The Disintegration of Somalia: A Historiographical Essay

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Like any other body of historiographical work, the recent historiography of Somalia has been shaped by the material realities that govern its production as well as the intellectual discourses from which it emerged and against which it reacts. That this historiography has been deeply influenced by the protracted civil war that has gnawed at the country's entrails since at least 1978 is obvious — more obvious, perhaps, than the obverse, its influence upon the conflict. Be that as it may, historians, social scientists, and other intellectuals — Somali and non-Somali — have taken on the task of trying to explain what happened and why.

This essay will discuss a part of this intellectual production of the last five to six years and analyze and evaluate some of its conclusions. It does not claim to be exhaustive. To begin with, it excludes from its scope a number of important and fully relevant subfields of Somali Studies that must await the efforts of other scholars. Such fields include the emerging studies of Somali refugees and the diaspora, Somali literature and literary analysis, folklore and those anthropological and historical studies that do not explicitly relate themselves to the civil war, first-hand accounts of individuals who participated in and were eyewitnesses to the war, pulp fiction that has adopted Somalia as its evil backdrop, the very mixed bag of books on Somalia for adolescents (middle and high school students), and those studies on the UN/U.S. intervention in Somalia that focus primarily on the role of the UN in post-Cold War peacekeeping. These separate and interrelated new literatures deserve to be analyzed, as well. However, this essay will be limited to those recent (mostly post-1994 and mostly book-

length) studies of Somalia that examine and draw conclusions about the civil war and state collapse.[1]

The studies selected in this, perforce imperfect, way will be discussed in three categories. The first category consists of general, chronologically-organized historical syntheses that explain state collapse in the light of a gradual undermining of the social and political relations, economy, ecology, and cultural values of Somalia since the inception of colonial rule. These syntheses are largely based on secondary sources, but they nevertheless make important contributions to the field, either because they represent new ways of conceptualizing the past or because they integrate themes and data that had not been part of older syntheses. The second category consists of what can be called a new school of history on southern Somalia, especially the riverine and interriverine areas that have been at the heart of a brutal struggle for resources between the state and local farmers since 1975. This historiography presents new ways of conceptualizing Somali society and unveils roots of conflict that had only been touched upon before. The third category is less cohesive and deals with those studies whose major focus is on state collapse itself. These, too, reflect on the causes of the war but, in addition, almost unvaryingly, also recount the processes that constituted and followed state collapse (including the UN/U.S. intervention) and propose in more detail — implicitly or explicitly—solutions.

II. Category One: The Historical Syntheses

One serious historical synthesis is Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe's *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy*, published in 1996.[2] After a brief introduction about pre-colonial Somali society, the author, in 148 pages, surveys Somali history from colonial occupation, through the era of the nationalist struggle for independence and the civilian and military governments, to the Somali-Ethiopian war, the emergence of armed opposition movements, and state collapse. Mostly based on secondary sources, the book uses Somali poetry as local commentaries on the events and processes described.

The study distinguishes itself from older ones in three ways. First, the author's treatment of anti-colonial resistance does not limit itself to an account of the Dervish movement of Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hasan but also includes the early, anti-Italian resistance of the Biyamaal and Wa'daan of the south, and the later resistance of the two

small sultanates of the northeast. Second, the author gives a particularly nuanced and detailed analysis of the aftermath of the Somali-Ethiopian war of 1977 – 78 and the emergence of the first armed opposition movement against the Barre regime, that of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). He presents the so-called "Majeerteen" coup of 1978 as a coup that was, in reality, prepared from within the military by army officers of diverse clan backgrounds.[3] It was Barre, he argues, who, through the exemplary punishment of only some leaders, created the myth of the "Majeerteen" coup in order to isolate the group that was the first to taste the brutal collective punishment of civilians that was to become Barre's stock-in-trade. Whatever the truth in this particular case may be, the process of demystifying the Barre regime's manipulations of history is still in its infancy.

Third, the author's resistance against automatically reading clan and clan-based motivations and behavior back into the past speaks to his historical sensitivity. His awareness of how Barre created clan hatred, for example, shows in his commentary on how the dictator singled out the so-called MOD (Marehan, Ogaden, and Dulbahante) clans for favorite clan treatment. The author reminds the reader that those MOD intellectuals and others who resisted this favoritism toward their groups were imprisoned. Those who did not step in line with Barre's clanist policies paid a high price.[4]

To what does Issa-Salwe, in the end, ascribe the disintegration of the Somali state and society? First of all, he holds the colonial powers responsible for the disintegration of Somali political institutions and culture, through the appointment of paid chiefs, the institutionalization of collective punishment, and the politicization of lineages in the new context of the colonial state.[5] Moreover, the imposition of nonviable and unjust boundaries was a time bomb for future wars and violence. Second, the author holds the civilian governments responsible for turning the clan into "a political instrument used by greedy and ambitious leaders."[6] Third, he blames the Barre government for sowing the clan hatred whose fruits are now being harvested by (1) singling out one group after another for near-genocidal destruction, and (2) presenting brutal action by the state and servants of the state as the work of particular clans against other clans.

The solution that Issa-Salwe proposes on the basis of this long-term analysis is "clan-balancing:"

> In the traditional Somali view, the overriding objection to the Barre regime was that it was based on clan domination. And until state institutions establish root in Somali society, it will be essential that clan equilibrium be maintained and political forces carefully balanced to share power.[7]

How this is to be done in the absence of any dependable census ever, and how such balancing will differ from the clan-balancing that has been policy in the Somalilands since colonial times, the author does not discuss.

While Issa-Salwe, with the exception of a casual reference to Durkheim on anomy and Fromm on violence,[8] does not bring major, outside theoretical concepts to bear on the Somali situation, the second historical synthesis to be discussed here, Alice Bettis Hashim's *The Fallen State: Dissonance, Dictatorship and Death in Somalia*, does.[9] Hashim attempts to understand Somalia in terms of a number of theoretical debates about the African state in general. On the question of whether the African state is strong or weak, Hashim follows R. Fatton who argues that an African state like that of Barre was strong because it was predatory. The "strength" of Barre's state lay first, she posits, in its control of the formation of the state elite; second, it lay in the success with which it defeated the unity of the subordinate class through "disarticulating" it, i.e., through dividing it so thoroughly by clan that a focus on a common class project would be impossible.[10] Instead of forming a new state bureaucracy, Barre turned to a consolidation of his own, personal, absolute rule, causing a double failure of the Somali state.

First, she argues, "the absence of a hegemonic bourgeoisie, capable of addressing issues on a national level and of cutting across clan lines, created a vacuum into which an authoritarian ruler stepped."[11] According to Hashim, such bourgeois class formation, which included both the state elite and the leadership of the opposition parties and fronts, was preempted twice in Somalia's recent history: once in 1960–1969 and once in 1969 – 1978. The failure of this class therefore preceded the failure of the state. The second failure, Hashim contends, was the failure of the common people to defend their common interest. The common people have been unaware that clanism has been an instrument preventing them from articulating a common class project. As a result, they "still view their condition as they have always viewed

it — the result of scarcity which must be overcome at the expense of competing clans."[12]

Hashim also brings the wider scholarly debate about ethnicity to bear on the Somali case. In contrast to Joel Migdal, who believes that remnants of traditional leadership undermined the state, she follows Jean-François Bayart, who sees ethnicity as a tool and channel for competition over wealth, power, and status. In the Somali case, Hashim contends, such ethnic mobilization was first practiced by the post-independence political elite and then brutally refined by the Barre regime.[13] Hashim agrees with Bayart that, in spite of the fact that local, factional, and ethnic struggles have dominated the post-independence era, "class formation is the key to the brutality of post-colonial military dictatorships."[14]

These are bold ways of attempting to conceptualize state collapse in Somalia in a wider African context. They hold the promise, not quite delivered in this book, of constituting a much-needed antidote against old school and colonial insistence that Somalis are so unique that systematic comparison can be of no benefit. The rest of Hashim's book, however, does not quite live up to its beginnings, and the concepts articulated in the introduction are not further developed and are, at times, even undermined by specific interpretations.[15]

To what does Hashim attribute the disintegration of the Somali state? Like other authors in this category, Hashim takes the long view and lists as causes the legacy of colonial rule; the inability to constitute a strong middle class to carry the state; group particularism and clanism; war; natural disaster; the transformation of the pastoral economy; Somalia's peripheralization in the world economy; dependence on foreign aid; and dictatorship.[16] Given her conclusion that collapse resulted from this long "cumulative shattering process,"[17] what solution does she propose? Her conclusion is comparable to that of Issa-Salwe. Although she views clanism as, at least in part, caused by the clan-balancing strategies of the first civilian regimes and Barre's clanist divide-and-rule,[18] and although she regrets Somalis' lack of awareness of "the process of class disarticulation to which they have been subjected,"[19] she sees no remedy except in the separation of the clans.

Her vision for the future is "a new formula of government which allows major clan families self-rule." She feels that "[a] federal system which allows Somali clan families a great measure of local self-government and enables them to present a united front to the world is commensurate with Somalia's societal base."[20] This is problematic. Not

only does it raise the question of the economic viability of such clan-family homelands, but, even on the political level, three problems present themselves. First, to the extent that the fighting of the most recent stage of the civil war had as its goal and accomplished the "cleansing" of members of the "wrong" clans from areas to be controlled by other, currently dominant clans, does such a proposal not just mean rewarding the warlords and giving up on those who lost out? Second, the political cohesiveness of clan-families or clans cannot be taken for granted and is, in reality, just as problematic as the category of "Somalis" as a whole. The brutal infighting of the sub-clan-based factions of Aideed and Mahdi that followed the expulsion of Barre from Mogadishu is just one compelling illustration. Third, if it would be important that such clan-family states as Hashim and others propose would protect the group (and individual) rights of sub-clans, minority clans, and those groups (such as the so-called lower castes) who do NOT fit into any clan family's genealogy, then would such protective arrangements in each homeland not also be appropriate for the sum of all homelands, i.e., Somalia?

Equally ambitious in scope and objectives is Jasmin Touati's *Politik und Gesellschaft in Somalia (1890* – 1991).[21] If Hashim brought to her analysis a background in political science, Touati comes to her topic from sociology with previous research on the settlement of Somali nomads. Touati's historical survey, also largely based on secondary sources, begins with two chapters on pre-colonial Somalia: the first, a strangely old-fashioned and uncritical restatement of the classical model of segmentary lineage politics; and the second, a dynamic analysis of the pastoral economy. Of the remaining three chapters (colonialism and resistance, nationalism and socialism, and the disintegration of the sociopolitical system), the latter is most innovative, as it includes an excellent analysis of how the Barre government underdeveloped the pastoral economy.

Touati takes the Barre regime to task for its disdain for what it saw as backward pastoral producers, its obsession with settling them, its neglect of the range, and its failure to regulate the increasing monopolization of grazing, water, and transport by a class of new rich. The parallel processes of elite enrichment and land grabbing in the riverine areas of the south escape Touati's northern focus.[22] Touati presents as a major cause of state collapse the emergence of a "political aristocracy," which enriched itself at the expense of rural producers and used ethnic clientism (clanism) to reach its particularistic goals. But mostly she

holds the Barre regime's increasingly corrupt and brutal policies responsible. After it lost the Somali-Ethiopian war, she argues, the regime turned against those who had led the war, meted out brutal collective punishment against the civilians of some of those leaders' clans, and thus caused the first armed opposition movement to emerge. The Barre regime fattened itself on fraudulently acquired refugee aid, armed itself to the teeth with the help of Western military aid, and deepened its oppression.

The author contends that "politicized ethnicity such as clanism and patrimonialism are not reinvigorated relics of a distant past but are causally related to the socioeconomic modernization processes in Somalia."[23] However, while she insists that the processes she analyzes changed the ways in which clans work and function, clan belonging, she argues, did not become less significant. On the contrary, "[t]he collapse of law and order, the regime's and militias' terror as well as the fragmentation of the political opposition strengthened people's [tendency to] search for shelter with their own clans."[24] Therefore, there can be no political solution that fails to take into account "the political importance of clans and their subgroups." Consequently, "[t]he new state which is to be created must orient itself on the social realities of the country, i.e., both the segmentary structure and individual clan interests must be taken into account. It will be of special importance… to grant protection to smaller clans.… "[25] One must conclude, therefore, that even a scholar whose analysis of the causes of the civil war includes increasing class inequalities, state-imposed modernization schemes, and changes in the gender regime, looks for a solution to the Somali conundrum primarily in accommodating Somalia's warring clans.

III. The New School of Southern History

The second category of books consists of studies that focus on southern Somalia and that locate some of the major causes of social disintegration and state collapse in the historical, especially economic, processes that have affected the south. One such study is Paolo Tripodi's *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia: Rome and Mogadishu: From Colonial Administration to Operation Restore Hope*.[26] Tripodi's study focuses on Italy's relationship with, and impact upon, Somalia from the beginning of the Trusteeship Administration (1950 – 1960), through the Barre period

(1969–1991), up to the era of state collapse and the U.S./UN intervention.

Tripodi's first subject area is Italy's performance during its trusteeship over Somalia. Throughout this part of the book, Tripodi repeatedly takes Italy to task for looking down upon, and failing to accommodate, Somali clan allegiances and competition.[27] This failure had serious consequences. Tripodi argues:

> In these first steps of Somali political life, while Italian influence remained strong, the roots of the collapse of the democratic state can be identified.... Instead of establishing a political system that could allow the coexistence of clans, even the government was committed to eradicate it.[28]

Accusing the Italian colonial government, or *any* colonial government, of not being clan-conscious enough is unexpected, to say the least, and Tripodi more often reasserts his conviction than corroborates it. On the contrary, Tripodi shows that Italy, for more than half a decade, remained hostile to the Somali Youth League (SYL), which ran on a nationalist, explicitly anti-clanist platform. Moreover, the electoral law of 1955 organized elections in the rural areas not by individual male suffrage as in the municipal areas (a small minority of voters), but by clan acclamation, through clan gatherings.[29] Rural Somalis were to appoint a representative, who then pledged the votes of all his clansmen to a specific party. Tripodi himself concludes that, "[a]s a consequence of this decision, the clan system was reinforced. In fact,... the clan's male populations were forced to find a representative party of [sic] the clan and the coincidence between clan and party became intense."[30] The author even suggests that it was the Italian administration's aim "to fragment the political scene, and to gain greater control over members of clans and sub-clans that were close to the administration...[and] to halt the SYL's successes in Somalia."[31] As it happened, this scheme did not work and, even in these circumstances, the SYL won a majority of seats. However, this kind of policy hardly constitutes an Italian neglect of clan politics and allegiances.

So when did the Trusteeship Administration fail the traditional clan structure of Somalia? Tripodi locates this failure in the administration's gradual acceptance of the SYL as the governing party. He writes:

> The main aim of the Italian administration was to identify the strongest political formation and establish with it links that would remain strong even after the end of the mandate. As a result, the AFIS [Trusteeship Administration] gave up supporting the southern regional political parties in favour of a rapprochement with the SYL. With this attitude, which failed to respect Somali traditional structure, Italy promoted the adoption of a form of state inappropriate to the Somali people[32]. . . . Ten years, or even a hundred years, are not enough to change the main features of a population, especially in countries like Somalia where these institutions are steeped in centuries of tradition.[33]

The author's implicit prescription for a new Somalia, therefore, is to build on these century-old traditions of clan-balancing.

More convincing to this reviewer's mind is Tripodi's analysis of his second major theme, the economic policies of the Italian administration. The author takes Italy to task for having had neither the resources nor the know-how or foresight to prepare Somalia economically for independence. By the end of the decade, he argues, "the Italian community, now reduced to about 2,000 people, was in control of 70 percent of Somalia's economy."[34] This included three-fourths of Somalia's agricultural production, almost the entire industrial output, and 50 percent of trade. This Italian community was favored and protected by the administration.

A third subject matter of Tripodi's study is Italy's role in supporting the Barre government. Having been somewhat marginal to Somalia in 1961–1975, Italy opened the sluice gates of aid following its establishment of, first, the Department of Cooperation and Development (1979), and then the Fondo Aiuto Italiani (1985). The author's description of the Italian bid for Great Power status and the fantastic corruption schemes that enriched Italian and Somali politicians alike are worth reading. According to Tripodi, Italian foreign policy "did not have long-term objectives" or "a detailed strategy;"[35] it did not even use the huge amounts of aid money to pressure Barre into reform. Until the dictator's last days, the Italian ambassador in Mogadishu continued to try to save the regime and reconcile it with the opposition, and it was not until January 12, 1990, fifteen days before Barre himself was driven out, and in the middle of violent street fighting, that the ambassador was airlifted out of the city. Although Tripodi does not go as far as Pietro Ugolini, who holds Italian policies fully responsible for the Somali civil war, his criticism is withering.[36]

Much more positive is Tripodi about Italy's performance in the UN/U.S. intervention of 1992, this book's fourth major theme. Although Italy saw its role in peacekeeping as "a new tool of foreign policy," and "an instrument to strengthen its international position,"[37] he commends the Italian troop commander for resisting the U.S. policy shift from peacekeeping to peace enforcing. The latter, he argues, involved "indiscriminate and disproportionate" use of force, including shooting at unarmed civilians."[38]

Written from a more explicitly and polemically southern point of view is *The Invention of Somalia*,[39] a collection of essays that takes issue with how existing scholarship has conceptualized or "invented" Somali history and society. The authors are particularly incensed about earlier presentations of Somalia as homogeneous and about the fact that northern, pastoralist images, metaphors, and other cultural forms have for a long time dominated any representation of Somalia. There is truth in these statements.[40] A particularly powerful example of the neglect of Somali diversity is the introduction of the official Somali orthography of 1974 (and the literacy campaign that followed), which failed to accommodate the sounds of the southern Maay dialect. This historiographical initiative, moreover—all the more powerful because the power relations on the ground are still being worked out—clamors for new attention and equitable treatment of the farmers and agro-pastoralists of the riverine areas. That this population includes groups that have borne the burden and stigma of past enslavement makes this appeal even more compelling.

Given the gravity of the subject matter, one may fairly ask how well the authors of the collection acquit themselves of the task they set. In this context, one must note that many essays of this collection betray their origins as conference papers. They are bold in tone and strong in spirit, but they are often more successful in articulating their discontent with the *status quo* than in supplying new scholarly data and interpretations to the newly proposed paradigm. Among the best chapters in the book, then, are small but significant contributions to a new scholarship on the south: Catherine Besteman on the Gosha,[41] Francesca Declich on dance societies in the Jubba Valley,[42] and Mohamed Kassim on the nineteenth-century Islamic scholars (male and female!) of Brava.[43] In the same vein, M.H. Mukhtar's proposal to rethink Somalia's Islamic history from the vantage point of the south is most valuable when he describes aspects of southern Islamic devotion and history that have until now been largely unknown.[44]

As part of a vindication of the south, Abdi Kusow surveys the secondary literature about the origins and history of the Somali language. However, his core argument, that would move up the formation of the Maay dialect one century in time (and thus make it ancestral to all other forms of Somali spoken today), is not linguistically supported.[45] It is, moreover, contradicted by Christopher Ehret's chapter summarizing historical linguistics' most current conclusions, with no comment from the collection's editor.[46]

Christine Choi Ahmed takes on other misconceptualizations of Somali society, i.e., the representation of women in scholarship on Somalia.[47] Unfortunately, rather than trying to assess the field as a whole or developing the theoretical principles of which she disapproves systematically, she attacks certain scholars for representing Somali women as weak, socially unequal, or victims of men. In this, she does not distinguish between analyses of social institutions and structure (which are still forcing women to navigate a different and in some aspects unequal social terrain) and judgments of Somali women as actors with powerful and purposeful agency. That Somali women were and are powerful agents in their own lives and society Choi Ahmed indeed shows, but she does so mostly through anecdotal evidence and by quoting the very authors she dismissed before. Nevertheless, even if this chapter does not make a substantial contribution to the agenda it proposes, this agenda, which calls for more and more women-centered research, certainly stands.

Implicit in *The Invention of Somalia* is the diagnosis that faulty and biased scholarship has contributed to the disintegration of Somalia. To sum up the argument, this old scholarship insisted on Somali homogeneity at the expense of the interriverine south, glorified cultural representations of the nomadic north,[48] neglected or had disdain for the history and culture of the south, accepted androcentric images of women, and was "unrealistic" about clan.[49] Ali Jimale Ahmed, the editor, does not elaborate on what a realistic approach to clan would be. However, Abdalla Omar Mansur reminds us of how historically suspect the genealogies that have played such a crucial role in Somali political and social action really are.[50] To illustrate this, he makes two points. First, he points at the contradictions in the ways the genealogies of the clan families attach themselves to the family of the Prophet. Second, he argues that the similarity of these clan families' founding myths, both with each other and with indigenous religious counterparts (all pointing to trees as the site of God's communication with

humans), make them symbolical statements rather than assertions of a literal historical truth.

The most substantial new body of work in this tradition of new southern history is undoubtedly the excellent collection entitled *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: The War Behind the War*.[51] The essays gathered here (not all of which are discussed in this article) are based on extensive fieldwork in the riverine areas of the south in the middle and late 1980s. Much of this research was commissioned by various international development agencies—thus forming part of the foreign aid avalanche of which it is so critical—and therefore focuses on resource use and control, and on socioeconomic relations among farmers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, traders, and the state.

The story of the Lower Jubba Valley, with its ethnically diverse and distinct population, is best told by Kenneth Menkhaus, this generation's pioneer of in-depth fieldwork in this region.[52] Menkhaus first outlines the history of the valley: how runaway and freed slaves first settled along the river in 1830 – 1870; how they were politically autonomous but in competition with surrounding nomads in 1870 – 1895; how Italian colonists alienated parts of their land and forced whole villages into compulsory labor on banana plantations; and how even the British military administration (of 1942) conscripted their labor to grow food. During the Trusteeship Administration, Menkhaus argues, close UN supervision made sure that the valley inhabitants were left in peace and even received some agricultural extension services. The years of civilian independent rule, 1960–1969, were years of benign neglect, he posits, but this changed dramatically in the 1970s. Then the Barre regime carved out large areas of land for state farms,[53] slapped new land registration laws on the people,[54] and let loose on the valley hordes of land-grabbing and speculating civil servants and other cronies of the Barre regime (who had gotten their hands on refugee aid and other foreign economic development funds).

Menkhaus points out that development wisdom of the day approved of these undertakings, referring to them positively as "market response" rather than "rent-seeking" and non-productive land-banking by speculators who hoped prices would rise when the Baardheere dam was built.[55] As a result, valley farmers were forced to fight three simultaneous battles. As a minority group, they were looked down upon and rendered powerless by "a 'self-styled' homogeneous society;" as smallholders, they were squeezed by "commercial and parastatal agriculture," and as peasants, they were obliterated by a

"rent-seeking state."[56] Menkhaus concludes that it is therefore not accidental that this vulnerable and marginalized farming population was trampled underfoot by militias moving back and forth through their lands during the civil war. This violence was an integral part, the author argues, of the schemes by which warlords positioned themselves for control of the most valuable agricultural resources.

The implications of this and similar research for an understanding of the civil war and a search for solutions are powerfully formulated in Besteman and Cassanelli's *The Struggle for Land*, especially in the "Introduction" and in Cassanelli's "Explaining the Somali Crisis."[57] The editors explicitly take issue with the bulk of explanations of the civil war and criticize the ways in which existing scholarship "has tended to focus on personalities and clan politics at the national level and has given precedence to analyses of kin-based elite competition for administrative, economic, and military resources that flowed to and through the state."[58] Instead, the authors of this collection, they argue, focus on:

> how local struggles for resources became increasingly intertwined with national and international ones. Moreover, since most of Somalia's best farm land has historically been held by 'minority' groups, these struggles reveal elements of ethnic and class conflict that go well beyond the standard of clan-based analyses.[59]

Cassanelli spells out what this means for clan analyses of the crisis. Barre was able to stay in power, he argues, because he controlled all resources, including those flowing in as economic development and military aid, and used them to buy loyalty. Cassanelli asserts, "That he did this along lines of kinship and clientism gave precedence to clan analyses of Somalia's plight, but in fact it was his control of resources that underpinned the system."[60] Focusing on how power-hungry warlords mobilized support along kin lines is not unimportant, but it can mean confusing "the form the conflict took with its substance and objectives."[61]

The victimization of the population of the Lower Jubba Valley and their distinct "ethnic" or "racial" status are brought center stage in Catherine Besteman's *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery*.[62] This book is based on the author's earlier Ph.D. dissertation, entitled *Land Tenure, Social Power and the Legacy of Slavery in Southern Somalia* (1991), but differs significantly from it. In response to the

brutalization of the villagers she studied during the civil war, Besteman has adjusted her focus and conclusions. Land tenure and registration, which contributed to the economic underdevelopment of local agriculture by the Barre regime, are moved to the background, while race-based violence unique to the area is foregrounded as critical to an understanding of Somali society and the causes of the civil war. Racial discrimination against these farmers, who speak Somali, are Muslim, and are mostly affiliated with a particular Somali clan, has affected their view of themselves, targeted them for abuse from surrounding nomadic groups, and marginalized them from elite status and state favoritism, the author argues.

This, she contends, proves two points. First, it proves that "Somali society was stratified by constructions other than clan," and second, that race was a critical cause of the civil war.[63] Although Besteman's careful articulation of her conclusions moderate the impact of the sensationalist and somewhat misleading title, there is intellectual slippage in this argument, in particular if it is seen in the long-term history of the local population. This becomes visible when one raises two questions. First, according to the new scholarship on the south, who is and has been responsible for the racial "othering" and additional forms of violence against the Jubba Valley farmers? Second, how large is the group that is racially *othered* and has been targeted for violence?

One of the enemies targeted by the new scholarship is the generic nomad. Although the authors are mostly careful to single out for criticism the nomads glorified in national cultural production and state-sponsored cultural policies, attacks on real nomads — people who suffered from the same processes of agricultural underdevelopment as the farmers — slip into the narrative. Thus, the nomad is criticized for racial and cultural arrogance, expansionist tendencies, the tendency to use force, and the disdain for manual labor.[64] Those who admire the nomad's poetry and his anti-colonial resistance are labeled as "Dervish-obsessed" and their honoring of this legacy is an insult to Hawiya and Rahanweyn (Reewin) memory.[65] Although there is some truth in these (as in all) stereotypes, blaming nomads for how cultural and political authorities have presented them, for complex and universal patterns of competition for natural resources, or for rapacious state policies, is a slippery slope. One reaches its bottom when the economic underdevelopment of southern agriculture by the national state elite and international development organizations, as well as the subsequent ravishing of land and people by warlords with clan-based mili-

tias, is blamed on northern "nomad groups," groups that are called by name, are both sedentary and nomadic, and probably make up almost half of the Somali population, north and south.[66]

This kind of reductive conclusion does not do justice to the otherwise sophisticated and innovative scholarship on which it is based. On the contrary, it alerts us to the fact that some of the polarizations presented in this body of work—between farmers and pastoralists, sedentary and nomadic people, north and south, racial supremacists and former slaves—are simplistic and therefore misleading. First, not all southern agriculturalists are "racially" distinct; in fact, the percentage of them that actually is "racially" distinct is not even known. Second, the distinction between so-called "noble" and "slave" (or "commoner") groups does not coincide with the north-south divide. As Helander reports in his "The Hubeer in the Land of Plenty," this division exists within southern groups as well![67] Third, although these authors do not seem to be aware of this, during the Zanzibari slave trade of the nineteenth and early twentieth century—an aspect of the global capitalist plantation system that also produced the Atlantic slave trade and certainly was not initiated by Somalis—"mainstream" Somalis indeed were among the slave traders; however, occasionally "mainstream" Somali individuals might also be enslaved.[68]

Fourth, the essays in *The Struggle for Land* show that in the Upper Jubba Valley the commoditization of farm products strengthened farmers over nomads at the same time that in the Lower Jubba Valley the fortunes of farmers fell.[69] In the Lower Shabeelle Valley, in the 1980s, moreover, farmers and pastoralists had complex, ingenious, and, at that time, peaceful techniques for resource sharing.[70] This suggests that it is not the juxtaposition of farmers and pastoralists itself that leads to violence but the context in which that interaction takes place. Fifth, Besteman and Cassanelli report that, until the 1970s, the farmers of the Jubba Valley maintained "a modestly satisfying if not privileged standard of living" and were "remarkably self-sustaining and resilient."[71] Moreover, from 1870 until the establishment of colonial rule, these settlements of former slaves established political autonomy, developed rules for access to land, defined structures of authority, produced an agricultural surplus for export, and obtained arms to defend themselves[72]—all this on what constitutes the best agricultural land of Somalia.

The conclusion that must be drawn is that, although racial discrimination is a grave form of violence, it was not "race," not even primarily

"race," that destroyed the Jubba Valley farmers. The Jubba Valley farmers failed to hold their own only when race intersected with a number of other factors: class, the predatory intervention of the government and the government elite, the misguided policies and unlimited cash flows of international development organizations, and the particular configuration of resources in the Jubba Valley. Besteman, of course, makes this clear in the course of her book, but holding "race, violence and the legacy of slavery" responsible for the "unraveling [of] Somalia," as her title suggests, is sensationalist and misleading.

IV. Figuring the Future of the Collapsed State

The third and final category of studies to be analyzed is much less cohesive, but it nevertheless has a more defined focus on the moment of state collapse in January 1991, the processes that caused, accompanied, and followed it, as well as potential solutions. The studies included in this category differ greatly in approach, focus, range, and length. Thus, *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal?* approaches the collapse from the *longue durée* of ecology, economy, politics, social relations, and cultural change.[73] On the other hand, Anna Simons' deeply flawed *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone* is anecdotal and fragmentary, basing (mostly derogatory) psychological and sociological generalizations on what are no more than casual conversations and uncontextualized snapshots of life in Mogadishu just before the collapse.[74] Different again is *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, which focuses almost exclusively on the future. With its forty-one contributions, it provides a platform for many voices, most of them Somali, and ranging from past (and still aspiring) Somali government officials to community organizers and social workers in the diaspora.[75] The relatively small category of Somalia-centered studies of state collapse and its aftermath merges and overlaps with the much larger literature about what lessons Somalia can teach with regard to UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement in the new post-Cold War world order. The latter are not included in this essay, which will instead touch on those studies that constitute a bridge between the former and the latter.[76]

Three themes are important in the studies of this third category: the causes of the civil war, the U.S./UN intervention, and the proposals for how to reconstruct Somalia.

A. The Causes of the Civil War

The causes analyzed here fall into three somewhat overlapping categories: cultural, political, and economic. Compared to the chronologically-organized syntheses of the first category, these studies mostly treat causes in an abbreviated form. However, for all their brevity, these causal analyses are very telling. Several studies hold ingrained nomadic culture (clanism) primarily or partly responsible for the civil war. For Lewis, pre-colonial Somalis "lived in a state of chronic political schizophrenia, verging on anarchy,"[77] with violence so woven into the warp and woof of their societal fabric that "characteristically, they have usually impinged on the world outside in context of confrontation and conflict."[78] Simons attributes the desperate sponging on other people, the dishonest pilfering, and the undignified scramble for survival amongst Mogadishu's white-collar and other poor in the 1980s, to the unprincipled opportunism she deems characteristic of traditional nomadic life.[79] Adam and Ford support this line of reasoning and blame state collapse, to a large extent, on "centuries old . . . profoundly Somali individualism and resilience, rooted in a clan structure that…makes it difficult to create and sustain a centralized state."[80]

For these authors, the Somali plight does not invite comparison with the other failing states or the desperately poor masses of other parts of the peripheralized Fourth World. The collapse occurred partly, such reasoning suggests, because "the Somalis have for centuries lived outside, or on the margin of world history,"[81] for "the Somalis…are not like other men."[82]

Political causes also figure in the studies of this category. Among them, colonialism takes an important place because of its undermining traditional social relations and morality,[83] the nonviable boundaries it bequeathed to the Somalis, the irredentism it caused (which in itself led to conflict and war),[84] and the north/south differences that plagued the Somali Republic after independence.[85] Finally, the shortsightedness and dishonesty of post-independence politicians, who manipulated (or allowed themselves to be manipulated by) clanism at the expense of the common good, and the clanist divide-and-rule policies of the Barre regime constitute a third set of political causes.

It is the analysis of this last set of political causes that is problematic, even more for what it fails to address than for what it does present. Detailed and well-documented analyses of either the greedy civilian governments or Barre's violent campaigns to set clans up against each

other are absent from the historiography. As for the crimes of the Barre regime, almost ten years after Said S. Samatar wrote *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, which provides a good outline of Barre's collective clan punishments of civilians, hardly anything has been written to further document the years of incitement to clan hatred.[86] Nevertheless, that Barre made his security forces commit acts of violence against members of a certain clan (or clan family) falsely using the name of another clan (or clan family) is a topic of many conversations. However, written analyses of Barre's tactics are still schematic, perhaps because no clan group dares to denounce the perpetrators among its own ranks. Barre's instigation of what may be called "Somali-on-Somali" violence — note the parallel with the so-called "black-on-black" violence actively caused by the security forces of the now-defunct apartheid government of South Africa — must be documented across or, better, irrespective of clan lines.

A similar problem affects analyses of the moment of state collapse itself. Even the studies of this category, with their more distinct focus on the civil war itself, do not problematize or carefully locate in time the transition from general opposition against a tyrannical ruler to multiple campaigns of clan genocide, first against the clan family of that tyrant and then between, within, and across clan lines. Instead, the authors read clan hatred and clanist motivations effortlessly back into the past, whether this is the pre-colonial past, the trusteeship period, the era of civilian governments, or the Barre regime. This also affects the treatment of the events and processes that accompanied or, better, constituted state collapse. For example, the United Somali Congress's massacres of groups of people who, in part, had borne the brunt of Barre's oppression must be analyzed as a rupture — which is how its victims experienced it — or otherwise explained. They should not be buried in general references to anarchic violence that hold no one responsible. Violence is mostly not arbitrary, as Besteman has pointed out.[87] Pretending that it is does not further our understanding of what happened and why, and allows those with blood on their hands to sit down at the table of governance once again.

In this third category, economic causes, at the heart of the new southern historiography, receive much less attention than political ones. Abdi Samatar's "Empty Bowl: Agrarian Political Economy in Transition and the Crises of Accumulation,"[88] is the only study that deals comprehensively, though briefly, with the economic causes of the failure of the Somali state. His diagnosis includes the underaccu-

mulation of capital (a problem that distinguishes the Fourth World from the rest of the globe) as well as the predatory state that was kept in power as a result of international military and economic development aid. Samatar summarizes the developments that undermined the farm, livestock, and plantation sectors of the economy of northern and southern Somalia. With the end of the Cold War, he posits, assistance petered out and the economic base of the state collapsed. However, the withering of the Somali economy had its causes in political failure. Samatar argues:

> Unlike Botswana's hegemonic class, the Somali petty bourgeoisie was not united. Nor did it have disciplined leaderships who recognized the importance of bureaucratization in conjunction with systemic accumulation and the protection of the collective project.[89]

The disunity of the governing elite and the weakness and passivity of the rural population created such a volatile and fragile political climate that "long-term investment in institution-building became impossible."[90] The fact that this predatory state depended on and was boosted by international financial and other economic aid removed it even further from any commitment to the collective good.

Most studies do refer to the enormous amounts of refugee, economic development, and military aid that fed Barre's kleptocracy (and that kept him in the saddle in spite of the growing resistance against his rule).[91] However, while Menkhaus analyzed the impact of foreign aid on the farmers of the Jubba Valley, and Tripodi reported on how Italian economic aid was diverted to enrich both Italian and Somali politicians, David Rawson deals with the consequences of U.S. aid on the Somali economy under Barre. In his "Dealing with Disintegration: U.S. Assistance and the Somali State,"[92] Rawson shows that the U.S. used security assistance to fund large, multilateral, unwieldy, and hugely expensive development projects. Funds allocated this way were diverted in many ways and, even when legally used, lined the pockets of many of the people involved, both Somalis and foreign aid workers of various kinds. Both the policies and the lack of oversight over how the Barre government handled the funds caused enormous inflation and undermined the Somali economy. However, in the midst of this disaster, the international organizations through which the U.S. channeled much of its monies so doggedly pursued specific goals (e.g., to get Somalia to (re)adopt IMF structural adjustment guidelines) that

they completely lost sight of the context: that they were enriching and providing a luxurious lease on life to an increasingly brutal dictator.

B. The UN/U.S. Intervention

A second important theme in this third category of historiography is the UN/U.S. intervention in Somalia. The wider literature on UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement in the post-Cold War era has a number of controversial themes: the inadequacy of the UN's structure, personnel, and decision-making processes; UN/U.S. relations during the Somali intervention, especially the question of whether the UN interpretation of its mandate widened (and thus conflicted with that of the U.S.); the roles of various UN and U.S. major officials, especially their attitudes toward the warlords and the latter's disarmament; the differences in "culture" and interpretations of the "rules of engagement" between European and Canadian troops, on the one hand, and U.S. troops on the other; whether the UN intervention in Somalia was a success or a failure; and what lessons Somalia can teach us about the future of UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions.[93] The analysis here focuses on those studies that have at the core of their inquiry not only the intervention but also what it did to Somalia. These latter contain three important contentions.

The first contention is that the UN/U.S. intervention in Somalia was a failure. For example, Lyons and Samatar attribute this failure to the fact that the policy guiding the intervention wavered between two approaches: that of "accommodating existing forces" (i.e., collaborate with the warlords, pay them rent for buildings and cash for armed protection, and refrain from disarming them) and that of "encouraging new institutions" (i.e., encourage other, civilian leaders and community groups).[94] Andrew S. Natsios agrees, but for different reasons. In his "Humanitarian Relief Intervention in Somalia: The Economics of Chaos," he attributes part of the failure to the dozens of relief organizations that, jealous of their autonomy, and making separate and inordinately expensive deals for protection with the very warlords who made their presence necessary, played into the hands of those who benefited from chaos.[95] Natsios explains how the food the relief agencies brought in became a cause for looting, even by the merchants, who hired thugs to get supplies for their shops. The NGOs were unprepared, Natsios argues, for:

> the unrestrained looting of convoys and warehouses, kidnappings of NGO staff for ransom, demands for higher wages by Somali staff who used their weapons as negotiating tools against their own . . . employers, checkpoints on every road where protection money was demanded, and warlord demands for a share of the food stocks going into their areas.[96]

When the agencies began to raise private armies (the International Committee of the Red Cross employed 15,000 to 20,000 young Somali men at the height of the crisis), they became an integral part of the "social pathology" they were supposed to remedy. The system they put in place continued "to reward anti-social behavior by young men with guns and . . . corrupt both the militias and the merchant class, the latter of which could have been a force for order and the restoration of some political authority."[97] No wonder the relief workers and then the UN troops came to be seen as just another set of warlords, well fed and wealthy, but not particularly smart or courageous.

The second contention is that humanitarian interventions in emergencies that are man-made (such as the Somali crisis) are always political and always have political implications. This is what is, for example, argued by Clarke and Herbst, who claim that both the UN and the U.S. were fully aware of the political dimension of the intervention. They contend that:

> it is simply not true that the UN greatly broadened the mission that the United States had decided to limit. In fact, all of the major Security Council resolutions on Somalia, including Resolution 814, the "nation building" resolution, were written by the United States, mainly by the Pentagon, and handed to the UN as a "fait accompli."[98]

Only after the disaster of October 3, 1993, when American lives were lost, did the U.S. get cold feet and abandon the woefully unprepared UN. To their minds, the UN was "seduced and then abandoned by the U.S."[99]

The third contention is that the UN/U.S. intervention enormously strengthened, provided legitimacy to, and enriched the warlords. This is a position taken by a number of authors.[100] According to Clarke and Herbst, the intervention was responsible for "enhancing the role and status of the warlords."[101] By not disarming them (not even partly, not even by removing only the heavy weaponry); by taking them as major discussion and negotiating partners; by doing business with them and

by paying them large amounts of money to attend national reconciliation conferences (at which they would be promised even larger sums of foreign aid), the U.S. and especially Robert Oakley made it clear for all Somalis to see that the warlords were to be "rewarded rather than punished."[102]

Natsios, as was already intimated, comments in some detail on the contributions that the relief organizations — and later UN troops of many nationalities, who also participated in the protection racket — made to the booming arms trade and thus the further militarization of Somalia. He writes:

> Most NGOs, indeed the U.S. government, never realized how massive and organized this arms trading would become during the course of the chaos. All the elements were there for major weapons and ammunition trafficking: demand created by the warlords for their private armies and by NGOs for their guard forces, supply from the Ethiopian merchants [whose government's huge army had just collapsed after defeat by the Eritrean and Tigrean forces], cash generated by the large-scale looting of food stocks and infrastructure, and protection rackets run by the warlords. The best way to make up for the absence of a job was a weapon…[103]

Not only did the UN intervention not succeed, such analysis suggests, but, by bringing a war economy as big as that of a middle-size country to the warlords of Mogadishu, it also deepened the militarization of the Somali civilian population and thus moved Somalia further away from peace.[104]

C. Proposals for Solutions to Crisis and State Collapse

The third important theme in this universe of studies is that they propose solutions to the ongoing crisis and statelessness in Somalia. Most of these proposals deal with the realm of politics, which will be discussed first, but a few outline economic blueprints.

1. Advocates of Clan-Based Decentralization

Of course, those who see Somali society and culture as uniquely (and incorrigibly) kin-based propose reconciliation processes and new political arrangements that are based on local "traditional" clan

elders.[105] They propose clan-based decentralization, either without an overarching state, or, if they accept a state structure at all, in the context of a multiplicity of states or a loose federal state.[106] For these scholars, only a political arrangement that is indigenous and "traditional" can be a remedy against the artificial, centralized nation-state (parliamentary or autocratic) imposed by the West, and can therefore be truly democratic.

One such scholar is, of course, I.M. Lewis, whose position — one must grant him that—has been consistent over a period of almost fifty years.[107] Less consistent, and therefore more politically suspect, are, for example, those contributors to *Mending Rips in the Sky* who, after having been deeply involved for more than a decade in the very dictatorship they now decry, suddenly promote a clan-based division of the national spoils! Although it was during their tenure (three served as ministers and one as a theorist of the Barre regime's socialist program) that this regime institutionalized the destructive clanism that exploded into violence during the collapse of the state, they do not reflect on this involvement, or on when and why they believe things went wrong. Thus, they sidestep the political and intellectual accountability that could make their proposals for a clan-based system more persuasive.[108]

As we saw in the historical syntheses of the first category, many other Somali and non-Somali scholars also embraced the concept of far-reaching decentralization along clan lines. One of the most extreme examples of this is Maria Bongartz's otherwise competent book entitled *Somalia im Bürgerkrieg: Ursachen und Perspektiven des Innen Politischen Konflikts.* She proposes that Somalia be reconciled and governed by a *shir* (to her, an inter-clan council) of elders, selected for their personal characteristics and their ability to distance themselves from political events.[109] One must wonder how such a formula would work for Germany, itself no stranger to centrifugal tendencies! However, once one accepts the uniqueness of Somalis and downplays their comparability and similarity to other human societies of the twenty-first century, such a solution should surprise no one. By 1999, Bongartz had substantially refined her proposals for new political arrangements in Somalia, as will be discussed below.[110]

A similar emphasis on Somali uniqueness and on "traditional" decentralization is evident in the report written by a group of six scholars and professionals (of whom four are Somalis) who, in the summer of 1997, were sent on a fact-finding mission to Somalia by the U.S. Institute for Peace. *Removing Barricades in Somalia* opens with the obser-

vation that there are "no appropriate models elsewhere in Africa, perhaps nowhere," and emphasizes that it proposes political arrangements "other than those of conventional unitary states."[111] The report contains many observations and recommendations. While some are valuable and insightful, the glaring contradictions it contains raise questions about the feasibility of its proposals for the future. For example, the report's recommendations regarding "traditional institutions" exemplify a reactionary tendency that coexists with more liberal proposals.[112]

First of all, the picture the authors paint of the pre-colonial past is inaccurate, for it is untrue that "the clans were more or less equal in power," and that "no elder believed that he could impose a military or political hegemony on the others."[113] This is naïve and, as a basis for modern political institutions, it constitutes quicksand. Second, the authors, uncritically and without any contextualization, propose to revive aspects of a traditional judicial system that, even irrespective of questions about its compatibility with Islamic law and basic human rights, presupposes the lack of a state:

> there are also traditional mechanisms by which offenders who have committed crimes against the clan are punished by their immediate families. This is achieved by clan elders meeting and then putting pressure on the offender's family to keep the offending member in line, even if the crime warrants, executing him.[114]

This approach, the authors add in all seriousness, would avoid an "unjust" punishment by "an external clan," which might lead to feuding.[115] The advocacy of techniques of collective punishment in the context of the complete privatization of justice does not bode well for the protection of individual rights or the reconstruction of public authority. The conclusion must be that the state is not a high priority for these authors.[116]

Removing Barricades in Somalia is optimistic about "decentralized, local action" as "the organizing principle around which permanent reform can be built."[117] It even considers the possibility that the Somalis might be "harbingers of a new, decentralized, participatory, and democratic future for Africa . . . and the first to incorporate traditional law and governance into modern economic structures."[118] However, the authors themselves detail the darker realities that still exist in Somalia: the inability of new local authorities to raise taxes (and the

diversion of tolls and taxes by private interests),[119] the presence of numbers of private armies in the country,[120] and the existence of a raging conflict "that pits warlords, faction leaders, and a rising commercial elite against traditional religious and clan leaders as well as women's groups."[121]

None of the advocates of governance by "traditional" clan or lineage elders carefully define the concepts they use or the processes by which they would establish these local authorities. For example, in the absence of a clear elucidation of what a clan or lineage elder is or might be, how would such a figure differ from a warlord? In both cases, the claim to authority would seem to be based on *de facto* power and only partially on position in the lineage or clan structure. Moreover, such lineage-based claims to authority might be populist but they are not democratic, as such leaders are not representative of the constituency they claim to represent through an elective or other democratic process. Such lack of clarity is dangerous, for it may allow those who in the past gained (and abused) power via the central state now to help themselves back into the saddle via the clan.

2. Advocates of Decentralization Based on a Blend of Old and New

Some scholars have advocated grassroots political processes and democratic institution building that do not exclusively depend on reified notions of "traditional" lineage elders but draw on groups of social actors and institutions whose roles and functions present a blending of old and new. Advocates of this type of grassroots political development leave room for, admire, and actively encourage leadership roles for women, for example. While women have always been influential in Somali society, in the pre-colonial period they did not normally have positions of formal political leadership. The latter is, therefore, at least potentially and, in part, a new development building on older forms of social leadership.

In this vein, Ahmed Samatar has suggested that, before Somalis can conduct a joint debate about the kind of state they want, five categories of Somalis, initially along kinship lines, should come together to discuss preliminary proceedings: elders, *ulema* (or religious scholars), poets, women, and modernizers (e.g., formally educated professionals or intellectuals). Even militia leaders might be part of such initial discussions, Samatar proposes, if they are willing and able to attract a constituency in other ways than by the gun.[122] This is not so different

from what Oakley claims to have attempted,[123] or from the groups Adam and Ford expect to be able to carry the project of reconstruction.[124] Perhaps it is Bongartz, in a recent article, who articulates the possibilities of such an approach best, when she says:

> The newly emerging political institutions have to reflect identity patterns as perceived by the very people who are supposed to be represented. Whether these identity patterns reflect back to traditional local community structures, such as religious and elders' committees, or rather rely on "modern" constituencies, such as women and youth organizations, remains to be seen.[125]

This is no longer a recipe for clan-based governance,[126] but rather for local representation of all kinds, and it represents a shift of focus away from trying to find solutions by starting at the top, at the national level, to one that begins at the bottom and refrains from thinking about the national level, let alone a state of whatever form, at least for the moment.

3. Advocates of an Effective and Developmental State

The only scholar to attempt a real reimagination of the state both on the theoretical and practical levels is Ahmed Samatar. In "The Curse of Allah: Civil Disembowelment and the Collapse of the State in Somalia,"[127] Samatar rejects the claim "that Somalis are altogether a distinct species" as "the height of ethnographic absurdity."[128] He boldly insists on thinking about the Somali state in the wider context of all states as well as theories-about-the-state throughout history. Samatar begins with a survey of what the state is (and has been) in the thought of liberal, Marxist, nationalist, and neo-Marxist theorists,[129] and draws on this analysis to conceptualize the state, concretely, as the set of institutions through which government is exercised, and, theoretically, as an expression of a philosophical and ethical vision of public order and authority.[130] Samatar sees the state relate to the private sphere of individual, household, kin group, and so forth, on three levels: that of *agency*, embodied by a particular regime in power at a particular time; that of *site*, embodied in the institutions that each regime partly inherits and partly (re)creates; and that of *mindset* or *ethical vision*. When the broad cultural foundations of private life, the ethical endowment of a regime, and qualified and dedicated government functionaries share a

common vision of what Samatar calls "political goodness," one can speak of a true community, or, in Islamic terms, a true *umma*.[131]

How does Samatar see the future in concrete terms? "Somalis," he argues, "can neither go back to the acephalous arrangements of old nor afford to hack the central public institutions into sectarian pieces." While not making "an a priori argument for a unitary state," he calls it an "undeniable fact that hardly any society has achieved modernity and development without a strong national state."[132] "Moral resurrection (the basis for a reconnected community)," he proposes, lies in "the constitution of a human-rights-centered democratic yet strong polity, and the creation of specific institutions and leadership that embody these new departures (which should be pluralistic and based on informed consent)."[133] Arguing that "culture itself has to be continually made, unmade, and remade," Samatar posits that Somali culture can be reinvigorated by adopting as philosophical principles Islamic values, kinship norms as tempered by *xeer* (custom), and secular political thought.[134] While these ideas are potentially in conflict, he believes that the tension between them can be dynamic, innovative, and capable of giving birth to new cultural foundations. How this would be institutionally expressed, beyond the idea to bring together representatives of the five categories of Somalis referred to above, is not further elaborated.

Economic proposals for a new Somalia are less common in this literature than political ones. While the new school of southern history expressed a clear moral imperative for agricultural justice and the protection of local southern farmers, the most explicit economic rendition comes from Abdi Samatar.[135] Having located two major causes of economic collapse in the disarticulation of the Somali economy and the underaccumulation of capital, Samatar is aware that the Somali economy must be reformed to serve the needs of the Somali people (rather than any outside interests) and must grow through an increase in productivity. To reach the objective of "economic growth with equity," he proposes a program of reform for the three major productive sectors of the economy: the farm, livestock, and plantation sectors. The system he outlines would allow household ownership of productive resources and would bring profits traditionally appropriated by middlemen and traders into the hands of producers, brought together for this purpose in cooperatives, which should be accountable to the public. The plantation sector, as well as the state's role in production (of which the Barre regime's parastatals were such a disastrous example), would be abol-

ished. All this would require efficient facilitation and organization by a state. This state must be "a strong state," he insists, "not a repressive or an authoritarian one."[136] Attempting to articulate a vision that might benefit all Africa's failing states, Samatar writes:

> A growth and social justice project presupposes an alliance of political forces. These political forces must include small rural producers, urban working people, and segments of the business class.... Creating leadership with legitimacy, discipline, [and] commitment to this new social contract, and building the necessary state apparatus and productive and progressive public-private network[s] are key to Africa's [and Somalia's] resurrection.[137]

Samatar asks the question of how conducive post-Cold War conditions are "for developmental states to rise out of the ashes of predatory ones."[138] Africa, he argues, has lost its autonomy twice; once when colonial powers established governments on its soil, and again when the "independent" states were hijacked by neo-colonial forces without a permanent military presence on African soil. Therefore, African states, collaborating within broad regions, must establish some autonomy from large "[n]eoliberal institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank [that] have usurped public policy prerogatives and promise to turn the current crisis into a permanent disaster."[139]

However, Samatar's plea for economic reform facilitated by an effective, autonomous, developmental state represents a lonely voice in this historiography. In contrast, *Removing Barricades in Somalia*, consistent with its political proposals, advocates a "free and unregulated market economy,"[140] which allows full range "to the spirit of innovation and creativity" that characterizes local initiatives, and to Somali ingenuity in "adapting external technologies and management systems to meet needs at local levels."[141] The report is enthusiastic about the level of dynamic, energetic, and unregulated economic activity in Somalia.[142] Airplanes are flying; houses are being built; food, fuel, and consumer goods are available; cellular telephones and computers are in use; the export trade has resumed; and money is being transferred.

However, here too, the darker realities, rather casually referred to in the narrative, loom large, and give clear evidence of the dangers of complete deregulation and privatization. Thus, the authors point out that the safety of crops in the field and goods in transit still depend on

their owner's private armies and militias,[143] and that "the lack of standards or acceptable terms of practice in the Somali private sector . . . encourages ruthless and sometimes destructive behavior and unprincipled practices." Just as, in the political sphere, they saw the beginnings of a conflict between haves and have-nots, so in the economic sphere, they signal the emergence of a new economic elite, "possibly as indifferent to the needs of the people as previous political elites."[144] This is exactly the kind of "growth without equity" that Samatar's proposed state would watch out against. The rapid and unregulated deepening of social stratification in Somalia and the increasing polarization between those who have access to outside arms, capital, and know-how, and those who have not, occurs in a context in which power relations are still dominated by those who wield the guns, the warlords. Whether the latent social conflicts can be contained in the clan terms the authors of *Removing Barricades* and others propose, and whether unregulated local initiatives will undermine these warlords rather than fatten them for a new round of fighting, is not addressed in this report and remains to be seen.

V. Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn from this survey are many. First, this historiography significantly furthers our understanding of the causes of crisis and state collapse. The historical syntheses (of the first category) allow us to see Somalia's deepening political and economic deterioration in a long-term perspective. The new school of southern Somali history allows us to understand the role of the state (and the state elite) as well as the deeply misguided international development policies and funding strategies in the underdevelopment of the farming sector of the south. It was the struggle for this fertile southern land, these studies show — and not anarchic violence alone — that, after the collapse, led to the brutal devastation of this region and its people. Many studies (of both the first and third category) attribute state collapse, at least in part, to unchanging and incorrigible Somali kin and clan allegiances, which they claim to be incompatible with a central state or with any form of state at all. The most eloquent opponent of this view is the pioneer of southern history, Lee Cassanelli. Explanations that focus on how the Barre regime and the warlords who succeeded him mobilized support along clan lines are not without meaning, Cassanelli contends. However, by ignoring the struggle for

control of resources of all kinds that underpins such power, they confuse "the form the conflict took with its substance and objectives."[145]

The preoccupation with the political and with clan-balancing and separation is a serious weakness of a good part of this body of historiography. Many authors unquestioningly read clanist motivations and violence back into the past and thus fail to problematize, periodize, and document two important historical processes: the Barre regime's history of incitement to clan-on-clan violence, and the USC's transition from opposition to the Barre regime to clan (family) genocide. That these two are causally related is inevitable, but how they are, and who were the agents who carried out the violent acts, must be researched and documented. Ahmed Samatar is correct when he counsels that:

> It is important to forget and forgive, because privileged grief and vengefulness are cancerous to *civitas*; at the same time, memory keeps alive moments of individual humiliation and collective horror for the sake of durable alertness and vigilance.[146]

However, one may go further and argue that, in the absence of an accounting for what and who initiated the cycle of clanist violence, the Somali people may fall victim to essentialized interpretations of their own genetic or cultural predisposition to clan hatred.

The studies analyzed here also make a contribution to understanding the impact of the UN/U.S. intervention in Somalia. They forward important arguments for seeing this involvement (from a Somali point of view, and in spite of the fact that it initially saved many civilians from starvation) as a failure, as it, in the end, refused to take responsibility for the political dimension that is inherent in any such humanitarian intervention, intensified the militarization of Somali society, and enriched, strengthened, and legitimized the warlords beyond anyone's imagination. Unfortunately, UN and U.S. leaders appear more interested in what Somalia can teach them with regard to a potential next round of peacekeeping than in acknowledging and trying to reverse the damage they did.

The historiography surveyed here is weakest in outlining possible solutions to crisis and state collapse in Somalia. As noted, the authors of the historical syntheses of the first category, who surpassed their predecessors by incorporating more data and by expanding their analyses beyond the political realm into the social and economic ones of class, gender, and environment, remained in their proposed solu-

tions preoccupied with clan-balancing and clan separation only. How clan-balancing or clan separation would remedy nationwide and long-term social problems such as the emergence of a rural and urban underclass, widespread soil erosion, or the decline of women's roles in production—singled out as important causes of Somalia's long decline—remains unclear.

As for the southern school of history, its main objective was to document the struggle for land in the fertile south as a cause of collapse and warfare. However, the negative attitudes expressed toward northern nomads, and the call to arms addressed to those Somalis of Bantu descent who, until the 1980s, had less separatist strategies with regard to their communal identities, are worrisome. Any move toward reducing what befell the farmers of the riverine south, especially the Gosha, to a problem of pastoralists versus farmers, nomads versus sedentary people, or "low-caste" versus "mainstream" **alone** is, as is evident from this historiography itself, misleading and thus a disservice to the reconstruction of Somalia.

It is the studies of the third category that, by definition, contain the most explicit proposals for solutions. Again, the focus is overwhelmingly on the political domain and on clan-based decentralization, led by "traditional" lineage and clan elders. Some proposals advocate local institution building that also draws on the less traditionally sanctioned leadership roles of women and youth. These guidelines appear to present real and feasible opportunities for the building of grassroots democratic institutions. They do not, however, speak to whether Somalis need a state and, if yes, what kind of a state.

In the historiography surveyed here, only two scholars break a lance for a strong, i.e., effective state. Ahmed Samatar, insisting on thinking about Somalia in the wider context of political theory and world history, proposes an abstract but comprehensive outline of the state as ideology, a set of actors, and a configuration of institutions (as well as the relations among these, and between them and the private sphere). Abdi Samatar, acutely aware of Somalia's position in the world economy, argues for a state that can carry the crucial project of simultaneously creating economic growth and social equity. This is not a minor issue, unless Somalia is to return to dependence on First World handouts, and unless the increasing polarization between rich and poor, within Somalia as well as in a global context, is of no concern.

These proposals for an effective state aside, the most significant failure of much of this historiography is twofold. First, its narrow focus on the political domain and, within it, on clan relations is incongruous with the causal analyses of structural and long-term socioeconomic decline. Second, the absence of an awareness of the impact of the world order on why states such as Somalia failed distorts scholarly lenses and yields a myopic vision of how Somalia might be reconstructed. As a result, all that remains visible are the "unique kind of natives" (so familiar from the colonial records) who are tearing each other apart.

Samir Amin has long held that "the polarization of the world into center and periphery nations" is inherent in the processes of accumulation that characterize capitalism.[147] He argues that:

> capitalist expansion has inverse effects upon the center and periphery of the system; in the first it integrates society, on which the nation is built, and in the second it destroys society, eventually destroying the nation itself, or annihilating its potentialities.[148]

In other words, when the inequities of this world system become so extreme that its most fragile neo-colonies begin to fail, this is a symptom of capitalism's failure to contain its polarization.

If this is even partly true, what does it imply for Somali reconstruction? Amin argues that the periphery can only surmount its marginal status by overcoming five capitalist monopolies: those of technology, financial markets, worldwide natural resources, media and communication, and weapons of mass destruction.[149] This is only possible, he believes, if the states of the periphery come together in regional power blocs. Their fragmentation into ethnic homelands is taboo to this vision.

Amin interprets ethnicity (read clanism, for the Somali context) as a symptom of the chaos created by this inequitable global system. As states fail, so do state elites. Ethnicity to Amin is "the recourse of certain segments of a shattered ruling class trying to reestablish some legitimate basis for its power."[150] While kinship and clan allegiance in Somalia have a more complex history and make-up than Amin suggests,[151] his analysis contains two important charges to scholars and other thinkers about Somalia.

First, those members of the "shattered ruling class," who are now thronging to get back into the saddle of state, must be held accountable

for any crimes they committed and any funds they misappropriated during the dictatorship and the civil war. Allowing them to hide behind the fig leaf of clan is to jeopardize any hope of reconstruction. Second, suggesting clan-balancing as a solution to Somalia's problems is nothing new. This has been practiced in Somalia since colonial times and the results are there for all to see. Scholars might heed Amin's call to rethink their priorities and integrate their proposed solutions into a global perspective. Amin contends:

> The world is both unified and diverse. But diversity is not exclusively, or even principally, cultural. Emphasis on cultural diversity relegates the major differences of position in the economic hierarchy of world capitalism to secondary importance. But it is at the level of the latter that we must begin the attack on the problem."[152] ◉

Notes

1. This includes separately published studies such as occasional papers.
2. Abdisalam Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy* (London: Haan, 1996). The final editing of this book leaves something to be desired.
3. Ibid., 94–95.
4. Ibid., 84.
5. Ibid., 139.
6. Ibid., 137.
7. Ibid., 134.
8. Ibid., 7, 138, 142–144.
9. Hashim, *The Fallen State.*
10. Ibid., 3.
11. Ibid., 7.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 8.
14. Ibid., 11. Hashim nevertheless adopts both primordialist and instrumentalist views of Somali clanism, 20.
15. Although mostly competent, the book contains factual mistakes (32, 63), serious misspellings of Somali terms (31, 37), an overemphasis on the opposition by the SNM, and some inconsistencies (33, 66).
16. Ibid., xv and *passim*.
17. Ibid., 92.
18. Ibid., 62.
19. Ibid., 7.
20. Ibid., 129.
21. Touati, *Politik und Gesellschaft in Somalia*.

22. This in spite of the fact that her bibliography includes the Ph.D. dissertation of Kenneth Menkhaus, *Rural Transformation* (1989), and that of Catherine Besteman, *Land Tenure* (1991).

23. Ibid., 247. All quotes are my translations from the German.

24. Ibid., 224, 249.

25 Ibid., 224–225.

26. Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia*.

27. Ibid., 7, 49, 51, 73, 84, 104, 107, 109.

28. Ibid., 84.

29. Ibid., 78.

30. Ibid., 79.

31. Ibid., 73.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 104–105. What the Italian administration should have done instead, the author does not explain, but he quotes approvingly a proposal for "a chamber of clan leaders" that would function side by side with the legislative assembly, 84.

34. Ibid., 95. Tripodi also blames Italy for not solving Somalia's boundary disputes, 108.

35. Ibid., 137.

36. Ibid., 135.

37. Ibid., 164.

38. Ibid., 157–158. He reports that the commander in question denied accusations that the Italian troops paid faction leaders not to attack them, and failed to support other contingents.

39. Ahmed, *The Invention of Somalia*.

40. This reviewer, too, has critiqued the limitations of the nationalist vision that inspired many of the poems and songs of the 1960s and 1970s. See Lidwien Kapteijns, *Women's Voices*.

41. "The Invention of Gosha."

42. "Identity, Dance and Islam."

43. "Aspects of the Benadir Cultural History."

44. "Islam in Somali History: Fact and Fiction."

45. "The Somali Origin."

46. "The Eastern Horn."

47. "Finely Etched Cattle."

48. Ahmed, "'Daybreak is Near,"' 138–143.

49. Ahmed, "Preface," in *The Invention of Somalia*, xi.

50. "The Nature of the Somali Clan System."

51. Besteman and Cassanelli, *The Struggle for Land*.

52. Menkhaus, "From Feast to Famine." See also his *Rural Transformation.*

53. Menkhaus and Craven, "Land Alienation."

54. Besteman, "Local Land Use Strategies."

55. Menkhaus, "From Feast to Famine,"148.

56. Ibid., 8, 134.

57. Besteman and Cassanelli, "Introduction;" Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis."

58. Besteman and Cassanelli, *The Struggle for Land*, ix.

59. Ibid., x.

60. Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis," 22.

61. Ibid., 24.

62. Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*.

63. Ibid., 7.

64. Besteman, "The Invention of Gosha," 50; Cassanelli, "Somali Land Resource Issues," 74; Ahmed, "'Daybreak is Near,'" 148.

65. Ahmed, "'Daybreak is Near,'" 138–139, 142–143.

66. Cassanelli quoting M.H. Mukhtar, "Somali Land Resource Issues," 69; see also 74. How unscholarly the outcome of careless and simplistic conceptualizations of nomads can be is evident from Simons' *Networks of Dissolution*, in which unprincipled and rapacious opportunism and shameless clientism are equated with the inherent nature of nomads' socialization (202–208, *passim*).

67. Helander, "The Hubeer," 51.

68. See, for example, Kassim in "Aspects of Benadir Cultural History," who relates how the nineteenth-century Dada Masiti was kidnapped and taken to Zanzibar. From there she was retrieved after ten years and, it seems, as a result of coincidental discovery by her relatives, 34. From the Aden Residency Records for the 1850s to 1880s (kept at the India Office, London: R/20/A), it is evident that any (in particularly young) individual who could be separated from her or his kin could be enslaved, including Indian, Chinese, Ethiopian, and Nubian individuals. Since slave status correlated with membership in certain ethnic groups (both from the area inland from the Swahili coast and from southern Ethiopia) and was often caused by being separated from one's kin group, it did have a distinct racial dimension. Somali kinship bonds would be able to protect most "mainstream" Somali individuals, however poor their lives as domestic servants or as "coolies" shoveling coal in Aden's port might be.

69. Merryman, "The Economy of Geedo Region."

70. Unruh, "Resource Sharing."

71. Besteman and Cassanelli, "Introduction," 11.

72. Menkhaus, "From Feast to Famine," 137.

73. Samatar, *The Somali Challenge*.

74. Simons, *Networks of Dissolution*.

75. Adam and Ford, *Mending Rips*.

76. For example, Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia*, and Clarke and Herbst.

77. Lewis, *Making History*, 2.

78. Lewis, "Somalia," 102.

79. Simons, "Epilogue," 202–208 and *passim*.

80. Adam and Ford, *Removing Barricades*, v.

81. Lewis, *Making History*, 3.

82. Lewis quoted in Ahmed I. Samatar, "Introduction and Overview," 7.

83. Lyons and Samatar, 8, 11, 63; compare Adam and Ford, *Removing Barricades*, 2.

84. Lewis, "Somalia," 99.

85. Lyons and Samatar, 12.

86. Samatar. *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil.* An exception, perhaps, is Issa-Salwe.

87. Besteman, *Unraveling*, 3–4.

88. In Samatar, *The Somali Challenge*, 65–92.

89. Samatar, *An African Miracle*, 191.

90. Ibid.

91. The concept of "gifts that bind" is beautifully presented in the novel called *Gifts* by Nuruddin Farah.

92. In Samatar, *The Somali Challenge*, 147–188.

93. For example, Bongartz, "The United Nations in Somalia;" Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*; Makinda, *Seeking Peace from Chaos*; Menkhaus, *Key Decisions*; Oakley, "'Look, We've Got to Do Something'"; Sahnoun, "Prevention in Conflict Resolution;" Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities;* Tilford, "Two Perspectives;" *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*; and *The United Nations and Somalia*.

94. Lyons and Samatar, 36–39, and *passim*. Note that Oakley prides himself on doing both at the same time; see Chester A. Crocker, "Foreword," x.

95. In Clarke and Herbst, 77–95.

96. Natsios, "Humanitarian Relief Intervention, 85–86.

97. Ibid.

98. Clarke and Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention," 241.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid., 239–253; Lewis, *Making History*; Lewis, "Somalia."

101. Clarke and Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention," 246.

102. Ibid., 247. See also Bongartz, "The United Nations in Somalia;" Lewis, "Somalia;" Lewis reports that the warlords were getting $150,000 in expenses per day during such conferences (119).

103. Natsios, "Humanitarian Relief Intervention," 84.

104. For a particularly hair-raising account, see that of Australian journalist Trisha Stratford, *Blood Money*.

105. Lewis, "Somalia," 107; Adam and Ford, *Removing Barricades*, 13; Mohamed Aden Sheikh, "A Few Words On Somalia's Crisis;" Ibrahim Megag Samatar, "Light at the End of the Tunnel;" and Ahmed Ashkir Botan, "Somalia."

106. Adam, "Somalia: A Terrible Beauty Being Born?," 88. The concept of consociational democracy has been made famous by Arend Lijphart, *Democracy In Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), especially 197–198. Even if one were to assume that clans or clan families were workable building blocks in Somalia, Lijphart himself points out the hazards of such a system (48–51). For example, it is in danger of (1) sacrificing individual rights to that of the group (as it regulates rela-

tions between "segments" and not individuals); (2) immobilizing the government, as any party can veto any action; (3) being inefficient (as for someone to get, for example, a job, group membership might be more important than qualification; and (4) being expensive, as it requires many separate facilities.

107. See, for example, Ahmed Yusuf Farah and Lewis, "*Peace Making*."

108. Mohamed Aden Sheikh, Ibrahim Megag Samatar, and Ahmed Ashkir Botan were ministers, while Hussein M. Adam was a theorist of the Socialist Party, a party that eventually adopted the view that, in the absence of classes in Somalia, the enemy of the state had to be found in the form of one or more clans. Adam and Ford, *Mending the Rips*, 649–652.

109. *Somalia im Burgerkrieg*, 60–61; "[T]his shows that the '*shir*' system must be carried by personalities who are capable of distancing themselves to some extent from political events." (61)

110. *Bongartz*, "The United Nations Intervention."

111. Adam and Ford, *Removing Barricades*, v.

112. Their wholehearted praise for women's roles in the cultural, political, and economic processes of reconstruction, for example, appear liberal, although they also propose, without acknowledging the potential contradiction of their plea, that "the most important donor action is simply to be supportive of Islamic family law," (21).

113. Ibid., 14, 13–14. Think, for example of the civil war that raged in Somalia during Muhammad Abdille Hasan's time (1898–1921). Also, what can we make of the observation that "three decades ago [i.e., in the 1970s] Somali governance was in the hands of elders" (19)?

114. Ibid., 17.

115. Ibid.

116. The authors argue that "decentralized, local action…can be the organizing principle around which permanent reform can be built." "This does not preclude some form of central governance," the authors argue, but they do not further reflect on such central governance, (vi).

117. Ibid., vi.

118. Ibid., 2.

119. Ibid., 9–10.

120. Ibid., 10, 16.

121. Ibid., 20.

122. Lyons and Samatar, 65–66.

123. Crocker, "Foreword," x.

124. Adam and Ford, *Removing Barricades*," *passim*.

125. Bongartz, "The United Nations Intervention," 589. For other such promising grassroots approaches, see Ford, "Rebuilding Somalia."

126. Compare Bongartz, *Somalia im Bürgerkrieg*.

127. In Samatar, *The Somali Challenge*, 95–146.

128. Ibid., 99.

129. Ibid., 101–109.

130. Ibid., 101 (drawing on Crawford Young).
131. Ibid., 129, 132.
132. Ibid., 97.
133. Ibid., 137–138.
134. Ibid., 129; Samatar and Lyons, 65–66.
135. Abdi Samatar, "Empty Bowl."
136. Ibid., 87.
137. Samatar, *An African Miracle*, 192.
138. Ibid., 191.
139. Ibid., 192.
140. Adam and Ford, *Removing Barricades*, vi.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid., 8.
143. Ibid., 16.
144. Ibid., 8.
145. Cassanelli, "Explaining the Somali Crisis," 24.
146. Samatar, "The Curse of Allah," 137.
147. Samir Amin, *Empire of Chaos*, 7. See also Samatar, "Somali Studies."
148. Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, 68.
149. Ibid., 3–4.
150. Ibid., 64.
151. For example, in the pre-colonial era, kinship was the idiom in which social relations were constructed. In the colonial era, under administrations that only recognized Somalis as clansmen, kinship became a tool to gain access to the state and was politicized in new ways. See Kapteijns, "Women and the Crisis."
152. Amin, *Capitalism*, 104.

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