic chaos and quite unable to mobilise the resources to act effectively;
 - e. both the absence of an East African analogue to Nigeria and the frustrating experience of the West African peace keepers/reconciliation promoters in Liberia meant that no sub-regional initiative could be mounted;
 - f. Somalia's neighbours - Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia - were deeply concerned that both refugees and violence would spill across their borders in unmanageable tidal waves;
 - g. general world (as well as US) opinion was in favour of humanitarian action and assisting/forcing Somalis to regain some semblance of civil (in both senses) governance;
 - h. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (as a human being and as an African human being) was genuinely outraged that a war beginning with genocide/ethnic cleaning in 1988 (Morgan in West Galbeed) and

following a trajectory as dire as that of the disintegration of what was once Yugoslavia was receiving very little attention, basically because it was in the South and the countries in danger of spillover were both Southern and weak and he said so publicly and in no uncertain terms;

- i. after which the Security Council had no real option other than to adopt a Somalia intervention/humanitarian relief/peace keeping operation.
59. Again, there is nothing discreditable about this set of reasons. One may query the weakness of the UN's humanitarian response (especially in mid to late 1991 and especially in the Northwest/Northeast) and the helpless paralysis of UNDP when it 'discovered' there was no recognised government to sign programme documents or (as the SG did) the willingness of the permanent members of the Security Council to glance at Somalia, shudder, avert their eyes and pass by on the other side of the road. But those criticisms argue not for inaction in 1992-93 but for more forceful action in 1991.
60. The inherent weakness in both the USA and UN approaches is a lack of a definition of medium term attainable goals, of the measures necessary to achieve those goals, of the resources (whether troops, drugs, civil personnel or finance) required to carry out those measures and of how the process could be systematically, gradually turned over to limited, joint and finally full control by Somalis:
- a. the USA decided in haste to act in haste, briefly, for limited ends and then hand over to the UN (notably without agreeing the last element with the UN before or during the event) which rather precluded and appeared to avoid the need for such an exercise;
 - b. the UN faced its usual problems of coordinating its family of institutions (whose inter-relations an uncharitable outsider might suggest differ from those of Somali clans only in that naked physical force is never used), of working out a long term programme on a hand to mouth emergency exercise budget, of recasting measures and resources needed to fit within deus (or diabolis) ex machina cost ceilings imposed by main funders. In addition, its (perfectly valid) reluctance not just to interfere in the domestic affairs of a Member State but to institute a de facto trusteeship pushed it toward putting down creation of a "recognisable" (in the diplomatic sense) Government of Somalia as an urgent priority without regard to whether this was an attainable or contextually desirable objective.
61. Those causes of initial conceptualisation and design error are not those of evil agencies, forces or men. Looked at from outside, after (even if just after) the event they look remarkably myopic and foolish. The horizons of a crisis manager in an institutional context mean that such a perspective was very much less evident to him at the time decisions had to be made. Moreover, criticising former President Bush, Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali or past UNOSOM heads is not likely to be of much help in overcoming the limitations and correcting the mistakes noted. On the contrary, it will bog participants down in quarrels over who intended, knew, decided what, when and why which divert attention away from saving and enabling Somali lives and Somali civil society over 1993-1996.

62. The greatest single obstacle to attaining an effective international strategy and praxis in Somalia today is lack of historical/contextual grounding. Not for nothing did Greek mythology typify the Gods of History as blind and term them the Furies (a perspective in slightly different terminology equally present in the work of Karl Marx). To ignore history because it is past is usually a quick way to being destroyed by its presence in, and influence on, the present context. Georges Santayana's warning that failure to know and to understand history doomed present actors to repeat it has a basic validity and no sane person wishes to repeat the 1960-69, 1980-87, 1988-90 or 1991-93 history of Somalia (in ascending order of unacceptability).
63. The near total lack of historical/contextual memory in the international organisational armada in Somalia has already been alluded to. So have some of the reasons it appears likely to lead to tragedies - foremost for Somalis and Somalia but also for some expatriates, for the UN system and for international initiatives for conflict resolution and for humanitarian assistance under conditions of massive internal instability, disorder and violence.
64. That defect is remediable. There are persons with contextual knowledge - Somali and expatriate - who could be brought in as full or part time advisers and consultants. The handful used to date seem to have made potentially useful inputs but too few and too fragmentary because they are too few, too specialised in their own knowledge bases and are not generally seen as an integral part of planning and operations.
65. A broader problem is that the UN system shows distinct tendencies to be unable to study and learn from its own history. Three aspects are relevant:
- a. failure to define do-able, medium term objectives and to articulate programmes to move toward them;
 - b. arbitrary underestimates of cost to 'please' potential funders which do not avert even these targets being underpledged and under (as well as late) delivered but do result in acting on a resource base totally inadequate to the (initial and reaffirmed) operational objectives;
 - c. failure to create viable coordinating mechanisms and focal points partly because most coordinators have obvious institutional conflicts of interest with those they are supposed to coordinate, partly because what needs to be coordinated and what left to individual agencies is often confused and partly because the UN has a split personality both deferring to weak governments in ways it should not (waiting for the signature of a non-existent Somalian government being an extreme case) and acting as if it were a supra governmental proconsul or viceroy in others.
66. To recognise these weaknesses is the first step toward guarding against repeating them. And the degree to which they have hampered different UN operations has varied. The 1986-92 (and perhaps especially 1986-89) UN Emergency Programme in Mozambique and the 1992 UN/SADC initiative on Southern African drought/famine are success stories (despite a host of errors and weaknesses which limited their success criticised elsewhere by the present author). Reflecting on why (and from a broader range of successes) might be useful in strengthening the Somalia programme.

67. The greatest danger at present is of 'achieving' a cobbled up 'unity' government (forging one in precisely the wrong sense of the term), rapidly phasing down the UN presence and seeing Somalia revert to mid 1992. That would doom Somalis - the world would blame them and wash its hands, not rush back. It would cripple the UN's capacity to mount or sustain operations of a comparable (at least on the civil side) scope and magnitude in - say - Angola, Liberia, Sudan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Khirgizistan, Burma (Myanmar) should the need and the opportunity arise and put at risk the lower profile but still far reaching Mozambique programme which has a forward dynamic and good prospects for success (from the perspectives of Mozambicans and of UN capacity and prestige building).

Signs Of Hope?

68. The prospects in Somalia - as perhaps suggested by some of the preceding suggestions toward ways forward - are not totally bleak. There are signs of hope embedded in its history.
69. Somalis are historically fiercely loyal to groups broader than either the individual, the immediate family or even the extended family. That suggests a strategic approach building on those loyalties from the bottom up and then seeking working, operational agreements among the largest human loyalty units now achievable has potential.
70. Intra-group historic relations have not been limited to armed conflict. As the water example illustrates, exchange (in various forms) has also been present. Another example relates to passage of herds across some other 'band' or sub-clan or clan pasture. With some exceptions, the norm has been for this to be negotiable and accepted as a necessary fact of nomadic life.
71. Historically Somali wars have not been a l'outrance. The concept of "innocent bystander" - especially in respect to merchants/transporters and religious leaders but also women and children - is not alien to Somalis. Unfortunately it is unknown to recoilless rifles, mortars, and artillery (especially in somewhat inexperienced hands) - cold steel and muzzle loading muskets are more selective.
72. Somalis set great store on commerce. It is not accidental that many trading establishments and vehicles still exist and do business; that there is trade across the "green line" in Mogadishu; that except by accident (or for personal reasons) merchants/transporters have often been 'taxed', fleeced, robbed but relatively rarely killed or totally wiped out. (External NGOs and pacific institutions - even though not Somali - have shared some of this very relative bystander status. Their losses of life have been 'accidental' from being in the wrong place at the wrong moment, literally personal assassinations or from being targeted by Islamic extremists who are by no means in the mainstream of Somali Islamic practice.) Bandits, however, make no such distinctions whether in Mogadishu house ownership battles or in the Northwest - but that is reason to believe that in a slightly less unstable context non-violent adjudication of property disputes and suppression of banditry could and would be enforced by Somalis.
73. The concept of 'neutral' law enforcers, civil tranquillity guardians has deep historic roots. Even under the Barre Regime the uniformed civil police were apolitical, moderately efficient and, by and large,

corrupt only in the sense of wanting Somali Sh 10-50 (USA \$.06-.30) donations from all and sundry because they were paid \$10-15 a month. The revival of the civil police in Mogadishu (feeble as they are in the present cauldron of armed men) is seen as a symbol of returning normality by many Somalis and the tenacious survival of local civil police in the North (both NW and NE) seems to have similar meaning.

74. Except in the context of war Somali political culture has not historically been oriented to all powerful leaders. (This is truest of nomadic groups, least so of coastal trading towns.) There has been pluralism and also division of powers even if not along lines instantly recognisable to those thinking from European/North American/Antipodean models. A group of 'executives' (with its head very much primus inter pares or more but usually constrained formally or in practice by the views of his fellows) interacted with a (de facto legislative) Council of Elders and a legal/court system (Sharia) provided by Islam and its leaders. This has the implications that eliminating the war or near war context would facilitate broader accountability and power distribution and that the UN (or anyone else) would be very foolish to treat current war leaders as legitimate (in Somali terms) holders of all power except in times of battle and, therefore, most unwise to consult and to negotiate with them to the exclusion of elders and Islamic leaders.
75. The preceding are, in total, a not inconsiderable portion of a foundation on which Somalis can be helped to rebuild their lives, civil, society groups and 'local authorities'. Whether they go very far toward creating the necessary reconditions for a unitary state is - now and for several years at least - a very different question.
76. In respect to the UN led effort there are also signs of hope:
- a. the UN has no vested interests in any result beyond relative peace, human survival and visible rehabilitation/reconciliation dynamics in Somalia and neither do the members of the Security Council;
 - b. UN agencies which see long term roles in Somalia (e.g. UNICEF) are happier and far more at home in contexts of civil order, concerned governments with some capacity and working primarily to and through domestic institutions (as, e.g., in Tanzania);
 - c. The UN wishes to be able to reduce the scope of its role (especially its very costly military role) speedily because of limited resources as well as a deep unease at acting as a proconsul or viceroy. The main funders share the first concern and at any rate do not wish to be seen to be proconsuls/viceroy;
 - d. the damage to its capacity and reputation a failure would entail (whether through the present situation continuing or a forged solution followed by a return to 1992) is evident to the UN and the danger of being hanged is said to concentrate the mind on how to avert that conclusion.

Each of these signs of hope (as suggested earlier) is problematic and can lead to missteps. But each can be a building block for substantial improvement on present programmes and conditions of life for Somalis.

77. To be optimistic in 1993 Somalia is indeed an act of will overriding intellectual pessimism. But a reasoned base for conditional optimism and for achieving some of the conditions to validate it can be made out. A commitment to human life and human dignity requires that the effort be made.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'R' enclosed within a circular loop, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

R.H. Green
March 1993
Mogadishu/Nairobi/Falmer