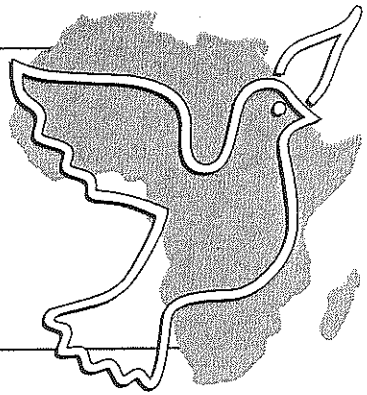
SEEDS BEARING FRUIT



PAN-AFRICAN PEACE ACTION *FOR THE* TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

edited by

Elavie Ndura-Ouédraogo,
Matt Meyer,
and Judith Atiri

Africa World Press, Inc.

P.O. Box 1892
Trenton, NJ 08607

P.O. Box 48
Asmara, ERITREA

2011

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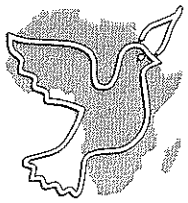

Gail M. Presbey

Security through Mutual Understanding and Coexistence or Military Might? Somali and U.S. Perspectives

Introduction

During the last two decades, Somalis have seen their country ravaged by internal wars and external aggressors. To a large extent, religiously and ethnically homogenous (with small ethnic minorities of Somali Bantu and Sudanese Somalis), Somalia was nevertheless ravaged by internal divisions based on clan affiliation during the 1990s.

The struggle for control of national government was the rationale for United Nations forces to intervene in 1993. U.S. Admiral Jonathan Howe drew UN forces into combat when he became embroiled in taking sides while trying to fix the outcome of the power struggle. This resulted in the notorious "Day of the Rangers," when over 1,000 Somalis and eighteen U.S. service personnel were killed. Shortly afterward, the U.S. pulled its troops out of Somalia. The deteriorating situation led many Somalis to leave their country, settling in the Dadaab refugee camp just across the border in Kenya.

This chapter spans two decades of Somalia's recent troubles. It will try to grasp what went wrong with the military approach to Somalia's problems during the 1990s, drawing on Mark Bowden's extensive interviews with both Somalis and U.S. military personnel related in his study, *Black Hawk Down*. The chapter will try to clarify a distorted picture of the situation given in the U.S. media and in the film

version of *Black Hawk Down*. It will then contrast this military perspective with the work for conflict resolution and peace education at the Dadaab refugee camp. Here I will draw on interviews I conducted with refugees during 1999 as part of a study done in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on behalf of CARE International of Kenya, the nongovernmental agency in charge of running the camp. I found that many Somalis had significant insights into the problems of their country. They only lacked a way to catapult their wise leaders into positions of power where they could enact sane and constructive policies. Just as with Bowden's book, listening to the voices of Somalis is the source of key ideas needed to solve their problems.

The chapter ends with an update to recent events in Somalia, especially during the last couple of years. Once again, Somali voices have gone unheeded and the United States has intervened through its proxy, Ethiopia, in a way that shows they do not understand the situation on the ground in Somalia. Somalis are still suffering because of this misunderstanding. At the heart of this problem is a U.S. foreign policy that is short sighted in its goals of protecting its own position of global dominance and ignoring real security that comes with citizens of their respective countries having basic needs met, democratic control of their governments, and demilitarization.

Bowden's *Black Hawk Down*

Mark Bowden's book, containing extensive interviews with both Somalis and U.S. service members stationed in Somalia sheds light on the political situation that came to a head on October 3, 1993, known as the "Day of the Rangers." The central Somali government had come undone, and various faction leaders were each taking military arms to lay claim to the whole country. It certainly was a humanitarian crisis. The problem was how to intervene in a way that saved lives and did not exacerbate the problem. The United Nations called for troops and U.S. Admiral Jonathan Howe was put in charge. However, the U.S. personnel apparently lacked the understanding of the Somali context needed to help the situation.

The service members and their commanders had grossly underestimated the enemy. U.S. forces went into the heart of General Mohamed Farrah Aidid's support area in Mogadishu in broad daylight, presuming they could accomplish their mission of catching Omar Salad and Mohamad Hassan Awale within a couple of hours. But going into a crowded area of a city where people were still very heavily armed (considering the civil war still in progress) caused Somalis to want to fight the intruding Americans. Their being under attack and outnumbered caused the U.S. service members to

quickly discard the rules of war; they began to shoot at anyone, even into crowds.[1] Black Hawk and Little Bird helicopters armed with automatic weapons shot into crowds overhead, turning these crowds within minutes into "a bleeding heap of dead and injured."[2] In less than twenty-four hours, eighteen U.S. service members and 500 to 1,000 Somalis had been killed to abduct the two lieutenants. The president and other military officials bemoaned the fact that the price had been too high. But which price? One gets the distinct impression that the "high price" refers to the eighteen U.S. service members and not the more numerous Somali deaths.

Bowden's book is intended to educate the reader, who is presumably in the same shoes as the Rangers: "None of the men . . . knew enough to write a high school chapter about Somalia. They took the army's line without hesitation. Warlords had so ravaged the nation battling among themselves that their people were starving to death."[3] U.S. forces were supposed to be in Somalia on a peacekeeping mission for the UN. They got involved in trying to arrest General Aidid's top ranking military men because Aidid had been opposed to the power-sharing plan the UN had for a postwar Somalia.[4] Indeed, the U.S. public's shock at the public display of the killed U.S. soldiers was due to their belief that the troops were there only to "feed the hungry," and they had not known that, since the Abdi House killings by U.S. troops on July 12, Aidid was "at war" with the U.S. In fact, before October 3, the U.S. had already conducted six missions or raids with mixed success.[5]

Mickey Kaus, drawing on Oakley's book, explains further why, by October 3, most Somalis were united behind Aidid and against the U.S. intervention. As he explains, the UN operations there happened in two phases. Phase I, mostly successful and very important, was an emergency feeding operation. At that point, troops were stationed there to oversee the food distribution process. But later, a Phase II "nation-building" project began. The UN wanted to oversee a power-sharing version of national unity in Somalia, but Aidid felt that since he had done the most conquering, he should be in power. Aidid and his SNA forces began to think that the UN opposed them in favor of Siad Barre's ethnic group, the Darod. These suspicions were reinforced when the UN closed down Aidid's anti-UN radio station, while allowing a rival, Ali Mahdi, to operate his station. When twenty-four Pakistani UN troops showed up to "inspect" the radio station, Aidid loyalists suspected them of foul play and killed them. The UN, concerned about discouraging the precedent of attacking UN peacekeeping troops, decided to launch a manhunt in search of Aidid and his leaders.[6]

However, Bowden reported an earlier tragic incident that most surely played a role in Somali reluctance to cooperate with the U.S. and the UN. On July 12, 1993, fifty to seventy clan elders and intellectuals, who had

met at Abdi House to discuss Howe's peace initiative, were killed when the venue of the meeting was bombed. Bowden includes the testimony of Mohamad Hassan Farah, who witnessed sixteen TOW missiles (capable of piercing the armor of a tank) being fired at the building.[7] He also reports that Howe said that only twenty people were killed and all had been in Aidid's military leadership. Thus, the UN and Somali accounts had vast discrepancies.[8] (The massacre was also covered by *Washington Post* reporter Keith Richburg.)[9] Targeting Aidid loyalists may have increased the perception, cited by Farah, that the U.S. was against Aidid and the Habr Gidr clan and was favoring a rival clan, the Darod, from which the former leader Siad Barre hailed.[10] With such perceptions running rampant, asking an embattled clan to accept the help of a group that has been bombing their leaders was difficult at best.

In 1993, the U.S. considered its military response to be a grave error—a failure. It resulted in the forced resignation of top military officials. However, Bowden did not want this story to be buried. He pieced together the story of the battle and put a new spin on it, one that the U.S. military did not dare: he decided that the men involved were unsung heroes and should be a source of pride for the nation. He wrote a series of stories for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, put together a website and documentary video, and created a best-selling book, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*.[11] That account has become a top draw at movie theaters with director Ridley Scott's film production based on the book.

How do the U.S. service members come out looking like heroes, after blatantly discarding the "rules of war" by shooting indiscrimately? Three main factors in the book and film contribute to this spin. First is the focus on the solidarity that soldiers have with each other; this is presented to civilians as a model for their behavior. Second, the Somalis are described as subhuman animals, living in a city that has not yet seen "civilization." Descriptions seemingly right out of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* make it difficult for viewers to empathize with Somalis who are hurt or killed, since they are encouraged instead to take the U.S. point of view and to empathize with the threat that the service members felt. Third, the reasons for the U.S. presence in general and action in particular either are not mentioned or are presented as justified and righteous. Somali society is presented as so chaotic and distasteful that viewers can only imagine that the Somalis should submit to U.S. or UN rule rather than to attempt self-rule.

Bowden's epilogue causes us to question his claimed "neutrality." While he states critically that the U.S. should not have taken sides (against Aidid) in the civil war, he argues that once the U.S. had decided to get involved,

it should have seen its project through to the end.[12] He notes that many service members were disappointed that they could not have stayed and finished the battle for Somalia's next government.[13] Bowden claims that he wrote the book for these American soldiers.[14]

Bowden also concludes with harsh words for Somalia. He thinks that the UN forces were there as an effort to help Somalia rebuild a unified national government. By fighting with U.S. forces (and targeting Pakistani forces on June 5, 1993, also part of the UN team[15]), Somalis rejected outside help without being able to resolve their problems on their own. He argues, "without natural resources, strategic advantage, or even potentially lucrative markets for world goods, Somalia is unlikely soon to recapture the opportunity for peace and rebuilding afforded by UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia). Rightly or wrongly, they stand as an enduring symbol of Third World ingratitude and intractability . . . they've effectively written themselves off the map."[16] Bowden falls short of saying what the Somalis did was "wrong" in a moral sense, but he judges them as shortsighted and far from pragmatic, missing their golden opportunity.

While Bowden calls the Somali death toll "catastrophic," it is not in the context of condemning the U.S. troops for discarding rules of war and causing the high casualties. One gets the impression that discarding such rules is one of the things about war that cannot be changed, a lesson that the young Rangers finally learn by experiencing a real war. Rather, he makes the remark in the context of calling Somalia's victory against the U.S. forces "hollow," almost as if it is the fault of Somalis themselves that their death toll was so high. Aidid could have been spared these casualties if only he had cooperated with the UN plan from the beginning.[17] No wonder the military loves this book. When the pilot, Durant, makes a comment on videotape during his captivity that things "have gone wrong" in Somalia because too many innocents were killed, he later felt bad about saying it and wished he had not.[18]

Bowden, nevertheless, does history a great service by going to the area soon after that fateful day to collect Somali testimony. He notes that he and photographer Peter Tobias were the only two Americans who ever came back to Mogadishu to piece together the story. He encouraged at-first reluctant Somalis to cooperate with his investigation by arguing that in this way, their story would reach a wider audience,[19] Bowden claims that the book is meant to represent both sides; when he represents the U.S. service members' views that the Somalis are diminutive humans, he is careful to note that the descriptions are how they were perceived and not necessarily how they really are. But the scenes in the book where Somali eyewitness accounts are reported are all missing from the film. We can

only regret that the film did not use the material from Somalis in creating a more multisided perspective on the military engagement.

Some Somali perspectives in the book describe those who were going about their daily business and were then interrupted by the sudden outbreak of U.S. gunfire. In the case of Kassim Sheik Mohamad, his garage was bombed and his employees killed. Mohamad and others tried to bury the dead by the end of the day, according to Islamic practice, but U.S. helicopters routinely scoured the local cemetery near Mogadishu to shoot at them.[20] Ali Hassan Mohamad saw the Rangers as "cruel men who wore body armor and strapped their weapons to their chests and when they came at night they painted their faces to look fierce."[21] After witnessing the Rangers kill his brother, Mohamad decides he must take up arms and fight the Rangers.

Some Somalis recorded in the book are given a chance to reflect, sharing their ideas with the reader. Bashir Haji Yusef was educated in the U.S., so as he watched the fighting, he reminded himself that most Americans have no idea what their soldiers did abroad. In other words, he was able to sort out his angry condemnation of the soldiers' actions from a broader condemnation of all U.S. citizens.[22] But his reflection also challenges the reader, who is now learning of the actions of their armed forces. This is one of the rare passages where a Somali viewpoint is able to challenge, indirectly, the U.S. perspective. The book also highlights the tireless work of surgeon Abdi Mohamed Elmi. In the morning, his 500-bed hospital was mostly empty. By the end of the day, it was overflowing with the wounded, and Elmi had to perform surgeries one after the other with no time for rest.[23] In contrast, in the film, we never see Somalis past the second in which they are pierced with a bullet.

Some of the Somali testimony included in the book succeeds in blurring the "us-them" dichotomy temporarily. The book quickly mentions that friendly Somalis helped a crew of a crashed Black Hawk helicopter to escape.[24] The website photo page shows Yousuf Dahn Mo'Alim, who saved the pilot Durant from an angry mob and then was shot by U.S. gunfire.[25]

When Abdiaziz Ali Aden saw a Super Six One helicopter crash, nicking the corner of his roof, he was curious to see the U.S. soldiers emerge. But when he saw them, he concluded that they did not look human, since they were covered in body armor, goggles, and helmets.[26] So, while the Somalis were portrayed as subhuman and animal-like, the U.S. service members also lacked humanity, but because they merged with machine and armor. Somalis, when they got their hands on such U.S. soldiers, liked to unmask and de-armor them. For example, when they found the pilot Durant, they tore his clothes off, looking for concealed weapons.[27] That Somalis were

able to commit cruel acts is also part of the story—not all were innocents. Hassan Yassin Abokoi saw a mob descend on U.S. service members who had been in a crashed helicopter. "He saw his neighbors hack at the bodies of the Americans with knives and begin to pull at their limbs. He then saw people running and parading with parts of the Americans' bodies," as if they were trophies.[28] Of course, there is also the infamous image of Black Hawk crew chief Bill Cleveland's corpse being dragged naked through the streets by a gloating crowd of Somalis.[29] Certainly, this glee about the dismemberment or the exposure of a dead body is deplorable. But the U.S. side also mutilated bodies, not with hand-held knives but with automatic weapons. Bowden describes how the Rangers laughed when one woman was shot so severely she "no longer even looked like a human being."[30]

In addition to valuable insights from the collections of interviews with Somalis that they collected, Bowden and Tobias also provide valuable insights from their candid interviews with U.S. service personnel. Reading the book, one notes that many U.S. servicemen are introduced to the reader first by a description of their looks. They are always muscular, the epitome of manhood. In a vain society such as ours, to possess bulging muscles is a sign of one's self-discipline and strength. The Somalis, on the other hand, are nicknamed by the U.S. service members as the "Skinnies," suggesting that their extreme thinness means that they are worthless.[31] The book also explains how U.S. service members note that Somalis do not work. "The people here, it seemed to Stuecker, just lounged, doing nothing, watching the world go by outside their shabby round rag huts and tin shacks. . ."[32] Indeed, the main event in town was lining up by the thousands to get handouts of free food from aid agencies. Knowing prevailing U.S. values, finding out that Somalis did not work and instead received aid, is a sure way to undermine their human dignity; they're the international version of "welfare scum." Bowden makes the service members' judgment clear: "they all felt sorry for the kids. For the adults they felt contempt."[33]

Just as U.S. civilians presume that welfare scum are "on drugs," so the book describes Somalis who chew *khat*, an amphetamine, which makes their teeth look black and orange and makes them "look savage, or deranged."[34] Never mind that the Somalis have suffered a long war with dire food shortages and that *khat* also numbs the pain of hunger and gives one energy to move when one is severely undernourished; all these signs of poverty and coping with hunger (thin bodies, dependence on food aid, and chewing *khat*) mark the distance between the young, strong, and well-fed "full" human beings and their diminutive "shadows."

The city of Mogadishu is also presented as a primitive, premodern city. Speculation in the book about how human life is even possible without

running water, electricity, and an operating sewage system abounds. At the beginning of the book, before the Rangers descend, Bowden describes the city as "a catastrophe, the world capital of things-gone-completely-to-hell." Everything of value had already been looted, he notes. "Every open space was clotted with the dense makeshift villages of the disinherited."[35] Bowden said U.S. service members looked at Mogadishu and thought of the "Mad Max" movies, a land after the "end of world" run by armed gangs, and that they, the U.S. Armed Forces, represented the "civilized world" sent to straighten things out.[36] We later hear that retired U.S. Admiral Jonathan Howe, in charge of the UN mission in Mogadishu, said of Somalia, "Here was a country not just at ground zero, but *below* zero."[37] Of course, a place that is already "below zero" cannot sink further; if it has nothing, one does not have to worry about, or justify, destroying the last remnants. Anything would be an improvement.

The film tries to correct the one-sidedness of the comments found in the book about Somalis and Mogadishu. At the beginning of the film, a Somali arms merchant who sells guns to Aidid, named Atto, is captured and jailed at the U.S. base. You hear one soldier ask the other, "What do you think of him?" The soldier replies, "Urbane, sophisticated." That being the first U.S. description of a Somali in the film, the comparisons to *Heart of Darkness* that jump out from the book are muted or left unsaid; in a sense, they are "covered up," to make the film look more politically correct.

Americans often like to think of themselves as rooting for the underdog or giving credit to those who are trying hard. The Rangers and Delta Force crews' meeting with stiff resistance in the beginning makes them temporary underdogs. Soldiers in tough situations are helped by helicopters. The superior fighting power of the helicopters is demonstrated several times in the film by focusing on the cascade of empty bullet shells that falls from the helicopters as they hover overhead, sometimes showering the U.S. troops below. Later, when the Black Hawk is shot down, Bowden explains: "It was more than a helicopter crash. It cracked the task force's sense of righteous invulnerability."[38] Part of the story Bowden wants to tell is how the Rangers become human by feeling their vulnerability. He earlier described how Rangers had never been in real battle but only practiced and how they yearned to be in a real battle; but when they actually got to fight in Mogadishu, it was disorienting.[39] How much have they changed because of their experience? Even after the fighting, the men assert that it feels to them as if they had been in a movie that could not have been real.[40]

Ways in Which the Film Diverts from the Book's Message

The context during 2001-2002, in which it was decided that this book should become a film, is important to remember. The new post 9-11 context and the beginning war in Afghanistan made some Americans want to present the story to America.

Being the world's only remaining superpower after the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States has been trying to redefine its geopolitical position. Powerful military contractors lobby to ensure that the end of the Cold War does not mean the end of weapons procurement or military spending. No longer poised to fight against a mighty adversary, the U.S. now engages in wars with relatively small and weak countries. How does the U.S. avoid looking like a thug in such confrontations? Since 9-11, the answer is simple: the seemingly small, weak, secret terrorist groups around the world are portrayed as actually mighty and bent on grave destruction, requiring vigilance at home and abroad, an unlimited military budget, and U.S. troops, with far superior military technology on their side, are the poor, embattled "good guys" just trying to help others. A pattern of U.S. military adventures against small, impoverished nations had asserted itself long before 2001, including Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Somalia, and the bombings of Libya and Sudan. Since the pattern may continue, films like *Black Hawk Down* psychologically desensitize U.S. citizens to such endeavors so that their discomfort at being the global bully will be minimized.

A headline story in *U.S.A. Today* about the war in Afghanistan drew a direct parallel between the fighting in Afghanistan and the film *Black Hawk Down*. Reporter Jonathan Weisman ponders in the third paragraph of his article, "When the history of the war is written, the traumatic battle in the mountains around the Shah-e-Kot Valley will be remembered as a testament to heroism: A bloodied, outnumbered band of U.S. service members held off a determined al-Qaeda force on frigid rocky terrain at least 8,000 feet above sea level. Call it *Black Hawk Down* in the snow."[41] Why would a reporter so soon interrupt his recitation of the facts of the battle, to suggest to readers that they should project themselves to a point forward in history, where their judgment, mimicking the judgment of the film, will decide that today's U.S. casualties in Afghanistan were heroes? This reporter is not the first to suggest that the film has a message, not only about history, but also about the current U.S. war on terrorism. In its most general terms, the message is: support our troops and do not question the war's intent or methods.

The claim that the U.S. casualties at Shah-e-Kot were similar to those in *Black Hawk Down* is due in part to their helicopter being shot down. But in what sense were the troops "outnumbered"? There were twenty-one service members in the helicopter, who were fired upon once they were downed. Through use of mobile cameras mounted on aircraft, Pentagon officials say they saw "a large number of enemy forces" advancing on the crash site. Overall, the same article explains, several hundred al-Qaeda fighters opposed 2,000 U.S. and allied troops. The article also explains, "within minutes, Air Force F-15 and F-16 fighter bombers were on the scene, pounding al-Qaeda positions and trying to drive back the enemy." They were shortly joined by Air Force AC-130 gunships, equipped with Gatling guns and howitzers, "which can blast out as many as 1,888 rounds a minute." But the journalist's eye trains us on the movement of the dozen or so vulnerable U.S. service members, searching for safety behind rocks, because to focus on the larger overall imbalance of power (air surveillance, F-15 and F-16s, and AC-130s) might be disquieting; it would reveal the U.S. as international bully.

Having had a glimpse of the Pentagon Papers, we know that the U.S. government and the Pentagon are particularly concerned with the image the United States projects at home and abroad. To win a battle but lose the public relations spin on the battle would mean, in effect, losing the war.[42] The U.S. hires specialists in military propaganda to ensure that the war is seen from the point of view that the government promotes. One could hope that, with freedom of speech in America, journalists could ferret out the facts and unmask blatant propaganda. Certainly, some journalists are dedicated to doing so; but other journalists get swept up in the same patriotic fervor as the general public.

Film reviewer Neil Gabler notices how *Black Hawk Down* departs from earlier war films, such as those during World War II that emphasized that the U.S. had a clear moral imperative and those made about the Vietnam era when the moral cause evaporates. Instead, "The rangers' obligation is to one another—to make sure their friends and fellow troops survive . . . in *Black Hawk Down* the battle becomes the cause, and the cause is the individual. As one soldier in the film puts it: 'It's about the man next to you. That's it.'" He thinks the film reflects recent trends of accepting unquestioningly the authority of the government as it chooses its wars and causes.[43]

Just as Gray noted about his experience in World War II, the camaraderie between soldiers intensifies as they face danger together.[44] The intoxicating feeling of overcoming individual isolation and merging into a "team," a "fighting unit," is so overwhelming that service members often

look back on such moments as the high points of their lives. In the book, Private Kurth goes through the same emotions in miniature, which the readers are encouraged to share. One minute he is thinking he is in hell on earth and is ready to quit the service; the next minute he wants to re-enlist, for as he says, "Where else am I going to get to do something like this?"[45] The quick-paced, ever-changing war scene gives excitement never to be found in the humdrum existence of middle-class American life or life in the barracks back home.

The film has been the subject of protests in New York City; the group A.N.S.W.E.R. (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) argued that it presents the war as a "race war," and *Village Voice* film reviewer Geoffrey Gray notes that while there were only two African-American soldiers stationed in Somalia, the starkness of white U.S. soldiers fighting against Africans plays into Ridley Scott's racist film aesthetic.[46] The film depicts one African American soldier who is around while Eberhart, the commander of a small unit, explains that he is not sure he agrees that the U.S. should be fighting in this war and that he respects the Somalis. After Eberhart speaks, the African American solider accuses Eberhart of being a starry-eyed idealist and then quickly espouses some realpolitik. So how can it be a race war if the African American soldier is not critical, while only the starry-eyed white idealist is? The film does not address the role of racism on an international scale, although it is an aspect of the film that has impressed and stunned critics and viewers. Film reviewer David Brooks, however, cites a Somali viewer, Mohamad Ali Abdi, who argues that in the film, "the reality of the Somali character is captured," especially "the crazy way Somalis just kept on fighting."[47] If Abdi's statement is accurate, then it may be that the racism of the film has to do not so much with distortion of the scenario as it does with providing accurate, snapshot glimpses into that reality without providing the context in which those snapshots can be understood—for example, the motivation for Somalis to fight so fiercely against the U.S., especially when they were technologically overwhelmed.

Bowden never mentions that the unacceptability of the carnage (U.S. and Somali) is the lesson to be learned from the failure of the military involvement. Indeed, if the recent war in Afghanistan is an example of lessons learned and applied, it seems that the only lesson learned is that U.S. casualties must be minimized, not necessarily those on the other side. When Bowden explains, "What happened to these men in Mogadishu comes alive every time the U.S. considers sending young soldiers to serve American policy in remote and dangerous corners of the world,"[48] this makes clear that the Pentagon is only counting the loss of U.S. lives and not the overall loss of lives. On his website, Bowden explained to a reader,

"The reality of war ought to give the public and our leaders appropriate pause before risking the lives of American soldiers. . . . One reason I think troops were committed in Mogadishu was the heady feeling that followed the Gulf War, which looked nice and antiseptic on all those videos on CNN."[49] As Bowden explains, the Rangers were "shocked to find themselves bleeding on the dirt streets of an obscure African capital for a cause so unessential. . . ."[50] While the cause was supposedly the noble one of helping Somalia reconstitute its government, the cause was not important enough to justify loss of U.S. lives.

Kaus reports that the Rangers had accepted the fact that casualties are part of their job and were frustrated with Clinton for calling off the project. While mourning the loss of eighteen of their men, they considered the battle worthwhile because the *ratio* of casualties was favorable to the U.S. However, Kaus cautioned, "[w]ith such a favorable 'exchange ratio,' Phase II of the Somali mission was rapidly approaching destroy-the-village-in-order-to-save-it territory."[51] In a similar parallel, military officials describing the recent battle in Shah-e-Kot, Afghanistan, which resulted in seven U.S. deaths, were quick to note, "In the larger operation, the enemy death toll is far higher." They explained that forty to fifty al-Qaeda fighters besieging the downed Americans were killed.[52] The entire operation in Afghanistan has resulted in few U.S. casualties, while civilian Afghan casualties were estimated to be about 3,800.

Bowden argued that the battle shows the limits of what force can accomplish. For example, force alone could not install a democratic government in Somalia.[53] But if this is so, would not sending a different deployment to Somalia, a nonmilitary force, have been better? If people cannot be forced by gunpoint into living in peace with each other, what kind of help would be more helpful? Kaus argues that if Bowden deduced that military might alone would not bring the hoped-for democracy, then his advice that Clinton should have gone ahead and finished the plan to undermine Aidid's power would have been pointless—even its ultimate "success," at the price of more lives, would have been a failure.

Kaus notes that the film ends on a note of defeat. We see the caskets of the dead service members, and we get the distinct impression that nothing has been solved in Somalia.[54] Yet the film comes at a time when the U.S. government wants people to acquiesce or support the use of troops around the world to fight the war on terrorism. Gabler argues that the film will be seen as calling for renewed pride in U.S. forces and signals U.S. citizen's preparedness to see them engage in combat.[55] Rather than caution regarding jeopardizing the lives of U.S. service members (let alone noncombatants of other countries) as Bowden claims was his intention, the

film may renew the commitment for U.S. intervention abroad and possibly in Somalia itself.

Insights of Refugees

Far away from the halls of Hollywood, Somali refugees have had their own experience of Somalia's troubles and their own insights into solutions. Not framed by the same issues of the U.S. projecting its image and maintaining respect and fearsomeness, Somalis are concerned about their country because they want to live in it. Just as Bowden's interviews with Somalis in Mogadishu after the "Day of the Rangers" are valuable, so also did I find great value in being able to converse with refugees who gave their unique perspectives.

With the help of Chaungo Barasa, Head of Water Engineering for CARE International–Kenya at the Dadaab refugee camp (himself a keen interviewer due to his experience in Odera Oruka's sage philosophy project in Kenya), I was able to interview sixteen refugees at Dadaab's three camps (Ifo, Dagahaley, and Hagadera) who were involved in peace education and other constructive endeavors at the camp. Interview topics included sources of conflict and solutions to conflict on interpersonal, refugee camp, national, and international levels. For these purposes, I will focus on their insights to solutions to their national problem, but I will also bring in the other categories as they are helpful to shed light on the national problem.

Causes

The Somali community has done a lot of reflection on what caused the war in Somalia. Hassan analyzed the situation as stemming from the perennial struggle of pastoral communities for grazing lands. In the past, communities might steal camels from each other; elders would be called in to negotiate and to suggest return of camels when necessary. Contemporary conflicts are graver because they involve struggle not for tangibles like camels, but for intangibles like power, advanced weapons, and desire for wealth. Competing warlords get people to fight along tribal lines, due to lack of education.

Yussuf continued this topic of how traditional struggles over grazing land and livestock formed a background for contemporary problems in Somalia. Uneducated people did not always respect their neighbor's requests, which could lead to conflict. He gave an example of a recurring situation, in which a family living near him had an odiferous dead cow or

donkey. When he complained and asked the family to bury it, they said, "It does not concern you; we are going to beat you up, or we are going to detain you." He attributes such attitudes and ways of speaking to lack of education. Yussuf is worried about practices of tribalism resurfacing in Somali politics. He describes Somalia as "a big tribe which has divided itself." Somaliland, Gede, and Jubberland are divided tribally, each with their special diet, even though many immigrants may live there. Political parties go along tribal lines. He thinks that due to lack of education, warlords do not understand how tribalism will hurt them. In his estimation, the elders were cooperating with the warlords, that the warlords had elders in their "pockets," and because of this, the elders were not filling their traditional role of passing wisdom to the next generation.

Abdullahi spoke at great length and with considerable depth about the problems of his country. He began by outlining what he considered to be four kinds of governments, based on scripture, colonial law, dictatorship, and democratic/ parliamentarian constitution. He wanted to focus on the problems of dictatorship. A dictator who unfairly rewards his loyal following while oppressing others will inevitably become unpopular and be overthrown. But at the time of the overthrow, a new leader can either unify the country and take it to prosperity, or become a factional leader who divides people and encourages strife. He says that the latter happened in Somalia. Factional leaders encouraged looting of weapons and other goods as they encouraged their followers to fight other groups. Those who are unqualified to become leaders are nevertheless political opportunists who use weapons and fighting to grab power positions. As he explains, "The only thing the political leaders know now is how to use the gun against civilians." They put illiterate people in positions of power because they are easier to manipulate. In the mayhem, intellectuals and families fled from the strife. He thinks that educated people know the dangers of civil war and so would have been more careful.

Abdullahi complained about what he thought was international apathy toward the plight of Somalis. He said that leaders in the community who were in the camps were willing to work with international agencies, which were serious about helping Somalia. He further noted that when Somali intellectual leaders went to peace talks in Kenya, it was hard for them to understand the faction leaders. Often the faction leaders agree to work for peace, but later they do not implement the policies. Abdullahi noted that the faction leaders come to Somalia with funds and attract people to their movements because of funds. A solution would therefore involve defunding the faction leaders and funding alternatives based on international groups working with community leaders.

Amina described the struggles and frustrations of living in a refugee camp. While all human beings want security—their basic needs like food, shelter, and health—the refugees did not have these basic needs secured. Life is precarious and every day is a challenge. Refugees listen to the radio and are disheartened to hear that the fighting between clans is continuing in some areas. Asked about the cause of conflict in her country, she said, "The war-lords haven't understood the goodness of their people. . . The majority of Somalis, although many have died because of war . . . but the few remaining, the majority are women and children with no fathers, and children who are orphans, who miss their fathers and mothers. And they would all like to have peace in their country."

Amina further explained that the bad situation continued because old men who should be leaders had no money, so they could not attract the youth, who will fight for those who promise them riches. She is frustrated that sons will ignore the counsel of their mothers and join wars. In her own words, she said:

> The conflict is there in Somalia because of the war-lords; they still have not understood the goodness of their people, because each and every one of the war-lords wants to have power, wants to be the president of the country, and he does not want the others to be president. They are all selfish, each wants everything for himself. . .War-lords use publicity and often like to talk about tribal issues. In Somalia these war-lords are divided into tribes and clans. So war-lords usually use youth from their tribes and they attract them with something which youth like . . . they tell them, "we're fighting with the other tribe and they want to overtake our town, they want to do this to us, so we should fight with them." So that would be the tactic usually used. Old men who are supposed to be doing reconciliation and peace, now he has nothing, he is very poor back home in Somalia and here... all the resources are in the hands of the warlords. The youth are with the war-lords because the war-lords are getting a lot of money [*sic*].[56]

Amina thinks that the solution to this problem is to have the international community help in cutting off the flow of weapons and funds to the warlords. We can see in her analysis an apt expression of the role of manipulation of ethnic and clan issues for personal gain and political power. The conflict is not really about ethnicity; tribalism is a ruse to get people motivated to fight.

Ethiopian refugees also reflected on the situation of their country. Bekele argued that in Ethiopia, tribalism and favoritism cause conflict.

People are not allowed to practice religion and morality as they wish. Abebe said that leaders are ambitious and will do anything to get a plot of land. Tsefaye reiterated, arguing that it is the same in Somalia; each warlord wants his personal benefit. He also opined that the U.S. Armed Forces being driven out of Somalia was unfortunate.

Some people emphasized the way in which people are misled to believe that they must hate enemies. Bekele said that wars begin when an ideology is imposed on people. Individuals may have independent ideas, but under peer and government pressure, persons will feel compelled either to hide their disagreement or change their views to fit the reigning ideology. The purpose of the ideology is always to be able to exploit some party. He gave the European colonizing of Africa and later the Cold War as examples of ideologies intended to exploit people. Tsefaye noted that the process of defining enemies begins very early. As children, they have been told that people from other countries are bad. This creates a predisposition that makes being manipulated to fight later easier. Hassan argued that the lack of education is the key cause of war since because of it people are easily manipulated.

Wani stated what is widely believed to be the case, that in both Sudan and Somalia, the leaders are dictators and they use their dictatorial powers to cause wars. But others noted that the cause of conflicts has to do not only with the perpetrators themselves, but also with the reluctance of others to get involved in helping to avoid the conflict or the inability of well-meaning parties to be effective in helping. Abebe bemoaned that the OAU was powerless to help resolve his and other countries' problems because leaders of government and rebel troops disregard its advice. Abdullahi went so far as to say that there is an "international conspiracy" to lose interest in Somalia's problems; he came to that conclusion because he noted that no country will help his country.

Solutions

Bekele explained bluntly that the greedy ones must go. Abdullahi argued that since the problems had economic roots, a solution would have to involve funds to compete with the faction leaders. Abdullahi said that the international community must finance peace because, he charged, right now they are the ones who are funding war. Whether factional leaders succeed depends on their finances, and they are getting their finances abroad. He argued that the supply of weapons to Somali factional leaders must be stopped. The international community must stop supplying

weapons to faction leaders; community groups must employ youths so that they do not turn to faction leaders for survival.

Amina also asserted that the international community should stop giving weapons to the Somali warlords. In the meantime, while she is in the camp, she organizes with others to improve conditions in the camp. She is part of a security committee, organized with block leaders, to prevent any fights that might escalate. She also works to discourage practices of wife beating and to help families stay together because break-ups are hard on the children. She is also on the antirape committee, which helps victims get support from social services, hospitals, and the police. The committee also organizes women so that they can travel in groups to lessen their vulnerability when they gather firewood. Her insights into conflict and its solutions certainly conform to the motto, "Think globally, act locally."

Hassan argued that there should be education, which would help people to understand the causes of conflicts. Such education would be an important first step in being able to avoid or stop conflicts. Hassan is involved in peace education for children at the camp. He teaches children to understand the root causes of conflict, whatever the level. He explains, "What is the conflict? Are the people in the problem acting out their feelings, or are they hiding their feelings behind another argument...? What does each person in the conflict need? What is stopping them from getting what they need?" The goal of negotiations is for both sides to be happy with the outcome. Hassan explains that when one listens respectfully to the other in a conflict, emotional agitation may calm as they see they are being taken seriously. Hassan explains how these basics of conflict resolution intersect with Somali culture. He says it is part of Somali culture that when there is a conflict, others get involved. When children are in conflict, elders will step in. Traditionally, the parties brought in (for example, parents) would be highly agitated and aggrieved. Nevertheless, they would be motivated to seek redress. Under the current circumstances, however, it is a challenge for Hassan and others teaching conflict resolution to encourage parties to become calm in order to solve their problems.

Hassan explains that the peace education program at the camp has been promoting its views by teaching children peace songs, which have verses like: "We are fingers of one hand, come and join us in our quest for unity." There are songs the goal of which is mutual understanding among the different groups within Somalia and to undo ethnic and racial hatreds. Hassan also teaches the children peaceful games that do not use violence. There is also a need to address textbooks used in school that contain derogatory accounts of Somalia's neighbors. Hassan explains that based on his study of civics, he concluded that Ethiopians were "like wild

animals which eat people"; but when he got to the camp, he found instead that "Ethiopians are absolutely very logical people, civilized and normal people, and now we are friends." He does not want the next generation to be subject to the same miseducation he had suffered.

While he teaches children at his camp, he sees the need for learning the lessons of creating peace, not only in the camp, but between nations and people, as for example between Palestinians and Israelis. As he explains, "peace is an international requirement."

Tsefaye pointed to the role of poets. He suggested that people compose verse to discourage people from fighting. He himself wanted to write a book; he thought that writing poetry and books would get the message of peace out to many people and have a good influence.

Analysis

Overall, the Somalis with whom I spoke saw their country's problem in a larger international and longer historical context than the usual focus on the immediate situation. They explain how different groups—the warlords, the intellectuals, the elders, the uneducated, the youth—all play different roles and together make up the Somali situation. Their solutions call for deeper understanding and deeper cooperation among all the stakeholders. The interviews include a wealth of information, which can be explored in depth and become the basis for future action to improve small communities as well as international relations.

Amina's insights are just one example of political wisdom. Focusing on questions of which companies or countries supply the weapons or the funds to buy the weapons, and then pressuring those sources to cut off their supply of weapons, would be a major step in de-escalating conflict in the area. A follow-up step would be to collect and destroy the guns already held by the general population, especially in war-torn areas. Control of arms proliferation is already an important project for the United Nations as well as NGOs. Since youth are attracted to join armed forces through promise of pay, or even just food, there is a need for alternative programs for youth, where they can be kept busy developing their skills in positive ways. Then the armies of the warlords would not look as alluring.

Quite a few of those interviewed emphasized the role of ideology—of governments or movements popularly picturing their enemies as inferior to themselves. Many media analysts and conflict resolution and peace studies advocates have explored this theme. Louis Kriesberg notes that our concept of self (individual or group) as superior or chosen by God can have the destructive tendency to harm others seen as inferior or evil.[57]

Michael Nagler, when trying to fathom the flare-up of ethnic tensions in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, often finds that just prior to a breakout of ethnic violence, one can find that some aspect of the media had been stirring up ethnic hatred in its news coverage, encouraging perceptions of the enemy as intolerable in some way. Nagler speculates that a key ingredient for a more peaceful world would be the media working to shed light on the sources of conflict and covering positive examples of when conflicts are solved.[58] He also echoes Hassan's insistence that much violence stems from ignorance. Nagler suggests that of the models that could be used to study and understand the causes of and solutions to violence, the one he finds most helpful is to understand violence as the result of ignorance, which can be lessened or abated by education.[59]

While refugees may come up with solutions and tactics already known by professionals who have written books, insights that come from their own communities and not just books are more likely to be accepted and implemented. Taking stock of the resources of those in one's own community is certainly the first step in improving conflict situations at whichever level they might occur, whether interpersonal or international.

Somalia as "Political Football" in Other Countries' Agendas

While one crucial aspect of Somalia's problems has to do with their negotiating their internal difficulties, Somalis have had an additional layer of problems from often being treated as a political football by larger countries with their own separate agendas, which do not have Somali thriving at the heart of their concerns. This problem goes back a long way. During the Cold War, Somalia was a client state of the Soviets, while the U.S. backed Haile Selassie in Ethiopia. But in 1975, when Haile Selassie was toppled by leftist Mengistu Haile Miriam, who then allied himself with the Soviets, the United States decided to court Somalia's Siad Barre. Military support kept Barre in power until 1991, when the U.S. withdrew its support after the fall of the Berlin Wall and Soviet power diminished. Barre was immediately overthrown by clan-based militias. During this entire Cold War period, it could be argued that Somalis were prevented from having a government that reflected their values and collective wishes.[60]

During the 1990s, there was factional fighting, and the United Nations got involved in trying to bring humanitarian aid and governmental stability (with the "Black Hawk Down" episode being just part of that years-long experience). General Aidid, and, upon his death in 1996, his son Hussein Aidid, struggled for dominance in the region. The Rahanweyn Resistance Army also fought for power and territory, capturing Bay and

Bakol in 1999. A peace conference held in Djibouti in 2000 created a Transitional National Government, formed in Ethiopia, while its base was in Baidoa. Somaliland seceded. A peace process in 2002 led to the formation of a Transitional Federal Government in 2004, led by Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.[61] But this TFG was experienced as ineffectual by many Somalis, who were tired of disorder in their governments. It also never gained the extent of legitimacy it needed to be effective. A popular movement called the Union of Islamic Courts began to gain support and to control many parts of Somalia.

What are reasons for conflicts between clans that dominated Somalia during most of the 1990s until recently? A study of the role of fights over resources was done by Christian Webersik, a postdoctoral fellow with the United Nations Institute of Advanced Studies. He noted that Bay and Bakol are the breadbasket of Somalia. Cereals come from Bay, while Lower Shabelle provides bananas. Faction leaders fight for control of resources and the means of trade such as seaports and airfields. Referring to resource scarcity theorists Johan Galtung and Paul Collier, he explains that the availability of lootable resources can prolong conflicts, not only providing needed supplies for fighting but also becoming the reason to continue fighting (to win the prize of future resource control). Other resource issues include a profitable trade in charcoal that continues during government neglect (since there are no environmental limits on deforestation) and the profits made from selling arms. Hotel managers and shipping agents profit from NGOs bringing aid during Somalia's crisis, and the lack of law and stability brings profits to security companies, which must therefore be hired to protect NGOs and their shipments.[62] Those who profit from this kind of instability do not necessarily want peace restored.

Martin Doornbos explains that in Somalia there are many groups opposed to the reemergence of a centralized state. Through lengthy, painstaking negotiations over recent years, by 2002, they concluded that they would prefer a loose federation (similar to Switzerland or the United Arab Emirates), to minimize chances that one clan or subclan would dominate the whole. While such an arrangement would be unconventional in the African context, Doornbos opined that it would be the best working model for Somalia. However, the UN and the European Union were still trying to institute a government of national unity. Prime minister of the interim national government, Galaydh, on October 19, 2001 pledged to the UN Security Council that he would support the war on terror, but Somalis soon rejected him and his cabinet. However, after 9-11, all neighboring states and the OAU (Organization of African Unity), EU (European Union), and UN supported the old and status quo concept of a centralized national

government. Doornbos fears that other nations' and organizations' agendas will override Somalia's attempts at solving the nation's problems.[63] It seems that the U.S.-led "war on terror" will put U.S. security first, even at the cost of continuing to destabilize Somalia.

The situation in Somalia dramatically worsened during 2006-2008. The Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) gained popularity and territory in 2006, taking over Mogadishu and much of central and southern Somalia. Many Somalis felt some relief from the chaos that had been present due to the ineffective central government. The problem is, both the United States and Somalia's neighbor Ethiopia could only see the UIC through the lenses of their own concerns. They did not want an Islamic-based government in Somalia due to their own fears. The U.S. thought that the UIC could open Somalia to al-Qaeda's influence. Seeing that Ethiopia also had its reasons to oppose an Islamic government in its neighbor (since it was working to quell similar sentiments within its own country), the two cooperated to militarily oust the UIC.

Ever since the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and increasingly since the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings, the U.S. has increasingly seen all developments in Somalia through the lens of its "war on terror," and because of this has often misjudged situations and neglected the impact of their decisions on the Somali people. Sharif Nashashibi, chair of Arab Media Watch, notes within the context of East Africa, Somalia and Sudan are the only two countries that have not yet cooperated with U.S. policy agendas. Ethiopia has had an interest in ensuring that Somalia remains weak, for a united Somalia could begin troubles with Ethiopia's three million ethnic Somalis. Occasionally over the past few years, Ethiopia has conducted military maneuvers within Somali territory. Now Ethiopia claims that terrorists are hiding within Somalia and is requesting that the U.S. do something about it.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, George W. Bush mentioned Somalia as a possible stronghold for terrorists and therefore a potential target for the U.S. However, no one from the U.S. Embassy staff had visited Somalia since September 11, 2001, and no evidence of terrorist activity had been reported in the country. In the meantime, the U.S. closed down the Barakaat, which was a telephone and banking system used by Somalis abroad to send $300–$500 million per year back to family members living in Somalia. The U.S. argued that the system was used by al-Qaeda terrorists; but its closing puts untold hardship on many Somalis.[64] Sarah Bayne, in a briefing paper presented to the European Union on January 9, 2002, argued that the closing of the Al-Barakaat created economic shock

throughout the country. She noted that in Somalia, total Diaspora remittances exceed the value of exports and international aid. Earlier, livestock had been a key export, but it had been recently banned because of Rift Valley Fever. Therefore, cutting off the flow of remittances was akin to severing a lifeline. The U.S. has also declared Al-Itihaad to be a terrorist group. It is true that Al-Itihaad did fight to establish an Islamic state from 1991 until its defeat by Ethiopian forces in 1997, but in the meantime, it has become the country's leader in providing education, health, and welfare services, so its shutting down would also lead to the misery of many in Somalia. The UN has declared that Al-Itihaad was not engaged in terrorist activities. Bayne argues that, by closing both Al-Barakaat and Al-Itihaad, the current U.S.-led strategy toward Somalia carries enormous risks to long-term prospects for peace and stability within the country and ultimately will become counterproductive.[65] She is also concerned that now faction leaders will use the threat of Islamic militancy to manipulate international donors.[66]

The U.S. has also not always had the best influence on fragile peace processes. When a peace process sponsored by the UN had as its goal the creation of a multiethnic Somalia, some faction leaders (including Aidid's son Hussein, who was a U.S. marine) walked out, assured that they had backing from the U.S. and Ethiopia.[67] Such developments lead one to believe that the U.S. is not pursuing the most peaceful agenda, but rather one that will ensure the allegiance of the new Somali government with U.S. policy. Nashashibi states, "Thus when one sees the regional gains made by the U.S. in its wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, it is not difficult to draw parallels to Somalia, and to understand the deep-rooted fear and suspicion in the Arab and Muslim worlds that behind the 'war on terror' is a strategy of attaining regional dominance and compliant allies regardless of local and humanitarian consequences."[68]

During 2006, the Islamic Courts became a formidable alternative to the (covertly) U.S.-backed transitional government and local military strongmen who had carved Mogadishu into their personal territories. The UIC seized control of Mogadishu in June 2006, dismantling roadblocks, reopening the airports, repairing streets, and bringing peace to the city. Many clan elders were relieved to see peace restored and so backed UIC-aligned militias. Soon the transitional government had little power outside of its base in Baidoa.[69]

While the U.S. State Department was not in favor of military intervention in Somalia, General John Abizaid arrived in Addis Ababa on December 4, 2006 to make a courtesy call to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zanawi. The official story is that Ethiopia decided to have its

armed forces enter Somalia on December 24, 2006, but they had been aided by U.S. Intelligence prior to the invasion, which gave them information on the position of the Islamists they wanted to fight. According to Peter Pace, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the U.S. justified its involvement, including sending advisers with Ethiopian forces and its eventual use of air strikes using "the Pentagon's authority to hunt and kill terrorism suspects around the globe, a power the White House gave it shortly after the September 11 attacks."[70] The Pentagon uses its outpost in Djbouti as a base for Special Operations Missions that involve Delta Force and other elite fighting forces, and that base was able to aid Ethiopia in this context.

While officials from Washington have characterized the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia as a response to Somalia's aggression, and while some Somali leaders had used aggressive and threatening language, *New African* columnist Cameron Duodu argues that the proper response to verbal provocation would have been to complain to other countries and work through the African Union to address the problem.[71]

On Christmas Eve of December 2006, Ethiopian forces, with the backing of U.S. forces and Somalia's transitional government, entered Somalia to topple the UIC. The U.S. used helicopter gunships in air strikes and in what they termed "mopping up" operations. The European Union condemned the invasion. Kurt Shillinger, a South African Institute for International Affairs expert in terrorism, stated that the U.S. would be better off if it concentrated on governance-building processes rather than military actions that could lead to the further collapse of Somalia and bring about exactly what the U.S. was hoping to prevent.[72] In fact, this military action could be an example of "preemptive" war against al-Qaeda, because the argument was mainly that conditions were ripe for al-Qaeda's entrance. But different parties to the fight had different estimations of whether al-Qaeda really had a significant presence in Somalia. Somalia's foreign minister Ismail Mohammed Harre said that his government had been fighting with *jihadi* forces, who had blood on their hands—real international terrorists.[73] But others say that while there may be many sympathetic to al-Qaeda, the UIC was not connected to international terrorists. A *Le Monde* editorial charges that the U.S. confuses "terrorism, jihadism, and Islamism" and by conflating these categories, mobilizes men to take up arms against Ethiopian forces.[74]

The December 2006 military intervention involved the cooperation of the U.S., Ethiopia, the Somali transitional government, and Kenya, which sealed off its border and captured those who tried to flee across into Kenya. Human rights groups say that Kenya arrested about 150 people and sent eighty of them back to Somalia and Ethiopia in what they charge was a

U.S.-planned case of extraordinary rendition. Among those held incommunicado was U.S. citizen Amir Mohamed Meshar, flown from Nairobi to Baidoa on February 10, 2007. The Muslim Human Rights Forum challenged the Kenyan government in court. Under a judge's order, authorities showed that eighty detainees had been transferred to Somalia and Ethiopia on three chartered flights on January 20 and 27 and February 10. Those flown to Ethiopia were Ogaden and Oromo fighters who joined Somali's Islamists in fighting against Ethiopian troops. There were grave issues about the violations of human rights involved in renditions such as these.[75]

In addition, Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi and Deputy Prime Minister Hussein Aidid had a difficult task of convincing Somalis of the legitimacy of the transitional government since they were reliant on Ethiopian forces and, as time went on, African Union peacekeepers (from Uganda and Nigeria) to stay in power and so were easily seen as beholden to foreigners, not Somalis. In the meantime, the anarchy that reigned before the Islamic Courts took power returned, so that business people were back to having to pay bribes and protection money in a chaotic context.[76]

In its further attempts to influence politics by proxy, the U.S. hired DynCorp International to help with the peacekeeping mission in Somalia. DynCorp then hired 1,500 Ugandan troops as peacekeepers, who were greeted with mortar attack and firefight upon their landing.[77]

Members of the Islamic Courts found asylum in Eritrea, which extended support to them in hopes of thwarting their common rival, Ethiopia. From his base in Asmara, Islamic Courts leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys argued that Somalia's transitional government (which cooperated with Ethiopian and U.S. forces) were traitors to Somalia. He criticized the Bush Administration's involvement in Somalia (commenting, "Bush thinks that he is in charge of the world") and insisted that Somalia had to be liberated from Ethiopian troops.[78]

Fighting continued throughout 2007, with several hundred killed in April. Those fighting the Ethiopian forces had been "flattened under a deluge of fire," said a reporter from *Le Monde*. Ethiopian and transitional government forces went door-to-door in Mogadishu, breaking in and searching for fighters and weapons, making the city unlivable. The security situation worsened. By November 2007, it was reported that the Ethiopian forces engaged in targeted and blind assassinations and "fire on passersby and opened tank fire on residential neighborhoods and the Bakara market."[79] By the end of the year, Elman Human Rights Group (the oldest human rights organization in Somalia, then banned by the transitional government) charged that 5,960 Somali civilians had been killed during

2007; over 700,000 people were displaced by the fighting.[80] By December 2007, some 200,000 refugees were in a makeshift camp called Mustahil, which was located on a road from Mogadishu to Afgoye. UN relief aid had to get through checkpoints that extorted payments.[81] Oxfam warned of a grave humanitarian crisis. Cereal prices increased by 500 percent, rice tripled, and fuel prices soared. Oxfam predicted 2.6 million people would be in dire need of assistance.[82]

Staying just offshore, U.S. naval forces fired two Tomahawk cruise missiles from a submarine into Somalia on March 3, 2008. Pentagon specialist Bryan Whitman explained that they were aiming at a "known Al-Qaeda terrorist," Kenyan Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, who was wanted for questioning in terrorist attacks within Kenya in 2002. Somalis say that the missiles hit and killed three civilians, three cows, one donkey, and destroyed a house. Somalis protested the bombings. U.S. forces had already fired into Somalia several times in 2007.[83]

The Senlis Council argued that frustration with war and unemployment was fueling the insurgency against Western forces. What was needed in the area was jobs and democracy, not more war against terror.[84] Both the International Crisis Group (Brussels) and the Center for American Progress (Washington, DC) contributed to a report called "Somalia: A Country in Peril, a Foreign Policy Nightmare," which charges that "U.S. counter-terrorism policies have . . . generated a high level of anti-Americanism and are contributing to the radicalization of the population."[85] Authors reported that the situation in Somalia in 2008 exceeded any possible worst-case scenarios that regional analysts had thought up prior to the Ethiopian invasion. The report points to the fragile peace begun by the signing of the "Djibouti Agreement" in August 2008, in which moderates from both the transitional government and opposition had cooperated. However, more extreme armed groups like Islamist Shabaab were not been on board and could undermine the agreement's success. Ken Menkhaus and Chris Albin-Lackey, who presented the report, argued that the moderates in Somalia had to be strengthened and supported, but that U.S. policies, especially its putting Shabaab on a list of terrorist groups, have "actually worked to strengthen and embolden hard-liners", resulting in "the exact opposite of what we set out to achieve," according to Menkhaus.[86]

The United States seems to have continued its policy of ignoring Somalia's grave humanitarian problems, while continuing to intervene (albeit now through proxies like Ethiopian troops) whenever it decides U.S. security is at risk. As a result, horrible conditions fester, but if they ever spawn what the U.S. considers a dangerous response, it squelches that response, leaving horrible conditions neglected. Is this a smart way to fight

the "war on terror"? Under these conditions, Somalis' dreams of having a livable country will be forever postponed.

If the swooping down of elite forces (in tandem with their proxies) is the new way in which the U.S. hopes to engage others in war around the world, with expensive technology, intent on saving U.S. lives while being willing to jeopardize the lives of others, we need to find alternatives quickly. Surely, such methods cannot ensure peaceful reconstruction of war-torn peoples. They also jeopardize noncombatant immunity and human rights. The popularity of the film *Black Hawk Down* may bode ill for the conscience of our nation. Films like this therefore become the sites of contestation: who will win the hearts and minds of U.S. citizens, and for what cause?

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Chaungo Barasa and support staff at CARE International of Kenya, especially Wayne Nightingale and Marangu Njogu, for arranging a series of interviews with refugees at Dadaab during 1999. Also, thanks to UNHCR for granting permission for the study. I would also like to thank the J. William Fulbright Foundation for a Senior Scholar position at the University of Nairobi from 1998–2000, which made my participation in this research possible. The names of the refugees quoted in this article have been changed to protect their identity.

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Seeds Bearing Fruit: Pan African Peace Action in the 21st Century
edited by Elavie Ndura-Ouédraogo, Matt Meyer, and Judith Atiri.
Trenton, NJ, and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2011. pp. 323-351.