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## Conflict Resolution Strategies in Africa: A Case Study of the Somalian Conflict, 1960-2010

**Grace Malachi Brown, PhD<sup>1</sup> and Malachi Elisha Brown, LL.M, PhD<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University of Education,  
P.M.B. 5047, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria | Tel: +234-803-313-5226 | E-mail:  
[nyetubrown@yahoo.com](mailto:nyetubrown@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>(Chief Consultant and Head of Chambers), Alfred Chambers (Barristers, Solicitors & Arbitrators), 1<sup>ST</sup> Floor  
Debo Plaza, 2-4 FGGC Road (Beside FGGC gate), Abuloma Town, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria | Tel:  
+234-803-310-4156 | E-Mail: [talk2drbrown@gmail.com](mailto:talk2drbrown@gmail.com)

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<sup>1</sup>Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University of Education, P.M.B. 5047, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria | Tel: +234-803-313-5226 | **E-mail:** [nyetubrown@yahoo.com](mailto:nyetubrown@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>(Chief Consultant and Head of Chambers), Alfred Chambers (Barristers, Solicitors & Arbitrators), 1<sup>ST</sup> Floor Debo Plaza, 2-4 FGGC Road (Beside FGGC gate), Abuloma Town, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria | **Tel:** +234-803-310-4156 | **E-Mail:** [talk2drbrown@gmail.com](mailto:talk2drbrown@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

In this study, we will begin briefly by examining the historical background of the state of Somalia, its geography and peoples; and trace the origin of its conflict and how the conflict was managed in line with the provisions of international humanitarian law and then analyze the efficacy of the conflict resolution mechanisms that was adopted to end the conflict in order to avoid the reoccurrence of the conflict. The contribution of this study to knowledge and research has become necessary, in view of the peculiar issues, politics and the crisis that bedeviled the State of Somalia and its implication to the African continent.

## 2. Historical Background of Somalia

- (i) **Location:** The country known as 'Somalia' or 'Somali Democratic Republic', is an independent state in the eastern part of the African continent. The country is also referred to as the 'horn of Africa' because of the shape of its landmass. Somali is bounded by the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Indian ocean on the east and south east, Kenya on the south west, Ethiopia on the west, and north west by French Somaliland (now Eritrea and Djibouti) – Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia.

- (ii) **Geography:** Somalia has an area of 1,882,857 square kilometre and an estimated population of 100,128,000. Most of the republic is a broad plateau with mainly a desert or semi desert climate (Robert, 2004). Fage (1977) observed that the North has less than 250mm of rainfall annually, which rainfall increases towards the South. Mogadishu (the Capital, which is in the south) has an average of 400mm rainfall annually. The rain occurs mostly between May to August. Mogadishu has an average temperature of 82<sup>o</sup>F in April (the warmest month) and 75<sup>o</sup>F in July (the coolest month).

Unlike the north, the southern parts have a Savanna type of vegetation with scattered acacia trees, grass and thorn bush. There are mangrove swamps along the Southern coast. The Guiba (or Juba) and the Scebeli (Shebeli) rivers both of which flow out of Ethiopia and empty into the Indian ocean are the principal rivers (Sandra, 1997).

- (iii) **Economic Activities:** The chief economic activity of the country is nomadic herding. Animals and animal products account for 66% of all exports (Michael, 2002). This sector employs about 80% of the entire population. Its crop production is concentrated in the South, especially the better watered areas along the Guiba and Scebeli rivers in the southern region. The average annual income in 1973 was only \$3,000. However, a severe drought in 1974 led to famine in 1975 and the need for massive foreign aid (George, 1980). The Central Bank of Somalia indicates that the country's GDP per capita is \$333. About 43% of the population live on less than 1 US dollar a day, with about 24% of those found in urban areas and 54% living in rural areas. As with neighboring countries, Somalia's economy consists of both traditional and modern production, with a gradual shift in favor of modern industrial techniques taking root. According to the Central Bank of Somalia, about 80% of the population are [nomadic](#) or semi-nomadic pastoralists, who keep [goats](#), [sheep](#), [camels](#) and [cattle](#). The nomads also gather [resins](#) and [gums](#) to supplement their income ([CIA World Factbook](#). 2012; [CIA World Factbook](#). 2012; Somalia: [World Factbook](#); [Central Intelligence Agency](#); [Central Bank of Somalia - Economy and Finance](#)). Agriculture is the most important economic sector. It accounts for about 65% of the GDP and employs 65% of the workforce. Livestock contributes about 40% to GDP and more than 50% of export earnings. Other principal exports include [fish](#), [charcoal](#) and [bananas](#); [sugar](#), [sorghum](#) and [corn](#) are products for the domestic market. According to the Central Bank of Somalia, imports of goods total about \$460 million per year, and have recovered and even surpassed aggregate imports prior to the start of the civil war in 1991. Exports, which total about \$270 million annually, have also surpassed pre-war aggregate export levels but still lead to a trade account deficit of about \$190 million US dollars per year. However, this trade deficit is far exceeded by remittances sent by Somalis in the diaspora, which have helped sustain the import level.

- (iv) **Social:** The average population density is less than 8 persons per square mile. In the drier part of the north, it is less than 1 per square mile. However, in the Savanna part of the south, the population rises to 20 per square mile. Most of the inhabitants are Somali speaking and are all Moslems. Somali language is a branch of the Cushitic dialect group of the Hamitic language family (David, 1987). Those who speak it are of mixed Arab and Negro descent. The Somalis are somewhat wild, restless and unsettled people. However, there are a few fishermen, traders and caravan traders on the seaboard (Horn of African, 1977)..
- (v) **People and Early History:** Nearly all the citizens of Somalia are Somalis who in turn are Sunni-Muslims. Unlike many African countries, Somalia has not been troubled by ethnic divisions. However, there are Somalis who also live in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya and this fact has, ironically, brought Somalia in conflict with its neighbours.

Somalia started as Arab trading stations established along the coast from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Northern Somalia later became a British protectorate in 1887 while Italy took the South in 1905 (Lewis, 1988). However, in 1960, the two parts had become independent and united under Aden Abdullah Osman as elected provisional president.

The army took control in 1969 and ruled the country through the Supreme Military Council. Somalia became a one party state in 1976 and was later ruled by the political bureau of the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party headed by Major General Mohammed Siyad Barre.

### 3. External Factors of the Conflict

As already stated, Somalia is made up of predominantly Somali speaking people quite unlike many other African states. Ironically, this situation has been its greatest undoing. This is because all the Somali speaking peoples are not confined within the borders of Somalia alone. Due to the partitioning of Africa by Europeans and also because of their nomadic activities, some spilled over to neighbouring countries such as Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Thus, with the independence of Somalia in 1960, there were growing fears by some of its neighbours that Somalia would embark on expansionist policies to unite the Somalis by capturing territories of other neighbours inhabited by Somali speaking peoples (Michael, 2002). This led to the outbreak of hostilities with Ethiopia shortly after Somalia became independent in 1960 on mere suspicion that Somalia would make claim on Ethiopia territories occupied by Somalis. Somalis had enjoyed traditional grazing rights on both sides of the Ethiopia border.

The cause of this friction can be traced to colonial roots because the colonial masters partitioned the continent to suit their selfish interest without minding the ethnic spread, thus splitting an ethnic group with common heritage into two or more countries as happened to the Yoruba speaking people in Nigeria and Benin Republic. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the European-defined Somali border had taken shape, there were “five Somalis”, that is, one each under the control of France, Italy and Ethiopia, and two for Britain, one of

which was ruled indirectly through Kenya (Barington, 2006). All attempts to join them in the 1960s did not succeed. The French, Ethiopia and Kenyan British segments could not join with the two larger groupings (that is, the Italian in the south and British in the north) to form a new nation. Thus, the Somali nationalists' dream of unity remained unfulfilled for a long time. When the initial independence-leaders failed, they became content to live with an incomplete nation until 2012 when the new parliament was inaugurated (Somalia, 2012). However, a socialist and military regime of Siyad Barre came into control of the country's leadership, but could not achieve peace.

Conflicts between Ethiopia and Somalia continued in the 1960s because of the cold war era. Thousands of Somalis demonstrated in protest against US military aid to Ethiopia even though Somalia itself also received food aid during a severe drought (Lacey, 2006).

#### **4. Internal Factors of the Conflict**

The major internal factor was the emergence of a man called "Mohammed Siyad Barre" in the political scene, who ruled for 22 years. Major General Siyad Barre seized control in an officer's coup on October 29, 1969 and proclaimed a new revolutionary socialist government. Siyad Barre embarked on building a socialist-oriented republic with the help of the Soviet Union which was then Somalia's closest ally. He undertook several reforms in the educational, health, agriculture and social sectors as well as development of infrastructure.

However, by the mid 1970s, the government had become less popular and more dictatorial and also manifested the worst features of both personal rule and military command. Therefore, in an attempt to regain popularity and legitimacy, Siyad Barre manipulated the surviving elements of his version of Pan-Somali nationalism.

In 1974/75, massive drought had weakened Ethiopia and with other factors, pushed Emperor Haile Sellasie's government to a state of collapse. Siyad Barre saw this as an opportunity to liberate the Somali-speaking peoples of Ethiopia and acted promptly. In a bold military manoeuvre, he invaded the Ethiopian Ogaden in 1976 (Benjamin, 1992).

Unfortunately for Siyad Barre, Soviet Union pursuing an opportunistic cold war strategy, ruptured its long term relations with Somalia to give full political, diplomatic and military backing to its new Ethiopian ally, the revolutionary leader, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who had toppled the Emperor Haile Sellasie. With the help of thousands of Cuba troops, operating sophisticated Russian weapons, the Ethiopians ejected the Somali army from the disputed territories. Thus Siyad Barre's military adventure ended as a failure and the beginning of doom for both himself and the country (Oihe, 2000).

Ethiopia's victory was a big accomplishment and counter-productive for Somalia because at independence, Somalian army was only 5,000. However, the Russians helped to increase it to 20,000 and Siyad Barre continued to build it up to 37,000 on the eve of the Ethiopia-Somalia war. Yet, after the crushing defeat in Ogaden, Siyad Barre continued to increase the army to a staggering 120,000 by 1982, which was somewhat larger than the army of Nigeria with over a hundred million population (Guardian Newspaper, 2006). Fearing loss of power after his defeat, anticipating rebellious factions within Somalia, and with few options to strengthen his weakening political base, Siyad Barre began a protracted and savage war against his own people.



## **5. Divide and Rule System**

Siyad Barre's Ethiopian invasion was intended to re-unite the old Somalia of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Instead, it led to the disintegration of new Somalia. With the Soviet departure, Siyad Barre's Somalia came under the patronage of the US and the rich Arab States. Siyad Barre reverted to the old 19<sup>th</sup> century strategies and employed clannish tactics to replace socialism as an ideology. For instance, he used his army to conduct punitive raids against the so-called hostile clans. Later his troops armed and encouraged the so-called loyal clans to wage wars against rebel clans. The stage was therefore set for one of post independence Africa's most savage and senseless wars (Guardian Newspaper, 2006).

Siyad Barre practiced a system of "divide and rule" and waged wars on the Majerteen, the Isaag and then the Hawiye clans. His uneven persecutions forced the opposition to utilize its own clans as organized, armed forces. From 1978, the Majerteen clan, for instance, rose in opposition under the banner of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). Early in 1981, the Northerners established the Somali National Movement (SNM) in London. They soon moved what later became a highly effective military operations to the Ethiopian and Somali towns and villages close to the border with the former British Somali land (Somalia, 2009).

The SSDF in the north-east and the SNM in the north-west began military raids against the regime. Isaag's SNM bore the brunt of Siyad Barre's war machine and so little wonder that in 1991 when the Somali government collapsed, the SNM declared the North independence, calling it the Somaliland Republic (The International Crisi Group, 2009).

While the above scenario unfolded, a group of Ogadeni soldiers and officers defected from Siyad Barre's army in 1989 and formed the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). Another group the Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC) appeared in the late 1989. The death of its military wing, General Mohammed Aidid (a Hawiye of the Habar Gedir Clan) and its Mogadishu representative, Ali Mahdi (a Hawiye of the Abgal Clan), was able to curtail the spate of the conflict (Guardian Newspaper, 2006).

Within two years, the USC was able to expel the exhausted and weakened Siyad Barre regime from Mogadishu. Yet, the real conflict between the two USC factions led to internecine wars as soon as Siyad Barre fled, and have continued off and on ever since. The primary problem seems to be that the USC attained victory without the benefit of a fully developed and politically mature programme and organization (Dane, 2006).

## **6. Stateless Somalia: An Analysis**

With the rudderless regime of Siyad Barre ousted and unorganized factions struggling for supremacy, the State of Somalia plunged itself into full scale confusion and anarchy unprecedented in history. Military battles intensified and exacerbated what would have been a manageable drought emergency situation between 1991-1992. Food aids were used as political weapons and the drought led to severe famine and untold deaths, especially in the Baidoa region and Mogadishu. As a result of incessant hostilities, the donor agencies and nations could not provide food assistance, thus contributing to a crisis of international proportions and an unmanageable famine (Bronx, 2003).

In November, 1992, the US government decided to intervene to stem the tide of

famine and Operation Restore Hope was created with the US marines landing on Somali beaches on December 12, 1992. Under the arrangement, the UN was to take over the peacekeeping role when sufficient order had been restored and the famine curbed. The US troops succeeded in clearing the roads, restoring health clinics and rebuilt communication systems and thus became symbols of peace and progress. Above all, they assured that food aids reached the largest population (Payanello, 2010).

Operation Restore Hope went on smoothly and actually restored hope apart from few incidents of violence and hijack of food materials and medical supplies. With this encouraging development, the command passed in May 1993 from the US military to the UN under the leadership of General Cevik Bir, with US Admiral Jonathan Howe assuming overall control of the UN operations in Somalia.

The UN security forces that took over the command was less equipped than even the US military had been, and even the units of the US military that remained under the new command were lightly armed. Washington bluntly refused to grant the request for heavy armour to back up their equipment.

In June 1993, a faction belonging to Aidid's USC had a confrontation with the UN forces. Aidid's militia ambushed a lightly armed UN patrol of Pakistani soldiers in a crowded Mogadishu neighbourhood next to Aidid's radio station. Twenty four (24) Pakistanis died in the attack which was very provoking and ironic, the UN having assumed that the Somali militia would welcome the Pakistani troops as fellow Muslims. This singular attack hardened the lines among the individual Somali groups as well as between the factions and the UN command. The UN placed a bounty on Aidid's head and for five months fruitlessly launched a search to capture him. However, the last straw that broke the camel's back and dealt a final blow on UNOSOM II (the UN operations in Somalia) was the attack on two US special forces Helicopters on October 3, 1993 which led to 18 US casualties and between 700 and 1000 Somalis in a Mogadishu "free for all" street encounter, US flags and soldiers were dragged on the streets of Mogadishu on camera and this affected the public opinion back home in US. Indeed, the US government found this incident most embarrassing and humiliating.

Thus, the May ambush at the radio station and the US military humiliation irreparably changed the course of event in Somalia forever. Thereafter, there was a half-hearted attempt to keep UNOSOM II going. Conflicts among the donors and within the UN itself, changes in the UN leadership, collectively left a profoundly dysfunctional command situation in Somalia for about two years. UNOSOM II finally pulled out of Somalia in March 1995 and indeed the world had turned its back on Somalia since then till now, Somalia had since remained on its own.

## **7. Somalia Thereafter**

At the moment, the country of Somalia is controlled by two principal groups. These are:-

- (i) The interim government with a 100 member cabinet and a parliament but which controls very little of the south and operates from a town called Baidoa. This interim government enjoys the backing of the Ethiopian government and the latter (though denied officially), provides security for the government.

- (ii) The second group is the Union of Islamic Courts made up of some Islamic fundamentalists, militias and other groups that had agreed to come together. Ironically, this group, rather than the interim government, controls more territory in the south including Mogadishu, the nation's capital. It also enjoys the support of Eritrea.
- (iii) Another group controls the north.

Effectively, the Somalian crisis has pitched Ethiopia against Eritrea. It would be recalled that Eritrea used to be part of Ethiopia until they broke away, thus bringing back memories of their own crisis and rivalry. The Somalian crisis portends a regional danger as it has the potential of plunging the entire region, as poor and drought-stricken as it is, to war. Later, there was a sharp division in the cabinet of the interim government on the issue of negotiating with the Union of Islamic Courts. This led to the resignation of 40 cabinet members from the government in protest against the unwillingness of the Prime Minister, Ali Mohammed Ghedi, to negotiate or open peace talks with the Union of Islamic Courts. As at September 20, 2006, There was a bold attempt on the life of the President Abdullai Yusuf when a suicide attacker drove his car into the convoy of the President and the bomb detonated leading to loss of several lives. In 2012, The Somalian parliament was inaugurated, thus bringing to an end the age-long conflict that had bedeviled the country with scores of wars.

## 8. An Overview of the Conflict

- (i) **Inter-State or Intra State Conflict:** Somalian crisis is, at best, an internal or intra state conflict since the crisis does not 'expressly' disturb neighbouring countries and vice versa. Even though as discussed above, Somalia had, at different times, engaged in conflict with neighbours such as Ethiopia, its statehood, sovereignty and government still survived them and continued. Anarchy only set in and remained thereafter, even after the regime of Siyad Barre was forced out of power and Siyad Barre himself abdicated. According to Michael Ibanga (2001), International Humanitarian Law recognizes two categories of armed conflict and the reference point between the two is the state border. Wars between two or more states are considered to be international armed conflicts, while clashes and actual wars occurring on the territory of a single state are considered to be non-international armed conflict or civil wars. The Somalian case was the latter.
- (ii) **Principal Parties of the Conflict:** The intervention of the US and later the UN cannot be said to have substantially changed the nature of the conflict from an intra state crisis to an international one, nor made them principal parties to the conflict. Thus, the principal parties to the Somalian crisis can be said to be:
  - (a) The Majerteens under the name of Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)



- (b) The northerners under the name of Somali National Movement (SNM)
  - (c) A group of soldiers who defected from Siyad Barre's army and formed the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM).
  - (d) The Hawiye based United Somali Congress (USC)
  - (e) Remnants of Siyad Barre's loyal troops and sympathizers
- (iii) The Major Issues in Contention:** The main bones of contention in the Somalian crisis, from the analysis above, have been identified as follows:
- a. Fear of domination, dictatorship and high-handedness as experienced under Siyad Barre.
  - b. Struggle for power and supremacy amongst the groups mentioned above.
  - c. Poverty, famine and drought as periodically caused by climatic factors and the struggle for scarce resources.
  - d. Destabilization of the clan system and over centralization of government

## 9. International Law on a Lawless Somalia

As already stated, the problems in Somalia were basically intra-state problems in spite of the international intervention in the manner mentioned above. It was therefore a conflict not of an international character, which occurred in the territory of a High Contracting Party. The Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Convention provides:-

1. *"Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanly, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria"*

*It went ahead to prohibit the following acts:*

- a. *Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture.*
  - b. *Taking of hostages*
  - c. *Outrages upon personal dignity in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.*
  - d. *The passing of sickness and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.*
2. *The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.*

From 1991 when Siyad Barre fled the country till 2009, there has been no government until the contraption called interim government was put in place. Yet, the 1949 Conventions, under the Common Article 3 stated above, which have set out the humanitarian standards applicable to intra-state conflicts such as this, will apply *in extenso*. The above provisions of Common Article 3 were supplemented and amplified by those of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflict (Protocol II). International law as, we know, is a collective of those international rules, established by treaty or custom, which are specifically intended to solve humanitarian problems directly arising from international or non-international armed conflict and which for humanitarian reasons, limit the right of the parties to a conflict to use methods and means of warfare of their choice or protect persons and property that are, or may be, afflicted by the conflict.

From this study, it is obvious that international humanitarian law, as an arm of international law, applies also to both international and non-international armed conflicts, For instance, Common Article 3 provided that if an armed conflict not of an international character occurs in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, certain fundamental humanitarian standards as set out above. The state of Somalia, therefore, is a High Contracting Party to the four Geneva conventions as well as the Additional Protocols, having been admitted as a member of the UN upon independence in 1960. Thus, Common Article 3 bound all the parties to the conflict.

In the same vein, Article 1(1) of Additional Protocol II provides that the Protocol is to apply to all armed conflicts not of international character and which takes place in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement the Protocol.

Somalian conflicts started when Siyad Barre used part of its 120,000 strong troops against his people in areas he felt threatened. Some were later to break away while the remnants were attacked by the USC forces and driven out of Mogadishu. So, to the extent that the conflict started between the official national armed forces and dissidents, the provisions of Additional Protocol II are applicable to Somalia.

It is also worthy of mention that at a later stage in the conflict when the central army had disintegrated and only the warlords held sway, the conflicts were then factional in nature, that is, one faction against the other. It is submitted that at this stage, therefore, since the conflict did not involve an armed force of a High Contracting Party, instead only two factions, such would be governed by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention.

It could be argued also that at the moment, the conflict is between the interim government and the Council of Islamic Courts. To that extent, even though the interim government (with a President, Prime Minister, Cabinet and Parliament) controls a small territory and is speculated to be backed by Ethiopian troops with no real troops of its own, it could still be regarded as a government while the Council of Islamic Courts would be the rebel.

It is therefore our findings that both Common Article 3 and Additional Protocol II

were applicable to the Somalian crisis and the factions of Ali Mahdi, Aidid, Council of Islamic Courts and so on, were obliged to observe their provisions.

It is against this background that the brutal act of ambushing the 24 Pakistani UN troops by the faction of Aidid at a radio station as well as the “public show of shame” when the US troops were harassed on the streets of Mogadishu and 18 of them killed, would be viewed. Our position is that, at best, they would have been taken as “prisoners of war” and treated as such pending further negotiations by their respective countries or the UN itself. In the same vein, the military expedition by Siyad Barre against the Majerteen, Isaag and the Hawiye clans cannot be justified.

### **10. Basis for Criminal Responsibility**

The grave breaches regime of the 1949 Geneva Conventions which admits of universal criminal jurisdiction over violators of the law, applies only to international armed conflicts. This position was upheld by the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Tadic Case. It does not mean that grave breaches do not take place within the context of intra-state armed conflicts, instead, it is only that what would amount to grave breaches in the case of international armed conflict are not described or recognized as such in relation to internal armed conflicts. Grave breaches do occur in intra-state armed conflicts though they are not recognized as such under the universal jurisdiction system of the Geneva conventions.

It could also be argued that neither Common Article 3 or Additional Protocol II made provisions for criminal responsibility for their violation nor provide for universal jurisdiction as in the case of grave breaches. Perhaps their violations are not crimes under international law, as erroneously opined in some scholars. Michael Ibanga (2001) dispelled that argument and surmised that such view could no longer hold in the light of recent developments such as the establishment and operation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the jurisprudence derived therefrom. On the whole, the statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and its jurisprudence have confirmed that serious violations of the law applicable to internal armed conflicts are international crimes that entail individual criminal responsibility. Indeed that tribunal has powers to punish violations of the law and custom of war and the tribunal has held that the provisions cover violations of common Article 3 and other customary rules on internal armed conflicts.

Our further findings, therefore, is that the parties under the Somalian conflicts are bound by the provisions of the International Humanitarian Law as epitomized by the Geneva Conventions. Where they are seen to have breached the rules of armed conflict, the international community should make them accountable even in future. The arrest of Charles Taylor and the trial by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to try him has raised hope and given us the confidence that justice, even if delayed, will be done in Somalia. This is, in spite of the contentious views being expressed by some African leaders, Heads of State and some Scholars, regarding the justiciability or selective exercise by the European community or the ICC to try only African leaders. For example, the refusal of the present Kenyan's President, Kenyatta, to honour the ICC's invitation and the support given to it by most members of the African Union (AU).

## **11. Options for Peace and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms**

In any conflict situation, there are always possibilities for peace the moment the grey areas that precipitated the conflict in the first place, are addressed. The Somalian situation is not different. In this regard, real concerted efforts were made by the African Heads of States, African Union and also the United Nations. Different approaches and stages of reconciliation were examined and impleted. All the different stakeholders were mobilized and carried along since Somalia's case is rather peculiar and has spanned over a decade as a "stateless nation".

## **12. An Examination of the Warlords in Somalia**

Siyad Barre had worked vigorously to weaken the power of the traditional institutions, and in many cases, quite successfully, as donor groups, The Siyad Barre era had to deal with government, not the elders. The Siyad Barre leadership also passed to another group, generally referred to as "faction leaders" or "warlords", who are not religious leaders or elders but have their background in business, military or politics. The warlords rely for their strength on a complex alliance of commercial interest, and agreements (as people pay for "protection" for food deliveries during the war, proceeds of which they use in financing their war machine) and young, urban based militia members (that is, young men looking for adventure, money and fast life).

The crave for resources designated for emergency food, health and related relief supplies was one of the principal reasons for the perpetuation of the conflict and the proliferation of faction. There is no way to track the flow of these resources or to document how these funds were spent. Indeed, it is glaring that these resources are most often, diverted. Furthermore, locally produced dramas, plays and poetry suggest that faction leaders enjoy the many conferences on peace and reconciliation as they keep donor resources flowing in ways they can control.

Thus, the role of the warlords in the conflict resolution cannot be ignored or washed away. The most significant part of the conflict pits the warlords or faction leaders and a rising commercial elite against traditional religious and clan leaders as well as women groups that seek to maintain order and stability. It is a conflict between political entrepreneurs representing a new macro power and people's organizations drawn from the clan's religion and women.

In addressing the problems on ground, three critical factors or key areas have been identified. These are:

- i. **Decentralization and Local Autonomy:** Total decentralization is chaos, yet greater local authority is fundamental to the development of sufficient local capacity to check autocracy. Already local arrangements with sustainable autonomy have sprung up in dozens of ways throughout the country. During the Peak of Somali nationalism, there was pressure for strong centralization and expansion of the state despite the age-old Somali tradition of clan decentralization management of natural and productive resources. Siyad had carried the nationalist theme to excess through highly centralized military unification and appeals to Somali patriotism and nationalism.

However, the current theme of anti-centralization is a direct reaction and a fall-out against the excesses of his regime's oppression. Coupled with the above is power sharing. A new model of governance must include power sharing. Historically, Somali politics were based on the sharing of power among clans, families, and elders, and the tradition runs very deep.

- ii. **The Role of Islam:** There are three compelling reasons why Islam is an important component of any Somali peace effort. First, it provides a well established and highly respected ethical and value system for carrying out social programs. Second, it is the spiritual foundation for all of Somali society and is therefore trusted and supported at every level. Thirdly, it is one of the few cultural forces in the country that cuts across lines of clan, gender, age and social class. Islam, not Islamic fundamentalism, could serve as a mediating, maturing, reconciling and peace building force
- iii. **The Role of Women:** Women are playing an increasingly prominent role in Somali civil society, which initiatives have won them respect among men and women alike. They have built bridges of peace between hostile clan groups through marriages. Women leaders in Mogadishu have become a major force in pressuring men to stop fighting and also speak out in political, religious and even economic issues. They have assumed new roles in the economy including taking jobs in retailing, money-changing, and local distribution of imported goods, to earn livelihood for their families in view of the collapse of more traditional forms of agriculture and rural vocations.

Though traditionally, the clan system tended to have marginalized the women and treated them like strangers, yet they remained undaunted and their activities transcend the destructive elements of clanism in Somali. For instance, it is reported that in Baidoa, during the worst days of the violence, UN staff were surprised to see women bury all of the dead, regardless of clan or sub-clan whereas the men would only bury members of their own immediate clan or sub clans. Women have been generally overlooked in the peace process and should be supported to assume prominent roles and continue their constructive influence in rebuilding civil society.

### **13. Conclusion**

Somalia can be said to be a country made of one people (one tribe), one religion, one language and one culture. Ordinarily, these ought to have been taken advantage of, for the benefit of the people. However, the reverse has been the case. The 'one people' had put it at loggerheads with neighbours due to expansionist programmes or expedition in a bid to create one Somalia of the nationalist' dream. Perhaps Somalia's greatest undoing was to have had Major General Siyad Barre as their ruler. It was under his despotic rule that the country disintegrated and collapsed and anarchy and chaos reigned supreme. Siyad Barre



killed several people and tortured others.

Against the background of the Liberian president, Mr. Charles Taylor's arrest and trial, there is hope that all the international humanitarian law violations as discussed above, would be addressed and key culprits punished to serve as deterrent to other African leaders. Peace has now been restored to Somalia. It now has government, parliament, governing constitution or laws, official currency, means to settle defaulted business contracts, public health system, and police, which were unavailable during their period of statelessness. There is nothing like peace. Our African leaders must learn lessons from the Somalian conflict that lasted several years.

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