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Evolutions in African Conflict

The Impact and Aftermath of the Cold War, 1985-1995

by

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July 1998

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of doctor of philosophy

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....iii-iv

Acknowledgments.....v

PART ONE: Introduction

1. The Evolution of African Conflict at the End of the Cold War.....2

PART TWO: Case Studies

Ethiopia

2. Ethiopia and the Fall of the Derg, 1985-1991.....65

3. Ethiopia During the Post-Mengistu Transition, 1991-1995.....134

Somalia

4. The End of the Cold War and the Wars in Somalia, 1985-1991.....232

5. The Wars of Post-Siad Barre Somalia, 1991-1995.....286

Angola

6. Untying the Knot: Confrontation and the Illusion of Peace in Angola, 1985-1991.....346

7. Conflict and Signs of Peace in Angola, 1991-1995.....429

PART THREE: Conclusions

8. The Promise and Challenge of Power-Sharing.....489

References.....513

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Evolutions in African Conflict
The Impact and Aftermath of the Cold War, 1985-1995
by Ian S. Spears

The conclusion of the Cold War has had contradictory effects on on-going conflicts in the former superpower client states of Ethiopia, Somalia and Angola. The argument proposed in this dissertation seeks to explain these variations in conflict. Two conditions, *distribution of power* and *governing agreement*, are considered to be fundamental to this explanation. In many cases, disputants have had access to arms in the past and their ability to pursue violent means to their objectives in the future is contingent on their continued access to weapons or other resources. These patterns are reflected in the distribution of power. The second condition, governing agreement, reflects the fact that in the immediate post-Cold War era, disputants have frequently sought to resolve their differences through negotiations. What is relevant here is whether any subsequent political pact exists between disputants and whether it involves *power-sharing* or a *winner-take-all* process. These two conditions, military viability and governing agreement, are combined in a matrix to suggest how their interaction leads to divergent outcomes. Depending on the mix of conditions, the outcomes range from "stable peace" to "tense peace or low-level conflict" to "civil war." The argument is applied to the three cases from 1985 to 1995. The author concludes that winner-take-all elections, though often the preference of African leaders, can be a recipe for disaster in tightly contested states with a history of violent conflict. On the other hand, while power-sharing agreements are difficult to arrive at (and even more difficult to implement), agreements leading to governments which are inclusive of the main disputants are an important step in the mitigation of conflict. By building security and creating the sense that both parties have a stake in the continued functioning of a political system, armed movements may be more willing to relinquish their weapons and embrace peace.

RÉSUMÉ DE LA DISSERTATION

L'Évolution du conflit africain
Les répercussions de la Guerre Froide, 1985-1995

par Ian S. Spears

La fin de la Guerre Froide a entraîné des effets contradictoires pour les clientes/superpuissances des états d'Ethiopie, d'Angolie et de la Somalie. La présente thèse a pour but d'explorer et d'expliquer la nature de ces effets contradictoires. Il y deux facteurs principaux necessaires au présent examen, soit la distribution du pouvoir, soit les ententes en vigueur. Les parties adversaires ont souvent eu accès aux armes, et afin de continuer l'emploi de la violence pour atteindre leurs objectifs, ces états ont dû maintenir l'accès aux armes et autres ressources nécessaires. Ces dynamiques sont refletées dans la distribution du pouvoir. Le deuxième facteur principal, soit celui des ententes conclues entres les parties adversaires, révèle que les participants ont souvent eu recours aux négociations pour tenter de régler leur différends durant la période immédiatement suivant la fin de la Guerre Froide. Il importe to déterminer si des alliances politiques ont été formées entre les parties adversaires, et si ces alliances se fondent plutôt sur le partage du pouvoir ou sur un processus où "le gagnant l'emporte". L'interaction des deux facteurs précitées, soit la viabilité militaire et les ententes en vigueur produit des résultats divergeants, qui vont de la ``paix stable`` à la ``paix tendue,`` et du ``conflit modéré`` à la ``guerre civile.``Ce modèle est appliqué à trois études de cas de 1985 à 1995. L'auteur conclut que les élections où "le gagnant l'emporte", souvent la préférence des états africains, peuvent avoir des conséquences désastrueuses pour certains états étroitement contestés où il y une historique de violence. Paradoxalement, bien que les ententes de partage de pouvoir sont difficiles à conclure, et encore plus difficile à réaliser, ces ententes peuvent mener à des gouvernements qui sont constitués des parties adversaires principales, ce qui sert donc à mitiger le conflit violent. En identifiant des objectifs communs, tel la sécurité, les diverses parties peuvent profiter de la stabilité et du bon fonctionnement du système politique,de sorte à ce qu'elles se dirigent plus aisément vers le désarmement, et donc, la paix.

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It is with relief and gratification that I now submit this dissertation — my preoccupation for the last three years. As others before me have noted, a project such as this involves the contributions of many individuals and institutions. It is with pleasure that I am finally able to recognize and thank them for their kind assistance. While many events in African politics are in dispute, I am, however, entirely to blame for the inevitable flaws in fact or analysis which remain.

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I am grateful to the following people who have assisted me in many important ways and who have never left doubt in my mind about their support for this project. To you I extend my profound thanks. At McGill, my advisor, Rex Brynen, waited patiently for me to submit drafts and, despite his own busy schedule, promptly returned them with insightful comments. The influence of Mark Brawley was particularly notable in drafting the argument and in providing comments on early drafts of chapters. I would also like to thank Professors Paul Noble and Narendra Subramanian for their kind assistance. In the political science

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friends and family: among them, Ellen and John Spears who aside from their on-going love and patient support, facilitated and funded one of two trips to Africa, outfitted me with a new laptop computer, babysat and read chapters; Annie Merttens, without whose special assistance I would indeed be "chapterless;" my co-conspirators, Mike Murphy, Allan Castle, Brad Crombie and Pete Moore, all of whom provided me with humour, encouragement and serious discussion at the appropriate moments; Sarah Powell and Stephen Smith, the latter of whom also proof-read; Richard Heller and Catherine Marx; Carman Sorger and Dan Brock; Professors Michael Szonyi and Francine Mackenzie; Professor Paul Kingston; Warren Cooney and Alexandra Gillespie; Stuart Peterson, Martha Spears, the Leger family, Laleh Moshiri; my intellectual mentors, Andrew Spears, Dr. Paul Moore (who read chapters with painstaking care), and Elizabeth Atkinson; my crews at McGill and Branksome Hall, who provided a much needed inspiration and diversion; and, finally, my most beautiful Jordan Alexandra and newly arrived John Christopher. Thank-you all.

If there was, however, one motivation driving me to complete this project it was so that I could dedicate it to my most wonderful and valued friend, my wife Sarah Elizabeth Atkinson.

For Sarah

PART ONE

Introduction

Chapter 1

The Evolution of African Conflict at the End of the Cold War

I

At the end of 1988, political commentator Joseph C. Harsch wrote: "Take a moment out at this turn of the year to look around the world and you will discover that the difference between now and a year ago is truly remarkable. Peace is by no means universal. There are still horrible examples of unnecessary famine, misery, war, and brutality. But there is immensely less war and danger of war than there was a year ago." He concluded that "four big wars [Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, southern Africa and Nicaragua] are almost over. This is a much quieter world than it was only a short year ago."[1] Reviewing the same systemic and regional changes, albeit four years later, newly elected President, Bill Clinton, the first post-Cold War American president, also noted: "On balance, let's make one thing clear: It is a wonderful thing that the cold war is over. But let's also admit that the end of the bipolar world has made it possible to peel off a layer of human aggression and made it possible in some parts of the world for people to be starved, brutalized and killed with much greater

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[1] Joseph C. Harsch, "This Quieter World," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 29, 1988, p 10. See also Charlotte Saikowski, "Economic Drain, War Weariness Push Belligerents Toward Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 1, 1988, p. 1.

abandon."[2] Indeed, while it is difficult to exaggerate the impact of the end of the Cold War on the world's longstanding conflicts, the changes it brought about were not the same in all regions and cases. In southern Africa, the end of the Cold war had a role in the liberation of Namibia and in bringing an end to apartheid in South Africa. The world community acted cooperatively through organizations such as the United Nations to counter aggression in Kuwait. In other areas, however, such as Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, existing ethnic tensions broke into open conflict.

The conclusion of the Cold War arguably had its most dramatic impact on African states which had been entirely dependent on superpower-provided military aid to contain domestic insurgencies and to sustain their regimes. Conflict outcomes have also differed dramatically among these states. Consider the three most militarily dependent states of Ethiopia, Somalia and Angola. During the 1980s, the Marxist government in Ethiopia fought an increasingly intense battle against northern rebels. Since the overthrow of the regime in 1991, however, Ethiopia has not experienced anything approaching the level of violence which characterized the Cold War years. In neighbouring Somalia, the reverse has been the case. Major violent conflict did not arise until the last years of the Cold War, but has continued since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. In Angola, conflict has raged since its independence from Portugal in 1975 and, despite the end of Soviet, Cuban, American and South African aid to the region, has continued intermittently into the post-Cold war era (see table).

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[2] Cited in Thomas L. Friedman, "Clinton Inherits Conflicts That Don't Follow Rules," *New York Times*, December 13, 1992, sec. 4, p. 3.

Major Armed Conflicts, 1985-1995*

	Ethiopia	Somalia	Angola
1985†	X	—	X
1986	X	—	X
1987	X	—	X
1988	X	X	X
1989	X	X	X
1990	X	X	X
1991	X	X	X
1992	—	X	X
1993	—	X	X
1994	—	X	X
1995	—	X	X

X denotes "major armed conflict" for that year
— denotes that this country was not listed as a "major armed conflict" during that year
† SIPRI did not publish lists of major armed conflicts until 1987 but its list of "Major Armed Conflicts in 1986" (published in 1987) it makes reference to *on-going* wars in both Angola and Ethiopia. For Angola it notes that there has been a "deep intensification of fighting in recent years," and for Ethiopia the authors note the war as beginning in 1962. See *SIPRI Yearbook, 1987: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1987), pp 314 and 315.

*Source: *SIPRI Yearbooks* (Oxford University, Oxford) for each of the years listed. A "major armed conflict is defined as "prolonged combat between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, and incurring battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people during the entire conflict."

This dissertation will pursue three objectives. The first is to consider the changes that came with the end of the Cold War and to determine what implications these changes had for the so-called client regimes of the superpowers. Specifically, what was the effect of the end of military assistance from the superpowers to their client states in terms of the client

regimes' ability to survive? The end of military aid also allows us to consider a second, more interesting question: why did these states have such different trajectories of peace and conflict during the Cold War-post-Cold War transition? Why did some states become more violent, while others either stayed the same or became less violent? The third objective is to propose an argument which will suggest how different conditions helped to shape the occurrence of peace and conflict during the transition and thereafter.

The argument to be presented assumes that the elimination of military aid from external powers to aid-dependent, centralized African regimes weakened or undermined many of these regimes. An inability to recentralize the regime is a central element in the process leading to conflict. More specifically, the ending of military aid led to a decline in a regime's ability to repress dissent and this lack of a centralized authority has led to new opportunities for subnational groups to resolve their grievances either violently or through pacific means. Two conditions, *distribution of power* and *governing agreement*, are considered fundamental to explanations of subsequent peace and conflict. Distribution of power concerns the relative military strength of the respective disputants. In many cases disputants have had access to arms in the past and their ability to pursue violent means to their objectives in the future is contingent on their continued access to weapons or other resources. These changes are reflected in the distribution of power. The second condition, governing agreement, reflects the fact that in the immediate post-Cold War era disputants have frequently sought to resolve their differences through negotiations. What is relevant here is whether any political pact exists between disputants and whether it involves *power-sharing*, or a selection procedure referred to in this discussion as *winner-take-all*. Power-

sharing is particularly significant because it has been proffered as a suitable means of governing in multi-ethnic states. These two conditions, distribution of power and governing agreement, can then be combined in a matrix to suggest how their interaction leads to divergent outcomes. Depending on the mix of conditions, the outcomes to be expected range from "stable peace" to "tense peace or low-level conflict" to "civil war."

The remainder of this chapter will present, first, a review of some of the existing literature on Africa in relation to the international system and on conflict in Africa. Second, a detailed explanation will be provided suggesting how changes in the international system affected Third World conflicts and how the two conditions named above lead to different outcomes of violence or peace. Finally, there will be an explanation of the methodology and the selection of cases to be used in the testing of the argument.

II

The Literature

Attempts to understand and explain African conflict in a changing international environment lead one to look at a broad range of scholarly literature. The most relevant literature includes materials which consider Africa's relationship with a changing international system and its main powers, and materials which help determine outcomes of *domestic* peace and conflict. While much of the material presented here provides insights into the subject matter of this dissertation, most of it focuses on related issues. Materials which consider Africa and the international system, for instance, focus more on how the international system tended to provide protection for weak states and less on the factors which contributed to domestic

conflict. Similarly, material which considers regime transitions concerns itself most with processes of democratization but does not generally deal with how different transitions lead to peace and violent conflict. One of the key pieces of literature used to account for the relationship between power and domestic conflict originated with explanations of *international* rather than domestic conflict. Collectively, however, these materials assist in the construction of a model which delineates the conditions of peace and conflict in Africa and elsewhere. What is presented here is not an exhaustive list of materials in these subject areas but a list which highlights the central underpinnings of the argument which follows.

Africa and the International System. The fate of African states has frequently been linked to their relationship with the international system and, in particular, the great powers. Walter Rodney argued, for instance, that the colonial powers essentially "underdeveloped" African states.[3] More recently, other writers have accepted that Africa's states remain in a position of weakness, but argue that, on the contrary, it is the international system which allows these states to exist and to survive. Indeed, much of the current literature concerning Africa revolves around the idea first put forward by Carl Rosberg and Robert Jackson, that of juridical statehood and so-called *quasi*-states.[4] In a book-length elaboration of the same idea, Jackson argues that the international system has been "leveled" into one constitutional category, that of sovereign states. Between them there is no formal or legal international hierarchy. Former colonial states are given the same rights and responsibilities as established

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[3] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University, 1972).

[4] Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1982), pp. 1-24. Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990).

states even if they have little in the way of the institutional or empirical qualifications that statehood used to require. Colonial states were given independence whether or not they had the resource base or the institutional structure to sustain themselves. Moreover, the fact that they have remained "weak, marginal or insubstantial," is no longer a justification for conquest or colonialism but, on the contrary, exempts them from such threats. While weak states would previously have been subject to invasion and direct foreign control, in the 20th century their survival has been underwritten by the international community. In other words, states which in any other era would not have survived, now continue to exist with the assent of the international community.

The fact of this "juridical statehood," however, has meant that even if Third World rulers have fewer security threats emanating from outside of their territorial borders, there are still plenty of domestic threats. "The Third World prince must worry about losing his head," notes Robert Jackson, "but he need not worry about losing his principality."[5] Indeed, African leaders have accumulated large quantities of arms but they are most often directed towards their own populations rather than foreign powers. Dissident groups within the state in turn threaten the regime and engage it in an ongoing struggle. So while the fate of the regime is frequently in doubt, the continued existence of the state itself is not.

Christopher Clapham sees the juridical nature of African states, as explained by Jackson and Rosberg, as central to the explanation of why these states have survived, but evidently he does not see this explanation as sufficient. He argues that *in addition* to the nature of the international system which essentially "'permitted' weak state survival," other

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[5] Jackson, p. 167.

factors have to be considered.[6] Moreover, he points out, even if the international system allows the weak state to maintain its territorial integrity and to maintain its seat in international organizations, it is the *regime* which has to take additional measures to sustain itself. This is particularly true if the so-called "idea-of-the-state" imparted by the regime has failed to take root and has not legitimated the regime in the eyes of its citizens.[7] Clapham states that "the evident weakness of African states did not reduce them [Africa's rulers] to a state of inertia, in which their fate was determined by external powers. On the contrary, it impelled them to take measures designed to ensure survival, or at least to improve their chances of it."[8] Those regimes who were the most threatened were the one's most in need of external support and leaders did not hesitate to make trade-offs to attract resources — most notably weapons or development aid — which then helped them retain domestic control. "At its extreme," Clapham notes, "the quest for survival on the part of the threatened governments could involve — and in several cases did involve — a desperate search outside the state for the means required to kill people within it."[9]

The work by Shoemaker and Spanier does not deal exclusively with Africa (though many of the examples used are drawn from African cases) but it does deal specifically with

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[6] Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), p. 4.

[7] The "idea of the state" is raised by Barry Buzan in *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 63-65.

[8] Clapham, p. 4.

[9] Clapham, p. 21.

relationships between states with vastly different military capabilities.[10] Moreover, it provides a more detailed examination of the means by which the superpowers sought to enhance the security of weak states and, more importantly, the regimes within them. The authors' main concern is an understanding of how Third World countries are able to involve and influence much more powerful superpowers: "Why do the superpowers, with so much to lose, allow themselves to be subjected to any measure of control by Third World states?"[11] Patron-client relations are distinguished from other relations between states by the disparity in the military capabilities of the states involved (meaning that "security transfers" from one state to another are unidirectional in nature), by the role that the client plays in patron competition, and third, by a perceptual dimension whereby the patron and client are consistently recognized as having a close association.[12] The authors note that the "litmus test" for such a relationship, however, is the durability of the relationship in the absence of patron-client competition. While relations between the United States and Japan would continue in the absence of superpower competition, they note, relations between the Soviet Union and Ethiopia would not.[13] It is this last qualification which makes this work especially relevant to this research project, because the end of the Cold War has indeed led to a change in relations between patron and client states. The most obvious issue for former Third World clients is the degree to which the security of various regimes was subsequently enhanced or

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[10] Christopher C. Shoemaker and John Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Praeger, 1984).

[11] Shoemaker and Spanier, p. 11.

[12] Shoemaker and Spanier, p. 13.

[13] Shoemaker and Spanier, p. 14.

diminished.

Unfortunately, Shoemaker and Spanier spend more time explaining the nature of the various *types* of relationships that can exist between patron and client (i.e. whether the relationship tends to favour the client or the patron), than the specific *consequences* of the relationship except to say that it is "*aimed* at enhancing" the client's security.[14] That the delivery of weapons at least to some extent enhanced regime security is assumed rather than demonstrated, though they do make clear that clients *believed* that their security was improved.[15] Because they do not detail the consequences of weapons transfers and the larger relationship in general, however, they are equally unable to answer what the consequences of change — particularly a lessening or ending of the relationship — will be in terms of conflict or the regime's ability to sustain itself.

Clapham discusses the effects of military aid but his analysis of the effects of military aid is, likewise, somewhat uncertain. He suggests that the precarious existence of African regimes led them to a reliance on the superpowers to provide armaments in an effort to bolster their strength relative to their opponents. If this did increase the regime's military power, it also "eventually exacerbated the very weakness of African states it had been intended to correct" so that over the long term state security was undermined.[16] Clapham does not deny that the regime's short-term military strength may have been enhanced by

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[14] Shoemaker and Spanier, p. 14. Italics added.

[15] These authors and others note the enormous appetite for weaponry of these regimes. In this respect, see also Paul Henze, *The Horn of Africa: From War to Peace* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1991); and Aferworki Paulos, *Superpower-Small State Interaction: The Case of US-Ethiopian Relations, 1945-1986* (Ph.D. Dissertation, George Washington University, 1988).

[16] Clapham, p. 159.

these armaments. On the contrary, he notes that given increasing political disorder in the 1970s and the decline of African economies, it was only natural that regimes looked to outside resources to compensate for their deficiencies in domestic power. Indeed, from the 1970s through the 1980s, arms imports to Africa increased dramatically.[17] But he also notes that this emboldened regimes to think that "their own hegemonic ambitions were ultimately unstoppable, and that they could therefore proceed with a monopoly state which need take no account of internal opposition" in the countries they governed.[18] Furthermore, when other state resources began to decline, those who were formerly loyal to the regime turned to the opposition or refused to fight, so that in the end "the attempt to shore up African states by seeking the aid of the superpowers proved to be entirely counter-productive."[19] Superpower-supplied weaponry, he argues, was also increasingly ineffective in fighting guerrilla warfare against insurgencies which were frequently able to secure the support of the rural population.

Clapham's view on the role of externally-provided weapons, however, is less clear when he notes how the end of the Cold War and the end of the conditions encouraging the oversupply of weapons led to a dramatic decline in the import of weapons to African states, suggesting that had weapons supplies continued, the longevity of regimes might have been increased.[20] He notes, for instance, that some states, such as the Sudan, were able to find new resources which allowed them to continue to purchase weapons to help sustain

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[17] Clapham, p. 153.

[18] Clapham, p. 156.

[19] Clapham, p. 157.

[20] Clapham, p. 158. Clapham provides his own figures which show that post-Cold War military aid to African states was the lowest since the 1960s. See p. 153.

themselves. As will be shown in the dissertation case studies, the MPLA regime in Angola was able to sustain itself almost entirely as a result of its ability to find new military resources from external sources. Clapham's central argument, that regardless of the fact of weapons Africa's weak regimes have difficulty sustaining themselves, still stands. The significance of his work lies in the shift of attention from the state to the regime within. If juridical statehood helped ensure the sovereignty of African countries, regimes still had to contend with other domestic challenges to their rule; yet they continued to seek resources provided from outside the state to ensure their own security.

Steven R. David, who has also detailed the relationships between patrons and clients, is less ambiguous about the consequences of these relationships. David contended in 1987 that of the 15 major recipients of Soviet bloc military aid (those who received more than $400 million in assistance), in only one case was a pro-Soviet regime replaced by a pro-Western military government.[21] Part of the reason for this was the "cocoon" of Cuban and East German advisors that often surrounded Third World clients of the Soviet Union. Moreover, in the absence of a change of political orientation on the part of the existing leader, Soviet-backed armies were inhibited from overthrowing pro-Soviet regimes. These efforts were said to go a long way in preventing the defeat of regimes friendly to Moscow. To safeguard their gains, the Soviets facilitated the delivery of security personnel, provided rapid arms transfers and offered immediate recognition of new regimes to help legitimize their rule.

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[21] Steven R. David, *Third World Coups d'Etat and International Security* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1987), p. 79.

In a subsequent work,[22] David presents his theory of "omnibalancing" to explain why Third World leaders align as they do. His argument is that the most important determinant of alignment is the calculation by the leadership as to which external power can best provide the means to keep them in power. He claims that leaders are more concerned about their own personal survival than that of the state and that this distinction is essential to understanding decisions to align with one state over another. Third World leaders question which outside power is most likely to protect *me* from the internal and external threats that are likely to be faced.[23]

A.F. Mullins also considers patron-client relationships and regime survival but he considers these two issues in terms of a nation's ability to develop.[24] His argument is that the existence of outside suppliers of weaponry allowed many Third World leaders to postpone indefinitely the political and economic development which in any other era would have been required for their physical security and well-being. In other words, patron-client relationships decoupled military power from development so that leaderships were not forced to develop their states in order generate the means to meet their security needs. In most cases the weapons received by client-states depended not on payment in cash or commodities that only a developed economy could provide, but were furnished by the patron in exchange for

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[22] Steven R. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991).

[23] David, *Choosing Sides*, p. 11.

[24] A.F. Mullins, *Born Arming: Development and Military Power in New States* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1987)

basing rights and other forms of payment characteristic of patron-client relationships.[25] By contrast, the European experience was such that elites had to develop their countries and make them function efficiently because a failure to do so invariably led to their overthrow by foreign or domestic forces. Third World leaders, however, have had an alternative in that the weaponry and support provided to them by external powers gave them the means to fend off *external* threats. While Mullins tends to understate the significance of *domestic* challengers, these groups rarely had development *per se* as their central objective (on the contrary, groups opposed to the regime often sought to have a piece of the economic aid pie that came as a result of the country's lack of development) and in any case, an insurgency's ability to generate a military threat of its own could usually be countered by the resources provided by the patron.[26] Citing the case of Ethiopia during the famine of the mid-1980s, Mullins argues that,

> it is a disaster, but the regime is in no jeopardy. It has a huge, well-equipped army, which is maintained without any regard to the economic damages of the famine. The famine is, in fact, essentially irrelevant to the staying power of the regime, which depends on continued patron support and on the loyalty of the armed forces equipped by that patron.[27]

In sum, these works consider several important themes. The first of these themes is that the international system has served to protect otherwise fragile and incomplete states from external threats. A second theme is that the major powers of the international system

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[25] Mullins, p. 95.

[26] Mullins, p. 111. Contrast this view with Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 101.

[27] Mullins, p. 112.

have served to sustain the regimes within these states usually through the provision of military resources which in turn have been used by the regimes to counter or postpone otherwise fatal domestic threats. A third and final theme is that the reliance on military means and the failure by the regimes to generate legitimacy for themselves, has led other groups to contest state leadership through violent means. Clapham, David and Mullins all agree that the leaderships of client states frequently took measures to protect themselves even if these came at the expense of the longer term security of the state and the general welfare of the countries' inhabitants. Implicit in their arguments, along with Shoemaker and Spanier, is also the suggestion that the ending of this military aid would or did have dire consequences for the regime insofar as it limited their ability to protect themselves from domestic adversaries.

System Change and Weakened States. In her description of social revolutions, Theda Skocpol offers a description similar to those noted above whereby regimes sustain themselves, despite a lack of legitimacy, by relying on external support. She states that,

> the course and outcomes of social revolutions in dependent countries are powerfully conditioned not just by the requisites of military defense and assertion against actual or potential foreign invaders but also by direct economic and military aid from abroad. ... One consequence has surely been to make social revolutions much less likely overall than they might otherwise have been if most new nations lacked modern militias. In part this is because of the sheer repressive strength of modern military establishments.[28]

Skocpol, however, also introduces the idea of external sources of change and small states. While David and Shoemaker and Spanier consider how clients can switch from one patron

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[28] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979), p. 289.

to another, Skocpol describes a situation where clients cannot strike new bargains with patron states and such "realignment" is no longer possible. She describes how the state will undergo some sort of weakening politico-military crisis which then leads to the revolutionary situation. For Skocpol, the weakening is likely to be a result of changes outside the state which have bearing on the regime's repressive capabilities.[29] For Krishan Kumar, the centrality of external triggers is especially true for the 1989 "revolutions" in eastern Europe that so definitively marked the end of the Cold War. He states,

> Certainly *externality* seems the hallmark of the 1989 revolutions [in Eastern Europe], to a greater extent than with any other revolution this century. The causes of the revolutions and the conditions of their success were largely external (changes in Soviet policy); the ideas were mainly derived from external sources (western liberal ideas going back to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution); the models of the revolution were also derivative (1789 and 1848 mostly); and the fate of the revolutions in the individual countries is, by general consent, dependent to a large degree on the reactions and intentions of the international community towards the new regimes.[30]

Literature which considers democratic transitions has sometimes also sought to identify an initial trigger which can then allow a longer process to unfold. In their discussion of regime transitions in Africa, Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle distinguish theoretical approaches which identify purely domestic triggers to regime transition from those which identify purely international sources.[31] Predictably, they choose a middle course whereby larger international events provide the correct context for other domestic events to

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[29] Skocpol writes, for instance, that "revolutionary crises developed when the old-regime states became unable to meet the challenges of evolving international situations." See p. 47.

[30] Krishan Kumar, "The 1989 Revolutions and the Idea of Europe," *Political Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1992), p 441. Italics in original.

[31] Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997).

proceed. They write,

> We suspect that global power shifts provide the occasion — but not the basic cause — for new or dormant forces to bubble to the surface after prolonged periods of repression. In the 1990s, the remission of superpower rivalry led to a reduction, reallocation, and in some cases elimination of sources of external economic and political support for authoritarian regimes. But the impact of new international conditions was always mediated through domestic state-society shifts. Shifts in the resource base of an extant regime altered the balance of power between state and civil society, creating new constraints for political incumbents and fresh opportunities for opposition social movements. ... The trajectory of subsequent political change then depends on whether domestic political actors adapt to an altered resources base and changed circumstances.[32]

This seems to be particularly relevant to the cases of Ethiopia, Somalia and Angola. While Bratton and van de Walle cite 1990 as a qualified date on which urban African political protests began to emerge in earnest, well-established insurgencies in the present three case studies had already been underway since the 1960s for both Ethiopia and Angola, and the early 1980s for the SNM in Somalia. In fact, the ending of the Cold War appears only to have presented these existing movements with an even better opportunity to challenge their respective governments.

While Bratton and van de Walle do acknowledge the important role of external forces, they arguably understate this role in order to make their argument more generalizable. This is understandable in order to avoid drawing definitive conclusions from an apparently one-time event — the Cold War's end. However, for the present purposes, the end of the Cold War was not simply the end of ties between one superpower and its allies or clients but the simultaneous restructuring of relations between all states — between the great powers, between the great powers and their clients, and between the great powers and the clients of

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[32] Bratton and van de Walle, pp. 32-33.

their adversaries. As a consequence of the Cold War's end, Third World leaders no longer had the option of asking, in Steven R. David's words, "[w]hich outside power is most likely to protect me from the internal and external threats ... that I face."[33] At the very least, there were significantly fewer, and in some cases no, means by which domestic leaders could seek protection from threats or readjust the domestic balance of power in their favour subsequent to the end of the Cold War.

Domestic Conflict and Mediating Conditions

As Bratton and van de Walle suggest, changes in the international system are mediated by domestic factors such as state-society relations. Since our interest here is peace and violent conflict, it is useful to consider factors which are more specific to this end such as the distribution of military and political power.

Military Power and Violent Conflict. The distribution of military power has frequently been used to explain conflict in international politics, but it is not often used to explain domestic conflict. This is surprising given the view expressed by Jackson that Africa's "quasi-states" reverse the distinguishing features of domestic and international conflict so that the Hobbesian "state of nature is domestic, and civil society is international."[34] Balance of power theory distinguishes between the anarchy of the international system and the alleged order of domestic politics. Domestic politics are, in theory, regulated by the fact of a central government with the authority and the capacity to

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[33] David, *Choosing Sides*, p. 11.

[34] Jackson, p. 169.

resolve conflicts or impose order. In some Third World states, however, this omnipotent power does not exist. In such cases, the government has neither the legitimacy nor the capacity to be anything other than one of several players seeking control of a territory (particularly its capital) and its population.

David notes how Third World governments' lack of legitimacy exacerbates the struggle for power. While a regime may have enjoyed legitimacy in the period following independence, its base of support became increasingly narrow and monoethnic. He also observes that the decline of anti-colonial nationalism in the Third World led citizens to identify more with their respective ethnic groups than with the state as a whole. Consequently, regimes were no longer representative of all the inhabitants of a territory but only of those who held power in the capital. In some cases other elites have forced their way into power through force — and after a brief hiatus, their base of support has frequently narrowed as well. Regime members, then, must constantly deal with threats to their rule and are frequently subject to overthrow by more powerful groups within the state.[35]

Balance of power theory helps explain why, given this situation, Third World leaders align the way they do. The extent to which the regime can impose order is a function of the extent to which it enjoys a favourable balance of power relative to its adversaries. The advantage of those in authority is in their access to a greater degree of state resources than their domestic challengers. Those in the regime also tend to have, as representatives of the state, better access to other states which can also provide these resources. Indeed, just as leaders in the developed world would be expected to seek the support of allies outside of the

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[35] David, *Choosing Sides*, p. 13.

country to deal with external threats, Third World leaders are forced to find outside supporters to help them overcome internal threats to their rule. This is why the superpowers — as the most significant suppliers of military aid — can be pivotal in this equation. Alignments, or the provision of weaponry to regimes (or, to insurgencies when they have access to outside help), were seen as the key means to the regime's (or the insurgent's) survival. This explains why, to repeat, Third World leaders made calculations as to which of the superpowers were most effective at maintaining this favourable balance. David adds that "if a Third World leadership determines that its existing superpower supporter will not do what is necessary to keep it in power and the other superpower will, the leadership will realign."[36]

Power transition theory, as elaborated by A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kuglar, provides more specific insight into how power relations might be related to domestic conflict and stability.[37] This approach is linked to the realist perspective which underlies balance of power theory in that power remains the critical variable shaping the way in which the political order functions. Unlike theories of balance of power, however which tend to explain only international conflict, power transition theory sees the rules governing domestic and international political systems as fundamentally similar. Political groups within a state are similar to nations in the international system insofar as they are both involved in competition over scarce resources. Peaceful outcomes occur when a dominant actor has the

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[36] David, *Choosing Sides*, p. 22.

[37] Jacek Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation," in Manus I. Midlarsky ed., *The Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 171-194.

support of its allies who are satisfied with the system's rules and the distribution of benefits. More importantly, however, peace requires the dominant actor to have a large power advantage over any single actor and over most combinations of actors dissatisfied with the status quo. Consequently, periods of "preponderance" tend to be peaceful and stable. By contrast, instability and conflict are likely during periods of relative parity; that is, as other actors who are dissatisfied with the current political arrangements approach parity by increasing their power and seeking to challenge the dominant actor. Recognizing the changing power relationship and fearing that it is about to be surpassed, the dominant actor prepares to resist such change. Violent conflict is the result.

Organski and Kuglar's central idea, that *shifts* in power, can explain situations of peace and conflict is especially valuable in the case of African civil conflict where the end of the Cold War and the cessation of arms supplies to client states brought about tremendous shifts in the power of domestic actors. Such shifts in power could only be precluded when domestic actors adjusted to the new reality of arms cut-offs from patron states and maintained their dominance by securing new sources of power and military might.

In his studies of conflict resolution, William Zartman, by contrast, considers the idea of a "mutually hurting stalemate" as being one of the components which makes an existing conflict "ripe for resolution." But he links stalemate with two other factors which are also necessary to move the conflicts into a negotiation phase: the presence of valid spokespersons and a formula for a way out of the conflict.[38] Stalemates can, but do not always, refer to a

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[38] William Zartman, "Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflicts," in *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington: Brookings, 1995), p. 18.

balance of military power. Zartman notes that while a stalemate is the most favourable condition to induce parties to negotiate, most domestic conflicts are asymmetrical, with the balance of power tending to favour the government. In the absence of power equality, however, the conviction on the part of the disputants that the war cannot be won despite the fact that one side may have a predominance of military power, may provide the same function as stalemate. But even this can be offset if external actors can bolster the military capabilities of a domestic actor by providing military supplies (in a sense, taking away the "hurting") and thus allowing parties to avoid negotiations.[39] Zartman is not arguing that violence does not occur at a time of power equality; on the contrary, violence may be very much in evidence at such times. But while Organski and Kuglar maintain that power equality is the moment at which disputants are most likely to be involved in violent conflict, Zartman argues that, given the correct conditions, stalemate can provide actors with an "opportunity for cutting losses and achieving satisfaction through accommodation."[40]

Political Arrangements and Violent Conflict. Evidently, the structure of power alone is an unsatisfactory explanation of conflict outcomes. In a 1995 article, Charles Krauthammer quoted Henry Kissinger as saying, "'In the end, peace can be achieved only by hegemony [the leadership of one power] or by balance of power [parity]. There is no other way.'"[41] As it is, quoted out of context, the statement is problematic because it says

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[39] Zartman, p. 12.

[40] Zartman, p. 18. Zartman qualifies his claims even further in his conclusions by noting that stalemate does not always lead to negotiations and, on the contrary, may tend to bury talks rather than promote them. See p. 334.

[41] Charles Krauthammer, "Peacekeeping is for Chumps," *Saturday Night*, (November 1995) p. 75.

nothing about what leads to *non*-peace outcomes unless further conditions are attached. What describable configurations of power exist other than hegemony and some sort of balance? If both of these configurations lead to peace and these two encompass the universe of possible configurations then what accounts for violent outcomes? As the discussion of Zartman, Organski and Kuglar shows, relying only on power configurations to explain outcomes of war and peace tends to lead to situations of *equifinality* whereby several sets of conditions or causal sequences can logically lead to the same outcome.[42] Understanding the relationships between war and concentration of power (whether systems are balanced or hegemonic) or the number of powerful actors in a system (whether the system is bipolar or multipolar) is a problem international relations scholars observe as well.[43] In the case of the former, both power equality and power imbalance can logically explain the resort to violence. In a situation where parties are militarily equal, for instance, they may be mutually deterred. Alternatively, they may resort to violence because both have the capacity to undertake aggressive action and both have confidence that they will prevail based on expectations of future power. In a situation of imbalance, on the other hand, peace is a logical result because the preponderant power can easily overpower the weaker adversary to maintain order in the system. Alternatively, conflict can arise out of the obvious possibilities for total victory by the predominant power.

By linking power balances to another set of conditions, however, we are better able

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[42] See Jack Levy, "The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence," in Philip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern and Charles Tilly eds., *Behavior, Society and Nuclear War*, vol. I (New York: Oxford University, 1989), p. 296. The alternative, *multifinality*, whereby one set of conditions or one causal sequence can lead to several different outcomes, is also true.

[43] See Levy, especially pages, 223-262.

to distinguish separate paths and specify conflict outcomes of peace and conflict. A reasonable second set of considerations in explaining civil conflict involves the new access to political power achieved by different groups through processes of democratization. Democratization is a particularly useful consideration given the number of African states that have experimented with multiparty elections during the Cold War - postCold War transition. Scholars did not fail to note the sudden move towards democratization and multiparty elections beginning in the early 1990s.[44] In 1992, for instance, Naomi Chazen noted how in the previous five years almost every African country had introduced economic liberalization measures and structural adjustment. In addition, in 1990-91 the leaders of all but five African states moved toward multiparty politics and/or scheduled competitive elections.[45] Bratton and van de Walle note that in the five years following 1990, the number of African countries holding competitive elections had more than quadrupled to 38 out of a total of 47 sub-Saharan countries. In 35 of those elections, opposition parties won legislative seats.[46] At the time of writing, however, Chazen observed that although repressive regimes were in decline and democracy on the rise, an end to civil strife was by no means a certainty. On the contrary, she added, civil strife might be exacerbated and states might not in the end attain viable forms of democratic governance. Larry Diamond's earlier examination of democratization in post-colonial Nigeria had suggested that the imposition of democratic

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[44] See, for instance, Samuel Decalo, "The Process, Prospects and Constraints of Democratization in Africa," *African Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 362 (1992) pp. 7-35; Naomi Chazen, "Africa's Democratic Challenge," *World Policy Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1992), pp. 279-307.

[45] Chazan, p. 279.

[46] Bratton and van de Walle, p. 7.

institutions frequently contributed to polarization and conflict between groups.[47] Indeed, many of Africa's post-independence leaders argued that authoritarian methods, military rule and one party states were the only means by which chaos could be avoided in polarized, multi-ethnic states.[48]

Much of the scholarly material which considers both democratization and the mitigation of conflict in such societies argues, however, that even if the differences between groups cannot be eliminated, innovative forms of conflict management can restructure the political game so that opposing groups can coexist peacefully. "Where there is some determination to play by the rules," notes Donald Horowitz, "the rules can restructure the system so that the game itself changes."[49] Power-sharing has increasingly been cited as an important method for addressing the problem of conflict in severely divided and conflictual societies. Zartman observes, for example, that the "eventual key to the effectiveness of mediators and negotiators is an outcome that returns the conflict to normal politics. ... Generally this involves creating a new political system in which the parties to the conflict feel they have a stake, thus in a very positive sense coopting all parties — government and

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[47] Arguably, the issue of democracy has the same problem as arose in discussions of balance of power. Democracy can lead to outcomes of both peace *and* conflict. See Larry Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism and the Struggle for Democracy," in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries: Volume 2, Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), pp. 33-91.

[48] Countries such as Niger became *more* centralized and *more* exclusive in the years following independence under the justification that only such a government could development and national unity be ensured. See Jibrin Ibrahim, "From Political Exclusion to Popular Participation: Democratic Transition in Niger Republic," in B. Caron, A. Gboyega and E. Osaghae eds., *Democratic Transition in Africa*, (Ibadan: CREDO, 1992), pp. 51-68.

[49] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), p. 601.

rebels — in a new creation."[50] Similarly, Marina Ottaway states that power-sharing "may be the only attainable short-term goal compatible with long-term democratization."[51] And in his April 1998 report to the United Nations Security Council, Secretary General Kofi Annan argued that African leaders must give up the "winner-takes-all" political mentality which prevails in so many African countries and consider including opposition groups in public debate.[52]

In his discussion of power-sharing, Timothy Sisk distinguishes between power-sharing and democracy and explains why the former is a preferable means of conflict resolution. He notes that there is increasing evidence that democracy is difficult and sometimes impossible to implement in countries which have deep internal divisions and animosity.[53] This does not mean that democratic principles and procedures should be abandoned but rather that there needs to be new thinking on how its basic principles can be harmonized with local conditions. Power-sharing is compatible with democracy but it goes some way toward diminishing its potentially destabilizing side effects. Sisk writes that the "essence of power sharing is not to do away with democratic competition but to contain it within acceptable boundaries so that differences of opinion along ethnic lines do not

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[50] Zartman, pp. 22-23.

[51] Marina Ottaway, "Democratization in Collapsed States," in William Zartman ed. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), p. 248.

[52] See John Stackhouse, "Annan Says Warring Leaders to Blame for African Woes," *Globe and Mail*, April 17, 1998, p. A16. Even the Burmese opposition leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, considered a power-sharing arrangement with the brutal military regime in Yangon, Myanmar. See Philip Shenon, "Democrat Won't Rule Out Sharing Power in Myranmar," *New York Times*, July 14, 1995, p. A6.

[53] Timothy Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), p. 3.

ineluctably lead to intergroup violence."[54]

Here two approaches to power sharing will be considered: the "consociationalist" approach as discussed by Lijphart and the "integrative" approach as discussed by Sisk and Horowitz. In addition, there will be a brief discussion of the nature of regimes prior to the Cold War's end, that of personal rule or neopatrimonialism.

Lijphart notes that when a society is characterized by few or no overlapping memberships or loyalties, there is little to encourage the formation of moderate attitudes among its members.[55] Generally the result is instability. There are cases, however, when fragmented societies do exhibit stability. This is the result of "overarching cooperation at the elite level" in what Lijphart describes as consociational democracy. Here while elites may take part in competitive behaviour, they also "make deliberate efforts to counteract the immobilizing and unstabilizing effects of cultural fragmentation."[56] Lijphart emphasizes that "the essential characteristic of consociational democracy is not so much any particular institutional arrangement as the deliberate effort by the elites to stabilize the system."[57] He does, however, suggest several elements which comprise consociationalism, most notably the idea of a "grand coalition" to govern the country made up of political leaders from all the society's major groups. In addition, Lijphart cites a mutual veto (which can be used by each of the grand coalition's component groups as a "guarantee of political protection"),

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[54] Sisk, p. 33.

[55] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1969), pp. 208-209.

[56] Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," p. 212.

[57] Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," p. 213.

proportional representation (whereby civil service appointments and scarce resources are allocated among the different segments and which he contrasts with a "winner-take-all principle") and various forms of autonomy (such as federalism, whereby a minority can exercise self-rule in areas of its exclusive concern) as being important components of consociationalism.[58] His central idea, however, remains elite cooperation and the formation of a grand coalition among ethnic representatives. Just as leaders will form coalition governments in extraordinary circumstances such as wars when the principle of majority rule is superceded by the need for unity, fragmented political systems require more than a simple majority to deal with their unique challenges. In this way, leaders in fragmented countries generate a sense of crisis which binds them together and, somewhat ironically, leads them to then create viable, stable democracies.

Lijphart uses ideas of consociationalism to explain existing cases of stable democracy among fragmented societies in Europe. The idea of establishing and maintaining cooperation among elites, however, is arguably not well suited to modern Africa. He notes that elite cooperation is most likely when there is the perception of an external threat to the country. He writes that in all of the consociational democracies, "the cartel of elites was either initiated or greatly strengthened during periods of international crisis, especially the First and Second World Wars." Such circumstances, he adds, "impressed on the elites the need for internal unity and cooperation. External threats can also strengthen the ties among the subcultures at the mass level and the ties between leaders and followers within the

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[58] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University, 1977), pp. 37-38.

subcultures."[59] For consociational democracy to work, according to Lijphart, elites have to "recognize the necessity of cooperation." In Africa, on the other hand, as Jackson and Rosberg have pointed out, there is less sense of a purely external threat. On the contrary, the security of the state has been guaranteed by the international system. Moreover, there is frequently a tendency for groups to capture the state for one's own ethnic group or to make the minimum number of side deals with other ethnic elites which would compromise exclusive access to resources — a fact which discourages elite cooperation across ethnic groups.[60]

Drawing on Horowitz's large work, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Sisk identifies a second approach to power-sharing which he calls the integrative approach. While Horowitz does consider the role of coalitions in reducing ethnic conflict, his work is too broad to be seen as a presentation of a single model of power-sharing in the manner of Lijphart's consociationalism. Nonetheless, Sisk considers a number of methods derived from Horowitz's work which allow the development of another more general approach to power-

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[59] Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," p. 217.

[60] Horowitz offers several additional criticisms of Lijphart's consociational approach. For example, he notes the difficulty in determining whether the "moderation and fluidity" of the European examples used by Lijphart (Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands) have been produced by consociationalism, or whether it is the "low intensity and fluidity" of these examples which makes consociationalism possible. See Horowitz, p. 572. Horowitz also notes that the consociational model, as explained by Lijphart, assumes that political elites have a "high degree of freedom of choice" and can make a "deliberate effort to counteract" centrifugal tendencies in their societies — a capacity that leaders in divided societies in the Third World, unlike those in Liphart's European case studies, do not always have at their disposal. See Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, p. 165. Moreover, Horowitz states, the coalitions that Asian and African leaders frequently claim to embrace are *grand* coalitions only in name and, in fact, are usually only masks for "an ethnically exclusive dictatorship." Therefore, Horowitz writes, "the *sine qua non* of consociationalism turns out to have little applicability in the severe conflict conditions of Asia and Africa." Horowitz, p. 576. Lijphart himself plays down the significance of differences between the First and Third worlds in terms of their capacity to implement consociational democracy. See Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, pp. 21-24.

sharing. In the integrative approach, incentives encourage parties to create inclusive coalitions *prior* to elections; these parties can then go on to form majoritarian governments. Measures such as vote pooling — whereby voters select second and third preferences on their ballots — force moderation on candidates and induce them to seek votes from other communal groups which might not ordinarily support them. Other measures such as federalism and the devolution of power reduce the political stakes at the centre and can stimulate intraethnic competition at the local level. The encouragement of non-ethnic social alignments such as class and territory can also result in crosscutting cleavages and facilitate pre-election coalition building. Of course, these principles assume that voters can be won over to support parties and leaders other than their own group and that politicians themselves can be induced into making pre-election coalitions. While the integrative approach has appeal as a prescriptive means to reduce conflict, for the present purposes it is also more difficult to identify and operationalize since intergroup alliances may not be in the form of easily recognizable, formal agreements.

It is worth pointing out that the criticisms leveled at various forms of power-sharing are not meant to demonstrate their lack of utility in the field but rather to highlight the obstacles divided societies, particularly those in Africa, have to overcome in order to reduce violent conflict. Lijphart notes that it "may be *difficult*, but it is not at all *impossible* to achieve and maintain stable democratic government in a plural society."[61] What is required, Sisk emphasizes, is to tailor specific institutions to particular contexts. In his own examination of methods of power-sharing, Sisk does not give priority to one form over

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[61] Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, p. 1.

another. In fact he sees potential for both the consociational and integrative approaches in playing key roles in the mitigation of conflict insofar as they both "seek to promote governing coalitions that are broadly *inclusive* of all ethnic groups in a divided, multiethnic society."[62] Moreover, he notes, there is considerable overlap between the two approaches, most notably their advocacy of federalism, proportionality and ethnic balance.[63] Consequently, since the "different types of institutions and practices for promoting democratic ethnic conflict management can be assembled and arranged in many different ways," the key is to find the tools which are most appropriate in meeting the needs of particular circumstances.[64]

Finally, it is worth noting a less normative form of government than that of power-sharing. African leaders have in the past relied on more tacit forms of inclusion such as "personal rule" or neopatrimonialism," to keep themselves in power. Bratton and van de Walle note that while these practices can be found in all polities, it is the *core* feature of politics in Africa." Moreover, they note, "virtually all African regimes could be viewed as neopatrimonial."[65] In such systems of governance, power is exercised at the discretion of the

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[62] Sisk, p. 6. Italics in original.

[63] Sisk, p. 40.

[64] Sisk, p. 6.

[65] Bratton and van de Walle, pp. 62 and 68. Incidentally, patrimonial regimes are also at the centre of what Bratton and van de Walle claim distinguishes regime transitions in Africa from those in other regions. While O'Donnell and Schmitter point to divisions within the elite as the starting points of regime transition, according to Bratton and van de Walle, such divisions rarely occur in neopatrimonial regimes. Here the "big man" is surrounded by sycophants who forever sing his praises in order to protect their positions rather than inform their leader about the regime's lack of popular support or initiate reform of their own. The leadership of the reform movement in African transitions, then, unlike those in Europe or Latin America, comes from outside rather than inside the incumbent group. See Bratton and van de Walle p. 86. Consequently, write Bratton and van de Walle, "personal rulers are unlikely to initiate political liberalization or relinquish power

leader or "big man" and there are few if any independent power bases outside of the regime.[66] Regimes take on the appearance of pyramids whereby support for the top is rewarded through the provision of public resources, contracts and public office. While the top leadership may be ethnically exclusive, support comes from other key ethnic groups to the extent that they too can be bought and included in a domestic patron-client hierarchy. There is an enormous incentive to support the regime regardless of one's ethnic affiliation. To do otherwise is to risk being left in the political wilderness and excluded from a portion of state resources. Alternatively, while rulers in African regimes are often seen as absolute, their power is frequently constrained by the need to maintain ethnic balance across clans or ethnic groups. Clapham notes, for instance, the significance of domestic ethnic or regional alliances in helping the regime sustain itself, stating that if "this alliance was capable of incorporating the most powerful factions within the state, it might well prove enduring."[67]

To sustain these relationships, regimes often make extensive use of state resources derived, for example, from oil or cocoa. When, as in the case of Somalia, there were few

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without a struggle; they have to be forced out." See p. 84. See also Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule, Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1986).

[66] For more complete discussions of *personal rule* (and its likenesses), see Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982); Robert Fatton Jr. "The Contradictions of Presidential Monarchism in Africa," chapter 3 in *Predatory Rule: State and Civil Society in Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

[67] Clapham, p. 53.

domestic resources, they became adept at exploiting aid provided by foreign donors.[68] The patronage of the superpowers in particular allowed regimes to maintain their relationships with domestic allies through the dispersal of incentives and rewards: "A clientelist domestic political structure," notes Clapham, "entailed a clientelist foreign policy."[69] When resources for domestic patronage ran out or were insufficient, militarized regimes had even more reason to look to foreign suppliers of weaponry to compensate for their lack of domestic legitimacy.

Personal rule frequently complemented coercive methods of maintaining regime stability in Cold War years so that the balance of political power rested with the regime and military power could be used to counter and suppress those outside the regime. As a result regimes could be fighting rebel fronts in pitched military battles at the same time as members of that same ethnic group were included in high office (in Ethiopia, for example, Tigrayans were both in the TPLF and in the Mengistu regime which fought the TPLF).

III

Building an Argument to Account for Peace and Conflict

The Links Between Large and Small States. Given this focus on the impact of the end of the Cold War, a fundamental assumption is that there is an *interconnectedness* between actors of the international system (great powers), and those of the Third World

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[68] For an account of the manner in which the Siad Barre regime in Somalia used foreign aid to sustain itself, see Michael Maren, *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity* (New York: Free Press, 1997). See also Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1997).

[69] Clapham, p. 60.

(governments, guerilla and secessionist movements).[70] Great powers are more tightly connected to a larger number of other actors than are small powers even if many interconnections are indirect. Most states had no direct connections with Vietnam, for example, but were affected by events there because of the changes in American policy resulting from its involvement in the Vietnam War. Robert Jervis notes that "to the extent that Vietnam led the United States to pull back from being a world policeman, it took the lid off local conflicts and encouraged regional actors to play a greater role."[71] The superpowers have in many cases also given disputants within states the capacity to fight. Randall Robinson, the executive director of the organization *TransAfrica*, observed with regard to Somalia that superpower policies, "first from the Soviets and then from us [the United States], have contributed to the wreckage of Somalia. Somalia has enough arms to outfit a major army. Twenty-five years ago it had none."[72]

Thus, even if most conflicts have their origins within the region itself,[73] the nature of the international system, and the structures the external powers create or remove, can

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[70] Robert Jervis, "Systems Theories and Diplomatic History" in Paul Gordon Lauren ed. *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy* (London: Free Press, 1979), p. 213.

[71] Jervis, p. 215.

[72] Cited by Bob Hebert, "The Right Thing," *New York Times*, October 10, 1993, sec. 4, p. 15.

[73] While few writers dwell on the issue, the general consensus in the literature is that sources of conflict are local in origin. Amitav Acharya states "Cold War superpower opportunism, although rarely a direct cause of Third World conflicts, contributed significantly to the ultimate severity of many cases of incipient and latent strife in the Third World. See Amitav Acharya, "Third World Conflicts and International Order After the Cold War," Working Paper No. 134, Australian National University, Peace Research Centre (1993), pp. 4-5. Similarly, Porter states that "the Soviet Union cannot plausibly be accused of having instigated or caused the local conflicts in which it became involved. The deeper one digs into the causes of local disputes, the more plainly do the indigenous roots of conflicts appear." See Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), p. 219.

exacerbate or mitigate conflict. A necessary preliminary research objective, then, is to specify the structures that the superpowers helped build to provide stability, but which were no longer sustainable in the post-Cold war era. Until now, for example, the survival of states and regimes in much of the Third World (Africa in particular) has depended on a strong, often repressive centre. Moreover, without efforts toward conflict resolution and institutionalization, this strong centre and the repressive measures the leadership used could only be sustained in the bipolar Cold War era where each patron-state not only tolerated repressive regimes but often supported them with material aid in order to further their own objectives *vis-á-vis* the other superpower. A non-polarized international system, however — symptomatic of the Cold War's end — has now eliminated external powers' belief in the need to support client regimes as a means of participating in any global competition. External powers are less interested in propping-up non-democratic regimes or regimes which impose costs on their resources unless there are specific interests associated with the regimes' continued survival that offset these costs to the external power.

The argument is not that the end of the Cold War and the accompanying end of military aid from an external power *necessarily* led to the downfall of client regimes. Rather, the end of the Cold War has meant that external powers are no longer willing or are no longer in a position to *rescue* clients in their times of need. Client regimes were invariably threatened regimes, often both internally and externally. It was this sense of threat which led regimes to look outward to find the means to sustain themselves in both the long and short

terms, and allowed the patron-client relationship to develop.[74] With the end of the Cold War, threats to the central regime did not decline, but the ability of the central regime to contain them has decreased. Consequently, in the cases of Ethiopia and Somalia, both regimes suffered *military* defeats at the hands of their domestic opponents. In Angola, following failed elections in 1992, the loss of superpower-patron support led to battlefield defeats for the MPLA regime until the regime mortgaged its oil reserves to purchase new weapons and pay for South African mercenaries to come to its assistance.[75] In none of these cases did their former patron seek to bail them out as had occurred in the past.

Thus, *when* regimes came to face overwhelming difficulties in containing threats, as they invariably did, they could not look to the same external powers to provide the security assistance necessary to cope. No longer supplied with large quantities of sophisticated weaponry without payment, regimes were increasingly unable to sustain long-term conflicts with domestic opponents. If they were to survive they were forced to address grievances; those that did not address and ultimately resolve major conflicts risked collapse and possibly further disorder.

Distribution of Power. At first look the ability of actors to engage in conflict would

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[74] In both the Angolan war and the Ogaden war, for instance, Soviet-organized airlifts reversed battlefield situations that had turned against its ally. See Porter, p. 237 and chapters eight and nine. Most often rescue was in the form of military aid and advisors from the patron-state. Steven R. David argues that "because of the level and type of outside assistance provided by the superpowers, Mengistu [in Ethiopia] and Siad [Barre of Somalia] have been able to defeat a multiplicity of internal and external threats that they could never have coped with themselves." David, *Choosing Sides*, pp. 141-142.

[75] In fact, in a case of enemy-turned-friend, what may have prevented a total collapse of the central regime in Luanda was a willingness on the part of South African mercenaries to come to the aid of the MPLA and help train its armed forces. Previously the South African government had supported the UNITA rebel movement in its fight against the MPLA regime. See "Foe Turns Friend in Angola," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1994: A1.

seem to be related to actors' access to military hardware and/or their military viability. The undemocratic character of many African regimes necessitated military power as the means by which actors challenged governments and by which governments countered these challenges. Indeed, the military, and military governments have tended to be a central feature of governance in Africa and, similarly, liberation fronts have looked to military means to bring governments down. Whether or not conflict takes place between them can reasonably be associated with the distribution of power between governments and insurgents. Establishing the relationship between military power and the likelihood of conflict, however, raises at least two problems for the creation of the argument.

First, R.T. Naylor has shown how weapons have become so inexpensive and so readily available in the post-Cold War era that their supply is less often a constraining factor in a group's ability to fight.[76] Even when groups are disarmed and their weapons destroyed, actors may, depending on the resources available to them, have access to at least some (usually light) weaponry even if this is not on the scale of that provided by the superpowers during the Cold War era. Consequently, it is difficult to see access to weapons or military viability *per se* as a causal factor in determining conflict outcomes. Not only is access to weaponry not always variable but it can frequently be seen as a constant across cases; most groups with a grievance are able to acquire weaponry provided they have some financial or other means to purchase them.

A second problem arises when one tries to predict outcomes based solely on the

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[76] See R.T. Naylor, "Loose Cannons: Covert Commerce and Underground Finance in the Modern Arms Black Market," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 22 (1995), pp. 1-57.

number of guns possessed by *one* of the actors. The research on the Ethiopian case undertaken here highlights the problem that can arise. Some of the literature which focuses on peasant revolutions, for example, tends to look only at the peasants themselves and their military assets or their grievances and level of motivation and discipline.[77] Other accounts claim that the events in May 1991 had little to do with the strength of the advancing rebel movements and almost everything to do with the fact that Mengistu's army had disintegrated.[78] In each these accounts the capabilities of the opposing force is either heavily discounted or kept out of the military equation altogether. In fact, it does not matter how powerful a fighting force is in absolute terms if the other relevant disputant remains a much *superior* force in those same or other dimensions of power. Moreover, whether it is the power of one side or the absence of power of the other is ultimately difficult to solve since neither accurately describes most situations. For the purposes of explaining outcomes of peace and conflict it may be more useful to consider *all* the relevant actors and to consider each one actor in *relation* to another actor; to understand the *distribution* of power across all disputants rather than to focus only on the capability of one actor.

An appreciation of the distribution of power across actors is important in understanding conflict outcomes in these states for several reasons. First, it is useful if one

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[77] John Young documents and accounts for what made the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) such a capable military force in its battle for political control. See John Young, *Peasants and Revolution in Ethiopia: Tigray 1975-1989*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Simon Fraser University (September 1994).

[78] In an interview with the author, David MacDonald, former Canadian ambassador to Ethiopia during the Mengistu regime, stated that "there is no compelling evidence that the TPLF won a military victory rather than that they simply walked into a military vacuum." He suggested that it was much less the abilities of the rebels which brought down the regime as the ending of military aid to Mengistu and merely the presence of a much weaker rebel group which only had to walk into a vacuum. The regime, he claimed, "imploded," it "collapsed." Interview with the author, December 12, 1995.

takes a more nuanced perspective on conflict outcomes which considers *level* of violence (high/low) and *type* of warfare (sporadic guerilla warfare versus pitched battles between regular troops). A Kalashnikov may be effective against others carrying Kalashnikovs, but may allow only hit-and-run guerilla tactics against a group in possession of tanks and other larger-scale and more sophisticated military hardware. Being sensitive to the type of conflict is also valuable when one considers the goals that are being sought. Guerilla warfare tactics of hit-and-run require relatively small amounts of weaponry whereas besieging the capital in an effort to overthrow the government usually requires more substantial equipment. Sensitivity to types of conflict also helps explain why violence can still occur even when the distribution of power heavily favours one actor over another. Even a highly unfavourable distribution of power does not preclude one actor from undertaking guerilla tactics.

A second reason to consider power in relative terms is that the end of the Cold War undermined and altered these relative capabilities in sudden and asymmetrical ways. Not all actors in a region were affected equally and the Cold War's end has not necessarily meant the end of a rebel group's ability to fight — even if on a reduced scale — provided they can acquire new financial means to purchase arms.[79] Indeed, a number of movements have been inventive in securing other new sources of funds to help them purchase arms.[80]

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[79] For a discussion of the needs and efforts of rebel groups to secure funds, see R.T. Naylor, "The Insurgent Economy: Black Market Operations of Guerilla Organizations," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 20, (1993), pp. 13-51.

[80] In Somalia, some factions have relied on the export of the drug *khat* for funds; see Donatella Lorch, "Despite War, Famine and Pestilence, the Khat Trade Thrives in East Africa," *New York Times*, December 14, 1994, A8. In Angola, UNITA rebels have come to depend on the export of diamond and ivory while the government relied on the export of oil to purchase weapons on the international arms market. See "Debts Written in Blood," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 35, no. 24 (1994), p. 3.

Consequently, systemic change upsets the relative distribution of power and offers new opportunities for some actors (especially for those that are able to secure new resources) while increasing the vulnerabilities of others. What is significant are these changes in the distribution of power and not simply the fact that military aid ended. Actors that were dependent for their military strength on only external support suddenly found themselves increasingly unable to fight. Alternatively, insurgents who had previously been suppressed, may now be better able to pressure weakened regimes to meet their objectives.

Finding a satisfactory means to measure power is not an easy task. While one might look only at quantities of military hardware, recent conflicts in Africa demonstrate obvious weaknesses in this approach. In 1994, for example, Rwanda experienced an enormously violent and bloody conflict but much of it was a consequence of machetes rather than guns. The power of the respective adversaries, then, may not always correspond with the number of guns possessed by one group over another or by the simple fact of an external supplier. Various other dimensions of power, however, can be considered to account for particular conflict outcomes. These could include power-enhancing factors such as regional allies and group cohesion or debilitating factors such as the presence of famine or low morale.[81]

One may, in simple terms, categorize the distribution of power in the following way. First, the state is militarily powerful, relatively cohesive and is able to execute basic administrative duties; alternatively, insurgent challengers to the state are weak and

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[81] These factors are more difficult to quantify but can be considered on a case by case basis. Indicators of low morale, for instances, might include high rates of desertion or defection, the abandoning of weapons or weapons sites and the use of forced conscription as opposed to volunteer forces. For further discussion on this see James Lee Ray, *Global Politics*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), pp. 185-189.

ineffective. This condition is called *State Viable*. A second possibility is where the state is weak or nonexistent and insurgents have sufficient resources to challenge the state. This condition is labelled as *Insurgent Group Viable*. Finally, it is possible that both the regime and the insurgents, or two or more insurgents (and no existing regime), have sufficient resources to challenge the other. This condition is designated *Both Viable*.

An understanding of the power relationships among various actors is less to explain why one side is winning or losing battles but rather whether or not there will be conflict. While understanding the distribution of power helps explain who is victorious, it is being used here first and foremost as a means of showing whether one group has the *capacity* to challenge an opponent and what form this challenge might take (ie ambushes, guerilla warfare, conventional warfare). Determining the thresholds from one form of conflict to another will require closer examination of the cases but it should be clear that even if one group remains on the unfavourable side of the balance of power relative to its opponent, it may still be a significant enough force that is capable of challenging its opponent.

Governing Agreement. The condition, *governing agreement* is important in this respect because it builds into the argument an explanation for why actors are motivated to behave the way they do and why power configurations of either domestic hegemony or balance lead to outcomes of both conflict and peace. In practical terms, governing agreements can provide a theoretical and practical escape from power configurations which might otherwise lead to violent conflict. The argument suggested here takes into account the fact that new governing arrangements are being made in the post-Cold War era but breaks them down into two general possibilities: a *winner-take-all* electoral process whereby the

group that can win elections gains virtually complete control of the government; and, a *power-sharing* agreement whereby groups are able either to gain a degree of autonomy and/or are given a shared voice in the political affairs of the state through a formal and explicit agreement between the disputants.[82]

The advantage of considering the specific governing agreement is that one is not left attempting to ascertain *degrees* of democracy and its effect on conflict but rather to link distinct and previously identified types of governing structures to conflict outcomes. The first, *No Agreement*, means that no new specific arrangement for governing the state has been defined between the government and opposing groups. All three of the present cases have been in and/or moved beyond this stage and have had to consider new governing arrangements. The remaining two governing agreements, entitled *power-sharing* and *winner-take-all*, presuppose a new agreement worked out between contending groups. They may or may not involve democratic processes and are so divided to account for the fact that one-time free and fair elections may not always lead to a long-term peaceful outcome. Power-sharing could, for instance, involve the implementation of a federal structure which satisfies desires for autonomy without allowing complete control of the state. Power sharing could also involve the distribution of government portfolios among representatives of different ethnic groups. Power-sharing will be identified by the existence of a formal written agreement between groups which specifies how political offices are to be divided among

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[82] It may appear tautological if democratic institutions are themselves the result of a peaceful outcome — but not if the reasons for new or renewed efforts at constructing democratic institutions is related in part to the end of the Cold War, especially if the incentives to construct these institutions are externally provided. Moreover, democratic institutions are not necessarily a sign of a complete resolution of conflict; insurgents such as UNITA have returned to violent forms of conflict after democratic institutions have failed them.

their respective members or which allocates a significant portion of political power to groups which make such demands. Winner-take-all implies an agreement to abide by an electoral process where the winner is able to gain formal control of the government structure to the virtual exclusion of other groups contesting power.

Political Agreements and Military Power. Considering governing agreement as a condition is problematic, however, if one is to claim that any governing agreement does not take place in a vacuum but rather is predetermined by military power relations among the disputants. If this claim is correct then one cannot see governing agreement standing on its own as a condition.

Several counterclaims can be made in response to this charge. First, it should be recognized that governing agreements are, indeed, relevant to military power but they involve the formal *re*distribution of political power. A formal agreement between government and insurgents can, in theory, lead to an allocation of political power among the actors which is incommensurate with their military power. New agreements between parties, for example, may come as a result of pressure from external sources such as former superpower patrons or international bodies such as the United Nations. International conferences of one kind or another have been a regular feature of the post-Cold War landscape in Africa and these have often been at the request of external actors. Their outcomes may or may not reflect the respective military capacity of each disputant.

Second, in some cases, the group that defeated the incumbent government was a coalition of several groups which, having defeated the regime, has since disbanded and had its component members pursue their own independent course. In this case, the transitional

governing agreement is not between the victors and representatives of the defeated regime (thus between the strong and the weak), as much as it is between all of the groups which have had a role in defeating the government. This was the case in Ethiopia where a coalition present at the time of the government's defeat has since had to cope with the exit of one of its largest groups, the Oromo Liberation Front.

Finally, to say that a certain military situation brings about a particular political situation, does not mean that the relative military balance remains static afterwards (even though the political agreement does). That is, even if an agreement does come about as a *result* of a particular power configuration what is interesting is what happens subsequently when power balances continue to shift *within* the confines of a static formal agreement. Political agreements are generally fixed insofar as they may not change *every* time there is a shift in the distribution of power (in fact, they may not change until one group violently attempts to coerce the other into making a new agreement which reflects that new power balance). In this way, political agreements tend to *freeze* a particular governing arrangement; one wants to know then what happens when there are changes in the distribution of power after the political agreement has been arrived at.

Secession. The assumption is made here that what motivates groups into confronting each other is a desire to achieve or share national political power. But in reality not all groups seek this end. No doubt many, if not most, seek at least a share of power. Others, however, will seek to opt out of political power altogether and secede from the state. This fact has relevance to both of our conditions of *governing agreement* and *distribution of power*. In terms of the former, it means that offers of power-sharing may not always satisfy

the demands of a disputant and thus have little bearing on the mitigation of conflict.[83] On the other hand, one can see how the political objectives of an actor can change as circumstances change. Groups may adhere, for instance, to demands for secession in the face of a brutal government only to change course when other opportunities for inclusion or total power arise.[84] In light of the fluid nature of these aspirations, an assumption is made here that two proposed solutions — power-sharing or winner-take-all — can satisfy most if not all groups, even if their previous public statements indicate a preference for secession.

In terms of the distribution of power, the fact of a dilemma between secession and central power (diametrically opposed objectives) also means that different groups are oriented to a range of often mutually incompatible goals which can become increasingly complicated with each additional party or liberation movement in a multi-ethnic state. These conflicting objectives may weaken the collective opposition's capacity to challenge the government. All groups may be opposed to the government but they will not all agree on the proper response and some may prefer to be let into the current regime rather than to bring it down altogether. Other groups may seek nothing less than the complete elimination of the regime particularly if the regime is perceived to be the central obstacle to secession. Moreover, in the case of a single large and amorphous group which lacks centralized

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[83] Offers of political power, however, or at least the sharing of political power may have the effect of inducing otherwise secessionist groups into changing course. In the 1960s tensions were diffused somewhat in India when the separatist Dravidian movement of the south was successfully integrated into the political system to become a powerful regional party. This possibility means that a group's apparent desire for secessions should not be assumed as final until that objective has been achieved.

[84] In the case of Ethiopia, the TPLF spent considerable time and energy trying to decide or convince dissenters within its ranks whether to pursue secession or seeking central power. The "Manifesto of the TPLF," released in February 1976, called for the establishment of an independent Tigray.

leadership there may be a range of opinion *within* the group on how to proceed. For the Oromos in Ethiopia this range included a willingness to work with the Mengistu regime, to a willingness to work with the TPLF (dissenters would say remain subservient to the TPLF) to a demand for outright independence of the Oromo homeland, Oromia. Consequently, despite the Ethiopia's relatively large Oromo population, incompatible political objectives within the ethnic group has inhibited the forging of a coherent and unified opposition to the government. Its relative power, then, is not commensurate with its population. Unless political objectives can be melded into a common front, the power that can be wielded may not correspond with the number of ostensibly anti-government movements or the size of the ethnic group.

Linking the Two Conditions. The two conditions, distribution of power and governing agreement, can now be combined in the form of a matrix to suggest how their interaction can lead to divergent outcomes. Depending on the mix of conditions, the outcomes to be expected change in terms of peace or conflict. What follows are brief explanations indicating how these outcomes are produced.

In a situation where only the state is viable and there is no governing agreement, for instance, the state is in a position to suppress its weaker challengers. Insurgents must play a waiting game until they are able to gain enough strength to pose a greater threat to the regime. A power imbalance does not necessarily mean that there is harmony and peace but only that one side has sufficient control of power resources to preclude a successful challenge to their rule. Challengers are able only to carry out intermittent hit-and-run guerilla tactics because they do not see themselves as strong enough to effectively challenge the state. The

regime, seeing itself as militarily much stronger, believes there is no reason to negotiate with insurgents and therefore prefers forceful suppression — especially if negotiations with one group means that the regime will be forced to enter negotiations with other groups. A significant imbalance in capabilities between the insurgents and the regime make this a fairly stable situation. This outcome, called *state suppression or low level guerrilla warfare*, is one of two outcomes one would have expected to find during the Cold War.

A less stable situation emerges in cases where the insurgents are viable and the government is weak and there is no political agreement between the actors. There is violence but it is transitory and its duration depends on how long the regime holds out and how many groups contest power once the regime is overthrown. The regime seeks to hold on to power as long as possible and is forced to fight a rearguard action as it contends with superior force. Once the battle appears to have been lost, regime leaders will flee to save their own lives. Insurgents, sensing imminent victory, move into the capital and attempt to restore order as soon as possible so as to prevent any challenges to its authority. Accordingly, this outcome is called *regime overthrow*.[85]

The most violent outcome is expected when both the regime and insurgents are viable and no agreement exists between the parties — a situation of *continued war*. Here there are at least two groups each believing it has a right to political power and can gain control

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[85] Even in the case of an insurgent group which is strong relative to the regime, overthrowing the regime may be difficult. There is a difference between being successful in *sustaining* oneself and in successfully *suppressing* opposition groups. The former is much harder than the latter (that is, one might be able to keep oneself in power, even if one is unsuccessful at snuffing out all forms of opposition -- something that relatively weak African regimes might find quite difficult). During the Cold War regimes were able to sustain themselves even if they were unable to prevent the *existence* of opposition groups. The more power a regime has, however, the more likely that they would be able to go beyond merely sustaining themselves and actually suppressing threatening opposition groups.

militarily. The level of violence and, hence, rate of casualties, is extremely high since both or many groups are armed and can throw large numbers of troops into battle. The stability of the situation depends on each group's ability to secure continued resources to carry on the battle. Neither group sees reason to negotiate as long as it believes a military solution is possible. This result is the second outcome one might have expected to find during the Cold War as different superpowers armed opposing disputants within a state.

Cases which include *winner-take-all* elections are complicated by the fact that outcomes depend on which of the actors — government or opposition-insurgents — is victorious at the polls. Unlike power-sharing, the potential for conflict remains relatively high because not only is the loser unlikely to be satisfied with the electoral outcome but they may be shut out of the political process entirely. Consequently, unless the loser accepts its loss gracefully, there is a high probability of a return to violence. In the case where the state is viable and the state wins the election, the chances of violence are low because the state has a monopoly on the means of force and can justify its legitimacy on the basis of the election. If the state loses, however, the likelihood of conflict is higher as ruling elites may be reluctant to concede power to a weaker movement. Once power is surrendered, however, those elites may not have the same capacity, in the form of access to the state's military resources, to bring about a forceful return to power in the immediate future. In *winner-take-all* situations where the insurgents are viable and win the election a stable peace is the likely outcome. However, there is a high probability of a return to violence if the insurgents lose the election. This situation is as dangerous as any other circumstances because an aggrieved player is left out of the process but with their capacity to attempt a violent return to power

intact.

Another violent outcome is to be expected in winner-take-all situations where both the key actors remain viable. While peace may be present at the time of the election, the parties are likely to descend into civil war following the announcement of results. Each group agrees to participate in the electoral process believing it has sufficient support to win at the ballot box and that the election will confer further legitimacy to the winner. By not disarming before the election each actor believes it has nothing to lose in the event of an unfavourable election result since the outcome can be challenged militarily. Being excluded politically and yet able to mount a military challenge, the losers see their only avenue to exercising power as being through force. Losing actors in winner-take-all elections are frustrated especially if they fear that the election was a one-time event and if they believe they will be unable to contest elections in the future. Election winners, satisfied with the legitimacy the election has conferred, feel justified in applying mild suppression when necessary. In these circumstances, the time from the agreement to the conclusion of the electoral process may be the only period of peace.

More peaceful outcomes are expected when governing agreements involve power-sharing. A *stable peace* emerges when the government remains viable but other groups are not excluded from power. Groups which are militarily weak but are included in the government are politically satisfied and, in any case, have no military option available to them. Since their future interests appear less threatened, less is at stake even if they do not control all political offices. The winner believes it has acquired power legitimately and has no reason to expect violent challenges because challengers are too weak and have already,

to some extent, been politically empowered.

Finally, there is *unstable peace* when a power-sharing agreement is devised but both groups remain viable or when the military balance favours the insurgent group. In the first instance, both groups are given a nonviolent avenue to having their interests served. However, having both groups remain militarily viable means that any irregularities which threaten one group's interests can lead to a violent response. Consequently, while peaceful, this situation is less stable than if there was a significant power imbalance favouring the incumbent. A power balance which favours a militarily viable insurgency over a weak government is unstable to the extent that the insurgents are tempted by the prospect of achieving total power. Remaining militarily viable means that even if it has a democratic political voice, the loser has a further means to press its claim should it be frustrated with the political process.

This supposition is noteworthy insofar as it captures the fact that democratic processes may not always lead to peaceful outcomes (provided the loser remains viable) while nondemocratic processes (provided they allow power-sharing) may not always lead to outcomes that are violent. Similarly one can see how situations where both disputants are militarily viable can lead to both peaceful and conflictual outcomes. A summary of these outcomes is provided in the following table.

Governing Agreement

Distribution of Power	**No Agreement**	**Winner-Take-All**	**Power-Sharing**
State Viable	1) State Suppression or Low-level guerrilla warfare	4a) *Government Wins* Stable Peace	7) Stable Peace
		4b) *Insurgents Win* Low-level Conflict	
Both Viable	2) Continued War	5) Return to War	8) Unstable Peace
Insurgents Viable	3) Regime Overthrown or forced into concessions	6a) *Government Wins* Return to War	
		6b) *Insurgents Win* Stable Peace	

With these static outcomes in mind, one can consider likely patterns of rising and falling conflict. Previously, as a consequence of the Cold War, there was little variation in conflict outcomes; one would expect the Cold War cases considered here to have remained in boxes (1) or (2). Accordingly, boxes (1) and (2) are the starting points for each of Ethiopia, Somalia and Angola when our study begins in 1985. As will frequently occur, the ending of military aid to a besieged centralized regime ultimately leads to the regime's violent overthrow. An insurgency installs itself in the capital and considers one of three possible options depending on its relative strength: suppress any new challenges to the regime; engage in a protracted civil war against another strong rival which is excluded from the new administration; or consider a new governing agreement with excluded groups. In

one scenario, the new regime commences organizing for an election in the near future. A less ideologically-charged international environment eliminates military aid flows to potential insurgencies. Negotiations begin to formulate an electoral format which is agreeable to disputants and which gives a political voice to all parties. These are then possible conditions leading to the most stable peaceful outcome. The level of conflict moves from a high, at the time of overthrow, to a low following the elections.

A different scenario emerges when the regime is overthrown by one group but several other groups remain viable and contest each other's claim to political power. A withdrawal of aid to the central regime leads to a leveling of the most important remaining actors. Whether no agreement is formulated between the parties or a winner-take-all electoral agreement is achieved, violent conflict will ensue provided the groups remain cohesive and can secure sufficient military resources to continue violent action. In this case violence is high at the time of overthrow and, with a possible interruption prior to winner-take-all elections, remains at high levels. Evidently, in order to ascertain what scenarios are likely, one must consider the conditions present and the shifts in these conditions that are likely to change outcomes from one level of conflict to another.

IV

Methodology

The case study method has been selected in this dissertation as the most appropriate means to consider and explain how different combinations of power and governing agreement lead to different outcomes of peace and conflict. This has been done for several reasons. First,

case studies allow one to examine change over time and the manner in which these outcomes of peace and conflict evolve out of differing rates of change among the two sets of conditions. For instance, one can see how conflict may arise when shifts in the balance of power take place within the framework of an existing static governing agreement. Second, case studies allow one to capture the richness of detail which makes this argument more persuasive. Power-sharing and threat are frequently as much a matter of perception as of fact — a tendency which can really only be captured through detailed examination of the events and perspectives involved. Shifts in the balance of power also frequently tend to be subtle and to involve a number of different elements, a fact which also forces one to consider things in greater detail. Third, to the extent that this research concerns the end of the Cold War — a one time event — there are relatively few cases which can be considered. The weakness of having fewer cases, however, is compensated by the fact that these variables are examined simultaneously over time. A single case, then, may yield any number of combinations of distribution of power and governing agreement — in effect increasing the number of cases which can be examined. Moreover, the regime in each case was involved concurrently in wars with a number of disparate and not always cooperative dissident groups. This provides the opportunity to test the argument against a large number of conflict situations.

The research follows the approach of *structured focused comparison* as outlined by Alexander George.[86] This approach seeks both descriptive richness and to establish cause

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[86] Alexander George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured Focused Comparison," in Lauren eds. *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, (London: Free Press, 1979).

and effect linkages between variables by asking standardized questions for each case considered. A preliminary set of questions was established to provide a overall framework for all three of the cases. These questions were as follows: What is the nature of the relationship between the regime (or the insurgent group) and external actors? If a relationship with an external actor has been terminated, has the regime (or insurgent) succeeded in securing new resources? What is the distribution of military power between the government and other domestic adversaries? What kind of formal or informal political agreements or relationships exist between the regime and other ethnic groups or adversaries? Finally, to what extent does any agreement satisfy those party to the agreements? Further readings from the secondary literature allowed the drafting of questions which, while within this framework, dealt more specifically with each case.

Sources. Research on Africa requires one to overcome a number of obstacles. The first is the relatively small number of publications reporting from each of these countries which are available in the West. Even while conducting this research a number of important news sources on Africa stopped publishing.[87] Of the publications whose focus is on Africa, such as *Africa Confidential* and the *Economist Intelligence Unit*, many frequently relied on other reports from the country rather than from their own sources on the ground. The most factually reliable reporting came from Western-based newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. While they had reporters on the ground, for better or for worse, they could not be said to represent the perspectives of

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[87] These included, most notably, *Africa Report* and *Africa Contemporary Record*. The fact that these and other reports are no longer being published was noted by the *New York Times*. See Gregory Jordan, "Publications Focusing on Africa Disappear," *New York Times*, November 18, 1996, p. D10.

Africans themselves (indeed, they often focused on American or UN interventions such as UNITAF and UNOSOM or, with regard to Angola, US oil interests in the region). The publication which relied most frequently on African writers was *New African*, but its record of events occasionally conflicted with other sources and its minor errors by regular staff writers sometimes undermined its credibility.

Other sources of information were the memoirs written by various individuals whose experience in these events provided a number of valuable insights. These individuals included Chester Crocker, Margaret J. Anstee, Mohamed Sahnoun, Robert Oakley, Jonathon Howe, Richard Greenfield, Paul B. Henze and David A. Korn. There are very few Africans who have written similar memoirs, but those who have include Dawit Wolde Giorgis and Jama Mohamed Ghalib. Statistical information was derived from various government sources: information regarding arms transfers came from the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA); information regarding foreign aid was derived from the United States Agency for International Development, the Statistical Abstracts of the United States, and from the World Bank's annual *World Development Reports*. US Government reports were also an important source of information as were the publications from human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Africa Watch. Another valuable source of information came from unpublished reports written by United Nations personnel in the field. Documents on Somalia were also collected from the United Nations' *Blue Book*.

The dissertation also relies on statements made to the author in interviews with those who were important actors in these events or who were proximate enough to observe events first hand. Interviews were conducted during a trip to Ethiopia in May 1996 and to Angola

in November-December 1997, among the African diaspora in Canada, and with diplomatic officials in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and New York. Statements provided during these interviews are used to support the author's own claims and to provide indications of the levels of violence or perceptions of threat or the extent to which governing agreements satisfied the respective parties.

There are many interpretations of events of these times which are frequently aligned with ethnic group interests and, accordingly, these interpretations are often politically charged. In Ethiopia, for example, the democratic character of the new regime was particularly controversial. There, opposition parties pulled out of the election claiming fraud and intimidation on the part of a government which was bound to have won in any case. With regard to Somalia, events were complicated by the fact that military leaders sometimes fought on behalf of several groups or militias or that several opposing leaders fought under the same banner (often against each other).[88] Moreover, group identities in Somalia were enormously fluid and the organizations themselves frequently changed names or emerged only to disappear within the course of this study. Similar processes were at work in Angola. Even at the time of Angola's independence, John Marcum observed that "the foreign intervention and factional fighting that ensued in 1975 proved so chaotic and opportunistic that its exact sequence may remain forever arguable."[89] Similarly, Fred Bridgland writes, "I've striven to ensure that [my] book is factually accurate. But the trouble with Angola is

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[88] Both General Mohamed Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi, the two most central actors in the battle for Mogadishu following the fall of Siad Barre, both claimed to represent the United Somali Congress (USC). Ali Mahdi himself belonged to several organizations and militias.

[89] John Marcum, cited in Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1986), p. 451.

that every fact is in dispute ... the facts are so contentious...."[90]

All of these problems are compounded by government secrecy with regard to domestic conflicts and suspicions directed toward an intruding researcher. Sorting out these problems and finding the common threads which reflect these perspectives is a difficult and humbling process. As always one has to be careful to document sources and look for confirmation. The purpose, however, was not to highlight these conflicting points of view (except insofar as they are relevant to analysis of threat perception) or to uncover new versions of events as much as to settle on interpretations where there tended to be general agreement for the purposes of testing the argument.

Case Selection. Ethiopia, Somalia and Angola have been selected as the cases for the testing of this argument. There are several reasons for choosing these countries. First, more than most other African countries, these states were *contested* states insofar as both superpowers were involved with their regimes (or insurgencies) either simultaneously or consecutively. Consequently, they were among the largest recipients of military and economic aid from the superpowers or the Eastern or Western-bloc countries during the Cold War. Second, being in an area of marginal strategic relevance beyond the Cold War, African states were also the most likely to experience the greatest impact from the Cold War's end. Unlike other areas such as the Middle East, the international importance of these states did not transcend the East-West competition which characterized the Cold War.[91] Moreover,

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[90] Bridgland, p. 10.

[91] According to the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), in 1990-91 drastic declines in arms imports had begun in all regions except the Middle East and North America. Africa's share of world arms imports fell from 17.5 percent in 1981 to a record low of 3.4 percent in 1991. In 1979, Africa was the second largest arms importing region in the world behind the MiddleEast, though by 1991 it was

subSaharan Africa is a region where states have virtually no domestic means to produce sophisticated weaponry. As a result, these states — among the most militarized in Africa[92] — were, with the end of the Cold War, most likely to demonstrate the greatest observable dynamic in terms of changes to local power balances (see table).

Arms Imports (million 1995 dollars)*

Year	Ethiopia	Somalia	Angola	Africa Average†
1985	1096	110	800	42
1986	440	40	1735	30
1987	1294	26	3495	36
1988	905	50	2996	29
1989	1168	60	988	23
1990	471	34	603	18
1991	88	33	55	11
1992	0	0	43	11
1993	5	5	294	6
1994	0	0	718	7
1995	0	0	90	4

* From or derived from United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1996*, pp. 101, 109, 121 and 141.
†Average for all of sub-Saharan Africa minus South Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia and Angola

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ranked seventh behind the Middle East, Europe, East Asia, South Asia/Oceana, North America and Latin America. See US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1990* and *1991-92*. Of all African countries, only a few were large importers. In the 1980s Algeria, Angola, Libya and Ethiopia accounted for three-quarters of all arms purchased in the region.

[92] The three cases are the most militarized states in Africa in terms of their ratio of soldiers per 1000 population. The top ten countries and their ratios are as follows: Angola (10.30); Somalia (8.7); Ethiopia (7.0); Mauritania (5.6); Congo (4.6); Liberia (3.2); Chad (3.1); Sudan (3.1); South Africa (3.0) and Mozambique (2.6). Source: Ruth Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures, 1991*, 14th ed. (Washington: World Priorities, 1991).

The time period chosen for all three case studies is 1985 to 1995. While there is a certain arbitrariness to the dates, 1985 corresponds with the ascension to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, a leader whose actions, most observers agree, most dramatically reduced international tensions. This, in turn, led to significant reductions in military aid going to each of these states (although aid reductions to Somalia arguably began even earlier). "In retrospect," notes Raymond Garthoff, "it is clear that the single most significant factor not only turning American-Soviet relations back from confrontation to détente and even beyond during the decade of the 1980s was the impact of Mikhail Gorbachev." He continues, stating that "without Gorbachev American-Soviet relations throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s would almost certainly have continued on the same basic course as they did in 1984-85, with minor variations in a pattern of continuing competition."[93] While there was no particular speech or public document where an explicit statement was made with regard to the ending of aid to client states, most observers cite Gorbachev's speech to the 27th Party Congress in 1986 as a turning point. At that time, Duncan and Ekedahl note, "Gorbachev made it clear that the Third World was low in the new regime's list of priorities. He subordinated the promotion of revolutionary change and the advancement of Soviet power in the Third World areas to the pursuit of domestic objectives and broader foreign policy goals."[94] Gorbachev also began to stress themes of "mutual security" and the claim that no state could defend itself solely on the basis of

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[93] Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington D.C: Brookings, 1994), p. 769.

[94] W. Raymond Duncan and Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl, *Moscow and the Third World Under Gorbachev* (Boulder: Westview, 1990), p. 71.

military-technical means. While Duncan and Ekedahl concede that these themes were not new to the Soviet lexicon, Gorbachev's "packaging" of them together with a more comprehensive international agenda which emphasized negotiations, mutual concessions and compromise among disputants, was new.[95] The year 1995 was selected as a general end point for the project because it was the most recent date for which secondary information was available and provided a manageable time in which to observe change in each of the countries considered. The entire time period encompasses the aid reductions, the collapse of regimes in two of the three cases, and the efforts at reconstruction and democratization in all three states.

Choosing a relatively small number of cases — all African — from an apparently one-time event — the end of the Cold War — does raise questions about the generalizability of the argument. The end of the Cold War provides an opportunity to examine changes which were occurring simultaneously in a number of similarly situated states. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to examine a set of cases where the outcomes are likely to be the most dramatic and the causal paths most clearly defined. The argument, however, remains equally applicable to other times and locales. As for the selection of exclusively African cases, William Zartman also notes that "our purpose is not merely to learn about Africa — an exercise of current interest to a small audience — but to learn from Africa — a project of much wider importance."[96]

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[95] Duncan and Ekedahl, p. 50.

[96] William Zartman, "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse," in William Zartman ed. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), p. 2.

The work presented here is unique for several reasons. First, it deals specifically with countries that were "clients" of the Cold War superpowers. These states were artificial insofar as they were to a large extent "propped up" by the superpowers. It was and is an interesting question to consider what would be the result when this artificial support ended so abruptly. Second, the argument itself is unique. There is some literature which considers domestic power balances but it requires greater explanatory power. While there is some discussion of issues such as power sharing, no one has *combined* different governing agreements with different power balances to determine conflict outcomes. It is, after all, the *mix* of these different conditions which is important in determining conflict outcomes. Third, international relations scholars have, to some extent, missed the boat in their examination of conflict. They are more often theorizing about interstate wars which have occurred relatively infrequently in the post-World War II era. That is not to say that there are not many complex interstate conflict situations in the international system which need to be examined. More work needs to be done, however, to link external and internal contributors to peace and violence and to systematically examine the conditions under which civil wars occur in various regions of the contemporary world. This is what this project attempts to do.

Chapter Outlines. Chapters 2 through 7 consider the specific experiences of each of the three cases during this time period. Each case is divided into two chapters: 1985 to 1991 and 1991 to 1995. The first chapter of each case study addresses changes in peace and conflict as the Cold War drew to a close, as superpower involvement and influence declined and as domestic alliances dissolved. Discussion here focuses on how the respective regimes

adjusted to these changing international circumstances and how they coped with other domestic challengers. In the second chapter of each case study, discussion focuses on changes in peace and conflict as new or reformed regimes dealt with the reality of being without superpower assistance. The final chapter of the dissertation summarizes the research programme and considers possibilities for conflict and conflict resolution for the future.

PART TWO

Case Studies

Chapter 2

Ethiopia and the Fall of the Derg, 1985-1991

I

The vast military power of the Ethiopian government in the late 1970s and 1980s came largely as a result of an enormous quantity of sophisticated weaponry, Cuban troops and security personnel provided by the Soviet Union during this time. The effect of this aid and support was to embolden the Ethiopian president, Mengistu Haile Mariam, into thinking that his power could not be contested. His adversaries, in turn, saw only his overthrow as an acceptable solution to the war. Indeed, with the end of the Cold War, Ethiopia experienced a dramatic and relatively sudden shift in the local balance of power. Even as the rebels gained strength, however, and as Mengistu's military machine began to dissolve following the reduction of the Soviet commitment to the regime, there was no meaningful attempt to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Consequently, the level of violence remained high until the regime's collapse in May 1991. The first section of this chapter will provide a historical review of these events until 1991 in order to give an indication of the nature of conflict during these last years of the Mengistu regime. The second section of the chapter considers the distribution of power and the factors which contributed to this shift. Finally, conclusions will be proffered on changing power balances and the larger military conflict.

II

The Historical Background[1]

The Military Evolution Until 1991. During its reign, the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam attempted to suppress numerous challenges to its rule. Each of these groups had its own particular political objectives: irredentist aspirations (Somalis in the east); secessionist objectives (Eritreans in the north); those who wanted political power commensurate with their population size (Oromos sprawled across the south, east and west); and those who sought to remove a government whose policies and methods were perceived as repressive or out of line with their needs (Tigrayans also in the north). In addition to these movements, there were other smaller groups and organizations who had less success articulating their political aspirations.

By 1985, two of these movements, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), were well established and exercised varying degrees of control over their respective provinces in the north of Ethiopia. The EPLF, the older of the two liberation movements, had by the end of the 1970s emerged from among a number of Eritrean organizations as the most significant and the most powerful rebel movement in Ethiopia. The Eritrean rebellion had been launched a year prior to the annexation of Eritrea by Haile Selassie in 1962.[2] In the early days of the rebellion, the

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[1] For more discussion of the history of Ethiopia see Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1974* (London: James Curry, 1991); and Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994).

[2] Eritrea was formerly an Italian colony which was federated with Ethiopia by the United Nations in 1952.

Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) relied primarily on hit-and-run tactics, attacking convoys and raiding government military bases, installations and police outposts. The government responded by burning villages believed to shelter the rebels. As the tactics of the insurgency intensified, so too did the reprisals carried out by the government.[3]

The first of several splits within the ELF occurred 1968 and in February 1972 the EPLF was formed. Subsequent internecine strife between factions of the Eritrean movements during the 1970s resulted in over 3000 casualties — more deaths from conflicts among the Eritrean fronts themselves than had occurred during all the previous years of engagement with the government.[4] Despite the conflict, the more disciplined and sophisticated EPLF, along with the ELF, came to control much of Eritrea except its capital, Asmara, Massawa and a number of Ethiopian garrisons. Complete control of the province might have been achieved had the Soviet Union not come to the assistance in November 1977 of the new revolutionary regime, called the *Derg*[5] and led by Colonel Mengistu, which was fending off a Somali invasion of the Ogaden desert in the east of Ethiopia. A massive influx of Soviet weaponry, Soviet advisors and some 17,000-20,000 Cuban troops, led to the expulsion of the Somalis. Subsequently, this support enabled the Derg to redirect its attention to the Eritrean insurgency in the north. But while a massive offensive in 1978 allowed the government to reclaim swaths of Eritrean territory, the Derg was never able to

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[3] David Pool, *Eritrea: Africa's Longest War*, Anti Slavery Society, Human Rights Series, Report no. 3 (London: 1980, revised 1982), p. 46.

[4] Africa Watch, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991), p. 42.

[5] "Derg" is the Amharic word for *council* and describes the secretive group of officers responsible for overthrowing the regime of Haile Selassie in 1974.

dislodge the rebels from their strongholds most notably at Nacfa in the northwest. Indeed, the human rights watchdog, Africa Watch, observed that by 1980 the war in Eritrea was in stalemate.[6] Repeated government offensives and inevitable counter-offensives by the rebels meant that towns changed hands on numerous occasions. When towns were lost to the rebels they were invariably subjected to bombing by government aircraft. In the largest offensive of the early 1980s, the Red Star campaign of 1982, the government once again strengthened its hold on the north but failed to capture Nacfa. Since Mengistu had been directly involved in the campaign (and its failure at meeting that objective), subsequent military campaigns tended not to be publicized.[7]

The Eritrean liberation movements frequently cooperated with Tigrayan rebels operating south of Eritrea in the province of Tigray. In fact, the EPLF had sought to create a buffer zone on its southern border and was involved in the creation and early development of a Tigrayan liberation front. The TPLF began its insurrection in 1975 and by 1978 had become the most significant anti-Derg organization in Tigray. As with the EPLF, its initial small size and limited resources precluded the TPLF from employing anything other than hit-and-run tactics against the government. The government also made the Tigrayan rebels the object of a series of military offensives during the late 1970s and the 1980s. In each case, the government failed to destroy the rebel movement; indeed, its brutal tactics drove Tigrayan peasants in increasing numbers to support the Tigrayan cause. The TPLF came to

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[6] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 115.

[7] Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), p. 209.

control ever larger shares of the Tigrayan countryside until it was delivered a near-fatal blow during the devastating famines of 1984-85.[8]

In fact, both the EPLF and the TPLF suffered setbacks at this time. In 1984 squabbling between the EPLF and the TPLF led to the severing of relations between the two organizations. Then, in April 1985, the Sudanese president and adversary of Mengistu Haile Mariam, Colonel Jaafar Numeiri, was ousted in a coup. His successor, the Transitional Military Council, sought improved relations with Addis Ababa and closed EPLF and TPLF offices in Khartoum. In addition, Khartoum undertook to limit cross-border operations by Ethiopian rebels operating from the Sudan.

Both the EPLF and TPLF were unable to counter subsequent government offensives. In February 1985, the government launched a two-front attack into central and western Tigray timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the founding of the TPLF. At the end of the offensive two months later, the army had regained much of central Tigray and, according to Africa Watch, allowed the Derg "a greater degree of control in Tigray than at any time since 1977."[9] The offensive in Tigray was followed by an equally damaging offensive into Eritrea in August 1985. An estimated 110,000 to 250,000 troops were deployed in the offensive which was described as the "largest and most successful offensive" effort since the late 1970s and resulted in the capture of a number of formerly rebel-held towns by government forces (although at a considerable cost to the government in terms of

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[8] Much of the famous BBC broadcast which alerted the world to the coming crisis in Ethiopia in October 1984, was filmed in Korem, in Wollo on the Tigrayan border, and in Meqele, the capital of Tigray.

[9] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 203. Despite the significant gains for the regime, however, the TPLF still claimed it had been at a cost of 2000 government troops killed and 900 captured. See "End of an Offensive," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 11 (May 22, 1985).

casualties).[10] The EPLF acknowledged the loss as a strategic withdrawal but it suffered casualties estimated to range from 2000 to 4500.[11] At the conclusion of the offensive in October 1985, Mengistu confidently traveled north to visit his troops and savour the victory.[12]

In early 1987, *Times* correspondent Charles Harrison spoke in terms of an "armed peace" prevailing in Eritrea.[13] Then, after months where the two fronts seemed to have been weakened by government offensives and the rift which continued to exist between them, both movements launched successful attacks on government troops in their respective provinces. In Tigray, the TPLF renewed attacks on small government garrisons and in October 1987, captured the strategic garrison of Rama on the Eritrean border. Other army outposts fell subsequently. In Eritrea in December 1987, EPLF rebels broke the line south of Nacfa to which they had withdrawn in 1978 after the introduction of Soviet weaponry and pushed the front 20 kilometers south. The battle at Nacfa was the largest battle in two years and,

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[10] David A. Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1986), p. 159; "Attrition," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 20 (October 1, 1985).

[11] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 183; "Ethiopia: Northern Campaign," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 22 (October 30, 1985).

[12] As had occurred in the Red Star campaign of 1982, however, government forces were unable to uproot Eritrean fighters from their stronghold at Nacfa, which was by now gaining a symbolic importance for the Eritrean rebels. Subsequent attempts to dislodge EPLF guerillas from underground bunkers and trenches around Nacfa in October and November 1985 were also unsuccessful. In fact, the repeated assaults by government forces leveled the city and reportedly came at a cost of several thousand troops killed or captured, and 50 tanks and 85 armoured vehicles captured or destroyed. See "Eritrea Update," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 25 (December 11, 1985).

[13] Charles Harrison, "Armed Peace Reigns as Rebels Lie Low in Eritrea," *Times* (London), April 23, 1987, p. 8.

according to the EPLF, 1550 government troops were "put out of action."[14]

Symptomatic of the continuing breakdown in morale in the Ethiopian military in the north, Mengistu again flew to Eritrea, this time to deal with unrest among his troops, many of whom were now refusing to go on patrol.[15] The worst was yet to come. In mid-March 1988, the EPLF again went on the offensive and within 48 hours defeated three Ethiopian infantry divisions and advanced the front another twenty-five miles by capturing the town of Afebet, the government's northern command and a key government supply centre for the war effort in Eritrea. The victory at Afebet is said by most observers to have been a turning point in the war in Eritrea; the battle resulted in 15,000 government troops killed, captured or dispersed, over 50 tanks captured and, most significantly, three Soviet advisors held hostage by the rebels.[16] African historian Basil Davidson described the battle scene as follows:

> The EPLF have taken enormous numbers of prisoners that are not yet counted. The mountains south of here are simply scattered with war *materiel*, cannons and tanks. I think something in the order of 50 tanks have been captured and they've captured three Soviet advisors, two colonels and a lieutenant. ... [This] victory ... is one of the biggest ever scored by any liberation movement, anywhere, since Dien Bien Phu in 1954 ....[17]

By May 1988, while the war remained restricted largely to the north of the country, in that

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[14] *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents, 1987-88*, vol. 20, Colin Legum, ed. (New York: Africana, 1989), p. B285.

[15] Marcus, p. 211.

[16] The capture of Soviet advisors was, of course, a coup for the EPLF and forced Soviet officials to meet with EPLF officials to secure their release. See Jane Perlez, "Prisoner No. 14279: Forlorn Pawn in Ethiopia's Long and Ruinous Civil War," *New York Times*, February 19, 1990, p. A6.

[17] BBC interview March 21, 1988, quoted in *Africa Contemporary Record, 1987-88*, p. B286.

region the government retained control only of the towns of Keren in the west, the provincial capital, Asmara, and the two port towns of Massawa and Assab.

Success did not come to government troops in Tigray either. After the Derg launched its Ninth Offensive in an effort to reclaim garrisons captured by the TPLF over previous months, the army was again overcome by rebel forces.[18] Instead of retaking garrisons, the government lost even more ground to the TPLF so that by the end of April 1988, Tigrayan rebels were in control of most of Tigray's important centres. The cost for the government on this occasion was 2500 troops killed and enormous quantities of weaponry captured.[19] Commenting on additional losses of the towns of Sinkata and Wikro to TPLF guerillas, *Times* correspondent Andrew McEwen stated, "If the TPLF's successes are confirmed it would demonstrate that, after 13 years, it has finally become militarily significant."[20] The Derg resorted to its usual tactics after losing ground to the rebels: it began a sustained bombing attack by MiG jet fighters.

Given his admission that the army was now involved in "grim battles," the military situation was evidently alarming Mengistu. On March 31 1988, Mengistu made his first public admission of the existence of the war in several years, stating,

> If the dismemberment of our homeland and the destabilization of our unity are not curbed through the necessary sacrifices, there will be the danger of great disaster, and

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[18] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 204. Africa Watch claimed this "Ninth Offensive" was a failed government effort to reclaim the lost garrisons. Marcus implies, on the other hand, that the government's defeat at Afebet in Eritrea during the same month drew in government troops north and thus allowed Tigrayan rebels to overcome the now vulnerable garrisons in Tigray. See Marcus, p. 212.

[19] Andrew McEwen, "Stepped Up Guerrilla Raids Threaten Food Deliveries," *Times*, March 31, 1988, p. 9.

[20] McEwen, "Stepped Up Guerrilla Raids," *The Times*, March 31, 1988.

> this should be very clear to all of us. ... Even though the problem takes the form of disruption in one region of our country, the tendency is a very dangerous one because it could jeopardize the sovereignty, historical unity, and independence of the people of Ethiopia.[21]

In the same speech, the Ethiopian president acknowledged the cost of the war by comparing the annual financial war expenditure to that which could otherwise be used to finance industry or to build hospitals in Ethiopia. The admission was notable because it was one of the first indirect indications of concern about the demise of Soviet support and the improved relations between the superpowers. Indeed, Mengistu had already received signals that the Soviet commitment would be reduced in the coming months. If he needed further confirmation, it came in April 1988 when the Soviet deputy premier Anatoly Adamishin visited Ethiopia and announced that the present arms agreement, signed in 1986 and due to expire in 1991, would be the last of its kind and that future arms supplies would be more limited.[22] Mengistu refused, however, to accept Moscow's advice that a negotiated settlement be sought for the war in the north, arguing instead that it was purely a domestic concern. "The issue of the northern part of Ethiopia is unique," he stated in June 1988. "It is our own internal affair which cannot be linked with anything else. In as much as it is unique, only we Ethiopians can find this solution. In my view, this issue has nothing to do with the discussions of the two superpowers."[23]

Increasingly isolated and realizing that victory over the rebels would require greater resourcefulness of his own, Mengistu sought other means to bolster the government's

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[21] Quoted in *Africa Contemporary Record, 1987-88*, p. B281.

[22] "Ethiopia: Mengistu Soldiers On," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 29, no. 13 (July 1, 1988).

[23] *Africa Contemporary Record, 1987-88*, p. B281.

military strength. After he had implored Ethiopians to fight the rebels with his call for "everything to the warfront" in his March 1988 speech, Mengistu began an intensive new round of conscription (his sixth since 1984) including the *re*mobilization of troops called up in the first two rounds. Then, as EPLF forces overran the government's remaining trenches in the north, Mengistu met with Somali president Siad Barre and made the unexpected announcement in April 1988 that a peace agreement had been achieved between the two adversaries. Peace with Mogadishu allowed the Derg to redeploy troops from its Ogaden garrison in the east, to Eritrea in the north.

Before the next government offensive began, Andrew McEwen of the *Times* wrote that "never before has a battle in the Ethiopian civil war been so heavily advertized in advance."[24] Following months of preparations, which included the expulsion of all foreign aid agencies from the region and the massing of 100,000 to 150,000 troops, the Derg launched its "once and for all" assault northward on June 1 1988. The bombing campaign in Tigray was of "unprecedented severity" and included an attack on the town of Hausien which was described by *Africa Watch* as the "most savage on record."[25] Simultaneously, Ethiopian forces began their ground offensive retaking many of the towns recently lost to the rebels. Stating all the while that it had never *lost* ground in the first place, the government claimed on June 13 that it had now cleared the area of "bandits." Following its usual custom of not holding territory, the TPLF withdrew from the besieged areas but suffered heavy

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[24] Andrew McEwen, "Ethiopian Troops Prepare to Launch Offensive," *Times*, May 3, 1988, p. 7.

[25] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, pp. 256-264. The attack was especially notable given that Hausien was not in rebel-held territory and apparently had no military significance.

casualties nonetheless.[26] In Eritrea, government troops made some progress but it suffered heavy casualties at the hands of the EPLF and failed to take any of the towns which would have signified government's renewed dominance in the north. Indeed, despite the army's advances in Tigray, the government did not achieve the decisive outcome it hoped would contain rebels in the northern provinces.

The period from September until December 1988 was marked by relative quiet on the Ethiopian battle fronts. Rebel leaders and Mengistu embarked on diplomatic tours to solicit support for their respective causes or to dissuade others from supporting their adversaries. The EPLF leader, Isayas Aferwerki, resolved differences with the TPLF and took advantage of the increased the profile of his own movement after the victory at Afebet to portray his movement to the European Community as nondogmatic, moderate and nonthreatening to European interests. In an indication that Washington now saw the Eritrean leader in this new light (and possibly a sign that it might reconsider Ethiopia's future territorial integrity), Isayas was received by State Department officials in Washington in May 1989.

Mengistu's travels were less fruitful. During his trip to Moscow in July 1988, Gorbachev rejected Mengistu's request for additional military supplies and reminded the Ethiopian president that Moscow's "unqualified military and economic commitment cannot continue much further."[27] Moreover, Gorbachev made it clear that continued Soviet support of any kind was contingent on a "general political relaxation" which was assumed to mean

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[26] "Mengistu Soldiers On," *Africa Confidential* (July 1, 1988).

[27] "Ethiopia: Dark Days for Mengistu," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 30, no. 4 (February 17, 1989).

that a political solution had to be found to Ethiopia's civil wars. Within a year the number of Soviet advisors in Ethiopia was halved and those remaining were kept away from the fighting in the north.[28] Mengistu's trip to Moscow was followed by an equally unsuccessful visit to China and later, in October and December, to Syria and Egypt. Mengistu may have had greater luck in getting Israel to provide unspecified assistance. If advisors and *materiel* were provided, however, it was not the amount Mengistu required to reverse his regime's sagging fortunes.[29]

In January 1989, Mengistu was confronted with other problems. The TPLF and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) formed the beginnings of the coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which would eventually oust Mengistu in 1991. The front enjoyed immediate success on the battlefield. In February, EPRDF forces handed the government its worst defeat since Afebet by capturing the towns of Selekleka and then Enda Selassie and putting several thousand troops "out of action." To the surprise of the TPLF, an unexplained and apparently deliberate withdrawal of government troops from all the major centres in Tigray followed. By the end of February

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[28] Perlez, "Prisoner No. 14279," *New York Times*, February 19, 1990.

[29] *Africa Watch* contends that cluster bombs subsequently used by the Ethiopian air force on Massawa "were almost certainly provided by the Israeli government". See Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 245. Indeed, Mengistu looked to the Ethiopian Jews, called *Falashas*, to pressure the Israelis into a possible arms for Jews deal. The Israeli defense ministry official, Uri Lubrani, who organized negotiations between Israel and Ethiopia, acknowledged that Mengistu had pressured him to link the withdrawal of Jews from Ethiopia with a promise to provide more weapons for the regime. He added, however, that "I had to made it abundantly clear to Mengistu that we were not going to supply Ethiopia with arms". Lubrani refused, however, to address allegations that the Israeli government had provided $35 million to secure the release of the Ethiopian Jews. See Joel Brinkley, "Israelis Rush to Help Ethiopian Arrivals," *New York Times*, May 27, 1991, p. A5. See also Jane Perlez, "Israelis Widening Role in Ethiopia," *New York Times*, February 7, 1990, p. A7. On the possibility of cluster bombs being provided by Israel, see Elaine Sciolino, "US Officials Suspect Israelis Sent Ethiopia Cluster Bombs" *New York Times*, January 21, 1990, sec. 1, p. 1; and "Israel Gives Assurance About Cluster Bombs," *New York Times* January 23, 1990, p. A2.

1989, with the exception of one small garrison at Maichew (on Tigray's southern border), the TPLF effectively controlled all of Tigray.[30] As disenchantment spread throughout the regime, Mengistu was subject to a coup attempt in May 1989. The coup failed but its occurrence precluded another government offensive in the north. Worst of all for the Derg's military fortunes, however, the subsequent "clean sweep" of many of Ethiopia's top generals left Ethiopia's once mighty military machine in the hands of novice commanders.[31]

On June 5 1989, Mengistu stated his willingness to participate in talks in Atlanta Georgia with US President Jimmy Carter as an observer. While talks did begin on September 7, the EPRDF continued to press government troops, ejecting them from Maichew and advancing south along the main highway in Wollo as far as northern Shoa. In September, the last of the remaining Cuban troops were withdrawn from Ethiopia. In November, talks were renewed in Nairobi under the chairmanship of former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere and in Rome under the auspices of the Italian government. Despite apparent concessions by Mengistu to bring negotiations about, talks did not move beyond technical issues.[32]

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[30] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 266.

[31] *Africa Confidential* noted afterwards that "virtually the entire Ministry of Defense staff and the air force command had been arrested." See "Ethiopia: A Blow by Blow Account," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 30, no. 11 (May 26, 1989). *Africa Contemporary Record* noted that, given the support the coup had even amongst the regime's most senior military leadership, it was remarkable that it failed. See *Africa Contemporary Record, 1988-89*, vol. 21, p. B307. The two most senior coup leaders included, among others, Major-General Merid Negussie, the Chief of Staff, and Major-General Amha Desta, commander of the air force. Twelve senior officers were subsequently executed.

[32] The willingness of Mengistu to follow up on these concessions was even in doubt. On June 5 1989, the Ethiopian *shengo* announced its approval of a six-point plan for peace talks "without preconditions". The following day, however, Mengistu stated that neither he nor anyone else had a mandate to negotiate secession. The EPLF accused the government of sending contradictory signals. See Sarah Vaughan, "The Addis Ababa Transitional Conference of July 1991: Its Origins, History and Significance." *Occasional*

After nine months of relative quiet in Eritrea, on February 9 1990, the EPLF launched a surprise attack on the port of Massawa.[33] Government troops were left stranded in Asmara, and until April when Moscow forbade the use of its aircraft, could only be resupplied by air transport from Addis Ababa. The battle for Massawa is said to have left 30,000 troops dead, wounded or captured and dozens of tanks and other equipment in rebel hands.[34] The air raids on Massawa which began on February 16 1990, continued for eight days. Subsequent reports claimed that napalm and cluster bombs were used by government jets.[35] In an effort to maintain its presence in Asmara, the army attempted to create human shields by preventing citizens from leaving the provincial capital. Unwilling to attack its own citizens, the EPLF began to shell the airport and limited any government movement between the two capitals.

On March 5 1990, in a belated attempt to exchange hardline communism for nationalism, Mengistu announced the end of socialism in Ethiopia and the replacement of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia with the Democratic Unity Party. The national *shengo* called

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Papers: Centre for African Studies, Edinburgh University, 1994, p. 21.

[33] The nine month truce provided a reprieve for rebel forces to regroup while they engaged in peace talks with the government. Another explanation for the relative calm in Eritrea was that EPLF fighters went to the assistance of the TPLF-EPRDF who were bogged down with government forces after launching an offensive in August 1989. Indeed, there were reports that the government counter-offensive was making gains against the EPRDF which, in turn, induced EPLF forces to come to the EPRDF's assistance. See "Ethiopia," *Africa Research Bulletin - Political Series*, vol. 27, no. 2 (March 15, 1990) p. 9592B-9594A; and "Ethiopia Reports More Port Combat," *New York Times*, February 12, 1990 p. A5.

[34] One report claims that in addition to the defeat of eight brigades of Ethiopian troops, the rebels destroyed 20 tanks and captured another 22. See Jane Perlez, "Insurgents in Ethiopia Begin Anti-Government Offensive," *New York Times*, February 10, 1990, p. A8. Other reports say that in addition to the haul of artillery, rocket launchers and anti-tank missiles, the EPLF destroyed 24 tanks and captured another 75. "Ethiopia," *Africa Research Bulletin* (March 15, 1990), p. 9593.

[35] "Rebels Say Ethiopian Planes Killed 50 in Port Bombings" *New York Times*, April 24, 1990, p. A5; Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, pp. 243 and 244.

for "nonstop recruitment" to the armed forces in June 1990 and began distributing arms to citizens on the road between the advancing rebel troops and Addis Ababa.

The final rebel offensive on Addis Ababa, however, did not come until the spring of 1991. Earlier, the EPRDF's penetration of Amhara and Oromo lands south of Tigray had come at a considerable cost in lives and was halted when EPRDF troops encountered more formidable Derg defences and greater opposition in the towns. The deaths of so many TPLF fighters in these encounters led many Tigrayans to question whether continuing the war was worth the human cost — particularly since they now controlled Tigray and given that much resistance came from Amhara whom the EPRDF claimed to be liberating. What followed was an evacuation from the front and a return to Tigray, after which a massive *gimgima* (consultation) took place for the following 10 to 12 months. Only at this time was it decided that the war should be continued until the defeat of the Derg. Consensus on the need to continue the war quickly led to its conclusion.[36]

In February 1991, after a year without any major new ground offensives being launched by either side, the EPRDF announced "Operation Teodros" which was meant to break the back of the army in Gondar and Gojjam, the two provinces north east of the capital. EPRDF victories, according to one source, came "startlingly fast" and despite varying accounts of the resistance encountered by the rebels,[37] government efforts to stop the

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[36] Correspondence with Professor John Young, Addis Ababa University (January 15, 1997).

[37] Despite the quick victories by the rebels, the fighting was intense. In fact, the EPRDF encountered further resistance from a rival movement, the EPRP, as it entered Gojjam province in January-February 1991. See Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 319. In terms of the fighting with the government outside of the capital, one account reported "heavy street-fighting" and "hand to hand" combat as well as government "aerial bombardment" of the plains north of Addis Ababa. See Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopian Guerillas Mount an Offensive as Peace Talks Near" *New York Times*, May 20, 1991, p. A1.

onslaught did not succeed. On May 21 1991, Mengistu handed control over to his recently appointed vice-president, Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan, and fled the country. Both the Second and the Third Ethiopian Revolutionary Armies subsequently dispersed. A government official stated at the time, "Everything is coming to an end because we have reached a stage where our military can't do anything to stop the guerillas...This is not the beginning of the end. It is the end of the end."[38]

The Political Evolution Until 1991. Having considered the military fortunes of the Derg and the rebel movements we can now more briefly consider this same time period in terms of its *political* evolution. The Derg had, after all, justified its overthrow of Haile Selassie in part on the basis that many of Ethiopia's nationalities had been exploited and oppressed under the old regime. Overtures to ethnic minorities from the regime were particularly evident before Mengistu had assumed absolute power in 1977 and at a time when the Derg was uncertain about whether it would have access to the same military means to suppress ethnic challenges provided by the United States to Haile Selassie.

Despite perceptions among ordinary Ethiopians of continued Amhara domination and the perpetuation of a Amhara political culture, the Derg was not exclusively Amharic.[39] Non-Amhara — including Tigrayans, Oromos and Eritreans — rose to positions of power

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[38] Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopia Dictator Flees; Officials Seeking U.S. Help," *New York Times*, May 22, 1991 p. A1.

[39] In fact, a number of individuals interviewed for this research emphasized that the issue was not political domination by Amhara, but political domination by "northerners" a term which includes *both* Amhara and Tigrayans. The struggle for power between both these groups is said to have created a common ruling culture. On this issue see Solomon Gashaw, "Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia," in Crawford Young ed. *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1993), pp. 138-157.

and influence in the Derg. At least one Tigrayan was present in the Derg's most elite circle until the last days of the regime.[40] As for Oromos, the head of the Provisional Office of Mass Organizational Affairs (POMA) was an Oromo and to many northerners (including some Amhara and Tigrayan) both the Derg and its influential ally *Meison* were "dominated" by Oromos.[41] Significantly, despite their large population size and the discrimination they suffered at the hands of the Derg, Oromos were never as active as the numerically smaller Tigrayans in contesting Derg power.[42] While observers cite several reasons for this fact, to the extent that Oromos did enjoy political influence in Ethiopia, conflict in Oromo areas may have been alleviated.[43]

In the early days of the Mengistu regime, Eritrean members of the Derg held out the possibility that an accommodation could be reached with the Eritrean insurgents. These individuals were obviously not members of the Eritrean liberation fronts. However, they

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[40] The most notable Tigrayan in the Derg was Fisseha Desta, head of the organization for the Worker's Party of Ethiopia and vice president. Despite his reputation as a hardliner in the Derg, as TPLF-EPRDF guerillas approached Addis Ababa in the spring of 1991, Fisseha was dismissed from the government apparently because of his Tigrayan background. See "Mengistu's Last Throw," *Africa Confidential* vol. 32, no. 9 (May 3, 1991); and Jane Perlez, "U.S. Urges Americans to Quit Ethiopia as Rebels Gain," New York Times, April 27, 1991, p. 3. See also Peter Biles, "Mengistu's Forgotten Men," *Africa Report*, March-April 1992, p. 24.

[41] Clapham contends that in its early days the regime was often seen as Oromo-oriented. Teferi Banti, an Oromo, was second in command of the Derg until a shootout at the palace in Addis Ababa in February 1977 left Mengistu Haile Mariam with uncontested power. While a number of the Derg's early policies, such as land reform, appeared to favour Oromos, the Derg's standing declined when subsequent policies such as resettlement infringed on Oromo rights to land. As the 1980s progressed and Oromo influence in the regime declined, groups such as the OLF increased in size and engaged the Derg in low intensity warfare. See Clapham, p. 215; and Gashaw, pp. 150-151.

[42] Large numbers of Oromo were forced to endure the hardships of war as members of the fighting forces, since Oromos were one of the most significant groups in the Derg army.

[43] Other explanations for a relatively weak Oromos-based movement include the wide dispersal of Oromos across Ethiopia, religious divisions, problems of leadership, and the Derg's land reform policies which are said to have gone some way to satisfying Oromo aspirations. Professor Merera Gudina, Addis Ababa University. Interview with the author, May 16, 1996.

demonstrated greater sympathy toward Eritrean aspirations than non-Eritrean members of the Derg and as long as they were an active part of the government they went some way to mitigating the degree of conflict in the north. The Derg's chairman, General Aman Andom, was himself Eritrean and had, among other things, brought about the appointment of another Eritrean, Amanuel Amde-Michael, as governor of Eritrea.[44] Following the revolution in 1974, Aman had traveled throughout Eritrea to consult with local notables before proposing initiatives of regional autonomy in an effort to satisfy Eritrean political aspirations. While his proposals had yet to be accepted by either Eritrean leaders or the Derg at the time of his death, his efforts coincided with a period when the Eritrean rebellion was on the wane.[45]

Aman's death at the hands of the government's own soldiers in November 1974 was a clear indication to the rebels that a settlement on regional autonomy with the Derg could not or would not be reached. On the contrary, Aman's death suggested that the Derg sought to settle the Eritrean question only through force of arms. The Eritrean rebellion was subsequently renewed and steadily increased in intensity until 1978 when the Derg, flush with Soviet arms, sought to put down the rebellion once and for all. Given Mengistu's preference for a military solution from the time of Aman's death, any sign of political concessions by the government was interpreted by the EPLF as a sign of weakness by a cornered regime rather than as a genuine attempt to appease the insurgents. With EPLF-TPLF strength growing steadily relative to the Derg, a sign of weakness by their adversary

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[44] Korn, pp. 9-10. As chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), Aman was Ethiopia's head of state until being forced out and killed in a Derg power struggle in 1974.

[45] Korn, p. 159.

was viewed by the rebels as evidence that the current tactics were working and that the present *military* course should be maintained.

The political objectives of the Tigrayans were not as clear as those of the Eritreans. John Young concludes that genuine development, good government, and a desire to avoid losing their sons to the civil war, were the main concerns of Tigrayans. Had the government not employed such repressive policies and instead responded positively to their grievances, both the TPLF and the EPLF would undoubtedly have been marginalised.[46] The Tigrayan insurgency was also fueled by the pride of being a former ruling class and the resentment that power had been wrested from them by the Amhara during the 19th century. Despite its Marxist rhetoric, the coming to power of the Derg in 1974 came to be seen by many as a continuation of an Amhara-dominated political system. While Mengistu's ethnic origins were uncertain, one Ethiopian observer stated that he "acted" like an Amhara and was seen by many as serving the needs of the Amhara.[47] As for the regime as a whole, Ethiopians are said to have known there were members in the Derg who were from other ethnic groups, but

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[46] John Young, Peasants and Revolution in Ethiopia: Tigray 1975-1989, Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University (September 1994), p. 175. This dissertation was provided by Professor Young to the author in the form of a computer disk. The subsequent translation from one computer system to another may mean that page numbering here does not correspond exactly with the original hard copy.

[47] Confidential interview with the author, May 22, 1996. Other interviews conducted for this research and by others confirm the perception that all Ethiopians, including the Amhara, were equally subject to oppression by the Derg. According to TPLF leader Meles Zenawi, the belief that the Amhara had long dominated Ethiopian politics -- and was being continued by the Derg -- was in reference to the Amhara of the Shoa region in central Ethiopia. See interview between Paul B. Henze and Meles Zenawi. A transcript of this interview was provided to the author by Shawn Houlihan of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Addis Ababa.

this "did not change substantially the perception that the Derg was Amharic."[48]

In response to these perceptions among non-Amhara and the liberation movements, the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities was created by the Derg in 1983 and charged with the task of drafting a new Ethiopian constitution. According to one member of the drafting commission, while the finished product was required to reflect Ethiopia's socialist principles, the process involved surprisingly "open discussion" and included a large number of "highly qualified" individuals from both within and without the state-sanctioned Workers Party of Ethiopia. Among the issues discussed were whether Ethiopia should be a unitary or a federal state and how the borders should be drawn so as to accommodate the aspirations of different nationalities. One participant stated, "We wrote many things on the rights and duties of citizens but we were discouraged on the federation option."[49] He stated further that there were,

> drawings and redrawings of maps. We were policy makers. We presented options to the government for their consideration. The boundaries of some maps were made on the basis of nationality while on other maps they took the achievement of regional development as the prime consideration.

For some participants of the drafting commission, the task was twofold: reduce the power of the president and recognize the legitimacy of various ethnic groups. In the end, the power of the president was actually enhanced and expanded beyond that planned by the

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[48] Confidential interview with the author, May 22, 1996. This perception of Amhara rule despite its multi-ethnic character should surprise no one familiar with Ethiopian politics. Christopher Clapham writes, "Although Ethiopia has continuously formed a multi-ethnic political system, participation in national political life normally required assimilation to the cultural values of the Amhara core: the Amhara language, Orthodox Christianity, and a capacity to operate within the structures and assumptions of a court administration." Clapham, p. 21.

[49] Confidential interview with a former member of the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities, May 22, 1996.

original drafting committee and the constitutional commission was unable to carry out its 1986 "public debate" in areas controlled by the EPLF, TPLF or other significant liberation groups.[50] In return for an expansion of presidential powers, however, Mengistu believed that Ethiopia's ethnic and regional minorities could be satisfied with the insertion of Article 2, subsection 2, on the equality of the nationalities and the designation of five of autonomous regions (Eritrea, Tigray, Assab, Dire Dawa and Ogaden).

If the constitutional initiative symbolized a loosening of the leash, most Ethiopians were too skeptical to believe much change was in the offing. While some claimed that the measures were a step toward recognition of a long ignored nationality problem, those opposing the government claimed that the measures were an effort to divide its opposition and impose a new form of colonialism. The Derg hoped that dividing Eritrea into several regions would help break up separatist sentiments or provide it with smaller regions that it could better afford to lose should the secessionists prevail. Indeed, the same commission member quoted above conceded that the provisions delineating autonomous regions had no effect in practice.[51]

These views quickly became apparent to both the government and its army when the rebels showed no intention of giving up the fight. Ethiopian soldiers who had been told by

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[50] In the new PDRE, Mengistu held the titles of President of the Republic, General Secretary of the Workers' Party, and General Commander of the Armed Forces. See *Africa Contemporary Record 1986-87*, pp. 287-288, particularly the comments by Aleme Eshete.

[51] Confidential interview. This view is confirmed by Clapham who wrote in 1988, "There can be no doubt...either about [Mengistu's] commitment to a centralized Ethiopian state.... Never at any time has he shown any willingness to compromise over the essential structure of central control, and even the concessions which at one time or another he has been prepared to offer to regional or ethnic autonomy have been cosmetic." Clapham, p. 81.

the regime's cadres that the new measures would quickly win over the rebels were understandably dismayed when EPLF troops broke through Ethiopian lines south of Nacfa in December 1987.[52] Neither the process nor the outcome had, in the minds of the rebels, represented significant concessions on power-sharing or autonomy. In his September 1984 speech where he first proposed regional autonomy, Mengistu had ruled out a role for the EPLF, claiming that the *Worker's Party* was "the sole organization which represents the aspirations of the working people of all nationalities. ... Other than the Workers' Party of Ethiopia...there can be no other vanguard organization representing workers in Revolutionary Ethiopia today."[53] Moreover, while genuine and guaranteed offers of regional autonomy might have undercut the Eritrean insurgency, what Mengistu offered was Soviet-style autonomy. Indeed, the finished product was modeled on the Soviet constitution and, with the exception of expanded presidential powers, used much the same language.[54] As for its democratic qualities, of the 813 seats contested in subsequent elections, in only five instances did the Derg's preferred candidate fail to win.

It was only at the time when rebel leaders were free to choose when they would overthrow his regime that Mengistu sought to portray himself and the Derg as ready for change. In March 1990, Mengistu candidly acknowledged the need to shift the regime's

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[52] Marcus, p. 211.

[53] Cited in Korn, p. 161.

[54] The new constitution was approved in the government's own referendum by a majority of 81% of Ethiopians, leading some to wonder why the approval rating was so *low*. See "Ethiopia: Nationalities and the Constitution," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 28, no. 7 (April 1, 1987). Given the upheavals in the north, the claim that 96% of the people had voted suggests that there were some voting irregularities. Others were sceptical that, given the low level of literacy in Ethiopia, so many voters would have understood the "esoteric vernacular of Marxism-Leninism" contained in the new constitution. See *Africa Contemporary Record 1986-87*, vol. 19, pp. B286-B288.

political orientation, stating to the Workers Party of Ethiopia that "today's world is not what it was when we chartered out the direction of progress 15 years ago.... We must make sure our path of progress is in harmony with the present (global) outlook."[55] Mengistu's response to domestic and international events, however, was tardy and unconvincing. Coincident with Mengistu's apparent transformation, Meles Zenawi, the leader of the TPLF-EPRDF, stated that, "We the TPLF are in a position to launch the final offensive. It's a question of breaking the back of the army. We think we are very close."[56] Mengistu showed a willingness to engage in peace talks in Atlanta, Rome and Nairobi which might have led to more substantial concessions on autonomy.[57] By this time, however, the rebels were so confident that it seemed pointless for them to negotiate with Mengistu when they were about to defeat him on the battlefield.[58] Indeed, while the EPRDF forces hesitated at the city's limits for an endorsement from Washington, the final assault on Addis Ababa took place on May 28 1991. In Eritrea, despite government claims that Asmara would only be captured as a ruin, the EPLF never held the Eritrean capital until EPRDF forces had neutralized air force bases near Addis Ababa; consequently the city was never subjected to the same bombardment as other rebel-held towns. EPLF guerillas took the still-intact city on May 25 1991, with little

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[55] Christopher Walker, Marti Colley and Susan Macdonald, "Street Dancing as Marxist Era Nears End in Ethiopia," *Times*, March 7, 1990, p. 7.

[56] Mary Ann Fitzgerald, "Marxist Armies Clash in Ruined Ethiopia," *Sunday Times*, March 4, 1990, p. A14.

[57] Clifford Krauss, "Conflicting Peace Plans Offered in Ethiopia Strife," *New York Times*, February 24, 1991, p. A11.

[58] One year before the fall of the Mengistu regime, TPLF-EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi explained why his organization would not return to the negotiating table, stating, "We think the Derg is too weak to be a partner in serious negotiations. The same is true, I think, in respect to the EPLF. The Derg has to be eliminated. We cannot compromise with it." Meles Zenawi interview with Paul B. Henze.

resistance from government armed forces.

A proposed governing agreement that was at best a token gesture by the Derg and at worst irrelevant to the interests of the rebels (irrelevant because the regime's removal became more important than gaining a share of power) meant that the outcome of conflict between the rebels and government was almost entirely dictated by power relations on the battlefield. The factors which contributed to the respective power of the government and the rebel fronts will be examined in the next section. First, factors which contributed to the weaknesses of the main liberation movements will be contrasted with those which contributed to the strength and apparently indomitable character of the Derg. More important, however, is an understanding of how these limitations were overcome, how the regime's seeming invincibility was undermined and how this shift in turn affected the likelihood of conflict in Ethiopia at this time.

III

The Distribution of Power in Ethiopia in the mid-1980s

The manner in which Mengistu and other members of the Derg framed the conflicts in Ethiopia both diminished the significance of the rebel fronts and, as will be seen, led to underestimations of the military force the rebels would later achieve. Until 1988 the Ethiopian government refused even to acknowledge the existence of civil war within its borders. For his part Mengistu described his adversaries only as *shifta* and "mercenaries"

supported in part by a "foreign conspiracy."[59] The government's claim that rebels were no more than bandits was in the 1970s more true for the TPLF than the EPLF (which adopted a conventional fighting capability prior to the TPLF). The view among many Derg and military officials was that Tigray was too impoverished and too backward to sustain a guerilla movement which could threaten the regime.[60] Other observers agreed. Christopher Clapham notes how the political, cultural and strategic marginalisation of the two northern provinces from the surplus-producing regions of Ethiopia long precluded the insurgencies from endangering the survival of the regime.[61]

Rebel Limitations and Liabilities. The Derg also had several other reasons to discount the strength of the rebel movements. An inability of the rebel groups to coordinate a united front against the Derg was the first of these weaknesses. The central obstacle to cooperation was their own competing and incompatible claims: both Oromos and ethnic Somalis claimed (and still do claim) large and overlapping portions of eastern Ethiopia as their own; Afars and Eritreans both claimed portions of Eritrea and by 1986 had given up attempts to work out a cooperative agreement. Because of divisions between Muslims and Christians in Eritrea, rival groups contended even among those purporting to represent similar causes. The EPLF and various wings of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) fought

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[59] *Africa Contemporary Record 1987-88*, p. B280. *Shifta* is Amharic for "bandit". Some observers have claimed his use of the term was incorrect not because the TPLF and EPLF were more formidable forces than genuine shifta but because at least in the case of the TPLF they were not engaged in the kind of petty crime activity that was normally associated with shifta. In fact, TPLF guerillas were often welcomed in some areas because they tended to push out genuine shifta which terrorized rural populations. John Young (1994), p. 266.

[60] John Young (1994), p. 163.

[61] Clapham, p. 206.

a war between 1973 and 1975 and remained uncooperative afterwards. In October 1985, the respective Eritrean leaderships announced an agreement to "unify the fighting Eritrean guns" only to have the agreement dissolve several months later after the EPLF claimed that the ELF was a "fifth column" and that it had "concrete evidence" about the "betrayal of our national cause."[62] The TPLF also had to contend with rivals within Tigray (such as the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Party (EPRP)) before it could effectively contest Derg power. Relations between the EPLF and TPLF, the two most significant groups, were also fundamentally incompatible as long as the TPLF insisted on the maintenance of Ethiopia's territorial integrity. Contrasting the goals of the TPLF, the objectives of the EPLF (and the OLF) were to defeat the Derg to allow the establishment (or resurrection) of their own independent states. Even when the EPLF and the TPLF could put these differences aside, cooperative efforts foundered on other issues. Relations between the two movements broke off in 1985 because, among other grievances, the TPLF claimed that the EPLF underrated its military capacity and was not treating it as an equal partner in the struggle against the Derg.[63]

The political and ideological objectives of the rebel groups were a second limiting feature of the rebel movements insofar as they discouraged potential support from international organizations or other states. Leaders of other African states were unlikely to support secessionist movements unless they were confident that their own internal divisions

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[62] Cited in *Africa Contemporary Record 1985-86*, vol. 18, p. B299.

[63] John Young (1994), p. 195. Explanations for the break between the two movements vary. Meles Zenawi claimed the division occurred over differing views on the Soviet Union. See Interview between Henze and Zenawi.

would not also become subject to outside manipulation.[64] Until the mid-1970s, American strategic concerns and the Kagnew communications station in Asmara precluded Washington's support for secession despite some sympathy for the Eritrean plight.[65] On the contrary, Washington's previous military assistance to the regime of Haile Selassie had helped to ensure secession could not occur. As late as 1990-91, the superpowers were reluctant to provide even verbal support for the EPLF's or OLF's political objectives unless they stopped short of advocating secession for Eritrea[66] or Oromia.[67] Respective ideological orientations were also a liability in this regard. While strict adherence to doctrine was not the case by the late 1980s, the EPLF had had Marxist tendencies in its early days.[68] The

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[64] The Sudan provided sanctuary for the rebels, although this was subject to the degree of friendliness between Khartoum and Addis Ababa. See Korn, p. 160.

[65] In a 1952 statement to the United Nations, American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles remarked, "From the point of view of justice, the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interest of the United States in the Red Sea basin and considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that the country has to be linked to our ally, Ethiopia." Quoted in Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 359.

[66] In a visit to Addis Ababa in August 1989, the new American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman J. Cohen, stated the US preference for maintaining Ethiopian territorial integrity -- something the Soviets were also said to prefer. See "Ethiopia: Talks Start at Last," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 30, no. 17 (August 25, 1989). Only with the imminent arrival of the EPRDF in Addis Ababa and de facto EPLF control over all of Eritrea did Cohen soften the US line on Eritrean independence and acknowledge Washington's willingness to seek a referendum on the issue. See Clifford Krauss, "Conflicting Peace Plans Offered in Ethiopia Strife," *New York Times*, February 24, 1991, p. A11. His comments reversed a long-held US policy of favouring a united Ethiopia and led protesters to March on the US embassy compound in Addis Ababa. See Clifford Krauss, "Several Rioters Are Killed As Ethiopians Vent Anti-American Anger," *New York Times*, May 30, 1991, p. 10.

[67] In an interview, one OLF member argued that their organization could never secure Western support as long as it advocated the establishment of an independent state of Oromia. The TPLF, they argued on the other hand, ensured that the unity of Ethiopia was not threatened because Tigrayans would always prefer to preside over the Ethiopian "empire" than to seek their own state. The West had been looking for an alternative to Mengistu but Oromo objectives, according to this official, have always been contrary to that of the United States. Tsegaye Yaie. Interview with the author, December 16, 1995.

[68] In 1990 EPLF leader Isayas Aferwerki was eager to downplay the Marxist past of his organization stating, "There was an extreme push to leftism.... When we look at it in retrospect, it was very childish. I don't think there is even a trace of it in the EPLF now." See Jane Perlez, "Africa's 30 Years' War: A Rebel

TPLF, for its part, had difficulty persuading potential supporters that it was not a Marxist organization and the issue was contested as late as the London conference in 1991. It was widely believed that the TPLF idealized a Marxist-Leninist state modeled on Albania and there are few who doubt that the United States did not provide assistance to the rebel movement as a result.[69] Reports circulated that Washington had contemplated the covert delivery of military equipment to the TPLF in 1986 but abstained once it heard the ideological rhetoric of the TPLF's Marxist wing, the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT).[70] In fact, virtually all of the actors in the Ethiopian conflict were Marxists at one time or another. Efforts were made to put together fragments of an earlier non-Marxist organization, the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), which had collapsed in 1978 but it continued to have internal difficulties.[71] Mengistu used the rebel's adherence to Marxism to his political benefit after his own political conversion from communism to nationalism in March 1990, pointing out that if the West did not like his brand of Marxism, they would

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Scouts for Allies," *New York Times*, February 21, 1990, p. A4.

[69] Meles Zenawi-Henze interview. In the interview, Meles claims that residual perceptions of a Marxist orientation were a result of his inability to control some TPLF elements and the TPLF radio broadcasting service. With the exception of famine relief and despite numerous allegations to the contrary, David Korn writes, "The United States has never given arms or money to the Eritrean insurgents, or entertained any direct contact with them....". See Korn, p. 159. In an interview with *New York Times* correspondent, Jane Perlez, even Mengistu acknowledged the fact that the US had not sent arms to the Ethiopian rebels. See Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia's President Looks Toward Better U.S. Relations," *New York Times*, November 28, 1988, p. A1.

[70] "Ethiopia: Hard Left in Tigray," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 27, no. 8 (April 8, 1986). The killing of two US relief workers at the hands of the TPLF in March 1986 reinforced negative perceptions held in Washington of TPLF guerillas.

[71] In fact, the EDU was defeated at the hands of the TPLF. The EDU, however, continued to receive small amounts of funding from the west (estimated at $500,000 each year) since it remained the only non-Marxist group in Ethiopia. "Ethiopia: EPD What?," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 27, no. 10 (May 7, 1986).

not find that of the rebel movements any more appealing.[72]

Being inexperienced and ill-equipped was a third and final weakness of the rebels. In its early days, most of the urban students who made up the TPLF were unaware of the logistics of fighting a guerilla war. Certainly none of the intellectuals who had founded the TPLF were familiar with tactics of warfare. When the insurrection in Tigray first began, its ranks were so spartan that its troops were kept on the move to give the impression to the Derg and Tigrayan peasants that the front was larger than it's actual size.[73] At that time many TPLF fighters reportedly held romantic visions of battle and underestimated the rigours and hardships the struggle required. John Young alludes to one guerilla leader who claimed that early TPLF cadres had a "'Che Guevara complex' and saw themselves as heroes who wanted to fight and win the war quickly."[74] Consequently its early failures against the Derg led to a significant decline in its numbers. The high rate of battle fatalities and defections resulting from internal political squabbles and difficult living conditions meant that the number of fighters was halved from 1200 to 450 between 1976 and 1978.[75] The TPLF was also poorly equipped for battle, a problem which discouraged new recruits. To compensate for the lack of weapons in their possession, TPLF guerillas resorted to carrying sticks covered in plastic to give the impression that they were carrying firearms.[76] Together

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[72] Perlez, "Africa's 30 Years' War...," *New York Times*, February 21, 1990.

[73] John Young (1994), p. 169.

[74] John Young (1994), p. 169.

[75] John Young (1994), p. 244.

[76] At this time the EPLF was providing weapons to the EPRP, rather than the TPLF, because the EPRP was more supportive of Eritrean independence. See John Young (1994), pp. 168-171.

these factors meant that few outside observers believed that either the TPLF or the EPRDF could ever mount a serious challenge to such a well equipped military force as the Derg.

The Strength and Strategy of the Derg. In many respects the Derg was weak. Being perceived as representing Amharic political culture and increasingly sustained on the use of force, its power base was narrow. But it was still hegemonic because military force continued to allow the Derg to counter most challenges to its rule. Indeed, one diplomat in Ethiopia described Mengistu as an "iron man" but he added that the military was his sole controlling mechanism: "He could never get away from his total reliance on the military," he stated in an interview.[77] While guerilla fronts such as the EPLF and TPLF had come to control portions of territory, for a long time they were unable to challenge Derg military power outside of their home province and were often tested within rebel-held territory.

This military dominance was, however, only achieved through Ethiopia's close relations with the Soviet Union. By the late 1980s, Moscow had contributed an estimated $12 billion dollars in weaponry to the Ethiopian regime in addition to thousands of Cuban troops and Soviet advisors.[78] There were no domestic and few outside powers other than the Soviet Union (and earlier, the United States) which could provide so many tanks and MiG jet fighters to allow such a heavy-handed use of force to continue. A rebel army armed only with Kalashnikovs was no real offensive match to a government equipped to bomb targets from their air. Accordingly, Soviet assistance was seen by many, and certainly by Mengistu, as the key to containing the Eritrean and Tigrayan insurgencies. Mengistu, in turn,

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[77] Interview, David MacDonald, former Canadian Ambassador to Ethiopia, December 12, 1996.

[78] Paul B. Henze, "There's Hope for Ethiopia," *New York Times*, May 28, 1991, p. A21.

committed much of Ethiopia's resources to maintaining the relationship with Moscow. Observers estimated that 45 percent of Ethiopia's annual budget was allocated towards its military and security needs.[79] The Derg's methods ranged from a scorched-earth policy involving the burning of crops, villages and the confiscation of cattle, to the terrorization of civilians by armed patrols, to the aerial bombardment of towns and massive offensives by army troops and tanks. Together, the exercise of military force and terror did lead to successes. Most notably, force was the primary means to eject the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somali army from the Ogaden desert in 1978. Armed force and terror essentially eliminated the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) during the urban terror campaigns of the late 1970s and, while the Eritrean movements had a number of internal problems of their own, it had almost fatally weakened the ELF as well. On several occasions the Derg was able to press the EPLF and TPLF even within their own provinces. When rebels were put on the defensive at the end of 1985 after government forces recaptured the town of Abi Adi, which had been under TPLF control for the previous six years, it was said to be due in no small part to Soviet armaments and Soviet assistance on the ground. The government experienced more trouble at Barentu in Eritrea but when it did overcome EPLF forces it was largely due to the help of Moscow. One observer, Christopher Coker, observed,

> In the end, it was the scale of Soviet assistance — in particular the continued provision of MiG-23s — which tipped the balance. Even though the Eritrean guerillas scored their greatest success to date in capturing the town of Barentu, which had eluded capture in 1977, they were unable to hold it in the wake of daily air

[79] Korn, p. 164. It is also noted by observers, however, that Ethiopia's payments to Moscow did not come close to the actual value of weaponry transferred to Ethiopia during this time.

> attacks by the airforce against which they had no defence. The capture of Barentu was, in fact, an act of defiance, a gesture of despair, an attempt to change the existing stalemate in an area normally outside the EPLF's political control.[80]

Indeed, there is little doubt that Mengistu perceived superpower assistance as crucial to the regime's survival. In an interview with Jane Perlez of the *New York Times*, Mengistu alluded to the straits in which the regime was left when Washington broke off relations in 1977, stating that "We did not expect the United States to impose an arms embargo on us — that was a big blow for us and something under which we were smarting for a long time." When asked whether he had overcome those feelings towards Ethiopia's former patron, Mengistu alluded to the Soviet Union's timely assistance noting, "We have found another solution...So this we consider a bygone thing."[81] Indeed, former US ambassador to Ethiopia, David Korn, argued that while Mengistu's attachment to the Soviets was in part a function of his self-perception as a revolutionary, he was genuinely grateful to Moscow "for having saved him in 1977 when the Somali invasion and the Eritrean insurgency brought him very close to the abyss." Korn notes that in his speeches Mengistu "made frequent appreciative references to Soviet help in that difficult moment." Korn adds further, "And when Mengistu thanks the Soviets for what they did for him in 1977, he no doubt also means that he counts on them to be his ultimate support in future times of need."[82]

In fighting his domestic enemies, however, the government could often only "retake"

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[80] Christopher Coker, "The Soviet Union's Year in Africa: The Gorbachev Factor," *Africa Contemporary Record 1985-86*, p. A276.

[81] Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia's President Looks Toward Better U.S. Relations" *New York Times*, November 28, 1988, p. A1.

[82] Korn, pp. 112-113.

strategic towns by leveling them with aerial bombardment rather than by defeating rebel forces on the ground. One observer noted in this respect how "massive Soviet expenditures" to allies such as the Ethiopian Derg allowed regimes "to cling to power but not defeat their enemies, let alone embark on anything approaching socialist transformation."[83] Nor did the presence of Soviet advisors guarantee victory on the battlefield. In the March 1988 battle for Afebet, for instance — one of the most significant battles of the war insofar as it marked a turning point for the rebel fighters — EPLF forces defeated a government contingent of 15,000 troops and captured three Soviet advisors.

Other strategies were also important in ensuring the regime's predominance. These included the development of a relatively sophisticated security network, the withholding of famine relief and the Derg's policies of *villagization* and *resettlement*. The first of these, a security network, insulated Mengistu and the Derg from challenges that might arise from within the government's own military forces. While there were those who disagreed with the Derg's continued use of force to suppress insurgency, *Africa Confidential* noted that any dissatisfaction within the armed forces toward Mengistu was countered by a ring of Soviet and East German security personnel and the continuation of a "climate of fear in which few dare to make a move against him."[84] Mengistu was said to have been "cocooned by growing numbers of mostly unpopular Soviet advisors" — similar language to that used by Steven

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[83] "Soviet Union: The Fall-Out in Africa," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 32, no. 22 (November 8, 1991).

[84] "Ethiopia: Worker's Autocracy," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 14 (July 3,1985). The East German security network appears was replaced or supplemented by North Koreans in the late 1980s.

R. David in his analysis of Third World security systems.[85] Indeed some of those present at the time emphasize the importance of the regime's security systems over military hardware in sustaining the regime. In particular they note the manner in which Ethiopians were intimidated and unable to communicate with each other or coordinate anti-government activities. A former member of the regime, Dawit Wolde Giorgis, for example, notes the collection of secretive security organizations and the hostility and suspicion that was intentionally generated amongst them by the regime:

> At the moment the military is intricately associated with the Soviets, so it would be difficult to bring about any rebellion. ... [But there are also the] different security organizations: special security, public security, military security, party security and many other security mechanisms that we do not hear about. They do not get along together. They're not supposed to. They are supposed to provide checks and balances and all have channels direct to the head of state.[86]

Similarly, other government and military officials interviewed for this research described a three-way "watchdog" system among different organizations within the regime and the military. The resentment and suspicion caused by this system had detrimental effects on army morale but, according to one observer, it was key in keeping Mengistu in power insofar as it detected potential conspirators within the regime.[87] Political control and terror were extended outside of the armed forces and into the peasantry through local Peasant Associations or *kebeles*. Organized by students in preparation for the land reform initiatives

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[85] Steven R. David, *Third World Coups d'Etat and International Security* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1987), pp. 79-80.

[86] Dawit Wolde Giorgis quoted in Paul Vallely, "How the West's Food Keeps a Tyrant in Power," *The Times*, October 29, 1986, p. 16. Dawit was a former member of the Ethiopian Derg. He defected to the West in 1985.

[87] Confidential interview with former member of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, May 22, 1996.

of 1975, *kebeles* were the lowest administrative units of the Derg. From the late 1970s onwards, *kebeles* did little to facilitate local discussion and participation among the peasants which was their original purpose and, on the contrary, were the functional tools of the government. Infiltration by government cadres allowed the Derg to consolidate its power and extend political control through terror and manipulation to the grassroots level. In poverty-stricken Tigray peasants could also become informers for the government with the payment of a few Ethiopian birr.[88]

On more than one occasion, Mengistu was also accused of withholding or obstructing food aid meant for famine victims in rebel held areas as a means of further emasculating his adversaries.[89] On some occasions such tactics were even admitted by the government.[90] Most observers agreed that the famine of the mid-1980s had a devastating effect on the rebels' fortunes. One observer in the field maintained that the TPLF and EPLF would almost certainly have been in a position to launch a major offensive against the Derg had it not been for the famine that began in 1984.[91] However, the consequences of the provision or withholding of famine relief are complex and contradictory and there is no consensus on whether the Derg's actions had their intended effect. *Africa Watch* attributed the reversal in

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[88] John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), p. 124.

[89] Paul Lewis, "Fear Grows that Ethiopia Will Bar Relief to Famine Stricken Area," *New York Times*, January 17, 1990, p. A3, and Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 209.

[90] David Korn relates an encounter with the Ethiopian Acting Foreign Minister, Tibebu Bekele, in December 1984, stating, "In the course of our exchange on the subject, Tibebu blurted out with more candor than he probably intended that 'food is a major element in our strategy against the secessionists.' The Ethiopian army, Tibebu added, tries to cut the rebels off from food supplies." See Korn, p. 137.

[91] John Young (1994), p. 190.

rebel fortunes from one of "military disarray" in 1985 to "great military success" in 1988 to the government's complicity in the famine, stating that the "fundamental reason for this [shift in the rebel's military strength] is that the government's strategy of using famine as an element of war so deeply alienated the peasantry that they turned in increasing numbers to the rebel fronts."[92] Evidently the famine increased the motivation of groups to rebel even if such hardship also meant that their capacity or opportunity to carry on the fight was low.[93]

Western reports also claimed that the involvement of the international community in the famine was either a misdirected effort to punish the regime or, on the contrary, that the provision of aid sustained Mengistu's presidency. *Africa Confidential*, for example, claimed that both the British and American governments held up food aid during the early stages of the famine in an effort to bring down the Derg.[94] Alternatively, commentators noted how the provision of food aid strengthened the regime's hold on power.[95] One observer, cited in *Africa Contemporary Record*, explained how the Soviet Union preferred to continue its supply of military aid over famine relief in the mid-1980s, commenting that "the Soviet Union hardly wished to find food relief making its way to guerilla movements against whom it had invested over $4bn. Instead, it used the famine to press home its offensive, selling the [Ethiopian] government $1 bn more in military equipment before the year was out."[96]

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[92] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 208.

[93] Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), pp. 17-18.

[94] "Ethiopia: The Death Stakes," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 1 (January 2, 1985).

[95] Vallely, "How the West's Food Aid...," *Times*, October 29, 1986.

[96] Cited in *Africa Contemporary Record 1985-86*, p. B277.

A final element in the Derg's strategy to undercut potential challengers involved its *resettlement* and *villagization* policies of the mid-1980s. While the Derg undertook these two schemes ostensibly to help relieve Ethiopia's famine plagued regions, they were both interpreted by the rebel movements as threats to their ability to fight the Derg. The resettlement campaign, begun in October 1984, was of concern to the TPLF insofar as it deprived guerillas of their peasant supporters.[97] The aim of the campaign was to move 1,500,000 peasants out of the northern provinces and thus clear Tigray of as much of its politically active population as possible. Depopulation denied housing, food and intelligence to rebel fighters and allowed movement of government troops to proceed unimpeded.[98] Between 1985 and 1989, a *villagization* scheme was pursued in the Oromo territories in the south, the southeast, the west of Ethiopia, Eritrea and, with less success, in Tigray. Villagization sought to relocate thirty million Ethiopians over a nine year period from dispersed existing settlements into larger communities as part of its plan to implement agricultural collectivization. The regime proclaimed that villagization would allow the regime to provide educational, social and sanitary services to the peasantry. These claims, however, were undercut by a lack of means and resources with which the regime could dispense these services and by the fact that the regime subsequently showed little commitment to providing these resources. Most observers saw the initiatives as either a means to enforce further political control over Ethiopians or as another step to reduce their

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[97] Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 1989), p. 289. John Young claims that the initiative was actually launched in 1978 but that it "assumed massive proportions" in 1984-85. See Young (1997), p. 145-46.

[98] Korn, p. 164; Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 199.

contact with and support for the liberation movements.[99]

The government's ability to pursue each of these tactics — military force and terror, the construction of an elaborate security apparatus, the obstruction of famine relief, and the government's villagization and resettlement schemes — meant that the balance of power favoured the regime. While acknowledging the resilience of the EPLF and TPLF, most observers did not believe that, given the obstacles to be overcome, the rebels' objectives could be achieved. David Korn wrote in 1986 that "prospects for achieving [the EPLF's] declared aim of independence are practically nil. ... Independence for Eritrea" he continued, "is a chimera."[100] As for the TPLF, Korn writes, "One must suppose that what the TPLF wants is to throw out the crowd in power in Addis Ababa and to set itself up as the government of Ethiopia. It has no chance of achieving that goal...."[101] It seemed that few could envision the shift in the distribution of power necessary for the rebels to overthrow such a mighty military machine. As late as 1989, *Africa Confidential* predicted that, as in 1974, only the army was in a position to overthrow the regime.[102]

Regime insiders, however, were beginning to see that, on the contrary, the regime's hegemonic position could not last. Not only was the Soviet Union becoming increasingly intolerant of Mengistu's draconian methods of suppressing its enemies but the rebel forces

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[99] John Young (1997), p. 146. Villagization, it should be noted, was never effectively implemented in Eritrea and Tigray.

[100] Korn, p. 161.

[101] Korn, p. 163. Korn also adds, "neither, it seems, does the government of Ethiopia have much prospect of bringing the Tigrean rebellion to an early end."

[102] "The Politics of Power and the Politics of Peace," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 30, no. 12 (June 9, 1989).

themselves were becoming increasingly powerful. Frustrated with Mengistu's continued refusal to acknowledge the growing strength of the rebel movements, a former member of the Derg wrote,

> It is absurd for the government to continue branding the Eritrean fighters as bandits. They are not bandits. They are powerful forces which have won pitched battles, launched successful propaganda campaigns, mobilized support from the international community, forced the government to spend three fourths of its national budget on the war effort, and inspired the birth of other insurgent movements.[103]

Indeed, despite his characterizations and the apparently localized nature of the insurgency, by the late 1980s even Mengistu was beginning to grasp the seriousness of the threat posed by the rebels. Given the modest beginnings of the rebel movements, it was indeed difficult to imagine how a force other than the army could unseat the Derg. It is important to understand, then, ways in which this shift in the balance of power took place.

The Shift in the Balance of Power at the End of the Cold War

The Weakening of Derg Power. As shall be demonstrated, there were a number of factors which contributed to the downfall of the Derg in Ethiopia. But dwindling Soviet interest in Ethiopia — and corresponding reductions in military supplies and personnel — was at the root of the overall decline in the Derg's power. In this section we will examine the evolution of the Soviet-Ethiopian relationship in the mid-to-late 1980s and how these changes undermined or accelerated the dissolution of Derg power and provided opportunities for rebels to gain strength of their own.

Efforts to induce Mengistu to find a political solution to the northern insurgency had

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[103] Giorgis, p. 111.

begun even before Gorbachev, but they rarely involved threats to withhold weapons. When the Derg forces appeared to be in control of most of Eritrea in 1982, Soviet officials allege that they urged Mengistu to seek a political settlement with the rebels. But Mengistu refused, reasoning that since he had practically destroyed the EPLF, there was no longer a need to make concessions to them. "We tried to persuade him again later," one Russian source stated in an interview. "Initially there were no threats to withhold weapons; it was all through discussion." He adds, "We were very close allies and we could not afford to lose Ethiopia. We knew Mengistu was a dictator. If we tried to threaten him the fear was that he could go somewhere else." Not until Gorbachev's ascension to power, however, did Moscow even contemplate backing up these admonitions with concrete action, much less consider ending its relationship with Ethiopia altogether. "Once Gorbachev became Secretary General," the Soviet official added, "we continued our efforts to persuade Mengistu. After that failed there were threats. All weapons supplies stopped in the period 1985-1990. By the late 1980s there was only small supplies of ammunition going to the Derg in fulfilment of our previous agreements made with Ethiopia."[104]

Both Russian and Ethiopian sources note that there was no demarcated point at which military aid from Moscow ended. The process was gradual and as late as 1991 there appeared to be aid coming in. In this respect, the break with the Soviets was not unlike that which occurred with the Americans in the early 1970s; the Soviets showed increasing reluctance to provide specific types of weaponry demanded by the Derg. The first signs of

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[104] Interview with former Soviet official, Addis Ababa, May 28, 1996. Whether aid ended prior to the March 1991 agreement is uncertain, but it is clear that the amounts of aid coming into Ethiopia at this time were very small.

a decline were in 1988.[105] Asaminew Bedane, a colonel in the Ethiopian army at the time, provides an account of the weapons shortages that became apparent to him:

> * Requests were made to provide more anti-aircraft guns. Moscow refused to deliver more than they had already provided
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> * Requests were made to provide Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicles (MICVs).[106] Vehicles of this type had previously been provided but the Soviets were now reluctant to provide more or to update older equipment
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> * The MiG-23 was the latest type of Soviet aircraft supplied to the Mengistu regime. The Derg found itself increasingly in need of spare parts and ordinance for these aircraft but Moscow was unwilling to supply the desired *materiel* in sufficient quantity.
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> * Advanced attack helicopters were not being provided in the desired quantity. Asaminew cites the Derg's desire to upgrade the Mi-24 to the Mi-35. The Soviets were reluctant to provide either the helicopters themselves or the spare parts to service existing weaponry.
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> * The Soviets were not providing needed equipment on such generous terms either. The Derg was increasingly asked to pay "up front" for any weapons purchased, something the Derg did not have the wherewithal to do.[107]

Mengistu made several appeals to Moscow for more weapons but was told repeatedly that the desired equipment would not be forthcoming and that all aid would end by March 1991. Personal relations between Mengistu and Gorbachev had never been good and Mengistu's heavy-handed tactics were proving to be an embarrassment for Moscow. Moreover, a series of defections and disagreements within the regime demonstrated its increasing instability.

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[105] This date was volunteered by Asaminew Bedane in an interview and is confirmed by *Africa Confidential* which noted that, following the July 1988 meeting between Gorbachev and Mengistu, "insiders" had reported much smaller quantities of weaponry than had been provided previously by Moscow. See "Dark Days for Mengistu," *Africa Confidential*, February 17, 1989.

[106] MICV vehicles are capable of carrying a squad and have a mounted medium gun.

[107] Bedane interview.

The rebels were no doubt aware of the consequences of military aid given the bombardments by Soviet-built MiGs they were subjected to whenever they captured a town. If nothing else, the destructive power generated by Soviet supplied weaponry allowed the Derg to inflict enormous casualties on rebels and civilians. Notably, the EPLF insisted on the exclusion of Soviet officials from the first round of peacetalks between Eritrean rebels and the government because of their belief that the war would have been won much earlier if not for Moscow's generous support.[108] Yet as the declining morale of government's troops became apparent, so too did the limitations of even the most sophisticated weaponry. Despite claims that the Soviet Union was continuing to supply weaponry in the late 1980s, it became clear to the rebels that the mere provision of weaponry would be insufficient to overcome a determined rebel effort. Halibai Fesshae, an EPLF division commander, stated at the time, "I have learned that deploying a lot of force doesn't give you any priority. ... Without troop morale, air and military weapons can't mean anything. A major force is morale. Theirs is totally flat, zero."[109]

For Mengistu, who for so long had relied on military support from his Soviet patron, Gorbachev's continuing insistence that the Derg seek a negotiated settlement to his domestic

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[108] Tesfai Ghermazien, the EPLF's representative in Washington, remarked, "We would like to hope we are closer to peace [now that new peace talks are being arranged for London in May 1991] but it is too early to tell. ...We don't accept the participation of the Soviet Union as long as they keep on advising and providing military supplies to the regime." See Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopia Talks to Resume, Under U.S. Leadership," *New York Times*, January 30, 1991, p. A2.

[109] Jane Perlez, "On the Ethiopian Front, Rebel Confidence Rises," *New York Times*, February 14, 1990, p. A15. Of course, morale can be related to declining superpower support as well. In fact, one former Soviet official argued this point in an interview stating, "After the break of support the morale of the army went down. That of the commanders went down; that of the soldiers went down. The soldiers did not know specifically what was going on above them but only that supplies were short. By that time we were also reducing the number of advisors to Ethiopia -- in 1989." Confidential interview, May 28, 1996.

troubles was, no doubt, alarming. When Soviet aid began to slow down and his situation became increasingly desperate, Mengistu was not above appealing even to the United States — whom he had abandoned 15 years earlier — on the expectation that he might once again be rescued before having to make concessions to his domestic adversaries.[110] He also appealed to lessor powers as alternative suppliers of weapons. He embarked on trips to various regional capitals in the fall of 1988 but with little success. He pressured Israel to provide further weapons and military advisors in exchange for the release of Ethiopian Jews (Falashas). While some have claimed that Israeli support did extend the life of the Mengistu regime, the aid which was provided was not of the scale previously provided by Moscow.[111]

Observers close to the action, however, are contradictory on whether continued aid could sustain the regime and, alternatively, whether the end of Soviet aid *necessarily* led to the regime's demise. Considering the provision of weaponry, Colonel Asaminew Bedane commented that he could not say "in any way" that Soviet weaponry had sustained the regime. Indeed, as will be shown, much of the weaponry demanded by the Derg was not suited to the type of war that was being fought, and thus even if the Soviets had complied in delivering the desired weapons, this would not necessarily have resulted in a difference on

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[110] After Mengistu visited the USSR in the fall of 1988, where he was urged to find a political solution to domestic troubles, he sent a "swift and unusually warm" message of congratulations to newly elected President George Bush. While there is no evidence that he appealed to American officials for weapons, he spoke to *New York Times* journalist Jane Perlez about a "new opportunity" for improved US-Ethiopian relations. This can only be seen as a remarkable reversal for Mengistu given the hostile rhetoric that had for so long characterized his relations with Washington. See Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia's President Looks Toward Better U.S. Relations" *New York Times*, November 28, 1988, p. A1.

[111] Paul B. Henze stated in his interview with Meles Zenawi, "No one sees any point in enabling Mengistu's government survive a few months longer. That is the only effect Israel's support can have. My own view is that Mengistu would probably have fallen by now if it had not been for the Israelis." In the same interview, Meles Zenawi noted that even if foreign military aid could not save a dispirited army, it did have the effect of delaying its collapse.

the battlefield. However, in the same interview, Colonel Asaminew stated that a continuing lack of spare parts and ammunition undermined the relative strength of the army vis-a-vis the rebels. Similarly, a former Canadian diplomat in Ethiopia commented that the Ethiopian military was an enormous "machine" requiring vast quantities of gasoline and considerable maintenance. "There was no way," he argued, "[that] it could sustain itself without the Soviets."[112] Indeed, *Military Balance* claims that the operational status of the Derg's airforce prior to the spring of 1991 rebel offensive was less than 50%, suggesting that Moscow's unwillingness to supply spare parts had consequences in terms of the Derg's fighting capacity.[113] Nonetheless the regime was not militarily incapacitated. If one sees the provision of sophisticated jet fighters to the Ethiopian regime as characterizing the relationship between patron and client state, it is hard to argue that the ending of military supplies was debilitating. Despite shortages of spare parts and jet fuel, bombing sorties by MiG-23 jet fighters were occurring too frequently (though, notably, without the intended effect of eliminating the rebels) even in the regime's last months, to claim that reductions in aid prevented the Derg from attacking rebel forces.

What most observers do note, however, is that the nature of patron-client relationships was more complex than the mere provision of military hardware. The contributions of external powers affected all aspects of the state's military and security

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[112] David MacDonald, former Canadian Ambassador to Ethiopia. Interview with the author, December 12, 1995. Moscow began demanding that the Derg pay for its fuel with hard currency -- something the Derg was increasingly unable to do. See Jane Perlez, "As Rebels Surge in Ethiopia, Its Capital Fears a Harsh Fate" *New York Times*, March 23, 1991, p. A1.

[113] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance, 1991-92* (London: Brassey's, 1990), p. 132.

apparatus. Apart from the provision of guns, patron states were active in the provision and training of troops (many of whom were Cuban in this case), logistics and the conduct of warfare in the field. When rebels were put on the defensive in 1985, Soviet advisors are said to have "occupied posts down to the battalion level," and to have "played a major tactical role in the government's offensive" against the TPLF and the capture of Tigrayan towns.[114] Moreover, the security network — also superpower provided — and the climate of fear which it facilitated, is seen by some as the most important element in the regime's viability. It was this more comprehensive sense of the patron-client relationship which was, according to one former Soviet official in Addis Ababa at the time, "decisive" in determining the domestic or regional distribution of power. He states further,

> If our support had continued, Mengistu would have stayed in power for 10 years or more. Of course, the political situation in Ethiopia would have continued to deteriorate; some areas would have been out of the Derg's control and resistance would have been stronger. But still, international support would have allowed him to prolong his military life. Russia, however, lost any interest in sustaining Mengistu any longer.[115]

Indeed, by the late 1980s, with the liberation fronts making gains on government forces, Moscow was no longer willing make a determined effort to safeguard its client. In fact, virtually all of the elements which were designed to ensure the regime's security and allow it to engage the rebels were pulled out from under the feet of the regime. While the Soviets did provide *materiel* up to the last year of the Mengistu regime, the rate of delivery had by this time "slowed to a trickle" and that which was coming in was only to fulfil the

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[114] Coker in *Africa Contemporary Record 1985-86*, p. A276.

[115] Confidential interview, May 28, 1996.

letter of a prior commitment due to expire in March 1991.[116] Moreover, according to the Soviet ambassador to the Sudan, Valery Sukhim, by March 1990 Moscow had pulled all of its military advisors from Ethiopian battle zones and returned them either to the Soviet Union or to Addis Ababa. The ambassador claimed that the Soviet Union would no longer "have any counselors or experts or technicians helping to fight or advising."[117] There was also little left of the "cocoon" of security advisors which had previously surrounded and protected the regime; well before the Derg had collapsed, East German advisors had been withdrawn from the region. While Cuban troops were used more to counter trouble in the south-east rather than the north, the process of withdrawing the 5000 soldiers remaining after the Ogaden crisis reportedly began as early as 1986.[118] In the regime's final months, Moscow had even disallowed Addis Ababa from using Soviet Antonov aircraft to ferry troops to besieged garrisons in the north.[119]

The ending of Soviet aid is also significant insofar as it set in motion or accelerated the dissolution of other elements of the Derg's power and provided new opportunities to be exploited by the liberation fronts. The increasing isolation of the Derg from its Soviet patron meant that the regime undertook actions which almost certainly would not have been advised or supported by Moscow.

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[116] Henze, "There's Hope for Ethiopia," *New York Times*, May 28, 1991.

[117] "Soviets Pull Out Advisors at Ethiopia Fronts," *New York Times*, March 22, 1990, p. A12.

[118] Recalling, of course, that this figure of 5000 Cuban troops marked a decline from an estimated 17,000 at the time of the Ogaden war in 1977-78.

[119] Jane Perlez, "Ethiopian Government Seen as Fighting to Survive," *New York Times*, April 17, 1990, p. A5.

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the Ethiopian army was far too rapid for the troops to be effective on the battlefield.[123] Consequently, new conscripts had no experience, little training and little sense of a just cause to motivate them. Army ranks were comprised of untrained men and boys who could be lured into recruitment camps by the promise of food or who were abducted from the streets or the university at gunpoint and coerced into fighting on the government's behalf. Andrew Buckoke of the London *Times* reported that at the time of government offensive in May and June 1988, many of the Derg's troops were as young as 14 or 15 years of age.[124] The EPLF reported capturing Ethiopian troops who had been conscripted by the army only 15 days earlier.[125] Describing an eight-day battle in March 1989 at Mount Giguru, EPLF Division Commander, Halibai Fesshae stated, "Their new recruits don't have enough food or medicine. They are not well trained. Even physically they are underaged, they cannot fight. Of 60 prisoners of war taken at the battle last year, 80 percent were under the age of 18."[126]

A second factor leading to the reduction of the Derg's power had to do with its methods of containing the insurgency. Contrasting guerrilla warfare which tends to be effective only over the long term, the principal limitation of the government's use of aerial

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[123] It should be noted that there was also a rapid growth in the size of the Ethiopian army at the time of the Ogaden War in 1977-78. At this time, however, in addition to the provision of military hardware, several thousand trained Cuban troops were also involved in fighting Somali invaders.

[124] Andrew Buckoke, "Red Cross Warned to Hand Over Food," *The Times*, May 23, 1988, p. 10.

[125] Andrew Buckoke, "Tanks Back Bandit Warfare in Eritrean Struggle," *The Times*, November 22, 1988, p. 13. EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi stated in an interview, "We sometimes capture the same men two or three times. We cannot hold them when we capture them because we have no place and we do not want to feed them. So we release them and they try to go back to their homes. But they get caught and put back into the army. So they defect to us again." Interview with Paul B. Henze.

[126] Jane Perlez, "On the Ethiopian Front, Rebel Confidence Rises," *New York Times*, February 14, 1990, p. A15.

bombardment and repeated ground offensives was that they had few short-term benefits and several long-term costs. In the case of aerial bombardment, for most if not all of the war the Derg controlled the skies and only a few aircraft were lost to the rebels in combat.[127] Bombing campaigns by MiG-23 jet fighters and Antonov aircraft,[128] however, were used extensively by the government throughout the war as a means of punishing or intimidating rebels and citizens, or to "soften up" rebel areas prior to a ground attack. Bombing also came to be an acknowledgment of the army's loss of a town in battle; the government preferred the total destruction of a town by aerial bombardment rather than allowing the rebels to claim it as a victory.

While jet aircraft allowed the regime to attack areas not under its control and to reduce its reliance on hastily recruited conscripts whose military skills and loyalty to the regime might have been in doubt, both of these advantages were small compensation for the longer term consequences of these attacks. In the end, aerial bombing could not succeed for several reasons. First, aerial bombardment was inappropriate to the type of guerilla warfare which was being conducted by rebel fronts, especially the TPLF. In Tigray there were few military assets possessed by the TPLF for which, even if they were destroyed, would have negative consequences in terms of the TPLF's fighting ability. TPLF fighters rarely spent time in the towns because of this vulnerability; they never left tanks, aircraft or other

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[127] In fact, at the time of the Derg's collapse, a number of aircraft could still be flown to Djibouti or the Sudan to keep them out of the hands of approaching rebels. Others were inoperational due to a lack of spare parts.

[128] In addition to MiG jet fighters, Antonov aircraft were used less frequently for high altitude night bombing. Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 269.

valuable military hardware exposed to government attacks.[129] Second, the indiscriminate nature of aerial bombardments alienated even those who did not share the views of the rebels. The Kunama people of Barentu in Western Eritrea had been supporters of the regime, having fought alongside government troops and provided it with intelligence on the Eritrean insurgency for nearly a decade. In July 1985, however, this relationship was jeopardized when, after several unsuccessful efforts to retake the town with ground forces, the government was finally forced to bomb Barentu as a means of rooting out EPLF guerillas.[130] More significantly, the Derg was insensitive to the fact that continued bombing did not break the resolve of Tigrayan rebels but, on the contrary, solidified their belief that the Derg had to be removed. After the EPRDF called a halt to their advance southward from Tigray in early 1990 (largely because Tigrayans could no longer stomach the enormous cost in lives of continuing the battle), the Derg's continued air attacks led to a consensus that peace in Tigray could only come by taking the war beyond Tigray to Addis Ababa.[131] Finally, sometimes even the most heavy handed force could not uproot rebels from rebel strongholds. The failure of MiG aircraft to either eliminate or dislodge rebel forces from the town of Nacfa increasingly symbolized the limitation of patron-supplied weapons.[132] No matter how

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[129] One eye-witness related how one or two MiG aircraft would launch daily attacks on a TPLF-held airfield until one pilot finally succeeded in destroying the one nominal asset on the ground which was ostensibly "held" by the TPLF, an Ethiopian Airlines DC-3. The TPLF never attempted to contest the government's control of the skies and thus had little use for such aircraft. The event seemed to characterize much of the war: expensive, sophisticated Soviet weaponry being used against a peasant-based guerilla fighters hiding out in the bush. John Young, interview with the author, May 18, 1996.

[130] "Ethiopia: End of the Party," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 17 (August 14, 1985).

[131] Correspondence with Professor John Young, Addis Ababa University (January 15, 1997).

[132] Buckoke, "Tanks Back Bandit Warfare," *Times*, November 22, 1988. Nacfa was virtually the only town in Eritrea that remained under EPLF control for the duration of the war.

sophisticated the equipment, they were unable to produce the military results necessary to win the war and, in fact, its deployment only increased the hostility and alienation of peasants toward the regime.

Just as some of its military methods were inappropriate, the type of weaponry the Derg insisted be provided by the Soviets, and the way these weapons were deployed, did not always reflect the nature of the warfare in which it was engaged. The Derg's purchase of anti-aircraft guns and surface to air missiles was symbolic of this misplaced emphasis since none of the rebel movements flew aircraft. Mengistu was more concerned with the latest high-technology than with actual war-fighting capability and he insisted that the army be provided with these weapons.[133] In an interview, Colonel Asaminew Bedane concurred stating that "the proper character of the opposition was not clearly understood." Individuals in the Derg, he claimed, believed that the side with the most modern, most prestigious, and most numerous weapons "would be the winner." This emphasis on modern weaponry, he argued, "was not much help. ... Instead of making people believe in their cause, the Derg looked only to weapons that threatened."[134]

The Gathering Strength of the Rebel Fronts. For both the EPLF and the TPLF, on the other hand, survival in the 1970s and success in the 1980s was a result of knowing their limits and working with their strengths. Implicit in their tactics was the acknowledgment that they could not compete with the military capacity of the Derg. During the late 1970s the ELF was virtually overcome by the government's ground offensives. Its decision to

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[133] See *Africa Contemporary Record 1985-86*, p. B302-3.

[134] Bedane interview, May 29, 1996.

continue to engage the vastly superior Ethiopian army likely accelerated its eventual collapse as a significant military force. The EPLF, on the other hand, while also weakened militarily by government offensives in the late 1970s, preferred not to engage itself in what would surely have been a losing struggle. In withdrawing to the mountainous Sahel region at the end of 1978, when the government undertook a massive offensive, the EPLF likely saved itself from the same fate as the ELF. Similarly, the TPLF fought a classic guerilla war whereby they refused to defend any territory or engage a superior force, and never allowed battles to be fought on their adversary's terms.[135] As long as it confronted a well-equipped Derg army, the TPLF initially focused on kidnapings and assassinations of key government officials. Even as its strength grew, it was careful not to overreach its abilities and thus sought to keep itself highly mobile, carrying out ambushes, attacking garrisons at unpredictable times, and seeking to limit government troop movements to large, centrally-controlled offensives. Towns were rarely held for any length of time so that its fighters were not subjected to bombardment by government aircraft. The TPLF continued to emphasize these tactics until the liberation of Tigray in February 1989 and the beginning of its campaign south to Addis Ababa, at which time it had little choice but to adopt a conventional strategy.[136]

Guerrilla tactics, then, allowed the insurgencies to survive at a time when the Derg could wield enormous military strength. Survival, in turn, was essential to take advantage of Derg vulnerabilities as they arose. Notable in this respect was the accumulation of large

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[135] Africa Watch, p. 139; Korn, p. 163.

[136] John Young (1994), p. 182.

quantities of military hardware as morale among Ethiopian troops began to decline. Implicit in the TPLF's adoption of guerilla tactics was an acknowledgment of its lack of heavy artillery.[137] Since there were virtually no external suppliers willing to provide the Ethiopian liberation movements with arms, the capture of weapons was the central means by which this weakness could be overcome.[138] From the beginning of its insurrection, TPLF fighters had attacked government supply lines north to Eritrea.[139] These tactics, in turn, led to the development of a more formidable conventional TPLF force which, by the mid-1980s, allowed the TPLF to go on the offensive. Indeed, one unidentified Soviet official noted that the rebels made better use of Soviet equipment they had captured from Derg forces than did the Ethiopian army itself.[140] In his account, Dawit Wolde Giorgis commented on this phenomenon of capturing government weapons, stating,

Today the Eritrean and Tigrayan movements do not have to go looking for

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[137] John Young (1994), p. 201.

[138] There were reports that some assistance did come from outside sources: While the EPLF leader conceded that most of the front's weaponry was captured he did acknowledge that the Eritrean diaspora had made a £4.5 million financial contribution to the cause but denied that any support came from Arab states as frequently alleged. See Nicholas Beeston, "Eritrea Rebel Leader Sees Moscow as Peace Broker," *The Times*, November 4, 1988, p. 9. Later the *Times* wrote that "[t]hough the EPLF has captured large quantities of Soviet-supplied weapons and *materiel* from the Ethiopians, it is clear that the fuel and ammunition it imports through the Sudan requires considerably more finance than it admits to receiving." See Andrew Buckoke, "Rebels' Cocktail of Socialist Theory and Self-Reliance Keeps Them Ahead," *The Times*, November 29, 1988. Relations between Israel and Addis Ababa did, however, encourage Arab states to consider assisting Eritrean fronts other than the EPLF. Other reports claimed that the EPLF used South African-made artillery provided by Iraq. See Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia's Long War Draws Closer to the Capital," *New York Times*, July 21, 1990, p.1. Nonetheless virtually everyone consulted for this research believed that the TPLF and EPLF relied primarily, if not entirely, on *materiel* captured from the Derg forces. For an account of how the EPLF captured these weapons, see Jane Perlez, "Pupil of G.I.'s Does Well, as a Rebel," *New York Times*, June 27, 1991, p. A4.

[139] John Young (1997), p. 123.

[140] Reported in "Ethiopia: US Peace Talks Go Ahead," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol 26, no. 8 (September 15, 1989), p. 9385A; and by Jane Perlez, "On the Ethiopian Front, Rebel Confidence Rises," *New York Times*, February 14, 1990, p. A15.

> armaments. They are supplied by the Ethiopian army. Ethiopian troops are so heavily armed, so immobile, so conventional in unconventional warfare, that whenever units retreat they leave behind enormous amounts of weaponry and *materiel* — tanks, heavy artillery, guns, munitions — to be seized by the rebels. The secessionist movements have become the most sophisticated and well armed guerilla movements on the continent. These are realities.[141]

The March 1988 battle for the Nadew military command near Afebet in Eritrea was only one such instance where large quantities of weapons were lost to the rebels. Afebet was the regime's largest military garrison in Ethiopia and contained large quantities of sophisticated heavy weaponry. Defying military logic and despite the difficulties that continued to plague government troops in the region, the Derg continued to stockpile weapons in this nonstrategic area. The EPLF's attack at Afebet met little resistance from now-demoralized government troops. Instead, many retreated, leaving behind enormous quantities of weapons which, according to Dawit Wolde Giorgis, included "over 50 Soviet T-55 tanks, several 'Stalin Organ' rocket launchers, artillery weapons and trucks in the hundreds, thousands of small arms, millions of rounds of ammunition, and other stores and supplies worth millions of dollars." The loss of men and *materiel* was said to have been "unparalleled" and led to the withdrawal of government troops from all the surrounding towns. Giorgis states that "the rebels got the control of almost half of Eritrea in one 48 hour battle, and are now equipped with the latest Soviet weapons."[142] While supplies of fuel and ammunition were often insufficient, by the end of 1988 the number of operational tanks held

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[141] Dawit Wolde Giorgis, p. 111.

[142] Dawit Wolde Giorgis, pp. 364-65.

by the EPLF was estimated to be as high as 200.[143] The fact that so many weapons were captured by the rebels — as opposed to receiving weapons from outside suppliers or manufacturing them — meant that there was a potential for weapons acquisitions to be zero-sum in nature; that is, gains in weapons strength on the part of the rebels necessarily implied a weakening on the part of the government. This was especially true once the Derg's arsenal became more finite after the Soviets decreased the provision of arms.[144] In some cases the combination of weakening morale on the part of government troops and the concentration of large quantities of *materiel* had the potential to lead to dramatic shifts in the local distribution of weaponry and consequently the distribution of power.

Similar tendencies occurred with respect to ordinary Ethiopians and captured troops. The government frequently made the critical mistake of attacking Tigrayan and Eritrean towns which were not in close proximity to the actual battle fronts or which were not specific rebel strongholds (sometimes not even in rebel-held areas) and thus of marginal strategic significance.[145] Evidently, the objective was not so much to destroy military targets but to intimidate those who were inclined to support the rebels. However, by not distinguishing

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[143] Andrew Buckoke, "Tanks Back Bandit Warfare in Eritrean Struggle," *The Times*, November 22, 1988, p. 13. Similarly, in his interview with Paul B. Henze in April 1990, TPLF leader, Meles Zenawi acknowledged that, "We are not suffering from lack of military supplies. ... We have captured large quantities of vehicles from the Derg's forces. Our only problem is fuel for them."

[144] Of course not all weaponry was captured by the rebels; the number of burned out tanks which remain strewn alongside the runway at Asmara airport in Eritrea is a testament to the destruction on the battlefield. Also, retreating government troops often found enough time to sabotage weapons which they could not take with them.

[145] The Tigrayan capital of Meqele in October 1989 was far from the current battle front and had no military importance. In mid-1988, the Tigrayan town of Hausien was attacked eight times by Ethiopian MiGs despite the fact that it had no military significance and did not even lie within the areas controlled by the TPLF. See Africa Watch, pp. 269 and 258-263.

potential supporters or those unsympathetic to the rebel cause from among its enemies, the government fulfilled its own assumptions about the support the insurgents enjoyed among the peasants; if all Tigrayans and Eritreans were not already supporting the fighters, the use of force only further alienated the peasantry from the government and drove them into the arms of the rebels. Moreover, by targeting and attacking combatants and noncombatants alike — either through bombing campaigns or by subjecting them to alienating policies, both peasants and rebels were merged into one enemy. Those who were otherwise noncombatants joined the rebels either as frontline fighters, as members of local militias or as merely passive citizens who refused to resist rebel activities. The number of fighters — man, woman, young and old — increased exponentially, limited only to the population of able-bodied citizens believing in the cause.

In time Mengistu's own tyrannical behaviour and continued use of force contributed to demoralization among his troops and senior officers as well. Many of his generals, who often had considerable Soviet military training and battle experience in the Ogaden, either defected or were executed by Mengistu when they failed to achieve a military objective. One former Ethiopian diplomat stated in an interview that,

> That was the moral death of the Ethiopian troops. [Mengistu] started to humiliate his own chief of command generals in front of their own troops, the privates. And when you are just attacking the hierarchy in the military structure, you are destroying the command. We should not be surprised that later everything went wrong.[146]

The same source noted that if there ever was any sense of a just cause for the continued fighting — a belief, for instance, that Ethiopia's territorial integrity was being maintained

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[146] Interview with former Ethiopian diplomat, March 12, 1995.

— it dissipated with time. After so many years of fighting against guerillas it was clear that the rebels were much more motivated than they were — a spirit, he claims, "that Mengistu never really inspired." In the end, Mengistu's troops were treated like "mosquitos;" put into action with virtually no training at which point they simply "threw up their hands." The consequences of the failed coup in May 1989 is the most notable example of how the destruction of the military leadership had negative consequences for troop morale and fighting ability. After this event, the London *Times* wrote, that "those who took part [in the coup] could hardly have expected to be let off with a caution, but the sudden removal of 200 or so officers left the Army in a critical condition, with inexperienced commanders in the field. Its performance, never impressive, has deteriorated further."[147] Jane Perlez of the *New York Times* added that the subsequent execution of 12 of the officers involved had "torn away the last shred of respect for the Ethiopian ruler." "The executions," Perlez claims, "spelled the end of any fighting spirit in the army."[148]

The liberation fronts had long sought to exploit this declining morale among government troops. Those who were captured by the rebels were not merely imprisoned and thus out of the military equation but, insofar as they were willing to work with the liberation movements, captured troops actually benefitted the rebels.[149] The TPLF sought to weaken army morale by undermining the rhetoric propagated by the Derg about the rebel

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[147] "Ethiopian Dawn," *The Times* (editorial), March 8, 1990, p. 15.

[148] Jane Perlez, "Ethiopian Ruled Ruthlessly, Killing Colleagues and Shedding Alliances," *New York Times*, May 22, 1991, p. A13.

[149] According to one estimate, between 1988 and 1990, the EPLF and TPLF captured 55,000 prisoners of war. See Perlez, "Prisoner No. 14279...," *New York Times*, February 19, 1990.

movements. One former officer in the Ethiopian army noted in an interview how government soldiers were frequently told by their commanders of the draconian measures exacted on PoWs by the TPLF were they to be captured.[150] He noted how this fear of the rebels among government troops began to change when in 1987 a large government army unit was captured by the TPLF. Rather than imprisoning or executing them, the TPLF presented PoWs with the option of joining the struggle against the Derg, living in the liberated areas, working abroad (usually the Sudan) on behalf of the struggle against the Derg or, finally, of returning home unharmed.[151] By following this policy, the rebels ensured that many PoWs would not return to fight on behalf of the government. But even those who did return to the army had political benefits for the rebels insofar as they disproved the Derg's claims about rebel atrocities and further undermined the will of those troops still fighting.

During their time in PoW camps, the rebels tended to treat their prisoners relatively well, especially when contrasted with the harsh conditions in the service of the government. The TPLF provided PoWs with the same rations as the rebel fighters received.[152] *Africa Watch* confirms reports of the remarkably generous treatment extended to PoWs, observing that "all the fronts have their dissenters, who are fiercely critical of certain of their actions and policies. These people have provided information on some abuses by the fronts but generally agree that the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war has been good, even

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[150] Bedane interview.

[151] These *choices* were noted by several other individuals and is confirmed by Africa Watch, p. 311.

[152] Fitzgerald, "Marxist Armies Clash in Ruined Ethiopia," *Sunday Times*, March 4, 1990.

exemplary."[153] As this knowledge of this approach became widespread many government troops voted with their feet and surrendered to the rebel fronts. Colonel Asiminew Bedane recalled in an interview, "I have seen 700 or 800 of them coming from the TPLF to the Derg with this in their heads."[154] Aware of the discontent and unease among his own troops as to where their commitment lay, Colonel Asaminew believed that he could also lead his entire division over to the TPLF.[155] Mary Ann Fitzgerald, a journalist for the London *Sunday Times*, noted that "When 130,000 conscripts are sent to the front this month, it will probably help the rebels, providing men and arms."[156]

Thus, with respect to both weapons and troops, the weakening on the part of the government almost always translated into a corresponding increase in the strength of the rebels. By the late 1980s the Derg was losing weapons to the rebels faster than the patron-state was willing to provide them; similarly, the Derg lost troops to the enemy on whose behalf those soldiers were increasingly willing to fight. While the Derg relied on outside weapons sources, the rebels were not subject to the same declines in weapons supplies because they had never had them in the first place and did not perceive themselves to be dependent on them. Moreover, because the rebels had relied on guerilla tactics which either did not require significant amounts of weapons or minimized their losses when they gave up ground, setbacks for the rebels such as the withdrawal from a town did not result in the same

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[153] Africa Watch, p. iii.

[154] Bedane interview.

[155] John Young (1994), p. 193.

[156] Fitzgerald, "Marxist Armies Clash in Ruined Ethiopia," *Sunday Times*, March 4, 1990.

gains for the Derg as the capture of a garrison would for the rebels. It was not that government troops had never been capable of containing the rebels but that as long as the rebels sustained themselves there was a continuous erosion of government power and augmentation of power on the part of the liberation fronts — thus, confirming the Henry Kissinger's dictum that the guerrilla wins if he does not lose and the conventional army loses if it does not win.[157]

A second feature which augmented the power of rebel groups was its ability to eliminate rivals and secure alliances with other groups. Victory over the Derg required the elimination of, or collaboration with, rival liberation movements in each of Tigray and Eritrea — an especially difficult endeavour in the case of the latter given its own religious and linguistic diversity. During the 1970s rivalry and violence had reduced the effectiveness of rebel movements and allowed governments in Addis Ababa to take advantage of these divisions. Once such rivals were out of the picture, the TPLF encouraged and assisted the formation of other ethnically-based groups in other regions in its creation of a common front. The formation of this front, the EPRDF, in May 1989 signified not only cooperation among otherwise independent rebel movements, but also the amalgamation of a number of smaller rebel groups under TPLF leadership. Dawit Yohannes explained in an interview that the TPLF succeeded in forming alliances with these other groups, on the basis of their "revolutionary" and "democratic" character. Recognizing the ethnic basis of the rebel groups themselves was also significant. On these terms the TPLF sought to accommodate and merge with other political movements with similar objectives (namely overthrowing the

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[157] Henry A. Kissinger, "The Vietnam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1969), p. 214.

Derg and fighting Soviet intervention) without interfering with the national objectives of the respective movements.[158]

The first alliance was with the TPLF's longtime ally, the largely Amhara-based Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), which had previously broken away from the multi-ethnic Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). Leaders from the amorphous Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), on the other hand, refused to join the EPRDF arguing that, as "highlanders," the TPLF sought only to recreate the Ethiopian empire. Consequently, the TPLF created its own Oromo-based ally, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, made up largely of captured and willing Oromos previously serving in the Derg army as well as disenchanted members of the OLF. Another more shadowy group, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Officers' Revolutionary Movement, was established simultaneously in May 1990.[159]

While the EPLF remained outside of the EPRDF, the ability of the EPLF and the TPLF to overcome their differences in 1988 and work together undoubtedly increased their effectiveness in countering government advances. Individually, the EPLF and TPLF were weaker from 1985 to 1988 when the two movements did not cooperate. Their willingness to cooperate again in 1988 coincided with a marked improvement in the fortunes of the rebels. In January 1990, when government forces appeared to be making gains against the TPLF, pushing them out of northern Shoa province, EPLF fighters arrived from further north

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[158] Dawit Yohannes, Speaker of the Ethiopian Parliament. Interview with the author, May 17, 1996.

[159] Later, another group joining the coalition, the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front (SEPDF), was an amalgamation of a number of smaller ethnically-based groups in the south of Ethiopia.

in February to counter the attack.[160] Once government troops were in retreat, the EPRDF prepared itself for the final offensive south in the spring of 1991.

Cooperation benefitted all the liberation fronts. Coordinated activity meant that the various liberation movements divided the Derg's energies and forced it to spread its most experienced officers over several battle fronts. Accordingly, government actions became increasingly reactive; it rarely had enough trained men or material to effectively fight simultaneous battles in different regions of Ethiopia.[161] TPLF attacks on government convoys transporting *materiel* north to the Eritrean front, for example, forced the Derg to divert increasing numbers of troops to maintain control of Tigray that might otherwise have been needed to contain Eritrean guerillas.[162] Increasingly, the Derg was forced to make deals in one area (such as one with Somalia in 1988) so that it could divert its troops to the regions in the greatest danger.

A third and final means by which rebel movements augmented their strength was that they effectively endeared themselves to the people (noncombatants) they claimed to

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[160] "Ethiopia: New Party, Same President," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 31, no. 6 (March 23, 1990); and *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 27, no. 2 (March 15, 1990), pp. 9592-9594. An alternative interpretation of these events is that the EPLF's attack on Massawa in February 1990 was timed to divert government troops further north to Eritrea and relieve EPRDF-TPLF troops with whom it was previously engaged.

[161] By the late 1980s several liberation movements had become more active in engaging in guerilla activity in various parts of Ethiopia. These included, among others, the Oromo Liberation Front which claimed to have killed several hundred government troops in 1987-88; the EPRP and its army the EPRA which attacked government troops in Gojjam and Gonder; the Afar Liberation Front, also in the north; and a breakaway from the WSLF, the Somali-based Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

[162] John Young (1994), p. 214.

represent — something the Derg had not been able to do.[163] While the brutality of government offensives often forced Tigrayans and Eritreans to flee these regions, it did not succeed in intimidating them into compliance. Instead, these tactics hardened the population's attitude against the Derg and eliminated the possibility of reaching an accommodation.[164] Alternatively, efforts by the rebels to accord respect to the civilians were, according to Africa Watch, "the EPLF's and TPLF-EPRDF's 'secret weapon,' and meant that with every atrocity committed by the government, more civilians supported — at least passively — the rebels."[165] According to one leader in the EPRDF's final assault south toward Addis Ababa, many people welcomed the advancing rebels as a deliverance from the Derg's brutality. Consequently, in many instances there was no need to fight.[166]

Winning the support of the peasantry had several obvious advantages for the movements. First, in the simplest terms, peasants who looked favourably upon the rebel movements necessarily meant that they were *not* supporting the government. Keeping citizens on the land and disposed to the rebel movements also provided resistance to government policies. Second, villagers also had a role in feeding and housing rebel fighters and furnishing intelligence concerning government activities.[167] Finally, local citizenry provided the basis for militias which could also provide a sizeable military reserve.

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[163] Korn maintains that following the revolution in 1974, Washington was confident that the regime was too unpopular to last. Consequently, it initially preferred to wait and hope for a change in the regime than to break relations with Addis Ababa entirely. Korn p. 14.

[164] Korn, p. 164.

[165] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 7.

[166] Col. Asaminew Bedane. Interview with the author, May 29, 1996.

[167] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 199; Meles Zenawi-Henze interview.

The ethnic basis of these rebel movements facilitated this support and nationalist movements such as the TPLF tended to have more success than those which did not have an ethnic orientation. But even among ethnically based rebel movements, the TPLF had more success than movements such as the Oromo Liberation Front which came from a numerically larger ethnic group. In the eyes of one EPRDF official, the key was in the "art of selling the [movement's] political programme to the people."[168] This, he claims, involved exposing the enemies of the people in order to attract them to their side and demonstrating a capacity to provide leadership which other movements could not do. Today, EPRDF officials emphasize how former leaders did not conduct the insurgency from abroad but were present "in the battlefield." Descriptions allude to their "selfless" leadership and to the number of fighters and leaders who were lost in battle. Whether or not such portrayals accurately reflected past events, perceptions of discipline, hardship and self-sacrifice were at the heart of the rebel movement's appeal among the peasantry. Other liberation groups, most notably the Oromo Liberation Front, were handicapped by, among other things, the comparatively wide dispersal of its people throughout Ethiopia. The OLF appealed to other ethnic groups by promising that areas not inhabited by Oromos would not be included in a future Oromo state or autonomous region.[169]

Perceptions of a power imbalance persisted, however, given the nature of guerilla warfare and the difficulty in recognizing changes in the number of people behind the

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[168] Haile Kiros, Head of EPRDF Foreign Relations Bureau and Member of the Council of People's Representatives. Interview with the author, May 24, 1996.

[169] Specifically, the Bertha, the Koma, the Anuak. "Ethiopia: Opposition Disintegration," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 27, no. 16 (July 30, 1986).

liberation movements.[170] By 1987, according to once source, the TPLF leadership believed that its forces and those of the Derg were roughly equal and that a stalemate existed.[171] Nonofficial estimates by people close to the fighting, however, suggest that the number of people associated with the liberation movements was considerably higher. After his capture by TPLF forces in the spring of 1988, Colonel Asaminew Bedane stated that army intelligence assumed TPLF strength to be at 60,000 fighters — a figure much higher than that listed by SIPRI and IISS.[172] Asaminew maintained that even the Derg underestimated the actual numbers of guerillas and that, in fact, the "whole population of the province is armed...everyone supports the TPLF."[173] Indeed, at times the TPLF was unable to absorb all of those who were wanting to join the TPLF as fighters.[174] The successes of the EPLF, also suggested a force larger than most observers estimated at this time. Andrew Buckoke's 1988 assessment of rebel strength is closer to the figure offered by Asaminew for the TPLF:

> Conventional estimates are that there are 30,000 regular fighters, but the fixed positions they have assaulted, the length of lines they have held, and the movement's training capacity suggests the figure is much higher. A total of 50,000 to 60,000 regular fighters appears likely, while EPLF members working in administration, road

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[170] Aside from problems of secrecy imposed by rebel fronts, much of the problem in ascertaining rebel troop levels is in distinguishing fighters from the multitude of other individuals who were critical to the rebel's strength but were involved in other essential noncombat activities. The problem is compounded further still by the fact that citizens in various regions were often armed to protect themselves against *shifta* or had had arms distributed to them by the regime at an earlier period by the regime.

[171] John Young (1994), p. 192. How this claim was arrived at is unclear. Presumably it is based on the number of troops that the Derg could put into action in Tigray rather than the total number of troops under the Derg's command. More likely, the claim represents a general assessment of the relative military strength and fighting capacity of both the Derg and the TPLF.

[172] Both SIPRI and IISS claim that TPLF forces totalled approximately 20,000 fighters in 1988. See *SIPRI Yearbook, 1989*, p. 350; and IISS, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989*, p. 129.

[173] Quoted in John Young (1994), 192, footnote number 75.

[174] Henze-Meles interview.

> construction, transport, workshops, hospitals, schools and other departments, all of them with military training probably offer a reserve of similar size.[175]

Had the Derg had a better appreciation for the manner in which rebel forces were rapidly gaining strength, it might have offered a political settlement which precluded its overthrow. But Mengistu chose not to either because he realized that his past brutality precluded him from making the necessary political concessions or because he remained obsessed with the hope that a final military solution could be provided if only his Soviet patron would comply with his demands for further weaponry. Evidently, he did not fully appreciate the manner in which his own power was being undermined by both internal and external forces. By 1991 the balance of power had shifted to such an extent that rebel forces were, virtually at will, able to move rapidly southward from Tigray and force the Derg government out of Addis Ababa. While the Derg had once exercised awesome military power, its indifferent superpower patron, its demoralized troops and its shattered leadership meant that it was no longer a force to be reckoned with in the face of a sophisticated and well organized rebel front.

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[175] Andrew Buckoke, "Tanks Back Bandit Warfare in Eritrean Struggle," *The Times*, November 22, 1988, p. 13. The sophistication of the logistical support behind the fighters in Eritrea was remarkable. Andrew Buckoke documented the workshops in the town of Arota which produced plastic sandals and sanitary napkins for the large contingent of women in the EPLF. Workshops remained underground or camouflaged under trees and most of the work was done at night and powered by electrical generators. Functioning hospitals, theatres and schools existed alongside a relatively sophisticated pharmaceutical operation. Workers were also involved in the repair and maintenance of tanks and roads. See Andrew Buckoke, "Rebels' Cocktail of Socialist Theory and Self-Reliance Keeps them Ahead," *Times*, November 29, 1988, p. 10.

IV

CONCLUSIONS

The shift in the balance of power from the Ethiopian government to the rebels had several causes: the ending of Soviet military supplies and advisors; the ongoing demoralization of the Derg's troops; and the manner in which the rebel fronts effectively exposed and exploited the weaknesses of the army. As the local balance of power shifted from favouring the government in the 1970s and 1980s to favouring the rebels by the end of the 1980s, the level of violence in Ethiopia intensified — due in part to the destructive capacity of the weaponry used and to the willingness on both sides to tolerate enormous numbers of casualties. In the "Peasant March" of 1976, for example, advancing government troops had been "mowed down" by waiting guerillas before they even entered Eritrea; 20,000 Ethiopians were reportedly killed, captured or disabled.[176] The battle for Nacfa in 1985 resulted in 14,500 killed or captured. The final battle for Massawa resulted in over 30,000 casualties.[177] Indeed, the American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman J. Cohen, testified before a Senate Committee in the spring of 1990 that the civil war in Ethiopia was "possibly the largest in terms of combatants and the most destructive conflict in the world today."[178]

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[176] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, pp. 115-116.

[177] In most of these cases, since the government repeatedly denied the fact of a war or sought to play down the extent of the violence (particularly as the rebels gained the upper hand), casualty estimates came only from the rebels. Despite inevitable bias and inconsistency, Jane Perlez, who covered the war for the *New York Times*, claimed that most diplomats found these figures to be reliable. See Perlez, "Ethiopian Government Seen ...," *New York Times*, April 17, 1990; and Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia's Long War Draws Closer to the Capital," *New York Times*, July 21, 1990, sec. 1, p. 1.

[178] Cited in Jane Perlez, "Ethiopian Government Seen as Fighting to Survive," *New York Times*, April 17, 1990, p. A5.

At no time did the regime or the rebels make sufficient concessions which might have prevented this level of violence from continuing. Perhaps in view of Moscow's apparently on-going commitment to the Marxist regime in Angola, Mengistu believed that his own military superiority — also afforded to him by the Soviets — would not end, thus precluding him from having to make a deal. The rebels, having been so alienated by the Derg's brutal tactics, could not imagine a solution short of Mengistu's overthrow. Moreover, since the rebels essentially sustained themselves by capturing government weaponry, it too could not afford to make concessions.[179] Having both committed themselves to military solutions, for one side to then make concessions was interpreted by the other not as an effort toward genuine reconciliation, but as a sign of weakness — an indication that it was not really in a position militarily to push its claim any further. Both sides took turns rejecting proposed negotiations out of hand, and, consequently, the conflict did not end until one of the two disputants was completely emasculated militarily. Until this point, ongoing violence was the result.

The fact that it was the Derg which ultimately lost the war is somewhat surprising given the vast military power it once wielded. Alex de Waal of Africa Watch contends that since weapons deliveries had continued until March 1991 and had thus not impeded the government's war effort, Mengistu "was no straightforward 'victim of *perestroika.*'"[180] The evidence suggests, however, that this aid was declining well *before* the March 1991 cutoff

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[179] Similar points are made by Marina Ottaway in "Eritrea and Ethiopia: Negotiations in a Transitional Conflict," in I. William Zartman, ed. *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington: Brookings, 1995), pp. 106 and 114.

[180] Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 373.

date and that virtually all foreign military advisors had been withdrawn.[181] Indeed, despite its obvious incompetence, the Derg army appeared to at least hold its ground until its defeat at Afebet in 1988, after which point it never regained its capacity to counter rebel troops. While there were fluctuations before and after, 1988 marked the first noticeable reduction in Soviet aid coincident with what was by most accounts, including those provided by Africa Watch, a turning point in the Derg's fortunes against the rebels and the beginnings of its irreversible decline and collapse in May 1991. While the Derg's military ineptitude arguably predetermined its fate, it is difficult to deny that the reductions in military aid and assistance, beginning as early as 1988, facilitated this process.

Regardless of whether the fortunes of the demoralized Ethiopian army could again be reversed under renewed guidance from Moscow or with the additional Soviet weaponry which Mengistu continued to demand, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was more concerned with his own domestic affairs. As the Ethiopian army collapsed around the Derg from 1988 onward, the Soviets showed no inclination to even attempt a rescue of its former client and thereby probably accelerated its demise. Moscow could not likely have rescued Mengistu in the spring of 1991, but if they were interested in sustaining his regime, neither would they have let the military situation deteriorate as far as it had prior to the regime's collapse.

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[181] Clifford Krauss claims that there had been a "nearly complete cut-off of Soviet assistance since December" 1990. See "Ethiopia Dictator Flees; Officials Seeking U.S. Help," *New York Times*, May 22, 1991, p. A1.

Chapter 3

Ethiopia During the Post-Mengistu Transition, 1991-1995

I

The TPLF and its successor, the EPRDF, had always claimed to be democratic and following its takeover of the capital it was under considerable domestic and international pressure to make good and demonstrate these credentials. It began a number of initiatives to prove its tolerance for opposition groups and its willingness to follow a democratic path. Notably, however, its military and organizational capacities were far superior to that of the opposition. There was also the belief that, having made the greatest sacrifices in the war against the Derg, it deserved power more than other groups. The opposition's own unwillingness to moderate its demands and offer compromise solutions did little to facilitate a climate of reconciliation. As well, external pressure on the government to democratize was mitigated by events in neighbouring Somalia where it was almost irrefutable that an imperfectly democratic regime would have been preferable to no government at all. Faced with an unresponsive opposition and an international community that was increasingly unlikely to back up its calls for greater democratization and power-sharing, the EPRDF offered nominal political concessions to satisfy some of its opponents and continued to rely on intimidation and military force to pacify the rest.

The organization of this chapter is similar to the preceding chapter. A historical overview will highlight the most important events in the transitional period and will be followed by a larger section analysing these same events in terms of our argument. Also included in this section is a detailed breakdown of the challenges presented by specific ethnic groups and the ability of the transitional government to satisfy their political needs or counter their military challenges. A final brief section will outline conclusions which have emerged in our most recent examination of the Ethiopian case.

II

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Following the exit of Mengistu Haile Marian, the government in Addis Ababa was left in the hands of Mengistu's Vice-President, Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan. Simultaneously, leaders from both the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) were preparing to meet in London with the Derg's Prime Minister, Tesfaye Dinka. Also to be included in the negotiations was a representative of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Yahannes Lata Wagayo. Against Washington's preferences, both the EPLF and the EPRDF had insisted that the OLF's recent military gains in the south justified OLF representation at the London conference which was set to begin on May 27.[1]

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[1] Sarah Vaughan, "The Addis Ababa Transitional Conference: Its Origins, History, Significance," Occasional Paper No. 51, Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh University, 1994, p. 32. According to EPRDF spokesman Dawit Yohannes, the OLF was approached on several occasions in an effort to persuade them to join a common front. Despite "tremendous difficulties" between the two leaderships, when the EPRDF reached Addis Ababa and it was clear that the Derg would fall, the OLF was persuaded to attend the London conference. Dawit Yohannes. Interview with the author, May 17, 1996.

The London meeting, however, was pre-empted by other events. Changing circumstances around the capital appear to have caught all the participants by surprise,[2] and the sudden collapse of the Derg led to an American decision to endorse an EPRDF takeover of Addis Ababa. Wanting to avoid the chaos that had recently engulfed the capitals of Liberia and neighbouring Somalia in favour of a "soft landing" which might "reduce uncertainties and eliminate tensions in the city," the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, sanctioned the EPRDF's plans to enter the city.[3] A US official noted at the time, "We want to see law and order. ... If the guerillas can impose it, so be it."[4] The EPRDF's spokesman in London was only too happy to comply, stating afterward that "the city was out of control, there was no government. ... There were signs of disorder and looting, so we moved in."[5] On June 3 1991 EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi claimed that his forces were in control of all of Ethiopia and observers remarked that this was "broadly true."[6]

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[2] According to OLF deputy chairman, Leenco Lata, even EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi had not counted on such a sudden collapse of the Derg. "I remember that evening, sitting and talking, the three of us, myself, Meles and [EPLF leader] Isayas [Afewerki]. Meles was in shock. ... And I had a specific question: 'Are you going to run the country?'" Interview with the author, December 14, 1996.

[3] Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopian Rebels Storm the Capital and Seize Control," *New York Times*, May 28, 1991, p. A1.

[4] Cited in Krauss "Ethiopian Rebels Storm," *New York Times*, May 28, 1991. American efforts to engineer a transition from the Derg to the EPRDF led to the event being seen as "Cohen's coup" and generated resentment towards the American intervention. Immediately after moving into the city, the EPRDF forcefully suppressed a group of protesters outside the U.S. Embassy compound in Addis Ababa killing and injuring a number of participants. A 24-hour curfew was imposed by the EPRDF.

[5] Both the current government and the now-U.S. backed rebels used the possibility of violence in the capital to support their own causes. Prime Minister Tesfaye Dinka, believing that violence would arise as a result of an invasion by what were seen as *foreign* Tigrayans, argued that "The rebel forces should never enter Addis Ababa. Any elements that have entered should quickly withdraw. There will be a lot of reaction. It will explode into hand-to-hand battle." EPRDF leader, Meles Zenawi, responded claiming that the Prime Minister "was in no position to accept or reject anything." See Krauss, "Ethiopian Rebels Storm," *New York Times*, May 28, 1991.

[6] "Ethiopia: Holding the Centre," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 32, no. 12 (June 14, 1991).

The U.S. action implied to Tesfaye Dinka in London that the US no longer saw a role for the current government representative and he promptly returned home to Addis Ababa.

In return for the promise of future aid, Meles pledged that his group would give way to a broader coalition government later in the following months. "No democracy, no cooperation" was the slogan invoked by Cohen to keep the EPRDF true to its publicly-stated commitment to bring democratic rule to Ethiopia. Despite coming to power by force himself, Meles Zenawi predicted that the future government would no longer rely on military means, stating, "We expect that Ethiopia will be a really democratic country, united not by force of arms but by the freely expressed will of the people involved."[7] Prior to their departure from London, the EPRDF, the EPLF and the OLF issued a joint statement declaring their intention to hold a conference no later than July 1 1991 in Addis Ababa in order to "discuss the details of the transitional period" and the establishment of a "broad-based provisional government."[8]

Before the official July conference took place, however, the key issues of the post-Mengistu arrangement were discussed in June amongst the three liberation fronts away from public scrutiny in Asmara. The topics discussed included the outlines of a draft Transitional Charter and seat allocations for the three main liberation fronts in a proposed transitional government.[9] Other sensitive issues were secretly dealt with in June. The EPRDF and EPLF agreed that in return for the EPRDF's willingness to accept a referendum on Eritrean

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[7] Cited in Craig R. Whitney, "Ethiopian Seeks to Form Temporary Government," *New York Times*, May 29, 1991, p. A6.

[8] Joint Statement by EPRDF, EPLF and OLF, London May 28, 1991, Cited in Vaughan, p. 1.

[9] Leenco Lata interview.

independence, the EPLF would guarantee Ethiopia access to the Eritrean port of Assab for two years.[10] Suggestive of the fact that the Eritrean leadership was already mapping out its future independent of the rest of Ethiopia, the EPLF announced that it would not be a participant at the forthcoming July conference but would instead sit as an observer.

Preparations for the July conference were being carried out simultaneously by the EPRDF. EPRDF officials contacted and extended invitations to other political organizations and community leaders. This action led to the organization and proliferation of a number of ethnically-based parties, many of which became EPRDF satellites called People's Democratic Organizations (PDOs).[11] At the conference, which took place from July 1-5, the previously drafted Transitional Charter was signed by the 27 groups present. In addition, an 87-seat Council of Representatives was created with a maximum two and one-half year mandate and seats were allocated among the EPRDF, the OLF and the remaining representative parties. Later TPLF leader Meles Zenawi was sworn in as the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE).

Not all Ethiopians accepted the new governing arrangements with equanimity. Two groups of significance, the Workers Party of Ethiopia[12] and the US-based Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF),[13] were refused the right to participate at the July

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[10] Speech by former Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Goshu Wolde, July 11, 1991.

[11] For a list of the parties at the July 1991 conference and parties participating later in the 1994 Constituent Elections, see Vaughan, p. 77; and *Africa Research Bulletin -- Political Series*, vol. 31, no. 6 (July 25,1994), pp. 11470-11471, respectively.

[12] See "WPE Ostracized," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 28, no. 6 (June 1-30, 1991), p. 10173.

[13] The Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF) was formed in April 1991 in Maryland. While COEDF's member parties include many long-time members of the Mengistu regime, their unity is more linked to a common opposition to the EPRDF and its vision of ethnic self-determination. All of the

conference, and COEDF quickly issued a statement rejecting both the EPRDF-controlled process and the current political settlement. As well, soon after the conference had concluded, reports surfaced of sporadic violence or "ethnic clashes" in various regions of the country. Accounts varied over the extent to which fighting was between organized fronts and EPRDF troops, or among various regional rivals contending for local control. Measures followed whereby regional administrations were empowered to disarm former government soldiers. Efforts were also made to control the proliferation of new militias with legislation stipulating that only the EPRDF (and their regional satellite parties) and the OLF had the right to carry weapons.[14] Significantly, however, there was violence between OLF fighters and EPRDF troops themselves. While a series of accords were signed by the OLF and the EPRDF in the fall of 1991 designating respective spheres of military operations, tensions between the two organizations persisted.

In March 1992, for instance, despite the fact that the OLF remained in the Transitional Government, differences erupted publicly when EPRDF forces clashed with demonstrating Oromos in Weter district leaving several dead and triggering mass demonstrations throughout Oromo-inhabited areas. At the beginning of April, the EPRDF made its first public statements where the OLF was openly criticized by name and warned, "We have approached the threshold where we have to choose between war and peace." On

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groups support Ethiopia's territorial integrity although some allow a degree of regional autonomy. COEDF's membership includes the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), the Ethiopian People's Democratic Alliance (EPDA), *Meison*, and the Tigrayan People's Democratic Movement (TPDM). See "Ethiopia: Mengistu's Last Throw," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 32, no. 9 (May 3, 1991).

[14] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 1st quarter, 1992, p. 25.

national television the following night the Ethiopian Defense Minister, Seye Abraha, said that the OLF's "intention seems to be to get concession after concession by carrying out all this destruction. ... We don't want to be pushed into war ... but we don't have an iota of doubt over who will win if we are." The OLF countered, accusing the EPRDF of "deliberate and ruthless intimidation" aimed at fostering "their grand ambition of bringing Oromos under their total domination."[15]

Following the harsh rhetoric, a US- and EPLF-brokered encampment accord was negotiated in April between the EPRDF and the OLF in Meqele in Tigray. But the effort did little to improve relations. On June 10 1992, the OLF led 18 organizations holding a total of 37 of the 87 seats in the Council of Representatives in a call for the suspension of upcoming June 21 elections which were to select representatives to Ethiopia's 14 regional assemblies. The request was rejected by the EPRDF who claimed that the organizations were only fearful of losing at the polls. On June 17, OLF officials announced their intention to boycott the elections and then announced their withdrawal from the TGE. The All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) and several other parties also announced their refusal to participate in the elections. Complaints ranged from claims that EPRDF troops had not encamped as agreed, to accusations that the EPRDF was intimidating and harassing the opposition. With few contenders to challenge them, EPRDF candidates won 1108 of 1147 regional assembly seats (96.6%).[16] Observers claimed that while the elections

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[15] Jennifer Parmelee, "Skirmishes Put Ethiopia 'Between War and Peace,'" *Washington Post*, April 4, 1992, p. A19.

[16] Terrence Lyons, "Closing the Transition: The May 1995 Elections in Ethiopia," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1996), p. 128.

represented an opening of Ethiopia's political process, disorganization, EPRDF coercion, and an absence of competition, meant they could hardly be said to be representative of the people's will.[17] The United States acknowledged that it would have to overlook these controversial elections.[18]

The OLF immediately repudiated the April accords and pulled its troops out of the camps. On June 26, Meles Zenawi announced a general mobilization of its armed forces, an action which was seen by the OLF as a declaration of war. Fighting broke out in early July 1992 between OLF and EPRDF troops near Harar in the east and near Nekempte in Welega province in the west. OLF fighters were quickly defeated and several thousand OLF troops were held in three detention camps. On July 9 1992, the EPRDF closed OLF's national offices in Addis Ababa. An OLF leader, Leenco Lata, said he would remain in the capital for any dialogue with the EPRDF. While the EPRDF had removed any significant military threat the OLF might present to the government, popular discontent remained and sporadic guerilla activity continued.

The EPRDF's political base among established parties continued to narrow following the subsequent ousting from the TGE of five of the ten members of the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Union (SEPDU), an umbrella organization which consolidated a collection of smaller ethnic parties from the south of Ethiopia. Members from the five groups had endorsed the so-called *Paris Resolution* struck by exiled opposition in February

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[17] "An Unrepresentative Landslide," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 33, no. 14 (July 17, 1992).

[18] "Recasting the Nation State," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 34, no. 1 (January 8, 1993).

1993 which denounced the government.[19] The expulsion of these representatives was justified on the grounds that the Council of Representatives was a coalition government, the component parts of which were not entitled to call for the government's dissolution.

Seeking to make good on its earlier pledges and demonstrate its willingness to tolerate opposition groups in its midst, the EPRDF government did not resist the April 1993 referendum in Eritrea and Eritrea's subsequent declaration of independence. With celebrations occurring in the streets, Eritreans had voted 99.8% in favour of independence in voting which was supervised by the United Nations. On May 3, Ethiopia formally recognized Eritrea's independence. Its reaction to initiatives by other groups and organizations, however, was mixed. Following the suppression of a student protest at the University of Addis Ababa in December 1992, the government had closed the university and dismissed over forty members of the faculty. Among those subsequently arrested was Professor Asrat Woldeyes, chairman of the All-Amhara Peoples Organization, allegedly for using his writings and speeches to incite warfare. The EPRDF allowed the publications of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), the only independent domestic human rights watchdog, but they were clearly irritated by EHRCO's accusations concerning the government's commitment to democracy. The EPRDF also allowed a Peace and Reconciliation conference to take place in Addis Ababa in mid-December 1993. While the conference was endorsed by Washington, the EPRDF refused to participate and claimed that

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[19] Five remaining parties in SEPDU dissociated themselves from the *Paris Resolution* and retained their seats on the Council of Representatives.

the forum was only a "propaganda exercise" meant to stir up trouble.[20] Upon their arrival in Addis Ababa on December 17, a number of the conference participants were arrested on the grounds that they had committed atrocities during the Mengistu era or belonged to groups guilty of inciting violence against the transitional government. The forum might have been insignificant except that the EPRDF's actions and attitude drew international attention to the government's imperious behaviour and provided an issue around which an otherwise fragmented and uncooperative opposition could unite. At the end of the conference, the participants formulated a communiqué calling on the government to step down and, more significantly, stating their intention to form a loose coalition called the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE).[21] In January 1994, CAFPDE's leader, Beyene Petros, called on the formation of a new transitional government made up of both the EPRDF and CAFPDE.

The EPRDF was, however, working on reforms of its own. In October 1993 it had acknowledged that Ethiopia's current army was comprised largely of Tigrayans but claimed that plans were in the works to establish an army representative of all Ethiopians.[22] In 1994 the TPLF, the dominant group in the EPRDF, held its Fourth Party Congress where it declared that military personnel could no longer be members of the party. This step was said

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[20] "Opponents Arrested," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 30, no. 12 (December 1-31,1993), p. 11272B.

[21] The components of CAFPDE included the OLF, the AAPO, the recently dismissed members of the Southern Coalition (now calling themselves the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition or SEPDC), members from Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF). Also present at the conference were members of the Salvation Party (*Medhin*) and *Meison*.

[22] Reports stated that 11 of the 15 divisions making up the Ethiopian army were made up of TPLF soldiers. See Kjetil Tronvoll and Oyvind Aadland, *The Process of Democratisation in Ethiopia*, Human Rights Report #5, Norwegian Institute of Human Rights, (August, 1995), p. 9.

to be a major move in modernizing the country's political structures and separating the state from the party.[23] The EPRDF could take comfort in reports that, while far from perfect, observation of human rights was improving as was general security in many of the country's regions.[24] Despite signs of another famine in 1994, the EPRDF government was better prepared than any previous government had been. There were also reports of "measurable gains" having been made by the Meles' government in terms of Ethiopia's economy.[25] Earlier, in 1992, Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Economic Cooperation had returned from Washington with a $672 aid package and the ending of bans, under the Brooke Amendment, on US lending to Ethiopia.[26] Reductions in Ethiopia's armed forces appeared to have a "peace dividend" allowing greater spending on Ethiopia's infrastructure.[27] But, while Ethiopia was now experiencing "general stability and peace," the country was so politically divided that there was a constant concern of a return to civil war.[28]

Indeed, the EPRDF was facing a political crisis. On January 22 1994, the government's mandate as stipulated by the Transitional Charter of 1991 ran out. Critics argued that since the EPRDF's own Charter was a "closed document," insofar as it did not

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[23] Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 9.

[24] "Ethiopia: Meles Dictates the Agenda," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 35, no. 2 (January 21,1994).

[25] The EPRDF government cooperated with the World Bank, devaluated the Ethiopian currency (the Birr) and lowered inflation to levels below 10 percent. Donatella Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent Stalk a Struggling Ethiopia," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994, p. A3.

[26] Peter Biles, "Living on the Edge," *Africa Report*, March-April 1992, p. 23.

[27] InterAfrica Group, *Demobilization and Reintegration: Issues in the Horn of Africa*, Issues Note No. 2 (1994), p. 9.

[28] Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994.

have provisions for an amendment which could extend the government's mandate, the government had no legal basis from which to continue its leadership.[29] As yet the TGE had not elected a constituent assembly to consider a draft constitution as promised, and was far from organizing elections for a new Council of People's Representatives.

The EPRDF also had other problems with its transitional Charter. In the Somali Region (Region 5), Ogadeni Somalis, under the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) (which held the majority of seats in the Regional Assembly) in January called for a referendum on the creation of the independent state of Ogadenia. While the Charter had provisions allowing for independence, the EPRDF was not eager to see Ethiopia's constituent regions take up the offer. On February 9 1994, Meles met with Somali elders in Region 5 in an unsuccessful effort to head off calls for a referendum. Sporadic violence in the region had long been a problem for the TGE, but on February 23 violence erupted between the EPRDF and ONLF leaving 54 dead and 189 injured.[30] Following another clash between EPRDF troops and members of the ONLF and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in mid-1994, Somali rebels were defeated and, like the OLF before them, were eliminated as a significant military force.[31] Sporadic guerilla activity, however, continued.

Region 5 was one of the few regions where the EPRDF had not established a party of its own to challenge local contenders in the 1992 regional elections. While the Ogadenis

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[29] Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), *Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Addis Ababa: March 1995), p. 13.

[30] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 4th quarter, 1994.

[31] John Prendergast and Mark Duffield, *Liberation Politics and External Engagement in Ethiopia and Eritrea*, Horn of Africa Discussion Paper Series #8 (Washington: Center of Concern: April 1995), p. 14.

comprised the largest single group of Somalis in the region, their status as the region's majority has always been in doubt. Moreover, a number of other smaller clans and clan-based parties harboured suspicions towards the Ogadeni and their political objectives. On the basis of an earlier association, ten of these factions were formally consolidated on February 10 to form the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL). The formation of the ESDL provided a regional ally for the EPRDF and thus a means for the EPRDF to penetrate the region. The end of ONLF domination of the regional assembly was then engineered.

The EPRDF sought to further consolidate its control among other groups as well. Continuing the policy of encouraging ethnically-based parties, one of the EPRDF's main constituent groups, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), changed its name to one which denoted an exclusively Amhara composition, the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM). Unlike the recently emerged All-Amhara People's Organization — the other significant movement contending for support in Amhara areas — the ANDM already had access to the perks of power.[32] Prominent ANDM members included the Prime Minister, Tamrat Layne, the head of Region 14 (the capital city), and the deputy head of the constitutional commission. Other non-EPRDF parties included the Ethiopian National Democratic Party (ENDP), formed in April 1994 through the amalgamation of a number of smaller parties all of which continued to hold seats in the Council of

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[32] The AAPO was essentially decapitated when the EPRDF locked up its leadership and continually renewing charges against them. Later, in June 1994, AAPO leader Asrat Woldeyes was sentenced to a further two years in prison by Ethiopia's High Court. Four others were also arrested with Professor Asrat and all were charged with inciting people to arm themselves against the government. *Amnesty International* noted that the arrests were based on questionable evidence; "AAPO Targetted," Africa Research Bulletin, vol. 31, no. 7 (August 21,1994), p. 11517C.

Representatives.[33] While the ENDP remained independent of the EPRDF and preferred to see itself as its "loyal opposition," it had accepted the EPRDF's approach to governance.

In May 1994 the Council of Representatives endorsed a draft constitution and in June a 547-seat Constituent Assembly was elected to ratify the constitution. While candidates to the assembly were not permitted to participate on a party basis, the election was boycotted by non-EPRDF parties. As expected EPRDF candidates won a clear majority, capturing 484 of the 547 seats, with independent candidates winning the remainder. Once again the election process was roundly criticized. Not only was there a lack of substantial competition, but voters were unsure of what purpose the Assembly would serve since a new government was not being elected and it was not evident that a bipartisan Assembly would have the opportunity to reject clauses with which it did not agree. The Constituent Assembly opened on October 28 1994, and although independent candidates actively participated in the discussions, the draft was easily ratified in December of the same year. Outside the assembly, groups such as CAFPDE organized demonstrations against the most controversial aspects of the constitution, namely those articles which specified the right to secession and continued state ownership of land.

While foreign observers acknowledged excesses of the EPRDF, many continued to insist that the opposition parties would be better off engaging directly in the political process and participating in the next set of elections scheduled for May 1995 to elect members to the new 548-seat parliament (the Council of People's Representatives) and to ten regional

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[33] The parties comprising the ENDP include the Gurage People's Democratic Front (GPDF), the Kembata People's Congress (KPC), the Wolayta People's Democratic Front (WPDF), the Ethiopian National Democratic Organization (ENDO) and the Ethiopian Democratic Coalition (EDC).

assemblies. One Canadian official involved in the process claimed that "We worked for ages to bring them into the political process."[34] Irvin Hicks, the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia — who is African-American — reportedly shouted that American Blacks would still be in slavery had they refused to participate in the US political process. There is evidence to suggest that the opposition was itself divided or ambivalent on whether to take part in the elections. In September 1994, Jimmy Carter met with Teshome Gebre Mariam of CAFPDE in an effort to persuade opposition groups to participate in the elections. Subsequent published reports claimed that Carter had been assured by Teshome that opposition groups would participate. CAFPDE later claimed, however, that they would not.

Other efforts to bring government and opposition together were initiated by Harry Johnston, Chairman of the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa. Initially, the TGE refused to take part but later acquiesced and from February 6-9, 1995 a series of meetings took place in Washington in an effort to find an accommodation which would allow opposition groups to participate in the May elections. Once again, the effort was to no avail and opposition groups were unwilling to break from earlier positions concerning the TGE's behaviour or its vision for Ethiopia. The authors of a subsequent report on the negotiations held both opposition and government responsible for the impasse, stating "that the lack of creative approaches and the unwillingness to offer compromise on all sides were major impediments during the Washington talks."[35] Further negotiations in

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[34] David Stockwell, former Canadian Ambassador to Ethiopia. Interview with the author, January 20, 1996 and February 19, 1997.

[35] Letter signed by US Congressman Harry Johnston, *Report on Congressional Task Force Talks on Democratization in Ethiopia, February 6-9*, (1995), p. 2.

March in Addis Ababa, in an effort to encourage SEPDC and CAFPDE to compromise, met a similar fate.

Not all groups were so steadfast in their refusal to be engaged in the electoral process. In February 1995, the ONLF renounced armed struggle and made an application to participate in the May 1995 elections. There were, however, no other such breakthroughs. In April 1995, three weeks prior to the elections, the OLF central committee called on the Oromo people and the non-Oromo residents of Region 4 (Oromia) to boycott the polls. The elections went ahead as planned (except in the Somali region where they were delayed until June). International observers claimed the elections were run competently and without the logistical problems that had plagued the elections of 1992,[36] but were without the opposition parties that might have made the outcome more meaningful. Kjetil Tronvoll and Oyvind Aadland of the Norwegian Human Rights Institute noted that the elections also lacked the spontaneous revelry that might be expected in the final chapter of the Derg's overthrow.[37]

Indeed, while the EPRDF did enjoy support amongst Ethiopians, the results of the elections were a forgone conclusion, a fact which no doubt put a damper on celebrations. There were, however, significant breaks in the EPRDF's victory: in the Amhara region (Region 3), a largely unknown ENDP candidate won one seat in the town of Dese; in Region 14, Addis Ababa, where opposition candidates had greater freedom and resources to engage EPRDF candidates, two independents, including an outspoken EPRDF critic, Major Adamse Zeleke, won seats in the federal Council of People's Representatives; and in so-called

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[36] Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 55; Lyons, p. 132.

[37] Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 42.

frontier regions of Afar (Region 2), Somali (Region 5), Benishangul (Region 6) and Harar (Region 13), which collectively had 57 seats in the 548-seat Council, local parties, including the ONLF, won seats to the federal assembly.[38] But challenged only by independent candidates, small regional parties, and a single other small national party, the EPRDF or EPRDF-affiliates won large majorities in every region and in every regional assembly.

The Council of Representatives of the TGE transferred power to the newly elected parliament on August 21 1995, at an inaugural joint session Ethiopia's two legislative houses. The following day, Negasso Gidada, a member of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) who had earlier defected from the OLF, was sworn in as President. Meles Zenawi was sworn in as Prime Minister and Tamrat Layne, an Amhara, was named Deputy Prime Minister. In late October 1995, Meles led an Ethiopian delegation on a seven day trip to the United States where they met with President Clinton. One report claimed that the high-level American welcome demonstrated the importance Washington now accorded Ethiopia in Subsaharan Africa.[39] Indeed, following the May elections, the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa had released a short press statement which was cautiously complimentary of the elections, stating, "In our judgement, the [1995] elections were conducted in a manner that was, on the whole, free and fair... [They] represent an important milestone along Ethiopia's road to greater democracy."[40]

While the EPRDF was not unchallenged it had emerged from the transitional period

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[38] Lyons, pp. 133-138.

[39] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 4th quarter, 1995, p. 12.

[40] Cited in Lyons, p. 141.

stronger than ever.[41] Observers remarked on the EPRDF's ability to transform itself from a loose coalition at the beginning of the transition in 1991, into a coherent and formidable organization which could operate across Ethiopia at the transition's conclusion.[42] Terrence Lyons, an observer of Ethiopian affairs, stated, "The EPRDF managed to exit the transition with the major political parties in disarray, with little prospect that they could mount a serious challenge to the elected Government."[43]

III

THEORETICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE HISTORICAL REVIEW

Levels of Violence

There can be no doubt that following the collapse of the Derg in May 1991, Ethiopia experienced a dramatic decline in the level of violence between opposition groups and the new EPRDF government. Beginning with its 1993 *Yearbook* (covering events for 1992), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) for the first time omitted Ethiopia from its survey of major armed conflicts.[44] In October 1994, *New York Times* correspondent

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[41] Despite claims that, among others, the OLF in Oromo Region and the ONLF in Somali Region had been emasculated as significant military forces, occasional attacks or clashes continued throughout the transitional period. In May 1995, the OLF claimed to have killed 400 EPRDF soldiers in a series of attacks in various areas of Region 4. EPRDF officials acknowledged that a threat continued to come from Oromo groups (both the OLF and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia, IFLO) but claimed the threat was containable.

[42] Lyons, p. 139.

[43] Lyons, p. 142.

[44] SIPRI states in its 1993 *Yearbook*, "The conflicts in Ethiopia were terminated in 1991 as one of the warring parties [the Derg] ceased to exist. ... Despite tension and skirmishes between the new government and Oromo groups, no major armed conflict was recorded for 1992." See p. 82. Ethiopia has not been included amongst SIPRI's list of major armed conflicts in any subsequent editions up to 1996 (covering

Donatella Lorch noted that Ethiopia was enjoying "general stability and peace."[45] The view that years of war had exhausted Ethiopians and induced them into pursuing peaceful means was shared by observers and opposition members alike. Opposition leaders stated their preference to end the *cycle* of violence, whereby both government and opponents relied on force to remove the other, and to embark instead on a more pacific course. In justifying CAFPDE's decision not to engage in violence, Dr. Beyene Petros argued, "I don't see any reason why this government may not be changed by force and muscle. But there is no guarantee that the government which replaces it will be any better."[46] Indeed, in interviews and reports from the region, opposition parties and critics explicitly distanced themselves from any sense of an armed struggle. CAFPDE spokesman, Taye Assefa, stated, "None of us is going to raise a gun to [government] heads and say 'Step down.'" Even if their efforts continued to be ignored by the government, Taye claimed, CAFPDE would pursue a "strategy of struggle" with the qualification that "We are not talking about a military struggle. I assure you, we are talking about a peaceful solution."[47]

Preferences for non-violent engagement among some government opponents did not, however, precluded tensions. Gayle Smith of USAID commented that while guns have been put down, the views of the central players have remained very militaristic; there are now, in

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events for 1995). A "major armed conflict" is defined by SIPRI as "prolonged combat between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, and incurring the battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people during the entire conflict." See p. 81.

[45] Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994.

[46] *Ethiopia: Seven Days Update*, vol. 2, no. 58. (1995)

[47] Jennifer Parmalee, "Ethiopian Opposition: Rulers Stay Too Long," *Washington Post*, December 23, 1993, p. A16.

her words, "verbal battles" taking place in Ethiopia.[48] Other observers remarked on several occasions, but particularly in the TGE's first year, that while generally peaceful, Ethiopia appeared to be "on the verge" of civil war or as being "between war and peace."[49] Indeed, while the large scale violence between government troops and organized rebel groups which marked much of the period prior to the Derg's fall had ended, Ethiopia between 1991 and 1995 was also almost never free from low-intensity conflicts in various regions of the country. Responding to assertions by EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi that his front had established peace in Ethiopia, one anonymous political analyst remarked, "If he means peace and stability in and around Addis, then what he said is correct. We can't take him seriously if he goes any further."[50]

One can consider this outcome in view of our argument. Either the TGE went some way to satisfy political aspirations of Ethiopians so as to preclude large scale violence between itself and the most significant opposition groups, or the newly installed EPRDF government had effectively eliminated the ability of opposition groups to challenge the TGE militarily. The following discussion suggests that there are elements of both of these factors at work. However, neither could be implemented so completely as to eliminate conflict entirely.

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[48] Gayle Smith speaking to the Horn of Africa Policy Group Annual Meeting, November 24-25, 1995, Ottawa, Canada. Quotation taken from author's notes.

[49] Jane Perlez, "Coalition Rule in Ethiopia is Facing Growing Fears of Collapse," *New York Times*, January 10, 1992, p. A2; Jennifer Parmelee, "Skirmishes Put Ethiopia 'Between War and Peace'" *Washington Post*, April 4, 1992, p. A19; Sam Kiley, "Famine Misery Unites Rival Ethiopian Clans," *Times* (London) May 30, 1992, p. 6; "Opposition Warns of New Civil War as Ethiopia Takes its First Taste of Democracy," *Guardian*, June 22, 1992, p. 8; Sam Kiley, "Africa's Opposition Heroes Lose Their Way," *Times* (London), July 23, 1992, p. 9; Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994.

[50] Cited in *Ethiopia: Seven Days Update*, vol. 2, no. 77 (1995).

The EPRDF's Political Agenda

Reinventing the State. The TPLF-EPRDF political programme was novel and controversial insofar as it attempted to carry out innovations that had never been contemplated in Ethiopia let alone the rest of Africa. The EPRDF was explicit in stating that the arbitrariness of Africa's colonial states and colonial borders had always stimulated rivalry and resentment in the past and would continue to do so in the future.[51] It was the emphasis on centralized government at the expense of Ethiopia's diversity which had "led to wars [and] to fuelling nationalistic tendencies."[52] The status quo, therefore, could no longer be the basis for multi-ethnic states like Ethiopia. EPRDF spokesman Dawit Yohannes stated,

> The whole idea of transforming or developing Africa without restructuring the colonial state is unacceptable. ... We say there is no country called Ethiopia, no state that defends the interests of this multi-ethnic community group under the name Ethiopia. That's why we've been immersed in wars for the last 30 years. So we must start again from scratch.[53]

That there was no "loyalty to history" did not bother the new leadership in Addis Ababa since, from this view, Ethiopia was not a viable long term option in the first place.[54] Thus, preserving it as an unbreakable unit could not be contemplated. In the new Ethiopia, power would be divided along two levels. At the federal level, power would be shared amongst all

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[51] This is not withstanding the fact that Ethiopia is often cited as the only African state which was not colonized, in the usual sense, by Europeans. Instead, various ethnic groups in Ethopia have seen other Ethiopians or "highlanders", namely Amhara (but also including Tigrayans) as colonizers. The Oromo perspective is most notable in this respect. See Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993); and Gadaa Melbaa, *Oromia* (Khartoum, 1988).

[52] Meles Zenawi, quoted in Cameron McWhirter and Gur Melamede, "The Ethnicity Factor," *Africa Report* (September-October, 1992), p. 33.

[53] "Opposition Boycotts Polls," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 32, no. 5 (June 27, 1995), p. 11839A.

[54] Dawit Yohannes, cited in Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 47.

of Ethiopia's ethnic groups. Below that, power would be devolved to a series of newly created ethnically-based regions. In the most extreme and controversial aspect of this vision, groups whose aspirations could not be met within the state as it existed were entitled to declare independence and form their own state.

Limited Power-Sharing. In considering their approach to power-sharing the EPRDF distinguished between previously established liberation fronts and the larger ethnic groups as a whole. The EPRDF banked on the possibility that Ethiopia's peoples would be satisfied with more limited offers of political power made by the EPRDF, even if the traditional liberation fronts were sometimes left out of the process.[55] This satisfaction would then undercut the support for the established liberation fronts. Power-sharing, then, did not necessarily mean that a regime consisted of representation from each of the major liberation fronts in the country. Rather, it required only the inclusion of individuals from the most prominent ethnic groups, or defecters from the liberation fronts who would follow the EPRDF's lead and yet could still claim to represent those ethnic groups. Both Haile Selassie and Mengistu Haile Mariam had members of significant ethnic groups other than their own within their governments (even in key positions), but never did they include other independently established liberation fronts. The difference for the Meles government has been that, unlike previous regimes, its rhetoric explicitly and consistently encouraged other fronts to join it in coalition or to contest elections, even if in practice EPRDF harassment and intimidation made this difficult to do.

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[55] This point was in the author's discussions with Jalal Abdel Latif of the InterAfrica Group in November 1995, Ottawa, Canada.

It is in this sense that power-sharing in post-Mengistu Ethiopia is limited. The effect has been, in the case of the Oromos, to split Oromo activists so that the OPDO (the EPRDF-sanctioned party) is publicly embraced and the OLF (the independent traditional liberation front) is clandestinely supported. Whether the EPRDF-supported party or the traditional liberation movements will remain viable in the long term is subject to dispute. As long as the traditional party remains viable, however, it continues to present a potential challenge to the government in power.

Creation of Ethnic States. At least as important as power-sharing was the EPRDF's effort to formally recognize the ethnic diversity of Ethiopia. The TPLF was sensitive to the danger of frustrated ethnic interests, most particularly its own Tigrayan aspirations. Amhara culture and political domination had long been substituted for Ethiopian culture in general. The proliferation of ethnically-based parties at the time of the 1991 July conference appeared to confirm that other non-Amhara identities were indeed the basis around which people preferred to organize.[56] Recognizing Ethiopia's constituent ethnic components and ensuring the right for peoples to live and express themselves according to their own culture and language would then go some way toward mitigating the most serious grievances and precluding or pre-empting conflict. According to Meles Zenawi,

> The key cause of the war all over the country was the issue of nationalities. Any solution which did not address them, did not address the issue of peace and war. [...] People were fighting for the right to use their language, to use their culture, to administer themselves. So without guaranteeing these rights [it] was not possible to

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[56] Vaughan contends the view that so many groups naturally organized along ethnic lines. She notes that the parties which emerged at the time of the July conference organized along ethnic lines not necessarily by choice but because they were encouraged to do so by the EPRDF. Even support for the TPLF is sometimes attributed to the TPLF's economic programme rather than its nationalistic one. See Vaughan, p. 57.

stop the war, or prevent another one coming up.[57]

The "devolution of power" was equated with the creation of a series of ethnic states, most of which were named according to the most significant ethnic group contained within. Opinions vary on the extent to which power has actually been devolved but generally undisputed is the fact that peoples are governed by members of their own ethnic group and in their own language. Even moderate critics of the government acknowledge that this has been a positive step forward in terms of reducing conflict.[58]

Critics and opponents alike acknowledged that the new government was embarking on a "bold experiment" but the question of how much was actually changing hinged on how one perceived the sincerity of the EPRDF rhetoric. Moreover, even if the rhetoric was sincere, did its programme not still allow the EPRDF to stand apart from the political process and ensure that its interests were served above others? Indeed, the same rhetoric which ostensibly gave ethnic groups long-denied fundamental rights also ensured that those orchestrating the process could exercise control. This was true for at least two reasons. First, the emphasis on ethnicity meant the creation of a truly national alternative which could challenge the EPRDF would be extremely difficult to bring about. Second, since secession was an option available to all regions and ethnic groups, it could also be utilized by the TPLF to protect its own interests should its bid to rule over all of Ethiopia end in failure.

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[57] Quoted in Vaughan, p. 56.

[58] According to one independent member of the Constituent Assembly, the benefits are that "People in the region have rights. At least the [leadership is] drawn from the region -- they know the problems... Oromos are now ruled by Oromos, Tigrayans are ruled by Tigrayans, Somalis by Somalis, and Afars by Afars." It was, according to him, a "big step forward" and likely precluded both the Oromos and the Somalis from seceding. Confidential interview with the author, May 14, 1996.

Successful execution of the EPRDF's political programme has required careful balancing among several often contradictory objectives. It sought to tolerate secession without sacrificing Ethiopia's entire territorial integrity. It sought to allow the dispersion of political power without establishing threatening power centres. Finally, it sought to create a democratic environment (either for democracy's sake or to please outside powers) while maintaining the EPRDF's capacity to control the process.

GOVERNING AGREEMENTS

In this section, our objective is to gain a more detailed appreciation of the governing agreements which flowed from the general outlines stated above. Between June 1991 and the end of 1995, a series of agreements were worked out among the major actors in Ethiopia. Some of these were official documents such as the Transitional Charter and the 1994 Ethiopian Constitution, while others were informal or secretive, such as the June 1991 agreements between the EPLF, the OLF and the EPRDF, or the February 1995 agreement between the EPRDF and the ONLF which paved the way for ONLF participation in the May 1995 elections. Both types of agreement are of interest here since regardless of how they are reached, our purposes are to determine the extent to which these agreements satisfied aspirations for political power. Informal agreements, however, are by nature less explicit and are not often available for public scrutiny. Consequently, determining their role can be more difficult.

The Transitional Conference and Charter. Immediately following the collapse of the Mengistu regime, announcements were made for the establishment of a transitional

conference. That the plan envisaged a "broad-based" government rather than an "all inclusive" government was not lost on observers. Nonetheless, the conference included a remarkable diversity of representatives and opinion. OLF deputy chairman, Leenco Lata recalls the agreement forged in June between the OLF and the EPRDF over who would be present at the July conference,

> In [Asmara] we agreed not to involve paper organizations [but] all the organizations with a history of some sort, whether you like that history or not. The WSLF, it had a history. It was there. You might not like their politics but they had a history behind it. The Somali Abo Liberation Front; you may not like them but they had a history behind them. The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia had a history. We agreed we should include only these, not paper organizations.[59]

Despite this apparent broad representation, both the OLF and the EPRDF had conflicting reasons for limiting the variety of participants at the July conference. In the days leading up to the conference, EPRDF activists sought not only to identify the "forces who stand for peace and democracy" but also to invite individuals who could represent Ethiopia's ethnic groups whether or not they had been organized previously.[60] The EPRDF's objective was to further broaden its political base by facilitating the organization of groups friendly to the EPRDF. The OLF, however was concerned that its own access to political power would be diluted by these EPRDF-created organizations. The OLF leadership realized prior to the July conference that the EPRDF had these other participants — "paper organizations" — in mind. According to Leenco, the EPRDF now said

> Habiyas can be organized, Gambetta's can be organized, Wolaitas, Gurages [and so on]. We had a big showdown. It came down to whether there will be a conference

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[59] Leenco Lata interview.

[60] Speech by Meles Zenawi at the opening of the July Conference, July 1, 1991.

> in which we will participate or not. But just to give the process the benefit of the doubt, with all our complaints, we decided it is better to participate.[61]

For its part, the EPRDF claimed it wanted to "strike a balance between conflicting interests and quickly getting down to the business of solving the country's problem[s] without getting bogged down in unnecessary disputes."[62] As the conference gate-keeper, the EPRDF was in a position to assist groups who wanted to organize and participate, to include groups who might offer dissenting views but who could be coopted into the EPRDF approach, and to exclude those who would not agree to the EPRDF vision and could potentially derail the conference. With respect to the latter, both the Worker's Party of Ethiopia and COEDF were excluded from the conference on the grounds that they had not renounced violence. Their exclusion led critics to claim that the remaining participants had been "handpicked" by the EPRDF to ensure that the conference would have a "smooth ride" and that the most controversial elements in the EPRDF programme would be accepted.[63]

The brief Transitional Charter which was agreed on at the conference combined both power-sharing and a devolution of power. While the Charter did not specifically define a distribution of power, it did state that a Council of Representatives "shall be composed of representatives of national liberation movements, other political organizations and prominent individuals to make up a total of no more than 87 members."[64] Once implemented,

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[61] Leenco Lata interview.

[62] Speech by Meles Zenawi at the opening of the July Conference, July 1, 1991.

[63] EHRCO claimed that the EPRDF's selection of participants also explained why the level of debate at the conference was "very low and uninspiring." See EHRCO, *Democracy, Rule of Law*, p. 13.

[64] *Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia*, Article Seven.

representation on the Council was divided among many of the organizations present at the conference in the following manner:

> * The EPRDF was given a total of 32 seats which were then divided amongst its constituent parts (TPLF 10 seats; EPDM 10 seats; OPDO 10 seats; Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Movement (EDORM) 2 seats)
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> * Seats were allocated to various ethnic parties which had either been previously established (the OLF was allocated 12 seats; the Afar Liberation Front was allocated 3 seats) or which were created at the time of the conference (such as Gurages, Hadiyas, Omotic and Wolaita, which in most cases were given 2 seats). An additional 6 seats were later divided amongst parties representing the Burji, the Gedewo, the Agaw, the Yem and the Kaffa peoples[65]
>
> * The remaining seats were distributed to smaller national political groups returning from exile and among community representatives (university faculty etc).[66]

Cabinet appointments were allocated across the most significant ethnic groups but the most important portfolios went to EPRDF members. Meles Zenawi (TPLF) was named President of the TGE, and Tamrat Layne, an Amhara member of the EPDM, was named Prime Minister. Other EPRDF officials were given the defence and foreign affairs portfolios. The OLF was given four lesser portfolios, and four other Amharas, each without party affiliation, were included in the cabinet. The remaining portfolios were distributed amongst six minor ethnic groups. To emphasize the inclusive nature of the Transitional Government, published cabinet lists included each minister's ethnic origin and party affiliation.

Other provisions in the charter were directed specifically toward the devolution of power and the development or rehabilitation of ethnically-based regions. Outside of the

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[65] More than 20 groups reportedly applied for these remaining seats. While it was unclear on what basis these seats were allocated, those who acquired representation attached "People's Democratic Organization (PDO), characteristic of EPRDF-affiliated parties, to their names. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 4th quarter, 1991, p. 26.

[66] For a complete list of seat allocations, see Vaughan, p. 77.

Charter, fourteen such regions were designated, each ostensibly containing a predominant ethnic group. Within each region, nationalities and peoples were empowered by the Charter to "preserve its identity..., promote its culture and history,... use and develop its language" and to "administer its own affairs" (article 2). Other provisions notable in this respect included an article prioritizing those areas "that have been severely affected by the war" for "rehabilitation" (article 14, assumed to be directed towards Tigray), and an article authorizing "special consideration to hitherto neglected and forgotten areas" (article 16, assumed to include the Somali regions of Ethiopia).

While provisions stipulating power-sharing and devolution of power were agreeable to the opposition present at the conference, the subsequent implementation of the agreement was not. Twenty-seven parties and organizations participated in the July conference, but within a year most of the non-EPRDF-affiliated parties had withdrawn from the government and did not contest regional elections in June 1992. Despite the withdrawal of the OLF and other parties four days before the voting, the EPRDF went ahead with the elections. As expected EPRDF candidates dominated the process. While Ethiopia's Oromo and Amhara populations were still in theory represented by the EPRDF-affiliated parties — the OPDO and the ANDM, respectively, both of which were successful if only by default — it is difficult to determine how much voter support they actually enjoyed. Observers who were interviewed on this question are divided or tend to respond according to their own political biases on the EPRDF. In any event, while power-sharing was a reality for many from the fall of Mengistu until the June elections, it was only so in more limited sense after these parties withdrew from the government.

The Constituent Assembly and the 1994 Constitution. The Transitional Charter included provisions stipulating how a new Ethiopian constitution was to be written. Article Ten of the Charter called for the Council of Representatives to create a "Constitutional Commission to draw up a draft constitution" which, in turn, would be submitted back to the Council for their consideration. An approved draft would be submitted to "the people for discussion." A final draft of the constitution was to be presented to an elected Constituent Assembly for their consideration. These events, in addition to the completion of national elections, were to be completed prior to the conclusion of the Transitional period. Persuading Ethiopians that this lengthy process was in their interests was a challenge and in order to increase the profile of the process, the government proclaimed January 6 1994 a holiday to allow "public discussions" on the proposed draft.

The June 5 1994 elections for the Constituent Assembly were said by most observers to be an improvement over the June 1992 elections insofar as they were run with greater logistical competence. But they did not lead to the election of significant opposition groups which might otherwise have engaged the EPRDF in more spirited debate on its proposed constitution. Once again, despite election rules forbidding candidates from stating their party affiliation, none of the major opposition groups participated. Thus, the EPRDF's victory was neither "significant nor unexpected."[67] Since the EPRDF knew in advance that their candidacy would be challenged by only a few independent candidates it is difficult to determine how successful a concerted effort by the opposition might have been. However, given that the EPRDF won *only* 484 of 547 seats (89%) with the remainder going to the

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[67] "Ethiopia: Constitutional Dilemmas," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 35, no. 13 (July 1, 1994).

independent candidates,[68] questions were raised as to whether the opposition had lost out on an opportunity to voice their opinion on the constitution. Frustrated with the opposition's refusal to participate, Andreas Ashete of the *InterAfrica Group* stated at the time,

> The opposition has failed its constituents. ... The regional elections [of June 1992] were terribly flawed, but the government has made a serious effort to correct the mishaps and will try harder again next time. Free and impartial elections cannot be left to the government alone. Join the electoral board! Open offices! That's how elections get to be fair.[69]

Arguably, what matters most for our purposes is not whether the elections were fair but whether opponents are empowered. Even fair elections where the opposition chooses not to participate does nothing to alleviate grievances. On the other hand, the belief among some opposition members that they had lost a legitimate opportunity to express themselves may have gone some way toward fragmenting opposition unity even if it did not always lead to a softening of attitudes toward the ruling party. After the Constituent Assembly elections, one "leading member" of the OLF argued

> Our chances of having our perspectives enshrined in the constitution are over now. ... The first important chapter is finished, and the Oromo are going to have to live under a constitution in which they have not participated. In a country that never had any democratic exercise, some violations are bound to happen. But it's up to us to rectify some of these violations rather than stay out of the process. We are going to have only one party running the show now. But what is the sense of lamenting after abdicating the whole thing.[70]

With an EPRDF-dominated Constituent Assembly the draft constitution was easily approved, although independent members of the Assembly ensured that debate did take

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[68] Lyons, p. 130.

[69] "EPRDF Landslide," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 31, no. 7 (August 21,1994), p. 11509C.

[70] Derived from an anonymous source, cited in "EPRDF Landslide," *Africa Research Bulletin*, (August 21,1994).

place.[71]

The final draft of the 1994 Constitution was in many respects an elaboration of the 1991 Transitional Charter. Its emphasis was toward guaranteeing rights of nations.[72] The Constitution lists nine states (down from fourteen in the Charter) as members of the Federal Democratic Republic most of which are named after one of Ethiopia's predominant ethnic groups.[73] Minorities within these states are given the right to establish their own states at any time (article 47, subarticle 3). As with the Charter, a Region is entitled to "write and develop" its own language and to "promote its culture" (article 37). Each nation is said to have "an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession" as well as the right to "a full measure of self government which includes the right to establish institutions" of its own. In terms of representation at the federal level, Article 37 stipulates that "every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has the right to...equitable representation in regional and national governments." Thus, both the lower house, the Council of People's Representatives (article 54), and the upper house, the Federal Council

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[71] Independent members acknowledge that there was free debate during the sessions of the Constituent Assembly. During votes on specific provisions, however, opposing members of the assembly were only counted as having voted *against* the measure. According to one member, a better tactic was to *abstain* because assembly procedures allowed dissenting views to be recorded in a written statement. This approach was apparently the most effective means by which the opposition-oriented independent candidates could challenge the EPRDF. Murkuria Tefesse. Interview with the author, May 14, 1996.

[72] According to one participant in the debate, the EPRDF "had thought we would oppose the secession article [article 39]. But the article seemed to me to be very democratic and I said 'I don't see why I should oppose it.'" Confidential interview with the author, May 14, 1996.

[73] These are as follows 1. Tigray, 2. Afar, 3. Amhara, 4. Oromia, 5. Somali, 6. Benishangul/Gumaz. 10. Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (which consolidated Regions 7-12), 12. Gambela, 13. Harar. Addis Ababa is often labelled as Region 14. Given the amalgamation of some previous regions and various numbering systems, confusion persists over which region is which. See "Ethiopian Electoral Areas Changed," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 32, no. 5 (June 27, 1995), p. 11839.

(article 61) are to be comprised of representatives of different nations, nationalities and peoples. The constitution does not, however, guarantee specific percentages of representation for each ethnic group nor, of course, does it specify whether these ethnic representatives must be from within or without the governing party.

The 1995 Elections. The May 1995 elections marked an "anti-climactic" closing phase of the transitional period.[74] Discussion of the elections are included here because they represented the fulfilment of the agreements initiated at the July conference in 1991 and could have reallocated political power across Ethiopia's ethnic groups and political organizations. Instead, as had occurred on the two previous electoral efforts, such a redistribution was precluded when voting was boycotted by the most significant political opposition groups.

The reasons for the boycott, however, may have had as much to do with problems within the opposition itself as with accusations that the EPRDF continually harassed opposition candidates. The only national opposition party to contest the elections was the small Ethiopian National Democratic Party (ENDP) which, despite acknowledging EPRDF interference, refused to withdraw from the voting process.[75] *Africa Confidential* stated at the time that the only other "remotely credible national opposition was Beyene Petros' noisy but chronically divided" CAFPDE which boycotted the voting. However CAFPDE, it noted

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[74] Lyons, p. 132.

[75] ENDP candidate Tesfaye Habiso noted that in general there was a lack "of organization, of will, of experience, and of financial resources" among the opposition. Moreover, he said, there was a problem of "ego" amongst the opposition leadership. "Everybody wants to be a leader." Interview with the author, May 13, 1996. Also see comments of ENDP Secretary General, Nebiyu Samuel, in Donatella Lorch, "Ethiopia Holding Elections in Federal System," *New York Times*, May 7, 1995, p. A3.

further, "hardly constitutes a coherent opposition. Disenchantment with the government is rivalled only by disenchantment with the opposition, not least because of a shortage of policies."[76] Indeed, on the failures of the opposition, one anonymous Western diplomat noted the following to *New York Times* correspondent Donatella Lorch:

> The tragedy of this election is that there will be no opposition. ... But you have to put just as much responsibility on the opposition that failed to breath life into the system as on the Government. There is no tradition of political tolerance in Ethiopia. Politics is extremely polarized. You are either for or against the government.[77]

Election monitors from Europe and from the region were divided on the extent to which the EPRDF had engaged in coercive activities to impel voters to support EPRDF candidates.[78] However, if the EPRDF had been tempted into such activities, the opposition's intransigence and self-destructive tendencies made most of it unnecessary. By not presenting Ethiopians with a coherent political platform (which the EPRDF had), by lacking a intelligible organizational structure which reached into most ethnic communities (which the EPRDF increasingly demonstrated), and by announcing their intention not to participate

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[76] "Ethiopia: No Contest," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 26, no. 11 (May 26, 1995).

[77] Donatella Lorch, "Ethiopia Holding Elections in Federal System," *New York Times*, May 7, 1995, p. A3. Interviews with foreign embassy staff and other organizations observing the elections, showed, with some exceptions, a similar lack of sympathy for the opposition. Despite acknowledged indiscretions by the EPRDF, the view of some observers was that the intransigence or disorganization of the opposition itself had prevented them from exploiting an opportunity to make inroads into the Ethiopian political process.

[78] In their report on the 1995 elections, the Norwegian Institute of Human Rights wrote, "Our observations and collected information made us suspect that there was considerable indirect and direct pressure and force involved in convincing the peasants to participate. We came across certain information which suggested a climate of fear growing in the rural areas, an apprehension which leads the peasants to follow EPRDF orders to vote -- to avoid repercussions and political stigmatization." See Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 33. Alternatively a group of local NGO's under the umbrella AD-NET concluded, "Apart from certain irregularities here and there, there is unanimity among the board members of AD-NET ETHIOPIA that the May and June 1995 elections were conducted democratically [and were] characterized by an atmosphere of peace." AD-NET ETHIOPIA; E95 GROUP, *Evaluation on the Elections for Representatives to the Federal Parliament and Regional Councils Held in Ethiopia on 7th May and 18th June 1995*, (Addis Ababa, October 1995), p. 35.

early in the year, there was little need for the EPRDF to bother disrupting the elections themselves. In the end, the unwillingness of the opposition to engage themselves in the elections allowed the EPRDF to dominate the elections at all levels gaining control of all regional councils and winning 493 of the 548 seats in the new Council of People's Representatives.[79] Consequently, the May 1995 elections presented Ethiopians with an odd situation; an imperfect but explicitly multi-ethnic government coexisting with a fragmented opposition which lacked both a coherent platform and a willingness to take political risks.

Power-sharing or Winner-Take-All? Whether or not people take up arms against a government is ultimately related to their evaluation of that government's performance and whether their interests are being served. A power-sharing agreement is important in this respect because it provides a visible indication that one's group does have a voice in government. Ethiopia's situation is difficult to evaluate because while established organizations are not (or are no longer) in the government, visible ethnic representation has been established.

Indeed, many of Ethiopia's peoples had representation in the highest levels of government. The top three offices were divided amongst Ethiopia's most significant groups: Tigrayan, Oromo and Amhara. EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi was named the new Prime Minister. The Presidency and head of state — albeit a largely symbolic appointment — went to an Oromo, Negasso Gidada. The former Prime Minister, Tamirat Layne, an Amhara, was named Deputy Prime Minister. After the Prime Minister, the only other Tigrayan among 17

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[79] "Ethiopia: Looking Federal," *Africa Confidential*, 36, 19 (September 22, 1995). An unofficial list of seats won by parties in the 1995 election is provided in Appendix 10 of AD-NET ETHIOPIA; E-95 GROUP, p. 53.

cabinet portfolios was the new foreign affairs minister, Seyoum Mesfin.[80] The remainder of the cabinet was comprised of four Oromos, four Amhara (including the Deputy Prime Minister and the Defense Minister), two Gurage and one from each of the Hadiya, Kambata, Somali, Wolayita, Hareri and Afar.[81] The EPRDF also did not miss opportunities to demonstrate to Ethiopia's most important ethnic groups that they were being represented. On August 22 1995, all government offices were closed for the ceremony where Negasso Gidada took the oath of office as President.

While the new government did not appear to have its uppermost levels dominated by one ethnic group (most notably by Tigrayans), *Africa Confidential* claimed that Ethiopia's new government, inaugurated in August 1995, "looks more federalist than it is."[82] Other opposition groups agreed. The OLF, for one, stated that the act of putting Negasso Gidada in the "so-called" highest post in the country was an effort to deceive the Oromo people. The OLF assured its people that their struggle would continue until Oromo sovereignty was respected and ensured. Other opposition members were not so sure that displays of ethnic inclusion would be so easily dismissed by Ethiopians.[83] Indeed, Tigrayans were much more evident below the ministerial level: at least five assistant ministers were members of the TPLF; in the military, most senior officers were also Tigrayan.[84]

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[80] "Looking Federal," *Africa Confidential*, September 22, 1995.

[81] For a complete list of the cabinet ministers, their portfolios and their ethnic affiliations, see *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 32, no. 8 (September 28, 1995), p. 11941.

[82] "Looking Federal," *Africa Confidential*, September 22, 1995.

[83] *Ethiopia: Seven Days Update*, vol. 2, no. 77 (August 28, 1995); and vol. 2, no. 78 (September 4, 1995).

[84] "Looking Federal," *Africa Confidential*, September 22, 1995.

The Ethiopian case, then, is in the theoretically awkward middle ground between power-sharing and winner-take-all. Some observers claim that opportunities to share power were obtainable and should have been exploited by the opposition, but were not. In this view, political power was available for others, but there was no one to share it with. In compensation for a failure to sustain this ideal power-sharing arrangement, a more limited settlement was attempted whereby power was "shared" across regions and its own explicitly ethnic parties. An alternative view is that the EPRDF had created a political landscape which was so hostile to potential opposition groups that it could only have been expected to produce a winner-take-all government. In the extreme, this view saw the TPLF as predominant and the EPRDF-satellite parties as covers for political domination by one ethnic group. Each of these two views was adopted and firmly held by government and opposition elites respectively. The boycott of elections in 1992, 1994 and 1995 precluded the opportunity to test either one. However, whether or not the opposition can mobilize enough support among common Ethiopians to effectively resist the EPRDF government depends ultimately on the perceptions of common Ethiopians of the performance of the government. The problem for the opposition organizations is that it is not clear that their sentiments are felt by the rest of the country. On the contrary, there is evidence that, while many Ethiopians are fearful of EPRDF intimidation and harassment, the government has gone some way towards improving their general condition. Significantly, any satisfaction among common Ethiopians appears to have as much to do with their class needs as peasants as with their needs for ethnic representation. In her report on the 1995 elections, Eva Poluha reflects on her findings in the field, stating,

> The downfall of the Derg and the coming to power of the EPRDF had, as people expressed it, brought along some very positive changes. The most important was that the war had ended and that people no longer needed to send their young sons to the warfront. The war had been hated all over the country and no one understood why they should send their children away to a war of which they knew nothing.[85]

On the fact that Ethiopians were no longer being beaten by Derg officials, but on the contrary were now being left by the EPRDF to look after their own affairs, Poluha adds,

> What was expressed over and over again in the interviews as people's main desire vis-a-vis the state was that they preferred to be left to live and work in peace, without being disturbed and without any claims being put on them. Consequently, peace, but also local security was very important to them. And as earlier mentioned, people appreciated that the EPRDF had taken care of the thieves that threatened their existence....[86]

Similarly, one Ethiopian intellectual accounted for this support in the countryside:

> Ethiopia, it must be remembered, is largely a peasant society. During the military regime most of the fighting was in the north. The issue for the rest of the country was forceful conscription. The subsistence nature of much of the Ethiopian peasantry meant that Ethiopian peasants could not simultaneously work peacefully and feed itself. When the EPRDF came to power, however, they allowed peasants to work; it did not conscript their children but has allowed them to work and live with them ... Therefore the normal work of peasants is left alone. This lack of government interference is a source of legitimacy for the current government.... Given this, in addition to the fact that there is no opposition to demonstrate an alternative course of action, they remain passive. Indeed, the government claims to have significant support from the countryside. I actually observed that this support does exist.[87]

Even some opposition leaders grudgingly concede that the EPRDF is a vast, if still qualified,

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[85] Eva Poluha, *The 1995 Ethiopian Elections: Viewed from the Grassroots*, Department for East and West Africa, (September 1995), p. 16.

[86] Poluha, pp. 16 and 20. Also notable in this respect is that the EPRDF's efforts to win some goodwill began immediately after it took over Addis Ababa. One observer, Herbert Lewis, noted the resentment at the U.S. decision to allow the EPRDF takeover but added that "most people I spoke to in Addis Ababa voiced their gratitude for the effective, efficient, orderly and relatively bloodless way it was accomplished. ... Looting was stopped almost immediately and the newly arrived forces set about getting control over the masses of arms that were in private hands throughout the city." See Herbert Lewis, "Beginning Again," *Africa Report*, September-October 1991, p. 60.

[87] Confidential interview with the author, May 31, 1996.

improvement over past regimes. Teshome Gebre Mariam, formerly of CAFPDE, acknowledged, "I disagree strongly with the government, but I recognize that in comparison with the Derg, this is a remarkable improvement."[88] Moreover, he claims, the EPRDF's ethnic strategy may satisfy the need for self-determination among some groups. He states that while he doubted the OPDO's claims that "they did not receive any instructions from anyone," he also noted that, at least "optically," the Oromos have a share of power. He added that "its far better than anything in the last 100 years, and in time the OPDO may not be willing to be dictated by the TPLF."[89]

It is these contradictory characteristics of the EPRDF government that appear to have brought a semblance of peace and continuing tension to Ethiopia. In the short-term, limited power-sharing and improved transparency has gone some way to satisfying some Ethiopians and precluded them from violently opposing the government. In the long term, a failure to live up to a democratic standard the EPRDF set for itself may erode any good sentiments the government currently enjoys.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

In this section our objective is to develop an appreciation for the distribution of power outside of the governing agreements.

The Relative Strength of the EPRDF

Military Power. Gayle Smith of USAID has remarked that if the TPLF/EPRDF

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[88] Teshome Gebre Mariam. Interview with the author, May 15, 1996.

[89] Gabre Mariam interview.

were as powerful as its opposition critics have claimed, the war would have been won years before and everybody would be a member of REST (RElief Society of Tigray, the branch of the TPLF responsible for providing famine assistance to Tigray).[90] Indeed, the EPRDF has never been powerful in the way of the Derg army — particularly in the military sphere. According to Dawit Yohannes, as of 1996 not only had there been no new military acquisitions since the fall of Mengistu (let alone the large scale military shipments that Ethiopia received during the 1970s and 1980s) but the number of troops in the army declined steadily as TPLF and ANDM soldiers continued to be demobilized (that in addition to the virtually complete dismantling of the Derg army).[91] Estimates of the size of the post-Mengistu armed forces range from 120,000 in 1992[92] down to 90,000 in 1994[93] (recall that estimates of the size of the Derg army were as high as one-half million). While the new EPRDF army could supplement weaponry it captured during the war with weaponry inherited from the Derg after the fall of Mengistu, much of the Soviet-built heavy weaponry has remained unserviceable.[94]

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[90] Gayle Smith, USAID, at the Horn of Africa Policy Group Annual Meeting, November 24 and 25, 1995, Ottawa. Author's notes.

[91] Dawit Yohannes interview.

[92] "Ethiopia: Power Struggles and the Ethnic Weapon," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 33, no. 9 (May 8, 1992).

[93] See InterAfrica Group, "Demobilization and Reintegration," p. 4.

[94] Although the Ethiopian air force reportedly had between 34- 40 MiG fighters and 2 dozen helicopter gunships operational by the summer of 1995. "Looking Federal," *Africa Confidential*, September 22, 1995. Estimates of the size of the Ethiopian air force at the end of the transitional period are as follows: 18 operational MiG-23BNs; 16 MiG 21s; 4 Antonov-12 transporters; 15 Albatros training planes. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report Ethiopia*, 3rd quarter, 1995, p. 13. Such weaponry is arguably irrelevant given that there are no reports of air force involvement in regional skirmishes.

It was in the EPRDF's political interest to downplay its reliance on military force if only to avoid offending potential foreign donors. According to Dawit Yohannes, the army's role is now more limited: "We don't expect any international conflict and we do not expect it to play any role in Ethiopia's political life. We are not interested in a strong army."[95] Nonetheless, throughout the Transitional period the EPRDF was militarily far more powerful than any of its potential adversaries who, incidently, were either poorly armed or had no military wing at all. The fact that they had defeated the Derg army was, of course, an indication of their efficient organizational structure and their military experience from the start of the Transitional period. In justifying the EPRDF's takeover of the capital in 1991, US Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen had remarked that "the EPRDF was now left as the only disciplined force capable of keeping order in the capital."[96] The only other organization which could potentially contest EPRDF military power even on a regional basis, was the OLF. Even the OLF, however, had been a relatively minor threat to the Derg army (in fact, many Oromos were *in* the Derg army) and when they did make gains in the last years of the Derg, it was because Derg forces were concentrating more on advancing EPRDF troops from the north.[97] Even members of the OLF leadership concede that militarily the

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[95] Dawit Yohannes interview.

[96] US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, Statement on June 18, 1991. Cited in Vaughan, p. 33.

[97] Vaughan, p. 32. Former Canadian ambassador, David Stockwell, noted an exchange he had with EPLF military leader Petros Solomon, who had been active in training the OLF in its fight against the Dergue. Petros noted that the OLF were the "worst fighters I have ever trained," adding that that if they did not step on their own mines, they shot themselves in the foot. He concluded stating that "these guys are never going to do anything" to threaten the new EPRDF government. When reminded that the EPLF had also come from modest beginnings, Petros responded that, unlike the OLF, the EPLF's military power had continued to increase year by year. Stockwell interview, February 19, 1997.

OLF has been no match for the EPRDF.[98]

During its time the Derg had found no other way than terror and continued military offensives as a means of defeating its enemies. Despite billions of dollars in Soviet military aid, the effort had ended in failure — a fact EPRDF officials did not fail to mention during interviews. While the EPRDF maintains its military superiority over potential contenders for power, it has also looked to other non-military means and resources to consolidate its strength and provide it with a distinct power advantage over potential challengers. These means and resources, to be discussed in the following sections, include foreign assistance and endorsement; tactics such as allowing potential threats to secede, or dividing the opposition to increase its own political base; and finally looking to incumbency as a central power resource.

Securing Outside Assistance and Endorsement. The first of these resources and means is not unfamiliar to the study of former African client states because it relies on a similar principle. The superpower(s) have had a role in the post-Cold War condition of African states, but this role has obvious differences with the Cold War years. Aid is still provided but it is invariably humanitarian rather than military and tends to have democracy, human rights and conflict resolution as its central objectives.[99] In return for Washington's

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[98] In his interview with the author, Leenco Lata stated that the EPRDF "deliberately kept us engaged, everywhere. And they could do it because they had a larger force and they had their forces spread in a wider area than we did." *I.S.: "They did have a larger force?"* Leenco: "No question, no question." *I.S.: "And better armed?"* Leenco: "By far." Leenco downplays the importance weaponry that Oromos might have kept following the dissolution of the Derg army, stating somewhat disingenuously, "That never served as a source of weapons." Leenco Lata interview.

[99] For policy statements and perspectives on US policy towards Africa see Francis A. Kornegay, Jr. "Africa in the New World Order," *Africa Report*, January-February 1993, pp. 13-17; Warren Christopher, "A New Relationship," *Africa Report*, July-August 1993, pp. 36-39; Margeret Novicki, "Interview: George E. Moose," *Africa Report*, January-February 1994, pp. 21-25; Francis A. Kornegay, Jr., "Setting a New

endorsement of the EPRDF's takeover of the capital, the EPRDF pledged to establish an inclusive form of government or risk losing future aid and cooperation from the United States. Herman Cohen stated at the time, "We will certainly criticize them very heavily [if they renege on their pledge of democracy] and we will make sure that there's no [economic] assistance to any government that emerges that is not democratic and tries to repeat the experiences of the Mengistu regime."[100]

Not surprisingly, the EPRDF was eager to follow orders from Washington, fully realizing that unless they did so the possibility of either securing themselves in power or reviving their exhausted and impoverished country were remote. It waited outside of the capital for several days until it received a go-ahead from Washington and demonstrated discipline and moderation when it finally did enter the city. Once installed it sought portray itself as a democratic organization. It proceeded with plans for a broad -based government and sought to avoided reprisals against specific groups not engaged in the fighting. It also sought to remove symbols of its past which did not convey the right *democratic* message. When reporters asked about the Soviet-made rifle that is a part of the rebels' emblem at their office in London, Meles retorted, "I suppose that we won't need the Kalashnikov anymore."[101] Aregash Adam, a TPLF official, also dismissed concerns that the hammer and

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Agenda," *Africa Report*, September-October 1994, pp .72-77; and the interview with Chester Crocker," in *Africa Report*, September-October 1994, pp. 8-9.

[100] US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, cited in Martin Fletcher, "Bush Worries Over Ethiopian Role," *Times*, May 31, 1991, p. 1.

[101] Craig R. Whitney, "Ethiopian Seeks to Form Temporary Government," *New York Times*, May 29, 1991, p. 6. In fact, it was not until the TPLF's Fourth Party Congress in 1994 that the Kalashnikov rifle was removed from the TPLF emblem. Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 9.

sickle which also adorned the TPLF emblem somehow indicated the fronts embrace of Marxism, claiming,

> The hammer and sickle are the symbols of workers and peasants, which are the primary classes of the democratic struggle. ... But don't be confused by symbols. We believe in a multiparty system and we believe that farmers and merchants should be free to work as they wish.[102]

Evidently the ideological transformation was timely. American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, later remarked,

> If this had happened five years ago, we wouldn't have been involved because in the cold war, it would have been hard to work with Marxists. ... Even two years ago it was hard for me to work with Swapo. [South West African People's Organization in Namibia]. The big difference is that people talk about Marxism and people laugh.[103]

Financial aid was forthcoming. In November 1992, Western leaders agreed on a $1.2 billion package to cover the government's immediate financial shortfall. While the total sum was, arguably, not large by international standards, the act was seen as reversing a long line of refusals of aid to Ethiopia. According to one official, "It's essentially an act of faith in a government with no track record."[104] By 1994 Ethiopia had also become the second largest recipient of US aid in Subsaharan Africa after South Africa.[105]

Meles Zenawi never missed an opportunity to brandish favourable statements from

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[102] Clifford Krauss, "New Policies, Old Slogans in Ethiopia," *New York Times*, June 29, 1991, p. 5.

[103] Jane Perlez, "New View of Ethiopia" *New York Times*, May 31, 1991, p. A10.

[104] Jennifer Parmelee, "Ethiopia's New Politics Echo an Old War," *Washington Post*, February 18, 1993, p. A33.

[105] Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994; also Prendergast and Duffield, p. 17.

Washington — which were also forthcoming.[106] Most notable among these statements was the American appraisal of the 1995 election which by-and-large spoke favourably of the process, claiming that they were "on the whole, free and fair" and represented an "important milestone along Ethiopia's road to greater democracy."[107] For the opposition, what was most irritating about this and other such reports was that they offered only qualified reminders to the TGE to include alternative views, but otherwise continued to support the government. As far as the opposition was concerned, foreign statements which were uncritical of the elections did not advance democracy but on the contrary only legitimized the EPRDF government and allowed a further consolidation of power. In a report written subsequent to a similarly favourable statement of the 1995 elections by the so-called Donor Group, Eva Poluha wrote that criticism of the EPRDF was overshadowed by the congratulatory thrust of the document and noted that opposition groups saw such comments as biased and unconstructive interference in Ethiopia's political process.[108] Overlooking their own failure to offer a feasible alternative, opposition leaders stated that if foreign observers were only

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[106] During Meles Zenawi's 1994 Washington visit, Clinton noted his "support for Ethiopia's attempts to establish a multiparty democracy and adopt economic reforms." On Meles, Warren Christopher stated that "clearly he is one of the young leaders in Africa who is making real strides in his country" and that "respect for human rights has grown under his leadership." One voice of dissent, however, came from the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, who noted that "neither exclusionary attitudes by those in power, nor boycotts by those in opposition, serve the cause of democratization." Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 4th quarter, 1994.

[107] Cited in Lyons, p. 141. The report stated further, "The unilateral decision by some parties to boycott does not invalidate the election exercise." Cited in Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 55.

[108] Poluha, p. 8. According to the David Stockwell, the Canadian Ambassador in Ethiopia at the time and a member of the Donor Group, the EPRDF "hated" the report that was written by the Donor Group concerning the elections. The report, which was not to be released to the public, generally spoke favourably of the electoral process but did cite a number of documented problems with their conduct. The EPRDF had pressured monitoring organizations to write favourable reports and was unhappy with the criticisms. The suspicion is that it was the EPRDF which subsequently leaked favourable portions of the Donor Group's report to the press. Stockwell interview, February 19, 1997.

going to continue unqualified support of the EPRDF, they might as well not be present at all. Commenting on the elections prior to May 1995, Beyene Petros, leader of CAFPDE and the Southern Coalition, scolded the Norwegian observer group, stating,

> Observation missions to Ethiopia [are] a waste of resources. Nothing will change and you will help legitimize the government. Monitoring just for the sake of documentation, without taking subsequent action, does not help the Ethiopian people. We do not understand the support of the Norwegian government and the West to the EPRDF. "How much as been achieved towards democratization?" This question has never been asked by the supportive governments of the West.[109]

In fact, foreign governments found reason to be supportive of the EPRDF not least because of a the opposition's own disunity. According to one diplomat in Addis Ababa, "the government appears to have acted in ways that were decent," and to have demonstrated a competence to the international community which indicated an improvement over the Derg and which was preferable to the risks of not supporting the EPRDF.[110] In interviews, embassy officials in Addis Ababa acknowledged that the EPRDF had managed a potentially disastrous famine in 1994.[111] Others note that the EPRDF has kept its financial house in order and has been effective in meeting requirements as set out by organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF.[112] Still others praised the EPRDF for bringing its security needs in balance with resource requirements — an act "which had become firmly entrenched in the

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[109] Aadland and Tronvoll, pp. 16-17.

[110] Confidential interview with the author, May 9, 1996.

[111] Confidential interview with the author, May 9, 1996.

[112] Gayle Smith of USAID, speaking at the Horn of Africa Policy Group, November 1995, Ottawa. Author's notes.

development agenda by 1993."[113] Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the EPRDF appeared to have brought a modicum of peace to a conflict prone region — a fact which was not lost in the face of the anarchy that persisted in neighbouring Somalia even years after the fall of Siad Barre in 1991.[114]

Allowing Potential Threats to Secede. The right to self-determination, which included the right to secede, had long been a part of TPLF doctrine, particularly since the TPLF had, along with Eritrea, contemplated secession.[115] The referendum on Eritrea's secession was held up as an example of the EPRDF's pledge to observe the democratic wishes on issues of self-determination. But critics claim that Eritrea's secession was a decision based on *realpolitik* rather than a demonstration of the new government's democratic credentials. Even if the EPRDF had not wanted Eritrea to secede, the military strength of the EPLF was something with which the EPRDF could not contend. Rather than allow powerful groups to engage the EPRDF in protracted conflict and exhaust the state's resources, secession removed the most threatening challenges and by default left the EPRDF as the predominant power.

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[113] Vanessa Sayers, "Why is Demobilization Important to the Horn of Africa," Introduction to "Demobilization and Reintegration...," pp. 1-2. In the last years of the Mengistu government, Ethiopia's armed forces reportedly consumed 50 percent of the national budget. See *Africa Contemporary Record, 1988-89*, p. B314. By 1994 this figure had dropped to 10 percent. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 4th quarter, 1994.

[114] Washington was reportedly "haunted by memories of the horrors in Monrovia, Liberia and Mogadishu, Somalia." The use of the term "soft landing" by White House and State Department officials referred to their preference to have a viable force -- specifically the EPRDF -- take over power from the Derg. According to one official, "If we had the kind of situation in Mogadishu reoccur in Addis, it would have been a disaster on a far larger scale for years to come." Cited in Neil A. Lewis, "U.S. Plan to Be 'Midwife' To a New Rule in Ethiopia," *New York Times*, May 26, 1991, sec. 1, p. 10.

[115] Vaughan claims that the TPLF's second constitution had for a time included a provision calling for an independent Tigray. Vaughan, p. 10.

Secession could not be contemplated, however, for other regions or ethnic groups because no one else had the military means to enforce such an outcome and because allowing all groups with any secessionist aspirations would lead to the fragmentation of Ethiopia. "They did not concede the same thing [right of secession] with the OLF." argued one opponent. "If they did, they [the EPRDF] would not have any country to rule."[116] Indeed, both the OLF and the ONLF have argued that while the right to secede has been emphasized, the possibility that anyone other than Eritrea could actually achieve that goal was minimal. The EPRDF, according to this view, had created conditions to ensure secession could not be implemented.

Clearly, however, the TPLF's intention was not to encourage secession, but to avoid war. Guaranteeing the right to secede was essential to allay fears among ethnic groups concerned about being forced into another oppressive state and to match the secessionist rhetoric emanating from within radical groups. While the right to secede was included earlier in the Transitional Charter (article 2c), the hope was that achieving that goal could be delayed long enough for ethnic groups to see the benefits of remaining in the new Ethiopia.[117] In the mean time, various factors were expected to dissuade others from taking up the offer to secede. In fact, Meles evidently saw power-sharing as a means to mitigate secessionist aspirations noting that if nationalities had functions in government they would inevitably

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[116] Mesfin Wolde Mariam. Interview with the author, May 25 1996.

[117] EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi even held out hope that Eritrea would remain within an Eritrean federation although he found the prospect unlikely. In his April 1990 interview with Paul B. Henze, Meles stated "Our own position is very delicate. We have to have good relations with the Eritreans, so we recognize their right to self-determination, going as far as independence if they want it. We endorse their proposal for a referendum because we don't think there is any other solution for the situation that has developed. But we really hope that Eritrea can remain part of a federated Ethiopia."

chose to remain in Ethiopia.[118] He also saw the attraction of a unified market as an incentive for regions to stay. Determining the sincerity of the secession pledge will require time if it can be ascertained at all.[119] It is unlikely, however, that a group or region will succeed in that endeavour unless it has the military might behind it to overcome any resistance from the central government.

Dividing the Opposition and Strengthening the EPRDF. The decision to form a broad-based transitional government was ostensibly justified by what the EPRDF saw as its own "intrinsically democratic nature." A more convincing explanation for the move, however, was that "it would have been ridiculous for one organization, operating in only a part of the country, to have formed a government."[120] While minorities have frequently controlled governments, they have often had to rely on either overwhelming force to suppress the majority opposition, or pacts with other significant groups which allow it to broaden its base. Tigrayans comprise only 12 percent of Ethiopia's total population and are concentrated in the north. Given perceptions by Addis Ababa's mainly Amhara-speaking residents that they were being invaded by "turban"-headed terrorists rather than being liberated by fellow Ethiopians,[121] the TPLF's ability to sustain political power necessitated

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[118] Jane Perlez, "Talks on a New Ethiopia Affirm Right to Secede," *New York Times*, July 4, 1991, p. A4.

[119] On this issue, Meles argued "When you start talking about [regional] development, you start talking about a wider economy, a bigger market and you cannot have a bigger market by dividing up states. That, we believe, even the peasant will understand." Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 3rd quarter, 1994.

[120] EPRDF statement cited in Vaughan, p. 31.

[121] Many of the Tigrayan fighters entering Addis Ababa wore turban-like wraps on their heads which were unfamiliar to residents of Addis Ababa. See Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopia's New Rulers Try to Shed Ethnic Baggage," *New York Times*, June 4, 1991, p. A7. An interesting comparison can be made of the

power-sharing with other groups.

The creation of People's Democratic Organizations (PDOs) amongst Ethiopia's major ethnic groups best represents these efforts. The TPLF was less successful at establishing lasting alliances with established organizations and was more adept at founding or creating new parties which ostensibly represented various ethnic groups but which were also pro-EPRDF. By attracting individuals within an ethnic community or existing party who were disenchanted with established opposition movements or who were eager to gain access to power, the creation of these groups simultaneously divided the opposition and broadened the EPRDF's ethnic base. On this issue, EHRCO writes that,

> there is hardly a political party on which a successful attempt was not made to split it. Whether one considers ethnic organizations or political parties, what started as one seems to end up invariably by splitting into at least two groups. Invariably, too, the splinter groups join the EPRDF. Not only this, the groups that remain outside the sphere of influence of the EPRDF encounter considerable difficulties in their activities. Among ... ethnic organizations there is hardly one that is singular, except the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) which is the core and decisive element in the EPRDF. Nearly every other ethnic group is split into two organizations...[122]

Even communities that were initially resistant to the formation of an EPRDF party eventually yielded. In the Somali region, where the EPRDF had long had difficulty finding a regional ally, the EPRDF encouraged the unification of ten smaller clans into the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL). With EPRDF support, the ESDL was then able to

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TPLF and EPLF takeovers of Addis Ababa and Asmara, respectively, given that in the latter the EPLF was seen as kicking out the alien force, the Derg. See Jane Perlez, "Eritreans, Fresh From Victory, Must Now Govern," *New York Times*, June 16, 1991, p. A10. The Tigrayans in the EPRDF, on the other hand, were perceived by many as representing a foreign force. Indeed, the presence of so many Tigrayans in Addis Ababa was likened by one observer, "as if the IRA had taken over London. Andrew Lycett, "Ethiopians Close Down Secret Police," *Times*, June 8, 1991, p. 10.

[122] EHRCO, p. 46.

overcome the secessionist Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) which was based on the demographically larger Ogadeni clan.

The practice, however, was not always so cynical. Terrence Lyons notes in his report on the 1995 elections that even amongst candidates who were not campaigning under the EPRDF banner, few challenged the EPRDF programme (the ENDP being the most significant exception). Moreover, Lyons notes that other parties, such as the Gambella People's Democratic Party *aspired* to join the EPRDF after the elections.[123] Such cases, then, demonstrate not only power-sharing but bandwagoning by various parties and ethnic groups. The tendency was for smaller ethnic groups to exploit opportunities to access power, but again the effect was to broaden the support base of the EPRDF. Evidently, what distinguished government from opposition was not simply whether one was Tigrayan or Amhara or Ogadeni but rather one was "on side" with the EPRDF programme.[124] In this way power-sharing gestures had the effect of increasing the relative political power of the EPRDF but without having to rely exclusively on military force.

The Power of Incumbency. Incumbency, the right to power and the exercise of power are linked together: Incumbency *positioned* the EPRDF to set the rules and to dismiss those who refused to abide by those rules; their deserving power *justified* the EPRDF laying out the rules in the first place. Together they have allowed the EPRDF to consolidate its power. Indeed, from the July conference in 1991, when Meles accepted the role of

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[123] Lyons, p. 140.

[124] This point was raised in discussion with aid officials working in Ethiopia during a May 1996 research trip.

conference chair while he remained head of the interim government,[125] to the 1995 elections when, as Terrence Lyons observed, the EPRDF sought to be both a neutral umpire and a political contender in the elections,[126] incumbency has been a power resource which the EPRDF exploited.

The EPRDF was in a much stronger position during the transitional period because winning the war against the Derg allowed them almost complete control over the process. Acquiring the power to achieve this end, however, was the consequence of a lengthy evolutionary process. Mark Duffield and John Prendergast emphasize the importance of "Darwinian-socialism" to describe the TPLF's political vision and its current course of action.[127] The upheavals of the TPLF's fight against the Derg and regional rivals of the TPLF, the authors argue, led them to embrace a belief that there was no room for compromise; that victory would go to the strongest and the best organized. "It is no surprise then," the authors continue, that during the transitional period,

> when people do not play by the book, they are "expelled" from the game one way or another. "They're in a race, a competition to win over the country" described one sympathetic outsider.... In the main, they do not accommodate different visions. There is little space given because it is felt there is none deserved.[128]

Indeed, there is sense amongst some Ethiopian observers that, having defeated the Derg, the TPLF had not only demonstrated their fitness for political leadership, but that they *deserved*

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[125] A duality which Jane Perlez of the New York Times claims some found "troubling" in itself; "Talks on a New Ethiopia Affirm Right to Secede," *New York Times*, July 4, 1991, p. A4.

[126] Lyons, p. 127.

[127] Duffield and Prendergast, pp. 10-11.

[128] Duffield and Prendergast, pp. 10-11.

to lead. Having survived, evolved and ultimately outlived even the Soviet-backed Derg, the TPLF-EPRDF justifiably believed they had a right to power. Other observers agree. "It's not underlying. They say it, articulate it. You see it implemented," contends Mesfin Wolde Mariam of EHRCO.[129] Similarly, Eva Poluha, after interviewing voters in various regions in the lead-up to the 1995 elections, concluded that "in their views the government never intended to let anyone else come forward because it was the EPRDF victory that had caused the fall of the Derg and made the elections possible."[130]

A sense of deserving power is also an explanation for the EPRDF's qualified commitment to democratization. Since they emerged from the areas most traumatized by war, and because they had liberated all of Ethiopia from Amhara rule, the EPRDF was willing to overlook its own minor transgressions of democratic principles. The EPRDF was not about to concede power to the OLF who, from their perspective, had done little to bring the Derg down.[131] Comments made by allies and opposition alike suggest that some individuals have acquiesced to this view and tolerate less than perfect elections for the time being. ENDP party candidate, Tesfaye Habiso, noted in an interview, "We have to realize that groups that fought for 17 years would not yield political power to others who were not in the battlefield." Genuine democracy, he says, is the "project for the future."[132]

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[129] Mesfin Wolde Mariam interview.

[130] Poluha, p. 15.

[131] In discussions with members of the Donor Group which had initiated negotiations in the fall of 1994 and spring of 1995 to get opposition groups to participate in the 1995 elections, Meles stated that the EPRDF would not simply concede defeat to opposition parties. Opposition parties, Meles said, should expect a tough fight from the EPRDF in any electoral contest. Stockwell interview, February 19, 1997.

[132] Interview, Tesfaye Habiso, May 13, 1996, Addis Ababa.

Incumbency and a belief that they had a right to power allowed the EPRDF to adopt a harder line in subsequent negotiations and to force the opposition to make concessions or be excluded entirely. A report on the negotiations led by Congressman Harry Johnston between the TGE and opposition groups in February 1994 concluded that "a major source of disagreement [at the negotiations] was the TGE's condition that participation in the process requires acceptance of the existing legal and constitutional framework." All of the opposition groups present, however, refused to accept the TGE's conditions for participation in the upcoming elections. The TGE's representative at the Johnston negotiations, Dawit Yohannes, emphasized the TGE's "interest in seeing opposition parties in operation" and distinguished between the need to endorse the constitution and the need to accept Ethiopia's existing legal and institutional framework.[133] Indeed, Congressman Johnston argued that the American constitution had also been written by a minority but was later adapted to accommodate changing conditions. Johnston said he hoped that "similar flexibility could be shown towards the Ethiopian constitution, which might in future be changed to meet the concerns expressed by its critics."[134] The problem for some opposition groups, notably COEDF or Amhara-based groups, was that they could not accept the "law of the land" because they were so adamantly opposed to its most fundamental principles including the creation of ethnic states and the right to secede.

Arguably the greatest mistake of the OLF, the largest ethnically-based group, was

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[133] Report on Congressional Task Force Talks on Democratization in Ethiopia, February 6-9 1995, (hosted by Cong. Harry Johnston; Hereafter cited as the Johnston report), pp. 11-15.

[134] Johnston report, p. 6.

that they had given the EPRDF the ability to legitimately claim that the "legal and constitutional framework" was the "law of the land" in the first place. The political framework of both the TGE and the current government was made largely on the basis of a TPLF vision. Members of the OLF, however, contend that they were central to the creation of later documents such as the Charter, even going so far as to claim that it was their "collective brainchild."[135] This is why the OLF's presence in the early stages of the TGE was so crucial and so detrimental to its later course of action when, as the OLF maintains, the EPRDF began "violating agreements." On the basis that it shared in some aspect of the platform's creation, the EPRDF could then claim that the Charter was the law of the land. To their undoubted regret, the opposition groups had been present in the transitional government when the EPRDF needed them most.

The EPRDF's penetration of *kebelles* and peasant associations was another advantage of incumbency.[136] Through them, EPRDF officials could distribute vital services and build a party machine. During the 1995 elections, voter registration often took place in the *kebelle* building and often under the supervision of EPRDF officials, making it harder to maintain the neutrality of the election boards. In some localities where there was little or no media, *kebelles* were the sole mechanism by which candidates could introduce themselves to

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[135] Leenco Lata interview.

[136] *Kebelles* are local institutions which were created by the Mengistu regime to administer rents and other administrative and political functions within the towns. They are the urban equivalent to peasant associations. A *kebelle*, more formally known as an urban dwellers association, comes from an Amharic word meaning neighbourhood and denotes the lowest level at which such associations were organized. Clapham, p. 51.

voters.[137] According to Eva Poluha, the same was true in many of Ethiopia's Peasant Associations:

> In February and March 1995, the people I met in the three PAs [Peasant Associations] still had very little information about the existence of different parties with different programmes. They know about the EPRDF but understood it to be the same thing as the government. From all their experiences there was no distinction between party and government. Officials came in government cars with government emblems and talked about what the EPRDF had done for the country and what it planned to do. When peasants went to town they met with these same people in government offices or at official meetings and all the time there was talk of what the EPRDF had done and how they should be supported.[138]

The exercise of such political control was not an option for other opposition movements. Even if they could exercise control over their respective regions, ethnically-based opposition groups did not have the coordinated control that incumbency had provided the EPRDF. Moreover, the long war against the Derg and the Derg's final defeat meant that the EPRDF had the organizational competence to penetrate such local structures.

In sum, there is little doubt that the EPRDF's own defeat of the Derg provided it with advantages which other opposition groups did not have. While proclaiming the system open to a variety of opinions, the EPRDF's defeat of the Derg justified its imposition of a vision which was largely its own. Subsequently, throughout the transitional period, but especially during elections, incumbency meant that the EPRDF was in a better position to exercise political power and control over all aspects of the transitional process.

Potential Weaknesses of the EPRDF. If there was a weakness on the part of the EPRDF it was its increasingly clumsy public management of the opposition which on

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[137] Lyons, p. 140.

[138] Poluha, p. 15.

occasion allowed even the most disparate groups to overcome their differences and present a united front. EPRDF behaviour was increasingly contradictory and was perceived by the opposition and outside observers as disingenuous. Meles, for instance, condemned his own one-party rule stating that "without meaningful political dialogue, the party is bound to go astray. ... It is in all of our interests to make sure it does not go astray."[139] While the EPRDF claimed that its satellite parties were already autonomous, leaders also acknowledged that having opposition groups such as the OLF would "strengthen" and "sharpen" its own organization. As it was, the OPDO was left as the only political party to govern Oromia, a fact which Dawit Yohannes concedes was "a bit artificial."[140] But the EPRDF's harassment of opposition parties, including the closing of the OLF's party offices and the locking up of the AAPO's leadership, suggested the EPRDF was not interested in tolerating opposition.[141]

The EPRDF alienated even those who were willing to forgive early transgressions as the mistakes of an inexperienced rebel movement who had only recently emerged from "the bush." Indeed, in January 1993, after the EPRDF had violently suppressed demonstrators protesting Eritrean independence, leading to several deaths, Meles Zenawi implicitly acknowledged that a lack of experience and improper crowd control measures had contributed to the problem.[142] But the government also argued that it could not tolerate an

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[139] Parmelee, "Ethiopia's New Politics," *Washington Post*, February 18 1993.

[140] Interview Dawit Yohannes, May 17, 1996, Addis Ababa.

[141] A similarly contradictory policy was the EPRDF's Press Law of 1992 which ostensibly ended government censorship. However, its inclusion of a provision outlawing, among other things, the publication of materials which might be interpreted as "agitation for war," led to the imprisonment of numerous Ethiopian journalists. See EHRCO, pp. 68-74, 164.

[142] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 1st quarter, 1993, p. 11.

increasingly disruptive opposition which was unwilling to abide by the rules. Those groups who withdrew prior to the 1992 elections claimed the previous 12 months had made that fact abundantly clear. The April 1993 ejection of five of the ten parties which comprised the Southern Coalition was carried out on the grounds that they were not entitled to criticize a government of which they were a part. The effect however, was to substantially narrow the EPRDF's political base and increase the ranks of the opposition. Even other parties which resisted withdrawing from the TGE were unhappy with the atmosphere created by the EPRDF. In October 1994, Nebiyu Samuel, leader of the ENDP, said "The writing is on the wall, no doubt. ... All the factors, all the recipes are there for this country to go to pieces. The temptation is there every day for me to quit. None of us should be quitters. But the road is getting narrower and narrower."[143]

Despite its actions, the government still declared its democratic credentials and claimed it sought only to maintain order. Following the arrests of opposition leaders arriving in Addis Ababa for the Peace and Reconciliation Conference in December 1993, the TGE argued that allowing the conference to have taken place in the first place demonstrated "the radically changed situation in Ethiopia and...the commitment of the transitional government to the principles and norms of democracy."[144] Presidential spokeswoman, Netsannet Asfaw, justified her government's arrest of demonstrators protesting the arrest of AAPO leader Asrat Woldeyes in September 1994 on the basis that they were inciting a riot. She argued that

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[143] Donatella Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994.

[144] Cited in Parmelee, "Ethiopian Opposition: Rulers Stay Too Long," *Washington Post*, December 23, 1993.

"Freedom should entail responsibility...If they incite violence, religious and ethnic, they are taken to court. In the West, you accept only peaceful struggle. The same should apply here. How did governments deal with the Black Panthers or the I.R.A?"[145]

But even if the TGE could rationalize its actions, the rhetoric did little to rally support for its cause. Concerning the December 1993 arrests, one anonymous Western diplomat remarked that "while the government's decision [to carry out the arrests] may be defensible on legal and technical grounds, it is not too smart politically. ... It will have a chilling effect on the conference, and it doesn't bode well for anything constructive coming out of it."[146] Others have observed that had the EPRDF not arrested the leaders arriving in Addis Ababa in December 1993, the opposition would not have been able to agree on anything, much less the formation of a new political party (CAFPDE). Indeed, the disparity of objectives among Ethiopia's opposition groups was such that bringing them into any semblance of unity was quite a feat. On the OLF's willingness to sit down with the AAPO (the former demanding secession from Ethiopia, the latter insisting on Ethiopia's territorial integrity) in February 1993 and sign the so-called Paris Resolution, Leenco Lata remarked, "In certain situations you make deals with the devil."[147]

By the end of 1995, a significant armed opposition which could present an immediate

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[145] Cited in Donatella Lorch, "Hunger and Dissent," *New York Times*, October 26, 1994.

[146] Cited in Jennifer Parmelee, "Ethiopia Arrests Dissident Political Leaders," *Washington Post*, December 18, 1993, p. A22.

[147] Leenco Lata interview.

challenge to the EPRDF's hold on power had yet to emerge.[148] But EPRDF actions had encouraged other parties who were otherwise too unorganized to participate to seek to discredit rather than strengthen the electoral process.[149] Ultimately, this was the greatest cost to the EPRDF. By providing the opposition with a list of examples where the EPRDF had forcefully suppressed dissent or contradicted its rhetoric on democracy, the government undermined its own credibility and amplified the voices of those denouncing the government.

The Relative Weakness of the Opposition

Despite any difficulties the EPRDF might have had, these paled in comparison with that of the opposition which *Africa Research Bulletin* regarded as "vocal but largely ineffective."[150] In 1993, the *Economist Intelligence Unit* remarked that "the only factor uniting eclectic groups such as Goshu Wolde's *Medhin* and the US-based Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF) is that none appear to have any constructive policies, relying instead upon vitriolic denunciation of EPRDF misdeeds and ethnic 'dictatorship.'"[151] Indeed, the view that election boycotts had nothing to do with EPRDF actions and everything to do with the opposition's own disarray was stated emphatically by Dawit Yohannes, who argued that

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[148] Observers note that in the first few months of the Transitional Government, President Meles Zenawi had debated freely with political opponents and intellectuals on television and that only later were officials unwilling to engage in public debate. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 1st quarter, 1994.

[149] Lyons, p. 127.

[150] "Constituent Assembly Elections," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 31, no. 5 (June 21, 1994) pp. 11431C-11432A.

[151] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Ethiopia*, 3rd quarter, 1993.

> [The] Southern Coalition is not prepared politically to participate in the democratization process. They have neither the cadres nor the structure to operate politically, and have a total lack of resources. That is why negotiations failed them. The withdrawal of the All Amhara People's Organization is political tactics. They want to have their leaders released, and are using the boycott as a pressure [tactic] against the government. [The] Oromo Liberation Front is totally disintegrated, and cannot even hold a meeting. How can they even think about participating in the democratization process?[152]

Most of the liberation fronts in the region have had limited access to weapons, and the organized urban opposition have as yet not sought them. The failures of the opposition, however, have had more to do with their own incompatible objectives and their unwillingness to compromise.

The range of opposition groups that has existed in post-Mengistu Ethiopia is remarkably broad and their perceptions of the political landscape in Ethiopia is equally wide. Tracing the evolution of any one of the established liberation groups (including the TPLF and the EPLF) reveals a confusing history of three and four letter acronyms representing different break away parties and name changes. Bickering within the leadership often led to the fragmentation of the fronts which were then resurrected in new associations and coalitions. Tronvoll and Aadland note that,

> Some of the major parties have printed political programmes, others only fragmented expressions by the party leaders...In fact there are several parties which have no political programme or platform at all, being one person's or a specific ethnic group's view, rather than relating to a political idea or concept.[153]

This tendency has been compounded during the transitional period, when the problem has been not only that leaders within a single movement have been unable to cooperate but that

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[152] Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 7.

[153] Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 8.

they have demonstrated a whole range of beliefs on how to respond to EPRDF policy. At one end of the continuum, members have defected from the established parties and formed new parties (with new acronyms) within the EPRDF coalition;[154] at the other, parties or individual leaders have withdrawn from the entire process and often from the country.

The EPRDF has been successful in dividing the opposition because much of its rhetoric and its constitution agrees with the longstanding objectives of some of Ethiopia's most significant opposition groups. The EPRDF's policies on land reform and secession are, in fact, a fulfilment of some of the most central grievances voiced by the liberation fronts during the time of the Derg. The effect has been to fracture the opposition. On the EPRDF's land policy, for example, the AAPO has insisted on complete land privatization while the EPRP wants land to remain in the hands of the state.[155] On the controversial issue of secession, the OLF and the ONLF wanted guaranteed rights of self-determination and secession; CAFPDE and the AAPO insisted on maintaining national integrity with no right to secession at all; externally-based groups such as *Medhin* and COEDF reject automatic rights to secession but accept the general principle of self-determination.[156]

Aside from divisions arising from a temptation to join the EPRDF, the political objectives among the parties of the opposition itself have been so diametrically opposed as to prevent any sort of meaningful discussion of an alternative government should the EPRDF

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[154] The best example in this case being Negasso Gidada who defected from the OLF to the OPDO.

[155] "Meles Dictates the Agenda," *Africa Confidential*, January 21, 1994. The 1994 Ethiopian Constitution maintains the right to "ownership of private property" but states that "the right to ownership of rural and urban land, as well as of all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the people's of Ethiopia" (Article 40).

[156] "Constitutional Dilemmas," *Africa Confidential*, July 1, 1994.

acquiesce to the opposition's demands. According to one Oromo observer of the OLF, the OLF has played a particularly divisive role in the opposition. For example, because the OLF is demanding its own independence and "viciously attacking" other opposition movements who oppose their independence, potential allies are left harbouring a "deep-rooted fear" of Oromo objectives. No other group (except perhaps the ONLF) supports Oromo independence because, given Oromia's size and central location, secession would entail the end of Ethiopia. Certainly the Amhara would never support Oromo independence, and as long as these two groups (the most relevant in Ethiopia along with the Tigrayans) remain apart, it is relatively easy for the EPRDF to maintain power.[157] From this perspective, the weakness of the opposition is not quarrels over who should lead, but rather a fundamental incompatibility of purpose. The objectives of the AAPO and the OLF are now so contradictory that the fulfilment of either one would necessarily come at the complete defeat of the *raison d'etre* of the other.

Finally, it should be noted that divisions in the opposition were only heightened by the EPRDF's ethnic policy. The emphasis on ethnicity meant that ethnic parties were the most effective in appealing to constituents. Yet success nationwide required the creation of a broad-based, multi-ethnic party like the EPRDF itself.

The effect of these factors meant not only that the opposition lacked the unity to present any real challenge to the EPRDF; its incoherence and confused message also reduced its credibility among foreign observers who undoubtedly had trouble envisioning an

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[157] Interview, Merera Gudina , May 16 1996, Addis Ababa. Professor Merera is the founding member of the Oromo National Congress party.

organized and disciplined, if arbitrary, EPRDF handing power over to opposition parties which were in perpetual disarray and opposition to each other.

Like the government, some opposition groups in Ethiopia have consistently adopted a hard line in their relationship with their political adversary — but at a greater cost. In his report on the 1994 elections, Siegfried Pausewang described the manner in which positions between the government and the opposition became "so entrenched, so defensive, that political arguments have to a large degree lost their value" He states,

> Since the adversary is suspected of hidden motives, every group is convinced to own the only democratic agenda which is ... to defend against the clandestine mischievous plans of others. There is a total and unyielding criticism of each other, a sense of exclusiveness which just does not allow for anything but disruption and destruction to be expected from other groups. Consequently political positions become self-assertive and absolute: every new demasking of the adversary, every new suspicion instantly adds credibility to one's own positions.[158]

This hardening of attitudes between government and opposition progressed throughout the transitional period. The report issued following the February 1995 negotiations between the TGE and several opposition groups and hosted by Congressman Harry Johnston, stated that the differences between the parties were "not insurmountable" and that the prospects for reconciliation were "better today than ever before provided all sides are willing to continue peaceful dialogue and think creatively." But the negotiations had collapsed, the report stated, because those present had demonstrated insufficient "flexibility and creativity" for an agreement to be reached. The report concluded that "the lack of creative approaches and the unwillingness to offer compromise on all sides were

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[158] Siegfried Pausewang, *The 1994 Election and Democracy in Ethiopia.* Cited in Trovoll and Aadland, p. 7.

major impediments during the Washington talks."[159] Indeed, despite their presence at the talks, members of the AAPO claimed they could not participate in "major negotiations" until their leadership was released from prisons in Ethiopia, apparently in the hope that a trade-off could be made between their release and the participation of the AAPO. Yet to the apparent dismay of the mediators, the AAPO representative, Gebreye W. Rufael, said he could not guarantee that the AAPO would participate even if those imprisoned were released.[160]

One can suggest several possible explanations for opposition's hardline and their refusal to participate in elections. These might include a failure to instill democratic culture in either the government or the opposition,[161] or a preference to use the government's failings and coercive actions as a cover for their own disorganization. In any event, the view that the opposition had not served its constituents well was remarkably widespread. Even one of the government's most vocal critics and the chairman of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Mesfin Wolde Mariam, reserved judgement on the efforts of the opposition saying,

> I am not a politician and therefore I cannot say if I am satisfied or dissatisfied. The facts are that [the opposition groups] were definitely oppressed, intimidated, pushed out of the political process. I do not know their condition. Its a subjective question. If someone says "I am afraid for my life and I am going to take this or that action," then who am I to say what is right and what is wrong. I also believe [however] that

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[159] Johnston report, p. 2. Other foreign diplomats involved in the negotiations prior to the 1995 elections note a similar inflexibility and unwillingness to compromise. One participant noted that there was little sense of anything being negotiated since few concessions were offered by one side or the other. He notes the tactic of "turning-your-back" on one's adversary as a means of pressing one's objectives. Stockwell interview, February 19, 1997.

[160] Johnston report, p. 5.

[161] Getachew Paulos, publisher of one of Addis Ababa's popular newspapers, noted that "we haven't mastered the art of opposition... We're still using old-style weapons." Parmelee, "Ethiopia's New Politics Echo," *Washington Post*, February 18 1993.

> the opposition groups have not really done much. There are risks in a country like Ethiopia where everything is new. I do not know if they have really done enough to promote their cause, to force the EPRDF to recognize them.[162]

An unwillingness to compromise is regarded as a weakness here because by following an all or nothing approach the opposition was, in the end, left with nothing — no way to assert their political claims. Opposition groups rejected calls from the international community that they should work to "level the playing field by playing on it" on the grounds that participation would legitimize the process.[163] In fact that those who participated in the July conference had, to some extent, already conferred legitimacy. Neither did they suggest avenues by which compromise could be reached or guarantee that they could follow through if the TGE was willing to compromise. By not recognizing the EPRDF's implicit belief that they "deserved power" (and therefore would not relinquish it to "just anybody"), and instead demanding power be provided to them "on a silver platter,"[164] the opposition enhanced the EPRDF's power while doing nothing to strengthen its own. Moreover, since the EPRDF was the incumbent party, an unwillingness to compromise led to the opposition's own exclusion from any sort of nonviolent engagement and thus further consolidated the EPRDF's hold on power. With no other means of asserting power they were left to plaintive calls to an often indifferent and not altogether sympathetic international community.

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[162] Mesfin Wolde Mariam interview.

[163] Lyons, p. 139.

[164] That groups such as the OLF wanted the EPRDF to hand over power "on a silver platter" was an expression noted to me more than once by both foreign officials and non-OLF Oromos.

POWER BALANCES AND GOVERNING AGREEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC GROUPS

Until this point our discussion has focused on opposition to the EPRDF in general. Now specific groups and regions are to be considered in terms of their individual power relative to the EPRDF, governing agreements arranged with the EPRDF and levels of violence in each region. A brief examination of each of Ethiopia's ethnic regions in these terms allows a more sophisticated understanding of the Ethiopian case than the monolithic conception of the opposition used thus far, especially given the disparate nature of much of the opposition in Ethiopia. The groups and regions to be discussed include the EPLF and Eritrea; the AAPO and Amhara-based organizations including the former Derg; the OLF and Oromia; and finally the ONLF and Somali-based organizations in the Somali Region.

Eritrea and the EPLF

While Eritrea is not without its own intricacies and ethnic diversity, the challenges for the EPLF in Asmara are in many respects less complex than for the EPRDF in Addis Ababa. For a start, Eritrea's more limited geographical space meant that maintaining political control was a less formidable task for the EPLF than it was for the EPRDF since the EPLF was at least as powerful as the EPRDF in military terms.[165] Moreover, while the EPLF had other regional rivals, the EPLF was in a stronger position than the EPRDF to argue that it fought the Derg for the benefit of all of its people. With the possible exception of the Afar interests

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[165] *New York Times*, correspondent Jane Perlez notes EPLF claims that it had about 95,000 fighters and adds, "whatever its strength, it is generally considered the best armed and disciplined guerilla group in Africa." See "Eritreans, Fresh From Victory, Must Now Govern," *New York Times*, June 16, 1991, p. A10.

in Eritrea, all Eritrean groups, including various branches of the EPLF's rival, the ELF, had the independence of Eritrea as their central objective. Moreover, while the conduct and final count of the Eritrean referendum might have been controversial,[166] no one doubted that support for independence among common Eritreans was extremely high.

More significant for our purposes is the relationship between the EPLF and the new government in Addis Ababa. Unlike the TPLF, the EPLF was not tempted by the prospect of power in Addis Ababa and did not take part in the July conference (except as an observer). Nor did it have an official role in the transitional government. Rather, as was already clear, the EPLF sought nothing less than the unconditional independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia.

Equally obvious was that the EPLF was in a strong position to demand this end. Despite the fact that the EPLF and EPRDF were partners in the task of defeating of the Derg, upon its completion the EPRDF was in no position but to accept the terms set out by the EPLF. While the EPRDF had numerous complex challenges from Oromos, Amhara and Somalis, none of these groups were so strong as to allow them the same kind of bargaining power as the EPLF. The military strength of the EPLF had only increased with the collapse of the Derg, such that EPLF leader Isayas Afewerki was in a position to declare that the level of armament in the EPLF's possession far exceeded its needs.[167] In the last years of the war the EPLF's "main aim," according to Sephat Ephrem, the EPLF chief of staff, "was to get their [the Derg's] artillery pieces" and thus increase their military power to ensure that their

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[166] *Africa Confidential* notes the EPLF's use of red "no" ballots (the colour of death in Eritrea) and blue "yes" ballots (the colour of the Eritrean flag). See "Africa's New State," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 34, no. 9 (April 30, 1993); and "Voting for What in Eritrea," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 34, no. 4 (February 19, 1993).

[167] Jane Perlez, "After 3-Decade War in Ethiopia, Eritrean Finds Victory is Somber," *New York Times*, June 10, 1991, p. 1.

objectives would not be compromised following the collapse of the Mengistu regime.[168] Even with an ostensibly friendly government in Addis Ababa, the EPLF had no intention of reducing its military strength for the time being, noting "international law has not been kind to Eritrea. We have paid enough sacrifice. We have to protect our victory by still being vigilant."[169]

That the EPLF would resort to coercive means, including war, in the event that Addis Ababa reneged on its pledge to allow a referendum on secession was clear.[170] On several occasions the EPLF took other actions which were no doubt meant to remind Addis Ababa of its superior position. There were, for instance, accusations that Eritreans were delaying food relief meant for Ethiopia at the Eritrean port of Asab, prompting accusations that Eritrea was adopting the "lessons of Mengistu" and using food as a weapon.[171] Gasoline was also delayed at the port, and telephone and airline links between Asmara and the capital were cut for a time. In July 1991, Eritrea expelled "tens of thousands" of Ethiopians and told relief officials to expect 150,000 more — an action which irked authorities in Addis Ababa.[172] The

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[168] Sephat Ephram quoted in Jane Perlez, "Pupil of G.I.'s Does Well, as a Rebel," *New York Times*, June 27, 1991, p. A4.

[169] Sephat Ephram, quoted in Perlez, "Pupil of G.I.'s Does Well," *New York Times*, June 27, 1991.

[170] Michael Binyon, "Eritrea Seeks Amicable Divorce From Ethiopia," *Times*, June 5, 1991, p. 12.

[171] Clifford Krauss, "In Ethiopia, Guns But Too Few Services," *New York Times*, June 1, 1991, p. 3; Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopians Have New Rulers, But Famine's Spectre Lingers, *New York Times*, June 14, 1991, p. A1; Clifford Krauss, "2 Major Ethiopian Rebel Groups Appear to Have a Big Falling Out," *New York Times*, June 18, 1991, p. A8; Clifford Krauss, "U.S. Accuses Eritrea on Food Relief," *New York Times*, August 12, 1991, p. A3.

[172] Jane Perlez, "Ethiopia Troops Battle to Survive Misery of Peace," *New York Times*, July 22, 1991 p. A1; and "Fears for the Future," *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 28, no. 7 (July 1-31,1991), pp. 10210C-10211A.

EPLF also sought to portray its *de facto* independence long before any referendum could take place. The Eritrean leadership declined proposals to discuss famine relief with France and the UN World Food Program, and refused offers by the Italian government to send in relief supplies, as a means of demonstrating their independent control over their territory.[173]

There was, then, no continuation of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea because there was a belief that a war with the EPLF would drain valuable resources from Ethiopia and, in any event, almost certainly could not be won. Dawit Yohannes noted that Ethiopia faced two choices: continued war or a referendum; he concluded, "they chose a referendum."[174] Prime Minister Meles Zenawi also acknowledged that Ethiopia had few options; Ethiopia lost the war, he argued, and independence was the price to be paid.[175] Alternatively, allowing Eritrean secession ensured that the EPLF would do nothing to challenge the EPRDF's hold on power. On the contrary, close relations between the two might even strengthen it. Eritrea's stake in a peaceful Ethiopia was obvious and a number of interested observers claim that the EPLF has had an important (if sometimes unspecified) role in insuring that the EPRDF remains in power in Addis Ababa.[176] The EPRDF apparently also believed that

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[173] U.S. Charge d'Affaires, Robert Houdek stated that he was "mystified why the Eritreans are snubbing the assistance offered by old friends such as the French and the Italians." Krauss, "2 Major Ethiopian Rebel Groups Appear to Have a Big Falling Out," *New York Times*, June 18 1991. On the other hand, these measures may have been a means by which the EPLF could consolidate its own power. By continuing its emphasis on self-reliance, the EPLF was better able to dismiss outside calls for a multi-party conference (similar to that in Ethiopia) or to link advances on democracy with the delivery of aid.

[174] Jane Perlez, "Eritreans Vote on Independence," *New York Times*, July 5, 1991, p. A3.

[175] "Africa's New State," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 34, no. 9 (1993).

[176] Isayas Afewerki noted, "We want to see stability prevail in Ethiopia. We don't want to see the economy damaged -- we would be affected by negative developments. If we can help the Ethiopians to relieve some of the burdens, we will." Michael Binyon, "Eritrea Seeks Amicable Divorce from Ethiopia," *Times*, June 5, 1991. p. 12.

while not strong enough to contest EPLF ambitions, with EPLF-backing they were strong enough to suppress inevitable dissatisfaction among Ethiopians who demanded the maintenance of Ethiopia's territorial integrity.

The example of Eritrea represents an interesting perspective to the argument in chapter one. In this case, the presence of two actors which were approximately equal in terms of manpower led to peace rather than violent conflict. Moreover, while there was a governing agreement between the EPRDF and the EPLF (the June 1991 agreement trading referendum for use of port facilities), it had less to do with power-*sharing* and more to do with *total* devolution of power. One must assume that the EPLF's close relationship with the EPRDF and its precursor, the TPLF, had a role in bringing about this more amicable relationship. But the decision to cut its losses and allow secession also demonstrated the EPRDF's respect for power; EPRDF forces would be too preoccupied with a number of other smaller liberation fronts pressing their respective claims to have to deal with the EPLF. Moreover, given that Eritrean liberation fronts had engaged two successive Ethiopian governments in civil war for 30 years, it was also a recognition of the costs of engaging any superior force.

The Derg, the Amhara and the AAPO

Since the fall of the Derg some of the most embittered rhetoric has come from Amharas who vehemently disagree with the EPRDF approach and who believe they have been excluded from a political process over which they had long exercised control. While never condoning the actions of Mengistu, many Amhara resent that his actions turned them into a vanquished

political force and allowed Tigrayans the opportunity to take charge of the country.

The EPRDF saw a potential threat posed by the members of the old regime and concerns of a possible counter offensive remained for some weeks after the May overthrow of the Derg.[177] Immediately after securing Addis Ababa, the EPRDF began the process of demobilizing the Derg army, the core of which while not exclusively Amhara was no doubt perceived by the EPRDF as the vehicle for continued Amhara rule. On June 14, 1991, two weeks after the EPRDF's takeover of Addis Ababa, the Commission for Members of the Ex-Armed Forces and Disabled War Veterans was created to manage the demobilization.[178] Between June and December 1991, approximately 452,000 former Derg soldiers were demobilized — a figure which was believed to represent 88 percent of the total army.[179] In its place, EPRDF troops became the "provisional" national army in charge of the country's security.[180] With the Derg army gone, and no other liberation front close to the EPRDF's 120,000 battle-hardened and committed fighters, the distribution of power was now in favour of the EPRDF.

During the early stages of the transition, however, former members of the Derg had

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[177] InterAfrica Group, "Demobilization and Reintegration," p. 15.

[178] By this time many of the Derg's soldiers had "melted away" into the Ethiopian countryside and promises of an identity card and food were required to bring them back into a series of camps. While the EPRDF claimed that long-term encampment and re-education was required to eliminate security concerns, foreign donors urged the EPRDF to hasten the reintegration of former soldiers into society. InterAfrica Group, "Demobilization and Reintegration," p. 15.

[179] Kees Kingma and Vanessa Sayers, *Demobilization in the Horn of Africa*, Proceedings of the International Resource Group on Disarmament and Security in the Horn of Africa, 4-7 December 1994, Addis Ababa, pp. 6-7.

[180] Included in the "provisional" army were approximately 6000 soldiers from the former army -- a figure below that which donor countries had sought as a means of encouraging national reconciliation. See InterAfrica Group, "Demobilization and Reintegration," p. 8.

continued to see themselves as having a role in a post-Mengistu Ethiopia. Prior to the complete collapse of the Derg army at the end of May 1991, Derg officials could claim that, despite their weakening military strength, it remained viable enough to rule the entire country. Indeed, the man to whom Mengistu handed over power, Lieut-Gen Tesfaye Gebre Kidan, was regarded by some as a relatively nonideological moderate and his Prime Minister, Tesfaye Dinka, reportedly had "a good relationship" with American officials familiar with the area.[181] Moreover, the argument went, Mengistu alone had been responsible for the brutality of the Derg and the war in the north.[182] Once Mengistu had fled, the cancer had been excised and they remained in position to govern the country or enter a coalition without further upheaval.[183] The London conference which might have produced a coalition government, however, never took place since it was precluded by Mengistu's departure and the breakdown of order in the capital. From the perspective of Derg representatives present, the US unjustifiably determined that the remaining government was "outgoing," and

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[181] Clifford Krauss, "Ethiopia Dictator Flees; Officials Seeking U.S. Help," *New York Times*, May 22, 1991, p. A1..

[182] After his departure, many of Mengistu's cadres including his closest advisors claimed they had not acted on their own but had been terrorized by him into carrying out these atrocities. See Peter Biles, "Mengistu's Forgotten Men," *Africa Report* (March-April 1992); and Ryszard Kapuściński, "Startled in the Dark," *Granta 48; "Africa"*(summer, 1994) pp. 206-208.

[183] Indeed, unlike his predecessor, President Tesfaye Gebre Kidan was willing to make any needed concessions to stop the EPRDF advance on the capital, stating, "There will be nothing that we will hold back from doing. We will do everything possible for the noble peace objective." James Shimanuyula, *Times*, May 23, 1991, p. 10. The following day he stated his willingness to set up a transitional government in line with the EPRDF's demands. See David Chazan, "Rebels Press Addis Ababa Defences as Lenin Topples," *Times*, May 24, 1991, p. 11. While the U.S. was certainly not unaware of the Derg's military predicament, Washington apparently also envisioned a coalition government which included remaining members of the Derg. The London conference was seen as the Derg's last opportunity to reach such a settlement. See "US to Give Rebels an Ultimatum at Talks in London," *Times*, May 27, 1991, p. 10. The need to maintain order in the increasingly chaotic capital took precedence, however, and Washington endorsed the takeover by the EPRDF. The façade of a conference did, however, allow the government a cover for its own surrender.

endorsed an EPRDF move into the capital.[184] The American decision to circumvent the Derg from that point on was therefore seen by many Amharas (and at least one foreign observer)[185] as premature, unwarranted and contrary to the democratic and inclusive rhetoric of the United States and the EPRDF.

Indeed, Ethiopia's larger Amhara population was not without grievances of its own. Mengistu had committed atrocities not against any one ethnic group but against all Ethiopians including Amharas. Therefore, some argued, not only were Amharas unaccountable for his actions, but they, like other ethnic groups, had also been recipients of Mengistu's brutality.[186] While the EPRDF had mobilized a small group of Amharas to fight the Derg, no other broad-based Amhara group had emerged during the Mengistu years. As one UN official noted in an interview, there has never been an *Amhara* liberation front because Amharas have never felt the need to liberate themselves from anything.[187] Instead, "as cultural bearers of the 'Greater Ethiopian tradition,' and ethnically dominant in the towers of power during the previous two regimes [and longer]," the Amhara symbolized "the

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[184] There were differing views on whether Derg officials should accept the EPRDF entering the capital. According to the Assistant Secretary of State, Herman Cohen, on May 27 the acting president, Tesfaye Gebre Kidan, had "told us the Ethiopian army had virtually disintegrated" and intended to broadcast an appeal to the city's residents "to accept the EPRDF when they entered the capital." See statement on 18 June 1991, cited in Vaughan, p. 33. The Ethiopian Prime Minister Tefaye Dinka, on the other hand, said his government would have nothing to do with the talks unless U.S. permission to enter the capital was revoked, stating "This step of inviting the [EPRDF] to go into Addis Ababa is the wrong move." Sam Kiley and Michael Binyon, "Ethiopia Order to Surrender Provokes a Coup Attempt," *Times*, May 28, 1991, p. 1..

[185] See "An Opportunity Lost in Ethiopia," Letter to the editor by Professor James Pickett, *Times*, May 31, 1991, p. 19; and Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, p. 377.

[186] A point emphasized in discussions with Professor Maimire Mennasemay at McGill University.

[187] Confidential interview with the author, April 23, 1996.

system of political and ethnic dominance that the TPLF rebelled against."[188]

At issue, however, was not only a struggle for power between Amharas and Tigrayans. The EPRDF vision was very much at odds with what was acceptable to most Amhara elites. The EPRDF's "ethnic strategy" and its willingness to allow the independence of Eritrea verged on the intolerable for many Amharas. In pursuing these objectives, then, the EPRDF lost the support of one of Ethiopia's most politically significant ethnic groups and one that saw itself as the guardian of Ethiopia's territorial integrity.

Having been at the centre of political power for so long, however, the Amhara have had relatively few means by which they could press their claims in the post-Mengistu era. Aside from the exclusion of the Derg's representatives in London, neither COEDF nor the WPE, organizations with significant Amhara representation, were invited to the July 1991 Conference. Nor was there a specifically Amhara-based, non-EPRDF organization included in the subsequent Council of Representatives (even the EPDM became the explicitly Amhara-based ANDM only in 1994). In February 1992, Professor Asrat Woldeyes founded the All-Amhara People's Organization, the first exclusively Amhara, non-EPRDF organization to emerge. It is difficult, however, to ascertain the extent to which Amhara political aspirations would be satisfied with AAPO representation in the federal or regional parliaments since they disagree with so much of the EPRDF platform. Moreover, for much of the time since the AAPO's formation most of its leadership, including Professor Asrat, have been imprisoned by the EPRDF and, as the Johnston-hosted negotiations demonstrated, the AAPO has been unable or unwilling to take any actions without them.

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[188] Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 35.

Since then the strength of the AAPO has been uncertain. The National Election Board claimed that the AAPO was encouraged to participate in the 1995 elections but that a failure to gain support from "the grassroots" beyond Addis Ababa forced the AAPO to forgo the elections rather than risk failure.[189] Another diplomat in Addis Ababa noted in an interview that it was difficult to tell if the AAPO has a broad support base or "if they are just a couple of guys with photocopiers."[190] Still others see the Amhara as presenting a future threat to the EPRDF. According to Duffield and Prendergast, the Amhara have "the urban base, the grievances, the money, the external connections, the numbers... and the patience to create a major threat to the government in the next decade."[191] Moreover, frustrated intellectuals, unemployed former soldiers and dismissed civil servants could be the basis on which an armed Amhara movement could emerge.

Oromos and the OLF

The most significant military challenge to the EPRDF during the transitional period came from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The Oromo comprise Ethiopia's single largest ethnic group in terms of population size and geographic distribution. However, these two factors have tended to work against the political aspirations of the OLF since they increase the difficulty of both determining an exclusively Oromo region and in mobilizing all Oromos toward a single political objective. The case of the OLF also demonstrates the greatest

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[189] See comments by National Election Board Chairman, Abbaye Tekle, in Tronvoll and Aadland, p. 39.

[190] Confidential interview with the author, May 9, 1996.

[191] Duffield and Prendergast, p. 11.

dynamic in terms of power-sharing arrangements, the distribution of power, and the levels of violence.

Violence between the EPRDF and OLF peaked in 1992 following the June regional elections. At other times, violence between the OLF and the EPRDF, even if not especially intense, has been constant. According to Leenco Lata, "there wasn't a week that went by without some kind of violence or another eruption between our units."[192] According to another Oromo observer of the OLF, the type of "major civil wars" that occurred during Mengistu's time are not occurring, "but signs of a durable peace are not there" either.[193] Another group, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO) is believed to be responsible for a number of guerilla attacks against EPRDF installations. Its small numbers (assumed to number no more than a few hundred fighters) and its unstable relationship with the OLF has meant the IFLO is more of a nuisance, albeit a violent one, to the EPRDF.

While all observers and political actors acknowledge their unpreparedness for the rapid collapse of the Derg in 1991, perhaps the least prepared for such an outcome was the OLF.[194] During the 1970s and 1980s, while the TPLF had been eliminating rivals, the OLF had suffered a series of setbacks in their struggle with the Derg and with other regional rivals. The number of fighters in the OLF at the time of the Derg's collapse was a relatively

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[192] Leenco Lata interview.

[193] Merera Gudina interview.

[194] In his interview with the author, Leenco Lata noted, "My personal observation was that nobody was really prepared for the sudden collapse of the Mengistu government. The most prepared perhaps to take all the governing responsibility was the EPLF. They had the stakes in place -- had been functioning in the Sahel for many many years. So moving into Asmara and to start administering Eritrea, which is smaller also, posed no problem for the EPLF. The TPLF was the next better prepared but even they were not prepared for to take over a country as large as Ethiopia. ... The EPLF was the most prepared. The TPLF next, better prepared. The group that was perhaps least prepared was the OLF."

small 5000-7000. Moreover, the perception among some observers was that the OLF had not been "pulling their weight" in the fight against the Derg. Despite this view, however, EPLF leader, Meles Zenawi, had insisted that the Oromos be given proper representation in any transitional government and be included with the EPRDF and the EPLF in discussions leading to a transitional charter. As with previous regimes, the EPRDF leadership recognized that the Oromo were too large a group to risk leaving out of any power-sharing agreement given their population and wide geographic distribution.[195]

Even more significant, the OLF agreed with the EPRDF on much of its political programme. While the OLF's main political objective during the Derg was the creation of an independent Oromo state,[196] the OLF was prepared to accept co-existence within a united state provided sufficient guarantees could be put in place to assure the right to self-determination.[197] Indeed, the Charter was devised to capture the support of the Oromo who had long felt oppressed by centralizing Amhara-dominated regimes, and who would settle for a weak political centre coupled with Oromo sovereignty. The OLF claims that the

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[195] Clapham, p. 216.

[196] Some Oromos claim that it is unrealistic for Oromo nationalists to seek a separate state given their wide dispersal across Ethiopia and the fact that they share many cultural attributes with other Ethiopians. Oromos have also frequently intermarried with non-Oromo Ethiopians. *Ethiopia: Seven Days Update*, vol. 2, no. 78 (September 4, 1995). Other Oromos disagree. A former OLF representative in the TGE, Tsegaye Yaie, sees the issue as a colonial one with Oromos having being "forcefully incorporated into the Ethiopian empire." Yaie argues that the "Abyssinians have lived without Oromos before the [conquering] of Oromia and I don't see why they can't do it now... The British empire [has] managed to live after the collapse of its empire [and] so have all the other empires including the last to collapse, the Soviet empire." Interview, December 16, 1995, and subsequent correspondence with the author.

[197] Vaughan, p. 17.

Charter was as much a creation of the OLF as it was of the EPRDF.[198] It was on these terms that the possibility of a cooperative relationship between the two liberation fronts existed. Leenco Lata notes that the opportunity to elect Oromo representatives, even if not specifically associated with the OLF, became their central objective.[199]

The outcome of the July conference was that, together, the OLF and OPDO provided Ethiopia's Oromo population with a total of 22 seats in the Council of Representatives.[200] The OLF was given, after the EPRDF, the second largest group of seats in the Council and the largest number for any single ethnically-based party. More importantly, however, power was being devolved to an Oromo state which the OLF no doubt believed it would easily capture in subsequent regional elections. On this basis, Leenco states,

> So there was a power-sharing arrangement. In the Council of Representatives, twelve seats for the OLF, they [the EPRDF] had about thirty-two, and then the other groups were — you know those allocations. This was according to agreements. And then the ministerial posts, we also discussed similarly and we agreed. To us all those were secondary — all that was not as important as A) a definition of regional power for the Oromo region and [B], the election of a genuinely representative administration for that region. This was the bottom line for us.[201]

Both sides now acknowledge, however, that relations between the OLF and the EPRDF remained fragile. The OLF leadership resented its status as the "junior partner" in

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[198] In an interview, Leenco Lata took credit for the Transitional Charter's creation. *I.S.*: "So the charter was a document you were satisfied with?" *Leenco*: "It was our working paper that became the charter. *I.S.*: And did you feel that you had had a role in creating the charter?" *Leenco*: "Yes. It was our brainchild." *I.S.*: "Collectively, or your OLF brainchild?" *Leenco*: "Collectively." Interview with the author.

[199] Leenco Lata interview.

[200] Oromo representation in the Transitional Council increases to 27 seats if one also includes the United Oromo People's Liberation Front and the Oromo Abo Liberation Movement each of which received one seat, and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia which received three seats.

[201] Leenco Lata interview.

the coalition government and had reservations about EPRDF or OPDO interference in the proposed Oromo region. But there is no shortage of critics, both within and without the EPRDF, who point out shortcomings in how the OLF handled events in subsequent months. One observer noted that the creation of the OPDO challenged the OLF's conviction that they alone had the right to lead and represent Ethiopia's Oromo people.[202] EPRDF officials claim that the OLF had never been interested in the 1992 elections and that their intention all along had been to withdraw from the transitional government and start a civil war.[203] Another observer notes that, once on board, the OLF had begun "doing its own thing" and "forgot" that it was the TPLF that was responsible for giving it the "lift to a position of power."[204] Despite having achieved power on the coat-tails of the EPRDF, the OLF was too proud to have to toe the EPRDF line; the OLF, then, "immediately reversed their cooperative attitude."[205]

The OLF's view, however, is that it was the EPRDF which was not satisfied with the OLF's presence in the transitional government. Moreover, it was the EPRDF which initiated violence between the OLF and the EPRDF early on in the power-sharing arrangement. Leenco Lata notes,

> ...When the [1991 July] conference was still in session, before even the delegates went away, the first incident took place. From then until we parted almost a year later there was never a peaceful week. I do believe, to be fair, there were incidents in which our own units took, say, actions against vulnerable EPRDF positions. There

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[202] Lyons, p. 126.

[203] Dawit Yohannes interview.

[204] Merera Gudina interview.

[205] Dawit Yohannes interview.

> may be some, but overall the EPRDF had one thing, one interest: to keep us busy. And so they kept us busy with engaging us here; before you'll resolve that, engaging us [there].[206]

Despite the continuing skirmishes between the OLF and the EPRDF, the OLF remained in the transitional government "to give the process a chance" before the 1992 elections. For the OLF, the June 1992 election,

> was the key election. All subsequent elections were useless as far as I am concerned. That was the first test, the first indication of the direction that the country was taking. It clearly indicated that we are starting a process in which one kind of domination was being replaced by a new one. But had that election gone relatively fairly I believe the question of independence would have died a natural death.[207]

By this time, OLF troop strength was estimated to have grown from 5000[208] at the time of the Derg's downfall to approximately 20,000.[209] Other estimates have set the number of OLF fighters at this time as high as 50,000, attributable to the OLF's absorption of former Derg soldiers (since many of the Derg's troops were Oromo). The maintenance of a recognized OLF-based army became a sticking point in subsequent negotiations. For the EPRDF, allowing the OLF to maintain its own army, let alone an army the size of which threatened the EPRDF itself was, in the words of one diplomat, a "nonstarter." For the OLF, however, maintaining their army of guerilla fighters was justifiable on the grounds that Oromos needed to guard against their being subjugated once again into a state governed by northerners. Indeed, Oromos, as with other groups, saw the EPRDF as primarily a Tigrayan

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[206] Leenco Lata interview.

[207] Leenco Lata interview.

[208] One of the EPLF's military leaders involved in training OLF fighters claimed that the OLF had no more than 5000 fighters at the time of the Derg's downfall. Stockwell interview, February 19, 1997.

[209] "Ethiopia: Power Struggles and the Ethnic Weapon," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 33, no. 9 (1992).

army which would ensure that northern interests were being served. Leenco Lata declared, "If the Tigrayans have an army, we are entitled to have an army — to be fair." According to one official involved in on-going negotiations in 1992 between the EPRDF and the OLF, it was the OLF's insistence on maintaining its own army — and not EPRDF harassment of OLF candidates or dissatisfaction with the Charter *per se* — that led to the breakdown in relations between the two fronts and the OLF's subsequent withdrawal from the government.[210]

The OLF maintains that following its withdrawal the EPRDF initiated a military challenge to the OLF. Leenco Lata states,

> The government drew up a plan of eliminating the OLF in six months. And they applied the same strategy that worked for them when they were fighting the government. Command posts for neutraliz[ing] the command structure by either killing or detaining people who have command responsibilities. In a way they did that. Within that six months they did that and they said its over.[211]

Rhetoric between the OLF and the EPRDF escalated into violence. The OLF spokesman in London, Dima Noggo, declared that "the EPRDF is out to get us. ... We will engage in battles and bloodshed."[212] In response to the OLF's repudiation of encampment accords negotiated between them in April, Meles Zenawi announced a general mobilization of the armed forces — an act which the OLF, in turn, declared was tantamount to a declaration of war. When fighting began in earnest in July 1992, the OLF was driven from its stronghold in Dembidolo and swiftly defeated. An OLF force of 22,200 was surrounded and subsequently held in

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[210] Stockwell interview, January 20, 1996.

[211] Leenco Lata interview.

[212] Cameron McWhirter and Gur Melamede, "The Ethnicity Factor," *Africa Report* (September-October 1992), p. 31.

detention.[213] One observer remarked that the "brief" conflict between EPRDF forces and the OLF "demonstrated that behind the EPRDF's political strategy of ethnic affiliates and regional elections was an experienced and battle-hardened military that could act decisively when necessary."[214] Between July 1992 and 1994 the OLF army was "totally demobilized" and released. Subsequently, the military threat posed by the OLF was reduced significantly. Skirmishes between Oromo rebels and EPRDF troops, however, continued.

The EPRDF claimed that Ethiopia's Oromo population continued to be represented by the EPRDF-affiliate, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization. Indeed, the OPDO adopted many of the symbols used by the OLF and drafted a political platform similar to that of the OLF in an effort to marginalise the OLF and to "capture Oromo imagination and represent Oromo nationalism."[215] But both critics and supporters acknowledge that the OLF continues to have a substantial following and would have won the Oromo region and a substantial number of seats in the federal parliament had they contested the 1995 elections. One observer claims this support comes almost despite itself. "The problem," he argues, "is not arms or resources but because the leadership could not lead — no vision, no commitment, no direction." It has "all the qualities of bad leadership, and none of the qualities of good leadership." Despite this, he argues, it continues to have a mass following.[216] From the perspective of another anonymous observer, the phrase "OPDO by

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[213] Kingma and Sayers, p. 6.

[214] Lyons, p. 128.

[215] Merera Gudina interview.

[216] Merera Gudina interview.

day, OLF by night" is a reality for many Oromos. The OLF remains very much the "home team" but if one wants a job or other form of personal security, one's public loyalty had better be directed towards the OPDO.[217] The EPRDF, for its part, asserts that Ethiopians are free to support the OLF. While the OLF was outlawed after the conflict of 1992, EPRDF officials now claim they are entitled to contest elections and to appeal to the Ethiopian justice system to ensure this right is protected. The obstacle is that the OLF refuses to recognize the government and has maintained a commitment to armed struggle ever since.

The case of the OLF suggests that even when genuine power-sharing agreements can be achieved, they are often difficult arrangements with which to live. The Oromos justifiably saw themselves as having a rightful place in any governing agreement given their demographic size. The EPRDF, believing they were responsible for the Derg's overthrow, were no doubt reluctant to concede power to the OLF commensurate with the Oromo population — especially given the OLF's secessionist aspirations and its questionable leadership qualities. As the military power of the OLF increased, the durability of the agreement was further jeopardized and the likelihood of conflict increased. The OLF's military strength, however, never equalled that of the EPRDF and the OLF was quickly overwhelmed by EPRDF military power. Since that time of brief but intense conflict, the OLF has remained outside the political conflict and the EPRDF has continued its attempts to satisfy Oromo needs through the same limited power-sharing arrangements as with Ethiopia's other ethnic groups.

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[217] Confidential interview, May 8 1996.

The ONLF and Somali-based Organizations in the Somali Region

While Ethiopia's Somali population is relatively small, the region is worth considering in depth given that intermittent violence has been a feature of the region throughout the transitional period. The Somali region has been unique, however, insofar as much of the violence that has occurred has been inter-clan rather than between Somalis and the EPRDF. This is attributable to at least two factors: First, in the Somali region, as with several other so-called "frontier" regions, there has been a relatively limited government presence. Consequently, and this is the second explanation, no where else in Ethiopia is a single ethnic group as fractured as in the Somali region as clans have vied over who will dominate the region. This fracturing, in turn, has also meant that there has been considerable ambivalence towards Ethiopian policies in the region. From the time of the Somali invasion of the Ogaden region in 1977, Ethiopian Somalis have shown varying degrees of resistence and acceptance of the fact that they are living in an Ethiopian administered territory.[218]

Following the collapse of the Derg, four groups sent representatives to the July conference. Included among those four were the secessionist Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) the latter of which had encouraged the Somali government to invade the Ogaden in 1977.[219] When the 87-seat Council of Representatives was formed, Somalis were given four seats, distributed among the ONLF, the WSLF, and two other parties, the Issa and Gadabuursi People's Movement

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[218] Maria Brons, Martin Doornbos, M.A. Mohamed Sahih, "The Somali in Ethiopia: The Quest for Alternative Futures," (unpublished paper), p. 13.

[219] The other two Somali-based groups represented at the July conference included the Issa and Gadbuursi People's Movement (IGPM) and the Oromo Abbo Liberation Front (OALF, formerly the Somali Abo Liberation Front or SALF).

(IGPM) and the Horyal Democratic Front. Ethiopian Somalis also had the benefit of a single cabinet portfolio held by Dr. Abdul Mejid Hussein who was minister for External Economic Cooperation. A year later in the regional elections, the ONLF won the largest number of seats in the 111-seat assembly, with the remaining seats divided among seven other parties.

Unlike other regions, the EPRDF had not created its own satellite party, thus allowing genuine opposition-oriented parties to achieve power more easily. More significantly, many Somali parties stayed in the political process as established by the EPRDF. Evidently, the change in power in Addis Ababa and the apparently genuine promises of regional autonomy were worth consideration — particularly given the declining state of affairs in neighbouring Somalia. Outside observers were cautiously optimistic about this turn of events. In their report, "The Somali in Ethiopia: the Quest for Alternative Futures," Maria Brons et al. note,

> The shift-over from Somali nationalist movements to political organizations operating within the structures of the Ethiopian state represents a fundamental transformation. The majority of the Ethiopian-Somali political organizations accepts the provisions of the National Charter proposed by the Transitional Government and therefore no longer considers the Ethiopian state colonial. Some of these political groups believe that an Ethiopian government has offered its ethnic Somali an opportunity to exercise their rights in a multi-ethnic pluralistic society. Whether that in fact is the case remains to be tested more fully.[220]

In fact, not all parties remained satisfied despite the achievement of political power. After winning the majority of votes in the regional elections, the ONLF returned to the question of secession. Indeed, the ONLF's secessionist ambitions were well supported by Ogadenis who comprised nearly half the population in Region 5.

But the Ogadenis were increasingly isolated from other Somali clans of the region.

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[220] Brons, et al., p. 22.

The inability to incorporate other clans into the movement had the effect of limiting the drive to secession exclusively to the Ogadeni clan. Non-Ogadenis believed that the leaders calling for secession had often been absent from the region for years and were only now returning to satisfy their own political ambitions.[221] Moreover, the name proposed for this future state, "Ogadenia", suggested a country which would be an Ogadeni state rather than one which accommodated other Somali peoples. The tendency to perceive Ogadenis as aggressively pursuing their own political interests at the expense of other Somalis generated a collective resentment among the smaller clans and stimulated efforts to counter-balance Ogadeni political power.[222]

Other incentives to organize a non-Ogadeni alternative rested on the Region's political instability and financial incompetence of the leadership of which the ONLF was at the centre. During the four year life of the TGE, Region 5 had no fewer than three presidents. One UN observer noted that it was "not possible to identify a single, coherent ONLF structure or platform."[223] Political decision making was either paralysed by inter-clan rivalry or resented because decisions were made without consulting non-Ogadeni representatives. Much of the area lacked effective administration and much of the region's budget remained unspent because of poor organization and "institutional incoherence."[224]

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[221] Brons, et al., p. 21.

[222] United Nations - Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia (UN-EUE), *Peace and Unity Conference of the Somali Nation of Region 5*, Mission report of the United Nations-Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia to Qabri Dahar, 14-16 February 1995, p. 3.

[223] UN-EUE, *Update on Situation in Region 5*, Mission report of the United Nations-Emergency Unit for Ethiopia to Region 5, 3-9 April 1995, p. 2.

[224] Brons, et al., p. 22.

The creation of the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL) in February 1994 was at once seen as a means to overcome administrative incompetence and to limit political domination of the region by the Ogadenis.[225] The organization was also a means by which the EPRDF could gain a long-sought regional ally. The ESDL grouped most of the region's non-Ogadeni clans into a single political unit on the platform of Somali *unity* — a virtuous term that the ethnically exclusive ONLF was unable to adopt for itself. Moreover, League supporters argued that while the Ogadenis were the largest single clan group in the region they still constituted less than one-half of the region's total population and, therefore, could not claim to represent Somali interests. On the other hand, supporters believed that the parties which comprised the ESDL enjoyed an absolute majority of support among Somalis. While the ESDL was denounced by the ONLF as an EPRDF collaborator, League supporters claimed that, on the contrary, only by putting clan differences aside and embracing Somali unity could the common Somali interests be advanced vis-a-vis Ethiopia's other ethnic groups and parties.[226]

While the EPRDF welcomed the new organization and likely had a role in its creation, there is also evidence that the ESDL enjoyed genuine support amongst Ethiopian Somalis. One report noted the satisfaction of the parties comprising the new party, stating,

> They believe that they are relatively well-off under the ESDL administration in terms of power sharing and distribution of political resources. This is particularly true in the case of small groups that were politically marginalised under previous ONLF

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[225] The ESDL emerged from an umbrella organization called the Committee for the Unity of the Ethiopian-Somali (CUES) formed in April 1993 on the basis of their willingness to work within the principles of the Transitional Charter and within the make up of the Ethiopian state. See Brons et al., p. 18.

[226] UN-EUE, *Update on Situation in Region 5*, Report on the UN-EUE mission to Region 5, 3-5 April 1995.

> administrations. For example, the Rer Bare in Kallafo were not represented in the past administrations, but now have two representatives in the regional council — both of whom are executive members of the council.[227]

The emergence of the ESDL ended ONLF domination of the regional administration. Moreover, the ESDL's emergence, coming only months after an ONLF declaration calling for an independent Ogadenia, was an effort to head off the Region's secession from Ethiopia. However, a violent clash between EPRDF troops and ONLF guerilla fighters was not avoided. As had occurred with the OLF in the Oromo region, the EPRDF overwhelmed Ogadeni guerillas in armed clashes and by mid-1994 had effectively eliminated their military capability.

Following its military defeat, the ONLF had a dramatic political about-face. On February 16, 1995, the ONLF issued a statement renouncing armed struggle in favour of "peaceful political struggle" and applauding the "recently ratified Ethiopian Democratic Constitution." Moreover, the ONLF put forward a request to the Political Parties Registration Board to officially recognize the ONLF so that it could participate in the May 1995 elections. This "astonishing breakthrough" was achieved after a series of conditional offers were made between the ONLF and the EPRDF in the preceding months.[228] While the 1995 elections were delayed in the Somali region, the ONLF did participate and won seats in the federal Council of People's Representatives, but not to the regional parliament where

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[227] Ahmed Yusuf Farah, *Permanent Agricultural Settlements Along the Webi Shabelle River in Gode Zone of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State*, Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, November 1995, p. 6.

[228] According to ONLF leaders, conditions outlined by the EPRDF included the encampment and registration of ONLF weapons and soldiers, and a statement by the ONLF declaring themselves to be Ethiopian. See UN-EUE, *Peace and Unity Conference of the Somali Nation of Region 5*, Report on the mission to Qabri Dahar, 14-16 February 1995, p. 4.

the ESDL won the largest number of seats.

On the election results, one UN observer in the field noted that the ESDL had been able to capitalize on the "disappointment with mismanagement and malpractice of previous [ONLF] administrations." The report continues,

> There is a widespread perception that the ESDL is determined to uproot corruption and establish an effective administration that serves the interests and well-being of the public. If the ESDL fails to capitalize on this popular support or does not carry out expected administrative reform and economic benefits, it will certainly lose the wider support and appeal it currently enjoys in this zone and throughout the region.[229]

The report also claims that there were signs of support for the ESDL even among the Ogadeni:

> Among the Ogadenis there has been a significant shift of support from the ONLF to the ESDL in Gode zone. This is based on the perception that Ogadeni clansmen will be better off under ESDL than the presently divided ONLF. Therefore, the Tolomogge Ogadeni clan in the Gode district supports the ESDL.[230]

An explanation for this surprising willingness to participate in Ethiopia's political process may be that, unlike other regions of Ethiopia where the government is ubiquitous, in the eastern regions the EPRDF has done less to cause offense to Somali sensibilities. On the contrary, in some areas of the region, government has been virtually nonexistent.[231] Low

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[229] Ahmed Yusuf Farah, p. 7.

[230] Ahmed Yusuf Farah, p. 7.

[231] UN-EUE consultant, Matt Bryden, notes that "East of Gaashamo, where there is a small military garrison and a few public buildings, there is virtually no sign of administration, and communities rely upon traditional authority structures for management of their affairs." "Beyond Jijiga, government authority recedes rapidly into haze, becoming either illusory or in some areas totally non-existent". The inhabitants of the area, "profess little (if any) first hand knowledge of any kind of administration." "Evidence of government in the area visited is limited to isolated EPRDF garrisons at Gaashamo, Wardheer, Geladi and Bokh (reportedly abandoned due to recent insecurity) and to sparse, dilapidated infrastructure. We were informed everywhere by village elders (with the single exception of Marqaan Weyne, where the census was in progress) that they had never seen any sign of an Ethiopian government (implying, improbably, that the area had even been spared the ravages of the Ogaden War)." *Report on Mission to Haud Area, Region 5,*

government visibility is not new and is partly attributable to neglect of the region by previous regimes. Ethiopian indifference, in this case may have been to the government's benefit provided the region's material and economic needs can be satisfied. Indeed, many of the region's elders have welcomed efforts to improve regional infrastructure.[232] Others have noted that when crises did engulf the region (such as droughts in 1972-74, 1985, 1988 and 1990-94), Ethiopia has been able to ensure the delivery of food aid more effectively than the Somali regime during similar crises.[233] The civil war and collapse of the Somali state in 1991 was an indication that Mogadishu was not in position to provide any assistance or guidance of its own — particularly when compared with the relatively stable EPRDF government in Addis Ababa. Finally, Northern Somalia's declaration of independence from the south in May 1991 was an indication that Somalis were no longer defining their future in terms of ethnic identity, but in terms of their colonial past.[234] For Somalis in Region 5, that past has been in Ethiopia.

In many respects, then, Somalis have acquiesced to Addis Ababa by default. Alternatively, the EPRDF's penetration of the region has been at relatively little cost to itself

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Mission report for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, 2-15 November 1994, p. 6.

[232] Bryden notes, "In general we heard that a government presence would be welcomed, especially if it implied benefit to the community in terms of public services." *Report on Mission to Haud Area, Region 5*, 2-15 November 1994, p. 6. Indeed, the TGE was beginning its first "exploratory efforts" to extend influence beyond urban areas".

[233] Brons et al., p. 23.

[234] Brons et al., p. 23.

and with a potentially significant gain.[235] In a 548-seat federal parliament, the number of seats allocated to the Somali region is relatively small and did not threaten the EPRDF's hold on power. The EPRDF is willing to let Somalis take care of themselves. If token representation is the means to penetrate and pacify the region and to maintain Ethiopia's territorial integrity, then all the better.

Nonetheless, until the end of 1995 there were continuing episodes of violence but most of it tended to be of "low intensity" and "sporadic" and "did not represent a major organized campaign."[236] While there were occasional ambushes of EPRDF patrols, the violence was still largely an *intra*-Somali contest over "who the region really belongs to" the ESDL or the Ogadenis. One UN mission observer noted,

> As Ogadeni elders readily admitted to us, their grievances have much less to do with the EPRDF than they do with the ESDL. It is primarily the EPRDF's presumed support for the [L]eague that leads the ONLF to consider the government as an adversary. Only a resolution of the rift between the Ogaden and no[n]-Ogaden communities of the region is likely to bring long-term peace and stability.[237]

Indeed, while Ogadeni-perpetrated violence has been persistent, the absence of any visible means of external support suggests that violence is likely to remain limited into the future.

Finally, it was not clear that political accommodation of violent groups — in the form of representation in Addis Ababa — would lead to a reduction of this violence. This was true for several reasons. First, the border between Ethiopia and Somalia is often described

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[235] Particularly given the persistent, if as yet unsubstantiated, claims that there may be oil and gas in the Ogaden region. See Brons, et al., p. 23.

[236] Matt Bryden. Interview with the author, May 31, 1996.

[237] UN-EUE, *Update on Situation in Region 5*, Report on the UN- EUE Mission to Region 5, 3-9 April 1995, p. 4.

by UN field workers as merely "notional." Nomads and guerillas alike are able to move back and forth across the border. Consequently, much of the regions's conflict has had to do with events in neighbouring Somalia rather than Ethiopia. A second explanation is that a relatively small Islamic group, *Al-Ittihad*, was often assumed to be behind much of the violence in the Somali region of Ethiopia. The movement rarely accepted responsibility for violent incidents it was suspected of committing and few people appear to have first hand knowledge of the organization. The group is also likely responsible for much of the intra-Somali fighting that has characterized the region; *Al-Ittihad* has enemies of its own among Somali groups. Some groups refuse to allow it to operate from their territory, while another group, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (DFSS), engaged *Al-Ittihad* in battle in 1992. While the organization is violent, its leadership apparently discourages the capture of territory claiming that such endeavours will only interfere with its global Islamic cause. One UN report claims that the group is more likely "too weak to face the prospect of a direct confrontation with EPRDF."[238] For our purposes it is worth noting that some of the violence in Region 5 comes from a group whose goals relate more to advancing its religious objectives rather than acquiring a share of power in Addis Ababa or pursuing territorial ambitions.

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[238] Bryden, *Report on Mission to Haud Area, Region 5*, 2-15 November, 1994, pp. 4-5.

IV

CONCLUSIONS

At this point, one is able to draw a number of conclusions concerning the ways in which the distribution of power and power-sharing agreements interacted to produce violent or peaceful outcomes during Ethiopia's transitional period.

The first conclusion is that the distribution of military power remains of central importance in the likelihood of violence in post-Cold War Ethiopia. During the transitional period, the EPRDF was unquestionably the most powerful actor in all respects. The EPRDF relied less on military power resources than the previous Derg administration, preferring instead to rely on other measures to augment its power and to satisfy ethnic aspirations through limited power-sharing arrangements. But the EPRDF did not hesitate to exploit its military preponderance to suppress and eliminate violent challenges to its rule. While Ethiopia was never without violence in some region during the transitional period, the EPRDF effectively reduced the most significant military challenges (specifically the OLF and the ONLF) to sporadic guerilla activity.

A second conclusion is that if power-sharing agreements are difficult to achieve they are even more difficult to sustain afterward. Power-sharing did exist in the early stages of the transition but the arrangement barely lasted a year, and even before the collapse of the formal agreement, there were reports of violent clashes. There is evidence that while the EPRDF had its own interests to nurture and protect, it had sought to implement genuine democratic reforms. Meles Zenawi was willing to debate freely, particularly during the early stages of the transition, and participants in the constituent assembly and other forums

acknowledge that the right of others to debate freely was generally observed. Foreign election observers have also noted that they were given the freedom to travel throughout Ethiopia. Finally, while some journalists have been detained, the streets of Addis Ababa are replete with newspapers. However, more meaningful efforts to include the most significant organizations have not been sustained and within a year of the 1991 July Conference, all the major opposition groups had withdrawn from the government. Either because of EPRDF intimidation and interference or because of the opposition's disunity, lack of policy alternatives or self-destructive tendencies (or some combination of each), the two sides could not contest any subsequent elections together, let alone share power.

Indeed, the fact that this more ideal form of power-sharing did not last cannot be blamed entirely on the government. Effective power-sharing, requires having a coherent and viable group (or an identifiable collection of groups) with which political offices can be shared. Finding unity between disparate members of the opposition, then, is as important as unity between the opposition and the government. Even without the EPRDF's harassment, however, the Ethiopian opposition groups were so divided and disorganized and their respective political platforms so completely incompatible that it was almost unthinkable for an enduring, broad-based power-sharing agreement to have been reached. Moreover, their own intransigence on key issues meant that a power-sharing agreement would have required the EPRDF to essentially forego its own long-held plans for post-Mengistu Ethiopia — something it would not have even considered given the EPRDF's central role in the defeat of the Derg army and its on-going military superiority over the opposition. The failure of the opposition to recognize this fact was almost entirely to its own rather than to the

government's detriment.

Power-sharing, however, could be said to have existed on a more limited level for the remainder of the transitional period. If established liberation fronts such as the OLF were unable or unwilling to make the necessary compromises which might have allowed the partnership to continue, individuals within these organizations or within the ethnic group were lured over to the EPRDF. Indeed, the EPRDF found it was considerably easier to create new, more compliant ethnic parties than to work with the existing opposition. Virtually every TPLF partner in the EPRDF coalition was a breakaway party or an EPRDF creation rather than the liberation front as originally conceived, suggesting that other factors such as access to political power may be as significant as ethnicity in determining political alignments. The risk in this endeavour, however, was that it still left disgruntled and marginalised parties in a position to commit violent acts.

This more limited form of power-sharing does, however, present difficulties for the dissertation's overall argument. Making a definitive statement on whether power-sharing exists is more difficult when members of ethnic groups, rather than the traditional opposition movements themselves, are included in a government. In our discussion of Ethiopia, 1985-1991, it was acknowledged that the regime did include members of certain ethnic minorities. But the Derg's excessive military force ensured that the distinction between government and opposition was clear. The EPRDF, however, was much more effective in incorporating substantial numbers of ethnic minorities into explicitly ethnically-based parties and regional governments. Moreover, the EPRDF frequently drew in disenchanted members of the members of the traditional opposition groups themselves and on occasion even endeared

itself to the peasantry — something the Derg failed to do. Evidently, the distinction between power-sharing and winner-take-all is more slippery than posited in the introductory chapter.

A third conclusion is that for regional or ethnically-based opposition, power-sharing was not always desired as much as devolution of power and control of the ethnic region. With the exception of the Amhara, the demands of Ethiopia's most significant ethnic groups tended towards self-determination rather than power-sharing. The extreme case, of course, is Eritrea which was not interested in any power-sharing agreement and would settle only for political independence. Other groups such as the Oromos and Somalis often framed their grievances in terms of colonial exploitation and thus saw their liberation as their central objective. To the extent that political arrangements satisfied Ethiopia's peoples, the creation of ethnic regions may have gone some way to bring about peace. The Amhara, on the other hand, having long ruled over Ethiopia, sought to maintain Ethiopia's territorial integrity and retake their place as the country's rightful rulers.

Finally, the examination of Ethiopia in both cases of 1985-1991 and 1991-1995 suggest that while the argument is deterministic, actors were also able to make certain choices. In other words, while power balances and power-sharing agreements may have impelled actors towards one particular outcome, there were still several outcomes from which actors could choose. Whether or not there was violence, or the degree of violence, depended in part on choices actors made. In the case of Ethiopia from 1985-1991 it was not until the TPLF went through a lengthy process of consultation (*gim-gima*) that they decided in favour of an advance on the capital. Once this decision was made and the EPRDF resumed engaging a weakening Derg army, violence became extremely intense. Another

such decision is evident in the 1991-1995 case study, but with a different outcome. Here, the EPRDF reversed the course taken by its two predecessors when it made a decision not to challenge the Eritrean rebels on the issue of Eritrean independence. Violence, in this case was avoided. In both cases the argument could be made that the distribution of power pushed their decision one way or another. But it was also conceivable that different choices *could* have been made. Prior to its advance south in February 1991, the TPLF could have decided that the Derg remained too powerful to sacrifice so many additional deaths (particularly given the TPLF already controlled all of Tigray and had already lost so many of its sons and daughters to previous battles with the Derg). Similarly in 1993 the EPRDF could have reneged on its pledge to allow an unprecedented referendum on Eritrea's independence as many urged it to do (especially if it was at the cost of Ethiopia's complete disintegration). Consequently, while domestic power structure might suggest certain outcomes in terms of violence and even suggest logical courses of action, actors in both cases do appear to have exercised a degree of choice.

Chapter 4

The End of the Cold War and the Wars in Somalia, 1985-1991

I

The case of Somalia makes an interesting comparison with Ethiopia. The two cases are similar to the extent that both states were led by dictatorial and often brutal regimes and had close clientelist relationships with both the major superpowers. They are also similar to the extent that the withdrawal of externally-supplied means of support coincided with and even appears to have accelerated the downfall of the two regimes. What distinguishes the two cases most obviously, however, is the dramatically different levels of domestic violence prior to, and in the aftermath of, the collapse of their respective regimes.

During the Cold War era, the Somali president, Siad Barre, proved to be remarkably resilient, surviving several coup attempts, a spectacularly unsuccessful military venture, a foreign invasion of Somali territory, and a near fatal car crash — any one of which on its own could have led to the regime's downfall. Given his extended rule, Siad Barre evidently understood the requirements for keeping himself in power: he successfully adapted Somalia to a limited external aid package and carefully managed to balance his regime across Somalia's delicate and complex clan structure. Yet within this time one can also find the seeds which led to the breakdown of relative political stability and the explosion of violence

which, unlike in Ethiopia, followed the 1991 collapse of the regime and which has persisted with intermittent breaks into 1998. In this chapter, the 1985 to 1991 period will be examined in order to gain an understanding of what accounted for the undoing of this relative stability and what features of this period disposed Somalia to the intractable and violent situation which followed the regime's collapse. In the second Somalia chapter, the period from 1991 to 1995 will be examined to understand how power balances and the difficulties associated with power-sharing undermined the many efforts to end the wars in Somalia.

II

Background[1]

The Nature of Somalia's Clan Politics. At first sight it is ironic that violent conflict would be a consideration in Somalia given its unique situation in Africa. Somalia is one of the few countries which is inhabited, by-and-large, by a single people: virtually all of Somalia's inhabitants are from the same ethnic group, speak the same language and follow the same religion. In fact, a central feature of Somali political culture has been the drive to overcome the only formal divisions which remain and absorb bordering Somali-inhabited territories into the Somali state.[2]

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[1] Space permits only a brief discussion on historical or cultural factors. For further discussion see I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (London: Longman, 1965) and *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (London: Oxford University, 1961); Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University, 1963); Ali Jimale Ahmed ed., *The Invention of Somalia* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea, 1995); and Lee V. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600-1900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1982).

[2] These territories include the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of northern Kenya; the Ogaden of eastern Ethiopia, and Djibouti. Notable is that each point of the white star on the Somali flag represents Somalis from a different region. In addition to the regions stated above, two points of the star refer to Somalis in British

Aside from formal political borders, however, divisions among Somalis are also characterized by clan. Somali society is divided among six main clan families: the Darod, the Hawiye, the Isaaq, the Rahanwein, the Dir and the Digil. Beneath each of these clan-families, lineage systems branch out into a complex array of clans and subclans.

Consequently, both centripetal and centrifugal forces are at work. Somalis are attributed with having a common identity and sense of kinship which extends to all countrymen and beyond, mixed with parochial clan loyalties sometimes associated with previous clashes over scarce traditional resources of water and grazing areas. While loyalty tends to be extended first to one's immediate family, then to one's extended and clan families and ultimately to the nation as a whole, the fluidity of these allegiances means that political organizations and groupings are inherently unstable. "The result," note Laitin and Samatar, "is a society so integrated that its members regard one another as siblings, cousins, and kin, but also so riven with clannish fission and factionalism that political instability is the society's normative characteristic."[3]

In practical terms, this has meant the following: governments and rebel movements alike have sought to include representatives from a broad cross-section of Somali society to ensure their stability. Indeed, immediately after independence in 1960, clan balancing became a standard element in the operation of government, while opposition groups sought to move themselves from clan-based organizations to national organizations by including

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Somaliland and Italian Somalia which were united at the time of independence in 1960.

[3] David Laitin and Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State* (Westview: Boulder, 1987), p. 31.

other clan representatives in their ranks. The failure to consolidate or maintain links across these divisions often led to their downfall. Clans which were left out of government positions were quick to express their sense of alienation.

The most obvious solution to contain factionalism and maintain national unity was to remove even the idea of clan from official Somali discourse. To some extent much of the popularity which was accorded to Siad Barre in the years following his 1969 coup was because he appeared to have successfully suppressed clanism. Laitin and Samatar state that Siad Barre "spoke a language of national unity that transcended kinship" and for the first time in Somalia's history political appointments "were not carefully scrutinized according to clan affiliation. [Instead] merit appeared to be the order of the day."[4] However, even the new brooms of a military dictatorship did not sweep away the need for clan balance and, owing in part to the fact that traditional reliance on pasturalism remained, clanism could not easily be dismissed from the daily lives of the people or in the government. Indeed, in his most recent major study of Somalia, I.M. Lewis shows that "in common with its predecessor's civilian cabinets, the [Somali Revolutionary Council] contained representatives of all the major lineage blocs in the country."

[4] Laitin and Samatar, p. 79.

Composition of Somali Governments by Major Lineage Blocs, 1960-75[5]

	1960	1966	1967	1969	1975
Darod	6	6	6	6	10
Hawiye	4	3	4	5	4
Digil & Rahanwein	2	3	3	2	0
Dir	0	1	1	0	2
Isaaq	2	3	4	5	4
	14	16	18	18	20

* Cabinet ministers only are included here and, after 1969, members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council

Moreover, as the sheen began to wear off the regime, and Somali unity gave way to fragmentation along clan lines, three clans (all from the Darod clan family) appeared with greater prominence in the highest levels of the Somali political structure. This clan coalition was referred to by the acronym MOD: Marehan, for Siad Barre's own clan; Ogadeni, for the clan of Siad Barre's mother; and Dolbahante, the clan of Siad Barre's principal son-in-law and the minister of the National Security Service. Thus, despite official pronouncements to the contrary, clanism remained a central element in political relations in Somalia.

Historical Background of Post-independence Somalia to 1985. Almost simultaneous with political independence came the unification of the colonies of Italian Somalia (in the south) and British Somaliland (in the north). While the two civilian-led governments which followed were reasonably democratic, they were at odds to deal with the challenges that faced the new nation. After nine years of political instability, a coup brought

[5] Table from I.M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea, 1994), p. 166.

Mohamed Siad Barre to power on October 21 1969. Siad Barre was more explicit in his irredentist ambitions than his predecessors and he espoused a doctrine of "scientific socialism" as a means of cementing a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, the only superpower which might allow his foreign policy objectives to be realized. With Soviet assistance, Mogadishu's military capacity multiplied such that, taking advantage of continued political instability in neighbouring Ethiopia, Siad Barre launched a full scale invasion of the Somali-inhabited Ogaden desert in 1977. Moscow abandoned its Somali client and, coming to the rescue of its new Marxist friend in Addis Ababa, assisted in the expulsion of Somali troops from eastern Ethiopia in early 1978.[6]

The defection of a prominent general, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, from the Somali army in 1978 following the failed Ogaden offensive and the subsequent formation of the Majerteen-based[7] Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia (DFSS) marked the first ostensible opposition to the Siad Barre regime. In 1981 another group, the Somali National Movement (SNM), was also organized, based predominantly on the Isaaqs who inhabited the former British Somaliland in northern Somalia. The activities of both these opposition movements during the 1980s tended to be hit-and-run guerrilla tactics against army installations and government buildings. The leadership in Mogadishu responded in turn with security crackdowns and arrests. The exception to this level of activity was in 1982 when

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[6] There are a number of studies which document Somalia's break from the Soviet Union and the early evolution of Somali-American relations. Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984); Steven R. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991); Paul B. Henze, *The Horn of Africa: From War to Peace* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991).

[7] The Majerteen is a clan within the larger Darod clan family — the same clan family as Siad Barre's Marehan clan.

the Ethiopian army, under the banner of the DFSS, invaded and occupied the two border towns of Goldegob and Balembale. While Ethiopian troops continued to hold the two towns, by 1985 the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reported that the level of conflict in Somalia was generally "very low" consisting of only a number of "small attacks" by the SNM in the northern border area, and by the DFSS in central regions. The EIU concluded, "These have continued to keep the army in a state of alert but have caused it little trouble."[8]

In the subsequent period from 1985 to 1991, the subject of the first half of this case study, one can see events operating on two levels. On one level, one sees circumstances changing from an international perspective. Somalia's declining strategic status and the regime's excessive human rights violations against its northern people accelerated the termination of support from the US and its allies. Beneath that one sees another distinguishable, but not entirely separate, series of events; the peeling away of various individuals which had heretofore supported the regime, including representatives of the regime's component clans, thus reducing the regime's territorial reach and its capacity to act against opposition forces. These two processes had the effect of weakening the political centre and creating new opportunities for other groups to compete for political power. A failure of any one of these groups to construct the clan alliances or the military power enjoyed by Siad Barre, however, set the stage for the disastrously violent situation of 1991 and after.

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[8] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 4th quarter, 1985. One Isaaq resident of Mogadishu noted how Siad Barre referred to the SNM as the "four thieves" to downplay their size and their political and military significance. Author's interview with former Mogadishu resident, Abdi Rashid Mohamed, June 13, 1997.

III

The Rise and Fall of Somalia as a Cold War Client State

The Soviet Period. Somalia had received modest amounts of Soviet military aid during the 1960s. This level of assistance was dramatically expanded, however, following Siad Barre's 1969 coup and his embrace of "scientific socialism" so that its total manpower ranked Somalia among the top five in Africa.[9] On a per capita basis the size of the Somali army had increased to five times that of Ethiopia and, on an absolute basis, four times that of Kenya. Moreover, with its much superior equipment — including 200 tanks, 300 armoured cars and personnel carriers, 200 heavy guns and SAM missiles, 60 MiG fighters and a squadron of Ilyushin light bombers — Somalia could claim to have the finest military force in sub-Saharan black Africa.[10] In addition, even as late as 1977 (prior to Somalia's invasion of the Ogaden) Moscow maintained 4000 military advisors in Somalia. [11] Somalia's military growth was far beyond that which could be financed by its own domestic sources.[12] Consequently, since none of its neighbours posed a threat to Somalia and, at the time, Somalia was without significant internal security problems of its own, Moscow's willingness to match Mogadishu's demands — fully aware of its irredentist ambitions — can only be

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[9] The four African states with larger numbers of soldiers included Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zaire and Uganda. See Lewis, p. 174, footnote 42.

[10] Lewis, p. 174, footnote 42. See also B. Crozier, *The Soviet Presence in Somalia*, Conflict Studies, No. 54 (February 1975). Interestingly, but certainly not coincidentally, the claim of the finest armed forces in Africa was also attributed by Henze to Ethiopia in the 1960s. See Paul B. Henze, "Getting a Grip on the Horn: The Emergence of the Soviet Presence and Future Prospects," in *The Pattern of Soviet Conduct in the Third World*, Walter Laqueur, ed., pp. 150-185, (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 156.

[11] Henze (1991), p. 143.

[12] Henze (1991), p. 110.

explained by its broader strategic need to secure a client state in the Horn of Africa.[13]

The Beginning of Somalia's Role as an American Client. Soviet generosity toward Mogadishu was not to last, however, and its American replacement, while still charitable, was not to prove as magnanimous. At the time of the Ogaden War, Somalia was by far the most militarized state in the Horn of Africa, a distinction which it continued to hold for some years after the war's conclusion.[14] Nonetheless a turning point had come in 1977 when the regime in Addis Ababa persuaded Moscow to come to its rescue, leaving Mogadishu, having just breached a sacred African trust by invading Ethiopia's Ogaden desert, to the Americans. Soviet arms had meant that Somalia was powerful enough to easily overwhelm Ethiopian defenses during the invasion of the Ogaden in 1977, yet dependent enough that they were routed once the Soviet Union had switched sides. Still wanting to retain a foothold in the Horn of Africa, President Jimmy Carter had, prior to the invasion, assured Mogadishu that American support would be forthcoming.[15]

Clearly the motivation for Washington's engaging Mogadishu was only to secure Somalia as a Cold War client state. With an eye to the increasing Soviet influence in the Horn, Brzezinski states:

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[13] Henze (1983), p. 154.

[14] This figure is calculated in terms of armed forces per 1000 inhabitants. After 1977 Somalia's level of militarization was rivaled only by the Soviet Union's new client, Ethiopia. See Henze, (1991), pp. 105-106. Another notable legacy of the Soviet relationship was the existing supply of AK-47s and other military weaponry of Soviet origin, much of which was still in evidence after the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991 (although some of the Soviet-origin weaponry was undoubtedly that provided by Libya in the late 1980s).

[15] On April 6 1977, Carter allegedly instructed Vice President Walter Mondale "to tell Cy [Secretary of State Cyrus Vance] and Zbig [National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski] that I want them to move in every possible way to get Somalia to be our friend." "We're going to lose Africa," the President later stated to Presidential Assistant Frank Moore, "if we don't do something to help those poorer countries." Quoted in Stanley Cloud, "With Jimmy from Dawn to Midnight," *Time*, April 18, 1977, p. 15.

> In my view the situation between the Ethiopians and the Somalis was more than a border conflict. Coupled with the expansion of Soviet influence and military presence in South Yemen, it posed a potentially grave threat to our position in the Middle East, notably in the Arabian peninsula. It represented a serious setback in our attempts to develop with the Soviets some rules of the game in dealing with turbulence in the Third World. The Soviets had earlier succeeded in sustaining, through the Cubans, their preferred solution in Angola, and they now seemed embarked on a repetition in a region in close proximity to our most sensitive interests[16]

On July 26 1977, the Carter administration announced that it was "ready to join other governments in providing military assistance for Somalia to reduce its long standing reliance on the Soviet Union." Britain and France followed suit with similar offers. The agreement also stipulated, however, that "American arms would be earmarked for the defense of Somalia's present territory and could not be used by Somali guerillas fighting to detach the Ogaden from Ethiopia."[17] Evidently, while the United States was reluctant to be perceived underwriting any *foreign* military adventurism by Siad Barre, it continued to see a need to maintain a stake in the Horn of Africa as part of a larger global competition with the Soviet Union.[18] Consequently, Washington had committed itself to Somalia's defense against any future meddling from Soviet-backed Ethiopia.

At the time of the Ogaden War, Washington could afford to offer a limited and conditional commitment to Mogadishu because it had received assurances from Addis Ababa

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[16] Zbigniew Brzezinski,, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), p. 178. For a counter argument, see Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 72-75 and 85-88.

[17] Quoted in David, p. 129.

[18] Brzezinski regarded the degeneration of the US-Soviet relationship, which eventually led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the failure of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), as beginning with Washington's failure to react more forcefully during the Ogaden war. In his memoirs, Brzezinski quotes from his journal: "In brief, underreaction then broad overreaction.' That is why I have used occasionally the phrase 'SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden.'" Brzezinski, p. 189.

that Ethiopian troops would not counter-attack by invading Somalia. Washington, therefore, kept Mogadishu on a string: too weak to launch any further aggressive actions of its own which could then reflect badly on Washington, yet committed enough to ensure that Somalia remained in the Western camp. The fact that Somalia was the lessor prize of the two Horn of Africa states and the fact that Somalia maintained an aggressive foreign policy toward the Ogaden, however, led to disagreements within subsequent US administrations over the extent to which Washington should provide assistance to Somalia.[19]

The Ethiopian invasion of Goldegob and Balembale in 1982 was the first test of Washington's commitment to its new client. Washington responded by airlifting eight planeloads of military supplies to Somalia, including armoured personnel carriers (APCs), anti-tank weaponry, small arms and ammunition. Washington also authorized Italy's provision of tanks, while Egypt and Saudi Arabia provided other equipment. The failure to oust Ethiopian forces from the two towns, however, was ultimately blamed on Washington and its refusal to dispense the quantity and type of military supplies that Mogadishu expected to be provided by its superpower patron — most notably tanks and aircraft.[20] American links with the regime, however, came in other forms. The United States conducted yearly joint maneuvers with the Somali armed forces called "Bright Star." More significantly, by the end

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[19] See, for instance, the exchange between Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski in *Power and Principle*, p. 182.

[20] Henze contends that Washington realized the futility of attempting to raise Somalia's military capacity to that of the now massively-armed Ethiopians. See Henze (1991), p. 164. Limited and *defensive* arms were also likely the result of the fact that the Ethiopian invasion had come in response to *Somali* provocations. In June 1982, Siad Barre's troops infiltrated and attacked an Ethiopian town 100 km from the Somali border. It was clear to Washington that Siad Barre was still not above pursuing his irredentist objectives.

of 1984, Washington had extended and modernized the port and air base at Berbera in northern Somalia and provided substantial amounts of security and other assistance.[21] Together these funds rose from a low of $32 million in 1981, peaking in 1985 at $85 million and were reduced yearly until the regime's collapse in 1991 (see table).[22]

US Military and Economic Aid to Somalia[23]

Year	US Military Aid	US Foreign Aid
1980	20	17
1981	20	12
1982	25	34
1983	31	48
1984	33	51
1985	34	51
1986	20	45
1987	8	36
1988	7	10
1989	1	13
1990	1	1
1991	0	1

These funds in particular and the larger relationship in general were under close

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[21] Also notable is the construction of a new US embassy in Mogadishu during the 1980s. The embassy grounds with its swimming pools and tennis courts were described as the most luxurious in sub-Saharan Africa and were indicative of Washington's plans for a continued connection with Somalia.

[22] Figures cited for such assistance vary considerably. The figures for "security assistance" as documented by Peter Schraeder, are higher and peak in 1986 rather than 1985. See Table 4.2 in Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994), pp. 186-187.

[23] U.S. Agency for International Development figures cited in U.S. Department of Commerce, and Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* for the years listed. Amounts listed are in millions of US dollars.

scrutiny in Washington by the House Subcommittee on Africa. During the mid-1980s the Subcommittee cited Mogadishu's continued support for its proxy rebel front in Ethiopia's Ogaden desert, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), the regime's continued human rights abuses, and the belief that American assistance had become a key element in the regime's counter-insurgency efforts in the north of Somalia, to argue that US aid should be reduced or stopped altogether. The effect of the Subcommittee's actions was, according to Schraeder, to limit the growth of security assistance to Somalia, but this growth continued incrementally nonetheless. The upward trend in security assistance was ultimately reversed in 1986 as a result of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Deficit Reduction Act.[24] The mismatch between Mogadishu's supplications and Washington's willingness to provide military aid was particularly apparent in FY 1987 when the US responded to a request for $47.1 million[25] with only $8 million in military aid.

Alternative Sources of Foreign Assistance. In frustration with Washington's reluctance to provide the type and quantity of weaponry and support to which it had been accustomed in its earlier relationship with Moscow, Siad Barre actively solicited other possible suppliers of weapons and assistance. In 1985, the Somali National Movement claimed that the regime was involved in negotiations with the government of South Africa. Following an exchange of visits by the Somali vice-president, Mohamed Ali Samatar and South African president P.W. Botha in 1984, South Africa provided substantial quantities of heavy weaponry including tanks (captured by the South African military in Angola and

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[24] Schraeder, p. 156.

[25] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 3rd quarter, 1987.

Mozambique) and spare parts and ammunition for ten Hawker Hunter aircraft which Somalia had recently acquired from the United Arab Emirates. Mogadishu looked to South Africa as well for the servicing of its MiG-21 jet fighters, which had been grounded as a result of a lack of spare parts and to provide advisors to train Somali pilots.[26] Mogadishu appealed to Italy which, as a former colonizer of Somalia, was generous in its provision of military and economic assistance.[27] Somali opposition groups also claimed that the Somali government had led secret missions to Israel in April 1985 and had been provided with several night-shipments of weapons.[28] Finally, Siad Barre made periodic overtures to Moscow in the hope that its former patron would resume supplying weapons.

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[26] As early as 1985, SNM also alleged that South African mercenaries were involved in air raids in northern Somalia against SNM targets. In exchange for military cooperation, South Africa was allowed fly-over and landing rights in Somalia and access to Somalia's well-equipped docking facilities at the ports of Kismayu and Berbera. See Economist Intelligence Unit, 1st and 3rd quarters, 1985.

[27] In fact, Italy's military contribution to Somalia during the 1984-1987 period was twice that of the United States. See Henze (1991), p. 121. During a visit to Rome in January by Somali Vice President Ali Samatar, Italy was asked to "shoulder its historic responsibility in defending Somalia." See Economist Intelligence Unit, 1st quarter, 1985. Also notable is the visit by Italian Prime Minister Benito Craxi in September 1985. "Considerable" economic aid was pledged to the Somali regime and several large scale projects (including promises to construct the enormous Bardhere dam) were initiated. Military aid, however, remained a contentious issue. Rome refused to supply West German-made Leopard tanks which Siad Barre had insisted upon to replace its current Italian-supplied M-41 tanks which, the regime claimed, were outclassed by Ethiopian tanks. See Economist Intelligence Unit, 4th quarter, 1985, and 1st quarter, 1987. Italy's policy in the Horn of Africa was apparently carried out with the full knowledge and approval of Washington. See Wolfgang Achtner, "The Italian Connection: How Rome Helped Ruin Somalia," *Washington Post*, January 24, 1993, p. C3.

[28] According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, $30 million in military supplies was provided by Israel. See Economist Intelligence Unit, 3rd quarter, 1985. The credibility of this claim, however, remains in doubt. The Somali embassy in London strenuously denied that such transactions had taken place and there is little evidence that such a relationship existed. See "Israel Arms Somalia, Say Opposition," *Times*, May 24, 1985, p. 6; "Somali Anger," *Times*, May 28, 1985, p. 6. Indeed there were other claims made by the Somali opposition which suggested Mogadishu was aggressively pursuing weapons and/or financial assistance but which later proved to be unfounded. One such claim stated that a deal had been worked out where in exchange for unspecified assistance, Washington would be entitled to use an 800 square kilometer site as a nuclear dumping ground — a claim which the US embassy in Mogadishu, the Somali government and even the UN environmental agency in Nairobi all denied. See Economist Intelligence Unit, 3rd quarter, 1985. A lack of credibility to these claims suggested that it was the Somali opposition rather than the regime itself which was in disarray.

Aware of his own limitations in augmenting his absolute power, Siad Barre sought to protect his advantage in relative power by persuading erstwhile enemies to terminate their support for Somali opposition groups. His greatest success in this regard came with the announcement in April 1985 of a resumption of Somali-Libyan relations and plans for their mutual cooperation in confronting subversive activities of "imperialism" against the Arab nation.[29] The effect of Siad Barre's rapprochement with Tripoli was immediately felt by the DFSS who had hitherto become almost entirely dependent on Libyan support. In the April 8 1985 agreement, Libya pledged to end its support to the Somali rebel movement and a subsequent trip by Col. Abdillahi Yusuf of the DFSS to meet with Col. Qaddafi failed to bring a change of heart.[30] In January 1986, the DFSS Central Committee recognized its weakness in a statement where it noted it had experienced the most "crippling problems since its inception" and acknowledged serious "divisions" within its ranks.[31] Taking advantage of dissension towards Abdillahi's dictatorial leadership, Siad Barre reduced the ranks of the DFSS by offering an amnesty which succeeded in persuading many of the Majerteens who made up the movement to return to Somalia and even fight Isaaqs in the north and, later, Hawiye's in the south on his behalf.[32]

Siad Barre had the same objectives in mind when he began direct negotiations with

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[29] Economist Intelligence Unit, 2nd quarter, 1985.

[30] Mogadishu's overtures to both Libya and the Soviet Union were meant to create sufficient alarm in Washington that the United States would increase its own provision of weapons to Somalia.

[31] Cited in *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents, 1985-86*, vol. 18, p. B408, and *1986-87*, vol. 19, p. B409.

[32] Hussein M. Adam, "Somalia: A Terrible Beauty Being Born?" *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, I William Zartman, ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), p. 76.

his arch-enemy Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia in January 1986.[33] There were several incentives to making a deal with Ethiopia (and at least one cost, to be discussed later). Not only did an agreement promise the ending of Ethiopian support to Somali opposition groups (and their demise or at least their relocation to distant Jeddah or London), but generous Italian and European Community aid was contingent on a settlement being reached. According to *Africa Confidential*, during his September 1985 visit the Italian Prime Minister offered $340 million to Mogadishu if the talks went ahead.[34]

The War with the Isaaqs and the DFSS. The objective of Western military aid to Somalia was ostensibly to deter or counter a potential attack from its western neighbour rather than to be used in battle against the regime's domestic enemies. In any event, neither of the two main rebel groups, the SNM and the DFSS, appeared to pose the kind of threat to the Siad Barre regime that would warrant increased American assistance. But even as the regime fell increasingly under siege, the declining significance of Somalia as a Cold War client state in the late 1980s meant that the administration in Washington saw less need to sustain the regime. In fact, as we will now see, Mogadishu's increasingly harsh treatment of its northern peoples and its seriously flawed human rights record, if anything, accelerated Washington's dismissiveness toward Somalia and the end of Western military and economic assistance.

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[33] Negotiations between the two leaders began in January 1986. A series of preliminary meetings with lower level officials had begun as early as July 1985.

[34] "Towards an Ogaden Pact?" *Africa Confidential*, vol. 27, no. 5 (February 26, 1986). The Italian Deputy Foreign Minister, Franceso Forte attended the talks which were held in Djibouti and initiated the aid process immediately after they concluded. The report claimed that another $200 million offer coincided with a visit by Italian military officials to Somalia in February 1986.

Somalis and scholars cite several explanations for the origins of northern discontent with the regime in Mogadishu. The most obvious sense of difference came from having had a colonial history which distinguished northerners from other Somalis in the south. While there were two Isaaqs in Somalia's first 12-member cabinet and, after 1967, one of Somalia's first prime ministers was an Isaaq, northerners frequently felt alienated by the focus of politics on the south. There were also claims of uneven economic development and frustration when economic policies which benefitted northerners, such as the *franco-valuta* system, were abolished.[35] Alternatively, northerners claimed that the south resented northern initiative and sought to sabotage self-help programs undertaken by the Isaaqs in the face of Mogadishu's apparent political and economic indifference.[36] The arrest of Isaaq members of the government in 1982 for having suggested that Siad Barre decentralize power was interpreted by northerners as a "move against the Isaaq."[37] Following the Ogaden War, Ogadeni refugees who had previously resided in Somalia moved north into Isaaq territory causing considerable tension and conflict. As relations between the government and the

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[35] The *franco-valuta* system was created by the Somali government as an incentive to Somali businessmen. The system allowed expatriate workers and businessmen to keep foreign exchange in foreign bank accounts to be used later to finance the purchase of imports into Somalia. The system was revoked in September 1981 because, depending on one's perspective, the regime was jealous of the considerable profits being accrued by Somali businessmen or because the goods imported consisted almost entirely of luxury goods. For a more thorough discussion of Somalia's domestic economic policy see Jamil Abdalla Mubarak, *From Bad Policy to Chaos in Somalia: How an Economy Fell Apart* (Westport: Praeger, 1996).

[36] Notable is the series of self-help projects (schools, hospitals, libraries etc) which were initiated by northerners in an effort to compensate for what were seen as years of neglect by the south. By some accounts, Mogadishu resented the successes of the north and sought to counter any challenges to its authority by arresting a number of northern elites whom it felt were behind the initiatives. The arrests then led to riots in 1982-83 which "temporarily paralysed Government authority in Hargeisa and Burao." See Saeed Sheikh Mohammed, "Siyad's Vendetta Against the North," *New African*, September 1987, p. 21.

[37] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 1st quarter, 1988.

Isaaqs worsened, Siad Barre created and armed Ogadeni, Gadabursi and Dolbahante paramilitary groups who continually harassed and attacked northern nomads.[38]

Both the SNM and the DFSS, however, faced constraints in their efforts to challenge the government in Mogadishu — and these tended to involve problems associated with their Ethiopian patron. Maintaining control over these two movements was essential for Ethiopia's own security: in the event that the DFSS were to topple the Somali government, Ethiopia needed assurances that the new government would abandon the standard Somali claims for a "greater Somalia"; alternatively, given its own concerns with secessionism in Eritrea, Addis Ababa was also distrustful of the SNM's barely suppressed secessionist aspirations.[39] The leaderships of the two rebel movements were equally intransigent when it came to meeting one of Ethiopia's central demands for continued support — the merging of the two movements into a unified organization. In 1984 the two movements claimed to have overcome their most significant ideological differences and to have united in a common front. In subsequent communiqués, they referred to themselves as different "wings" of the Somali opposition forces. Despite being united in principle, however, neither group was prepared to defer to the other. Frustrated with Abdillahi's intransigence in particular and

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[38] See United States General Accounting Office, *Somalia: Observations Regarding the Northern Conflict and Resulting Conditions*, Report to Congressional Requesters, May 1989. For a brief but more complete explanation for the sense of alienation felt by northern Isaaqs in Somalia, see Lewis "The Rise of the Somali National Movement: A Case Study in Clan Politics," in *Blood and Bone*, pp. 177-219.

[39] Mengistu had sent his liaison officer to the SNM with a message that the rebel movement would forfeit its support from the Ethiopian government if secessionism was made a public political objective. While secessionism remained a "powerful undercurrent" the SNM constitution in 1982 specifically avoided mentioning secession and emphasized, instead, the need for renewed unitary government. In this respect the SNM apparently did a better job of not offending their Ethiopian patron than did their Majerteen counterpart, the DFSS. See Matt Bryden, "Fiercely Independent," *Africa Report*, November-December 1994, pp. 35-42. See also Lewis, p. 207.

the inability of the two movements to make good on their promises of greater cooperation, Addis Ababa decapitated the DFSS leadership in October 1985 by arresting Abdillahi and a number of senior DFSS members and seizing their weapons.[40] Under a new leader, Mohamed Abshir, the DFSS had trouble regaining the support of Majerteen guerillas in the bush.

By residing in Ethiopia, both the DFSS and the SNM suffered the consequences of being allied with what was regarded by virtually all Somalis as the enemy. Siad Barre did not fail to take note of reports of Ethiopian soldiers massacring DFSS troops in May 1984 and of clashes again in August of 1986. As well, in what was described as the "betrayal" of its Somali client, Ethiopia's foreign minister, Goshu Wolde, claimed in 1987 that the two towns of Balembale and Goldegob, which had supposedly been liberated under the DFSS banner, were now an integral part of Ethiopia and not Somalia. Speculation was that Addis Ababa was either being remindful of their belief that Somali rebel movements should not embark on a course independent of Ethiopia, or that it was curtailing the activities of its Somali clients with an eye to an imminent settlement with Mogadishu.[41]

One final liability with which both the DFSS and the SNM had to contend was the perception that they were clan-based rather than *national* organizations and were therefore unable to appeal to all Somalis. In fact, for a time both movements did have some representation from different clans. However, despite these periodic efforts to appeal to all

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[40] "Betrayal of the SSDF," *New African*, February 1987, pp. 23-24.

[41] "Betrayal...," *New African*, February 1987. Until this point, Ethiopia had claimed publicly that the two towns were under the control of the DFSS, although privately they were seen as bargaining chips for a future deal with Somalia in a settlement with the Ogaden issue. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 4th quarter, 1985.

Somalis, the membership of both the DFSS and the SNM became increasingly concentrated on the Majerteen and the northern Isaaq respectively.[42]

Even as the SNM was losing its Hawiye component it was stepping up its guerilla activity against government targets in the north. In the closing months of 1986 the SNM engaged Somali troops on at least three occasions, inflicting considerable casualties on "unenthusiastic" conscripts and, in its greatest success, assassinating the government's local chief of security.[43] Then, in 1987, a government document written by the new sector commander, General Mohamed Siad Hersi Morgan, was leaked to the Western press and became known as the "letter of death." The letter acknowledged the increased military activity of the SNM, stating that the "security situation ... had deteriorated" and detailed punitive actions that had already been undertaken by the military and actions planned for the future. Evidently the regime was not alarmed by the increased rebel activity and the letter claimed that government reprisals had been carried out with minimal losses to the army; the concern was for the future and the belief that unless the SNM was dealt with firmly "and its supporters are subjected to a campaign of obliteration, there will come a time when they will raise their heads again." Measures to be implemented included "rendering uninhabitable the territory between the army and the enemy," and purges of the military and the civil service.[44]

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[42] The SNM's vice-chairman, Ali Wardigle was a Hawiye until he failed to get himself re-elected at its congress in February 1987. When he subsequently left the organization to form what became a Hawiye-based organization, the United Somali Congress, he took most of the Hawiye with him. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 2nd quarter, 1987.

[43] "The President Delegates," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 28, no. 7 (April 1, 1987).

[44] The document called for "removing from the membership of the armed forces and the civil service all those who are open to suspicion of aiding the enemy — especially those holding sensitive posts" and the "purge of the Somali Police Force, the Security Forces and the military police, the members of which are recruited locally, by finding a force to 'dilute' them and by transferring present members." The so-called "letter

On May 3 1988, Siad Barre succeeded in what he hoped would finally curtail the ability of the Somali rebel movements to launch attacks against the government when he concluded a peace agreement with the Ethiopian president Mengistu Haile Mariam. In return for recognizing Ethiopia's territorial integrity, Mogadishu received a pledge that Addis Ababa would no longer provide sanctuary or supplies to the SNM. Having anticipated that the SNM would follow the same path of self-destruction that the DFSS had in previous years, the Siad Barre regime was shaken when at the end of May 1988, the SNM launched its boldest military offensive to date, attacking the town of Burao and the north's regional capital Hargeisa. In the process the SNM was able to enlarge its own arsenal when it captured government weapons caches in the north.[45]

Evidently, the SNM had greater immunity to the constraints which had weakened the DFSS. Since it relied on Ethiopia primarily for the provision of a base area, fuel and ammunition rather than for weapons (which came largely as a result of confiscating government weapons), it was less susceptible to the changes that came with a Somali-Ethiopian rapprochement.[46] The SNM had also become reliant on a large and increasingly prosperous Isaaq diaspora for financial support. According to Abdirahman Ali, who had been a Somali ambassador before defecting and joining the SNM, preparations for a major

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of death" was published in Richard Greenfield, "Somalia's Letter of Death," *New African*, July 1987, pp. 14-16.

[45] At the time, the Somali Defence Minister was in Italy and General Morgan and Siad Barre were both in Ethiopia and had to be rushed back to Somalia to direct the counter-offensive. In an indication of the new level of cooperation between the two former enemies, Ethiopia allegedly provided the aircraft which allowed General Morgan to return to Hargeisa.

[46] According to Matt Bryden, of the United Nations-Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, the Siad Barre regime continued to be the source of heavy weapons for the SNM — especially as more government troops began to defect carrying their weapons with them. Interview with the author, May 31, 1996.

offensive had been in the works for "at least two years." He added,

> We have been taking arms inside the country and hiding them. We have been preparing the people for this. I was in the country in December and January explaining what we are doing. ... I don't need to explain to the people about the oppression. The government is bad in all areas, but especially in the north. There is hardly any Somali in the north not affected by this tyranny.[47]

Indeed, there were some within the SNM who had been calling for a break with Ethiopia since its hardline Marxism and the perception of being Somalia's enemy reduced the movement's ability to gain broader support among moderate Somalis. The Ethiopian-Somali agreement, however, forced the issue: with peace between the two countries, the SNM believed that there was little hope of removing the Ogadeni refugees who continued to attack northern Isaaqs. Demilitarization of the border zone (which, according to the agreement, was completed on May 15, 1988) also enabled the SNM to move back into Somali territory unimpeded.[48]

In response to the SNM's offensive, the regime believed it had no alternative but to respond in kind. Aden Farah Shirdon, a former ambassador for the Somali regime, explains that Siad Barre believed that a weak government response to the attacks in the north would only set off similar uprisings in other regions of Somalia:

> It was a surprise. Shock. He was not expecting these things. And he got mad. A dictator challenged in the towns? He gave the green light to [his commander in the north, General] Morgan, saying 'Do whatever you like.' He wasn't afraid that the SNM would capture and control the whole of Somalia because that was unbelievable. But, if they did this ... all the tribes, were going to try capture their land. He didn't want other tribes to follow whatever these people were doing — Hawiye or the

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[47] Linda Feldman, "Rebels Create Havoc for US-Backed Somalia," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 6, 1988, p. 1.

[48] US Government Accounting Office, p. 4. Others note that the SNM was quick to pull out of Ethiopia to avoid the confiscation of their weapons, as had happened to the DFSS.

> Darods themselves. He was unpopular. So if he left the Isaaqs in their area, the people would realize that he was weak. The Hawiye were going to start to capture their own area, which included Mogadishu. How could he survive?[49]

Having been unable to defeat the SNM in direct combat, the regime looked to its fleet of Hawker Hunter and MiG aircraft, piloted by Rhodesian and South African mercenaries, as well as heavy artillery to inflict unprecedented destruction on northern cities. A western investigative team which interviewed some of the thousands of refugees displaced by the conflict reported that refugees reported being "caught by surprise by the scope and intensity of the fighting both in Hargeisa and Burao." The report continued, stating:

> The refugees told similar stories of bombings, strafings, and artillery shelling in both cities and, in Burao, the use of armored tanks. ... A few of the refugees were quite specific in their recollections; they mentioned that the military aircraft would start shelling at 8 am and stop at 5 p.m.[50]

On the extent of the damage at the conclusion of battle, the report stated: "The U.S. Embassy estimated that 70 percent of the city has been damaged or destroyed. Our rough visual inspection confirms this estimate."[51] The SNM, which had hitherto relied on hit-and-run tactics, could not compete with the government's power when it surrendered its mobility for the defense of targetable positions. The SNM along with an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 refugees were forced to retreat.[52] By July 13, 1988, the government had recaptured both

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[49] Aden Farah Shirdon. Interview with the author, July 2, 1997.

[50] US Government Accounting Office, p. 5.

[51] US Government Accounting Office, p. 6.

[52] Most of these refugees sought refuge in eastern Ethiopia but others went to Kenya and Djibouti. Another several hundred thousand were said to be displaced within Somalia. See Robert Gersony, *Why Somalis Flee: Synthesis of Accounts of Conflict Experience in Northern Somalia by Somali Refugees, Displaced Persons and Others*, Bureau for Refugee Programs, Department of State, August 1989.

towns of Hargeisa and Burao.

The Decline of Somalia as a Cold War Client State. The dramatic surge in the intensity of violence in northern Somalia led to a re-examination of Washington's policy towards the Horn of Africa. Congressional critics who had never accepted the need for a relationship with the Somali regime, complained that US weaponry was being used by the Somali government to attack Isaaqs in the north and argued that the relationship should now be terminated. By July 1988, following disagreements among the House Subcommittee on Africa, the Defense Department and the US State Department, the latter voluntarily placed a hold on any further lethal aid to the Siad Barre regime — a concession made to ensure the continuation of Washington's economic assistance to Somalia. The Defense Department argued that the State Department had caved in too quickly to pressure from the House Subcommittee and that the US had an obligation to Mogadishu. Schraeder cites one unidentified official as stating, "Either we're allies or we're not. ... What is the sense of having this program if we're not gong to give them the military support when it counts the most."[53]

In fact, a subsequent report issued by the US General Accounting Office (GAO) detailed the abuses of the Somali government and proved to be of considerable embarrassment to the Reagan administration when it revealed that Washington had had a role in supplying the Somali military with automatic weapons and ammunition.[54] "As part of the

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[53] Schraeder, p. 161.

[54] United States General Accounting Office, *Somalia: Observations Regarding the Northern Conflict and Resulting Conditions*, Report to Congressional Requesters, May 1989.

administration's on-going military assistance program," the report stated, "$1.4 million worth of small arms and ammunition was provided to the government of Somalia during the height of the conflict." The shipment of weapons destined for Somalia had earlier been delayed because carriers were reluctant to ship relatively small amounts of weaponry. Under siege, the "frantic" regime in Somalia urged Washington to provide the weapons and agreed to pay the price to have the weapons shipped to Berbera where, according to the GAO report, it "was used by the government at a critical point in the conflict."[55] While one observer has argued that "Somalia's status as an important regional state left little, if any doubt that Washington should quickly respond to Mogadishu in its hour of need,"[56] the small quantity of aid and the fact that it was only provided when the regime appeared to be threatened demonstrated that Washington was thinking less about keeping Somalia bristling with arms than with the more modest objective of sustaining its former client. Even the need to meet this objective was now being questioned.

With the revelations that human rights abuses continued to be exacted on northern Isaaqs by the regime, pressure continued to mount in Washington for a cessation of all assistance to Mogadishu. Critics in the House Subcommittee argued that US assistance was "fueling the conflict" and that since an agreement had been reached with Ethiopia — the threat which created the *raison d'être* for military aid in the first place — there was no

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[55] The report continued: "From Berbera, the city of Hargeisa is typically less than a 3-hour trip by car. The fighting was heaviest in this relatively small area. During this period, the Somali government supplied arms to an undetermined number of refugees to fight the SNM insurgents in the north. A senior military official confirmed that the U.S. equipment was distributed to troops in the north and was used during the conflict." US Government Accounting Office, pp. 8-9.

[56] Schraeder, p. 161.

justification for continued support. In September 1988, 35 members of Congress addressed letters to the US Secretary of State which called for the "re-programming of $21 million in economic support funds" for Somalia "due to the on-going gross violation of human rights, especially in the northern region of the country." The letters stated concern over "suggestions that U.S. military supplies or equipment have been used to support the reported slaughter of civilians by Somali government troops," and concluded that although the provision of weapons were part of agreements made with a previous administration, "You well know such assistance was never intended to kill, maim, or bomb civilians."[57]

Observers within and without the administration chronicled the abuses of the Somali regime and some attacked the continued provision of economic aid.[58] Following a lethal confrontation between Somali troops and demonstrators on July 14, 1989, Holly Burkhalter of Human Rights Watch wrote:

> Within a week of the mid-July massacres, the State Department asked Congress, which is holding up Somalia's aid, to grant $20 million to President Siad Barre. Bilateral aid from the U.S., Italy and other donors is essential to keep the International Monetary Fund and private banks lending to Somalia. The multinational development banks have also played a critical role in keeping the regime afloat. Last month, the World Bank granted Somalia a $79 million loan, and the African Development Bank is supplying an additional $25 million as part of an 'agricultural stabilization' program.

Burkhalter urged the Bush administration to "rethink" its aid policy or to make aid conditional on a political settlement to the war and improvements on human rights.[59]

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[57] Cited in Richard Greenfield, "Barre's Unholy Alliances," *Africa Report*, March-April 1989, p. 66.

[58] See Africa Watch. *Somalia: A Government at War with its Own People — Testimonies About the Killings and Conflict in the North* (New York: Africa Watch, January 1980).

[59] Holly Burkhalter, "Somalia's Massacres Aren't on TV," *New York Times*, August 13, 1989, sec. 4, p. 23.

Even prior to the July 1989 events, proponents of continued military support had been unable to agree on the benefits of continued assistance. Schraeder cites one State Department official who argued, "Its fine to say let's cut off aid, even if that's what the American people want. ... But then what are the consequences?" Schraeder contends that it was the fear of losing influence on the Horn that justified continued support.[60] On the other hand, Linda Feldman of the *Christian Science Monitor* cited another official who claimed that "People on the Hill need to be more realistic. Foreign assistance gives very little leverage when you want one-for-one results. And criticizing Siad wouldn't be productive anyway. The sign that you give is that you stick by your friends."[61]

The Search for New Weapons and Assistance. The Ethiopian-Somali peace agreement, the SNM offensive in the north, and the subsequent government counter-offensive against the Isaaq nonetheless was the train of events which ultimately culminated in Washington's rejection of support for the regime and led Siad Barre on an desperate search for weapons and the financial means to sustain his government. However, there was no critical point where aid stopped, according to Matt Bryden, a consultant for the United Nations in Somalia. Somalia never had sufficient revenues of its own to sustain a durable state structure in the first place but it had become effective in adapting itself to whatever resources were available at the time.[62] Somalia "devoured" foreign aid, according to Bryden,

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[60] Schraeder, p. 163.

[61] Linda Feldman, "Critics Charge US Policy Fuels Conflict in Somalia," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 10, 1988, p. 3.

[62] Bryden interview. Bryden contends that Siad Barre attempted to sustain a bureaucracy of over 65,000 in one of Africa's poorest countries with a population of no more than 6 million people.

and when bilateral foreign aid began to decline, it focused "parasitically" on multi-lateral aid or any other potential sources of wealth.[63] American observers visiting the northern region after the 1988 conflict reported that the capital was being dismantled and valuables transported south to Mogadishu, apparently for the benefit of the regime.[64]

As Siad Barre had fewer and fewer domestic resources available to pay the army, his troops became increasingly predatory (a fact which, incidentally, further alienated the government from ordinary Somalis). At this point, humanitarian aid, paradoxically, became central to maintaining a cohesive fighting force. Development assistance to Somalia was substantial (ranging in the hundreds of millions of dollars) and, unlike military assistance, it experienced less dramatic reductions during the late 1980s (see table).

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[63] There are numerous accounts of how the regime sought to generate wealth. Bryden relates that in 1990 following efforts to print more cash, Siad's troops raided the Somali Airlines safe for cash. On another occasion, a collection of four-wheel drive vehicles were stolen; only half were ever accounted for again. Bryden, interview.

[64] GAO reported: "Homes are devoid of doors, window frames, appliances, clothes and furniture. The looting has resulted in the opening of what are called 'Hargeisa markets' throughout the region, including Mogadishu and Ethiopia, where former residents have spotted their possessions. One observer remarked that Hargeisa is being dismantled piece by piece. We were told that long lines of trucks heavily laden with Hargeisa goods could be seen leaving the city, heading south towards Mogadishu after the heavy fighting had stopped." US Government Accounting Office, p. 7.

Year	Official Development Assistance [65]
1984	350
1985	353
1986	511
1987	580
1988	433
1989	427
1990	428

Siad Barre looked to UN refugee camps to house and feed his troops and Ogadeni militias fighting in the north, so that all the regime was required to provide was the guns.[66] According to Bryden, humanitarian food aid meant for refugees was often diverted and sold with the proceeds going to pay the army.[67] In another grand scheme, relayed by a former aid to the

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[65] Figures from the World Bank's annual *World Development Reports*. Figures are in millions of dollars from all sources. In response to abuse of these aid packages, however, international agencies kept a closer eye on how this money was spent. This tightening of control over aid to Somalia during the 1980s decreased the amount of aid that remained accessible to the Siad Barre regime. Moreover, by the late 1980s, increased fighting made it increasingly difficult for foreign aid programmes to operate. See Samuel Makinda, *Security in the Horn of Africa*, Adelphi Paper 269 (summer, 1992), p. 35.

[66] In one instance, in response to UNHCR concerns that some of the refugees among the Somali government claimed that they had been armed for their own protection against SNM guerillas. While acknowledging that some Ogadenis had been attacked, the UNHCR concluded that they had become a party to the conflict and thus were ineligible for continued humanitarian assistance. See US Government Accounting Office, p. 9.

[67] Bryden interview. Henze confirms these claims. At least half of this aid — which in total comprised about 40% of Somalia's GNP — did not reach refugee camps. The US and UN had complained about these losses in 1982 which were then reduced to one-third of port deliveries. Siad Barre refused to adjust estimates of refugee camp populations even after their numbers declined in response to overtures from Addis Ababa. See Henze (1991), p. 156. International aid which did reach its intended target may also have relieved the government of its own civic responsibilities. Reports note that nomads often sent family members to the refugee camps in infertile areas — which were frequently better than conditions among the local inhabitants — while the men remained behind to tend their herds. Placing refugees in areas which could not be farmed ensured a continuation of the aid supply. Edward Girardet, "Somalia: There's been a change in a land that once claimed Africa's largest refugee population," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 4, 1985, p. 16-17.

Somali regime, Siad Barre instructed a group of envoys to secretly barter Somalia's fishing rights and other products for arms since it was too financially strapped to pay cash for weapons on the open market.[68]

As was the case in Ethiopia, as the regime found itself unable to rely on traditional sources of arms and aid, and as troops became increasingly unreliable, the regime came to settle for weapons from *any* source and to bolster their troop strength with little regard for military training or experience rather than ingenuously seek a political settlement. Notable, however, was not that there was a lack of weapons in Somalia (as an examination of post Siad Barre events will show) but that weapons had become so widely distributed as to decrease the regime's relative power. To rectify this, the regime redoubled its efforts to find new weapons suppliers and undertook publicity campaigns to improve its image among traditional suppliers. The Somali Prime Minister, Mohamed Ali Samatar traveled to London, Washington and Italy in 1989, ostensibly in an effort to "correct all the false information" about Somalia and, in the case of the Washington visit, to unfreeze $55 million in economic aid withheld by the administration since the summer of 1988. The Prime Minister's efforts, however, failed to secure the desired support.[69] In January 1989, Siad Barre himself traveled

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[68] Documents which were leaked to the press involved correspondence between the Somali government and a Swiss company and involved weapons originally collected in Romania and which had been "hanging around the unofficial arms market for some time." Included in this collection were rockets and launchers including infrared-guided anti-tank rockets, mine-laying equipment, tanks and helicopters. See *Africa Report*, May-June 1988, and "Secret Somali Arms Deal," *New African*, May 1988, pp. 46-47.

[69] Indeed, one State Department official claimed that the visit was successful insofar as the range of US leaders and opinion to which Samatar was exposed: "All this contact is helping them," remarked the official. "They're beginning to realize what an awful image they have. And they're beginning to realize they won't get what they want just by saying the right words." Linda Feldman, "Somali Leader Makes His Case in the US," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 7, 1989, p. 7. In response to Samatar's claim that new aid was justified on the basis of nominal moves toward greater democratization, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, said that he "welcomed Somalia's new policies and expressed the hope that they

to Iraq, Egypt and Kuwait but there was no confirmation that he succeeded in persuading anyone to meet his demands for military and economic aid. The president's son, Maslah Barre journeyed to Libya in August 1989, and the president followed up the visit ostensibly to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Libyan revolution. Only on this last diplomatic effort did the Somali regime secure significant arms supplies in return for its efforts.[70] This eleventh hour infusion of weapons gave the regime a reprieve, for it allowed it to hold off the rebel onslaught for another year and even allowed government forces to retake territory previously held by the SNM.[71]

That these weapons continued to come into Somalia despite the refusal of traditional suppliers to meet the demands of the regime had costly implications for the longer term fate of the regime and for post-Siad Barre peace prospects. The problem was that these weapons

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would be implemented fully and quickly." Congress, however, refused to release economic support funds until more concrete steps toward respect for human rights and economic reform had been taken. In London, Prime Minister Samatar had visited with British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Prime Minister Thatcher on January 23 and 24, but failed to secure the release of a £5 million aid package. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 2nd quarter, 1989. Relations with Italy, once Somalia's most important single source of military aid and an important source of economic aid, suffered a setback with the death of the Roman Catholic Bishop in Mogadishu, Monsignor Colombo, on July 9, 1989, and the plausible claim that the Somali government had had a role in his assassination as a means of silencing his criticism of the Siad Barre regime. See "Somalia Executes 46 After Rioting," *New York Times*, July 22, 1989, p. 4.

[70] Somalia had resumed relations with Libya at an earlier date and it is unclear at what point weapons may have been provided. Following the 1989 visits, however, reports of significant quantities of weapons did emerge. One army deserter who worked in the army repair shops in Galcaio claimed that he personally took delivery of 32 T-55 tanks, Stalin organs, artillery and munitions. The SNM made the unconfirmed claim that Libyan advisors also arrived in October 1989. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 1st quarter, 1990. There were also reports that Hercules aircraft continued to ship weapons to the regime in early 1990. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, No. 2, 1990. The Economist Intelligence Unit also reported a shipment of second-hand UK-manufactured weapons arrived from Abu Dhabi and included 160 military vehicles, 164 artillery pieces, and 30 containers of light arms and ammunition. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report:Somalia*, 4th quarter, 1989.

[71] During 1990, the government's new commander in the northwest, Gen Abdulaziz led government troops in capturing SNM bases at Balleh, Gubadle and Alaybaday and driving rebel forces back into Ethiopia. The SNM recaptured the major cities in the north at the end of 1990 just prior to the government's fall. See Bryden, "Fiercely Independent," *Africa Report*, November-December, 1994.

did not always strengthen the regime relative to its adversaries. Given the regime's tactic of arming clan militias to fight their battles and the increasing unreliability of the army, the result was a ever wider dispersal of weaponry throughout Somali society. This lessening of the regime's relative power made its position precarious but, as well, the arming of so many different groups each with their own political agendas meant that numerous parties were in a position to contest power once Siad Barre fell.

On August 14, 1989, General Maslah traveled to Moscow where he conferred with the Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov. The effort was apparently made as much with an eye to alarming Washington as to obtaining Soviet arms and support. Neither objective was achieved. "If General Maslah and his entourage — which included the military commanders of the Somali Navy, Air Defense Force, and Air Force — thought they would throw a scare into their American backers by traveling to Moscow, it appears not to have worked," reported Linda Feldman of the *Christian Science Monitor*. "US officials and other informed observers," she added, "doubted the Soviets would oblige with arms donations that it cannot afford financially and does not want to afford politically."[72] A US official claimed at the time: "I don't think the Soviets want in in Somalia." He continued: "This doesn't bother the US at all. The argument that that is a foot in the door sounds a little tattered."[73]

By this point Washington apparently did not see itself as dealing with a regime which was long for this world. The administration conceded that Siad Barre controlled little

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[72] Linda Feldman, "Weak US-Backed Somali Regime Looks Again to Soviets," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 1989, p. 7.

[73] Feldman, "Weak US-Backed Somali Regime," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 1989.

territory beyond Mogadishu: "The security forces are out of control; there are mutinies all over the place," said a US State Department official. He continued: "The political institutions are inoperative almost to the point where we don't feel as if we're dealing with a government anymore." Washington had other reasons not to lose sleep over a regime which appeared to be increasingly under siege. By the late 1980s the guerilla groups which were knocking on Mogadishu's door all advocated continued strong relations with the United States. One member of the State Department's Africa Bureau described the situation as being "win-win" whereby even "risk averse bureaucrats could count on maintaining US influence regardless of whether the Somali government or the guerilla opposition emerged victorious."[74]

As the Mogadishu regime continued to slip, the SNM continued to gain strength. Following the 1988 SNM offensive and the government counter-offensive, two points become evident. First, if this had not already occurred, the point of no return was reached whereby northerners would ever be able to make amends with the regime. Following interviews with Isaaq refugees, the GAO report stated:

> When asked if government assurances of safety and goodwill (such as cross-border food or water deliveries) would convince the Issak population that it is safe to return, the universal response was incredulity. The refugees emphasized that President Siad Barre could not be trusted and that any cosmetic steps at rapprochement were meaningless in light of the trauma they had endured.[75]

Second, there was a giant swelling of SNM ranks. Investigators with the GAO reported that

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[74] Schraeder, p. 169. It is notable that this might not have been the case with the DFSS which long followed a hardline Marxist doctrine and continually praised the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. See Lewis, p. 208. It is also notable that the strategic *raison d'être* for maintaining a relationship with Somalia was no longer relevant; the naval facility at Berbera was not even used during the Operation Desert Storm in 1990-91.

[75] US Government Accounting Office, p. 11.

refugee camps in Ethiopia meant to house Isaaq refugees were "virtually devoid of men" who immediately after the government counter-offensive had taken up arms and "returned to Somalia to join the SNM in the fight." Indeed, another journalist who followed the SNM plight, Gerard Prunier, stated that while the regular forces of the SNM numbered approximately 4000 men, "In a way the SNM does not exist at all; it is simply the Isaaq people up in arms."[76] It would be somewhat ironic, then, that it was not the SNM but another rebel movement which would ultimately push Siad Barre out of Mogadishu in January 1991.

In the face of more limited and then declining official arms transfers, how did Siad Barre's regime survive almost as long as Ethiopia, which had received far larger quantities of military aid during the 1980s? As a patron state, the United States and other western suppliers of arms had found a balance whereby Siad Barre remained in the Western camp, but ensured that he would be unable to realize his previous foreign policy ambitions. Siad Barre in the 1980s, then, was not especially powerful militarily (and certainly not as powerful as he had been in the 1970s). Then again, his domestic adversaries, which Hussein Adam summed up as being "weak, inexperienced, decentralized, clan-based, and unable to provide capable national leadership and vision," did not present the same challenge or threat to the regime as did the EPLF in Ethiopia.[77] Moreover, the regime also managed to sustain the MOD coalition. The end came only with the defection of the Ogadeni component of this coalition. It is on this latter subject that discussion will now be focused.

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[76] Cited in Lewis, p. 219, footnote 32. Given its parallels with Ethiopia, this appears to be a feature of rebel movements who represent a people specifically targeted for government repression. By the late 1980s, the SNM had revised its constitution so that government Somali government officials — which had been previously barred from joining the movement — could now be absorbed into the leadership. See Lewis, p. 212.

[77] Adam, p. 78.

The Breakdown of MOD and the Collapse of the Siad Barre Regime

In considering the structure of the Siad Barre regime during the 1970s and 1980s two points are evident with respect to power-sharing and regime stability. First, while power-sharing has benevolent connotations in discussions of post-Cold War politics, more limited — and usually undemocratic — forms of power-sharing have already existed. Moreover, the regimes these coalitions comprised were, themselves, not especially benevolent. In other words, we can see other examples where political power is distributed across several clans or ethnic groups which should not be confused with the broader power-sharing arrangements but which did have a role in sustaining regimes. A second point is that in multi-clan regimes, power needs only to be extended so that the balance of power is sufficiently favourable to that coalition. The fewer the number of groups required to achieve this favourable balance, the fewer the number of compromises that need to be made and, in theory, the longer the coalition should last (since fewer compromises means there is less incentive for any one group to leave the coalition).

The Siad Barre regime manifested a complex mix of ethnic exclusiveness on one level, and the extension of some of the sinecures and perquisites of political power to a broader range of clan representatives on another level. Lewis writes that,

> when we look closely at the composition of the SRC [Somali Revolutionary Council] and the connections of key figures and interest groups in General Siyad's government, we find an inner core bound together by traditional loyalties and surrounded by an outer circle drawn from opposing groups carefully balanced so that none should gain an influence that could not be countered by others.[78]

On this first, more exclusive level one finds the three clan-pillars most often identified with

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[78] Lewis, p. 167.

the Siad Barre regime, MOD: Marehan, Ogadeni, Dolbahante. In the face of changes which might occur on the second level, maintaining the MOD structure as a consistent unit was essential because it ensured that a favourable balance of power would be sustained. According to Laitin and Samatar, MOD held the ingredients to enduring political power. They write:

> If the MOD alliance holds together in a succession struggle, it can, we think, easily hold its own against any combination of contestants. The Ogaadeen and the Dolbahante have the requisite numbers, and the Mareehaan have the firearms — this potent combination of numerical strength and firepower will make it virtually impossible for any other group to dislodge them.[79]

Siad Barre was careful to ensure that key military posts and the most critical political posts remained either in the hands of the MOD coalition (especially his own Marehan clan) or, alternatively, were held by other non-threatening clans. Indeed, Richard Greenfield, a political advisor to the Somali regime until 1986, notes how the tank and artillery brigades surrounding Mogadishu were held by Marehans who had "since their inception," reported directly to the President. In Somalia's second largest city and one which was essential to preserving government control in the north, the infantry, tank and artillery brigades were also controlled by Marehan officers. "Many other vital military posts were and are held by Marehan officers," writes Greenfield, "quite out of proportion to the clan's place within the entire population."[80] In an interview, a former Somali diplomat related the importance of

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[79] Laitin and Samatar, p. 162. The Dolbahante were also symbolically important insofar as they straddled the border which previously separated the two colonies of British Somaliland and Italian Somalia. See Lewis, p. 167.

[80] Richard Greenfield, "Succession Struggle in Somalia," *New African*, April 1987, p. 11. Other groups such as the Isaaq saw power concentrated in the hands of a Darod "confederacy" which included Marehans, Ogadeni, Dolbahante and also including the Majerteen and which was united against them. From this perspective, the Darod comprised over 50% of Somalia's police commanders and nearly 80% of the army's

controlling the armed forces in relation to other political posts:

> I am talking about the military. The minister of tourism, the minister of health doesn't matter. Who cares? They are not a threat to his power. They're everywhere. Minister of justice, minister of health, the minister of tourism. The military in Africa *is* politics. The military is the main thing the president is concerned about with [respect to] their future.[81]

Keeping the key positions of military power within the MOD coalition provided the necessary security which then allowed other lesser posts to be distributed among non-MOD clans.

At the second level and below, for the president's security, clan identity did not matter as much as loyalty. Even a superficial glance at the regime over the years demonstrates that it was the same loyal individuals who came in and out of the circle of power. But symbolically clan identity *per se* did matter and the president was careful to ensure that clan balance was maintained. Even if the MOD clans were prominent in the most significant power centers, the dispersal of political offices beyond these clans was essential to the regime's longevity. Greenfield writes that the "composition of the politbureau, Siyad

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sector, divisional and brigade commanders — a potentially overwhelming concentration of power. In fact, despite their common ties to the larger Darod clan family, significant political differences could easily be discerned between Ogadenis and Marehans (most notably over the 1988 peace deal with Ethiopia) and even within the Marehan's themselves (some Marehan's objected to the concentration of power within Siad Barre's own family). See "Military Politics," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 27, no. 2 (October 29, 1986).

[81] Aden Farah Shirdon, interview with the author. An interesting exception to this rule is the example of the 1st Vice President and the Minister of Defence, Mohamed Ali Samatar. According to Mr. Aden, in the uncertainty of Somali politics, the President's objective was to avoid putting someone with both the motivation and the capacity to seize power in the second-in command or in charge of the military. Ali Samatar was not a Marehan but came instead from a politically insignificant clan. Mr. Aden claims that Ali Samatar satisfied two otherwise incompatible ambitions: he threatened neither other potential presidential aspirants by pre-empting their own plans for power, nor the president himself, by threatening his own sense of personal security. Evidently, then, for those at the top, clan representation was less important than ensuring clan or personal interests were not jeopardized. As long as Siad Barre remained in reasonably good health, most parties were willing to live with Ali Samatar as second-in-command and nominal head of the military even though he did not represent their clan. This changed with Siad Barre's 1986 car accident, which is to be discussed.

Barre's cabinet and the Central Committee of the Party, have all long reflected the disabled President's shrewd understanding of the need to balance appointments on the basis of the clan structure of the Somali nation."[82] Several observers note that while Siad Barre frequently denounced clanism, he himself was the most sensitive to its requirements and the most adept at playing the game.

As one might expect, considerable financial resources were required to maintain the entire structure of the domestic patron-client relationships which were forged and foreign assistance provided the "glue" that held the system together.[83] Noting a practice utilized throughout Africa, Laitin and Samatar write that in Somalia the so-called "big men," who were placed in this second-circle of political power,

> provide jobs, lucrative construction permits, outright cash payments, and other forms of patronage to certain influential clan members and their families in return for the latter's ability to deliver the clan's support. Here as elsewhere in Africa, ethnic support becomes the key to political success, mainly because politicians find it convenient to distribute scarce national resources through the clan structure.[84]

Cabinet shuffles were the frequently utilized means of bringing clan representatives into power and replacing threatening ministers with more compliant individuals. In the revolving door of Somali politics, individuals fell out of favour and were often arrested, only to then

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[82] Greenfield, "Succession Struggle...," *New African*, April 1987. The "Party" referred to is the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP), a Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Party established at the Soviet's behest in 1976.

[83] Adam, p. 72.

[84] Laitin and Samatar, p. 46. Others who have written more generally about "big men" and patron-client relationships in Africa and elsewhere include Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), and Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1988).

be released, rehabilitated and placed in prominent, if symbolic, positions of government.[85] Indicative of Siad Barre's understanding of the need for balancing his actions, the dumping or arresting of one clan was almost always matched symbolically with actions taken against members of his own coalition's clans.[86]

Siad Barre kept adversarial clans off-guard by offering a mix of incentives, symbolic gestures, amnesties and negotiations (never failing to make use of the members of a clan whom he had included in his government), combined with punishments and violent confrontations. One can see this two-track approach in the regime's relations with three politically significant clans: the Isaaq, the Majerteen, and the Hawiye.

Concerning the Isaaq, following attacks on government troops and the Mandera prison in January and February 1983, Siad Barre made his first trip to the north in several years. Accompanying him was a "high-powered" ministerial team which included the Minister of Mines and the Minister of Public Works (both of whom were Isaaq) and the Minister of the Presidency (Gadabursi — another northern clan). There he lifted the state-of-emergency in place since the attacks began and offered political amnesty to those who had

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[85] The most remarkable example of the regime's efforts in this regard involved a former vice president, Ismail Ali Abokor, and a former foreign minister, Omar Arteh Gelib. These men, both of whom were Isaaq, were arrested in 1982 and sentenced to death. Then in 1988, at a time when relations between the government and Somalia's Isaaqs were at their lowest point, the regime attempted to buy back Isaaq support by releasing the two men from jail and seating them prominently at the revolutionary celebrations in October. In the regime's last year, Siad Barre even looked to Omar Arteh to be his prime minister and form a new government. General Aidid, the man who eventually led his own troops into Mogadishu during Siad Barre's overthrow, was another member of the regime who was imprisoned by Siad Barre only to be released and dispatched to distant India as Somalia's ambassador.

[86] During the 1982 purging of the regime which led to the imprisonment of Omar Arteh Gelib and Ismail Ali Abokor, Siad Barre also dumped two prominent Marehan officials, Omar Haji and Mohamed Aden Sheikh. Such actions lent credibility to Siad Barre's claim that clan identity was irrelevant to government appointments and dismissals. See Laitin and Samatar, p. 157.

committed "national crimes." It was, declared *Africa Confidential*, "an attempt to show unity in the face of increasingly serious attacks on government forces in the north." Following his January 1986 meetings with Ethiopia's Mengistu Haile Mariam, Siad Barre returned to Mogadishu via various northern cities where it was reported he received "a considerable welcome."[87] In terms of punishment, Siad Barre carefully discriminated the Isaaqs from other northerners so that their ability to cooperate with other clans in the forging of a common front would be limited. Siad Barre furthered this process and helped his own cause by arming other groups residing in the north (such as the WSLF), encouraging them to carry out attacks and then sending his own representatives in to mediate between the groups.[88] Isaaqs did not enjoy any sense of territorial self-government; on the contrary, the harsh security apparatus in northern Somalia under General Mohamed Hashi Gani and General Mohamed Said Hersi Morgan, alienated many northerners.

Siad Barre employed similar tactics in his effort to defang the Majerteen, who were the predominant clan in the DFSS. During the 1980s two of his ministers, Abdurahman Abdulla Osman (education) and Mohammed Omar Jama (commerce) reportedly persuaded many Majerteen to reject any affiliation with the DFSS.[89] Also notable in this respect is the political amnesty offered by Siad Barre himself to disenchanted members of the DFSS, which was evidently credible enough to have been accepted by many of the front's members.

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[87] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 1st quarter, 1986.

[88] "Somalia: Barre Hangs On," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 24, no. 5 (March 2, 1983).

[89] Another prominent Majerteen in the upper levels of the Siad Barre government was Abririzak Mahamoud Abubakar, the head of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party's (SRSP) training program. "Somalia: Post Reshuffle," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 23, no. 6 (March 17, 1982).

In 1985, *Africa Contemporary Record* reported that, despite continued backing from Ethiopia, the DFSS "showed little sign of military activity" — a level that remained much the same until the fall of the regime in 1991.[90]

Being the largest single clan in Somalia, it was in Siad Barre's interests to keep the Hawiye on-side.[91] Siad Barre sought to prevent any sort of Isaaq-Hawiye alliance which, if consummated, would almost certainly lead to the regime's demise (particularly since Mogadishu was in Hawiye territory). Hawiyes had become uneasy in 1982 when their senior representative in government, Mohammed Osman Jelle, was imprisoned by the government. Following the arrest of a number of Hawiyes for alleged complicity in a 1986 coup attempt, several senior Hawiye officers defected to the SNM. Nonetheless, after the Darods, the Hawiye consistently comprised the largest bloc in the composition of Somali governments.[92] Siad Barre could count on the support from a number of key Hawiye figures during the life of his regime including the second Vice-President, an Assistant Secretary General to the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP) (who was, reportedly, "very close to Barre"), the Minister of Higher Education and the Minister of Finance. "It is these people in particular" remarked *Africa Confidential*, "who act as a conduit for government funds and patronage to the Hawiye."[93]

The 1986 Car Crash. On the international front, the Ethiopian-Somali peace

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[90] *Africa Contemporary Record, 1985-86*, p. B353.

[91] Which of the Somali clan families is the largest is a contentious issue for obvious reasons. Many if not most observers, however, maintain that the Hawiye are the most populous.

[92] Lewis, p. 166.

[93] "Somalia: Barre Hangs On," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 24, no. 5 (1983).

agreement of 1988 had been a turning point in the regime's fortunes. But another event, Siad Barre's near fatal car crash in May 1986, had almost equal gravity. Early accounts claimed that the subsequent transfer of power to the second in command, Ali Samatar, went smoothly. In fact, the accident had major consequences for the future of the regime. In the short term, the event touched off an acute (but nonviolent) political showdown as different individuals positioned themselves for the possibility that Siad Barre would not return to office. While Ali Samatar did not have the support of a major clan, his own personal popularity and the fact that both the presidency and the defence ministry were not in the hands of Siad relatives alarmed other presidential aspirants (notably Siad Barre's son, General Maslah, and Siad's brother, Jama Barre). Blocked from an attempt to seize power through constitutional means at the time of the accident, senior Marehan officers, led by General Maslah, came together in a dramatic show of strength to ensure that Samatar did not use the event to further his own grip on power.

More importantly, two critical longer term observations can be made. First is that while Siad Barre did return to office, the President's political strength was significantly reduced and in his weakened capacity he was less adept at balancing various clans and interests. Consequently, government decisions were "fiercely contested" and political outcomes were more often the result of rivalries within the regime.[94] A second observation is that the accident galvanized senior members of Siad Barre's family into ensuring that they would be better prepared for a future succession struggle. What followed was the most

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[94] See Richard Greenfield, "What Price Political Prisoners," *Africa Report*, January-February 1988, pp. 48-51.

thorough series of purges and self-promotions to date as threatening individuals or clans were removed and power was concentrated not just on the Marehan clan but on Siad Barre's own family.[95] Remarkably, however, the key actors behaved as if their actions were taking place in a political vacuum. That neither the DFSS nor the SNM could take advantage of the accident was an indication of their own relative weakness at the time. But the players at the centre of the drama showed little concern that their efforts would be perceived by others as further reducing an already narrow power base. Their own ambition for power suggested an unwarranted confidence that the regime would maintain a favourable balance of political and military power indefinitely and allow them to overcome any hostility such a concentration of power might elicit. In fact, wrote one Somali observer, the events which followed the car crash "sent a shudder through the regime's tribal landscape." The "threatening performance" of Siad Barre's family members "sent a clear message to all clans, including the other MOD clans." The author notes that the subsequent political trend "excluded the other two MOD coalition members" (namely Ogadeni and Dolbahante) and signaled the imminent breakdown of the MOD coalition.[96]

Moves by General Maslah to consolidate power in his own hands began after Siad Barre embarked on a trip to Romania, Yemen and Turkey in 1987, and involved the arrest of four military leaders on the grounds that they were plotting a coup against the absent

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[95] The most notable demotion in this regard was that of Ali Samatar from the position of 1st Vice President to Prime Minister -- an office that had not been filled for several years. Ali Samatar also lost his portfolio as Minister of Defence.

[96] Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy* (London: By the author, 1994), p. 72.

President.[97] General Maslah was evidently concerned that those he had arrested were planning to support the President's constitutional successor, Vice President Ali Samatar, rather than his own bid for the presidency. The event led to the formation of alliances within the regime as different family members, including two of the president's wives (one of whose brother was among those arrested by Maslah) joined forces in an effort to secure or defend political power. The issue was ostensibly resolved with the return of Siad Barre to Somalia (and the release of the four alleged coup plotters), but the concentration of power continued. By the end of 1990, Maslah had systematically removed most of the non-Marehan officers whom he thought could obstruct his rise to the presidency. After the incident, the Economist Intelligence Unit commented,

> Embarrassing though it is for family quarrels to have surfaced so publicly, there is no sign that any of the obvious potential heirs to the president are prepared to cooperate with each other, and none have shown any sign of being able to command serious national support. The implications of this for the future government are made all the more serious by growing impatience among Somalia's other clans at what is seen as an excessive effort by the Marehan to prolong their time in power.[98]

Indeed, as paranoia mounted, family members exerted increasing pressure on the President to replace senior government officials of questionable loyalty with family. But in acquiescing to their demands, Siad Barre unwittingly accelerated the regime's demise by further undercutting the support base and encouraging dissent among the newly disenfranchised. No longer within the circles of power, key members of the regime departed to form their own rebel movements against the government they themselves had served. The

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[97] Among the four were Brigadier General Abdinasser Haji Hashi (former commander of the Mogadishu tank brigade), Brigadier General Saeed Daoud (head of the air defense corps), Colonel Ibrahim Elmoge (military intelligence), and Colonel Mohamed Samatar (Military Police).

[98] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 3rd quarter, 1987.

departure of the Ogadeni and the Dolbahante were the most obvious indications of the regime's imminent demise.

The Departure of the Ogadeni Pillar of MOD. The obvious risk involved in any peace agreement with Ethiopia was that it threatened to come at the cost of one of the three pillars of the MOD coalition. Making a deal with Ethiopia required Mogadishu to recognize Ethiopia's territorial integrity and, consequently, signaled an end to any subsequent efforts by the Siad Barre regime to secure Ogadeni self-determination in Ethiopia's Ogaden desert or integration with Somalia. There is evidence that a rift between Ogadenis and Marehans had occurred prior to the start of negotiations in 1985. Indeed, Siad had claimed that Ogadenis had never showed him sufficient appreciation for his going to war with Ethiopia on their behalf in 1977 and that Ogadenis had been behind two alleged coups launched in 1984 and 1985.[99] It was no surprise, then, that neither the Ogadenis themselves nor any group claiming to represent Ogadeni interests (such as the WSLF) were invited to attend the negotiations with Addis Ababa.

Anticipating possible moves by Ogadenis in the regime to pre-empt the deal, Siad Barre sought to neutralize senior Ogadeni officers and had begun reducing their number and influence within the regime. But Siad had also sought to ensure that moderate Ogadeni support was sustained by promoting or keeping a number of trusted Ogadeni officials within the regime. The most notable example in this respect was Major General Adan Abdullahi

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[99] See Richard Greenfield, "An Embattled Barre," *Africa Report*, May-June 1987, pp. 65-69 ; and "Towards an Ogaden Pact," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 27, no. 5 (February 26, 1986). Other observers trace the origins of the Ogadeni break from MOD to the failure to prevail over Ethiopian forces in the 1977-78 war in the Ogaden. "Somali in victory, rebels in defeat," is the expression S. J. Hamrick, a former US State Department diplomat, uses to describe this break and subsequent unrest. See S.J. Hamrick, "How Somalia Was Left in the Cold," *New York Times*, February 6, 1993, p. 21.

Nur "Gebiyu," an Ogadeni who was promoted to the Minister of Defence in a December 1987 cabinet shuffle (taking the post over from Siad Barre, who had held the portfolio since Ali Samatar had been demoted following the car crash). With close links to the President's son, General Maslah, and another senior Ogadeni officer, Ahmed Omar Jess (who controlled 8000 Ogadeni troops in the north), Gebiyu's appointment meant that Ogadeni support had been secured once again and Siad Barre appeared to have masterminded another clan balancing act. It was not to last. In yet another cabinet shuffle on April 11, 1989, Gebiyu was demoted from the Defence Ministry to the Ministry of Tourism and Information before being thrown out of the cabinet altogether and eventually arrested in June 1989.[100] Colonel Omar Jess was also forced to accept a reassignment in the south.

A group of Ogadeni troops in the southern city of Kismayu responded to the demotions and increasing Marehan hegemony with open rebellion. Efforts by the regime to negotiate with the rebels came to no avail.[101] Colonel Jess defected from the regime with several hundred Ogadeni government soldiers and joined the Somali opposition (some of whom were still in Ethiopia). Gebiyu's son-in-law, Colonel Bashir Ali 'Bililqo' moved to set up an Ogadeni opposition movement, the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), which began limited collaborative efforts with the SNM and carried out attacks on government

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[100] Gebiyu's replacement as Minister of Defence was another Ogadeni, Hussein Abdulrahman Matan, but his civilian status left little doubt that military power was no longer in the hands of the Ogadeni, and that his position was mere tokenism. Control of the Defence Ministry resided in the hands of Gebiyu's rival, and Siad Barre son-in-law, General Mohamed Siad Hersi Morgan.

[101] A government delegation of Marehan elders and two Ogadeni colonels met with Ogadeni rebels at Afmadu (100 km north of Mogadishu) in August. The rebels demanded Gebiyu's release and the withdrawal of government troops from Kismayu. The meeting ended in a shootout with the rebels wounding both Ogadeni colonels, allegedly as a warning to other Ogadeni officers who were continuing to support the government. See "The End in Sight for Siad," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 30, no. 18 (September 8, 1989).

troops. The Ogadeni pillar of MOD was lost. The Dolbahante appeared to be about to depart as well.

The SNM had hoped and expected to prevail over the Dolbahante even more than the Ogadeni with whom they had frequently been involved in violent conflict. Having a northern culture similar to the Isaaq, the Dolbahante had been the SNM's best hope for driving a wedge between Darod groups. In the past Siad Barre had sought to portray Mogadishu's conflict with the SNM as one which pitted the Darod clan family against the Isaaqs. But the behaviour of the Marehan, and Siad Barre's family antics in particular, led some Dolbahante to consider sharing power in Mogadishu with the Isaaqs instead.[102] As early as 1988, five of Siad Barre's generals had refused to involve themselves in the fighting in the north and stated their preference to remain neutral. Siad Barre undertook efforts to keep the Dolbahante on side and break any sort of alliance between his Dolbahante son-in-law, Ahmed Sulieman, and the now-Prime Minister, Ali Samatar. A deal hatched in August 1988 had included offering the post of the Interior Ministry back to Ahmed Sulieman and the post of Vice-Defence Minister to Ahmed's brother, General Mohamed Adan 'Degoabe' — a proposition that the Marehan members of the regime hoped would maintain Darod solidarity.[103]

Both these efforts to win over Ogadenis and Dolbahantes are prime examples of how positions of power were a central and often effective means of buying peace from a group — even at this late stage in the game. Complex deals were arranged often by Siad Barre in

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[102] "Generals Fall Out," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 29, no. 19 (September 23, 1988).

[103] "Generals Fall Out," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 29, no. 19 (1988).

the hope of bringing an entire clan back into the fold. But the effectiveness of these overtures was reduced by the fact that they were increasingly seen as mere tokenism rather than as offering genuine access to power. Alternatively, the loss of political power which came with an individual's removal from political office, was a seminal event in the resort to violent conflict which would eventually overwhelm the regime. It was the missteps by Siad Barre and those surrounding him that finally led key components of the ruling coalition to break with the government that they had hitherto had a stake in sustaining. Moreover, the regime's previous arming of Ogadeni and Dolbahante militias in their fight against the Isaaqs and the fact that Ogadenis made up a substantial portion of the armed forces leadership would have ominous implications for the regime once these components of MOD broke away.

The Formation of the United Somali Congress. Opening a "second front" in the south using Hawiye rebels was an important objective for the SNM insofar as it allowed the Somali opposition to portray itself as a national force rather than an exclusively Isaaq-based movement. The first indications that such an alliance was in the making came in 1985 when SNM statements suggested that a second front with the Hawiye had been opened in the Bakool and Hiran regions.[104] The SNM did attract a number of disillusioned Hawiye's into their movement — most notably one of the SNM's vice chairs, 'Ali Mohamed Ossobleh "Wardigly." But differences between the Hawiye and the SNM continued: Isaaq leaders resented Ossobleh's popularity, while Ossobleh criticized the movement for concentrating its military operations in the north (and thus confirming suspicions of the SNM's secessionist

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[104] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 3rd quarter, 1985.

aspirations).[105] In any event, while there were debates within the SNM concerning whether or not an Isaaq-based movement in the north had the capacity to topple the regime by itself, most others, including a former member of the Hawiye-based United Somali Congress (USC), dismissed the prospect as "preposterous."[106] Evidently, the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime would require the support of the Hawiye. But well before the regime did collapse in 1991, critics speculated that the Hawiye's were sitting on the sidelines and their refusal to commit themselves one way or another indicated they were only waiting for the Isaaq and Darod to exhaust each other so that they could then pick up the pieces.[107]

The late arrival of powerful Hawiye-based rebel groups suggests that the collapse of the Siad Barre regime may have been related less to Hawiye disenchantment and disenfranchisement (beyond that felt by all Somalis), and more to the inability of a charismatic and militarily competent leader to acquire sufficient military hardware and to arouse sufficient support among Hawiye's in and around Mogadishu. The Hawiye-based USC was formed in Rome in 1989. From there the leadership recruited General Mohamed Farah Aidid to Ethiopia from his post as Somalia's ambassador to India, to gather forces and lead a charge to overthrow Siad Barre. There appears to have been little doubt that General Aidid had the military skill to defeat government troops and when he defected he brought with him numerous Hawiyes from the Somali army. In June 1990, Aidid formed an alliance with the SNM at Mustahil in Ethiopia. An agreement with the Ogadeni-based SPM

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[105] Lewis, p. 213.

[106] M.A. Jesow, former USC representative to London. Interview with the author, June 20, 1997.

[107] "Showdown in the North," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 29, no. 15 (July 29, 1988).

followed. Another agreement in October 1990 dealt with plans for a future Somali government and, for the interim, the leaders pledged not to engage in peace talks with Siad Barre. By November 1990, Aidid's militia had already overcome government troops in each of the central regions of Mudug, Galgudud, and Hiran. But by that time, there was already unrest in Mogadishu as Hawiyes began to threaten government buildings and offices. By the end of December 1990, an uprising had begun among Mogadishu's residents. As they became organized, however, they did so under another USC military leader, General Mohamed Nur 'Galaal,' and not under Galaal's adversary, General Aidid, whose troops had yet to reach Mogadishu.

Siad Barre had made several offers to meet some of the terms of the Somali opposition. In August 1989 the Central Committee of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party announced plans for the creation of a limited multi-party system. The process, however, was not to be in place for another sixteen months. The opposition groups claimed that the regime's days were numbered and rejected the government's proposals out of hand. Moreover, the credibility of these offers was undermined by the regime's arrest of members of the only significant unarmed organization, the so-called *Manifesto Group*. The group, comprised of over one hundred Somali intellectuals and business interests, had proposed several initiatives during 1990 which they believed could lead to a peaceful way out of the impasse.

It is clear, however, that the armed Somali opposition groups were not interested in a peaceful settlement, not least because a deal between the Manifesto Group and the government would jeopardize their own aspirations for power and meant that their sacrifice

had been in vain.[108] The fact that there were several disparate armed groups with similar approaches to a negotiated settlement, as well as disunity within the most significant group around Mogadishu, would not bode well for a peaceful outcome in post-Siad Barre Somalia.

In the end, Siad Barre's regime was killed by a thousand cuts. By January 1991 many groups controlled territory outside the capital but few of them controlled the regions beyond their own clan turf. The government army was sprawled along three main fronts fighting each of the SNM in the north, the SPM in the south and, most recently, the USC in central Somalia. In the last year of his regime, Siad Barre, himself, was referred to as the "mayor of Mogadishu" as a result of his own limited territorial control.[109] He was only overthrown when Mogadishans themselves rose up in December 1990 and January 1991 under the USC's General Mohamed Galaal and later assisted by SPM troops under Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess. General Aidid, who did not arrive in Mogadishu until later, turned out to be one of the few military leaders whose superior military capacity allowed him to break out of his traditional Habir Gedir territory.[110] But, as will be discussed in the next chapter,

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[108] Ibrahim Megag Samatar, one of the SNM's leaders, stated that the Manifesto Group's members were "brave but belated". He claimed that it was thanks to the armed rebel movements which had weakened the government, that the Manifesto Group could even exist. "I think their manifesto was really the catalyst that has awakened the people" in Mogadishu, remarked Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, who would eventually become president of an independent Somaliland. "But that is where I think their role ends." He argued that the Manifesto Group should now step aside to allow rebels to form a transitional government or face a showdown with them. Robert M. Press, "Somali Dissidents Detail Government Wrongdoings," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 31, 1990, p. 6.

[109] In the last days of the Siad Barre regime, the SPM claimed to have been in control of Bakol, Bay, Gedo, Shebelle regions and the outskirts of Mogadishu. The SNM controlled northern Somalia. Central Somalia was described by one SPM official as a "no man's land." Mohammed, Muhumed Ugas Hashi, "Why the USC Cannot Alone Rule Somalia," *New African*, August 1991, p. 12.

[110] The exact date of Aidid's arrival in Mogadishu is uncertain — a problem which is not helped by the fact that several groups included themselves under the USC banner. It is clear, however, that he arrived "late in the day". According to Makinda, Galaal's USC force of 1500 men had been fighting 50 km from Mogadishu and arrived in the first week of January 1991. Siad Barre's departure did not come until after the

his efforts were resisted by other Hawiyes as well as Siad Barre's own troops (even after the President fled Mogadishu in a tank on the night of January 26-27 1991) and he has been regarded by some as a squatter in Mogadishu ever since.

IV

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be made concerning power balances and power-sharing in the last years of the Siad Barre regime. The first is that inclusive government which went beyond mere tokenism was an effective means of sustaining the regime. The inclusion of clan representatives was effective in buying support from the clan as a whole. Alternatively, their demotion or outright dismissal led to violence. Previously established rebel organizations resisted any sort of cooperative efforts beyond token gestures. The apparent contradiction in the practices of the Siad Barre regime prior to its fall are interesting in this regard. On the one hand, Siad Barre's "shrewd" understanding of clan politics and his careful balancing of government suggested that he was sensitive to the need to maintain an inclusive government in order to maintain stability. Indeed, for twenty-one years he had succeeded in finding a balance whereby a minimum number of concessions to allies still allowed him freedom of action and a greater concentration of political and military power than his adversaries. On the other hand, the actions of him and members of his regime at the end of the 1980s are impressive insofar as they indicate an almost total, even reckless, abandonment of these

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arrival of more heavily armed SPM troops under Omar Jess' leadership. Meanwhile, General Aidid was, much to his later frustration, still fighting government troops in central Somalia. See Makinda, p. 31; Africa Watch, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death," in *News From Africa Watch*, vol. 4, no. 2 (February 13, 1992), p. 3.

principles — the removal of Isaaqs from military positions and the bombing of Isaaq towns in the north; the increasing prominence of members of his family in senior posts; and the political maneuverings among family members at the time of the car crash. Siad's previous experience apparently led him to the mistaken belief that no matter how narrow his political base, his clan's dominance over the levers of force would allow him to prevail once again. The problem was that, by this time, these resources were increasingly difficult to find.

From its earlier status as having one of the finest militaries in Africa, the position of the regime relative to its adversaries declined during the 1980s. Despite Siad Barre's early expectations based on Washington's rhetoric, US military aid to Somalia was significant but never enormous. US military aid to Somalia did not compare with the massive quantities of assistance provided by the Soviet Union to Ethiopia or by the Soviet Union to Somalia in the 1970s. Consequently Somalia was not a client to Washington in the way that Ethiopia had become a client to Moscow. The downfall of the regime, however, came soon after it committed a tactical error — allowing the coincidental decline of the regime's military power and the dismissal of the important Ogadeni component of the MOD coalition. While the regime tried to make peace with Ethiopia by renouncing claims to the Ogaden, in fact it further alienated Ogadenis in the Somali army at the same time that it forced SNM guerrillas out of Ethiopia and into a offensive position. With the regime weakened and facing an aggressive guerrilla force, its demise was only a matter of time.

As its military strength declined relative to its adversaries, the regime became increasingly susceptible to military challenge by these groups. Instead of working to maintain bridges it had earlier built to Somalia's numerous clans, the regime's actions only

drove away potential supporters. Only belatedly did Siad Barre offer give even the most qualified indication of a willingness to meet rebel demands. Militarily significant and excluded from power, it should not be surprising that rebel groups refused these overtures and instead pressed for violent confrontation.

Chapter 5

The Wars of Post-Siad Barre Somalia, 1991-1995

I

From the fall of Siad Barre in January 1991 until the conclusion of United Nations intervention in 1995 the level of conflict in much of Somalia alternated between full-scale war between two or more armed factions and military stalemate which resulted only in massive looting and general insecurity. What was it about the Cold War's end that not only allowed such high levels of conflict and insecurity to develop, but allowed it to continue? What features of the Somali situation led to such a dramatically different conflict outcome from, for example, Ethiopia's post-Cold War experience? How was it that an unprecedented interventionist force was not only unable to bring peace to Somalia, but brought conflict upon itself?

In comparing the Somali situation with our other cases there are two points which are immediately evident. First, while our other two case studies have involved a government's confrontation with another rebel group, in Somalia from 1991-1995 there is no sense of government. Instead, what existed was near if not total anarchy. No one group or collection of groups could legitimately claim to govern all of Somalia and at no time did one group have anything approaching a monopoly of force. Second, almost all the events —

particularly from 1992 onward — were coloured by the considerable international involvement in Somalia. The United Nations and the United States were active participants in the conflict, both in terms of their efforts to secure a peace agreement and as participants in the fighting. The subsequent discussion will consider the wars in Somalia in both of these terms: the inter- and intra-clan conflicts which occurred throughout but most notably from 1991-1993 and 1994-1995; and the "war" which occurred between the Somali factions and the US-UN intervention forces in 1993.

Legacies of the Cold War and the Siad Barre Era. One of the most obvious legacies of the Siad Barre regime was the enormous quantity of weapons throughout Somalia. Almost a year after Siad Barre's fall, Jane Perlez of the *New York Times* noted that Mogadishu was "awash" in "arms of all kinds."[1] During the American intervention in 1992-1993, military officials stated that tens of thousands of handguns, grenades and heavy artillery pieces were assumed to be hidden in Somalia's urban markets, alleyways and narrow streets. An American officer, Colonel Fred Peck, described one weapons cache uncovered by US troops as the "K-mart" of the arms market.[2] Estimates of the number of armed Somalis ranged as high as 180,000.[3] Randall Robinson, the executive director of *Transafrica*, voiced his frustration at the ubiquity of arms and at those who supplied them: "Those policies, first from the Soviets and then from us, have contributed to the wreckage

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[1] Jane Perlez, "U.S. Role is Not to Disarm, Aide to a Top Somali Insists," *New York Times*, December 6, 1992, Sec. 4, p. 14.

[2] Five trucks, each with a five-ton carrying capacity, were required to remove the weapons from one weapons cache in Mogadishu's Bakara market. See Kenneth B. Noble, "Troops in Somalia Raid Big Arsenal," *New York Times*, January 12, 1993, p. A3.

[3] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 4th quarter, 1992.

of Somalia. Somalia has enough arms to outfit a major army. Twenty-five years ago it had none."[4] This was the most lasting legacy of the Cold War in Somalia. Indeed, while clan militias managed to import still more arms to carry out their battles, much of the weaponry had previously been supplied by the superpowers and their allies. However, the weaponry in Somalia was notable more for its quantity rather than for its quality or sophistication. The most common heavy weapon in post-Siad Somalia, for example, was the so-called "technical" which consisted of a large machine gun or other weapon mounted on a jeep and which was constructed in the workshops controlled by Somalia's "warlords."[5] Despite the relatively small monetary value of the weaponry which had been sent to Somalia during the 1980s, the nature of the weapons themselves (durable, usually small arms, requiring less maintenance and expertise than more sophisticated weapons) meant that the quantity of usable arms was still enormous and more than sufficient to arm a host of clan militias. In fact, one observer suggested that Somalis could have been relieved of *all* their weapons at a total cost to the international community of only $10-15 million.[6]

Perhaps the ubiquity of weapons in Somalia was so pronounced as a result of Siad Barre's practice of arming paramilitary groups and inciting them to attack other clans on the regime's behalf. A consequence of this practice was that groups were predisposed to further

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[4] Bob Hebert, "The Right Thing," *New York Times*, October 10, 1993, Sec. 4, p. 15.

[5] The term "technical" is derived from "Tekniko," a Soviet arms manufacturer who had previously trained Somali engineers. In the 1980s, these engineers mounted large weapons on Land Cruisers which were then called Tekniko vehicles and, later, "technicals."

[6] This total value assumed the cost of a gun to be around $120. The writer adds that even at four times that cost, the investment would still have been a good one. See Ray Bonner, "Buy Up the Somalis' Guns," *New York Times*, December 2, 1992, p. A23 .

violent conflict in the post-Siad Barre era. Particular hatreds hardened and groups were inclined either to consolidate control over their own territory as a means of self-preservation or to retaliate in kind for past attacks. Concerning the former, Isaaqs in the north declared the independence of northern Somaliland along the same borders which had divided British Somaliland from Italian Somalia prior to the 1960 unification. The call for Somaliland's independence in May 1991 was rooted in large part in Siad's attacks on the north during the late 1980s. In an interview, one northerner noted the transformation which came with Siad Barre's fall:

> A lot changed. I have pictures here, at my house. If I showed you pictures of my cousins from northern Somalia, who have been burned by napalm gas, you wouldn't believe it. Siad invited South African mercenaries and gave them airplanes to go and bomb Hargeisa. They killed the whole city. The leveled the whole city. They used napalm. They used everything, you know. If people do this to you, would you like to live with them? There is no point.[7]

In the south, violence was directed against Darods whether or not they were directly associated with the regime. Interviews with eye witnesses describe situations where Darods in general and Marehans in particular were singled out for retaliation for past oppression at the time of Siad Barre's fall. Mohamed Omar Giama, a former Somali ambassador to the European Community and a former vice-minister in Siad Barre's government, stated prior to his flight south to Kismayu that, "The United Somali Congress in Mogadishu has embarked on a policy of genocide. ... They seem to want to drive us [the Darods] out of the country. So the only solution is to fight back and defend ourselves."[8] Darod groups

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[7] Confidential interview with the author, June 13, 1997.

[8] Cited in Peter Biles, "Starting From Scratch," *Africa Report*, May-June 1991, p. 59.

congregated in Kismayu and after forming their own movement, the *Somali National Front*, began to mobilize a military effort to return to Mogadishu.[9]

Observers also note, however, a transformation in conflict from one which was directed "against anybody whom they identified as Darod" at the time of Siad's fall, to a series of conflicts involving many other clans and subclans after Siad Barre had fled the capital. The most notable of these was that which erupted between the different wings of the Hawiye-based United Somali Congress over control of the capital Mogadishu. Similarly, while Darods originally saw the Hawiye as their main enemy, the problems of Kismayu and Jubaland in southern Somalia were related more to conflicts which arose *within* the Darod clan family, indeed among different factions of the Ogadeni clan.

It was with these delicate and enormously complex characteristics that Somalia emerged from the Cold War era. From here we consider the efforts toward reconciliation and the power balances in Somalia to better understand why peace in Somalia was so elusive.

Observers of Somali politics have claimed that Somalia had never had enough resources of its own to maintain a centrally organized state. It therefore had to rely on externally-provided resources to maintain a unified state structure.[10] The collapse of the

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[9] Troops associated with Siad Barre made two attempts to recapture Mogadishu: one in April 1991 and another in April 1992. While both offensives came to within a few kilometers of Mogadishu, neither one succeeded in capturing the capital.

[10] In an interview with the author (May 31, 1996), United Nations-Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia consultant Matt Bryden stated that Somali state had never had control of sufficient domestic revenues to maintain a durable state structure and had become, consequently, dependent on externally-supplied resources. Menkhaus and Prendergast state similarly, "Economically, there was never in Somalia's history a sustainable material basis for a viable central state authority. In the past, the Somali state was funded almost entirely by Cold War-driven foreign aid, leading to a bloated and artificial structure which collapsed soon after that aid was frozen in the late 1980s." Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast, "Political Economy of Post-Intervention Somalia," *Somalia Task Force Issue Paper* #3, April 1995, p. 2.

regime suddenly meant that this funnel through which external funding passed through and was distributed was gone. Power was suddenly up-for-grabs and many groups were in contention. But while the subsequent battle for control had the appearance of clan warfare (and was reported in the media as clan warfare), the issue at hand had as much to do with personal ambition and the struggle for wealth and power as with clan animosities *per se*. Indeed, the two main Hawiye clans fighting over control of Mogadishu had no long-standing grievances between them.[11] "What is going on is not *clan* warfare," stated Dr. Ahmed Yusuf Farah, a Somali consultant with the United Nations in Addis Ababa in an interview. "Clans live together, no problem. Trade is going on between [clans]. These militias mobilize along clan lines but there is no clan fighting. [Rather] it is a political struggle between militias and [their] clan leaders."[12] A report issued by *Africa Watch* agreed that the ensuing violence was largely related to a struggle to gain political and economic control:

> In a poor and aid-dependent country such as Somalia, control over the symbols of 'legitimate' or 'sovereign' government are more than a matter of status, they are a license to print money. The government not only literally manufactures banknotes, but controls the exchange rate, can run up debts on the national account, and receives foreign aid — all of which are elements that can bring great personal fortunes to those in office.[13]

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[11] The Abgal and the Habir Gidir, the two Hawiye clans behind Mohamed Ali Mahdi and General Mohamed Farah Aidid respectively, did not have a history of conflict. The most significant difference anyone seems to be able to point out is that Habir Gidirs, as nomadic people, tended to think of themselves as somewhat superior to their southern and urban brethren. M. A. Jesow (former USC representative in London). Interview with the author, June 20, 1997.

[12] Dr. Ahmed Yusuf Farah. Interview with the author, May 27, 1996.

[13] Africa Watch, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death?" *News from Africa Watch*, vol. 4, no. 2 (February 13, 1992), p. 7. Indeed, observers did not fail to notice that much of the violence between General Mohamed Farah Aidid and Mohamed Ali Mahdi was sparked by Ali Mahdi's efforts to bring in plane loads of newly printed bank notes. See also Alex de Waal, "The Shadow Economy," *Africa Report*, March-April 1993, pp. 24-28.

Clan identity was, however, appropriated by clan leaders so that their own personal ambitions were inflated to that of the entire clan. Consequently, an entire clan benefitted or endured retaliation for the actions of one of its members.[14] Thus, while some groups sought to protect their local interests by consolidating control over their territory (the Isaaqs in northern Somalia, for example), others sought to capture the political center and rebuild the a state structure by cobbling together a coalition or arriving at a political agreement.

II

Political Agreements and the Failure to Achieve Peace

After the fall of Siad Barre there were at least a dozen significant conferences and agreements which sought to end the fighting and/or establish some form of limited government. Conferences and the political agreements they produced lived or died depending on their inclusiveness and their ambitiousness. By and large the agreements which were reached were limited in the extent to which they laid out details for a future permanent government structure. This is the context in which one should see the agreements that were forged. Nonetheless, the agreements which were worked out had a role in the prevention of conflict even if only in the short-term. Conferences and agreements which excluded one or more of the key actors were bound to collapse or result in violence.

The first of these efforts took place took place in June and July 1991 in neighbouring

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[14] John Prendergast, *The Gun Talks Louder Than the Voice: Somalia's Continuing Cycles of Violence* (Washington: Center of Concern, July 1994), p. 26. Prendergast cites one Somali as stating "When two groups fight, all of the people are at risk. When [Colonel Omar] Jess attacks, all of the Mohammed Zubeir must be careful because they face retaliation." The Mohamed Zubeir are a sub-clan of the Ogaden clan and the Darod clan family.

Djibouti. The two Djibouti conferences included Somalia's major armed factions. The leaders committed themselves to a general ceasefire and even proposed a plan for a distribution of political seats across Somalia's most significant clans and factions. Despite the pledges made, however, the accords did not bring peace to Somalia nor did the proposed allotment of seats lead to the establishment of a government. In another agreement, Mohamed Ali Mahdi and General Mohamed Farah Aidid, the two main protagonists in the battle over Mogadishu, did reach a ceasefire agreement in March 1992 after seven months of intense conflict. The deal, however, said nothing about a future government for Somalia. The most substantive political agreement came at the end of March 1993 in Addis Ababa. Here faction leaders committed themselves to disarmament under UN supervision and to a two-year transition leading to the formation of a national government. The agreement proposed the formation of district and regional councils and a Transitional National Council. One year later, with the commitments made in Addis Ababa still largely unfulfilled, General Aidid and Ali Mahdi signed (on behalf of their faction alliances) the Nairobi Declaration which laid out principles similar to those agreed upon in Addis Ababa and called for a national reconciliation conference to be convened the following May. The conference never took place, however, and in March 1995 the UNOSOM mandate ended with no real peace and no Somali government in place.[15] In addition to these conferences a number of smaller regional conferences were organized and often had greater success in bringing about peace.

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[15] UNOSOM refers to United Nations Operation in Somalia. The original operation, UNOSOM I, began in April 1992. The second, larger operation, UNOSOM II, began in March 1993. Between the two UN-led operations was the American-led mission, known as UNITAF (Unified Task Force), which lasted from December 1992 until March 1993.

In examining these events, one can identify several factors which meant that agreements were difficult to achieve or that, even when agreements were realized, meant they did not necessarily lead to a cessation of violence. Alternatively, factors which helped bring about peace among these less ambitious conferences can be specified.

Political Ambition and Legitimacy. Unlike circumstances at the time of Mengistu's fall in Ethiopia, there was considerably more confusion at the time of Mogadishu's takeover by the rebels. The violence and disorder which was the result of a popular uprising already taking place within Mogadishu in December 1990 and January 1991,[16] was compounded by the fact that three additional rebel groups arrived subsequently, each claiming they had had a central role in Siad Barre's defeat.[17] To add further disorder, a member of the *Manifesto Group*, Mohamed Ali Mahdi, was in the process of taking over the USC leadership and declaring himself Somalia's interim president. The confusion allowed two of these groups, both claiming to represent the Hawiye-based USC, to justify their claims to political power.

There were few observers who did not note General Aidid's obsession with achieving the presidency. As in Ethiopia, a rebel's role in overthrowing Somalia's dictatorship was a large part of any subsequent claim to legitimacy. UN special envoy to Somalia, Robert Oakley, stated that "Aidid deeply, deeply believes, that having been the one who got rid of

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[16] Observers of events in Mogadishu at the time of Siad Barre's fall and the subsequent takeover strenuously argue that the violence in Mogadishu originated out of a popular uprising and only later achieved a degree of organization. Once underway, one observer noted, anybody who had access to a gun started fighting. Interview with Mogadishu resident, August 14, 1997. Interview with M. M. Afrah, formerly a journalist with the government's Somali National News Agency, June 27, 1997.

[17] These forces included United Somali Congress forces under General Galaal (Habir Gidir), Somali Patriotic Front forces, and later (much later according to some sources), USC forces under General Mohamed Farah Aidid.

Siad Barre, he's the one who should take his place. ... He's totally committed to that."[18] Another Somali journalist writing for *Reuters* at the time and in frequent contact with Aidid, noted this obsession: "He [Aidid] had this negative side. All he wanted was to become president of the country. By all means. By Hook or by Crook. He was obsessive about the presidency."[19] In an interview with the author, a former member of the USC argued further that the presidency had appeared Aidid's for the taking:

> His understanding was that he could [win the presidency]. ... The forces that he had, the geographical advantage of the Hawiye in central Somalia and southern Somalia [led him to believe] that he could topple Siad Barre and cleanly take over power. And that all other clans — which he thought were all insignificant according to his understanding — would just follow him once he kicked Siad Barre out of Mogadishu. That was his understanding. But he never thought that his main obstacle would be the Hawiye too.[20]

Outraged that his effort to secure the presidency for himself had been pre-empted by Ali Mahdi, Aidid launched a "lightning strike" in Mogadishu beginning in November 1991. In three months of fighting, an estimated 14,000 people were killed and another 300,000 were wounded as General Aidid and his Habir Gidir militia consolidated his control over much of Mogadishu.[21] But Mogadishu was largely Abgal territory rather than Habir Gidir. Aidid's attacks stimulated the Abgal clan, of which Ali Mahdi was a member, to come to his defense

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[18] Quoted in Steven A. Holmes, "The Man Who Makes Somalia Worse," *New York Times*, August 15, 1993, Sec. 4, p. 5.

[19] Afrah interview.

[20] Jesow interview.

[21] Casualty figures are cited by Donatella Lorch, "U.N. Still Struggling With Somali General's Militia," *New York Times*, September 14, 1993, p. A3.

and thus prevent Aidid from gaining complete control over the capital.[22] Members of the Aidid wing of the USC scoffed at Ali Mahdi's claim to the presidency, alleging that Ali Mahdi's faction had stolen the military victory from the armed movements, and Aidid himself claimed that the new interim government was "nothing but a continuation of the Siad Barre regime."[23] The USC's Mogadishu wing, for its part, claimed it had been fighting Siad's forces for three weeks prior to Aidid's arrival and that the Aidid faction had arrived "very late in the day" to take credit for a victory which rightly belonged to the Ali Mahdi faction."[24] Still other observers say neither one was solely responsible for the regime's overthrow[25] or that the overthrow was linked to an uprising already taking place within Mogadishu. One former Mogadishu resident noted,

> The whole thing is [nonsense] in the sense that if you were here first, or you were here last, it would not matter. Because this thing was going on. This was already going on. ... As I said, it was a spontaneous thing. So nobody could claim exactly whether he was first or last. They will tell you so, but I mean it was never like that. ... I mean everybody wants to claim something. So they could tell you so, but it was never like that. I knew.[26]

Nonetheless, Aidid's power continued to increase. Despite his inability to

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[22] In an interview with the author, M. A. Jesow stated; "When Aidid decided to kick Ali Mahdi out of Mogadishu that is when Ali Mahdi automatically got his Abgal army. Because Somalia is clan ... and if you attack one prominent individual, his clan will fight for him. And [Aidid] almost pushed Ali Mahdi out of Mogadishu."

[23] *Africa Watch*, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death," February 13, 1992, p. 4. With Ali Mahdi's selection of Siad Barre's last Prime Minister as the new Prime Minister in his own government, there was, evidently, some continuity between Siad Barre's government and that of Ali Mahdi's interim government.

[24] Aweys Haji Yusuf, Minister in the Presidential Office of Ali Mahdi's interim government. Quoted from *Africa Watch*, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death," February 13, 1992, p. 3.

[25] For instance, some observers note that the USC only came to prominence at the very end of Said Barre's rule, long after the regime had been weakened by years of guerrilla warfare. See Mohammed Muhumed Ugas Hashi, "Why the USC Cannot Alone Rule Somalia," *New African*, August 1991, p. 12.

[26] Author's interview with former Mogadishu resident, Omar Gedi, June 27, 1997.

consolidate complete control over Mogadishu, he successfully countered subsequent offensives of Siad Barre in April 1991 and again in April 1992 when *Somali National Front* (SNF) forces pushed to within a few kilometers of the capital. While the differences between the two Hawiye clans, the Abgals and Habir Gidirs were temporarily put aside during those encounters, Ali Mahdi himself could not countenance an alliance with General Aidid and abstained from the fighting. Consequently Aidid "took credit for the ultimate defeat of Somalia's biggest bogeyman, and gained in stature accordingly."[27] He subsequently used this special status to claim that his views should be given preferential consideration at any reconciliation conference.[28] But his victory was incomplete. Despite Aidid's claim that he had finally defeated Ali Mahdi in November 1991, Ali Mahdi himself appeared for a BBC interview the next day declaring that he was very much alive and still claiming the interim presidency of Somalia.[29] Indeed, Ali Mahdi remained the single most significant obstacle to Aidid's claim to the presidency.[30]

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[27] Matt Bryden, *Update on Situation on Muqdishu*, Report to the United Nations-Emergiencies Unit for Ethiopia, March 29, 1995.

[28] Aidid also unsuccessfully demanded that only those groups which had been involved in the fighting against Siad Barre be present at any reconciliation conference. Aidid targeted his words to newly created factions which he feared would support Ali Mahdi in conference decision making. Aidid was also eager to keep other interests — elders, women's groups, religious groups — out of conferences in the belief that he would be marginalized. At one conference there were over 250 participants. "The U.N. Trundles into Action," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 34, no. 6 (March 19, 1993).

[29] "Hundreds Slain in 5th Day of Strife in Somalia," *New York Times*, November 22, 1991, p. A9.

[30] It is notable that both men claimed they were not interested in the presidency per se. There are also reports that Ali Mahdi initially refused the USC's (Mogadishu wing) offer of the presidency immediately after Siad Barre fell; Interview with M.M. Afrah with the author. Ali Mahdi stated, "Anytime they decide I should quit and go, I will do so, but I won't resign because of the will of one person." For his part, Aidid claimed that his intention was not to govern Somalia, but to "liberate" it. Their respective claims to the presidency were based on the illegality or the incompetence of the other. See Peter Biles, "Filling the Vacuum," *Africa Report*, November-December 1991, p. 35. When asked in 1993 if he still wanted to be president of Somalia, he stated "That's up to the Somali people." Paul Watson, "A Laughing Fugitive Greets Foreign Press in Mogadishu,"

The combination of General Aidid's obsession with the presidency, the uncertainty and confusion which surrounded the take-over of the capital, and the need to defend clan interests were central factors not only in the genesis of violent conflict but in indisposing the parties to any amicable power-sharing agreement. In the rush to overthrow a dictator, the Somali case demonstrates that while an armed rebel group threatens the regime, several armed rebel groups threatens everybody.

The Benefits of Continued War. The main factions and militias in Somalia were also resistant to political agreements as a result of the wealth that could be generated not only because continued statelessness allowed for looting, but because the conflict itself kept the prices of goods artificially high. Moreover, the international intervention under UNOSOM I and II and UNITAF poured billions of dollars into Somalia which were exploitable by the armed militias. But unlike aid passing through and disbursed from a central government, continued statelessness benefitted many contenders for power. It appeared to be in everybody's interests (except those, of course, not associated with clan militias) to avoid a political agreement and subjecting themselves to the rule of law. Thus, not only did many groups have unprecedented access to wealth and often military supplies (thus increasing their absolute power), continued statelessness provided incentives to continue the conflict in the hope of increasing their relative power.[31]

Looting was directly associated with continued violent conflict. Areas that appeared

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New York Times, October 15, 1993, p. A12.

[31] See Matts Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilization After Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, Adelphi Paper (Oxford: Oxford University, 1996), p. 17.

to have been bombed had often only been stripped of anything of value. Alison Mitchell of the *New York Times* observed that,

> Marauding gangs, many organized by warlords and merchants, cut down telephone cables and dug up electric wires for the copper inside. They tore up the streets to steal the sewer pipes, leaving the sewage to pour into the streets. In a village near the port city of Merca, Somalis tell how an entire electric station disappeared overnight. In Berbera, a concrete factory disappeared and reappeared in Yemen, a United Nations official said.[32]

Osman Ato, General Aidid's chief financier (until Ato defected in 1995), is credited with organizing looting on a massive scale, reportedly extracting every piece of copper in Mogadishu (including that from underground telephone cables) in an effort to fund the USC and later SNA.

Aid agencies were particularly vulnerable to looting. In December 1992, the UN reported the disappearance of thirty of its aid trucks and their contents north of Mogadishu.[33] Aid agencies without sufficient armed protection were frequently relieved of everything from computers to walkie-talkies to video-recorders all which became the currency of the Somali economy and a means to fund their respective war efforts.[34] While food distribution organizations count on a percentage of food aid being lost or stolen, the looting which took

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[32] "I never thought Somalis could go down to this level" claimed Ahmed Jama, a former Somali police chief. I was totally ignorant as to what could happen. I never thought Somalis would destroy themselves and all their services." Cited by Alison Mitchell, "Fifth Horseman of Somalia: Stealing," *New York Times*, January 24, 1993, p. 16. Even a car that the interim president Ali Mahdi was driving in was identified by British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd during visit to Mogadishu, as belonging to the British Embassy. Jane Perlez, "Guns, Greed and Khat Define a Once-Graceful City," *New York Times*, December 7, 1992, p. 1.

[33] Eric Schmitt, "Marines and Somali Troops Meet Warily But Peacefully," *New York Times*, December 21, 1992, p. A12.

[34] Perlez, "Guns, Greed and Khat," *New York Times*, December 7, 1992.

place in the aftermath of Siad Barre's collapse was said to "go beyond mere skimming."[35] Much of the food aid and supplies provided by the Red Cross, CARE, and other relief agencies disappeared only to appear later at local food markets. In his own account of events leading up to massive international intervention, the UN Secretary General wrote:

> In fact, international aid provided by the United Nations and voluntary agencies had become a major source of income in Somalia and, as such, the targets of armed attacks. So-called "authorities" — sometimes no more than two or three bandits with guns — exacted bribes from donor agencies and organizations at the port and at innumerable roadblocks and checkpoints along transport routes. Agencies were also forced to pay for "protection," in particular for escorts of their personnel and convoys. Warehouses were looted and expatriate personnel were detained. The net result, as I said in a letter dated 24 November 1992 to the President of the Security Council, was that the humanitarian assistance reaching the intended beneficiaries was often barely more than a trickle.[36]

Indeed, Andrew S. Natsios, an aid coordinator for USAID, publicly voiced his outrage that as much as 80% of food aid was being stolen and used to purchase weapons from Ethiopia, stating, "The relief food should not be a treasury to buy more guns."[37]

There is also considerable evidence the famine in Somalia was not a result of drought but was a consequence of the war. Even when conflict subsided, food was plentiful but

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[35] Diana Jean Schemo, "Donors Find Much Somali Aid Stolen," *New York Times*, February 9, 1993, p. A10.

[36] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Introduction by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations," *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996*, Blue Book Series (New York: United Nations, 1996) p. 29.

[37] Jane Perlez, "Somali Aid Workers Split on Troops," *New York Times*, November 27 1992, p. A14. Natsios's figure of 80 percent was significant coming when it did at the time of the decision to send a muscular international force. Peter Stocker, head of the international Red Cross operation in Mogadishu claimed the figure was too high. Jane Perlez, "U.S. Plan to Guard Convoys is Backed by Somali General, *New York Times*, November 28, 1992, p. A1. Still this figure continued to be used in subsequent weeks in the press in an apparent justification for the large US operation which was to follow.

inaccessible because of the insecurity.[38] The hoarding of food and the inability of aid agencies to deliver the often considerable food supplies they had kept prices artificially high all to the benefit of the militias. James R. Kunder, director of the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, claimed that food was available but that "people are dying in the thousands daily because aid workers cannot move relief food." "Its appalling," he continued, "that there is food at the Mogadishu port and at a store nearby but it cannot reach millions of starving people a few kilometers away because of the insecurity."[39] In his address to the nation, President George Bush echoed the same sentiments when he asked Americans to imagine "7,000 tons of food aid literally bursting out a warehouse on a dock in Mogadishu while Somalis starve less than a kilometer away because relief workers cannot run the gauntlet of armed gangs roving the city," to justify US intervention in December 1992.[40]

The problem was that while the subsequent international intervention in Somalia did succeed in delivering food to the most needy, it provided little incentive to reach political accommodation. On the contrary, judging by its enormous expense, international intervention only further enriched and empowered the clan militias. Menkhaus and Prendergast write of UNOSOM as being a "cash cow" for the warlords.[41] Indeed, UNOSOM reportedly paid Hawadle militia leaders who controlled Mogadishu's airport $100,000 so that

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[38] See for instance, Jane Perlez, "Soccer and Seedlings: Hope in a Somali Town," *New York Times*, October 23, 1992, p. A1; Donatella Lorch, "Effort to Get Food Out to Somalis Falls Prey to Arms and Frustration," *New York Times*, December 6, 1992, p. A1; Jane Perlez, "Where a War Has Bred Famine, Green Somali Fields Offer Hope," *New York Times*, December 14, 1992, p. A1; Eric Schmitt, "Troops in Somalia Close In On goal of Aiding Hungry," *New York Times*, December 16, 1992, p. A1.

[39] Cited in Jane Perlez, "U.S. Says Airlifts Fail Somali Needy," *New York Times*, July 31, 1992, p. A9.

[40] "Transcript of President's Address on Somalia," *New York Times*, December 5, 1992, p. 4.

[41] Menkhaus and Prendergast, p. 9.

the first Pakistani peacekeepers could be stationed there. Previously, militia leaders had been charging $300 per aircraft landing.[42] By December 1992 this figure had increased to $1200 per plane.[43] By early 1994, UNOSOM was paying over $40 million in salaries and contracts and was employing approximately 17,000 Somalis (11,000 of whom were located in Mogadishu) to facilitate their operations. It was no wonder that some of the fiercest battles continued to be fought among the Hawiye over Mogadishu given that so much of UNOSOM's $2 billion total budget was distributed amongst Hawiye subclans in Mogadishu.[44] NGO's also essentially adopted a clan and employed them for all of their essential services; thus in renting a house from a Sheekhaal (of the Hawiye clan family) landlord, the French NGO, *Action International Contre La Faim*, also inherited Sheekhaal to staff their operations and a Sheekhaal militia to protect their assets. These were then increasingly concentrated among clan leaders (thus feeding their political or military ambitions) rather than the population as a whole or even Somalia's most impoverished.[45]

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[42] "Warlords Meet the New World Order," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 33, no. 24 (December 4, 1992).

[43] Donatella Lorch, "40 Killed in Fighting as Somalia Awaits Americans' Arrival," *New York Times*, December 8, 1992, p. A1. Airports were an unusually profitable location for militias to control both because they were the means by which the narcotic *qat* could be important and because they were the key conduits for aid agencies and the UN. Observers noted how during UNOSOM's withdrawal in March 1995, clan militias surrounded Mogadishu's airport ready to take control as soon as the foreign troops had departed. See Donatella Lorch, "Gunmen Race For the Spoils In Somalia," *New York Times*, March 2, 1995, p. A9. Nor was this a problem only in the south. Hargeisa's airport in northern Somaliland became contested territory and led to a small war in October 1994 between members of the Eidegalla, who had controlled the airport for the previous 18 months, and the government of Mohammed Egal. The Eidegalla militia reportedly profited considerably from their taxing of incoming flights until the government successfully ejected them from the runway. See "Battle For Control of Hargeysa Airport," UN Briefing Paper, October 15, 1994.

[44] One donor official noted the minor impact such a large expenditure seemed to have on bring peace to Somalia stating that "for this amount, Mogadishu could have been turned into a super Disney World and all Somali children put on a life-time health plan and given full scholarships for schooling abroad." Quoted in Prendergast, p. 6.

[45] "The Politics of Hunger," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 33, no. 19 (September 25, 1992).

Prendergast claims, for instance, that the $100,000 the *International Committee for the Red Cross* paid to maintain their own security facilitated the rearming of General Aidid and other militia leaders.[46] The continued provision of aid, in turn encouraged further violent actions by the militias. Russ Ulray, a logistics officer for the United Nations World Food Program argued, "Everything we've done here promotes rule by the gun. ... At the port we were paying by check twice a month. ... Now they want it in cash every four days. They come demanding it with four technicals, and they say what they want in a relatively threatening way — so it's given to them."[47]

This is not to say that violent conflict would have been absent if such assets had not existed. These resources, however, increased both the incentive to fight (or alternatively, disincentive to find political accommodation) and provided the means by which continued war could be financed. An ongoing UN presence ensured the flow of resources would also continue; quick political agreement and the departure of the UN meant they would not. Realizing their predicament, the UN tried to reverse this process in November 1993 by making explicit promises of international aid contingent on an agreement being reached.[48]

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[46] Prendergast, p. 6.

[47] Even beyond that which was stolen, significant percentages of arriving food aid was distributed to guards watching over the shipments. From one 4000 ton shipment arriving at Mogadishu's port, 240 tons were allotted to the guards. But according to a logistics officer for the UN World Food Programme, James Ulray, "That's what it says on paper.... Its the demand on top of the 240 tons that's the killer." Quoted in Jane Perlez, "Thievery and Extortion Halt Flow of U.N. Food to Somalis," *New York Times*, December 2, 1992, p. A1.

[48] The Clinton Administration stated that $100 million would be made available to Somalia. The American ambassador to the UN Madeleine K. Albright stated, "These funds will be used for humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation projects in those regions where progress on political reconciliation and security has been made.' ... 'These funds will be made available if and only if Somalis make real progress in creating a secure environment and reconciling politically." Quoted in Paul Lewis, "U.S. Offers a $100 Million Peace Deal to Somalia," *New York Times*, November 20, 1993, Sec. I, p. 3. These pledges likely paled in comparison to the cash payments which were made directly to the militias in Somalia.

Interestingly, the [March] 1994 Nairobi agreement between the warlords came only when the UN refused to continue paying the colossal hotel bills of clan leaders and their entourages.

Peace agreements were undesirable for the faction leaders because they interfered with their own political ambitions. Peace agreements do not work unless their signatories are themselves committed to the process — which Somalia's leaders clearly were not. Warlords were reluctant to sign accords because it threatened to freeze what was otherwise a very fluid military situations. To live up to cease-fire agreements, then, precluded satisfying political ambitions or reacquiring territory which they believed was rightfully theirs and which might be easily acquired in future. Thus, in July 1991, General Aidid was reluctant to commit himself to the Djibouti accords until he had retaken the strategic port city of Kismayu. Alternatively, both Aidid and Ali Mahdi signed the Nairobi Accords in March 1994 only to satisfy the UN and the rest of the international community knowing the UNOSOM mandate was about to end. Even observers at the time predicted that, given the weak commitment on the part of the faction leaders, there would be no peace dividend.

The Trap of Inclusive Agreements. The wide dispersal of wealth made many of Somalia's numerous clan factions viable and therefore difficult to exclude from political agreements. Efforts to include (or share power with) all the relevant parties in a comprehensive peace agreement (or even a localized one) were subject to other difficulties as well. Observers cite Ali Mahdi's attempts to establish an interim government immediately after the fall of Siad Barre as being at the root of the subsequent conflict in Somalia. While Ali Mahdi's government was certainly large (72-members) and "broad-

based" insofar as it included representatives of different clans, there had been no attempt to share power nor even consult with the other established and militarily significant clan factions or their leaders — Omar Jess of the SPM, Abdirahman Tuur of the SNM or, most importantly, General Aidid's wing of the USC — before taking office.[49] Non-USC factions saw Ali Mahdi's claim to the presidency as a powergrab by the Hawiye clan family.[50] In fact, it was another Hawiye, General Aidid, who was most upset at having been excluded from power.

Despite the fact that the most significant clans were represented at the two Djibouti conferences, some factions complained they had been excluded.[51] A larger problem was that, while the factions themselves were present, some of their leaders stayed at home, thus allowing them to claim later on that they were not bound by the accords that had been reached. While Ali Mahdi claimed that the Conference represented the views of 90 percent of all Somalis and thus legitimized his appointment as President, he also stated that his personal absence from the conference meant that he was not bound to all the provisions that had resulted.[52] Consequently, the agreements ran into other problems as deals made at the

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[49] See Peter Biles, "Filling the Vacuum," *Africa Report*, November-December 1991, p 35-37; John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia: A Tale of Tragic Blunders*, (London: Haan, 1994) p. 29. For a list of individuals included in Ali Mahdi's interim government see *Africa Confidential*, vol. 32, no. 3 (February 8, 1991).

[50] Mohammed Muhumed Ugas Hashi, a representative of the SPM reflected on the new government's composition: "This makes a lot of us suspicious of the intentions of the USC. Though the interim government claims that all factions, regions and clans must be represented, the USC has deliberately promoted members of the Hawiye clan to the top government posts in utter disregard of the interests of other clans." See Ugas Hashi, "Why the USC Cannot Alone Rule Somalia," *New African*, August 1991.

[51] The United Somali People's Front (USPF) led by Hashi Egal is one example.

[52] Africa Watch, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death?", February 13, 1992, p. 5; Drysdale, p. 35.

conference started to come unglued. The *Majerteen* had tended to side with Ali Mahdi and the Abgals on the basis of an understanding that the recently resurrected DFSS would be able to make a number of political appointments of its own. After the Djibouti conferences the DFSS warned Ali Mahdi, however, that it still planned to exercise this right and that it resented the continuing concentration of political power in Ali Mahdi's hands.[53]

While the formation of a government at the national level remained unresolved and apparently in a position of stalemate, the UN changed tack. Following the conclusion of at least two localized peace agreements, the UN opted for a "ground up" approach. The accords which had been reached in Addis Ababa in March 1993 had been signed by all 15 of the significant clan militias and included the signatures of the clan leaders themselves. In the agreement were provisions stipulating the establishment of Regional and District Councils which together ensured that representatives would be sent from each of Somalia's 18 regions and that the affairs of each district would be competently managed. It was on these provisions which the Secretary General's Special Representative, Jonathan Howe, now focused his attention. A decentralized approach had several advantages. First, it put aside the issue of national leadership which was, evidently, extremely delicate. Second, it reduced the political stakes and the risks which appeared to make controlling political power so necessary. Third, it allowed leaders to internalize the rules of democratic politics on which a firmer national government might be constructed. Finally, it was a reflection of the *de facto* localized politics which existed in much of Somalia outside of Mogadishu. The problem was, however, that political leaders continued to view the lower levels of

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[53] Drysdale, p. 18.

government only in terms of meeting their needs at the national level. Despite having signed the accords, Aidid's faction (now in the form of a coalition called the Somali National Alliance or SNA) remained hostile to the councils because he was not in a position to control them politically. In their account of events, Robert Oakley and John Hirsch note the following:

> From the SNA's perspective, the district and regional councils were a serious institutional obstacle to Aideed's long-term ambitions. It argued that under the Addis Ababa Accords, UNOSOM had no right to interfere or be involved in any way in creating local government structures. The SNA's real objection was that few of the councils were under its control (Council control had been a major issue for the SNA ever since a Rahanwein-dominated council sprang up in Baidoa during January and the SNA-appointed governor was ousted by popular pressure.).[54]

The issue of power-sharing, however, was uniquely problematic in Somalia given its complex clan structure and the tenuous links between militias. While the "Hirab" peace conference of January 1994 involved the two Hawiye clans most responsible for the violence in Mogadishu, the Abgals and the Habir Gidir, its exclusion of other Hawiye clans (not to mention other non-Hawiye clans) aroused considerable resentment. Similarly, the so-called Mogadishu Peace Committee established in 1994-1995 as a precursor to a local government involved only a select number of Hawiye clans. "Unless other Hawiye clans are brought into the process," wrote Ken Menkhaus and John Prendergast at the time, "they can and will disrupt it. A partial peace in Somalia is not seen as a 'first-step' toward a broader peace — it is seen as a new coalition, threatening those excluded from the talks."[55] But determining

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[54] John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections in Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1995), pp. 135-136.

[55] Menkhaus and Prendergast, p. 8.

which factions to include and which to exclude invariably generated hostility. While General Aidid and Ali Mahdi were ostensibly the most significant military powers and the main contenders for political power, they were also allied with innumerable other clan militias involved in power struggles in other locations. To exclude one such faction risked drawing in more powerful forces from other regions. Alternatively, the ability of factions to splinter off along any number of clan lines and then to form their own political movements further complicated the process. At the Nairobi conference in March 1994 Aidid attempted to overcome a perceived disadvantage in the number of groups in the SNA coalition (compared with Ali Mahdi's *Somali Salvation Alliance* also referred to as the *Group of 12*) by encouraging groups to break away and ally with him as autonomous voting entities. But UNOSOM had imposed a cut-off date for the recognition of new groups thus leaving an imbalance between the SNA, four of whose seven constituent groups had been accepted by the UN, and the eleven groups associated with the SSA which had been recognized.[56]

Increasingly there were gaps between the leaderships and the respective factions they claimed to represent. Aidid found himself isolated from his own Habir Gidir clan after his long absence in Nairobi during 1994. His grip on the SNA was being eclipsed by his financier, Osman Ato, who had made several reconciliatory overtures to UNOSOM. Problems of legitimacy — not only to the conveners of reconciliation conferences but to the Somali clans themselves — extended to other clans as well. Neither General Aden Gebiyo and Colonal Omar Jess, both of whom claimed to represent the Ogadeni-based Somali Patriotic Movement, were native Somalis (coming instead from the Ogaden region of

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[56] "Warlords Restored," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 35, no. 20 (October 7, 1994).

Ethiopia), and it was not clear that agreements they reached over the southern city of Kismayu reflected the interests of the city's own Ogadeni residents. In Somaliland, Abdirahman Tuur declared the region's independence from the rest of Somalia only to join forces with General Aidid and become a unionist. Similarly, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, a unionist in the days after Siad Barre's fall, later became the President of Somaliland and utilized secessionist rhetoric to consolidate his power. Finally, the political trajectory of Omar Arteh Gelib, from one of Siad Barre's ministers, to being imprisoned by Siad Barre, to being Prime Minister under both Siad Barre (again) and Ali Mahdi (only to then depart Somalia altogether), did little to enhance his credibility among Isaaqs (his own clan) or the legitimacy of Ali Mahdi's "government" among Somalis in general.[57] The antics of General Aidid, who in 1994 designated himself "President of Presidents" on top of a new three region federal government prompted *Africa Confidential* to write: "All this is not a thousand miles from the 1991 Djibouti agreement: self proclaimed faction bosses, with no real control over their troops nor any mandate from the population, are sharing out jobs among themselves, without worrying about the total absence of any sort of administration."[58] Similarly, Matt Bryden condemned the on-going peace process, stating:

> The present 'reconciliation process' — essentially a series of meetings between major faction leaders ending in the formation of a government — is a dead end. Cozy discussions between such men will hardly provoke the kind of government Somalia needs, since it will amount to little more than a sharing of executive posts among the various leaders. History has shown this to be a zero-sum game with no

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[57] See comments by Mohammed Muhumed Ugas Hashi in "Why the USC Cannot Alone RuleSomalia," *New African*, August 1991.

[58] Warlords Restored," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 35, no. 20 (1994).

winners.[59]

Any efforts towards inclusion or power-sharing, then, became a trap. Efforts to include and accommodate everybody inevitably — intentionally or unintentionally — left some key players out of the process. In their efforts to create large, "broad-based" governments, political figures were in fact continuing to exclude the most significant other political players. Moreover, the effort to extend the process outward inevitably stimulated various self-appointed clan leaders to involve themselves regardless of whether they had a genuine connection with the clan community.

Successful Political Agreements. There were several instances, however, where Somali clans did have success at bringing about limited, if sometimes short-lived, peace agreements. On March 3 1992, after seven months of intense fighting, General Aidid and Ali Mahdi signed a cease-fire agreement which maintained a semblance of peace in Mogadishu lasting until June of 1993. In the former British Somaliland, the so-called Borama conference laid the foundation for what resulted in a more peaceful and, many hoped, independent northern territory. As well, the Galcayo conference of March 1993 produced what appears to have been a lasting peace in north-eastern Somalia. Ironically, these agreements and conferences succeeded in the face of remarkable odds. Even as the March 3 1992 peace agreement was being signed, skeptics argued that the cease-fire did not rest on solid foundation of diplomacy" and would not be respected.[60] In fact, the agreement

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[59] Matt Bryden, "Status Quo Ante?" *Africa Report*, May-June 1994, pp. 18-23.

[60] Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal, "Who Prolongs Somalia's Agony?," *New York Times*, February 26, 1992, p. A21. The authors, Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal, were, respectively, executive director and associate director of *Africa Watch*.

held. But its apparent success may have had more to do with the military stalemate that prevailed in Mogadishu at the time than with any desire to achieve peace on the part of the armed factions. According to a former USC member, Aidid had by this time effectively gained control over much of the capital:

> If you look at Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi was pushed out of Mogadishu to northern Mogadishu. And let me tell you, northern Mogadishu is just the margin of Mogadishu. Its a small part of Mogadishu. But central Mogadishu and all hospitals, and airports, and the seaport and everything else — the economic centre, the livelihood of Mogadishu — were all under Aidid. So Aidid didn't want to go to northern Mogadishu because northern Mogadishu was permanently Abgal territory — you know 99 percent of the people that live there are Abgals — and Aidid didn't want to risk his troops in an area where he will never succeed in capturing. Because always there was this number disadvantage to him.[61]

The March 3 1992 agreement, then, was a consequence of Aidid's willingness to accept the military situation as it stood.

A more durable but still frequently interrupted peace in northern Somaliland was set at the Borama conference of 1993. The political process in Somaliland, however, was a more drawn out process (the conference itself stretched from February until May) allowing a number of difficult issues to be dealt with. The conference also included a greater number of community representatives, most notably northern elders, who were able to exercise greater control over the region's fighters when agreement was reached.[62] While there were non-Isaaqs who were uncertain about the call for political independence, these fears were successfully managed through various constitutional provisions which minimized the

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[61] Jesow interview.

[62] See Robert M. Press, "Elders of North Somalia Meet to Preserve Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 1, 1993, p. 6.

politicization and competition among clans. Most notable for our purposes, delegates to the Borama conference managed to successfully incorporate elements of power-sharing into the political structure.[63] Non-Issaq clans are now said to be better represented in Somaliland's governance than at any time in the past (with members of minority groups holding key posts such as the vice-presidency and defense) and to enjoy a greater share of the seats in the national parliament.[64] The United Nations was also notable for its absence in Northern Somaliland.

The Galcayo conference of March 1993 concerned itself with bringing peace to the central regions of Somalia north of Mogadishu. The conference was particularly eventful because it was convened by General Aidid and took place without the assistance of the United Nations as originally planned. Part of the reason for its relative success may have been the limited objectives of the conference. General Aidid insisted that participation in the conference be limited to the political leaders of the region concerned and General Aidid was forced to exclude the UN when it attempted to broaden the participation of the conference. The General also insisted that, contrary to the views of UNOSOM II, the agenda of the conference not be extended to include the situation of the southern city of Kismayu. In the end, the conference which was originally to be organized jointly by the UN and the SNA was

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[63] For a more complete discussion in this regard, see Hussein M. Adam, "Formation and Recognition of New States: Somaliland in Contrast to Eritrea," *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 59 (1994), pp. 21-38.

[64] Matt Bryden, "Fiercely Independent," *Africa Report*, November-December, 1994 , p. 39 or 40.

not held. Instead, General Aidid went ahead with a separate peace conference of his own.[65]

From this, one can draw several conclusions concerning the problems of political reconciliation in post-Siad Barre Somalia. First, power-sharing not only involves a voice in governance but also, and perhaps more importantly, a voice in the preliminary stages of government formation — anything, that is, which determines the fortunes or affects the interests of a group. Groups resent being excluded from the political process whether it be in the execution of government functions or merely in talks towards the creation of viable government structure. Groups that are left out of this stage of the political process may still have the means to disrupt the proceedings through violent actions and preclude the achievement of a more permanent structure. Thus, even if power-sharing is not a final objective (self-government, for instance, being another alternative), it is conceivably a necessary step on the way to the devolution of power and a step from which groups prefer not to be excluded.

Second, finding this balance between inclusiveness and manageability was an obvious problem in post-Siad Barre Somalia particularly given the proliferation and constant reformulation of clan factions and alliances and the sometimes tenuous links between leaders and the clans themselves. The UN and local facilitators of the peace process constantly risked excluding political players who could not reconcile themselves to anything other than a VIP seat at the negotiating table. Similarly, governments proposed by the faction leaders themselves were bound to fail or face military confrontation so long as they could neither

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[65] See "Report of the Commission of Inquiry established pursuant to resolution 885 (1993) to investigate armed attacks on UNOSOM II personnel," June 1, 1994 in *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996* (Blue Book), p. 368.

link themselves to other key power centres and include them as full partners in any meaningful way or eliminate them entirely as military capable entities. Given the number of militarily viable militias and the tensions in Somalia at this time, the dissatisfaction of one faction from any aspect of the political process risked drawing ever larger military forces into violent confrontation.

The Rise and Fall of the Armed Clan Factions. The stars of different groups ascended and descended as their military power rose and fall, as alliances were formed and dissolved and as external factors unified what were otherwise disparate clan families. Each of the central protagonists had a strong suit. Ali Mahdi had been a wealthy hotelier with extensive business connections in Italy. Prior to being nominated as Somalia's interim president, Ali Mahdi had been a financial backer of the United Somali Congress in its effort to defeat Siad Barre. Aidid had been a general in the Somali army who, by all accounts, had considerable skill as a military leader. Until 1995, Aidid was financially supported by Osman Ato who had allegedly organized the importation of ammunition and fuel to service Aidid's militia. Depending on how forces were counted, estimates of the size of Aidid's forces ranged from a core of several hundred well-armed and disciplined fighters, to several thousand disorderly and poorly trained camelboys imported from the countryside.[66] Aidid had the ability to bring considerably more military hardware to bear in the form of

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[66] In January 1993, one Canadian commander at Belet Weyn reported that Aidid led an estimated 3000-4000 troops into battle against an equally large Somali National Front force. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Somalia*, 1st quarter, 1993. Yet at a time when Aidid's military strength was believed to be on the wane, his military forces were assumed to number "only several hundred men." This latter figure was used by the *New York Times* less than a month before Aidid's fighters successfully downed three US helicopters and killed 18 US Army Rangers. Donatella Lorch, "U.N. Still Struggling With Somali General's Militia," *New York Times*, September 14, 1993, p. A3.

"technicals," artillery and armoured vehicles. Since much of Mogadishu was populated by Ali Mahdi's own Abgal clan, he was able to respond with a larger number of infantry. Despite claims from both Ali Mahdi and Aidid that they had the military capacity to defeat the other, it was clear that a decisive military victory was out of reach. *Africa Watch* described their respective military strength as follows:

> When there is a major battle, Aidid's forces tend to win. In the slower war of attrition that occurs between the big artillery duels, Ali Mahdi's forces tend to advance. The Abgal forces take over positions quietly at night, and surrender them to the Habr Gidir counter-attack in daylight. However, because neither side is trained for urban guerilla fighting, and discipline cannot be enforced, there is little systematic taking and holding of territory. After a block or street has been captured by one side, often it will be abandoned simply because the fighters need to resupply themselves, because there is no centralized logistics to give them the rations and support they require.[67]

In fact, however, power balances between the two factions contending for power in Mogadishu were more dynamic than the military stalemate might indicate. Changes in the power of one clan or another had much to do with their relations with foreign actors in Somalia (to be discussed) and with events outside of Mogadishu. The factions of General Aidid and Ali Mahdi were increasingly intertwined with a number of localized power struggles within Mogadishu and in other cities and regions.[68] On the basis of these linkages the clans were able to build their alliances. For example, Ali Mahdi looked to Omar Hashi who had defected from Aidid's camp to increase his strength. Ali Mahdi appointed him to be governor of the Benadir Region (Mogadishu and its environs) and hoped that his ties to the Hawadle (who controlled the airport) would increase his wealth and emasculate General

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[67] Africa Watch, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death?," February 13, 1993.

[68] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996*, p. 25.

Aidid.[69] Alternatively, Aidid looked to Omar Jess, chairman of the Somali Patriotic Movement, and provided him with sufficient military supplies to allow him to retake Kismayu from Siad Barre's son-in-law in April and May 1992. After persuading him to abandon the quest for Somaliland's independence, Aidid also forged links with the former leader of the SNM, Abdirahman Tuur, and supported him in an ill-fated attempt to regain credibility in the north. Aidid's stature among Hawiye clans and Ogadenis was enhanced during a UN hunt for Aidid from June to October 1993. Hirsch and Oakley reported that "Aidid began to take on an almost mythical stature, even among Somalis who did not care for or support him, through his appeal to powerful traditional and nationalistic identifications."[70] Hundreds of Somalis migrated from central Somalia to reinforce the SNA militia.

Ali Mahdi and General Aidid reportedly spent hours on a daily basis trying to maintain the strained loyalties of clansmen who demanded food and loot in exchange for their allegiance.[71] Maintaining this support base was not unlike that practiced by Siad Barre; it depended on a continual flow of resources which could then be used to buy off clan leaders. But this was also expensive and even subclans within Aidid's own Habir Gidir complained when insufficient resources were being provided. The strength of Mogadishu's two main clan factions also depended on the fortunes of the other clans and individuals

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[69] Drysdale, pp. 36-37.

[70] Hirsch and Oakley, p. 123.

[71] Jane Perlez of the *New York Times* wrote that Ali Mahdi "drives from hot spot to hot spot in his northern enclave to negotiate, in a similar effort, with breakaway soldiers who mutiny for more money. "Chaotic Somalia Starves as Strongmen Battle," *New York Times*, October 4, 1992, p. A1.

contained within. By mid-1994, for instance, the Omar Jess-led SPM had ceased to be a military factor[72] Even more devastating for Aidid was his eclipse by his former financier, Osman Ato. Following a string of defections and the self-destruction of clan militias, Aidid was left allied with a host of illegitimate and inauspicious followers, making Aidid a mere shadow of his former self.[73]

Despite (or, perhaps, as a consequence of) this power dynamic no one group was able to build the kind of national coalition that the UN had hoped would lead to a legitimate national authority, or to one which the warlords had hoped could restore the lucrative centralized government Somalia had had since Siad Barre's 1969 coup. During 1994 the UN tried to identity factions and leaders which appeared to be on the rise and which might provide the backbone of a national government. The most notable effort was directed towards linking Generals Morgan and Aidid and Col. Abdullahi Yusuf thus creating an axis which stretched from Kismayu in the south, through Mogadishu and up into central Somalia. But the UN was constantly frustrated by the fact that none of the political factions was sufficiently broad-based and authoritative to facilitate accords of national reconciliation.[74]

Lack of an enduring over-riding issue meant that there was no political consensus to unite factions.[75] The composition of the various alliances was constantly changing and

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[72] Menkhaus and Prendergast, p. 3.

[73] Matt Bryden, "Update on Situation in Muqdisho," Report for the United Nations Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, 19 June 1995.

[74] Menkhaus and Prendergast, p. 3.

[75] Both the efforts to expel Siad Barre in the spring of 1991 and 1992, and the U.N. manhunt for General Aidid from June to October 1993, provided only brief episodes in which Somali factions could unite behind a common cause.

no one leader could secure broad support long enough to make a legitimate claim to the leadership of all of Somalia. Moreover, larger clans were often able to mobilize more resources than any would-be state body which was constructed. Even with their own tendency to subdivide, clans could continually outlive any government coalition which was formed. In military terms, this stalemate was further entrenched by the pseudo-disarmament undertaken by UNITAF and UNOSOM. While disarmament enjoyed some success in the towns of Bardera and Baidoa, in Mogadishu the removal of the clans' armed jeeps and trucks destroyed any sense of hierarchy that had previously been established. Cedric Piralla, head of the Red Cross delegation in Somalia stated that,

> The 'technical' was a means to loot. ... It meant power. Now it is gone. Everyone has a Kalashnikov and everyone is equal. Now they kill with the Kalashnikov and everyone will retaliate. I am afraid the situation will deteriorate. The Somalis no longer have any point of reference within their system. ... They are lost. They no longer have any structure to rely on. Their sphere of influence is limited to the end of their Kalashnikov.[76]

Unable to increase their relative power through domestic sources, clan factions often looked to foreign sources to bolster their status and generate at least the perception that they were in a predominant position. U.S. Presidential envoy Robert Oakley noted that all of the clan leaders proved adept at creating the impression that they were receiving foreign backing.[77] Indeed, the substantial foreign intervention which began in earnest in December

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[76] Donatella Lorch, "Shootings in Somalia Reflect Rising Tension for U.S. Troops," *New York Times*, December 30, 1992, p. A3.

[77] Clan leaders often tried to create the impression that they were directing the foreign intervention. In one instance, as US Cobra helicopters fired on Morgan's troops who were advancing on Kismayu in January 1993, Aidid held a news conference demanding military action. In fact, Aidid had been informed the previous night that such action was being planned. Of the two protagonists in Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi was the most accepting of foreign intervention, evidently believing that amicable relations with the UN and US would enhance his credibility and claim to Somalia's presidency. See Hirsh and Oakley, p. 124. *Africa Watch* also

1992 and concluded in March 1995 had a significant impact on events in Somalia including its own involvement as a military player.

III

International Intervention and Armed Conflict

Both the UN and the United States were obstacles to the political aspirations of the warlords (most notably General Aidid) insofar as they established unexpected democratic hurdles which had to be overcome before becoming president, and a potential threat to their military power insofar as disarmament was implemented. While others have commented on the fact that the international interventionists did not significantly alter power balances among the warlords (i.e. did not disarm them),[78] the possibility that their power *might* be undermined (particularly among those who were in position to claim the presidency and who would normally have achieved it had intervention not taken place) generated considerable hostility, suspicion and fear. Certainly Somalia's faction leaders believed they had reason for concern. One of the first indications that Aidid's power would be jeopardized occurred when a Russian aircraft with UN markings and chartered by a UN agency had been caught delivering currency and military equipment to the north of Mogadishu apparently to the troops supporting interim President Ali Mahdi. Aside from the fact that the delivery contravened a Security Council resolution banning deliveries of weapons and military equipment to

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noted how Ali Mahdi and Aidid would provide tours for visiting dignitaries to demonstrate their territorial control. See Africa Watch, "Somalia: A Fight to the Death?" p. 8.

[78] Prendergast, p. 3.

Somalia, the event generated the perception that the UN and some countries were biased in favour of Ali Mahdi.[79] More damaging was the fact that early experience with UNOSOM I had led some leaders (Aidid in particular) to believe that they would not be consulted on actions being taken by the international community. UN officials in the field had complained that UN headquarters in New York were insensitive to the security concerns of the Somali leaders. After weeks of careful negotiations with wary Somali leaders, Mohamed Sahnoun finally secured their willingness to accept a 500-man UN peacekeeping force. But even before these troops had arrived in Somalia, the UN announced that an additional 3000 troops would be sent to Somalia. The announcement was made without informing the UNOSOM delegation already in Mogadishu (who were normally informed of such decisions) and without consulting the key faction leaders and community elders within Somalia.[80]

Despite these early blunders in executing UNOSOM I's operations, international intervention was about to take on a much more invasive role. On this occasion, the intervention, in the form of the US-led UNITAF operation, coincided with a notable absence of conflict in much of Somalia including Mogadishu.[81] But there were several elements of the UNITAF operation which ensured that conflict would be minimized during its mandate. First, the operation did not threaten the warlord's long term political aspirations. Early plans called for a mission of short duration. Outgoing U.S. President George Bush announced the

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[79] Mohamed Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1994), p. 40.

[80] Sahnoun, p. 38-39.

[81] UNITAF began in December 1992 and concluded in March 1993.

mission, called Operation Restore Hope, on November 25 1992 and claimed that the mission could be completed and troops withdrawn as early as January 20 1993.[82] Even at the time, critics argued that by announcing a withdrawal date (particularly one which was so soon) the warlords could simply wait out the operation and resume their attacks following the completion of the mission.[83] Moreover, believing that Washington would side with him, Aidid was emboldened by the fact that both the UN and the US had selected southern Mogadishu — Aidid territory — to locate their headquarters. US officials later said that they should have realized that Aidid's cautious but warm reception to arriving US troops was contingent on his maintaining power.[84]

The second element that helped ensure peace was that UNITAF involved the deployment of an overwhelming amount of force. The operation was conducted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter which authorized the "Secretary General and Member States" to use "all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia."[85] Regarding the decision to send US forces to Somalia, Hirsch and Oakley outline the unprecedented nature of the policy, stating that

an essential part of this new policy was the clear implication that peacekeeping

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[82] A number of officials and critics claimed, however, that given the situation in Somalia, expectations of such a quick withdrawal were unreasonably optimistic; See Jane Perlez, "U.N. Backs Somalia Force; Bush Promises a Quick Exist But Pentagon is Less Sure," *New York Times*, December 4, 1992, p. A1.

[83] "Intervention in Somalia: White House and U.N. Muddy the Mission," (editorial) *New York Times*, December 4, 1992, p. A30.

[84] Douglas Jehl, "An Elusive Clan Father is Peacekeeper's Nemesis," *New York Times*, October 7, 1993, p. A1.

[85] Security Council Resolution 794, December 3 1992, paragraph 10.

> should be conducted along the lines of the so-called Weinberger-Powell Doctrine of a clear, finite 'doable' mission, involving the deployment of overwhelming, efficient force, with rules of engagement that allowed the expeditious use of force when necessary. This view was diametrically opposite to the traditional peacekeeping doctrine under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which calls for deploying as few forces as possible, with strict limits on the degree and circumstances of the use of force and with the requirement for approval from local authorities.[86]

No doubt, having learned from its experience in its recent war in Kuwait, the motivation behind the large and heavily armed American force was to avoid inviting conflict. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, remarked that forces were being deployed "in a rather decisive way so there will be no question in the mind of any of the faction leaders in Somalia that we would have the ability to impose a stable situation, if it came to that, without their cooperation. ... We want them to understand that." Powell continued, "We also wanted to put in a large enough force that we could dominate the entire country and not just find ourselves trapped in a port or a single city. And essentially we wanted to seize the initiative away from those who might not wish to see the humanitarian effort proceed."[87] In fact, US troops experienced little resistance to their presence. According to one US marine at the time, "We're desperate to use our toys. ... We were expecting to meet some resistance and get the chance to kick butt. But instead, we find that the bad guys have just run away."[88] Given that local leaders knew that UNITAF's stay would be short, Somalis generally let the intrusive force have its way.

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[86] Hirsch and Oakley, p. 47.

[87] Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Is Sending Large Force as Warning to Somali Clans," *New York Times*, December 5, 1992, p. 5. The total number of UNITAF troops in Somalia grew to a total of 37,000 over subsequent weeks. See *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996*, p. 94.

[88] Marine Bill McAllister, quoted in "Winning Hearts and Minds," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 28, 1992/ January 4, 1993, p. 24.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, Somali militia leaders felt little in the way of a military threat from the proposed operation. Early indications were that under UNITAF disarmament of the clan militias would not be an objective of the mission unless the weapons posed a direct threat to international troops. Disarmament was not referred to as an objective in the Security Council resolution authorizing the US-led operation. During its formulation Washington resisted any commitment to disarmament and opted instead for a more vague pledge to create a "secure environment." Doing so meant that certain criteria on disarmament would not have to be met before withdrawal could begin and avoided any risk that Somalis might resort to violence in the likely event that the clan leaders resisted such a policy.[89]

The result of these factors was that in all areas where international troops were located, the amount of violence was reduced. There was a reduction in fighting and in the visibility of weapons following the arrival of US Marines. To ensure their weapons were not perceived as being threatening, clan factions stored their weapons or withdrew them to areas outside of Mogadishu. On the other hand, areas where international troops were not present experienced no change or an increase in violence.[90] "Judging by numbers alone," wrote *New York Times* correspondent Diana Jean Schemo, "the foreign military presence has vastly

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[89] US Envoy Robert Oakley commented at the time that "There are three things important to a Somali — his wife, his camel and his weapon. ... In the Somali soul there is the right to have a weapon. So when they hear foreigners are taking weapons by force, they say 'No, never.'" Oakley maintained that house to house searches would be "absurd" comparing it with "rank colonialism." "We could come in with force and scurf up a lot of weapons," Oakley warned, "but it would generate a lot of hostility." Jane Perlez, "Must U.S. Strip a Land of Guns," *New York Times*, December 15, 1992, p. A8. See also comments by Lieut. Col. Fred Peck in Eric Schmitt, "U.S Helicopters Destroy Vehicles in Somali Clash, *New York Times*, December 13, 1992, p. 1.

[90] Jane Perlez,"Somali Gunmen Reappear in Large Numbers,"*New York Times*, December 18, 1992, p. A1.

reduced the number of deaths in Somalia. Digfer hospital [in Mogadishu], which used to treat 45 to 50 gunshots a day, now sees one-tenth that number."[91]

As the mission progressed, however, the policy on disarmament evolved such that some limited forms of disarmament did take place. Despite Washington's resistance, the UN had applied pressure to undertake a more active approach to disarming the factions. In a December 8 1992 letter to President Bush, the UN Secretary General noted several,

> points which seem to me to be of cardinal importance in this formative phase of the new operation. The first relates to the need to disarm the lawless gangs which have been terrorizing Somalia in recent months. ... [A]ny forceful action by the international community in Somalia must have the objective of ensuring that at least the heavy weapons of the organized factions are neutralized and brought under international control and that the irregular forces and gangs are disarmed. Without this action, I do not believe that it will be possible to establish the secure environment called for by the Security Council resolution....[92]

Boutros-Ghali claimed to have been under the impression that while a specific pledge to disarm the factions had not been included in the resolution, Washington had discreetly promised to disarm the factions.[93] Indeed, U.S. officials reportedly had informally told Security Council members their hope that, while complete disarmament would be impractical, at minimum, large machine guns, mortars, artillery pieces and other heavy weapons would be confiscated.[94] The chief US military spokesman, Colonel Fred Peck,

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[91] Diana Jean Schemo, "Boy's Death in Somalia Tests Uneasy U.S. Role," *New York Times*, February 20, 1993, p. 1.

[92] Letter from the Secretary General to President Bush of the United States discussing the establishment of a secure environment in Somalia and the need for continuous consultations. *The United Nations and Somalia*, pp. 216-217.

[93] Paul Lewis, "U.N. Chief Says Letter To Bush Outlines U.S. Commitment to Disarm Somali Gangs," *New York Times*, December 13, 1992, Sec. 1, p. 14.

[94] Paul Lewis, "U.N. Says Somalis Must Disarm Before Peace," *New York Times*, December 6, 1992, Sec. 1, p. 15.

remarked, "the aim here is not to disarm the militias. ... If we started with one, we'd have to go to all of them, and that's not in our charter. We're not spoiling for a fight with the factions." However, the Colonel also noted that "Huey and Cobra crews are under strict instructions to destroy the technicals if they menace an American helicopter."[95]

This qualified approach appeared to change somewhat on December 21 1992 when Brigadier General Tony Zinni, the operations director for the US military command in Somalia stated that an expanded campaign would be undertaken to rid Somalia of its heavy weapons — a policy more in line with that proposed by the Secretary General.[96] Still, UNITAF's efforts at disarmament were uneven and differences existed over the direction of the policy. Some officials indicated that small arms would be confiscated but only if they presented a threat.[97] At Mogadishu's airport, Somalis could check their weapons and have them returned once they left the area, while at another checkpoint the same types of weapons were confiscated.[98] U.S. Envoy Robert Oakley also acknowledged that the new focus was on "collecting" heavy weapons which, he claimed, were not only responsible for the greatest

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[95] Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Helicopters Destroy Vehicles in Somali Clash," *New York Times*, December 13, 1992, p. 1.

[96] Zinni stated, "As we expand the humanitarian relief sectors, the tolerance level for those weapons that haven't been removed will very low." While house to house searches would not be conducted, efforts were to be directed towards the removal of the "technicals"; "There won't be room for us and them to operate in the same area," added Zinni. "Any technical on the street will be seen as menacing." See Eric Schmitt, "A General Says Armed Vehicles Will Be Seized On Sight in Somalia,"*New York Times*, December 23, 1992, p. A6.

[97] "We're not after every AK-47 in this town," stated Marine Spokesman Fred Peck. "Otherwise we'd be here forever." Donatella Lorch, "Shootings in Somalia Reflect Rising Tension for U.S. Troops," *New York Times*, December 30, 1992, p. A3.

[98] Lorch, "Shootings in Somalia Reflect Rising Tension," *New York Times*, December 30, 1992. In some areas whether or not a weapon was confiscated depended on its country of origin. One media source was told by a U.S. Marine sergeant, "If its American-made and I see it, it's mine. ... I can't touch an AK-47. I wish I could. But if its American, it's mine." "Disarming Somalia, Sort of," (editorial) *New York Times*, January 8, 1993, p. A24.

number of casualties but were "the symbols of power." In January 1993, UNITAF troops began shutting down the so-called "arms markets" in Mogadishu and confiscating their weapons. U.S. troops were also increasingly willing to confront Somali gunmen. In response to sniping attacks against American forces, US helicopters, tanks and ground forces launched an assault on January 7 1993 against two of General Aidid's bases, destroying one compound and seizing weapons.[99] By February 1993 US forces were seizing "several large weapons caches each week."[100] Most notable was the change in the official and unofficial American rhetoric suggesting that at least partial disarmament had become an objective of the mission. On the effect of the raids on a particular weapons storage site, one U.S. commander stated, "Singularly, I would say it would not have an impact. I would say, cumulatively, over time, by that I mean a couple of weeks, I think it may have an influence. That's provided we continue to take down stashes like this."[101] Robert Oakley described the approach in terms of its effect on the power of the warlords as if it were "plucking the bird," quietly limiting their power, while not alienating them. "You take one feather at a time, and the bird doesn't think there's anything terrible going on," Oakley told the Associated Press.

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[99] Alison Mitchell, "U.S. Troops Begin A Drive to Expand Hold of Mogadishu," *New York Times*, January 10, 1993, p. 1.

[100] Among the weapons seized by this time were 1.27 million rounds of light ammunition, and more than 129,000 rounds of heavy ammunition, 2255 small arms, 636 heavy weapons including tanks, mortars, cannons, and rocket and missile launchers. Weapons seizures continued despite a January 15 agreement signed in Addis Ababa requiring factions to turn in their heavy weapons. Most factions got around this by turning in only their most obsolete or unserviceable weapons. See Diana Jean Schemo, "The World Moves On Somalia; The Warlords Move Faster," *New York Times*, February 21, 1993, Sec. 4, p. 6.

[101] Major General Charles Wilhelm, Commander of the First Marine Division. Quoted in Kenneth B. Noble, "Troops in Somalia Raid Big Arsenal," *New York Times*, January 12, 1993, p. A3.

"Then one day he finds he can't fly. We did that from the beginning."[102]

At the end of the UNITAF mission Oakley noted, "I don't say it's a bright future but it's a stable future. ... The problem of clan warfare is virtually gone." But Oakley also stated that the "downside of all this is an increase in armed robbery."[103] Indeed, observers did not fail to notice an increase in tensions towards the American military presence which had coincided with early indications that a more aggressive disarmament policy was about to be undertaken.[104] General Aidid, for one, had frequently complained that the disarmament was being carried out unevenly and was jeopardizing the security of his troops.[105] Perceptions of uneven disarmament was a key factor on the road to later conflict since it threatened to disrupt the very means by which factions sought to secure political power in Somalia.

The transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II on May 4 1993 marked the most significant change in the evolution of a disarmament policy. Believing that the U.N.'s experience in Angola was a lesson in the dangers of not requiring that disputants disarm, the Secretary General was determined not to make the same mistake again. Disarmament, then,

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[102] Diana Jean Schemo, "Nearly Everything in Somalia Is Now Up for Grabs," *New York Times*, February 21, 1993, p. 3.

[103] Quoted in Donatella Lorch, "U.S. Envoy to Somalia Says American Mission Has Been Achieved," *New York Times*, March 3, 1993, p. A6.

[104] Lorch, "Shootings in Somalia Reflect Rising Tension," *New York Times*, December 30, 1992.

[105] Diana Jean Schemo, "U.S. Copters Attack Rebel Force in Southern Somalia," *New York Times*, January 26, 1993, p.A3; and "Rioting by Warlords Supporters Creates Havoc in Somali Capital," *New York Times*, February 25, 1993, p. A1. Ironically, despite his initial pleasure in being located close to the US/UN compound in Mogadishu, General Aidid's proximity also meant that UN peacekeepers were more likely to encounter and disarm his fighters than those of Ali Mahdi. Steven A. Holmes, "The Main Who Makes Somalia Worse," *New York Times*, August 15, 1993, Sec. 4, p. 5.

was "essential" to the peace process in Somalia according to the Secretary General.[106] Unlike the Security Council resolution which authorized the UNITAF mission, the March 26 resolution establishing and empowering UNOSOM II emphasized the "crucial importance of disarmament."[107] But not only was the UN increasingly vocal in its threat to disarm the factions, UNOSOM was itself a significant military and political threat to some of the factions.[108] In a report submitted to the UN which looked into the roots of subsequent violence between United Nations troops and Somali militia, Professor Tom Farer stated,

> Simply by being in place as the dominant military force in the country, UNOSOM reduced the influence of those political leaders, General Aidid eminent among them, who had hitherto disposed of substantial forces. While UNOSOM remained in place, guns would no longer trump all other sources of influence. And to the extent UNOSOM succeeded in substantially disarming the warlords, they could not look forward to playing their trump after UNOSOM departed.[109]

That the UN might interfere with other military ambitions was not simply an unfounded fear concocted by conspiracy-minded factional leaders. In March 1993, General Aidid's ally, Omar Jess, was forced out of Kismayu when troops associated with Siad Barre's son-in-law, General Morgan, clandestinely slipped past Belgian UNITAF troops guarding the port city.

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[106] The Secretary General stated at the time, "The mistake we made in the past was to try to promote peace negotiations while the factions were still armed and fighting. ... We will not repeat that mistake." He added further, "Disarmament is essential for lasting peace and it will take time." See Paul Lewis, "U.N. Says Somalis Must Disarm Before Peace," *New York Times*, December 6, 1992, p. 15. For an contrary view on whether negotiations should be allowed to take place prior to a cease-fire, see Rakiya Omar and Alex de Waal, "Who Prolongs Somalia's Agony," *New York Times*, February 26, 1992, p. A21.

[107] Security Council Resolution 814, March 26, 1993, Section B, paragraph 7.

[108] It is notable that many factions were willing to turn in their weapons "so long as the others do," according to one State Department official. See Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Forces to Stay in Somalia to End Warlord Violence," *New York Times*, August 28, 1993, p. A1. The fear was that UNOSOM would jeopardize the security of the clans and clan factions (most clans) or upset a favourable balance of power (Aidid and the SNA).

[109] Tom Farer, *Report of an Investigation into the 5 June 1993 Attack on United Nations Forces in Somalia*, by Professor, paragraph 19, in *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996*, pp. 296-300.

In May 1993, the same Belgian contingent (now under UNOSOM II) saw an undisguised offensive on Kismayu by Omar Jess as a direct attack on their positions and responded by inflicting heavy casualties on the advancing Somali forces. The fact that Morgan's troops had not been stopped by UNITAF in the earlier attack combined with the fact that UNOSOM had prevented Jess from retaking Kismayu in May 1993 was seen as evidence of the partiality of UNOSOM and was, consequently, a significant contributor to the hostility of the SNA towards UNOSOM.[110]

Equally damaging was the perception that many of the efforts undertaken by the UN threatened to marginalize Somalia's aspiring warlords politically. General Aidid accused the United Nations of trying to embarrass him by renouncing its support for what was to be a joint UN/SNA conference in Galcayo, hosted by General Aidid. The UN was suspicious of Aidid's attempt to limit the participants and the agenda believing that they were being duped into supporting a conference which would be perceived as legitimizing and promoting General Aidid's political aspirations. Aidid, for his part, accused UNOSOM of interfering with Somali politics and attempting to undermine his genuine efforts to bring about an agreement for Somalia.[111] Aidid also came to realize that the interim government proposed in the March 1993 Addis Ababa accords was being built as an alternative to the warlords.

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[110] Notable, however, is that Belgian troops had, in fact, prevented two other offensives by Morgan on Kismayu, prior to their successful attack in March 1993. Hon. Matthew M.S.W. Ngulube, Lt General Emmanuel A. Erskine and Lt. General Gustav Haggland, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 885 (1993) to Investigate Armed Attacks on UNOSOM II Personnel Which Led to Casualties Among Them*, June 1 1994, in *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996*, pp. 368-416.

[111] In the end Aidid proceeded with a separate conference of his own. Ironically, perhaps, this conference led to an agreement which significantly reduced conflict in the region. See accounts of the conference in both Hirsch and Oakley, pp. 115-116, and the Ngulube, Erskine and Hagglund report, paragraphs 74-80.

While Aidid was a signatory, the proposed council was to be made up of a number of different groups and interests including community leaders and women's groups. According to David Shinn, the Clinton Administrations special coordinator for Somalia, "the policy was to basically marginalize the factional leaders and to broaden the political base in the country. ... [Aidid] saw time working against him."[112] As relations worsened between UNOSOM and General Aidid and SNA attacks on UNOSOM troops continued, the rhetoric of the two camps hardened. "My bottom line has been, had been, is still that ... it's up to the Somali people to judge who their leaders will be," argued the Secretary General's Special Representative, Jonathan Howe,

> What we have to guarantee as the United Nations is a fair and equitable process. We are obviously not going to allow criminals, intimidators, terrorists into the process. And Aidid, by his actions against the United Nations, has excluded himself from the process.[113]

Africa Report interpreted this statement to mean that the UN was attempting to control Somalia's political process while claiming that it was in the hands of Somalis. It also helped foster a view that the UN was "an aggrieved and lawless party."[114] Aidid accused the UNOSOM of undertaking "colonialism" as if the United Nations were a political actor like any other faction which challenged the General and his "well-known vision of himself as the man who saved Somalia from Siad Barre and the man destined to assume national

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[112] Steven A. Holmes, "The Man Who Makes Somalia Worse," *New York Times*, August 15, 1993, Sec. 4, p. 5.

[113] Mark Hubard, "The Politics of Violence," *Africa Report*, September-October 1993, pp. 13-19.

[114] Hubard, "Politics of Violence," *Africa Report*, September-October 1993, p. 19.

leadership."[115] Indeed, Aidid's advisor and the main liaison between the SNA and US officials, Abdi Hassan Awale, stated,

> It is clear the U.N. wants to rule this country. ... They do not want a Somali government to be established. The U.N. wants to colonize us. The U.S. and the U.N. have made a lot of mistakes in this country. The U.S. has changed its policy. We now want the U.S. to help change the policy of the U.N.[116]

Perhaps most damaging in terms of its ability to bring peace to Somalia, was that UNOSOM II was perceived as being weaker than its predecessor — a fact which, it was feared, would invite a confrontation between Aidid and the UN troops. Hirsch and Oakley note that,

> there was a widespread Somali perception that UN-led forces would be weaker than UNITAF, even if most of the units stayed the same, and even with strong U.S. military support. ... Before the transition, General Johnston and new U.S. special envoy Bob Gosende discussed with Admiral Howe and Generals Bir and Montgomery the likelihood that Aideed would challenge the new operation. These discussions were inconclusive, although there was agreement that the SNA and others were likely to test UNOSOM's resolve and capabilities.[117]

Indeed, there were a number of indications suggesting that UNOSOM was not as capable as its predecessor. Because of insufficient personnel and equipment, Pakistani peacekeepers in south Mogadishu had reduced the number of day and night patrols. The training and doctrine of the peacekeepers were also significantly different from that of American troops under UNITAF and there was some confusion over the support UNOSOM could extend to the peacekeepers in the event of a confrontation. Such indications, claim Hirsch and Oakley,

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[115] Hirsch and Oakley, footnote 3, p. 116.

[116] Donatella Lorch, "As U.S. Exits, Somali Clan Chief Stands Strong," *New York Times*, March 2, 1994, p. A3.

[117] Hirsch and Oakley, pp. 115-116.

"sent a message of irresolution that Aideed, already convinced that UNOSOM II planned to continue paring his military power, took as an opportunity. Having managed to slip much of his heavy weaponry back into Mogadishu, he went on the offensive...."[118]

This was the most volatile situation: militarily capable entities (most notably General Aidid) perceiving themselves as being threatened militarily and risking emasculation, who were being shut out of the political process. Realizing that the international effort could itself be undermined with certain tactics, the USC/SNA began attacking United Nations and American troops. The most dramatic change in the level of violence between USC/SNA forces and UNOSOM came on June 5 1993 when Somali gunmen killed 23 Pakistani peacekeepers who were carrying out a weapons inspection near Aidid's compound. "The ferocity of the attacks and the deaths of so many UNOSOM II forces in one day," wrote the commission looking into the attacks, "proved to be the turning in UNOSOM's operations in Somalia. The inadequacy of the military's equipment and lack of preparedness of UNOSOM II forces for such armed confrontation was starkly demonstrated."[119] The Security Council resolution which followed on June 6 1993 and the manhunt for Aidid were the most obvious indications of the depths to which UNOSOM's relations with the USC/SNA had sunk. Aidid was not only excluded from the political process, but the call for Aidid's arrest (sweetened with a $25,000 reward offered by Special Representative Jonathan Howe) threatened to eliminate one of Somalia's most influential warlords. "The resolution resulted in a virtual war situation between UNOSOM," declared the Commission of Inquiry, "as the two sides

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[118] Hirsch and Oakley, pp. 116.

[119] Ngulube, Erskine, and Haggland, paragraph 122.

attacked each other over a period of four months."[120]

While USC/SNA forces continued ambushes on UNOSOM forces, American troops reinforced with U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force commandos carried out a number of attacks of their own, seeking both to capture Aidid and the senior USC/SNA leadership and to undermine his powerbase. The purpose of the US/UN attacks stated the American Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine K. Albright, "is primarily to disarm and restore order; it is not to capture a single individual." She added, however, that "There is no question that the capture of those involved would contribute to that overall goal."[121] US and UN officials, while frustrated with their inability to find Aidid himself, believed they were effectively weakening their opponent. Not only did they appear to have destroyed many of Aidid's weapon's storage sites, but they attacked Aidid's military headquarters on July 12 1993 killing many of Aidid's most senior aides.[122] UNOSOM troops also arrested Osman Ali Ato, Aidid's chief financier (shutting down the many "garages" where Ato had constructed the so-called "technicals") and barricaded runways at airfields in order to stop

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[120] Ngulube, Erskine, and Haggland, paragraph 125. The report continued, "The feeling of being at war is reflected in UNOSOM II fragmental orders;" instead of referring to clan militias under Aidid as "hostile forces", these orders referred to "enemy forces". See paragraph 152.

[121] Michael R. Gordon, "Somali Warlord, Still at Large, In a Test of Wills With U.N.," *New York Times*, June 15, 1993, p. A12.

[122] After one June 12 1993 attack, the Deputy Commander of the UN in Somalia, Major General Thomas Montgomery, stated, "We have probably not put Aidid out of business, but I bet you he's pretty shaky today." Notable is that, if Aidid himself could not be captured, the complete destruction of his military capacity was an objective. In reference to the same attack, U.N. Special Envoy Jonathan Howe stated, "I think it was much safer today than before the strike. Our end objective is total disarmament. It is a very ambitious task but it is required and it is what the people want." See Donatella Lorch, "U.N. Says Attack Dealt Heavy Blow to Somali Faction," *New York Times*, June 13, 1993, Sec. I, p. 1.

the flow of military supplies and *qat* which was used to finance his war effort.[123] Washington was so confident that Aidid had been all but defeated that President Clinton had already declared on June 17 that "the military back of Aidid has been broken." [124]

It was the seventh major U.S. operation on October 3 1993 which resulted in the most costly firefight for American forces since the war in Vietnam. After Somali gunmen shot down two American helicopters, U.S. Army Rangers were unable to retreat from a battle which resulted in 18 American deaths and another 75 wounded.[125] The casualties on the Somali side were even greater: 300 Somalis were estimated to have been killed and another 700 were wounded. "The member states which have contributed troops find the fatalities in this operation unsustainable," remarked the U.N. Under Secretary for Peacekeeping, Kofi Annan. "Nobody was prepared for this level of violence, and it shocks the world. It shocks the U.N."[126]

Indeed, U.S. and UNOSOM officials never had understood the military capability of General Aidid. Never having heeded the warnings of U.S. Ambassador to Nairobi, Smith Hempstone, who had cautioned that Somalis were "natural-born guerillas" who "will inflict

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[123] Aidid used two airfields located west of Mogadishu to import arms and other supplies and to export shipments of *qat*. See Steven A. Holmes, "U.S. May Send Commandos to Hunt for Somali Warlord," *New York Times*, August 11, 1993, p. A1 and Donatella Lorch, "U.S. Troops Arrest Somali Warlord's Top Aide," *New York Times*, September 22, 1993, p. A5.

[124] Michael R. Gordon, "Clinton, Praising 'Success,' Says Goal Was Not to Capture Aidid," *New York Times*, June 18, 1993, p. A14.

[125] For an American perspective on the events surrounding the October 3 firefight, see Kent DeLong and Steven Tuckey, *Mogadishu!: Heroism and Tragedy* (Westport: Praeger, 1994).

[126] John Cushman Jr., "Death Toll About 300 in Oct. 3 U.S.-Somali Battle," *New York Times*, October 14, 1993, p. A12.

— and take — casualties,"[127] Washington constantly underestimated Aidid's capacity to wage war (particularly when he was being marginalized politically) and failed to appreciate their own limitations. While United Nations officials constantly sought to emphasize General Aidid's declining influence, televised images of Somalis apparently rejoicing over American casualties suggested that Aidid's message continued to resonate among Somalis. Hirsch and Oakley comment further that there was never "a realistic appreciation of just how tough it would be to successfully take action called for by the Security Council against the SNA in the back alleys of south Mogadishu. There was obviously an unwarranted initial assumption that the SNA, with only light arms, would not be difficult to deal with."[128] In fact, wrote Mark Doyle for *Africa Report,* "Aidid's militia is not, as it is sometimes portrayed in the press, a rag-tag army backed by civilians. It has at its disposal heavy firepower such as recoilless rifles, mortar launchers, machine guns, and RPGs. And despite being a 'militia,' some of Aidid's men are clearly highly trained crack shots." As for General Aidid himself, Doyle wrote that, "as a military and political tactician, he knew the importance of capturing at least one American alive, and knew the importance of getting a videotape of the man to the foreign press, especially the U.S. TV networks.[129]

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[127] This excerpt comes from a letter from the American Ambassador in Nairobi to U.S. Under Secretary of State, Frank Wisner. The letter was in response to solicitations from Wisner on the issue of American intervention in Somalia. Excerpts from the letter were subsequently printed in "Think Three Times Before You Embrace the Somali Tarbaby," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 14, 1992, p. 30.

[128] Hirsch and Oakley, footnote 8, p. 118.

[129] Mark Doyle, "A Dangerous Place," *Africa Report*, November-December 1993, pp. 39-45. One U.S. helicopter pilot, Michael Durant, was held along with a Nigerian soldier, Umar Shantali, by Somali gunmen until their simultaneous release on October 14 1993.

Despite its large size and unprecedented cost,[130] UNOSOM II had a number of significant weaknesses of its own. Not the least of these was the fact that the initial intervention into Somalia had been conceived of being largely in terms of a humanitarian and peacekeeping operation and contributing countries were, consequently, reluctant to risk the lives of their own troops now that the UN had become a combatant. Moreover, as a multinational operation there were enormous logistical problems over command and control of specific operations and even the policy directions of the entire mission.[131] General Aidid, evidently, correctly read these potential liabilities. He was emboldened by United Nation's alleged failings in Angola and irresolution in Bosnia. Aidid's advisors had reportedly not only studied America's involvement in Vietnam, but were aware of the new *low* standard of acceptable casualties following the Gulf War.[132] After the attack on the SNA leadership, Aidid made his own calculated effort to cause American casualties. After July 12, Somali militiamen "tried to kill anybody American," said Abdi Abshir Kahiye, an SNA spokesman. "There was no more United Nations — only Americans. ... And if you could kill Americans,

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[130] UNOSOM II's troop strength peaked at 28,000 troops and was supported by the U.S. Quick Reaction Force on ships of Mogadishu's coast. The operation had been described by the *New York Times* as "the largest, most expensive, and most ambitious peacekeeping operation it has ever undertaken." The total cost at the outset was estimated to be $1.5 billion or one-half of the total annual peacekeeping budget of the United Nations. See Paul Lewis, "U.N. Will Increase Troops in Somalia," *New York Times*, March 27, 1993, p. 3.

[131] Most notable in this respect is the disagreement between Italian commanders and UNOSOM officials over whether to engage General Aidid in dialogue rather than pursue him militarily. See Donatella Lorch, "Disunity Hampering U.N. Somalia Effort," *New York Times*, July 12, 1993, p. A8; and Keith B. Richburg, "In War on Aideed, U.N. Batted Itself," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1993, p. A1.

[132] The Somali militias, on the other hand, could and did accept large numbers of casualties. Both clan leaders and U.S. officials acknowledged that between June 5 and October 3 1993 an estimated 6000-10,000 Somali casualties occurred as a result of the fighting (although it remained unclear as to how many were attributable to clan fighting and how many were a result of engagements with UN forces). See Eric Schmitt, "Somali War Casualties May Be 10,000," *New York Times*, December 8, 1993, p. A14.

it would start problems in American society."[133]

In the weeks immediately after the October 3 firefight, the United States shifted the focus away from the capture of General Aidid. Washington was now eager to demonstrate that its primary concern was political reconciliation rather than being another combatant seeking retribution on General Aidid.[134] Such a public targeting of Aidid seemed only to empower the General at the expense of other faction leaders. Washington tried to distance itself from a series of embarrassing gaffes and to reshape its public relations image.[135] Washington requested the removal of an American, David Stockwell, the United Nations' military spokesman, to discount the impression that the UN operation was American run. Among other measures, Washington also informed the UN that it wanted the 1300 American combat troops in Somalia to be used only for emergency operations rather than for routine patrols which other countries could undertake. It also ordered the withdrawal of the American Quick Reaction force to offshore ships. The effort, according to one American official was to move its troops "over the horizon."[136]

Washington and the Secretary General, however, still had not given up their attempt to capture and arrest the General. Instead they pursued a deliberately vague two-track approach which sought to continue the hunt for the warlord but keep the door open for an

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[133] "In War On Aideed, U.N. Battled Itself," *Washington Post*, December 6, 1993.

[134] Interestingly, there are indications that the move away from attempts to capture Aidid began *before* the October 3 firefight. See Patrick J. Sloyan, "How the Warlord Outwitted Clinton's Spooks," *Washington Post*, April 3, 1994, p. C3.

[135] Among these mistakes was the arrest of a Somali man resembling General Aidid but who turned out to be a senior member of the United Nations-backed Somali police force.

[136] Elaine Sciolino, "U.N. Asked to Use U.S. Troops Only in Emergency," *New York Times*, September 29, 1993, p. A10.

unspecified agreement. "We want to keep the pressure on Aidid," a senior Administration official noted. "We don't want to spend all day, every day chasing him. But if opportunity knocks, we want to be ready. At the same time, we want to get him to cooperate on the prisoner question and on a political settlement."[137] Evidently, however, Washington preferred to keep Aidid out of the reconciliation process. In a State Department paper presented by the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, to the UN Secretary General, the UN was asked to enlist neighbouring Eritrea and Ethiopia in a Somali reconciliation effort. They were asked to convene a new conference on national reconciliation which would bring together the Somali factions but exclude General Aidid and his ally Colonel Omar Jess.[138]

Part of the reason for this continued intransigence by Washington can be traced to habits formed during the Cold War. But the concern was for the future and what kind of precedent a foreign policy failure might set. It was this fear of failure and the implicit message which would subsequently be sent around the world which had continued to fuel the drive to capture Aidid. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, noted that if American forces withdrew from Somalia in apparent defeat the opportunity to create a new world order would be lost. [139] Evidently, there was an inability to distinguish between Somalia and the American willingness to fight when US interests were genuinely at stake.[140]

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[137] Gwen Ifill, "U.S. Mixes Signals to Somali General on Its Next Steps," *New York Times*, October 9, 1993, p. 1.

[138] Elaine Sciolino, "Pentagon Changes Its Somalia Goals as Effort Falters," *New York Times*, September 28, 1993, p. A1.

[139] Caleb Carr, "The Humanitarian Illusion," *New York Times*, September 16, 1993, p. A23.

[140] Thomas L. Friedman, "Bid to Clarify Aims," *New York Times*, October 6, 1993, p. A1.

President Clinton noted that not only would an immediate withdrawal return Somalia to its 1992 days, but that "all around the world, aggressors, thugs and terrorists will conclude that the best way to get us to change our policies is to kill our people. It would be open season on Americans."[141]

The United States and UNOSOM, however, were only able to buy peace from the USC/SNA once it explicitly rescinded its call for Aidid's capture and stated it would not object to the inclusion of Aidid in a future political agreement. That combined with a "date certain" for a U.S. pullout, in effect was an agreement to relinquish the political agenda back to Aidid. On October 10 1993, U.S. officials conceded that, despite the continued existence of a UN resolution,[142] a viable agreement was unlikely unless it included General Aidid. The change came about as Robert Oakley effectively took control from the UN Special Envoy, Jonathan Howe. In a meeting with Aidid aides, Oakley signaled to the General that if attacks on U.S. forces were ended and an American and Nigerian hostages were returned, Washington would not oppose the SNA's inclusion in a power-sharing arrangement. Thus, the promise of power-sharing was used to induce Aidid into foregoing violence, which might then be reciprocated. Oakley reinforced his rhetoric, however, stating that the arrest warrant for the General would remain in effect and that if American overtures were not reciprocated, U.S. forces would be prepared to resume the manhunt. Indeed, the General understood the message and responded with a unilateral ceasefire and the release of the American and

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[141] Douglas Jehl, "Clinton Doubling U.S. Force in Somalia, Vowing Troops will Come Home in Six Months," *New York Times*, October 8, 1993, p. A1.

[142] The June 6 1993 Security Council resolution (#837) which followed the killing of the Pakistani peacekeepers did not specifically refer to General Aidid, but called only for "all necessary measures against all those responsible for the armed attacks" on UNOSOM II.

Nigerian hostages. Denying the existence of any formal arrangement, the President stated "There was no deal made, and I can tell you that."[143] But it was clear that an informal *quid pro quo* had taken place. Not only was the SNA/USC included in subsequent political reconciliation efforts but, to the amazement of some, General Aidid was delivered to peace talks in Addis Ababa in December aboard an American military aircraft.

As the UNOSOM II operation wound down over subsequent months, those who had had differences with General Aidid over his intransigence towards the UN (but were willing to stand behind him as long as the U.N. had continued its manhunt) began to re-emerge. As U.N. forces were withdrawn, Aidid's power was also reduced. While he could claim a sort of victory over Washington and UNOSOM, the confrontation had been costly. Through death, dissidence or arrest, Aidid and the USC/SNA lost a number of his key supporters. The showdown had also been costly for Aidid's Habir Gidir clan; some of its subclans had resented their reflexive identification with Aidid's SNA and Aidid's refusal to compromise with the UN and other Hawiye clans, especially the Abgals.[144] Without the challenge to Aidid from UNOSOM, unity among the Habir Gidir began to dissolve and by early 1994, one of the his key clan allies, the Hawadle, had deserted the SNA. An official with the United Nations stated that Aidid's "all-or-nothing political posture has led many of his followers to conclude that the man who once embodied the aspirations of his clan now

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[143] Thomas L. Friedman, "Dealing With Somalia: Vagueness as a Virtue," *New York Times*, October 15, 1993, p. A1.

[144] "Somalia: Aydeed Faces His Own People," *Africa Confidential*, vol. 34, no. 24 (December 3, 1993).

represents no one's interests but his own."[145] Reflecting on the General's powerbase in 1995, Bryden wrote:

> [Aidid's] power base is probably at its most feeble since he resumed the USC leadership in 1991. Certainly the coterie of followers he has gathered about him in his new cabinet contains some of Somalia's least representative and least promising political leaders, mainly representing unpopular (or even unknown) splinter groups from within their clans or factions. In military terms, there are few, if any, among the names on the list, who could mobilize significant military resources in support of [Aidid].[146]

In the end, politics in Somalia had returned to its pre-intervention ways. Aid levels dropped to 1991 levels and Somalia degenerated into the localized authorities and self-appointed "presidents" (each of Ali Mahdi and General Aidid and Mohamed Ibrahim Egal had declared themselves as such) that had come with the fall of Siad Barre in 1991. "If the troops of America leave our country on March 31 of next year [1994] without disarming Aidid," warned Ali Mahdi, "then I cannot promise what will happen."[147] Despite the continued presence of UN troops from the end of 1993 through to 1995, international forces did not intervene directly in the sporadic interclan fighting around the capital.[148] While UNOSOM officials had made peace with the major clan factions, UN troops now

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[145] Matt Bryden, "Update on Situation in Muqdisho," (Report for the United Nations Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia) June 19, 1995.

[146] Bryden, "Update...," June 19, 1995, p. 2. In his report Bryden also includes a comprehensive list of Aidid allies and their respective powerbases.

[147] Douglas Jehl, "Somali Faction Leader Warns U.N. to Disarm Aidid, His Foe," *New York Times*, October 22, 1993, p. A3.

[148] On October 25 1993, observers noted four separate battles taking place in various regions of Mogadishu. See Douglas Jehl, "Mogadishu Tense as Rival Clan Fighting Subsides," *New York Times*, October 27, 1993, p. A6.

demonstrated a willingness to allow events to take their own course.[149] In 1995, both Ali Mahdi and General Aidid had had their own reconciliation conferences and had announced plans to establish their own coalition governments. While the UN urged clan factions to agree on a single government structure, the two leaders extended their respective coalitions to just about anybody except to each other.[150] An 11-point understanding that emerged out of the 1994 Nairobi conference came after repeated deadlocks and only with considerable prodding from UNOSOM II officials. Despite their signatures, neither ceasefire nor the National Reconciliation conference scheduled for the following May transpired. Matt Bryden wrote in response, "for those who remember the days before foreign troops arrived, it is as though nothing has changed: Somalia has come full circle." Another observer of Somali affairs, Said Samatar, noted that the two faction leaders had reached a lethal balance of power. "This," he concluded, "is a recipe for a prolonged civil war."[151]

IV

Conclusions.

For better or for worse, the complexity and fluidity of several conflicts occurring simultaneously in Somalia during this time period means that drawing normative conclusions

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[149] Donatella Lorch, "Tensions Are Rising in Somalia Amid Fears of Renewed Civil War," *New York Times*, October 29, 1993, p. A8.

[150] Aidid's new government announced following his March 1995 ousting from the USC leadership, for instance, consisted of 5 vice-presidents and 60 ministers. See Bryden, "Update on Situation in Muqdishu," June 19, 1995.

[151] Barbara Crossette, "As U.N. Packs Bags, Fear Grows Among Aid Groups in Somalia," *New York Times*, November 27, 1994, sec. I, p. 13.

on what might have brought peace is a dubious process. While at the conclusion of UNOSOM II there was no shortage of experts ready to detail the faults in the mission, the unprecedented nature of the conflict meant that even in hindsight definitive lessons were difficult to determine. Since most of what was tried failed to bring peace to Somalia, it is presumptuous at best to make categorical claims about what *could* or *should* have been done. Moreover, there were so many relevant political actors, each reacting to events and circumstances in different ways, that predicting their actions was extremely difficult. Nonetheless, several features do become apparent.

First, the failure of the armed groups themselves to build lasting cross-clan alliances did not bode well for post-Siad Barre politics. Several armed groups existed at the end of Siad Barre's reign (all seeing their own clan interests as paramount), instead of one hegemonic force which could impose order once the regime collapsed. While Ethiopia was no ideal, the fact that one group had dominated military power and successfully integrated other ethnic groups (even if not to the satisfaction of existing ethnic organizations) led to a far more peaceful outcome than in Somalia. If forging a multi-clan opposition was difficult when there was an identifiable enemy in the form of Siad Barre, creating lasting cross-clan linkages was even more difficult in the post-Siad Barre era.

Second, armed groups have an obvious capacity to make war. They will do so when either they are excluded from the political process or when they are targets of aggression. As distasteful as it may be to include them in the political process (and as preferable as it may be to take the high road and include alternative political groups or elements of civil society), shutting them out carries enormous risks. This is not to say that the path of

UNOSOM II should not have been taken; rather, that doing so risked a violent response and potential casualties for which there was little tolerance within the international community.

Third, the case of Somalia illustrates in the extreme the difficulties in forging any sort of long-term power-sharing arrangement. Examples of power-sharing did occur but they were never taken to their necessary completion. In fact, despite being obscured by the militarization of the country, post-1991 Somalia was as much an exercise in building cross-clan coalitions as it was a military confrontation. Both Ali Mahdi and General Aidid built alliances with other clans by including clan members in their own self-styled and overly large national "governments." But while the principal leaders were determined to develop *national* coalitions, they were not always able to forego or compromise their personal political ambitions. Nor were they able to follow through on power-sharing agreements (such as the second 1992 Djibouti conference) which transcended the two main power centres (that between Ali Mahdi and General Aidid). The distribution of cabinet posts among other clans was often seen as a means of *countering* the power of others rather than making ground towards peace. The leaders were only willing to make power-sharing arrangements with other significant but nonetheless lesser clans and militias — ones that would require the fewest political compromises — rather than make the deal that really would have counted, with their principal adversary. With clan coalitions rising and falling almost on a month to month basis as different groups entered and exited the respective coalitions, and with no deal between the two most prominent players, there was little opportunity for there to be an overwhelming distribution of power in favour of the government combined with the group satisfaction which comes from inclusion in the

government — the two features which in combination are necessary for peace.

Finally, it must be emphasized that power-sharing must be seen as beginning in the initial negotiation process. It does not just occur as a final product. Groups that do not have a say in the creation of government institutions and who have the capacity to challenge the government militarily, can prevent any final, formal power-sharing objective from being achieved. Consequently, it is necessary to include them early on the in the negotiation process.

Chapter 6

Untying the Knot: Confrontation and the Illusion of Peace in Angola, 1985-91

I

External power involvement in Angola began prior to Angola's independence on November 11, 1975, but it was at this latter date that the number of interventionist powers was dramatically increased. "The Americans hired the South Africans, and the Soviets hired the Cubans" noted one longtime diplomat in Luanda in describing the complex relations between patrons and clients in southern Africa. In addition, other powers, large and small had a role in the years following Angola's independence including China, East Germany and Zaire. The number of powers involved, of course, reflected the complexity of the conflict, given its "personal, ideological, inter-ethnic and interregional dimensions."[1] Having so many intervening powers in Angola had two effects. First, it complicated each party's conception of who their real enemy was, since both the government and rebels tended to cite the external powers as bolstering an otherwise illegitimate and militarily-weak adversary. Second, the military capabilities which the local actors received as a result of their associations with external powers excused them from having to find a political solution of their own for

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[1] Donald Rothchild and Caroline Hartzell, "Interstate and Intrastate Negotiations in Angola," in *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars*, ed. I William Zartman (Washington DC: Brookings, 1995), p. 175.

Angola's internal conflicts.

Consequently, peace in Angola required the resolution of conflicts on two levels, the second being contingent on the first. The first agreement would have to satisfy the foreign policy objectives of the intervening external powers. As this broader international conflict started to resolve itself, the underlying conflict between the two local actors, the MPLA[2] and UNITA[3], emerged with greater clarity. The second agreement between these local actors was achieved comparatively quickly because in the end it required them only to make a minimum number of reversible concessions. Each convinced that they would prevail in elections which would give them total control of the government, the actors were willing to forgo a share of power and accept the risk that they might be excluded from power altogether in the event they lost elections. By guaranteeing that one party would lose, however, this second agreement did not address fundamental political objectives in the way that the first agreement did for the intervening powers. Long-term peace, then, would be illusory.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate these claims. After providing a general background to the Angolan conflict, the relationships between local actors and external powers will be examined. This will be done to demonstrate the manner in which external power involvement complicated the identification of each actor's enemy and how only the resolution of this broader conflict could unlock the local conflict and create opportunities for its resolution. Finally the process of arriving at an agreement and the problems with that

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[2] *Movimento Popular do Libertação de Angola* — Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

[3] *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* — National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

agreement will be discussed.

II

Background to the Conflict in Angola[4]

Despite a long and violent struggle by Angolan nationalists, independence for the Portuguese colony became possible only in April 1974 when army officers in Lisbon demanded an end to Portugal's unwinnable wars in the colonies and overthrew the authoritarian Caetano regime. The leaders of Angola's three liberation movements met in January 1975 in Alvor Portugal and agreed on the formation of a tripartite transitional government in which each liberation movement would be represented. Other provisions in the agreement called for the integration of the nationalists' respective military forces and for subsequent elections. Independence was set for November 11, 1975.

Angola's struggle for independence had been notable as much for the violence between the liberation fronts as for that between the nationalists and the Portugal. Separating the three movements was a complex mixture of ethnicity, ideology and territorial roots. The MPLA, led by Agostinho Neto and arguably the most ethnically diverse of the three movements,[5] included the Kimbundu-speaking peoples surrounding Luanda, *mestiços* (ethnically mixed), and educated urbanites. It had its origins in the Angolan Communist

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[4] Space permits only the briefest discussion of historical factors leading to conflict in Angola. For more complete discussions of historical and cultural factors see Gerald J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Basil Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola's People* (New York: Doubleday, 1972); and John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume I,: The Anatomy of an Explosion* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1969).

[5] Keith Somerville, *Southern Africa and the Soviet Union: From Communist International to Commonwealth of Independent States* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 36.

Party (PCA) and the Portuguese Communist Party. UNITA and the FNLA,[6] by contrast, tended to be pro-Western and this allowed them to receive limited support from the United States. UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi, gained its support largely from the Ovimbundu of the *plano alto* in central Angola. The most regional of the three movements, the FNLA under Holden Roberto, was centred on the Bakongo of northern Angola and southern Zaire.[7]

Unlike our previous cases in Ethiopia and Somalia and in spite of their territorial and ethnic differences, none of the movements wanted anything other than a territorially united Angola: none of the groups sought independence for their region or their ethnic group, and all three agreed that the oil-rich northern region of Cabinda should remain a part of Angola. Once Angola's independence from Portugal was assured, however, there was little common ground for cooperation among the movements. Indeed, the fact that these three groups had the same irreducible political objective — to secure total power in Luanda — made them incompatible. With a date set for the transition, and the Portuguese now eager to leave the colony, there were more incentives to strive for complete control of the capital Luanda than to continue with the power-sharing deal stipulated in the Alvor agreement.[8] Thus, with independence, the conflict in Angola transformed itself from an anti-colonial war to a civil war.

External Power Involvement. The fact that Angola approached independence with

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[6] *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* — National Front for the Liberation of Angola.

[7] For a more complete discussion of the ethno-linguistic background of Angola's most significant groups, see *Angola: A Country Study* (Washington: American University, 1979), pp. 72-86.

[8] Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), p. 152.

no fewer than three anti-colonial movements presented ample opportunity for outside powers to link themselves to regional actors as a means to influence events. The United States, for example, was determined that one of the two rebel groups with Western leanings, either the FNLA or UNITA, gain control of the capital rather than the Soviet-backed MPLA. In July 1975 the United States supplied both military and financial aid to UNITA and the FNLA. It is known that from July through to November an estimated $30 million in cash and another $16 million in weaponry was distributed by the CIA to the FNLA and UNITA (the former cash figure Arthur Klinghoffer claims represented "just a fraction of the true cost" of aid to the rebels).[9] John Stockwell, a former CIA operative in Angola, noted that arms shipments included surface-to-air missiles, mortars, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers and armoured vehicles.[10]

Virtually all critical political commentaries on the initial involvement of the United States in Angola in the mid-1970s argue that Washington was more concerned with its own global agenda *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and paid little attention to the actual local conflict and the means to its resolution. "To insist upon defining the Angolan issue in global terms to the exclusion of local and regional terms," wrote John Marcum in 1976, "was to exclude the most plausible means of remedying the conditions which had attracted foreign intervention in the first place."[11] Arthur Klinghoffer agreed: "Part of the American problem

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[9] Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Foreign Policy in the Third World* (Boulder: Westview, 1980), p. 83.

[10] For a complete list of weaponry sent to US allies in Angola see John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), pp. 265-268.

[11] John Marcum, "Lessons of Angola," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 54, no. 3 (1976), p. 418.

in formulating policy toward Angola, was that global and domestic factors were given too much consideration while the realities of Angolan and southern African politics were often overlooked."[12] And Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Nathaniel Davis, noted that in his refusal "to abandon the competition against our great adversary," Secretary of State Kissinger "would freely acknowledge, I believe, that he saw Angola as part of the U.S.-Soviet relationship, and not as an African problem."[13] The achievement of power for their respective clients was the first consideration behind American involvement in Angola. Superpower involvement during the Cold War, then, was clearly not with the intention of resolving conflict in Angola and, on the contrary, had the effect of amplifying an otherwise local issue.[14]

The Alvor agreement soon broke down and Portugal, as the departing colonial power, had neither the inclination nor the means to restore order. The MPLA could claim power not because of its extensive control of territory but because, on the day of Angola's independence, its power-base was largely concentrated in (and primarily limited to) the capital Luanda and its environs. Armed with materiel provided by the Soviets and with the assistance of several thousand Cuban troops — a level of assistance that the West was unable or unwilling to match despite the efforts of some officials within the Ford Administration —

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[12]Klinghoffer, p. 97.

[13] Nathaniel Davis, "The Angolan Decision of 1975: A Personal Memoir," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 57, no. 1 (1978), pp. 123-124. For another personal account by a player involved in these decisions, see Roger Morris, "The Proxy War in Angola: Pathology of a Blunder," *The New Republic*, January 31, 1976, pp. 19-23.

[14] For another thorough discussion of superpower involvement in Angola during the transition to independence see Raymond Garthoff, "Competition in the Third World: Angola," in *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington: Brookings, 1985), pp. 502-537.

the governing MPLA then withstood an attack on Luanda by FNLA forces advancing from the north, and South African and UNITA forces from the south.[15]

The MPLA continued its close relationship with the Soviet Union and with Cuba in the years after independence. Following the departure of many skilled Portuguese from the former colony and given the MPLA's Marxist leanings, the government nationalized the remaining industries in Angola and looked to Soviet and more particularly Cuban expertise to provide security and to organize and reestablish Angola's infrastructure. Over the following years thousands of Cuban teachers, managers, technicians and skilled workers arrived in Angola to fill in the void left by departing Portuguese.[16] To cover the costs, the MPLA encouraged foreign oil companies in Cabinda to remain and stationed an estimated two thousand Cuban troops in the territory to ensure that the regime's hold on the territory continued.[17]

The Soviets saw their involvement in Angola not as "intervention" (which they claimed to oppose) but rather as part of its effort to offer "political, moral and material support to the armed struggle national liberation movements in Angola, including the

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[15] The fact that the MPLA controlled the capital and the fact that Luanda was a port city facilitated the delivery of military supplies and thus allowed Moscow's client to prevail in subsequent fighting.

[16] Somerville, p. 80. Somerville claims that the Soviet Union, East Germany and Bulgaria also made important contributions to Angola in this regard.

[17] Three days prior to Angola's independence a 2000-man invasion force had crossed from Zaire into Cabinda in an effort to wrest control of the territory from the MPLA. With Cuban assistance, Angolan troops expelled the invaders leaving an estimated 300 dead. When pressure began to mount for the withdrawal of the Cubans, dos Santos noted in a letter to the United Nations that in the event of a withdrawal agreement, Cuban troops in Cabinda would be the last to leave. While Cuban troops provided protection for the Cabinda region (which is geographically separate from Angola proper), Angolan troops provide protection for the oil installations themselves. See James Brooke, "In Angola, Oil and Politics Mix," *New York Times*, January 5, 1985, p. 27.

[MPLA]."[18] Since the Soviets perceived the MPLA as the legitimate and recognized government in Angola and other movements such as UNITA as foreign power proxies, Soviet involvement, sanctioned to some extent by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), gained a measure of self-defined legitimacy.[19] Washington accused Moscow of "ruthless opportunism."[20] But despite these allegations and the fact that it was struggling with its own involvement in Vietnam, Washington had also become party to the conflict in Angola. The Central Intelligence Agency's covert support of pro-Western forces who were fighting the MPLA angered members of the U.S. Congress who claimed that the policy had been implemented without its knowledge. In 1976 Congress passed the Clark Amendment banning further military funds to Angola.[21]

Without the risk of continued US assistance to UNITA, the new Angolan government might have been given a reprieve but for the fact that South Africa remained hostile to the idea of a Marxist government in southern Africa on the border of Pretoria-controlled South West Africa. [22] While the passage of the Clark Amendment had forced South Africa to

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[18] A. Klimov, *Izvestia*, December 25, 1975, cited in Porter, 154.

[19] Porter, p. 154 and p. 174. It is notable, however, that the Soviet Union did not establish military bases in Angola. Angolan president Agostinho Neto claimed that Angolan foreign policy would be based on non-alignment and that, while no one had asked permission to establish military bases, they would be refused in any case. Somerville, p. 66.

[20] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 119.

[21] The Amendment was named after Senator Dick Clark of Iowa, chair of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa. For a detailed, critical, first-hand account of the CIA's involvement in Angola, see Stockwell. See also Davis, pp. 109-124.

[22] South West Africa is also referred to here by its current name, Namibia.

reconsider taking military actions in Angola on its own,[23] by the early 1980s Pretoria was emboldened by the coming to office of Ronald Reagan to increase its support for UNITA and to begin a series of major incursions into southern Angola. The South Africans, in turn, were checked by Soviet arms and Cuban forces. Prior to South Africa's launching of Operation Askari in 1983, the USSR issued a warning to South Africa that if they pushed beyond a certain point they would face Cuban forces directly.[24]

UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi claimed that if Cuban troops were really in Angola only to protect the regime — as opposed to extend Soviet influence in the region — they would have been directly involved in fending off incursions from South Africa. Notably, however, from the time of independence until 1988, the role of Cuban troops in Angola was primarily one of deterrence. With the exception of flying occasional air missions into rebel-held territory in southern Angola, Cuban troops generally avoided direct combat. Instead they remained in reserve along a "tripwire" at the 15th parallel near the southern border, ready to fend off a deep incursion by South Africa.[25] Keeping Cubans in the rear allowed more

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[23] There is, of course, speculation on the extent to which the United States and South Africa cooperated at the time of Angola's independence for the purposes of bringing about a mutually favourable outcome. John Marcum notes that "Although Mr. Kissinger has asserted it was 'untrue' that there had been any U.S. 'collusion' with South Africa, 'high officials' in Pretoria have announced that South Africa's entry into Angola was made on the basis of an 'understanding' with American officials that the United States would rush sufficient supplies to counter-balance the weapons superiority of the MPLA/Cuban forces, and have expressed disappointment at Secretary Kissinger's inability to make good on his promises. At the very least, the United States connived at the South African intervention and sought to cooperate with it." Marcum, p. 422.

[24] As well, the South African ambassador to the United Nations was later informed that any escalation of the war in Angola would be matched by a Soviet commitment in weapons and advisors to the Angolan government. Jeremy Grest, "The South African Defence Force in Angola," *War and Society: The Militarization of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p. 126.

[25] James Brooke, "Cuba's Strange Mission in Angola," *New York Times*, February 1, 1987, sec. 6, p. 24.

Angolan troops to be allocated to the front. Also, by avoiding direct contact with the South Africans, Pretoria was deprived of the opportunity to make the more self-justifying claim that it was combating Cuban communism in southern Africa.

Since each local actor provided a vehicle for external power involvement, the ambitions of these external actors were frequently confused with those of the MPLA and UNITA. Each party cited an adversary other than their local adversary as the main target of their actions. UNITA claimed, for instance, that its purpose was to eject Cuban troops from Angola (ostensibly because Cuban troops prevented it from reaching a power-sharing agreement with the MPLA). Alternatively, the MPLA called on South Africa to end its occupation of southern Angola and Namibia. "Until 1988 the conflict was directly with South Africa," argues former Angolan foreign minister Afonso Van-Dunem Mbinda:

> But they were always putting forward UNITA trying to convince international opinion that the war was not against government of Angola and the government of South Africa but that it was rather between the Angolan army and UNITA. In fact, it was the South African army helping UNITA to fight the government of Angola. And the facts show this up to today.[26]

At another level, the South Africans claimed to be fighting only the guerrillas of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) and the Cuban-Soviet presence rather than the MPLA, while the Cubans claimed they were supporting the legitimate regime against South African incursions. Of course, both superpowers were also trying to influence events — either themselves or through their proxies South Africa and Cuba. Indeed, the local power struggle was in many respects a reflection of the larger power struggle between United

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[26] Afonso Van-Dunem 'Mbinda,' former Angolan Foreign Minister. Interview with the author, November 14, 1997.

States and the Soviet Union — not least because the external powers essentially designated the ideological orientations of the local actors (thereby transforming what might otherwise have been an ethnic power struggle into an ideological one).[27] Consequently, Cold War power-sharing — if it ever was seriously considered — was a remote possibility because such an agreement would necessarily have subverted superpower objectives.[28] Moreover, the local actors, the MPLA and UNITA, and the struggle between them, were sustained as militarily capable units as long as the struggle continued at a global level.[29] Only the removal of these external actors would reduce the conflict exclusively to that of the MPLA

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[27] The best indication of the manner in which external power involvement led to the three groups having their ideological orientations designated to them comes from an exchange between Congressman Les Aspin and the Director of Central Intelligence, William E. Colby, during testimony before a House Select Committee on Intelligence in December 1975. When asked about the differences between the political movements in Angola, Colby stated: "They are all independents. They are all for black Africa. They are all for some fuzzy kind of social system, you know, without really much articulation, but some sort of 'let's not be exploited by the capitalist nations.'" ... Congressman Les Aspin: "And why are the Chinese backing the moderate [FNLA] group?" Colby: "Because the Soviets are backing the MPLA is the simplest answer." Aspin: "It sounds like that is why we are doing it." Colby: "It is." From the so-called "Pike Papers" published in *The Village Voice*, February 16, 1976, p. 88. Similarly, in an interview with Savimbi in 1981, the *Wall Street Journal* noted that "Mr. Savimbi's stated policies don't offer much that is different from the policies of the present Angolan government." At that time Savimbi went so far as to say that he believed in "socialism, but in an African way." He concluded, "You can't apply capitalism in Africa". See Steve Mufson, "Angolan Rebel Leader Courts U.S. Aid," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 1981, p. 29. Alternatively, prior to Angolan independence the MPLA leadership was careful not to identify itself too closely to Marxism. When addressing delegates at the CPSU's 24th Congress in Moscow in 1971, Agostinho Neto praised Soviet aid but did not publicly commit the MPLA to Marxism. Later in a 1972 interview Neto noted that "when a movement consists of people who are different politically and ideologically it is not possible to say that this is, for example, a communist movement. Not all our people are communists or socialists. But the movement has a political orientation ... We think that ideologically we follow not necessarily the Communist or Marxist line but we follow the socialist line." Interview with Tanzanian *Sunday News*, August 20, 1972 (cited in Somerville, p. 46).

[28] Stockwell notes that in September 1975 Savimbi "embarrassed" Washington when he made overtures to the MPLA for a negotiated solution. He notes that "we wanted no 'soft' allies in our war against the MPLA." Stockwell also notes that an MPLA delegation came to Washington in late October 1975 to "plead the MPLA's potential friendliness towards the United States." The delegation was met only by a "low-level State Department officer who reported perfunctorily to the working group." See Stockwell, p. 193.

[29] The FNLA eventually dissolved once external support for it ended in the late 1970s making the local power structure resemble that of that global system even more closely.

and UNITA and, for the first time, allow the consideration of a political settlement between them.

The Beginning of "Constructive Engagement." The presence of Cuban troops in Angola was a central force motivating both American and South African foreign policy in southern Africa. Indeed, while the Reagan administration sought to distance itself from that of the apartheid government in South Africa, there was much in the American policy which South Africa endorsed. The American President aspired to extend to Angola the so-called "Reagan Doctrine" which sought to ensure that "those who have a positive alternative to the Soviet model" receive American support. As articulated by the American Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Chester Crocker, the objective was "to help the Soviets learn that it was one thing to seize power using instruments of coercion; it was something altogether different to prop up year after year a collection of feckless and bankrupt regimes that lacked a popular mandate and depended overwhelmingly on Soviet guns to survive."[30]

In light of Washington's inability to challenge the Angolan regime militarily, the removal of the Cuban troops became a central plank in American diplomacy. The policy of "constructive engagement" linked two issues: the Cuban presence in Angola and Namibian independence.[31] It sought to place Washington in the role of an "honest broker" in order to

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[30] Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighbourhood* (New York: WW Norton, 1992), p. 290. The doctrine was first articulated by President Reagan in a speech to the United Nations on 24 October 1985. For a critical view of the Reagan Doctrine see Michael McFaul, "Rethinking the Reagan Doctrine in Angola," *International Security*, vol. 14, no. 3, (1989-1990), pp. 99-135.

[31] Although there is no official document outlining the policy of constructive engagement, the approach was elaborated in an article by Chester Crocker in "South Africa: Strategy for Change," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 323-351. The thrust of the *Foreign Affairs* article is concerned mostly with the politics within South Africa rather than a region-wide policy of conflict resolution in southern Africa.

bring about an agreement committing Angola to sending home Cuban troops in exchange for a promise from South Africa to grant Namibian independence under UN Resolution 435.[32]

Namibian independence was a key factor in southern African thinking on security issues insofar as it provided a buffer zone to outside aggression. The problem was that both South Africa and Angola coveted Namibia as the key to their security but were themselves bitter enemies. For South Africa, Namibia (or South West Africa) was the last of a collection of white-ruled states on its periphery which could prevent attacks from guerrillas based in neighbouring black states. Angola, for its part, saw Namibian independence as the key to its security insofar as it would preclude South African incursions into its territory from Namibia in retaliation for its harbouring SWAPO and ANC guerrilla bases. Angola also had much in common ideologically with SWAPO and the ANC.

By linking Cuban withdrawal to any plan for Namibian independence, the United States (and South Africa) were able to meet several of their own policy objectives. The first and most general of these objectives was the removal of Cuban troops as the "enforcer of the Brezhnev doctrine" in southern Africa.[33] Second, it provided some protection that a newly independent Namibia would not immediately come under Soviet control since Cuban troops

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[32] Resolution 435 was adopted by the United Nations Security Council on September 29, 1978 and called for the withdrawal of South Africa's illegal administration of Namibia and the independence of Namibia through free and fair elections.

[33] George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), p. 1112. The Brezhnev Doctrine, first articulated following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, referred to the view that, having joined the socialist bloc, states were not entitled to embark on paths independent of the Soviet Union. The implication of Shultz's comments here was that the United States did not accept the MPLA claim that Cuban troops were present in Angola at the invitation of the Government of Angola, but were forced upon Angola to ensure that it would remain a faithful client.

would no longer be in a position to invade the territory.[34] Third and least explicit, the removal of Cuban troops ensured that an arguably vulnerable MPLA would be amenable to political reconciliation with its anticommunist ally, UNITA.[35] Even without the Clark Amendment, linkage gave Crocker a certain degree of leverage. Linkage put pressure on each of the Soviets, the Cubans and the Angolans insofar as they would have difficulty resisting an agreement which would bring about Namibian independence and ease military pressures on Angola.[36] The potential downfall of the initiative, however, was that the United States could be seen as blocking Namibia's internationally-acknowledged right to independence because of its insistence on Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola.

The Angolans were well aware of how their own security was related to Namibian independence given that the territory was frequently used to stage South African incursions in pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas and was means of channeling military supplies to UNITA. Publicly, Angolan and other African leaders resisted linkage by arguing that Resolution 435 called for Namibian independence without conditions. Moreover, it was argued, Cuban troops were in Angola legally on the invitation of the MPLA government (albeit a government Washington had chosen not to recognize). Since Cuban troops had respected the borders of Angola's neighbours, they neither threatened Pretoria's control of South

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[34] George Shultz, "Forward" in Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, p. 12.

[35] Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 1112. For its part, South Africa welcomed linkage. By menacing Angola militarily, South Africa ensured the continued presence of Cuban troops in Angola and avoided it having to make concessions of its own on Namibia. Notable is that South Africa did not raise the issue of Cuban presence in Angola in its original objections to Resolution 435. See Jeremy Harding, "Timetable Troubles," *Africa Report*, November-December 1988, p. 37.

[36] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 68.

Africa nor did they pose a threat to an independent Namibia (in fact, an independent Namibia would mean there was little need for Cuban troops to remain). Although many Cuban troops were increasingly disillusioned during their posting in Angola,[37] the Cuban leadership was in no hurry to pull out. Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister later noted,

> ...We are not the source of the problem. The Cubans did not create the problem. We didn't invade Angola, nor Namibia, we haven't imposed apartheid on anybody in the area. We are not to blame for anything. There is no international resolution asking the Cubans to withdraw. And on the contrary, there are more than one expressions of recognition of the role Cuba has played there — the Non-Aligned Summit conference, the UN, and so forth.[38]

Privately, as early as 1984, however, Angolan President dos Santos and Cuban President Fidel Castro indicated their willingness to consider a Cuban withdrawal given the right conditions.[39] But if Cuban troops were to withdraw, Luanda argued, it would only be *after* its security had been guaranteed by Namibian independence.

The Balance of Power in the mid-1980s. By the mid-1980s after 10 years of war (more than 20 years if one included the pre-independence war) and an estimated 67,000 war-related deaths,[40] outside observers on all sides were beginning to acknowledge that this was

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[37] While there is reason to doubt the accuracy of his claims, a Cuban defector Brig. Gen. Rafael del Pino Diaz told US interrogators in 1987 that 10,000 Cuban troops had been killed since 1976. See "For the Record," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 1987, p. 2; and Clara Germani, "Defector Discusses Cuba Role in Angola," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 2, 1987, p. 14.

[38] See the interview by Margaret A. Novicki with Cuba's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ricardo Alarcon, *Africa Report*, November-December 1988, pp. 39-41.

[39] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 203. At this time, the Angolan government offered a three year withdrawal of 20,000 Cuban troops south of the 13th parallel. It would not, however, make a commitment on Cuban troops in the north of the country. See E. A. Wayne, "Negotiators Walk a Mine Field in Bid for Peace in Angola," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 18, 1988, p. 5.

[40] See Ruth Leger Sivard, "Wars and War-Related Deaths of the Twentieth Century," *World Military and Social Expenditures, 1985* (Washington: World Priorities), pp. 10-11. Sivard's figures show that an estimated 55,000 Angolans were killed during the war for independence (1961-1975) and another 12,000 were killed in conflict from 1975-1985.

a war which could not be won. The Soviet Union dispensed billions of dollars in military aid to the Angolan government and provided upwards of fifteen hundred military advisors. East Germany provided an additional twenty-five hundred advisors as well. These advisors were in addition to the thousands of Cuban troops which provided security to the MPLA regime.[41] For its part, UNITA was supplemented by an estimated $80 million in annual support from South Africa.[42] Few doubted that government forces were superior to UNITA in terms of numbers of troops and quantity of arms,[43] but UNITA had other advantages which obstructed the government's ability to gain complete control in Angola. José Ernesto dos Santos, a government military commander, noted that "the UNITA puppets do not attack our military units. They attack civilian populations causing pain and death, and steal the goods of our people. UNITA's objective at this moment is to place explosives in all the principal economic centers to create human and material destruction."[44] Indeed, although UNITA did not control any of Angola's major urban centres, government officials acknowledged in 1985 that the rebels were able to operate freely in the eastern provinces of

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[41] In 1985 the number of Cuban troops in Angola was estimated to be between 20,000 and 30,000. See *Military Balance 1985-86*, p. 91 and Patrick Laurence, "South Africa Role in Angola Raises Questions," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 29, 1985, p. 7. *Military Balance* claims that in addition to the troops there were an additional 6000 Cuban civilian instructors and advisors. By 1988 estimates of the number of Cuban troops was upwards of 50,000.

[42] E.A. Wayne, "Angola-Namibia Accords: Act Two," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 23, 1989, p. 8; "U.S. Aid to Savimbi: Bush Pledges to Keep the Money Coming," *Africa Report*, March-April 1989, p. 5.

[43] Estimates of government troops in 1985 (FAPLA — *Forças Armadas Populares para a Libertação de Angola* [People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola]) were in the range of 100,000. Estimates of numbers of UNITA (FALA — Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola) troops were in the range of 40,000 (*Military Balance, 1985-86*). In 1988 Savimbi confirmed other Western estimates that UNITA had 27,000 regular troops and 37,000 "other fighters" at its disposal. See Christopher Wren, "Angolan Rebels Look to Life After South Africans," *New York Times*, October 30, 1988, p. 10.

[44] Cited in Novicki, "Against All Odds," *Africa Report*, January-February 1985, p. 6.

Cuando Cubango and Moxico where population levels were low. The sheer vastness of Angola's territory made government ground operations difficult to execute efficiently and attacks on UNITA's main base at Jamba in the extreme southeast were invariably met with swift reprisals from the South Africa Defense Force.

UNITA's power, however, did not derive from its ability to control territory or to find sanctuary among its population. Indeed, while UNITA was largely comprised of Ovimbundu, it was the Ovimbundu Angolans of the central plateau frequently suffered as a result of UNITA's strategy of destabilization. William Minter, a longtime observer of the war in Angola, noted that "... UNITA did make political appeals to the rural population, and in some areas at least provided rudimentary health and education services. But their military strategy was also aimed at making life physically impossible for civilians who did decide to stay in government areas."[45] While UNITA was unable to launch a major conventional force of its own (except when it was part of a larger South African-led offensive) it did carry out ambushes of government vehicles, sabotage government installations and terrorize local populations. In fact, perhaps its greatest advantage was its ability to scatter government forces over a wide area, avoid concentrated targets and choose its own time and place to conduct operations.

Interviews with UNITA members indicate that while the movement had been the smallest of the three principal movements at the time of independence, UNITA's strength in terms of personnel and equipment continued to increase during the 1970s and 1980s as a result of expanded South African support and, after 1985, increased military support from

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[45] William Minter, "Behind the Unita Curtain," *Africa Report*, May-June 1990, p. 45.

the United States.[46] In 1985, even before the ending of the Clark Amendment restrictions on American assistance to UNITA, officials were buoyant about UNITA's military capability: "We have made some impressive breakthroughs, some irreversible gains, and militarily it is only a matter of time" before the MPLA would be brought to its knees, noted Jeremias Chitunda, UNITA's "foreign secretary." "We have a totally winning situation today," he continued. "If you asked me a year ago, I would not have been as optimistic.... [But now] we are everywhere, north, south, east and west."[47] At this time UNITA claimed to be dominant in more than one-third of the country and had a significant presence in two thirds.

Nonetheless UNITA's military strength remained inferior to that of the MPLA. Crocker notes that an outright UNITA victory "would become possible only if the SADF [South African Defence Force] intervened massively and the Soviets and the Cubans walked away — an unlikely scenario."[48] Indeed, more sober assessments of UNITA's military capability by UNITA officials tended to play down the possibility of total military victory. According to a senior UNITA official, Abel Chivukuvuku, "UNITA's perspective was always that the war would have to end in negotiations, because a guerrilla movement rarely

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[46] Luis Graciano, former officer with both UNITA and the MPLA, in an interview with the author, December 9 1997. See also Chester Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 171. Early estimates of troop levels indicate the UNITA was indeed the smallest of the three principal movements. Stockwell notes CIA estimates of respective troop strengths at independence as follows: MPLA 20,000; FNLA, 15,000; UNITA, 4000. Stockwell later adjusted this figure upward either suggesting either the size of UNITA was increasing or that their estimations were below UNITA's actual size. On this later occasion, he states that despite a poor logistical system "Savimbi's army was several times larger than the FNLA's, better led, and supported by a political organization of some depth." See Stockwell, pp. 91 and 155.

[47] "Guerrilla Chief Predicts Victory Over Angola," *Washington Post*, January 2, 1985, p. A24.

[48] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 173.

goes to [the point where it can] take power by force. Its [purpose] is to force the established government to negotiate a peaceful settlement."[49]

Other UNITA members acknowledged that, indeed, there were few illusions about what could be accomplished. One former UNITA guerrilla fighter noted that although there was no question that the government was capable of mobilizing more weapons and more personnel, UNITA's deficiencies in these regards were compensated by its political sense of purpose: "Their political ideals, their determination, their expectations — they had a hope for the future." He notes how UNITA fighters were frequently reminded that "'Angola is being led by Cubans and Russians, so we have to change the situation. We are fighting until we have elections in Angola. If we have elections we will win.' This is what most of their members hoped."[50]

UNITA's sense of purpose and its determination to overthrow a corrupt, elitist government was very much rooted in its own humble origins. A Canadian diplomat in Luanda emphasized the sense of an underclass among UNITA members:

> UNITA grew out of a kind of Africanist radicalism of the 60s. It is fired by people like Franz Fanon. I think UNITA saw themselves as really the wretched of Angola. They represented the most exploited group of people and most exploited class of people and still do. ... I think UNITA saw and probably still sees themselves as the representatives of the poorest and most downtrodden class of people in this country.[51]

Like the TPLF in Ethiopia, UNITA also gained a certain psychological strength from its

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[49] Abel Chivukuvuku, currently the representative of the President of UNITA to the President of Angola. Interview with the author, November 24, 1997.

[50] Graciano interview.

[51] Allan Cain, *Development Workshop* (Luanda), Canadian Honourary Consul to Angola. Interview with the author, November 22, 1997.

having conducted their anti-colonial struggle from within Angola (rather than abroad) and among the Angolan people — a claim which UNITA officials insist neither the MPLA nor the FNLA could make.[52]

In terms of leadership, Savimbi had become the *sine qua non* of UNITA. "They see Savimbi as a saint," noted a former UNITA guerrilla who eventually defected to the government's side:

> They prayed to Savimbi. That doesn't happen here. On this side no one prayed for dos Santos. There are guys that killed their family for Savimbi. ... It's not normal. I myself saw this. I was there [to see] this cult of personality. [They say] 'Mr. Savimbi is our father. Mr. Savimbi will solve the problems of the country. With Savimbi we will have a lasting peace.'[53]

Observers of the ruling MPLA, by contrast, claim that it appeared never to have recovered from the death of one of its most important leaders, Agostinho Neto. His successor, José Eduardo dos Santos, was not as charismatic as Neto had been and had trouble controlling the more radical elements of his party.[54]

Angola's vast diamond and oil reserves provided both an asset over which the disputants fought and a resource which the disputants relied on to arm themselves. Diamonds might have been a greater source of income for the government except for the

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[52] Chivukuvuku interview. Keith Somerville also notes that Savimbi himself was determined to announce the formation of UNITA in 1964 from inside of Angola. Savimbi was critical of the MPLA and UNITA for basing their movements outside of the country. The MPLA organized its anti-colonial struggle from its bases in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville and Zambia. See Somerville, p. 45. Ironically, however, following its main strategy of destabilization, many of the acts of terrorism committed by UNITA were conducted against the Ovimbundu people of central Angola, the very group which is the most significant ethnic group in UNITA. *Human Rights Watch — Africa*, "Angola: Civilians Devastated by 15 Year War," vol. 3, no. 1 (February 5, 1991).

[53] Graciano interview.

[54] Crocker notes this in his negotiations with the Angolan government. See Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 166.

fact that beginning in March 1984 guerrilla attacks on Angola's most profitable diamond mines in the northeast of the country drastically cut production.[55] Consequently, the Angolan government was increasingly forced to rely almost exclusively on oil production to fund its war effort. In the early 1980s oil comprised almost 85 percent of Angola's total exports and provided the government with an estimated $1.5-2 billion annually. Moreover, unlike diamonds, oil production continued to increase during the 1980s from 130,000 barrels a day in 1982 to 205,000 in 1984.[56] "Were it not for the burgeoning oil industry," wrote *Africa Report* in 1985, "the Angolan economy would have likely collapsed under the weight of war-time expenditures. ..."[57] The ability to exploit these resources or to avoid squandering Angola's wealth on its military forces, however, provided an ongoing incentive for conflict resolution.

The final and arguably central reason behind the emerging military stalemate in Angola, however, was that none of the external backers of UNITA and the MPLA was prepared to see their client be defeated. Regardless of the respective sizes of FAPLA and FALA it was the involvement of external backers at crucial moments in the battles which saved the local powers from defeat or even elimination. Indeed, both the MPLA and UNITA were adept at appropriating external power ideological interests and orienting themselves to external power objectives in an effort to increase their relative power and preclude the need

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[55]In 1984 production in Angola's three most profitable mining areas had to be halted following an attack by UNITA rebels. Production continued to fall in 1986 before rising again in 1987. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, 1992-1993*, p. 19.

[56] Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 21

[57] Margaret A. Novicki, "Against All Odds," *Africa Report*, January-February 1985, p. 9.

to make concessions to their adversary.[58] UNITA's presidential spokesman, Abel Chivukuvuku, claims, for instance, that it was Savimbi's job to alert the South Africans to their common interest of getting Cuban troops out of Angola:

> The second phase of the war started in Angola 1976. UNITA had to go to the bush; the Cubans were coming in more and more. And then Savimbi had the clever idea of trying to convince the South Africans that the fact of the Cubans coming in, and the South Africans withdrawing, meant a threat to them. And that all this coming of Soviets and Russians and communists and so on, was a threat to South Africa and was a threat to the values of the West.[59]

While the local actors had obvious common interests with the external powers, as we shall see, there were also important differences.[60] Because of their associations with them, however, the interests of the external powers would have to be met prior to the needs of the local actors. The next section will consider more specifically the complex relationships between superpowers and local clients. In particular, attention will be paid to the manner in which these relationships obstructed the addressing the local conflict and the manner in which the end of the Cold War subsequently unlocked possibilities for conflict resolution on a local level.

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[58] The tendency of UNITA and the MPLA to look to ideological factors to distinguish themselves rather than existing ethnic differences is the clearest example of this tendency.

[59] Chivukuvuku interview.

[60] As suggested previously, the MPLA preferred to portray itself as a member of the nonaligned movement rather than a member of the Soviet camp. See Somerville, "Soviet-Angolan Relations: Liberation, Destabilization and Diplomacy," in *Southern Africa and the Soviet Union...*, pp. 36-123. UNITA, for its part, on occasion voiced its disapproval of apartheid in South Africa so as not to undermine its credentials as black nationalists.

III

The MPLA and the Soviet Union and Cuba

By the mid-1980s Soviet objectives in Angola had already been accomplished. The end of Portuguese colonialism had opened up new opportunities for Soviet expansion which had now been realized. The Soviets emerged victorious in the battle for Angola in 1975 and for a time even managed to preclude direct American involvement. In supporting new regimes such as the MPLA in Angola, wrote Duncan and Ekedahl, "Moscow enhanced its reputation as defender of those seeking independence from colonial rule, undermined the position of the United States and the West — and substantially extended its global reach."[61] Its primary concern once these objectives had been achieved was to defend the status quo.

Indeed, no one in the Angolan government minimized the key role the Soviets played in allowing the MPLA to achieve power in the 1970s and to maintain it in the 1980s. Continued good relations between the MPLA and Angola, however, were as much a result of its need for ongoing weapons supplies as its genuine warm feelings toward those who assisted them in their time of need. Paulo Jorge, a senior member of the MPLA and a former foreign minister, noted the sentiments that emerged at the time of independence:

> The most important aid to be given to the armed struggle came from the socialist countries and some African countries. ... In the meantime that we were receiving this assistance, the United States of America, France, Spain, and Britain were helping Portugal. And if during this period you assist me, it is normal that in the future I keep good relations with you. Not with those who didn't help you.[62]

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[61] W. Raymond Duncan and Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl, *Moscow and the Third World Under Gorbachev* (Boulder: Westview, 1990), p. 168.

[62] Paulo Jorge. Interview with the author, December 4, 1997. During the MPLA's anti-colonial struggle, the United States and its NATO allies had furnished support and military assistance to Portugal in its effort to maintain control of its colonies. William Minter a critical observer of American policy in Angola at

Even in the mid-1980s, the MPLA remained unapologetic for the fact that their aid continued to come from the Eastern bloc. This reflected the fact that it had been rebuffed in its effort to get recognition from the United States and the belief it had no alternative but to secure whatever assistance it could to combat South Africa. Noted President dos Santos in 1986:

> We will get aid from all countries who would like to help us defend ourselves against external attacks. If this aid comes only from the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union and Cuba, it is not our fault. We have already made a public appeal to all people to help us defend ourselves against South Africa's aggression.[63]

Angolan officials (and a few American critics of US military assistance to UNITA) claimed that the presence of Cubans and South Africans reflected necessity rather than choice and that continued incursions by the SADF only increased this dependency.

When Gorbachev arrived in office in 1985, however, Moscow was in the unenviable position of seeking to sustain its client in the face of escalating pressure from the United States and South Africa. The cost of defending the gains it made in the 1970s had become increasingly difficult for Moscow to bear in the 1980s, particularly in view of Gorbachev's own desire to reorder domestic and international priorities. While the issue of who was paying for Cuban troops and Soviet weaponry was something of an enigma, Cuban and Angolan officials acknowledged that sophisticated weaponry such as jet aircraft were paid for by the Angolan government. The Soviet Union, no doubt, appreciated the fact that Angola, unlike many of its other African clients, had resources which could be exploited to

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that time noted that "Africans in Portuguese Africa have increasingly recognized that they fight not only against Portugal, but against a whole imperial complex headed by the United States." See William Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West*, (New York: Monthly Review, 1972), p. 99.

[63] José Eduardo dos Santos. Interview with Margaret A. Novicki, *Africa Report*, January-February 1986, pp. 4-7.

pay its military bills. But there are other indications that the Angolan government was unable to meet its financial obligations. Paulo Jorge, a former Foreign Minister suggests that while Luanda was supposed to be paying its bills to Moscow, the financial burden was becoming too much to bear:

> It was not aid. We were buying it. An independent country has got to buy it. [They said] 'You are an independent country, now you buy it.' That is the reason why I say I don't know if we have paid for all this equipment — it seems not. Not yet. Personally I don't know if we must [still] pay it.[64]

Indeed, owing in part to a fall in oil prices in the mid-1980s, Luanda found it increasingly difficult to meet its financial obligations to the Soviet Union particularly when this was combined with an increased need for weaponry.[65] Weapons shipments to Angola increased from approximately $600 million in 1984 to $730 million in 1985 to approximately $1 billion in 1987. Duncan and Ekedahl claim that by 1988, Angola owed $2.6 billion to the Soviet Union.[66] Moreover, while its client remained in power, it was clear that UNITA, though unable to defeat the MPLA, continued to exist at a fraction of the cost to Washington

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[64] Jorge interview #2.

[65] A fall in oil prices in December 1985 cut into Angola's export earnings for 1986 — although it was compensated to some extent by increased production. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, 1992-93*. p. 21.

[66] Duncan and Ekedahl, pp. 172-73. The authors indicate that between 1984 and 1988 "Moscow was not receiving payments for its arms shipments." As for the cost of Cuban troops, Angola's Finance Minister Augusto Teixeira de Matos, stated to a journalist that "The Cuban soldiers are not paid for from our budget." President dos Santos, for his part, claimed that "the presence of Cuban troops doesn't represent a significant expenditure — these forces are not paid. ... They are based on a generous gift of internationalism." See Brooke, "Cuba's Strange Mission...," *New York Times*, February 1 1987. A report cited in the *Christian Science Monitor*, however, claimed that the financial burden of the Cuban troops on the Angolan government ranged between $150 - $400 million. See E. A. Wayne, "US Sees Progress in Southern Africa Talks," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 3, 1987, p. 6.

as the MPLA was costing Moscow.[67]

Accordingly, Moscow 's objective was no longer to win, but rather to avoid losing. The continuing escalation in the war beginning with the repeal of the Clark Amendment in 1985 was stimulated by the need of both superpowers to avoid the military defeat of their respective clients. In the mid- to late 1980s, the Angolan armed forces turned increasingly to Soviet-provided anti-aircraft weaponry and improved air power to fight the UNITA and the SADF. In the fall of 1985 the Soviets assisted in the strengthening of the Army's air defense systems and provided more radar equipment, helicopter gunships and MiG fighter bombers.[68] The US, in turn, provided advanced surface-to-air missiles because, they claimed, the FAPLA had launched a more aggressive air war which risked the elimination of UNITA.

With little prospect of an outright victory, Moscow now either had to keep its client in power or find a way to extract itself with a minimal loss of face. The appeal of a resolution to the conflict came from its ability to lessen the burden on Moscow while still being able to say that something had been gained from its involvement and that of Cuban internationalists — such as relieving Angola from South African incursions, and the achievement of Namibian independence. Of course, given the right conditions, all parties to the conflict in southern Africa were amenable to an agreement but it was particularly true for the Soviet Union. The problem was that it was reluctant to be seen as abandoning its

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[67] The Clark Amendment which had banned American military assistance to UNITA was revoked in 1985. Covert aid to the Angolan rebels began in 1986.

[68] Karl Maier, "Angolan Civil War: Air Power is Key," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 19, 1986, p. 9.

clients — in this case a client which, unlike the Dergue in Ethiopia, still had a better chance of making good on its payments. "We want to clean house," noted a Soviet diplomat in Angola. However, he continued, "we cannot be indifferent to the needs of a friendly country. ... Our level of support will depend on the level of external aggression."[69] Indeed, unlike the increasingly embarrassing Mengistu, support for the MPLA was easily justifiable given continuing South African aggression in southern Angola.[70]

The MPLA was now in a dilemma since it viewed Cuba and the Soviet Union at once as providing insurance against continued South African aggression if the relationship with Moscow and Havana continued, and a key to the resolution of the war in Angola if they were willing to end the relationship. That the Cuban troops provided essential security is undoubted. The Angolan government claimed that from 1981 to 1985 South Africa conducted 168 bombing raids, 234 airborne troop landings, 90 strafing incidents, 74 ground attacks and four naval landings.[71] In a letter to the United Nations, President dos Santos wrote that with this ongoing military threat from South Africa a complete Cuban withdrawal from Angola would amount to "suicide" for his country. Moreover, the MPLA had reason

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[69] Cited in James Brooke, "Angolan Settlement Moves Higher on U.S.-Soviet Agenda," *New York Times*, May 29, 1988, p. 3.

[70] Loyalty to its client and South African aggression would continue to be major justifications for continued Soviet support for the MPLA as late as 1988. While there were indications of a change in policy in 1988, it was also clear that the Soviets preferred not to be seen as pressuring their allies. The initiative had to be seen as coming from the MPLA. Indeed, Soviet officials acknowledged that an internal agreement could be achieved "very easily" once South Africa ceased its interventionist policy. "Suppose the Luanda Government sets forth its program of national reconciliation,' stated Anatoli Adamishin, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister. "We shall consider it. But as for inventing a program in their place or forcing a program on them, that's a very delicate matter, and I wouldn't take the liberty to do it." See Bill Keller, "Russians Want to Expedite an Angolan Settlment," *New York Times*, June 6, 1988, p. A8.

[71] Brooke, "Cuba's Strange Mission...,"*New York Times*, February 1, 1987.

to believe that even if an agreement was reached, South Africa could not be trusted. In 1985 it came to light that South Africa had violated a non-aggression agreement with Mozambique.[72] South African troops had also been found in Angolan territory after Pretoria had publicly announced its withdrawal from southern Angola in March 1984.[73] "We cannot sign our political suicide," one Angolan official said concerning Cuban withdrawal. "How can we trust the South Africans? They are a few hours away from Angola, while Cuba is at the other side of the world."[74]

It was also not clear, at least from the American perspective, that the Cubans could be persuaded to leave even if the Angolans asked them. Understanding the degree of autonomy and control exercised by Moscow, the Angolan government and the Cubans has been the subject of considerable speculation. Many observers claim that during its initial involvement in Angola, Cuba had acted on its own and without Soviet pressure to intervene.[75] Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker noted his initial uncertainty in 1981

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[72] In an indication of continued South African support following the signing of the Nkomati agreement between South Africa and Mozambique in 1984, documents surfaced indicating that Mozambique's rebel movement, the MNR, had been visited by the South African Deputy Foreign Minister Louis Nel. See Patrick Laurence, "S. Africa Shows Signs it Still Aims to Destabilize Region," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 20, 1985, p. 1.

[73] In February 1984, the Lusaka agreement was signed between Angola and South Africa whereby South Africa agreed to withdraw from southern Angola on the condition that Luanda restrain SWAPO guerrillas from interfering in Namibia. Over the next year South Africa continued to enter Angolan territory claiming that Angola had not lived up to its side of the bargain. Novicki, "Against..." *Africa Report*, January-February 1985. See also Patrick Laurence, "S. Africa Stalls on Namibian Independence," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 19, 1985, p. 7; and "Crossing Borders: A Glance at S. Africa's Record," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 23, 1985, p. 9.

[74] Cited in "Angola's Feelings Don't Get in the Way of Profits," *New York Times*, January 12, 1986, sec. 4, p. 3.

[75] Some observers maintain that the decision to intervene in Angola in 1975 was Havana's alone and that this view was "privately" accepted by then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. This report even claims that an Angolan mission to Moscow was given a "chilly reception" by Soviet leaders and referred to Cuba for

over to whom his diplomatic efforts should be directed: the Cubans, the Soviets or the Angolans.[76]

UNITA, the MPLA and the United States

The remaining external powers involved in Angola — the United States and South Africa — tended to have various inter-related objectives in the region. Their multi-track policies frequently reflected ambivalence toward the Angolan government and divisions within the foreign policy establishments of the intervening states over foreign policy objectives and how best to achieve them. Morever, they reflected the "unusual complexity of a tangle of several overlapping conflicts" which characterized the region.[77] In each case, however, this apparent ambivalence and confusion provided a means for their local client, UNITA, to increase its military strength and further their own objectives (which, in turn, frequently complemented those of the intervening powers).

The foremost objective of the United States was the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. Cuban withdrawal was what constructive engagement ultimately sought to achieve. But that objective was imbedded in a number of other parallel policy goals. More conservative elements in Washington sought the more ambitious task of replacing the

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assistance. See Don Oberdorfer, "Cuban Intervention in Angola Intrigues World Capitals," *Washington Post*, February 18, 1976, p. A6. See also Gerald Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," in *American Policy in Southern Africa*, ed. Rene Lemarchand (Washington: University Press of America, 1981), pp. 89-96. Others also suggest that the Cubans did act independently though likely in concert with the Soviet Union since successful intervention would also depend on the timely arrival of Soviet weaponry in 1975. See Porter, pp. 164-170; and Somerville, pp. 56-63.

[76] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 135.

[77] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 169.

Marxist MPLA government with a pro-Western UNITA government (or at least destabilizing the MPLA to allow a political role for UNITA). The Reagan administration also had a qualified commitment to the independence of Namibia — though Crocker acknowledges that the trend in the administration was to shift from a concern with Namibian independence (a concern of the Carter administration) to that of the communist regime in Angola. Crocker claims that his own approach was to emphasize a "regionwide" strategy which encompassed all of these objectives.[78] Washington's continuing refusal to recognize the government in Luanda was rooted in its "rejection of the MPLA's victory in 1975 and the manner in which it took place." Without concessions from the Angolan government, such as Cuban withdrawal or reconciliation with UNITA, recognition was seen by administration officials as an unearned "gift to Luanda and a blow to UNITA."[79]

Continued non-recognition, however, rankled the MPLA not least because the MPLA saw the Cuban presence as the only means by which it could defend itself from South African aggression. Now Washington was seeking to involve the MPLA in constructive engagement while continuing its refusal to recognize the Angolan government.[80] From

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[78] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 43.

[79] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 53.

[80] The fact that Washington saw the Angolan government as a partner in constructive engagement was seen as conferring some legitimacy on the regime itself. In an interview, former Angolan Foreign Minister Paulo Jorge noted his exchange with Chester Crocker: "Then [I said to the Assistant Secretary] 'The fact that you don't recognize the People's Republic means there are no diplomatic relations between our two countries. Then my question is, You came here to talk with whom? What do we represent to you?' And I remember waiting some minutes for the reply — because he was very embarrassed. ... And finally he said, 'We came here, Mr. Minister, to have contact and discussions with the Government of the People's Republic of Angola.' Then I said, 'Okay, in some way you recognize that we exist. At least *de facto* if not *de jure*.'" Jorge interview # 2. Chester Crocker provides a similar account in *High Noon*, p. 138. See also Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 135. Alternatively, for some time, South Africa refused to allow a negotiating role for Cuba believing that they had no right to be there and no concessions should be offered to get them out. See Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 389.

Angola's perspective, Washington was unjustifiably and unfairly more concerned with the fact of these troops being Cuban — an issue of little significance — than with Angola's legitimate security needs. Paulo Jorge, Angola's Foreign Minister at the time, argued that the fact of foreign troops in Africa could not in itself be objectionable since Washington tolerated French troops in similar roles elsewhere in Africa — and indeed had established diplomatic relations with the governments who had invited these troops.[81] Jorge claims to have told Crocker, "'I am sorry to tell you but the problem you have with the Cubans is not our problem. You have a lot of Cubans in your country. Why are you worried about Cubans who are in my country? My *independent* country!'"[82]

Relations between the Angolan government and Washington took a turn for the worse following the repeal of the Clark Amendment in July 1985. As a result of the perceived intransigence on the part of the Angolan government to move on the Cuban issue, there were renewed pressures in the United States to find new sources of leverage and, consequently, to repeal the nine-year-old ban on aid to UNITA. The difficulty was that Washington wanted to find a means to show support for UNITA while not undermining its role as an "honest broker" in negotiations for a comprehensive political settlement. Since South Africa had been UNITA's main supporter since independence, the removal of Clark also risked creating

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[81] In an interview with the author, Jorge noted his comments to Crocker: "'But the fact that you mention that the obstacle for you to recognize [Angola] and to have diplomatic relations is the presence of foreign troops in Angola, I have this question: If I am not wrong, in June 1977, the United States of America established relations with the Republic of Djibouti. At that time there were 2500 French troops in Djibouti. The French troops are not foreign troops in our continent? The French troops in Senegal, Gabon and Djibouti? The foreign troops in Angola [are objectionable] only because they are Cubans. Only because of this. How is it possible?'" Jorge interview #2. A similar account is again provided by Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 140.

[82] Jorge interview #2.

the perception that the United States was aligning itself with Pretoria. Proponents urging an end to Clark claimed that the removal of the ban was important insofar as it was a signal to Luanda that Washington was no longer limited in its ability to apply pressure to bring about a settlement.

While the administration claimed to have no immediate plans to provide aid to UNITA, calls to resume aid soon emerged. Representative Claude Pepper (D-Florida) introduced legislation requesting $27 million in non-lethal aid to UNITA — the first time such a formal request had been made in over a decade.[83] Supporters argued that while the $27 million was not militarily significant — and was certainly no match for the billions that the Soviets had provided the MPLA — it nonetheless indicated an American commitment to stopping Soviet aggression. The aid package received widespread support from Reagan's advisors and particularly in the National Security Council and the Department of Defense. "It's necessary because under the Clark Amendment we've had a veiled policy," noted Republican Congressman Jim Courter of New Jersey, a co-sponsor of the package. "Negotiation will only succeed when there's pressure on the government of Angola." A

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[83] There were accusations that Washington had found other indirect means to support UNITA during the time the Clark Amendment had been in force. One such claim was that assistance was channeled through the Saudi royal family — a claim that was vigorously denied by US officials. See "Saudi's Linked to Donations to Angolan Rebels," *New York Times*, July 2, 1987, p. A5. Raymond Garthoff reports Saudi support for the Angolan rebels as an accepted fact, claiming that in return Riyadh gained the administration's support for the sale of AWACS aircraft. See Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings, 1994), p. 691. Somerville also reports "growing evidence" that Zaire was used during the early 1980s as a channel for assistance to UNITA from the US and Israel. Much of his evidence, however, appears to be based on Soviet accusations that Israeli advisors were in Zaire and working with the CIA as part of a larger region-wide American policy. See Somerville, pp. 88-89. Imani Countess of the Washington Office on Africa, an Africa advocacy group, later claimed that "the spirit if not the letter of the Clark Amendment was violated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as US officials encouraged other countries such as Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa, to join in supporting UNITA." See "US Must Hold Savimbi Accountable, Support Angola Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1992, p. 23.

failure to pass the bill, Courter continued, would only "embolden and encourage the Soviets to stick with the policy of continuing military force to stamp out UNITA."[84] The State Department was less convinced of the merits of overt military aid believing that it would compromise Washington's ability to work with South Africa and other "front-line" states.[85] "Not only will it hurt negotiations with Angola," stated one State Department source. "It will also hurt our image by creating the impression that we're in collusion with South Africa. Anything that ties the US closer to South Africa in the eyes of the world limits our capacity to conduct effective diplomacy."[86] Other critics claimed that the purpose of the bill was unclear: was the goal to put Savimbi in power or merely to force a power-sharing settlement?; was the proposed aid sufficient to achieve this end, particularly when the Soviets were already providing billions in assistance and could increase its commitment at will?; would US aid only further increase the dependence of the MPLA on Soviet and Cuban support — the opposite of its intended goal?[87] To Chester Crocker, the man behind the negotiations on southern Africa, the proposed aid package went too far. Crocker said he hoped that the Administration would make a strong statement of support for UNITA but

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[84] George D. Moffatt III, "U.S. Aid to Angola Plays Role in Presummit Posturing with Soviets,"*Christian Science Monitor*, October 28, 1985, p. 5.

[85] The so-called front-line states — Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe — saw themselves as leading the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

[86] Moffatt, "US Aid to Angola...," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 28, 1985.

[87] See David D. Newsom, "Angola: Facing the Costs of US Involvement," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 7, 1985, p. 18.

opposed open military or economic aid to UNITA.[88]

In a speech to the United Nations on its 40th anniversary, President Ronald Reagan called for the United States and the Soviets to cooperate in a regional peace process "leading to an end to violence, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and national reconciliation in five nations" including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Ethiopia and Angola. But also included were implicit warnings that the United States was willing to provide moral and financial support to anti-Marxist rebels — whom the President called "freedom fighters" — if it meant cooperation could be brought about. Eight days later, on November 1, 1985, the State Department acquiesced when it commented: "There is a widespread feeling in this country that when, as a result of Soviet interference in the internal affairs of another nation, internal resistance mounts to that Soviet involvement, Americans should sympathize with and support such assistance. We are at one with that feeling, and UNITA's resistance to Soviet aggression is a case in point."[89]

By early 1986 it was an "open secret" that the United States was preparing to send an estimated $15 million in *covert* military assistance to UNITA. While Secretary of State Shultz and Assistant Secretary of State Crocker had opposed open military aid because it precluded the more ambiguous role the administration preferred and eliminated "even a trace of deniability," *covert* aid gave the administration the option of a more subtle show of

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[88] Crocker stated to the *New York Times*: "Diplomacy requires, to be effective, a degree of pressures that drive the parties toward a political compromise. ... But pressure, pure physical power, does not in itself, represent solutions, and in our analysis, cannot be effective in the absence of a meaningful political context." Quoted in Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Is Urging Chevron to Quit Angola," *New York Times*, January 9, 1986, p. A15.

[89] Cited in Joseph C. Harsch, "Angola, Updated," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 5, 1985, p. 18.

strength.[90] Covert aid also had the advantage of lessening Savimbi's reliance on Pretoria. Since no black African government would publicly support insurgents in another state, covert aid allowed for states other than South Africa to provide a transit point to UNITA. Regardless of whether aid would be covert or overt, however, the repeal of the Clark Amendment led the MPLA to break off negotiations. There would be no negotiations during 1986.

Clearly a driving force for open aid to UNITA had been ideological and not because proponents of aid had any intimate knowledge of events in Angola. Chester Crocker noted that conservatives in the United States "viewed Africa as elephant country — a place to hunt for anti-Communist trophies to hang on the wall and to demonstrate doctrinal manhood in support of freedom fighters."[91] Moreover, it became increasingly clear that the motives of proponents of aid to UNITA had more to do with their Cuban constituencies in the United States than any long-standing comprehension of the Angolan conflict. Claude Pepper, who had introduced the original bill requesting $27 million in aid, acknowledged that, "A few months ago I was not any more aware of other parts of the world that pass in kaleidoscopic review from time to time before our mental and hindsight vision. But I was approached about this matter by the Cuban American National Foundation ... they told me something about conditions in Angola."[92] Finally, proponents of aid to UNITA cited Savimbi's

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[90] Newspaper reports at the time suggested that Secretary of State Shultz opposed *any* military aid to Savimbi. In his memoirs, Shultz claims he only opposed *overt* military aid. See Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan to Offer Angolan Rebels Moral Backing," *New York Times*, January 26, 1986, p. 1; and Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 1118-1119.

[91] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 254.

[92] Cited in Salih Booker, "The Other Engagement," *Africa Report*, January-February 1986, p. 50.

democratic credentials and the fact that he had a "good human rights record,"[93] when in fact his embrace of democratic values had yet to be conclusively demonstrated and his human rights record, as would later come to light, was less than stellar. Aid to UNITA was primarily a means to pressure the MPLA into making concessions on another issue — namely the removal of Cuban troops from southern Africa. Resolving the conflict between the MPLA and UNITA may have been an objective, but it was constantly obscured by other issues and actors.

American relations with Angola were further complicated by the sometimes embarrassing fact that the United States was Angola's single largest trading partner. The Cabinda Gulf Oil Company oversaw 193 oil wells which, when combined with other drilling operations, made Angola Africa's second largest producer of oil after Nigeria. In 1985, 53 percent of Angola's oil exports went to the United States and American banks provided virtually all short and long-term credit for Sonangol, Angola's state-run oil company (which had a 51 percent share of Cabinda Gulf Oil).[94] Given that oil production provided the Angolan government with an estimated $2 billion — an increasingly large percentage of its total revenues — it was ironic but hardly surprising that American conservatives accused Gulf Oil of propping up a Marxist state.[95]

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[93] Dimitri K. Simes, "US Should Help UNITA," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 12, 1985, p. 20.

[94] See Brooke, "In Angola, Oil and Politics...," *New York Times*, January 5, 1985.

[95] Also, during the 1970s, liberals accused Gulf Oil of sustaining Portuguese colonialism. See Brooke, "In Angola, Oil and Politics...," *New York Times*, January 5, 1985. In another seemingly contradictory situation, a subsidiary of South African-owned De Beers provided technical assistance for many of Angola's diamond mines until its contract expired in December 1985. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, 1992-93*, p. 19.

Until the mid-1980s Washington not only tolerated but even appeared to approve of Gulf Oil's role in developing Angola's oil resources. Indeed a State Department release in August 1984 noted, "We feel strongly that U.S. business participation in Angola is in the long-term interests of both our nations and of all Angolans."[96] With the ending of the ban on aid to UNITA, however, there was renewed pressure on Gulf Oil to reconsider its involvement in Angola. In late January 1986 the Reagan Administration reminded Chevron and other companies operating in Angola that "they are in the middle of a war zone [and] that they are also in the middle of a rather hot political debate" regarding their continued desire to do business in Angola. A State Department spokesman said that while the decision of whether to remain in Angola ultimately remained with the oil companies, he advised that "they should be thinking about U.S. national interests as well as their own corporate interests as they make their decisions." In justifying this apparent change in policy, the State Department cited "an escalation of the war" combined with "increased Soviet involvement" and a failure of the Angolan government to commit itself to a negotiated settlement as its reasons. "Most of the hard currency earned by the Angolan Government with the help of these companies goes to the import of military equipment and payment for the Cuban troops," the State Department noted. Gulf's presence in Angola, it continued, "has not, according to our perceptions, accelerated the negotiating process."[97]

U.S. oil interests, however, had not simply turned a blind eye on the government in

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[96] Gwertzman, "U.S. is Urging Chevron...," *New York Times*, January 29, 1986.

[97] Gwertzman, "U.S. is Urging Chevron...," *New York Times*, January 29, 1986.

Angola. Despite the regime's public commitment to Marxism-Leninism,[98] there was a genuine belief that the MPLA was a movement with which Western firms could conduct business. Even in the years prior to its independence, the MPLA had tried to articulate that its more practical approach to Marxism-Leninism was in part driven by security concerns and its need for weapons from the Soviet Union.[99] During the transition itself in mid-1975, Gulf Oil not only predicted that the MPLA would win the battle to form the first post-independence government but concluded that it was the only party which could provide stable government in Angola. Gerald Bender quotes one conservative US Senator as stating that "the MPLA can't be all that bad if Gulf is strongly supporting them."[100]

Indeed, President dos Santos, though professing to be a Marxist, had frequently spoken out critically against dogmatism and appeared to be more of a pragmatist.[101] Dos Santos showed a willingness to dismiss Soviet hardliners with whom he disagreed and demonstrated an interest in introducing private enterprise and in dealing with Western financial institutions such as the IMF.[102] Another senior Angolan official, Pedro de Castro Van-Dunem, said during a 1987 trip to New York to visit American business leaders that he rejected the Marxist label to describe his government, claiming that he preferred "socialist

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[98] In October 1976, the MPLA Central Committee adopted Marxism-Leninism as its official ideology. In December 1977 the party was renamed the MPLA Worker's Party and its members resolved to turn the MPLA into a vanguard party of the "worker-peasant alliance." See Somerville, pp. 67-71.

[99] See Somerville, pp. 63-68.

[100] Cited in Bender, "Kissinger in Angola," p. 140, footnote 56.

[101] One joke which demonstrated the MPLA's effective management of two apparently opposing ideologies was that the government was using capitalism to pay for socialism.

[102] Angola's application to join the IMF was opposed by the United States in 1987.

orientation" instead.[103] The Angolan government had also lived up to its financial commitments and until the mid-1980s maintained an "impeccable payment record" on a debt of nearly $3 billion to Western interests.[104] In the mid-1980s banks were reportedly lining up to participate in a new five-year $1 billion dollar investment scheme. "Consistently, our partners here have lived up to their obligations, James E. Lee, Chairman of Gulf Oil. "For anyone who is interested in foreign investment or foreign trade, that is a very important point."[105]

As for new pressures on American firms to leave Angola, Chevron's spokesman Stephen North stated, "The administration has not contacted our management." He added, "We also believe that what we are doing is in the national interest of this country. From what we read in the press, there seems to be a switch in US policy, but it's not clear what it's a switch to." Company officials also pointed out that Chevron's withdrawal would only lead to a flood of other companies coming into Angola: "There are many British, French and Italian companies," North noted, "with their tongues hanging out."[106] Angolan leaders and Western business interests remained in a precarious position: US oil companies that

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[103] "Approaches on Angola," *New York Times*, June 22, 1987, p. A14.

[104] Karl Maier, "Angolan Oil Region Typifies Pressures in East-West Tug of War," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 15, 1986, p. 25. See also James Brooke, "Angola's Economic Struggles," *New York Times*, January 31, 1986, p. D1. The Economist Intelligence Unit notes that "Until the collapse of the oil prices in 1986 the government enjoyed a good credit rating. It was scrupulous about meeting its commitments and honouring those acquired before independence." The Angolan government's good standing was a reflection of its cautious borrowing policy and the expectation that oil production would continue to boost Angola's foreign exchange resources. See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, 1992-93*, p. 38-39.

[105] Brooke, "In Angola, Oil...," *New York Times*, January 5, 1985.

[106] Charlotte Saikowski, "Angolan Guerrilla Launches Skillful Quest for US Aid," *Christian Science Monitor*, Friday January 31, 1986, p. 1.

remained in Angola subjected themselves to guerrilla attacks by forces who were now being supplied with weaponry by Washington. Moreover, it was these on-going security concerns and the resulting need for Cuban troops and Soviet military aid which complicated the MPLA's complete turn to the West.

UNITA deliberately positioned itself in a way that would appeal to US conservatives concerned about Soviet expansion. UNITA explicitly portrayed itself as a pro-Western, democratic front which could combat the spread of communism in southern Africa. Both Savimbi and the Reagan administration conceded that there was "no prospect of a military victory" for UNITA. Instead, Savimbi claimed, objectives were, first, like the United States, the removal of Cuban troops from Angola and, second, the establishment of a multiparty political system.[107] UNITA linked itself with other liberation movements aligned with the West including the Contras in Nicaragua and the Mujahadin in Afghanistan both of which were beneficiaries of weapons provided under the Reagan Doctrine.[108] In January 1986, under the guidance of a Virginia public relations firm, *Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly*, Savimbi began a two-week campaign of media appearances and meetings with Reagan administration officials including the President himself. Savimbi was escorted through the

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[107] Steve Mufson, "Angolan Rebel Leader Courts U.S. Aid," *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 1981, p. 29. A UNITA statement released in 1987 highlighted its role in ejecting Cuban troops claiming that foreign involvement would end once sufficient casualties had been inflicted on "Fidel Castro's mercenaries". See Ned Temko, "Angolan Civilians Bear Brunt of 12-Year War," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 1987, p. 9.

[108] Chivukuvuku interview. Notable in this respect was the formation of a "global alliance" of anti-communist insurgents — including representatives from Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola and Laos — formed at UNITA headquarters at Jamba in southern Angola in June 1985. They received verbal support from President Reagan and called themselves the Armed Movements Fighting Against Soviet Expansionism. The conference was sponsored by a Washington-based conservative lobby group, Citizens for America. See Alfonzo Chardy, "Rebels of 4 Nations Form Antileftist Front," *Washington Post*, June 6, 1985, p. A29; and Garthoff, *Great Transition*, p. 698.

capital by Federal security agents and received a reception usually reserved for heads of state.[109] His cause was portrayed not as one in league with South Africa, as Savimbi's critics frequently claimed, but as an anti-communist. Savimbi encouraged the viewpoint among conservatives that Angola was another test of the resolution of the United States to stand up to communism. "If you lose Angola to communism," Savimbi warned at the end of his tour, "you lose southern Africa. By losing southern Africa, you lose access to strategic minerals that are critical to your economy. Also, you lose the strategic [trade] lines of the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean."[110] According to Savimbi, all that was required to accomplish UNITA's objectives was a small demonstration of assistance from the Reagan administration: "With a little support," he noted, "we can really bring the MPLA to the negotiating table."[111]

For many conservatives, noted the *Christian Science Monitor*, the issue was simple: "Mr. Savimbi has a fair degree of legitimacy, his Ovimbundu tribe is the largest in Angola and deserves some role in government, and he's battling a Marxist regime heavily aided by the Soviets and the Cubans. Why not give him the guns?"[112] Reagan did not make an

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[109] The MPLA eventually hired their own public relations firm to improve its image in Washington. In February 1986, a firm usually associated with Republican causes, *Gray and Company*, announced that it had been hired by the Government of Angola. Robert K. Gray was previously deputy director of Ronald Reagan's 1980 Presidential campaign and co-chair of his subsequent inaugural. See R. W. Apple, "Red Carpet for a Rebel, Or How a Star is Born," *New York Times*, February 7, 1986, p. A16. The MPLA is also noted as hiring former US Attorney General, Elliot L. Richardson, to facilitate improved diplomatic relations between Luanda and Washington. See "Angola Hires Ex-Diplomat to Explore Ties With US," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 10, 1986, p. 2.

[110] George D. Moffett III, "US Debates Support for Angolan Rebels vs. Broader African Policy,"*Christian Science Monitor*, February 11, 1986, p. 6.

[111] Moffett, "US Debates Support...," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 11, 1986.

[112] John Hughes, "Angolan Puzzler,"*Christian Science Monitor*, February 7, 1986, p. 16.

explicit commitment of weapons to UNITA, stating instead: "We want to be very helpful to what Dr. Savimbi and his people are trying to do, and we're trying to arrive at this the best way to do that."[113] When asked during his 1986 tour what kind of support he was after, Savimbi remarked that he was more interested in *political* support. In fact, in meetings with the President, the Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, and Secretary of State Shultz, Savimbi had reportedly requested hand-held anti-aircraft missiles and anti-tank weapons for use against MPLA armour that had been used in recent battles. By the time President Reagan had made his remarks, plans for a first installment of "covert" military aid were already underway.[114]

While the assistance was indeed "covert," its existence was widely known. In recent years "covert" aid to the Nicaraguan *Contras* had been debated openly. Indeed, within one month of Savimbi's Washington visit, Assistant Secretary Chester Crocker acknowledged publicly that a decision had been made to provide an unspecified amount of assistance to UNITA. The money came out of existing CIA funds and did not require formal Congressional approval (though the funds could have been blocked through a majority of votes in Congress). Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (Foreign Relations Committee) and Patrick J. Leahy (Vice-Chair Select Committee on Intelligence) subsequently argued that, "The real effect of continuing to label this program 'covert' when it was never intended to remain secret has been to exclude Congress from any direct role on this important foreign policy

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[113] Saikowski, "Angolan Guerrilla Launches...," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1986.

[114] Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. and Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, "Covert Aid to Angola?," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 14, 1986, p. 14.. The amount was believed to be approximately $15 million.

decision."[115] The type of weaponry, however, also suggested that there was another purpose to the aid package. In April 1986 a Pentagon official, Michael Pillsbury, leaked the fact that top-of-the-line *Stinger* anti-aircraft missiles had been sent to Angola. While sending this particular weapon could be legitimized by the need to counter an increasingly aggressive air war launched by the Angolan government against UNITA, *Stingers* had by this time been provided to so few US customers that once spotted in Angola, any remaining secrecy about the fact of US aid would be lost. A "covert" aid package consisting of *Stinger* missiles then not only avoided much of the domestic wrangling that might have resulted with overt aid but it sent a message to the Angolans (and their external supporters) that the United States was not afraid to apply military pressure to get a settlement on southern Africa.

American military assistance to the Angolan rebels coincided with UNITA's efforts to open a "second front" in Angola's northern provinces of Uige and Zaire close to Angola's oil region and hundreds of miles from its traditional bases in the south. There was speculation that UNITA sought to increase its activity in the north as a way of drawing off Cuban troops which appeared to be congregating in the south apparently in preparation for a major military offensive. But the shift had as much to do with the fact that Washington was looking to Zaire (Kinshasa) as a conduit for military aid to UNITA. Zaire's 1300-mile common border with Angola was too vast to be effectively monitored by Angolan troops and allowed Washington to avoid relying on South Africa to carry out its policy objectives (aside from the fact that it would also violate an American arms embargo on arms shipments to South Africa). While President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire denied that his country was

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[115] Mathias and Leahy, "Covert...," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 14, 1986.

being used as a base from which to supply UNITA rebels, reports soon emerged that the CIA was planning to use an abandoned air base at Kamina originally built by Belgian colonialists.[116] The United States had allocated a "few million dollars" to upgrade the base and to provide financial compensation to the Mobutu regime for US landing rights — a controversial move in itself given the frequently-made charge that money to Zaire sustained Mobutu's own autocratic regime.[117] Boeing 707s and C-130s with the name "Santa Lucia Airways" were spotted arriving at the base on at least three occasions in 1986. Weapons shipments through Zaire to UNITA rebels subsequently continued at a rate of four or five shipments a week through six bases in southern Zaire.[118] Shipments reportedly included automatic weapons, ammunition and *Stinger* missiles.

The State Department claimed that the US-provided assistance was insignificant compared to the $1 billion in military hardware recently provided to the Angolan Government by the Soviets. "It wasn't us that made this into an East-West issue," one administration official countered. "The Soviets have poured about $8.2 billion into Angola over the past 13 years. ... Soviet aid dwarfs our aid to UNITA by 80 or 90 to 1, [and] they

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[116] James Brooke, "C.I.A. Said to Send Weapons Via Zaire to Angola Rebels," *New York Times*, February 1, 1987, p. 1. In June 1987, the *New York Times* received copies of two apparently genuine typewritten memoranda that referred to the arms supply operation. Both appeared to have been written by Zaire's intelligence services to President Mobutu in the wake of the February 1, 1987, *New York Times* article about the airlift. See James Brooke, U.S. Arms Airlift to Angola Rebels Is Said to Go On," *New York Times*, July 27, 1987, p. 1.

[117] Colin Legum, "African Ire Expected Over US Bid for Base in Zaire," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 24, 1987, p. 9.

[118] Although James Brooke, the *New York Times* journalist who initially reported the initial arms shipments through Kamina, was subsequently barred from entering Zaire.

aren't volunteering any cuts."[119] But there is other evidence that, however small aid was in relative terms, the weaponry was having a significant effect on the battlefield. One consultant on international affairs argued at the time:

> For years, a principal weakness of Afghan and Angolan guerrillas has been inadequate air defenses. But recent figures suggest the Stinger has helped [UNITA] overcome this weakness. The figures, cited by UNITA and confirmed by independent analysts, signify a radical rise in insurgent air defense capabilities directly traceable to the Stinger. Between January 1986 and April 4, 1987, UNITA shot down 65 aircraft flown by the Marxist Angolan government forces, their Cuban protectors, or the Soviets. ... The implications of this situation are profound in terms of the ability to sustain an insurgency. It means that Soviet-provided aircraft cannot be utilized with impunity as a substitute for artillery in hard-to-reach areas. ... In other words, we may be witnessing a change in low intensity warfare in these two countries. This may signify that the indispensable air superiority of professional armies over insurgents is partially neutralized. *There is a relatively high impact of a fairly small dollar value of military assistance from the United States.*[120]

While US aid to UNITA admittedly never reached anywhere near the quantity of weaponry Angola acquired from the Soviet Union, aid levels did increase beyond the original $15 million that was originally thought to have been sent. "All we have said is that we are providing appropriate assistance — without spelling out how, where or how much," Bea Russell, a State Department spokesperson said in an interview with the *New York Times*. "We are trying to provide some balance to the vast amount of assistance coming from the Soviet Union to the other side."[121] Angolan officials, for their part, claimed even at that time that the $15 million figure was a "gross underestimation" of the extent of US assistance to

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[119] E. A. Wayne, "African Leaders Want US Mediation in Angola, But No Rebel Aid," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 1988, p. 7.

[120] Charles Waterman, "Providing US Missiles to Angolan, Afghan Insurgents Adds New Twist to Guerrilla Wars," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 2, 1987, p. 14. Italics added by the author.

[121] James Brooke, "Angola Says U.S. Uses Zaire Bases to Train Rebels," *New York Times*, May 26, 1988, p. A10.

UNITA. "Fifteen million dollars is a joke," noted General António França N'dalu, commander of Angola's army. "That barely supplies a battalion."[122] Indeed, upcoming US presidential elections and the campaign pledge of Presidential candidate Michael Dukakis to cut off US aid to UNITA were leading Washington officials to step up assistance to UNITA to compensate for the possibility that Republican President George Bush would not prevail. According to a former UNITA representative in Washington, US aid to the Angolan rebels reached approximately $80 million per year.[123]

UNITA, the MPLA and South Africa

South African foreign policy in Angola was, to say the least, complex. It, too, had a number of ambiguous and inter-related objectives and targets.[124] Commentators on South African foreign policy note that a central policy objective had been to maintain a border of white-ruled states on the periphery of South Africa's territorial claims.[125] The April 1974 *coup* in

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[122] Cited in Brooke, "Angola Says U.S....," *New York Times*, May 26, 1988.

[123] Chivukuvuku interview. Of course determining the exact quantity of covert military aid from superpower sources is always difficult. During the 1970s there were differing estimates of the amount of US aid to UNITA because, in part, much of the weaponry provided was surplus or obsolete and therefore undervalued. See Stockwell, p. 58; Bender, p. 87. Marcos Samondo, a UNITA representative in Washington for much of the war, noted that since much of the materiel provided was in the form of weapons (and not cheques) even UNITA officials had only ballpark estimations of the quantity of aid sent to Angola. Marcos Samondo, interview with the author, December 5, 1997. *Human Rights Watch* estimate that the total amount of aid provided to UNITA by Washington between 1986 and 1991 to be $250 million — making it the second largest covert weapons programme after that to the Afghan rebels. See Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations of the Laws of War Since the 1992 Elections*, p. 9.

[124] There are a number of good sources on South African foreign policy. In particular, see Stephen Chan, *Exporting Apartheid: Foreign Policies in Southern Africa, 1978-1988* (London: Macmillan, 1990); James Barber and John Barratt, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945-1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990).

[125] Grest, p. 119.

Portugal presented a crisis for South African foreign policy to the extent that friendly governments in two of those newly independent neighbouring countries, Angola and Mozambique, would be hostile to the apartheid government in Pretoria. Angola's oil resources in particular were appealing to South Africa since it would increase its independence and ease the burden of sanctions against South Africa.[126] During the transition to independence, both the FNLA and UNITA had invited South African support for their cause. Having crossed into Angola from Namibia, South Africa had set up training bases in August and September 1975 and with CIA encouragement sent military supplies to UNITA. In October 1975, the SADF assumed a more direct role in Angola when its own forces advanced northwards along the coast toward Luanda. By mid-November, the SADF was within 200 kilometers of the capital when heavy fighting against recently-arrived Cuban forces slowed its advance. With its involvement now public knowledge, South Africa had to reconsider its future role in Angola in light of the fact that the Congressional ban on US support for UNITA meant that Pretoria would have to confront Soviet and Cuban forces on its own. In January 1976, the South African government elected to withdraw its forces from Angola. If a friendly government could not be installed in Luanda, than an embattled MPLA government was an acceptable alternative.[127] UNITA proved to be an effective vehicle for Pretoria to maintain pressure on Luanda and to achieve a number of related objectives.

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[126] Grest, p. 116.

[127] Whether or not South Africa was continuing its efforts to dislodge the MPLA from power into the 1980's remains an issue of some debate. In 1976 South African Defense Minister Pieter Botha allegedly told an MP that South African troops could have captured Luanda and were in fact ready to move when they were withdrawn. See Bender, 1981, p. 136, footnote 40. Former members of the SADF continue to argue today that if their objective was solely to oust the MPLA they could have bombed the capital. Instead, they claim, they were only interested in countering SWAPO incursions.

Indeed, former members of the SADF insist that by the 1980s Pretoria had largely reconciled itself to the MPLA's hold on political power in Luanda and together, or in combination with UNITA, the SADF undertook a number of different roles to further these objectives.

Limited SADF raids into southern Angola in hot-pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas. First among these objectives was to maintain the security of South African-controlled Namibia — a territory which, despite international law was very much regarded by South Africa as its own.[128] There should be little doubt that, despite South Africa's adversarial relations with Luanda, a primary concern for Pretoria involved the more limited problem of SWAPO guerrillas infiltrating Namibian territory and carrying out attacks on its northern towns. Indeed, Pretoria's most public justification for its involvement in Angola was the need to counter SWAPO (and ANC) guerrillas for whom the Angolan government continued to provide sanctuary. Former members of the SADF acknowledge, however, that relations between the MPLA and SWAPO were so close that they were frequently perceived as the same enemy and attacks were made on both of them.[129]

Facilitate UNITA occupation of southern Angola. South African command was specific about how far into Angolan territory the SADF was allowed to penetrate in pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas (known by their acronym PLAN — People's Liberation Army of Namibia). This fact goes some way to explaining why UNITA became a South African proxy: not only was UNITA's ideological orientation acceptable to Pretoria but a South

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[128] In June 1971 the International Court of Justice at the Hague ruled that South Africa was in illegal occupation of Namibia and should withdraw forthwith.

[129] Confidential interviews during November and December 1997 with former members of the SADF who operated in southern Angola and northern Namibia.

African-reinforced UNITA meant that something other than the SADF could do the work for them. A UNITA-controlled southern strip of Angola provided a security buffer north of Namibia. While Angolan forces never did penetrate Namibian territory, there was a genuine concern that Cuban-backed Angolan forces could be used to this end.[130] By ensuring that UNITA controlled much of the southern portion of Angola, it was more difficult for SWAPO/PLAN or FAPLA/Cuban forces to locate in the south or launch military operations into Namibia. The southern band forced SWAPO further north away from the border area and meant that South Africa would have to commit fewer trans-border operations of its own.

Major SADF operations to push SWAPO, FAPLA and Cuban forces north. Beginning in 1981, the SADF launched large scale military campaigns under such names as Operation Protea in 1981 and Operation Askari in 1983. The effect of the operations was to clear large sections of territory for UNITA and to attack key economic and strategic targets in Angola.[131] These operations were carried out under the pretext of pre-empting SWAPO operations. Indeed, the Chief of the South African Army, Lieutenant-General Geldenhuys, noted the following: "You should realize that operations are conducted on a continuous basis. Protea was perhaps just a bit more dramatic and spectacular."[132] In fact, the targets included Angolan towns or FAPLA positions suggesting that general

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[130] Confidential interviews. Indeed, at the Non-Aligned Movement's conference in Harare in 1986, Cuban President Fidel Castro indicated his intention to take the war into South Africa itself. See Paul Rich, "The United States, Its History of Mediation and the Chester Crocker Round of Negotiations Over Namibia in 1988," in *Mediation in Southern Africa*, Stephen Chan and Vivienne Jabri eds. (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 89.

[131] For brief descriptions of the battles see "The Angolan Campaigns," in Gavin Cawthra, Gerald Kraak and Gerald O'Sullivan eds., *War and Resistance — Southern Africa Reports: The Struggle for Southern Africa as Documented by Resister Magazine* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 50-70.

[132] Cited in Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, *War and Resistance*, p. 51.

destabilization was the objective of these operations as much as countering SWAPO. These operations also had a role in generating armaments for UNITA. Large arms caches were captured during these operations which were then channeled to UNITA forces operating in the region. Indeed, much of the aid provided to UNITA from South Africa was Soviet weaponry which had been captured during confrontations with Angolan forces.[133]

Sabotage operations. Smaller operations against Angolan installations (under the guise of UNITA) sought to destabilize the government and served as punishment for harbouring ANC and SWAPO guerrillas. The nature of these operations came to light in May 1985 when Angolan forces surprised a South African commando squad in northern Angola, killing two and capturing one: Captain Wynand Petrus du Toit. South Africa's immediate response was to claim the commandos were there to gather intelligence on the ANC. Du Toit publicly conceded, however, that his objective had been to destroy oil storage tanks in Cabinda and then to leave papers behind to indicate that the operation had been carried out by UNITA. "If this attack was done successfully and UNITA got the responsibility for the attack," noted du Toit at a MPLA-arranged press conference, "then it shows UNITA is active also in the northern part, in the province of Cabinda."[134]

Rescuing UNITA. The SADF conducted rescue missions in support of UNITA

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[133] Chester Crocker notes the large quantity of weaponry that was captured at a later battle at Cuito Cuanavale: "In a splendid paradox," he notes, "the Soviet Union had become the largest external source of arms to Unita and South Africa." See Crocker, *High Noon*, p.360.

[134] Cited in Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, *War and Resistance*, p. 58. See other reports in Patrick Laurence, "S. Africa Admits Troops Still in Angola Despite Withdrawal Pledge," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 1985, p. 9; "S. Africa Role in Angola Raises Questions," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 29, 1985, p.7; and "South Africa Denies Troops Were in Angola for Sabotage," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 30, 1985, p. 2.

during FAPLA offensives into UNITA-controlled territory. South Africa was not only essential in sustaining UNITA as a fighting force, but in giving it any life at all. Beginning in 1985 and again in 1987, the Angolan government launched massive southern offensives of its own in an effort to wipe out UNITA guerrillas once and for all. On each occasion, the offensives were stopped by South African intervention. "The offensive" in 1985, noted one Western diplomat, "demonstrated that if the government shows success against UNITA, South Africa will attack.... In military terms, the situation is a deadlock."[135] Indeed, SADF Colonel Jan Breytenbach told Keith Somerville in an interview that without South African logistical support, the assistance of South African troops and major ground and air strikes to fend of FAPLA offensives, UNITA would not have survived the attacks launched by Angolan government forces.[136]

Of course, ensuring UNITA's survival had direct benefits for the South African government as well. In fact, all of these activities allowed Pretoria to exploit linkage to the fullest. Linkage, as conceived in constructive engagement, meant that as long as Cuban troops remained in Angola, South Africa would not be forced to give up its occupation of Namibia. The defeat of UNITA would conceivably enable the Angolan the government to send Cuban troops home and thus remove South Africa's last justification for refusing to grant Namibian independence. By menacing Angola in the name of safeguarding Namibia from SWAPO guerrillas, South Africa and UNITA ensured that Cuban troops would remain

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[135] Karl Maier, "Angolan Civil War: Air Power is Key," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 19, 1986, p. 9.

[136] Somerville, p. 82.

in Angola.

The larger relationship between South Africa, UNITA and the United States is also a point of interest. Both the United States and UNITA were highly dependent on South Africa even though doing so entailed certain costs. While Washington claimed that it was interested in Namibian independence, it was equally certain that it did not want to facilitate South African withdrawal only to "lose" it to Soviet influence. Regardless of its policy on apartheid, South Africa was the best guarantee that Washington's interests could be met. Parallels in policy objectives, then, necessitated Washington using South Africa as a sort of proxy of its own. While South Africa clearly was not a "client" of the United States, Washington looked to South African military might as a convenient means of pressuring the MPLA into making concessions at the negotiating table. Crocker notes how he once warned the MPLA that if it "obstructed our settlement terms, the price of pain would grow. South African power was one of the anvils of our diplomacy." On the other hand, Crocker states that it did not help matters for the United States to be "perceived as riding on a South African tank to the negotiating table. If *that* were the game — 'settle or else' — there was no need for a mediator or, indeed, for a diplomatic process."[137]

It is difficult to assess UNITA's allegiance to South Africa. Jonas Savimbi was present at the inauguration of South African President P.W. Botha in 1984 and South Africa frequently insisted that a political settlement would have to include Savimbi. Savimbi was also unapologetic that circumstances forced him to appeal to Pretoria for military assistance and claimed that he was less dependent on South Africa than the MPLA was on its Soviet

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[137] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 170.

and Cuban patrons.[138] UNITA would undoubtedly have preferred more support from Washington but was prevented from receiving it by the Clark Amendment. "Guns don't drop from the skies," he noted in 1981. "I have to get them where I can."[139] But despite protestations by Savimbi that he did not condone apartheid, there were undoubted costs to its relationship with Pretoria. Not only did South Africa provide another excuse for American liberals not to endorse Savimbi's cause but it also meant that other African leaders could not, at least publicly, support UNITA. There is no doubt, then, that while framing the conflict primarily in ideological terms meant that UNITA could benefit from substantial material support from South Africa and the United States, in doing so UNITA lost the legitimacy that might have been gained from framing its cause in ethnic terms.

Despite the fact that both the United States and South Africa were the primary backers of UNITA, the emerging need for American diplomatic assistance tended to mute some of the MPLA's hostility toward Washington. In doling out invectives against its UNITA's external supporters, South Africa was identified as the main culprit. To be sure, it was not that the war did not involve UNITA in the fighting; rather the prevailing belief was that UNITA's military capacity was so closely associated with South Africa that once this aid ended, UNITA would collapse as a military force. "Without Pretoria's help, Savimbi

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[138] See "Two Views of Angola's Problems," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 1, 1988, p. 4.

[139] Steve Mufson, "Angolan Rebel Leader Courts U.S. Aid," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 1981, p. 29. Savimbi made a similar statement in 1988 during his trip to the United States: "I think that anything that we got from South Africa was out of necessity. Because when one is fighting a war, you have to get support where you can get it. It is not only UNITA that has been getting support. The founding fathers here [in the United States] got support from the monarchies of France and Spain, and they did not approve at all of the systems which were there because they were fighting to have a more democratic system at the time." See *Africa Report*'s interview with Jonas Savimbi, in the July-August 1988 issue, p. 49.

couldn't last a month," argued Angola's Ambassador to the United Nations, Elisio de Figueiredo. "Savimbi is South Africa."[140] Similarly, Major Agostinho Nelumba, of the Army's General Staff stated, "We view the South Africans as our principal enemy. ... If it were not for the South Africans, we would have resolved the [rebel] problem already."[141] Indeed there was considerable public frustration on the part of Angolan officials who claimed that UNITA would have been wiped out during FAPLA's major southern offensive in 1985 had it not been for the timely invention of South African forces. [142]

An interventionist South Africa was then the single largest threat to the MPLA and the primary justification for the MPLA's refusal to consider a power-sharing arrangement with UNITA. "We do not have any interest in forming a government with the puppets" argued Angola's Vice-Minister of Foreign Relations, Venancio de Moura, in a 1988 interview:

> That would mean sharing our power in Angola with the apartheid regime — which wouldn't be desirable for our people. We fought a long liberation struggle to win our independence as Africans, Angolans, non-aligned, and for the political option we chose, Marxism-Leninism. The possibility of forming such a government is

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[140] Ted Morello, "Angolan Envoy Warns Against US Aid to Savimbi," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1986, p. 9.

[141] Cited in Maier, "Airpower is Key," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 19, 1986. The view that South Africa gave UNITA its teeth was shared by Western observers as well. "UNITA would be a less formidable fighting force," wrote Robert I. Rotberg in the *Christian Science Monitor*, "if it were not assisted financially, militarily and logistically by South Africa. Indeed, it is easy to argue that UNITA has packed a robust punch only because of the steady transfer of supplies from South Africa and because of the direct assistance of a South African-officered battalion, and the provision of South African air cover, radar surveillance, and shared intelligence." See Robert I. Rotberg, "Angola Sting," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 1986, p. 16.

[142] See comments by President José Eduardo dos Santos on the South African intervention in 1985 in his interview with Margaret A. Novicki in *Africa Report*, January-February, 1986, pp. 4-7.

nonexistent.[143]

One effect of such extensive external superpower commitments was to make each of the local actors increasingly intransigent on making concessions toward the other. The continued willingness of external actors to supply ever larger amounts of weaponry in an apparent effort to match the commitment of the opposing external power only emboldened the local actors further. Reagan officials cited increases in Cuban troops and Soviet aid during the time of the Clark Amendment to justify their own subsequent escalation in weapons supplies to UNITA. "We drew a lesson from this," noted one US official: "US unilateral withdrawal and restraint would not be reciprocated."[144] But almost simultaneously US officials claimed that the MPLA Government was "still preoccupied and focused on military solutions in the south and hoping that they can, in just one more dry season, perhaps, crush the forces of UNITA."[145]

Indeed, the relationships of both local actors with their respective external power patrons were increasingly those of need and disaffection. The MPLA needed Cuban and Soviet military assistance to ensure its survival. Yet it also knew that to reach a settlement would require Washington's diplomacy.[146] UNITA, for its part, required the military backing of Washington and South Africa to sustain itself in the face of so many Cuban troops, but

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[143] *Africa Report* interview with Venancio de Moura, July-August 1988, pp 46-48.

[144] Cited in Wayne, "African Leaders Want...," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 1988.

[145] Chester Crocker cited in Brooke, "U.S. Arms Airlift...," *New York Times*, July 27, 1987.

[146] Crocker states how the threat to withdraw was remarkably powerful given that the central actors recognized that *they*, not the US, would be the "big losers" were the US to disengage. Crocker maintains that no one wanted the US to disengage as long as there was a possibility that Pretoria might settle on Namibia and reduce its interventionist activities in the region. Moreover, no one believed Moscow would be effective in settling the regional conflict. See Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 81 and p. 130.

it also knew that continued white-rule in Pretoria made its most important supporter, South Africa, a liability in its cause. The effect of this was not only to make international politics in southern Africa enormously complex but also, given the correct circumstances, to provide a pathway to conflict resolution. A comprehensive settlement, however, would require the coincidence of security conditions being met for the local actors with the occurrence of other regional events (namely the ending of apartheid) and global changes (the end of the Cold War).

Unlocking Global and Regional Conflict in Angola: Prelude to an Agreement

Namibian independence was a central security issue for all the players in the southern African equation. But the resolution of one issue depended on settlement in other issues — such as the presence of Cuban troops. "The Cubans have become a chicken and egg proposition," wrote the *New York Times* in 1987, "with Angola saying they will be sent home when security permits and the U.S. insisting on their departure as a first step."[147] Each party had fundamental conditions which had to be met prior to making concessions of their own. "We are staying there until the Cubans leave," the South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha argued. "They showed no signs of leaving voluntarily. And until that situation has been settled, we will not withdraw from Angola."[148] Statements from Angola at one time suggested that even Namibian independence would not suffice: "No country of southern Africa can feel secure as long as apartheid exists," stated Angolan President dos Santos. "As

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[147] Flora Lewis, "Stalemate in Angola," *New York Times*, January 23, 1987, p. A27.

[148] Karl Maier, "The Military Stalemate," *Africa Report*, May-June 1988, pp. 33-36.

long as apartheid continues to threaten, the Cuban forces must remain."[149]

Just as the policies and prerequisites for agreement were locked and interlocked, constructive engagement had the potential of providing simultaneous benefits to all the parties. "Constructive engagement was, I think, a very clever way of giving everybody something," noted Marcos Samondo, UNITA's representative in Washington at the time.[150] "The independence of Namibia," noted President dos Santos, "can unchain solutions for all other problems in our region — it would create better conditions of security in the southern border of Angola which could be followed by the progressive reduction of Cuban troops."[151] What was required was an event which would move the various protagonists to reconsider their positions and options.

The battles at Mavinga and Cuito Cuanavale in 1987 through to 1988 proved to be important catalysts in this regard. There have been various interpretations and considerable analysis concerning the events at Cuito and while disagreement remains as to who ultimately emerged as the victor, interviews with observers and participants do agree that the battle was a turning point.[152] For one thing, it would be the last occasion in which external patron states would rescue their clients with their own troops rather than let them be overrun. Mavinga and Cuito Cuanavale are also significant insofar as they further demonstrate the confusion

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[149] Cited in Clifford D. May, "Angolan Says Cubans May Be Asked to Leave," *New York Times*, June 30, 1987, p. A2.

[150] Samondo interview.

[151] Cited in Andrew Meldrum, "At War with South Africa," *Africa Report*, January-February 1987, pp. 28-30.

[152] For an interesting discussion of these different views see W. Breytenbach, "Cuito Cuanavale Revisited: Same Outcomes, Different Consequences," *Africa Insight*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1997), pp. 54-62.

over who the main players were and whom they were fighting against.

The battle itself was the culmination of a two-year weapons build-up by the MPLA. As early as 1986 diplomats were noting that preparations were underway for what appeared would be a military showdown which would break the military deadlock in southern Angola.[153] In 1987 it was reported that "Soviet personnel in Angola are leading a massive military build-up against the United States-backed rebel forces. ... Round-the-clock deliveries on hundreds of military planes are carrying military equipment and Cuban and Angolan troops to bases near the edge of rebel-held territory in southeastern Angola."[154] The operation was similar to an offensive in 1985 when Angolan troops sought to wipe out UNITA once and for all but were thwarted in their efforts when South African troops and aircraft intervened on UNITA's behalf. The commander of the Angolan forces, Colonel Baptista Cordeiro noted that a similar scenario was unfolding in late-1987 and 1988: "Our operation was to clean out UNITA," he stated. "The South African invasion was to save UNITA."[155]

Fighting began in August 1987 and climaxed at a key battle on October 13 at the Lomba river near the town of Mavinga. The capture of Mavinga had long been a strategic objective of the Angolan forces insofar as it was the last step on the way to UNITA's stronghold at Jamba in the extreme south-east of Angola. Anticipating the offensive,

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[153] See, for instance, Sheila Rule, "As War Takes Its Toll, The Angolan Mire Deepens," *New York Times*, September 19, 1986, p. A2.

[154] Robert M. Press, "Soviets Lead Angola Buildup," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 7, 1987, p. 1.

[155] James Brooke, "Angolans Besting Angola in a Remote Battle," *New York Times*, May 18, 1988, p. 1.

Savimbi had urged South Africa and the United States to come to UNITA's assistance. As FAPLA forces approached, South African troops intervened and forced the retreat of government troops back to Cuito Cuanavale. UNITA took credit for the victory, however, and even claimed they had done so without South Africa's help. One month later, at a press conference, South African Defense Minister Magnus Malan claimed that UNITA had Angolan troops "on the run." FAPLA's predicament, however, prompted massive intervention by Cuban troops and Soviet advisors. The Defense Minister then explained the need for the Soviets and Cubans and then the South Africans to rescue their respective clients. He stated that the Soviets and Cubans,

> either had to stand by and witness the defeat of the [Angolan] forces, using Russian weapons, or it had, in desperation, to become actively involved. The present Cuban-Russian offensive indicates that it opted for the latter course. ... This in turn, forced South Africa into a clear-cut decision: accept the defeat of Savimbi or halt the Russian aggression.[156]

In fact, other reports suggest that even in the October 13 battle where FAPLA forces had been so decisively rolled back, UNITA's role had been less than it had claimed. Karl Maier claims that "the battle at the River Lomba had been a strictly Angolan-South African affair. The Cubans were not directly involved at all and UNITA's own role was minimal." According to this account, when the Cubans could see that the defeat of Angolan forces was imminent, an additional 15,000 Cuban troops were dispatched to the southern battlefront.

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[156] Cited in William Claiborne, "S. Africa Military Says Intervention in Angola Staved Off Rebel Defeat," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1987, p. A28. Savimbi was irritated at the suggestion that UNITA had not acted alone. Eager to prove that UNITA was a force to be reckoned with Savimbi claimed that US-provided *Stinger* missiles had been "decisive" in the battle and that South Africa's role had been insignificant. In an interview with correspondent Karl Maier on November 13 1987, Savimbi stated that "We have had aid from South Africa but not men fighting at our side. That is categorical." Karl Maier, *Promises and Lies* (London: Serif, 1996), p. 25. Savimbi's claims, however, were soon undermined by comments made by the South African Defense Minister.

Pursued by SADF forces, Angolan troops withdrew to Cuito Cuanavale and dug in with their Cuban comrades.[157]

For years South Africa had waged a successful low-cost, low-level war in southern Angola and few dispute the fact that at Mavinga the South African forces had the upper hand in conventional battle. This changed at Cuito Cuanavale. As one former SADF officer noted in an interview: "We never really expected them to fight back. In fact, it was really more like sport. Then there was Cuito Cuanavale. That was a shock."[158] Indeed, the military balance shifted in favour of FAPLA at Cuito Cuanavale in part because of shorter supply lines and the arrival of the Cubans. If FAPLA forces had been overextended at Mavinga their retreat to the heavily fortified town, where bunkers were constructed and various other defensive measures were deployed, gave them a decisive military advantage. Several reports also indicate that Angolan pilots had become much more skilled at flying their MiG-23 aircraft and effectively nullified South Africa's previous ability to control the air war.

Without a clear understanding of the precise military objectives of the SADF it is difficult to state conclusively who won the battle at Cuito, but it was clear that continuing the war had suddenly become much more costly for all parties.[159] As details of the battle were leaked out to the South African public, editorialists demanded to know why so many South African troops were being killed in such a distant war. No one doubted the military capacity of the SADF. The view of some, however, was that even if the SADF prevailed in

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[157] Karl Maier, *Promises and Lies*, p. 25.

[158] Confidential interview, November 20, 1997.

[159] Breytenbach, p. 59.

southern Angola, the cost of such adventurism was becoming too much to bear — particularly at a time when South Africa was experiencing urban unrest at home and when its own economy was stagnating.[160]

Cuito Cuanavale was also significant because it was the most direct confrontation between the very outside parties who had been responsible for escalations in the military capability of each side during the mid-1980s. The intervening states now saw in the starkest terms the futility of continued escalation and involvement. Moreover, it was evident that externally-supplied aid, no matter how massive, did not necessarily lead to victory in battle. Angolan government troops were pushed back from Mavinga during its late 1987 offensive despite the fact that it had recently received an estimated $1.5 billion in military hardware from the Soviets. Alternatively, despite its military prowess, South Africa did not give UNITA the necessary lift to defeat Angola troops at Cuito Cuanavale. Stalemate had set in; the local parties could neither be defeated nor defeat their adversaries.

Events on the battlefield were reflected in a series of twelve meetings between the disputants over eight months hosted by Chester Crocker. Indeed, the chief negotiator on southern Africa notes that it was during the siege at Cuito Cuanavale when the situation began to "ripen" for a resolution to the conflict. The situation had stabilized somewhat by March 1988 before a bloody clash in June 1988 between Cuban and South African troops marked another "psychological watershed" in events.[161] Continuing clashes after Cuito

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[160] Confidential interviews; Lynda Schuster, "S. Africa's Foreign Policy Game Plan," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 17, 1988, p. 1.

[161] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 372. In the June clash, a number of South African troops were killed when their base at the Calueque dam in southern Angola was attacked by Cuban-flown MiG aircraft. While the event was on a much smaller scale than the battle at Cuito Cuanavale, some see the clash as having a similar effect

Cuanavale are said by a participant to have "focussed everybody's mind ... both sides were bloodied and began to reflect on the need to reduce tensions."[162]

Meetings between the parties began in London in May 1988 before proceeding to Cairo, New York, Geneva and Brazzaville. A breakthrough came in July at Governor's Island in New York, the so-called 14-point agreement, where South Africa consented to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435 on Namibian independence. Still to be worked out was a date for implementation of the Resolution and a timetable for Cuban withdrawal. But even this was eased by subtle indications that the Cubans were now willing to withdraw. The problem was that the Angolan Government's continued sense of insecurity meant that the Cubans were now more willing to withdraw than the Government was to see them leave.[163] Realizing that the Cubans were considering a deal, the MPLA was increasingly fearful of being left alone to fight UNITA and became more assertive in its call for an end to US aid to UNITA — something that Washington was not yet willing to do.[164]

From September through to November 1988 the central preoccupation of the negotiations became the timetable for Cuban withdrawal.[165] Finally in Geneva in November,

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in the on-going negotiations. See Breytenbach, p. 60.

[162] Cited in E. A. Wayne, "U.S. Officials Hail New Give and Take in Talks on Southern Africa," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 15, 1988, p. 7.

[163] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 164.

[164] Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 1125.

[165] The issue of scheduling had long been a problem in these negotiations. For South Africa, an agreement in which it granted independence to Namibia before the withdrawal of Cuban troops was politically unsaleable and therefore unacceptable. For the Angolans, sending the Cubans home before Namibian independence threatened to put Angola at the mercy of continued South African incursions from Namibia. A settlement required negotiators to find a way to satisfy both objectives simultaneously.

the MPLA signaled that it was ready to make a deal. In early December a document was initialed in Brazzaville, and in New York on December 22 1988, the New York Accords, consisting of a bilateral agreement between Angola and Cuba, and a tripartite agreement involving Cuba, South Africa and the Government of Angola, were signed. The agreements included the following provisions, among others:

> * The withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia and the independence of Namibia under Security Council Resolution 435.
>
> * A timetable for Cuban withdrawal whereby half of the now-50,000 Cuban troops in Angola would leave before Namibian elections set for November 1, 1989. Another 8000 would leave by April 1, 1990. The remainder was required to leave within 27 months of the commencement of Namibia's independence process, set for April 1, 1989. The withdrawal would be monitored by the United Nations
>
> * A pledge to respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states of southwestern Africa.

Chester Crocker notes how the deal simultaneously gave something to all parties:

> UNITA would lose its regional military ally at the moment when the MPLA was losing the Cubans. The ANC would lose its last remaining sanctuary within reach of South Africa just when SWAPO would become free to return home and seek power through democratic elections. The South Africans, rapidly losing credible enemies, would put Namibia on the path to independence and begin shedding their interventionist military role in neighboring countries[166]

What was perhaps most remarkable about the agreement was that the Angolan Government conceded to let Cuban forces go when South Africa had had a history of reneging on agreements. Earlier there had been indications that some Angolan officials preferred a Cuban "bird in hand " (Cuban troops) to an American "bird in the bush" (pledges

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[166] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 442.

of security guarantees or American aid or investment).[167] While there were signs of reform in South Africa, the end of the apartheid regime was far from a done deal. Moreover, despite assurances in the form of American guarantees to keep South Africa in check, in none of the other case studies did a party willingly give up such a central part of its security apparatus. It is worth considering what forces pushed the MPLA to signing such a deal.

First, Angola's increasingly dire economic predicament almost certainly was a factor. Coffee production was one-twentieth what it was at independence. The profitability of diamond mining was continually jeopardized by UNITA attacks on the key diamond areas. Angola's Benguela railway had been sabotaged so many times that it had been for all intents and purposes shut down. The extensive use of anti-personnel mines had left Angola with only 2 percent of its land under cultivation. Even Angola's oil industry, which for the most part had been insulated from UNITA attacks, suffered with dips in the price of oil during the mid-1980s. Most notably, however, in 1986 the ongoing need to fund FAPLA consumed an estimated 75 percent of Angola's budget. In addition to keeping thousands of troops (assuming these were paid for by Luanda) Angola was purchasing billions of dollars in Soviet weaponry.[168] A deal which would send Cuban troops home would not only relieve Angola of a considerable financial burden, but could also open the door to the Western

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[167] Ned Temko, "Angola Signals 'Good Will' to US," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 29, 1987, p. 9. Notable in this respect are comments made by Maj. Jacques Raul, an Angolan military leader, who recalled Pretoria's December 1987 claim that they were withdrawing from Angola: "They never withdrew -- they faked a withdrawal," Major Raul said. "For us, the word of a South African is not worth much." James Brooke, "Angola Settlement Moves Higher on U.S.-Soviet Agenda," *New York Times*, May 29, 1988, p. 3.

[168] Statistics from James Brooke, "Angola's Economic Struggles," *New York Times*, January 31, 1986, p. D1; Karl Maier, "Angolan Civil War Keeps Potential Economic Powerhouse Poor," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 1986, p. 15.

investment it had pursued for so long.

A second factor in Angola's willingness to sign an agreement may also have come from pressure from the Soviet Union. Financial troubles in Angola constrained its ability to pay for continuing arms and the Soviet Union was reluctant to continue support without payment. There is not, however, a consensus on this issue of Soviet pressure. According to Western diplomats Moscow "twisted some arms" when President dos Santos visited the Soviet Union in 1988.[169] This is confirmed by Duncan and Ekedahl who note that the reception President dos Santos received in Moscow in 1988 was considerably cooler than a similar trip made in 1986.[170] Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, on the other hand, claims that he "saw no evidence of Soviet arm-twisting" and states that in 1988 Moscow still had not begun to reduce aid to Cuba.[171] James Brooke reported, however, that indeed there was an expectation that Luanda would finance its own war effort and that it had failed to meet its financial obligations. "We are counting our money everywhere," he quotes a Soviet journalist in Luanda. "We are not making any profit here, political or economic. They were supposed to pay for the arms. Then they sent a letter to the Soviet bank saying that Angola was a poor country, a developing country, and they couldn't pay."[172] The implication is that the Soviets liked Angola as a client because they were capable of paying. When this ability

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[169] "Bush Victory Might Spark Peace Talks on Namibia, Angola," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 10, 1988, p. 6.

[170] Duncan and Ekedahl, p. 172

[171] Crocker, *High Noon*, p. 422-23.

[172] James Brooke, "Angola Gives Hints of Willingness to Seek Political Solution to War," *New York Times*, January 28, 1989, p. 4.

no longer existed, Luanda was treated like any other client and jettisoned.

A third factor in Angola's decision was the belief that by agreeing to send Cuban troops home and getting South African troops out of southern Angola (the latter hopefully guaranteed by Namibian independence) UNITA would be emasculated. "Let's assume that South Africa fully abides by the agreements and puts an end to its help to UNITA," noted Cuba's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ricardo Alarcon, in an interview just prior to the signing of the agreement:

> Then UNITA would not be able to use Namibia as a rearguard or a starting point for their attacks on Angola, and that certainly would put UNITA in its normal perspective. This big giant invented or fabricated in some parts of the Western media would be reduced to its real proportions.[173]

Indeed, there was a genuine perception that the balance of power in Angola was shifting decisively toward the government. Thanks in part to Cuban and Soviet training, FAPLA itself was seen as a much stronger military force and certainly one that was superior to the soon-to-be emasculated UNITA.[174] The MPLA was willing to make a deal to send Cuban troops home — even if it was still not prepared to consider a negotiated solution with UNITA — on the basis that it would now have the upper hand militarily, economically and politically.

Forging Agreement Among Local Actors: The Road to Bicesse

No doubt both local actors, the MPLA and UNITA, were anticipating the consequences of

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[173] Novicki interview with Alarcon, *Africa Report*, November-December 1988.

[174] Jorge interview #1, November 29, 1997.

the end of external involvement in Angola. Their military power had for so long been linked to the interests of other actors that only when those issues which had been of central importance to the external actors were resolved and the MPLA and UNITA were left facing each other, could a process begin which sought to find a political agreement to Angola's purely internal conflicts. "Angola was a conflict that for the better part of two decades had been elevated by geostrategists into a pillar of Cold war rivalry," wrote US Secretary of State James Baker. "While this confrontation was understandable in an earlier time, by 1989 neither of the superpowers had overriding reasons for being embroiled in this conflict. It was time to move on to more critical issues — and the Angolan civil war seemed ripe for resolution."[175] Indeed with fewer ideological justifications for continued violence and with both sides starting to acknowledge that the war could not be won militarily (but might be won via the ballot box) an agreement between UNITA and the MPLA now seemed to be a distinct possibility.

While the war between UNITA and the MPLA remained unfinished business, greater clarity had emerged concerning who opposed whom. In the latter months of negotiating the Tripartite Agreement a top American official (assumed to be Chester Crocker) noted the emerging nature of the conflict: "Since the June 26 clash between Cuban and South African forces, the political talks have provided an umbrella for calming the battlefield," the official stated. But while the foreign combatants were now quiet, he added, "the guerrilla war continues." Recent reports indicated that UNITA had captured the town of Bailundo near

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[175] James Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1990* (New York: G. P. Putnum's Sons, 1995), p. 599.

the strategic Benguela railroad in central Angola. Prior to that UNITA had attacked the city of Huambo. Crocker continued: "This shows [that] it shouldn't be forgotten [that] we need to deal with national reconciliation. ... We can negotiate a peace between Cuba, Angola, and South Africa, but it doesn't mean peace will come to Angola."[176]

There had also been hope that the Tripartite Agreement had, in itself, moved the local parties closer to an agreement: "This is the end of two wars and we hope a third," stated Crocker at the December signing ceremony in New York. He added, "We think it can also lay the basis for Angolans to at long last recognize that for their internal question they have no real option except for a political solution, for political dialogue and reconciliation."[177] But Savimbi was clearly annoyed at having been excluded from the talks and warned that an agreement there would not preclude him from continuing the war.[178] To be sure, while official South African assistance to UNITA had ended, both the rebels and the MPLA continued to receive military assistance from the superpowers. Savimbi's concern, however, had been that Washington was negotiating a deal which would not only fail to bring a role

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[176] Cited in E. A. Wayne, "Now the 'Nitty-Gritty' on Namibia-Angola," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 1, 1988, p. 5.

[177] Cited in E. A. Wayne, "'Big Prize' for Southwestern Africa," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 22, 1988, p. 1. The two resolved wars were 1) South Africa and SWAPO, and 2) South Africa and Angola. The remaining unresolved conflict was, of course, UNITA and the MPLA.

[178] Anticipating an agreement of which it was not a part, Savimbi put the parties on alert that, "If there is no agreement between UNITA and [Luanda] there will be no cease-fire." Cited in Lynda Schuster, "Angola's Rebels Decry US Peace Plan," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 1988, p. 1. Four days later, Jeremias Chitunda, UNITA's Vice-President echoed the sentiments, stating that "a deal without UNITA is no deal at all." Cited in Lynda Schuster, "For Angola Rebels Business is Booming," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 26, 1988, p. 1. In the end, the New York Accords did not include UNITA in any sort of national reconciliation but neither did they stipulate an end to superpower aid to their respective clients. According to Jeremy Grest, however, the failure to include UNITA in the talks had as much to do with a failure by the SADF to locate Savimbi in the Angolan bush as with any deliberate attempt to exclude him. See Grest, p. 131.

to UNITA in a proposed government of national reconciliation, but would also use the promise of an end in aid to UNITA as an incentive to get the Angolan government to sign.[179] Savimbi claimed that he had the means to upset a settlement on southern Africa by emphasizing that UNITA would have no difficulty in continuing the fight even if military aid from South Africa and the United States was ended: "I will have the means. ... and I know how to buy guns from all over the world. I have some dollars with me already which didn't come from South Africa or America."[180] If peace and not some other superpower objective was the goal, Savimbi would have to chasten Washington into maintaining its commitment to UNITA until national reconciliation had been achieved.[181]

Soon after the New York Accords were signed in December 1988 there were

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[179] Savimbi's concerns were justified by the fact that in April 1988, the United States and the Soviet Union had signed the Geneva Accords leading to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. In stating his intention to pull out, Gorbachev had argued that the establishment of a coalition government was a "purely internal Afghan issue" and would not be taken up by the superpowers. Moreover, in December 1985, Washington had claimed that it would not end aid to Afghan insurgents until all Soviet troops were withdrawn, evidently under the mistaken belief that Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan would not occur any time soon. See Garthoff, *Great Transition*, pp. 735-737. Conservatives in the US now feared that a similar deal was about to be made on southern Africa complete with an end to American aid to UNITA. See Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Deal Making, Soviet Style," *Washington Post*, October 3, 1988, p. A11; and David B. Ottaway, "Fate of Angolan Guerrillas Unresolved by Accord," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1988, p. A15. Savimbi wrote a letter to President Reagan urging him of the need "'to make clear to all parties that the United States will not stop providing necessary assistance to UNITA until the Soviets, the Cubans, the Eastern bloc countries ... cease providing military supplies to the MPLA'" and to continue pressing for a Government of National Reconciliation. See Kirkpatrick, above.

[180] Cited in Schuster, "Angola's Rebels Decry...,"*Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 1988.

[181] On the repercussion of the New York accords for UNITA, Abel Chivukuvuku noted the concerns in UNITA's leadership at the time: "We had to think about it. Dr Savimbi was very attentive to those discussions. As far as our view at the time was concerned this was a threat to UNITA because we could no longer count on the South Africans and their strong backing as far as logistics. That is when we also started launching several political initiatives along with the effort of the war. ... But it was a problem to think about having to do all the logistics by plane. The Americans at that point were doing the logistics to support us, but it was not comparable to South Africa's logistics. The American logistics was in quality superior, but in quantity inferior. Stingers and TOWs and anti-tank weaponry and training and so on as far as quality is concerned superior, but as far as quantity is concerned inferior." Interview with the author.

indications that a process of national reconciliation process was underway. On January 26, 1989, the Angolan government publicly acknowledged for the first time that it had recently engaged in limited discussions with UNITA officials. It also made an informal call for a ceasefire.[182] But clashes between the two movements also continued well into 1989 and it became increasingly clear that UNITA, even without its South African patron, was not as marginal as the MPLA had hoped. "To say UNITA's impact is negligible is ridiculous — when you can barely drive out of Luanda," noted one diplomat.[183] While few believed that UNITA had any chance of overthrowing the government, it was equally clear that the MPLA could not suppress UNITA entirely. "The real problem is not one of numbers, but rather the type of war," noted one relief worker. "[The Army] can't destroy UNITA altogether, because they are everywhere and nowhere all at once."[184]

Indeed, a capacity to continue the fight was a result of the fact that the superpowers themselves had yet to completely disengage. Howard Wolpe, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, accused South Africa in June 1989 of having "extended a golden handshake of up to three years of military supplies to UNITA" before it formally ended aid on April 1, 1989.[185] In December 1989, the MPLA launched yet another offensive against

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[182] The call for a ceasefire was made in an interview and did not represent a formal initiative on the part of the MPLA. UNITA insisted that it would not consider any offer until it became a formal position of the MPLA. See James Brooke, "Angola Gives Hints of Willingness to Seek Political Solution to War," *New York Times*, January 28, 1989, p. 4.

[183] Collen Lowe Morna, "Peace Slow to Follow Angola Accord," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 17, 1989, p. 6.

[184] Morna, "Peace Slow to Follow Angola Accord," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 17, 1989.

[185] Howard Wolpe, "More U.S. Aid For Savimbi," *New York Times*, June 10, 1989, p. 27; John Battersby, "Namibia Success Raises Hopes for Angola Cease-Fire," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 23, 1990, p. 1.

Mavinga believing that it could crush UNITA once and for all. Once again the US rushed an emergency infusion of military aid, including more *Stinger* missiles, which prevented the MPLA from achieving a more decisive military outcome.[186] Indeed, the government's ability to carry out the offensive in the first place was as result of the fact that a significant number of Cubans remained in the country and the government had been able to stockpile Soviet weapons since its last failed offensive in 1987.[187]

There were, however, continuing pressures on the superpowers to end their own support for their Angolan clients. Washington's support for UNITA was sustained after the December 1988 agreement on the basis that the MPLA should continue the negotiating process until an accommodation was reached by the rebels. The problem for Washington was that the MPLA was sounding less dogmatic and UNITA less democratic than ever before, particularly after reports and allegations emerged that UNITA dissidents had been burned to death on Savimbi's orders.[188] Moreover, the crash of a CIA plane in November 1989 which was delivering military supplies to UNITA proved embarrassing to Washington given that it occurred only days before a meeting between President Bush and Gorbachev off Malta where the President planned to complain about on-going Soviet weapons shipments

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[186] Baker, p. 599.

[187] Abiodun Williams, "Negotiations and the End of the Angolan Civil War," in *Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), p. 202.

[188] For discussions on UNITA human rights abuses see Imani Countess, "US Must Hold Savimbi Accountable, Support Angola Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1992, p. 23; Human Rights Watch-Africa, *Angola Civilians Devastated by 15 Year War*, vol. 3, no. 1 (February 5, 1991); and Africa Watch, "*Angola: Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides.*"

to various clients.[189] There was also a sense of betrayal on the part of the MPLA who claimed to have been led to believe that US aid to UNITA would end with the signing of the New York Accords.[190] In the end, it was largely the claim that the Soviets were continuing deliveries of military aid to the MPLA which justified Washington's own on-going military aid to UNITA.[191]

In fact, prior to the MPLA's offensive in December 1989 several steps appeared to have been taken towards national reconciliation when a surprise announcement was made in June 1989 that a cease-fire had been worked out between Savimbi and President dos

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[189] Robert Pear, "C.I.A. Crash Called Problem in Angola," *New York Times*, December 1, 1989, p. A9.

[190] In an interview with *Africa Report*, Pedro de Castro Van-Dunem 'Loy', Angola's new minister of External Relations, stated that, "At a certain stage in the negotiations, the American administration said that when Angola presented a calendar for Cuban withdrawal acceptable to all the parties, then the U.S. would begin a different type of relationship with Angola, recognizing Angola diplomatically, ending assistance to UNITA. We attained an acceptable calendar and signed a global accord, but to our surprise the American administration publicly affirms that it will continue support to UNITA and the destabilization of Angola." Pedro de Castro Van-Dunem 'Loy,' "Creating Conditions for Peace," interview with Margaret Novicki, *Africa Report*, March-April 1989, p. 24. While similar assurances were reported by other sources (see, for instance, David B. Ottaway, "Angola Offers Removal Of All Cuban Troops," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1988, p. A32) these claims were undermined by the fact that at least publicly Washington continued to state that support for UNITA would be sustained until a political agreement was worked out between the government and the rebels. See J. Stephen Morrison, "Mr. Savimbi Goes to Washington," *Africa Report*, September-October 1988, p. 56.

[191] Evidently Washington still could not distinguish between its own objectives and those of the local actors. While there were indications that Washington was trying to force a "merger" of UNITA and the MPLA, other statements indicated that it could not accept the fact of its own unilateral withdrawal without a *quid pro quo* such as national reconciliation with UNITA. In an interview with *Africa Report*, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman J. Cohen, noted: "When I attended this conference sponsored by Aspen, there was a Soviet representative. And a number of UNITA supporters in the Congress, like Senator DeConcini and Senator Graham, put the question to the Soviet: Would you be willing to stop if we stop? And the Soviet said it's not the same. You [the U.S.] are helping a rebel, while we [the Soviet Union] are helping a legitimate government. And besides, we have commitments to the MPLA government and we have contracts for delivery. Therefore, we cannot stop but we urge you to stop. But we [the U.S.] don't think that would be a fair deal." Cohen added: "Sure, the MPLA is the government, it's in the UN, it's been recognized by the OAU (by one vote by the way). But we really see Angola as two governments at the present time. We look at it in terms of what exists on the ground. There are two governments there and the big question for making peace is how to merge those two. One way to promote peace would be for everybody to stop being involved, not just one stopping unilaterally." Herman J. Cohen "Forging a Bipartisan Policy," interview by Margaret A. Novicki, *Africa Report*, September-October 1989, pp. 10-13.

Santos at a Mobutu-hosted summit before 18 African heads of state at Gbadolite, Zaire. Almost as soon as the agreement was announced, however, there were indications that it would not last. Dos Santos claimed afterward that he had agreed to four key points: an immediate ceasefire; the creation of a commission to oversee the integration of UNITA members into Angolan institutions; an end to foreign interference in Angola's affairs; and a secretive decision on Savimbi's future. The latter was variously interpreted to mean that Savimbi had accepted exile in another African country — a provision that Savimbi later vigorously denied having agreed to. That such a misunderstanding could occur was not surprising. President dos Santos had not even been informed that Savimbi would be present at the summit and threatened to leave upon this realization.[192] Moreover, the agreement was never formalized in a written document, thus allowing each leader to have differing interpretations of what had been agreed. Finally, suspicions soon arose over the fact that the summit's host and apparent engineer of the agreement, Mobutu Sese Seko, was about to embark on a trip of his own to the United States and was looking for ways to improve his declining image in Washington.

Jonas Savimbi's refusal to go quietly into exile should also not have surprised anyone — and it is unlikely anyone really believed that he had accepted such an agreement. Indeed, Savimbi had dismissed earlier proposals which included UNITA but excluded Savimbi himself: "Sometimes people try to divide UNITA and Savimbi," he stated. "The Angolan government may be so afraid of me, but let me stop dreaming. When you are saying UNITA

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[192] Dos Santos reportedly arrived at Gbadolite under the impression that it was a meeting of African heads of state. As a result there was no expectation that Savimbi would also be in attendance.

you say Savimbi. Talk about UNITA, I am included."[193] Knowing Savimbi's essential role in UNITA and that UNITA remained a force to be reckoned with even after South Africa's withdrawal from Angola, it seemed remarkable that anyone would find the claims of the summit's host credible. Savimbi remained emphatic in his denials that he had accepted such an agreement: "Why should UNITA, which has never been stronger militarily and politically," Savimbi asked, "surrender to the Luanda Government in negotiations what the Government could never obtain on the battlefield? UNITA has not fought 22 years, first against the Portuguese colonial rule and then against the Soviets and Cuban-backed regime, only to throw up its hands in surrender."[194]

In the end, Gbadolite amounted to nothing: the MPLA did not think it was making a concession, believing that without Savimbi UNITA would be even less of a force; Savimbi, it seems, did not agree to anything. Once both parties had realized what had been negotiated (or not negotiated) they returned to war. Herein lay the core of the problem: neither party was willing to accept a political outcome which was incommensurate with the aspirations, ideology and the sacrifices that had been made since independence and which were at the heart of their respective movements. "Mr. Savimbi is no democratic freedom fighter," wrote Flora Lewis in the *New York Times*:

> But he is an effective leader with a genuine constituency. He is too formidable for any idea of power-sharing to be taken seriously. 'In Africa, there can't be two chiefs,' said an African diplomat. Mr. dos Santos put it another way: 'In Africa we have one-party states. We think this system suits us in this phase. There can only

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[193] Maier, "Military Stalemate," *Africa Report*, May-June, 1988, p. 35. See also the interview with Jonas Savimbi in *Africa Report*, July-August 1988, pp. 49-50.

[194] Jonas Savimbi, "I Have No Secret Agenda," *New York Times*, October 30, 1989, p. 19.

be one party,' and, by implication, one chief.[195]

The obstacle for power-sharing was not the differences between the movements *per se* as much as the inevitable incompatibility of having two political leaders. As for the Angolan government, there were indications that while it was willing to conduct limited, secretive negotiations with UNITA, it was also not yet prepared to consider power-sharing with Savimbi himself. The integration of UNITA and the MPLA might be negotiable; the merging of its respective leaders was not. Angola's Foreign Minister, Pedro de Castro Van-Dunem 'Loy,' stated:

> As Savimbi is the spiritual father of the hideous crimes against our people, at this moment he cannot be encompassed within the policy of clemency. Maybe perhaps after some years, but we cannot find any justification before our people to explain why we would include Savimbi at this point. We can bring in his other companions even from UNITA's leadership, because a large part of the atrocities that were committed by UNITA were through force of terror.[196]

As negotiations stalled, the government offensive which had been launched in December 1989 got as far as Mavinga. By February 1990, both the MPLA and UNITA were claiming to hold the town. While government troops had made significant gains and arguably had the upper hand, both sides had suffered heavy casualties and it was not clear that the government could maintain its foothold. Furthermore, much of the success of FAPLA was a consequence of UNITA having moved some of its operations northward closer to the border with Zaire (through which it continued to receive military aid from the United States). From there it carried out a series of urban attacks, sabotaging both Luanda's

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[195] Flora Lewis, "The New Climate, *New York Times*, January 26, 1989, sec. 4, p. 25.

[196] Pedro de Castro Van-Dunem 'Loy.' Creating Conditions for Peace," Interview by Margaret A. Novicki. *Africa Report*, March-April 1989.Margaret A. Novicki. pp. 23-25.

water supply and its power station in February 1990. Earlier, in August 1989, UNITA had also struck a diamond mine at Cafunfo in the Angolan north, forcing the operation to close down. At a press conference in Harare Zimbabwe in mid-1990, Foreign Minister Loy acknowledged the government's difficulties and noted that even Luanda was under pressure from guerrilla forces. Despite his belief that FAPLA would win the day, the foreign minister stated that there was a risk of an uprising.[197]

The government had, however, begun to make concessions. In March 1990, President dos Santos announced that explicit references to Marxism-Leninism would be dropped from official documents and noted that non-MPLA members could run for political office. He also noted the "possible evolution of our political system into two parties."[198] Finally in early April 1990, in Cape Verde, the MPLA announced its plans for "exploratory talks" with UNITA.

The first of several rounds of negotiations between UNITA and MPLA representatives began in late April 1990 in Portugal. The first five rounds of talks accomplished little. By November 1990, debate continued over UNITA's demand for recognition by the MPLA.[199] Former Secretary of State James Baker claims that the without

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[197] Cited in Andrew Meldrum, "The American Connection," *Africa Report*, September-October 1990, pp. 55-57. The Minister blamed Washington for its refusal to end military aid to UNITA until a political agreement was reached. Interestingly this aid was itself in jeopardy. In September 1990 a senior State Department official was reported as saying in the *New York Times* that although the Bush Administration was continuing covert efforts in Angola to boost Mr. Savimbi, it did not share the Reagan Administration's commitment to the struggle and realized that opposition in Congress was increasing. "You can't go on forever getting aid from the Hill for UNITA," he noted. "We're in the end game." Cited in Clifford Krauss, "Superpowers Seeking an Angola Agreement," *New York Times*, September 17, 1990, p. A3.

[198] James Brooke, "Angola Sees Gain in Free Namibia," *New York Times*, March 21, 1990, p. A12.

[199] UNITA had already announced its recognition of the MPLA on May 1 1990.

superpower intervention to bring about a deal, the conflict would have continued. During a December 1990 meeting between Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Baker in Houston, the two leaders agreed to apply simultaneous pressure to their respective allies and present them with a settlement plan.[200] A peace plan drawn up in part by Herman Cohen and his Soviet counterpart, Yuri Yukalov, on December 11, was then presented to representatives of each movement at a meeting in Washington two days later. With the Washington plan forming the basis of an agreement which linked a ceasefire to an election date, deciding on the timing between the two became the most problematic issue.[201] Following another round of negotiations in April 1991, the Estoril Accords were initialed providing both a ceasefire and a settlement to the civil war. On May 31, 1991, President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi formally signed the Angola Peace Accords (Bicesse Accords). Included in the Accords were the following notable provisions:

> * Agreement on a ceasefire, the demobilization of FAPLA and FALA and the creation of a new integrated army
>
> * Free and fair multi-party elections to be held in September 1992 under UN supervision. A president and a national assembly were to be elected, the latter of which would be elected according to a system of proportional representation.
>
> * A "triple-zero" option whereby each of the United States and Soviet Union pledged not to provide further military aid, and the superpowers would publicly urge other countries (most notably South Africa) to follow suit
>
> * The formation of a joint MPLA-UNITA commission to monitor the ceasefire under

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[200] "These guys can't make it on their own in negotiations," Baker reports Shevardnadze as saying. "We need to give them a push. ... Then we need to bring in all the parties and sell it to them." Baker, p. 599.

[201] The MPLA had long insisted on a fifteen-month period between a ceasefire and elections; UNITA argued that it would accept a year as the maximum time. A compromise proposed by the Portuguese mediator, José Duao Barroso (the Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) whereby elections would be held between fifteen and eighteen months after a ceasefire was eventually accepted.

UN-supervision (arising out of the previous UN Angola Verification Mission established in 1988 to monitor Cuban withdrawal).

One can identify three factors which were responsible for the historic agreement. First is the idea of a "mutually hurting stalemate" as discussed by William Zartman.[202] Zartman notes that parties will consider negotiations when both sides see little hope in winning a military victory and see an opportunity for accommodation. After repeated large scale offensives the government had failed to defeat UNITA (even without its South African backer) and, in fact, had suffered enormous casualties amongst its ranks. With the United States stating publicly that aid would not end until an agreement was reached, and as UNITA expanded its area of operation, the government of Angola saw itself condemned to continued rebel attacks and its own failed offensives. UNITA, for its part, was clearly not in a position to overthrow the government in Luanda as it had itself acknowledged on numerous occasions. Stalemate alone, however, does not seem to be sufficient to explain why at this point, after sixteen years of conflict, an agreement would finally be forged.

A second, related, factor was the threat that their relative military power would undermined by the superpowers if they were found to be the main obstacle to an agreement. Following the meeting between Baker and Shevardnadze in Houston in December 1990, the MPLA was reminded by Washington that US support for UNITA would not end unless a settlement was reached. UNITA was also told by the Shevardnadze that its US support would end if it was viewed as the only obstacle to a negotiated settlement.[203] Both UNITA

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[202] I. William Zartman, "Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflicts," in Zartman (ed.) *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington: Brookings, 1995), p. 18.

[203] Chivukuvuku interview with the author.

and the MPLA responded to the moves by upgrading their negotiators.

A third explanation has to do with the fact that elections offered an appealing alternative to war. Moreover, the type of elections — essentially a winner-take-all formula — meant that in the event of their victory at the ballot box no substantive concessions would be required. Both parties were induced to believe that if the battle could not be won militarily, it could be won through the ballot box. For an agreement to be reached, however, both sides also had to trust that they would indeed win. This appears to have been the case. UNITA's confidence was related to the fact that Marxist regimes were collapsing in Africa and elsewhere.[204] Given the government's own economic mismanagement it seemed likely that the same pattern would continue in Angola. In the face of increasing lack of interest from the United States, elections offered UNITA a strategy which would finally, legitimately, offer them a realistic chance at power — an opportunity which, despite its military gains, appeared not to be achievable through military means. A Canadian diplomat in Angola noted the following:

> UNITA, largely Savimbi, has been very clear. Their goal is to take power basically. If one accepts that simple premise everything that they have done makes sense. They joined the Bicesse process because they really did believe they would win the elections. If they hadn't believed that they wouldn't have opted for democracy. So what I am saying is that democracy was a strategy not a policy of UNITA at that time.[205]

Indeed, elections had long been advocated by UNITA as a means for addressing its conflict with the government, in part because of its conviction that it would win them and in part

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[204] Abel Chivukuvuku noted: "I think ... there was a kind of momentum. By 1991 the communist regimes were falling. We and our friends, the Americans, we were all led to that belief that okay maybe it spreads to Angola and the process continues." Interview with the author.

[205] Cain interview.

because of its claim that power had been taken from them in 1975. In a letter to the *New York Times* in 1989, Savimbi stated that the Angolan Government "ran away from elections in 1975 and it's running away now." He added:

> The reason, simply enough, is that its governing power was achieved through coercion and not through the consent of the people. UNITA is not afraid of elections. Only through elections will the Angolan people get a government that they see as legitimate, one that will inspire them to work together to reconstruct the nation.[206]

It is also worth noting that although there had been earlier indications that UNITA was willing to accept a power-sharing deal,[207] there was no reason to accept power sharing under these circumstances. On the contrary Savimbi claimed that power-sharing was a second-rate form of democracy:

> Some might argue that it is unrealistic to expect the outcome of the Angolan negotiations to be democratic elections, that some form of integration is all that can be expected. This brand of elitism seems to assume that the Angolan people are incapable of democracy, their long struggle to achieve it notwithstanding. It fails, moreover, to explain why the world community supports free elections in Poland and Namibia — our southern neighbor — but would settle for integration in Angola.[208]

Being the incumbent, the MPLA certainly had more to lose than UNITA but MPLA officials, predictably, were also convinced that victory was theirs. An electoral triumph also virtually guaranteed that they would gain long sought recognition from the United States and needed foreign investment. Indeed, for both parties a winner-take-all settlement was

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[206] Jonas Savimbi, "I Have No Secret Agenda," *New York Times*, October 30, 1989, sec. 1, p. 19.

[207] See E. A. Wayne, "Namibia Talks Enter Crucial Round," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 7, 1988, p. 3.

[208] Savimbi, "Secret Agenda," *New York Times*, October 30, 1989. See also comments on power-sharing in Namibia by the UN Special Representative to Angola, Margaret Anstee in *Orphan of the Cold War: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process, 1992-93* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 519.

agreeable because both sides were convinced they would win the elections and, in that event, it would in effect require them to make a minimal number of concessions. Moreover, both parties were convinced that the electoral process would confer long-awaited recognition status from the United States.

IV

Conclusions

After sixteen years of civil war and the deaths of over 300,000 Angolans, hope had been raised that peace was about to come to Angola. With the end of the Cold War emerged new possibilities for conflict resolution. Until that time the intervention of outside powers into Angola's civil war had both complicated the process of conflict resolution and emboldened each party to pursue total military victory. The Cold War essentially stalemated the conflict though not in a way which was conducive to negotiations. Stalemate in this case did not refer to an equal balance of power — equality in military power, as both sides acknowledged, did not exist. Stalemate did exist, however, insofar as the external powers prevented their respective proxies from losing even if the local powers were unable to win outright. This does not mean that stalemates always preclude negotiations. Indeed, in other situations where superpower assistance was not an issue, stalemate might have been the very condition leading the parties to consider negotiation. The unique situation of the Cold War, however, precluded either side from having to consider it. Indeed, reliable military backing from external actors decreased the incentives for a non-military solution to the conflict. Each external power was, in effect, able to increase the military power of their client so that no

matter what the client's fortunes were on the battlefield, their continued viability was assured. And so long as their military viability was assured there was little to drive the local actors towards a political settlement. As a result, peace only came to Angola with the resolution of, first, the larger global and regional conflicts between outside powers (and the subsequent cessation of military aid) and, second, between the local actors themselves. "There was a great overlay of the cold war here," noted Herman Cohen, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. "Once that went, there was northing else [for the parties of Angola] to do but to negotiate for power."[209]

Clearly the key to conflict resolution in Africa was the removal of Cuban troops. The stalemate in southern Africa might have ended earlier had the MPLA been willing to take the plunge and send Cuban troops home prior to 1988. Nearby Mozambique was another former Portuguese colony with even more orthodox Marxist credentials than the MPLA and a brutal rebel movement which was supported by South Africa. But while the MPLA continued its reliance on Soviet and Cuban support, Mozambique sought reconciliation with the West — a rather shrewd move insofar as it led Washington to pressure South Africa to end its aid to the Mozambican rebels. And while Mozambican president Samora Machel was invited to the White House during the Reagan administration, Washington refused to recognize the Luanda government until some months after President Bill Clinton had come to office. Unlike Mozambique, relations between UNITA and South Africa and the United States continued until 1991 so that once UNITA was for all intents and purposes excluded

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[209] John Battersby, "The World From ... Luanda, Angola," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 30, 1992, p. 3.

from power in the 1992 elections (to be discussed in the following chapter), it continued to pose a military threat to the newly elected government.

The Angolan case also begins to highlight more of the problems associated with power-sharing. There are few incentives to forming a power-sharing deal when non-risk-averse groups have the option of complete political power. Even in a situation where a movement could conceivably lose, it is difficult for movements to consider anything other than complete power. The Bicesse agreement was problematic insofar as it failed to simultaneously meet the stated objectives of both the central actors. Unlike the New York Accords, Bicesse did not resolve anything. It was not conflict *resolution* as much as conflict circumvention. The New York Accords by contrast simultaneously relieved the signatories of their most pressing security concerns: Cubans were removed from Angola; South Africans were removed from Namibia. They had different objectives which unlike the appointment of a single president *could* be met simultaneously provided they were matched by *quid pro quos* in another area from their respective adversary. Winner-take-all elections only provided a means for avoiding or delaying dealing with the central issues which by their very nature could not be dealt with concurrently. Power-sharing could have met these objectives but it would have required the leaderships to accept roles as co-presidents.

Chapter 7

Conflict and Signs of Peace in Angola, 1991-1995

I

The high stakes associated with the elections of 1992 contributed to a breakdown in the peace brought about in the 1991 Bicesse Accords. Following the return to war in October 1992 there was a need to reconsider the peace process in Angola based on lessons learned during the 1992 elections. While the subsequent Lusaka Protocol, signed on November 15, 1994, still did not meet all of the objectives of the two movements, the likelihood of violent conflict had by this time been reduced in two ways: first, by ensuring that the balance of *military* power favoured (and would continue to favour) one party over another; second, on the basis that the now-weaker UNITA could not be completely eliminated militarily, by allocating a measure of *political* power to UNITA through a limited power-sharing agreement.

This chapter will consider the manner in which peace has been brought to Angola. First, the events surrounding the September 1992 election process will be examined in order to highlight how the Bicesse Accords ultimately failed to bring enduring peace to Angola. Second, consideration will be given to the means by which the government managed to gain a favourable balance of power before extending limited political power to UNITA. Finally,

an assessment will be made of the current situation in Angola and the prospects for long-term peace.

II

The False Peace Brought About by the 1991 Bicesse Accords

The signing of the Bicesse Accords on May 31, 1991 did bring peace to Angola. While skirmishes continued following the signing of a ceasefire on May 15, a subsequent meeting between the two movements led to the establishment of a commission to ensure that the ceasefire held. Within 24-hours of the meeting virtually all such clashes had ended. Six weeks later, in June, the ceasefire was said to have passed a milestone when Angolan officials and international monitors traveled together to visit UNITA headquarters in Jamba. "This is a very positive step toward the rapid and irreversible implementation of the peace accords" stated UNITA Vice-President Jeremias Chitunda.[1] One of Portugal's mediators during the negotiations, Antonio Monteiro, was equally pleased with the outcome: "I never had any doubt that this day would come. ... And I have no doubt that the agreement will hold."[2] In turn, the first UNITA officials arrived in Luanda in June and held a pro-UNITA rally which attracted an estimated 10,000 supporters. UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi stated that he was waiting for an invitation from President dos Santos to come to Luanda: "I have asked President Eduardo dos Santos for a house ... and the day they tell me it is ready, I will

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[1] John Battersby, "Angolans Begin to Disarm Under Successful Cease-Fire," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1991, p. 6.

[2] Cited in Battersby, "Angolans Begin to Disarm...,"*Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1991. Monteiro was Head of the Portuguese Observer Delegation to the Joint Political and Military Commission (CCPM) in the during the time of the 1992 elections in Angola.

go to stay."

While the Bicesse Accords made no mention of power-sharing or a transitional government of national unity, such ideas did receive limited attention among some of Angola's political leaders.[3] On Portuguese television, President dos Santos himself gave vague assurances that such a deal could be considered and his advisor, Lopo de Nascimento, noted that a coalition government might even be preferable: "I think it is possible," he noted to the *Christian Science Monitor*. "I think it is desirable. I think a government of national unity would be appropriate to cure the wounds of war."[4] Confident that it would win any election race, however, UNITA spoke less about power-sharing but promised to respect the decision of the people in the event of a loss. "If I lose the election, this is my country and I am an ordinary citizen," declared Jonas Savimbi. "No one will push me to go back to the bush anymore."[5] Long after the elections had taken place, Angola's political leaders reflected back to the Bicesse Accords as a significant step in the achievement of peace in Angola and as having led the way to the country's first multiparty elections. "Maybe it was the fact that at that point people were just tired of the war, but it was something that everybody embraced and you could really see a new birth in the country," noted Marcus Samondo, a senior member of UNITA. "Because, remember, it was the Bicesse Accord

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[3] UNITA was not excluded, however, from exercising some power during the transitional process. While it explicitly did not replace the Angolan government, the Joint Political-Military Commission (CCPM) was in charge of "the political supervision of the ceasefire" and was comprised of representatives of the government and UNITA (as well as Portugal, the US and Soviet Union). Its decisions required a "consensus between the Government of the People's Republic of Angola and UNITA". The Bicesse Accords called for the President to be elected "through a majority system, with a recourse to a second round, if necessary," and the National Assembly to be elected "through a system of proportional representation at the national level."

[4] Battersby, "Angolans Begin to Disarm...," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1991.

[5] Battersby, "Angolans Begin to Disarm...," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1991.

more or less which brought the multiparty system. There was this hope for free and fair elections. So the country was really going through what UNITA had fought for."[6]

Signs of Trouble. As the elections drew near, however, there were indications that hostilities from the war remained between the two principal movements. A resulting problem was that the process of assembling government and rebel troops at 45 demobilization centres across the country was constantly behind schedule. UNITA troops, in particular, were not demobilizing as required and the deadline for the cantonment of troops was postponed from August 1, 1992 to September 15, 1992. It was soon clear that demobilization would be far from complete by election day.[7] While they maintained an "exemplary" record on the cantonment of troops, UNITA lagged far behind the government in the demobilization of troops.[8] Demobilization was particularly problematic for UNITA because being guerrilla fighters they, unlike government troops, frequently did not have a home to return to once released and often resorted to banditry. The custody of armaments during the demobilization process was also a problem since weapons could not be secured away from troops. "I hope Angolans can make quicker progress with demobilization of

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[6] Marcus Samondo, Member of UNITA and Minister of Geology and Mines in Angola's Government of National Unity and Reconciliation. Interview with the author, December 5, 1997.

[7] See Margaret Joan Anstee, *Orphan of the Cold War: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process, 1992-3* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), pp. 19, 26, 48 and 57. It should be noted, however, that the reported figures on the rates of demobilization are contradictory. *Africa Report* stated that as of August 1, 1991, only 68 percent of the total forces had been counted. Human Rights Watch states that by this date 37 percent of the government's troops and 85 percent of the UNITA troops had been demobilized. Part of the confusion no doubt lies with the fact that while all troop were to be cantoned, some troops were to be demobilized while other troops were to be integrated into the new Angolan Armed Forces (FAA). See Vicki R. Finkel, "Brothers in Arms," *Africa Report*, March-April 1992, p. 61; Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations of the Laws of War Since the 1992 Elections* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), p. 13.

[8] Anstee, p. 52.

troops and the setting up of the new army," warned the UN Special Representative to Angola, Margaret Anstee, "because these delays are the main cause of instability."[9] That UNITA was so obviously reluctant to demobilize carried ominous signs for aid workers and diplomats in Angola prior to the elections. "It was clear to all of us that UNITA still had an army, noted one election observer. "They still had weapons buried in the bush — their own. But even the weapons that they turned in were being stored a few hundred paces from where they were being barracked. All the conditions were set for what happened. And the UN could have prevented it."[10]

While the UN was accused of incompetence in its involvement in Angola, its role was more circumscribed than was reported in the media.[11] Despite this limited role, however, senior UN officials frequently complained that they were given comparatively few resources to carry out its mandate.[12] Special Representative Margaret Anstee also claimed that a failure to pressure UNITA to demobilize was as much the fault of the Angolan government as that of the UN. At one point, reports emerged that UNITA was maintaining

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[9] Cited in John Battersby, "Restless Armies Threaten Progress," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 24, 1992, p. 5.

[10] Allan Cain, *Development Workshop* (Luanda), Canadian Honourary Consul to Angola. Interview with the author, November 22, 1997.

[11] Margaret Anstee goes to great lengths in her account of the elections to emphasize that the role of the United Nations was not to organize the elections but only to observe and verify them. See, for example, Anstee, pp. 38, 42 and 169.

[12] Comparisons were sometimes made with UN operations in Namibia and Cambodia. Anstee notes that the UN budget in Cambodia for the same year was $2 billion compared to $118 million for Angola. While the mandate of the United Nations was considerably larger in Namibia than in Angola, Anstee claims that this was offset by Angola's larger size, its larger population (10 times as many voters), and its war-ravaged infrastructure. Calling it the "world's cheapest peacekeeping operation, Anstee complained that she had been asked to fly a 747 but given fuel sufficient only for a DC-3 (the resolution mandating the operation was UN Resolution 747); Anstee, p. 38; and Kenneth B. Noble, "Election Makes Skeptics of Angolans," *New York Times*, June 28, 1992, sec. I p. 8.

a "secret army" in the bush numbering as many as 20,000 troops and in violation of the peace accords.[13] Indeed, both the United Nations and the Angolan government were aware of the possibility of such an army but neither were able or willing to take action. Margaret Anstee notes the government's "apparent passivity" in the face of such ominous signs. She claims that despite these reports the government called off a hunt for the "hidden army" two or three days before its scheduled termination. "Once more," she wrote, "the reason why the Government should take a decision that was apparently at odds with its own interests is obscure."[14]

The possibility of an imbalance in military power was all the more dangerous given the increasingly bellicose language that was exchanged by the MPLA and UNITA. One diplomat warned in June 1992 that both sides were "finding it extremely hard to make the transition from being bitter antagonists to accepting the notion that they can peacefully coexist. ... They still tend to respond to every challenge with threats of violence."[15] American Assistant Secretary of State Herman J. Cohen also remarked at a June press conference that the campaign was being marred by "increasingly heated rhetoric" and an "atmosphere of tension."[16]

While strained relations should have not have surprised anyone given the years of

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[13] UNITA, for its part, accused the government of creating a new army of its own under the guise of an elite anti-riot police unit. See "UNITA Mobilizing," *The Guardian*, April 17, 1992, p. 12; and John Battersby, "Restless Armies Threaten Progress," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 24, 1992, p. 5.

[14] Anstee, p. 53.

[15] Cited in Noble, "Election Makes Skeptics...," *New York Times*, June 28, 1992.

[16] Cited in Noble, "Election Makes Skeptics...," *New York Times*, June 28, 1992.

violent conflict that had characterized relations between the MPLA and UNITA, the tension was no doubt a result of increasing uncertainty over the election's anticipated outcome. "There was a general consensus across the board that UNITA would win those elections up until June 1992," noted Allan Cain, one of the election observers in Angola at the time.[17] Indeed, while dos Santos did enjoy personal popularity as the leader who had secured peace for Angola, his government was held in contempt for its corruption and incompetence. "It was only in August [1992] that the MPLA mounted a brilliant campaign," Cain continues, "and UNITA mounted an abysmal campaign. Up until election day, I could not have told you who was going to win."[18] By that time the Angolan government had hired a Brazilian public relations firm to direct its political campaign. By contrast, Savimbi's own speeches were sounding increasingly belligerent. "If I lose, then the elections were rigged," Savimbi reportedly told a British television crew. "I will send my men back to the bush to fight again. We will not accept defeat."[19] As well, Savimbi's anti-white, and anti-*mestiço* rhetoric and UNITA's own actions — including the setting up of roadblocks — alienated many Angolans. Savimbi's pledge to purge state-sector employees who had supported the MPLA in the past led many Angolans who were dependent on government employment to believe that support for UNITA could be costly.[20] As a result, the anticipated UNITA sweep turned to a situation

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[17] Cain interview.

[18] Cain interview.

[19] Cited in Andrew Meldrum, "Hungry to Vote," *Africa Report*, November-December 1992, p. 27. Anstee notes a similar phenomenon: "Dr Savimbi's electioneering caravan was roaming all over the country and his speeches were seen as increasingly aggressive. One phrase of his, frequently quoted by alarmists and opponents alike, was 'If UNITA does not win, then it means fraud!'" Anstee, p. 151.

[20] Human Rights Watch, *Arms Trade and Violations...*," p. 11.

where the two main contestants for power were described as "neck and neck."[21]

Remarkably, there was uncertainty as to whether such a close electoral race would have benefits or disastrous consequences for conflict resolution in Angola. Kenneth B. Noble of the *New York Times*, stated,

> ...as the transition to democratic rule draws nearer, recrimination between the ruling party and the political opposition has alienated many voters, deepening skepticism that the elections will produce a clear winner. The failure of either side to win a mandate could force the ruling party and its main adversary into an uneasy and potentially volatile coalition government. ... Commentators here fear that voting could result in a political deadlock, with Mr. Savimbi winning the presidency but the current Government in control of Parliament. Neither side has seemed inclined toward coalition building.[22]

The irony, of course, was that a clear winner was the outcome that other observers thought was most likely to send the two forces back into battle. Indeed others hoped that a divided ballot would give the presidency to one party and the 223-member legislature to the other and thereby force an inclusive government. John Battersby, writing for the *Christian Science Monitor*, quoted one Western diplomat as stating, "I think that the ideal result would be for Savimbi to win the Presidential ballot and the MPLA to win a majority in the Parliament. ...

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[21] John Battersby, "War-Weary Angolans Prepare for First Democratic Elections," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 23, 1992 p. 1. UNITA experienced other problems which damaged its image as a democratic movement. New revelations emerged in 1992 of UNITA atrocities, in particular the murder of two high ranking UNITA officials, Tito Chingunji, UNITA's former representative in Washington, and Wilson dos Santos, Savimbi's brother-in-law. UNITA officials claimed that Savimbi had had no knowledge of the deaths but the incident prompted US Secretary of State to call for a "full explanation" of UNITA's alleged human rights abuses. The incidents also prompted Savimbi's biographer, Fred Brigdland, to distance himself from the leader — Bridgland's major biography on Savimbi, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1986), portray's UNITA's leader favourably as a democrat. The murders occurred after the Bicesse peace accords had been signed but while Washington was allegedly still providing aid to UNITA. See Imani Countess, "U.S. Must Hold Savimbi Accountable, Support Angola Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1992, p. 23; Clifford Krauss, "Angola Rebel Lays Killings to a C.I.A. Plot," *New York Times*, May 5, 1992, p. A7.

[22] Noble, "Election Makes Skeptics...," *New York Times*, June 28, 1992.

That would ensure strong leadership for the daunting talks ahead and at the same time provide a balance to ensure that democratic principles prevail." Battersby cites another diplomat as stating, "Any scenario which forces a coalition or more inclusive government is preferable to an outright win by either side in both ballots."[23]

Indeed what was at issue was not only who would win the September elections but whether the two leaders could somehow coexist and even cooperate in the rebuilding of a democratic Angola. In the month prior to the election, pressure mounted from within the international community for the two leaders to form some sort of government of national reconciliation or a coalition government. Both the MPLA and UNITA, however, resisted the latter and paid only lip service to the former, claiming that their preference was to win the elections and then invite representatives of various political organizations to participate in the new administration. Anstee implies that the kind of partnership which a coalition would require was not in the cards given their ideological differences, their radically dissimilar personalities and the "deep personal animosity" which characterized their relations.[24] "The gulf of personal mistrust between the two was so vast as to be probably unbridgeable," she states. "I hardly ever attended a meeting with either that did not contain some comment of suspicion or disdain — even contempt — for his rival."[25]

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[23] Battersby, "War-Weary Angolans...," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 23, 1992.

[24] Interestingly, Anstee claims there was no comparison with the post-apartheid government that was being built in South Africa. She notes that "even after the signing of the Peace Accords in Bicesse, and the strained handshake that followed [between dos Santos and Savimbi] for the benefit of the media, this was no de Klerk-Mandela relationship. Theirs was not a close association where personal and political rivalry was suppressed for the overriding national interest. These two men were prepared to fight out their political destinies to the end." See Anstee, p. 147.

[25] Anstee, p. 147.

Peace was maintained during the pre-election period, however, in spite of the animosity and bellicose rhetoric between the two movements. Elections still provided the most direct and least costly means by which one side or the other could legitimately gain complete political power and neither UNITA nor the MPLA was prepared to jeopardize this opportunity by undertaking overt violent actions. Anstee states, "the ceasefire held — even if sometimes by a hairline — simply because, when push came to shove, neither side wanted to imperil the elections, which each expected to win (at least in the latter stages)." The elections would be, noted Margaret Anstee, the "critical watershed."[26]

Anstee and others claim that when election day came at the end of September 1992, the initial reports from both sides were positive.[27] However by October 1, before the vote-counting was complete but after the early reports put the MPLA and dos Santos in the lead, Western sources were already hearing accusations from UNITA that the election had been rigged. On October 3, figures released by the National Electoral Commission on the still-incomplete vote count put dos Santos in the lead with 55 percent of the vote and Savimbi with 25 percent. Savimbi made a statement on UNITA's radio station, Radio *Vorgan*, accusing the MPLA of having "stolen the ballot boxes" and of "misappropriating the ballot boxes." He said that the "MPLA is not winning and the MPLA cannot win" and claimed instead that "UNITA is running ahead in the legislatives and presidentials, as a just and noble

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[26] Anstee, p. 78.

[27] Anstee, pp. 200-201. Both UNITA and the MPLA had representatives throughout the country on September 29 and 30, the two days for voting, in order to verify the vote. NEC officials claim that on those days UNITA representatives did not make any claims that vote-rigging had been committed. See Testimony of the President of the NEC, Dr Caetano de Sousa, in *Angola: White Book About Peace Process*, volume I (Luanda: Republic de Angola, 1995), pp. 126-127.

recognition of those who fought for the liberation of the country." Savimbi stated that "We have all the facts on the fraud, the violation, the theft of votes, and we will in due time present [them] to the national and international opinion." More ominously he issued the vague threat that "all this will make UNITA take a position which could deeply disturb the situation in this country."[28]

American officials challenged Savimbi to prove his claims of fraud and to take his findings to the National Electoral Commission, but Savimbi responded that there was "no organization which can say whether the elections were free and fair — only the Angolan people can do that."[29] Threats continued to emanate from UNITA. In an interview with Portuguese radio, a senior UNITA official, Elias Salupeto Pena, stated that unless the election results were annulled there would be "immediate war" in Angola. "The situation is so grave," he continued, "that we cannot imagine the publication of such fraudulent results because this will mean immediate war."[30] With United Nations officials and other observers refusing to acknowledge that any sort of systematic vote-rigging had occurred and given UNITA's failure to substantiate its own claims, UNITA's threats were widely viewed as a reflection of its frustration at its apparent loss in the elections.

The official results of the elections were not announced until October 17, 1992. By that time, in response to UNITA's accusations of vote fraud, four commissions had been

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[28] "Declarations by UNITA Leader Jonas Savimbi," Radio *Vorgan*, October 3, 1992, cited in *Angola: White Book*, p. 198.

[29] John Battersby, "Angolan Vote Brings New Rebel Threat," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 5, 1992, p. 6.

[30] John Battersby, "Angolan Rebels' Threat to Bolt Puts Democratic Vote in Jeopardy," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 13, 1992, p. 1.

established to investigate the complaints and consider a recount. On the same day the results were announced, Margaret Anstee detailed the observations of the United Nations stating that with "all deficiencies taken into account" the elections could be considered to have been "generally free and fair."[31] The final tally put President José Eduardo dos Santos at 49.57 percent of the presidential ballots, and Jonas Savimbi at 40.07 percent. In the legislative voting, the MPLA won 53.74 percent and UNITA won 34.1 percent.[32] Since dos Santos won less than the 50 percent required for an outright victory, a second run-off election would be required to decide the presidency. Following desperate efforts to persuade him to control his rhetoric and his troops, on October 16, Savimbi stated his willingness to accept the "admittedly fraudulent" legislative election results and to participate in a run-off election for the presidency. His words were soon overcome by events.

The Return to War: Why the Peace Process Failed. Clashes which began in late October initiated the long slide into all-out war, seen most dramatically in the intense fighting which occurred in Luanda beginning on October 31, 1992. From then on, UNITA troops swept across the country. Whether the MPLA or UNITA started the war is a contested issue. For its part, the MPLA had much to lose and little to gain by a return to war and there is much evidence to suggest that the MPLA's military forces had little sense of

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[31] Anstee and other observers did not deny the existence of irregularities but claimed they were "mainly due to human error and inexperience." In her official statement on the elections she said, however, that "there was no evidence of major, systematic or widespread fraud, or that the irregularities were of a magnitude to have a significant effect on the results. ... Nor, in view of their random nature, could it be determined that such irregularities had penalized or benefitted only one party or set of parties." See *White Book*, p. 135. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the European Community (EC) and other international organizations made statements supporting the claim that the elections had been free and fair. Many of these statements are documented in the *White Book*.

[32] The results of legislative balloting according to these figures provided the MPLA with 129 seats in the 223-seat parliament. UNITA won 70 seats.

motivation and were too unorganized to consider an offensive. But once hostilities were underway, it likely perceived an opportunity to decapitate the senior UNITA leadership while it was still in the capital.[33] Neither was the return to war likely a preplanned and deliberate move by UNITA.[34] At the time of the battle for Luanda, UNITA had a number of its most senior officials in residence in the capital — a location where UNITA's support was not significant — suggesting that their rhetoric and mobilization possibly had more to do with brinkmanship than a preconceived intention to resume war.[35] Nonetheless, according to Margaret Anstee, UNITA was the "aggressor." She states that "in this case, it was clearly UNITA's refusal to accept the results of the elections which started things."[36] Given Savimbi's alarming pre-election claims that a UNITA electoral loss would necessarily mean electoral fraud and a return to the bush for UNITA guerrillas, his post-election actions now

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[33] For an account which blames the MPLA for the return to civil war, see Martin James and Margaret Calhoun, "Savimbi Is Not to Blame For Angola's Troubles," *Christian Science Monitor*, Monday, November 16, 1992, p. 19.

[34] UNITA officials deny that they started the war. Abel Chivukuvku stated the following in an interview with the author: "UNITA did not go back to war. We can be accused of having acted with frustration. And we let the feelings of the individuals be expressed which led to a feeling of ungovernability. And the government, they reacted with just power. ... The first military actions were started here in Luanda by the government."

[35] The government claimed that diaries of these officials which were found later by the MPLA stated that UNITA planned a *coup d'état*. Human Rights Watch examined the diaries and concluded that UNITA's intent was brinkmanship meant to force the government to offer UNITA more political power than the elections would have provided. At the time UNITA evidently did not expect war to break out as several of its most senior officials — most notably UNITA's representative to the Joint Political and Military Commission and Savimbi's nephew, Elias Salupeto Pena, and UNITA vice-president, Jeremias Chitunda — were killed trying to escape Luanda and several others were captured including one, Abel Chivukuvuku, who was interviewed by the author. See Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, pp. 18-19; and Karl Maier, *Promises and Lies* (London: Serif, 1996) pp. 100-101.

[36] Margaret J. Anstee, responding to a question at the David Davies Memorial Lecture. The lecture, delivered in London on September 23, 1993, was entitled "Angola: The Forgotten Tragedy — A Test Case for U.N. Peacekeeping." A transcript of this speech was provided to the author by Mr. Teté Antonió of the Angolan Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

seemed risky and self-fulfilling. There were, however, a number of other factors associated with the 1992 election process which had predisposed the actors to a return to war.

The first of these factors relates to the brief period of time — 16 months — between the signing of the Bicesse Accords and election day. No account was made for inevitable delays in demobilization of troops and there was little time for the two main movements to evolve from military organizations to political parties. "UNITA had its own problems," noted Marcos Samondo in an interview. The UNITA leadership did not know, he adds, "how to transform itself quickly from a movement that was really at war and come quickly into the city and really start competing with all of the obstacles that the government was creating for UNITA."[37] For their part, UN officials in Angola felt that their hands were tied: "I was not happy about the mandate and the timetable from the beginning," noted Margaret Anstee. "But the UN was not a party to negotiating the Bicesse Accords." Anstee claimed that the problem lay as much in the inelastic nature of the election schedule as with the shortness of its duration. The assumption was that a preliminary set of steps such as disarmament, demobilization and re-education would be accomplished prior to the election date; there was no plan for the eventuality that these steps were not completed. Noted Anstee, "the lack of any conditionality, or any flexibility for the election date beyond the stipulated term, 'between September and November 1992,' was to have dire consequences."[38]

Indeed, a finite period did not allow for the abatement of long-held hostilities

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[37] Samondo interview.

[38] Anstee, p. 534.

between the two movements and for the development of a culture of peace. It should have been of no surprise that, after 30 years of war, UNITA guerrillas saw a more promising future in a return to war than in accepting living under a MPLA-dominated government.[39] UNITA had remained on a war footing evidently because it had not been persuaded of the long-term viability of the peace process and it took little momentum to launch its guerrillas back into war.[40]

A second factor which predisposed the parties to war was related to the lack of preparedness by the United Nations and the international community. Interviews with election observers and diplomats suggest that in the early stages of the campaign it was assumed that UNITA would win the elections and there would be a generally peaceful transfer of power from the current government to UNITA. In an interview, Portuguese negotiator Antonio Monteiro noted that the impression amongst the international community at the time was that Angola was a relatively wealthy country and UNITA was a "responsible movement" and therefore large UN expenditures would not be required to fund the mission. "The Americans insisted that they [UNITA] are very responsible," noted Monteiro. "'They

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[39] Interestingly, the government soon had the same fears about a UNITA military victory. One former officer in the FAA noted how his seniors "were calling on troops [saying] we need to organize the situation." With that came the warning that if UNITA "takes control of the country by force, than there is no future for anybody here." Luis Graciano. Interview with the author, December 9, 1997.

[40] See Matts Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilization After Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, Adelphi Paper (Oxford: Oxford University, 1996), pp. 21-22; Patrick Smith, "Angola: Free and Fair Elections," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 55 (November 1992), p. 101. In response to the problems in Angola, the UN reconsidered the length of time between the signing of peace accords and elections in Mozambique. "I will suggest very strongly a delay of the proposed election date [set for October 1993] if the military process has not been completed on schedule," noted Aldo Ajello, the UN's Special Representative to Mozambique. "The political process must be conducted with meetings and not with guns." See John Battersby, "Clashes Stall Angola Peace Effort," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 10, 1992, p. 3.

will abide by these [terms], since what they want is democracy,'" he quotes American officials as saying. Moreover, he states, "the government had no means and no right [to reject the election results]. We knew that the government had no forces to reject public opposition, [or to] deny or refuse the results of the elections — they had no power for that."[41]

The international community's early expectations of a UNITA victory also meant that the UN was less strict about ensuring UNITA demobilization. One election observer compared the UN's mission in Angola to the recent experience in neighbouring Namibia. In Namibia, he argues,

> SWAPO never brought their troops back into the country before the election. They kept their troops in Angola, at least the bulk of them, until after the elections were over as a bit of security. But everyone expected that SWAPO was going to win the elections so the UN didn't blow the whistle on them. ... I believe that the UN expected UNITA to win the elections [in Angola] and for that reason didn't feel the pressure to demobilize UNITA. I think they expected the same thing could have been arranged: UNITA troops could have been quietly demobilized or integrated into the army after the election.[42]

Expecting a UNITA victory, the international community contributed minimal funds to support an election which was expected to lead to a peaceful transfer of power and overlooked large numbers of troops which had not been demobilized. Had UNITA won the elections, the outcome might have been different. When the MPLA won the elections, however, the international community was not prepared to face the large numbers of battle-ready troops which UNITA had kept in reserve.[43]

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[41] Antonio Monteiro. Interview with the author, November 14, 1997.

[42] Cain interview.

[43] Several sources note that of the two forces, the government's troops had appeared less prepared for hostilities and more willing to get on with demobilization prior to elections. See Smith, pp. 101; and Anstee, pp. 19, 26, 35.

A third factor explaining the rapid return to war relates to the expectations of victory in such high stakes elections. If the international community was not prepared for a victory by the MPLA, it is also notable that Jonas Savimbi himself was surprised at the outcome (notwithstanding the fact that he had not demobilized his forces as required). In his report on the elections, journalist Patrick Smith notes that there was "genuine incredulity" amongst UNITA officials that the elections had been lost after they had repeatedly told themselves and been assured by their former allies in Washington and Pretoria that they would win.[44] "Angola is poised between a tense peace and renewed civil war," noted a Western diplomat in the days after the election. "It appears that rebel leader Jonas Savimbi is incapable of accepting the fact that he and his party have lost the ballot."[45] While the government frequently portrayed UNITA as a band of terrorists, UNITA saw themselves as a genuine liberation movement who had made enormous sacrifices for the country. Electoral victory, Savimbi claimed, was only the expected reward after "sixteen years of suffering, of humiliation, of torture and above all of theft."[46]

Such an election outcome might not have been so disastrous except for the fact that a winner-take-all electoral process left little in the way of a fall back position for the loser. As in many African countries, to be excluded from the state in Angola was to lose control of virtually all the levers of political and (perhaps more importantly) economic power. "The rivalry of the two main political forces at that point," noted Abel Chivukuvuku, a senior

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[44] Smith, p. 101.

[45] Cited in Battersby, "Angolan Rebels' Threat...," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 13, 1992.

[46] Savimbi's October 3, 1992, speech on Radio *Vorgan* in *White Book*.

UNITA official, "was such that the perception within the MPLA camp was that if UNITA and Savimbi gain power, we are lost; our perception was that if the MPLA continues in power, we are lost. Whenever you have those perceptions, you cannot really have a normal political process."[47] Both sides had been so confident of victory (UNITA apparently more so that the MPLA) that neither side had seriously lobbied for a power-sharing (or even face-saving) arrangement which could have alleviated the consequences of losing. What was offered during the campaign — vague promises of a government of national reconciliation — was too uncertain after the election to satisfy those who did not win.

The situation was exacerbated further by the fear that the loser would not have an opportunity to challenge the 1992 results in future elections. One election observer noted, "I think that the perception was that this was the *one* election. ... [There was this] mistrust and fear of each other and I don't think there was a tremendous amount of confidence that the party that wins the elections would not find an excuse to change the constitution to maintain their power. ... UNITA has valid fears about entering into a political process when the playing field isn't flat."[48] Indeed, today UNITA officials concede with the benefit of hindsight, that they signed the wrong type of agreement in 1991 at Bicesse. "We should have gone into a transition phase of 50-50 sharing power for five years ... during which we could have put aside all of these fears of hatred and problems of war," argues Abel Chivukuvuku. He maintains that it is better to arrive at a political settlement "where there is never a threat to one's belongings. [Where] one can change power, but there is never a

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[47] Chivukuvuku interview.

[48] Cain interview.

threat to one's life. We need to have this kind of political understanding — which we did not have in 1991." Instead the type of agreement which was agreed on at Bicesse created a highly explosive situation no matter who had won the elections. Chivukuvuku continues,

> After the elections we reacted with frustration and all that it entails. The government reacted with arrogance and all that it entails. And the international community was not strong enough, not clever enough, to understand that unfortunately the system was such where the winner takes all. And the lesson for Angola was that whatever the outcome, there should have to be some kind of sharing of power. This is really what has created the whole crisis.[49]

Having convinced themselves, then, that they had unjustly had the election taken from them, UNITA may have been propelled into taking aggressive action by a favourable balance of power. In light of the certain condemnation that UNITA would face from friends and foe alike, UNITA's return to war might have been a colossal error, "except for the fact that [UNITA] almost won," noted a Canadian diplomat in Angola. "I mean it was awfully, awfully tempting. Through most of 1993, my sense was that they were still winning. ... They were all over the country."[50] Indeed, with much of the Angolan armed forces in disarray and with UNITA troops making rapid advances in both rural and urban areas, Savimbi was undoubtedly convinced that for the first time he could gain complete control. "Savimbi wants the whole pie," one Western diplomat stated at the time. "And in his position, with most of the country effectively under his control, why should he compromise."[51]

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[49] Chivukuvuku interview.

[50] Cain interview.

[51] Kenneth B. Noble, "A New Crisis Engulfs Angola As the Rebels Make Big Gains," *New York Times*, January 29, 1993, p. 1.

Missed Opportunities to Share Power. Following the elections and in light of the bellicose rhetoric emanating from UNITA, several efforts were made to persuade UNITA's leadership that it still had a stake in a peaceful Angola and to include it in the political process. Working against this was the fact that both parties had agreed to the very election process which had been carried out. To then try to arrange a new political arrangement when both parties had known prior to the elections that one of the contestants would lose, was undoubtedly perceived as undermining the good faith of the winning party and the spirit of the accord itself. Nonetheless, it is worth considering how the issue of inclusion was approached in the period after the elections and the reactions to these initiatives.

Following UNITA's claims of voter fraud and its threats to return to war, a number of Western countries joined the United Nations in calling for a recount of the Presidential ballots and a delay in the official announcement of the election results. Election results were kept under wraps for several days beyond the scheduled October 10 announcement date and four investigative commissions were established to investigate UNITA's allegations. The National Electoral Council initiated a recount of the ballots following the strictest interpretation of the electoral code with the result that the percentage of ballots for dos Santos fell just below the 50 percent required to avoid a second round of voting. One election observer, however, notes that dos Santos "probably got quite a bit more than 50 percent." He notes that "there was a real attempt to keep Savimbi onboard during the final days of counting." In other words, efforts were made to avoid an outright Presidential victory in order to demonstrate to Savimbi that the political option was still a viable one. The observer adds,

> Presidentially, in fact, I think dos Santos actually won the election. Then there was some backpedaling and recounting in a desperate attempt to allow a second round — hoping that would entice [Savimbi] into not walking out. ... Watching the results from the election, dos Santos had a good lead and when the pressure from UNITA started to emerge, I think there were some recounts to basically allow a second [vote].[52]

With 60 percent of the ballots counted, the MPLA had the lead with 54 percent of the legislative vote compared with UNITA's 36 percent.[53] On October 13, 1992, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that dos Santos had won 51 percent of the presidential vote and would not, therefore, have to go through a second ballot.[54] When the election results were officially announced on October 17, however, dos Santos' vote percentage had slipped below the 50 percent required to preclude a runoff ballot. By that time Savimbi had accepted UNITA's defeat in the legislative elections and stated his willingness to participate in a Presidential runoff.

Dos Santos' failure to capture more than the 50 percent could have provided an opportunity for a new power-sharing arrangement to be worked out. An informal agreement could, arguably, have been made without changes to the Bicesse Accords provided the parties were willing to make the necessary compromises. "I think this is the basis of a deal," one Western diplomat commented following the announcement of results. "Dos Santos must bargain because he is under pressure to hold a second ballot and Savimbi, too, must bargain because he will probably lose the run-off. ... The close presidential vote could turn out to be

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[52] Cain interview.

[53] Battersby, "Angolan Vote Brings New Rebel Threat," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 5, 1992.

[54] Battersby, "Angolan Rebels' Threat," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 13, 1992.

the mechanism needed to force a post-ballot coalition."[55] Anstee agreed, claiming that "most diplomats and observers heaved a sigh of relief that there had been no outright victor in the presidential race, and that there would have to be a second round."[56] Foreign diplomats, most notably former UNITA allies from South Africa and the United States, began to press for a coalition government based on a shared UNITA-MPLA platform. One South African plan proposed that key portfolios would be offered to each party on an alternating basis. However, while the MPLA was willing to consider a government of national reconciliation as discussed during its campaign, it resented the idea that UNITA, having lost the elections, could pressure its way into power on the basis of their threat to return to war. Moreover, the MPLA was certain that had roles been reversed and UNITA won the elections (as many early in the campaign had expected), it would have had few allies pressuring UNITA to include it in a coalition government.[57]

More broadly, Anstee notes another failure in bringing about UNITA's inclusion in the political process — the inability to persuade Savimbi to consider the role of an opposition leader. Savimbi's "great hero," Winston Churchill, she told him, "had also suffered unexpected defeat in the elections after the war, a war that he had brought to a victorious conclusion. Yet he had continued to play an important role as the leader of 'His majesty's Loyal Opposition ... and five years later had been voted back into power." Similarly, Anstee

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[55] "Angolan Rivals Meet To Hash Out Deal On Presidential Vote," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 19, 1992, p. 6.

[56] Anstee also cites the fact that there was no outright victor as an indication that there had not been massive fraud or vote rigging. Anstee, p. 236.

[57] Smith, pp. 103 and 106.

emphasized, the election victor in the Angolan election would have the tall order of having to rebuild a war-devastated country, reforming a Marxist-oriented economy and reigning in the electorate's unrealistic expectations of what democracy could do for the lives of Angolans. Indeed, she noted, there would be undoubted hardship before the situation got much better in Angola — a fact which provided an excellent opportunity for Savimbi to achieve power in a subsequent round of elections several years later. Anstee concludes, stating that "Savimbi listened attentively and appeared receptive to my words. But it was impossible to gauge what he was thinking."[58]

It was also difficult to stop the momentum toward war which had begun with Savimbi's October 3 speech on Radio *Vorgan*. Hardliners in both camps had pushed their respective leaderships toward more forceful action and it was not clear that dos Santos and Savimbi had complete control of their commanders in the field. UNITA claimed that fighting had been initiated as a result of MPLA's efforts to wipe out its senior leadership which had been in residence in the Hotel *Turismo* and the Miramar district of Luanda since the elections. MPLA hardliners maintained that UNITA's aggressive actions had been a result of its efforts to secure power through military means now that political avenues to power had been exhausted. Their concern was that dos Santos would make a deal with Savimbi when compromise was unnecessary since, by all accounts, the MPLA had legitimately won the elections.[59] Peace talks in the southern coastal town of Namibe beginning on November 26, 1992 led to a call for a nationwide ceasefire, a halt to offensive

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[58] Anstee, p. 217.

[59] Smith, 106.

troop movements and an expanded role for the United Nations in the peace process. The agreement was in place for 72 hours before UNITA occupied the two northern towns of Uíge and Negage — on the very day that Savimbi was announcing his intention for UNITA members to join the cabinet at senior levels. The ceasefire agreement was scuttled in spite of Savimbi's protestations that he had not ordered the attack.

Regardless of UNITA's initial strategy, its subsequent actions were seen to be in violation of the Bicesse Accords and as legitimizing the government's own counteroffensive. The government began to distribute weapons to pro-MPLA vigilantes (called *fitinhas*) in Luanda and to organize attacks by the government's remaining military force, the emergency anti-riot police or *ninjas*, on UNITA positions in Luanda and throughout the country.[60] Government supporters throughout Angola destroyed UNITA offices, killed UNITA officials or purged them from towns. By November 1993, MPLA supporters had begun targeting southerners and Ovimbundu on the premise that they were automatically followers of UNITA.[61]

Buoyed at having forced UNITA out of Luanda in early November and with the balance of world opinion believing that UNITA was responsible for restarting the war, the MPLA was more interested in forming a new administration than in negotiations with

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[60] The *Ninjas* were a 4000 member group of elite troops from the regular army and government security forces. They were chiefly responsible for the defense of Luanda in October 1992 and later became the core of the government's fighting unit. Their numbers later increased to an estimated 10,000-20,000 troops and became known as the Rapid Intervention Force. The distributing of weapons to MPLA supporters was also a tactic that had been used in 1975 as a means of countering FNLA and UNITA forces. According to a source cited in *Angola Peace Monitor* approximately 700,000 weapons were distributed by government forces to civilians in Luanda following the return to war in 1992. See *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 11 (July 31, 1996).

[61] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, pp. 19; Maier, *Promises and Lies*, pp. 117-118.

UNITA. On November 26, the new Angolan parliament was inaugurated and on December 2, dos Santos was formally nominated to lead the first Government of the Second Republic. Despite the absence of UNITA members who had rightfully gained a seat in the parliament, the government was referred to as a government of "national unity" and included one ministerial post and four vice-ministerial posts for UNITA and six senior offices for other parties who had contested the September elections.[62] A notable element in the new government's composition, however, was the inclusion of a number of MPLA hardliners and the exclusion of moderates such as Lopo de Nascimento and General Antonio N'dalu, the latter of whom was one of the few members of the government with whom UNITA had been willing to negotiate.

Indeed, the prospects for a quick negotiated settlement were bleak. As the course of battle shifted back in favour of UNITA, the MPLA remained unwilling to make concessions because of fears that these would be seen as indicative of its weakening position. UNITA, on the other hand, wanted to gain control of more territory so that, from a position of strength, it could bargain at least a new power-sharing deal. Earlier efforts by the South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, were rejected by the government and he was eventually declared *persona non grata*. Believing the war could be won militarily, UNITA conditioned its return to a settlement on the basis of new elections run in its entirety by the United Nations. Even more problematic for the prospects of negotiations was the concern amongst

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[62] The Ministry of Cultural Affairs was reserved for UNITA as were vice-ministerial posts in Defence, Agriculture, Public Works and Social Assistance. Interestingly, the new Prime Minister, Dr. Marcolino José Moco (previously the MPLA's Secretary General) was an Ovimbundu — the ethnic group which forms the basis of support for UNITA. See Anstee, pp. 333 and 334.

UN officials that one of the factors which had been significant in forcing an agreement at Bicesse — the cessation of external arms supplies and the resulting military stalemate — might no longer be applicable. Anstee notes how her initial belief that the two sides "must come to terms sooner or later" was based on the view that neither side could win a war because the "triple-zero" provision in the Bicesse Accords precluded either side from receiving military supplies from outside sources. "In the new circumstances," whereby new arms shipments could be justified by UNITA's return to war, "this might no longer be the case." Moreover, Anstee continues, "both sides still had the huge quantities of arms supplied earlier by their allies — mainly the two superpowers — during the Cold War and now back in circulation after the collapse of the peace process; these arms were still capable of killing people, however obsolete some of them might be by Western standards."[63]

The Course of Battle. UNITA suffered the most casualties in the fighting which broke out in Luanda at the end of the October 1992. Indeed, the government's counterstrike succeeded in decapitating a significant portion of UNITA's leadership and support structure and in weakening its armed urban militia. The counterstrike, however, did little to diminish UNITA's regular forces outside of Luanda who were rapidly winning control of large swaths of territory. In fact, by January 1993, UNITA was in control of an estimated 70-75 percent of Angola's total territory (up from 20 percent prior to the September elections). While UNITA had never acquired control of any major Angolan towns during the pre-Bicesse civil war, according to UN estimates, in the months after the elections it gained control of 105 of

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[63] Anstee, pp. 372-3.

Angola's 164 municipalities.[64] Towns which eventually came under UNITA control included the key port city of Lobito and other towns such as Uíge, Malanje, Namibe, Kuito, Caxito and N'Dalatando.[65] UNITA's victory in the key oil town of Soyo in the northwest in January 1992 along with its control of the diamond areas in the northeast assured that the government would be denied the revenues that had financed its earlier military efforts.[66] Then, following an eight-week battle, UNITA captured Angola's second largest city, Huambo, on March 6, 1993.[67] The battle would be a turning point: "This was a new kind of war," noted Jorge Valentim, UNITA's Information Secretary. "We are no longer a guerrilla army. It is conventional now. From now on, the towns and cities are our battlefields. We will defend them to the death."[68]

By January 1993, the prospects for MPLA success became so grim that foreign observers wondered aloud if UNITA could even take Luanda. "It's not inconceivable that UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi could conquer the joint," noted one diplomat. "But he would have to kill just about everyone in Luanda to achieve that." Indeed, UNITA attempted to use

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[64] Noble, "A New Crisis Engulfs Angola," *New York Times*, January 29, 1993.

[65] Andrew Meldrum, "Two Steps Back," *Africa Report*, March-April 1993, p. 45; Smith, p. 103.

[66] While UNITA was able to exploit the diamond areas for its own purposes by sending its own troops to work in the mines, it was not able to generate revenue from Angola's oil region. When UNITA took over the town of Soyo, the major oil companies withdrew their workers. Thus, while control of diamond towns such as Cafunfu generated revenue for UNITA's war effort, the sole effect of UNITA's control of Soyo was to deny these revenues to the government.

[67] Earlier, on January 20, 1993, UNITA had announced on BBC radio that its troops had captured both Soyo and Huambo. The statement was premature. In fact, Huambo was not captured until several weeks later on March 6 1993. "Angola Rebels Seize Oil Center and Old Base,"*New York Times*, January 21, 1993, p. A5.

[68] John Battersby, "Angolan Rebels Win Concessions After War Gains," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 22, 1993, p. 8.

the fact that most of Angola's population remained in government control to its own advantage. The diplomat noted that Savimbi "is more likely to attempt to bring [Luanda] to its knees by cutting off the power and water and then mounting a protracted siege."[69] Similarly, another UN official commented in an interview,

> I think [UNITA] had a very clear strategy that if they went to war they would completely disrupt the rural areas ... and they would cause this massive influx of people into the towns, the urban centres. And these centres would become overloaded with population. [The government] didn't have the infrastructure to support anything and they would implode and collapse under their own weight. There would be a complete breakdown and the central government would not have any control.[70]

Fighting between the two armies was intense: "It was never as bad as this, even at the height of the Cold War," noted a Western diplomat observing the January 1993 fighting. "The extent of the destruction through recent fighting is staggering," he continued, "and reports of escalating political assassinations are most disturbing."[71] Angola correspondent John Battersby noted that "the battle has been more intense than at any time during the civil war and damage more widespread...."[72] Angola's Deputy Foreign Minister, Jorge Chikoti commented, "Things are worse now than they've ever been. ... We have never seen so many

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[69] Cited in John Battersby, "Violent 'Cleansing' Part of Angola War, Aid Workers Say," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 3, 1993, p. 7. In fact, on January 24, 1993, UNITA succeeded in cutting off Luanda's water supply, located 18 miles outside of the capital. It then began to target two power plants located 90 miles and 28 miles outside of Luanda.

[70] David Wimhurst, former UN Spokesman in Angola. Interview with the author, February 6, 1998.

[71] John Battersby, "Angola Returns to Full-Scale War in Post-Ballot Period," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 21, 1993, p. 1.

[72] John Battersby, "Angola Looks to Clinton for US Recognition," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 1993, p. 6.

refugees, so many deaths, so much destruction in a short period of time."[73]

III

Creating the Conditions for Peace in Angola

Following the return to war there was an obvious need for the government to re-examine the peace process and consider how violent conflict could be brought to an end. "The Government played largely by the rules, and lost big time," noted a Western military analyst. "You can be assured they won't make that mistake again...."[74] Indeed, the Angolan government sought to create a set of conditions which would assure its legitimate claim to power and reduce the likelihood of major conflict in a way which the Bicesse Accords did not. This was achieved in two ways: first by ensuring that the balance of power in Angola favoured the government rather than UNITA; second and subsequently, by agreeing to a political settlement, the Lusaka Protocol, which allocated a measure of political power to UNITA. These two factors can now be discussed in turn.

Creating a Favourable Balance of Power

Considering the first of these, one observer noted in January 1993 that while both parties were paying "lip service" to the possibility of a peace initiative, the ceasefire had clearly collapsed: "There is little doubt that this conflict will be settled militarily," noted a senior

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[73] Cited in Noble, "A New Crisis Engulfs Angola," *New York Times*, January 29, 1993.

[74] Cited in Kenneth B. Noble, "Angolan Rebels Rebound, Within Reach of a Victory," *New York Times*, April 13, 1993, p. 1.

United Nations official in Luanda.[75] Anstee notes that while it was "highly unlikely that either side could win a war quickly or decisively, ... both sides seemed hell-bent in that direction." She adds that the "grim prospect was for another long-drawn-out and bloody slogging match...."[76] While both sides acknowledged that the war could not militarily be won outright, they sought to at least strengthen their position at the negotiating table through pressure on the battlefield.

The Angolan government recognized that, despite having won the elections, its ability to dictate the terms of a peace agreement was severely constrained by its weakened military position relative to UNITA following the 1992 elections. "The government was very close to losing power completely," noted Allan Cain, resident in Angola at the time, "because in 1992 the Government was elected with no national army." Indeed, when war began in October 1992, even MPLA officials acknowledged that their forces were at a serious disadvantage since so many government troops (FAPLA) had been demobilized and the creation of the new integrated army (FAA) was only in the initial stages.[77] "Militarily, not much more could go wrong for the government," noted Margaret Anstee. "A rough map ... revealed just how precarious a toehold the government retained." There were only a few enclaves where "the legitimately elected government could have a presence, and some of those did not look likely to hold out for long. One look at this map made it easy to explain

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[75] Cited in Battersby, "Angola Returns," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 21, 1993.

[76] Anstee, p. 339.

[77] FAPLA — *Forças Armadas Populares para a Libertação de Angola* (Armed Forces of the People's Liberation Army); FAA — *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (Angolan Armed Forces).

UNITA's reluctance to return to the negotiating table."[78]

Evidently UNITA believed that the battle had to be won before a new political agreement could be arranged. While the government presented itself for a second round of negotiations in Addis Ababa in February 1993, UNITA continued to delay until Huambo came under its military control. The city's eventual fall led to a dramatic reversal in UNITA's willingness to negotiate.[79] With the victory in Huambo, UNITA's ability to bargain appeared to have increased exponentially. In a statement on Radio *Vorgan* made from his Huambo headquarters, Jonas Savimbi boasted, "We have now captured many, many tanks here in Huambo. We have anti-aircraft guns, long-range guns and we have ammunition. We can, therefore continue this war for a long time."[80] In view of the victory in Huambo, one Western diplomat observed that "UNITA has managed to accomplish in two months what they couldn't do in nearly two decades of fighting. ... And given his recent successes on the battlefield, it would be unrealistic to think Savimbi's going to be satisfied until he has it all."[81] With its control of Angola's rich diamond fields providing UNITA with an estimated $500 million per year the prospect of UNITA dictating the terms of a peace

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[78] Anstee, p. 402.

[79] Indeed, immediately following the fall of Huambo in March 1993, a UNITA official in Paris, Marcelino Georges Sanjeade, said that UNITA was willing to begin peace talks with the MPLA in Geneva the following week. See John Battersby, "Angolan Rebel Victory May Facilitate Peace Talks," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 9, 1993, p. 7.

[80] Noble, "Angolan Rebels Rebound," *New York Times*, April 13, 1993.

[81] Noble, "Angolan Rebels Rebound," *New York Times*, April 13, 1993.

agreement appeared to be a distinct possibility.[82]

Predictably, the MPLA claimed that the loss of Huambo was a "strategic withdrawal." The MPLA's Deputy Foreign Minister, João Miranda, dismissed UNITA's new willingness to resume peace talks as a "joke." He added, "We must not give importance to this proposal. ... In any case it is premature to speak about it. The war is not over and the town of Huambo is not lost as UNITA has suggested."[83] While Huambo was indeed under UNITA control, the war was not yet won for UNITA. "If UNITA was going to win the war militarily, their chance was between October and April," observed a Western military analyst. "They didn't do it."[84] On the contrary, the government was undertaking a number of initiatives which would allow it to regain the upper hand politically and militarily. The first reports of a new government military offensive were in August 1993. Government forces were massing on several fronts: one north of Luanda from which the government sought to retake the northwestern oil towns; another from Catumbela on the Atlantic coast which would drive toward Huambo; and a third force sought to challenge UNITA's control

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[82] A report in the *New York Times* in 1985 claimed that once UNITA gained control of the diamond fields in the northeast of the country it mined an estimated $500 million per year. See Suzanne Daley, "Foes in Angola Still at Odds, Over Diamonds," *New York Times*, September 15, 1995, sec. 1, p. 1. Another report in the *Christian Science Monitor* claims that de Beers purchased between $500-800 million worth of diamonds between 1992 and 1993. See Judith Matloff, "Going for the Glint: Diamonds Keep the War in Angola Alive," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 18, 1995, p. 1. In an interview, David Wimhurst, the UN spokesman in Angola, claimed that the yearly net benefit of UNITA's control of Angolan diamond areas was likely closer to $250 million. Wimhurst, interview with the author.

[83] Battersby, "Angolan Rebel Victory," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 9, 1993.

[84] Bill Keller, "After Big Gains, Angolan Rebel Offensive is Halted," *New York Times*, September 24, 1993, p. A3.

of the diamond areas in the northeast.[85] Several factors would have a role in altering the distribution of power between UNITA and the MPLA.

Qualified International Support for MPLA and Condemnation for UNITA. International recognition of the MPLA government was seen as a key step in gaining at least a diplomatic victory over UNITA. "UNITA is destroying the country because of the ambitions of one man [Savimbi] to be president," noted Paulo Jorge, a senior member of the MPLA. "I am confident that pressure on UNITA from the international community — particularly from the US and South Africa — will convince UNITA that it is time to talk and stop waging war."[86] But despite the MPLA success in the September 1992 elections, recognition from Washington was not forthcoming. The outgoing Bush administration, which apparently still saw local actors in terms of their ideology rather than their electoral support, claimed that it would not recognize the Angolan government until the election process was completed — a stipulation which required dos Santos to go through a second ballot as required under the Bicesse agreement. Later, Washington refused recognition on the basis that the government should be in control of all of Angola's territory. The government publicly voiced its frustration. An exasperated President dos Santos responded by claiming that its hands were tied: "To maintain a position which does not recognize Angola means to favour UNITA. ... There hasn't been a second round of the ballot yet

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[85] Government preparations for new counteroffensives against UNITA were noted in the following reports: "Angolan Leaders Welcome US Bid to Lift Embargo," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 7, 1993, p. 2; Keller, "After Big Gains..." *New York Times*, September 24, 1993; and John Darnton, "Civil War of Nearly Two Decades Exhausts Resource-Rich Angola," *New York Times*, May 9, 1994, sec. 1, p. 1. See also Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, pp. 21-30.

[86] Cited in Battersby, "Angola Looks to Clinton," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 1993.

because Savimbi decided to go back to war." He added, "There is no control over the whole territory because Savimbi managed to occupy some of the territory by violating the Bicesse accords."[87]

Human Rights Watch maintains that the delay in recognizing the Angolan government reflected divisions within the US State Department over how best to induce UNITA to rejoin the political process.[88] Some officials argued that immediate recognition would indicate to UNITA that Washington recognized the existing democratic process — one which UNITA could not circumvent by returning to war. Opponents claimed that recognition should be delayed to demonstrate that Washington had not instantly recognized the MPLA in its current state and thus had not shut the door on UNITA's political participation. The effect was, according to Allan Cain, precisely the opposite to this latter view: "The fact that the UN delayed for three weeks in recognizing or endorsing the results of the elections and the fact that the Americans delayed a whole six months before recognizing the government ... I think gave the kind of message to UNITA that the international community was not going to stand by the government that came out of the election." UNITA, in turn, "saw the opportunity in rejecting the election results and going back to war without strong condemnation from the US government — the one that counted."[89]

Indeed, it took the coming to office of the Clinton administration before recognition

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[87] John Battersby, "Angolan President Urges US Role to Help End Renewed Civil War," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 25, 1993, p. 1.

[88] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 127.

[89] Cain interview.

was extended to the Angolan government in May 1993. In doing so, Washington noted that UNITA had rejected the latest UN-US peace initiative while the Angolan government, "by contrast, has agreed to sign that peace agreement, has sworn-in a democratically elected National Assembly and has offered participation by UNITA at all levels of government."[90]

US recognition of the Luanda government and condemnation for UNITA was important for several reasons. First, it signaled that Washington — one of UNITA's two most significant former allies — had run out of patience with the party that international opinion had already agreed had upset the peace process and was obstructing current efforts at negotiations. UNITA was increasingly isolated even by former allies in the Ivory Coast and South Africa. "Savimbi knows today that he has no alternative," Alioune Blondin Beye, the UN's Special Representative to Angola would later note. "The international context has changed. He does not have the friends he once had."[91] Second, Washington's recognition allowed the eventual removal of an international embargo on arms supplies to Angola, thus allowing the MPLA to begin a massive military rearmament programme.

The Angolan Government Rearms. In an interview in early 1993, President dos Santos acknowledged to the *New York Times* that his troops had not been prepared for the UNITA offensive in late 1992 and had been losing territory ever since. But he also asserted that once the military structure had been reorganized and rearmed, "the military evolution

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[90] Clinton's statement in announcing US recognition of the government in Angola on May 19 1993. Cited in Peter Grier, "Recognition of Angola Signals Shift in US Policy on Africa," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 21, 1993, p. 3.

[91] Bill Keller, "Will Angolan Rebel Give Peace a Chance," *New York Times*, February 14, 1995, p. A1.

will be favorable."[92] Indeed, the government had a long way to go before it could even achieve equality with UNITA. Western analysts stated that, unlike UNITA, the government had generally followed provisions for demobilization as outlined in the Bicesse Accords. Consequently, while the Government had had an estimated 90,000 troops under arms, by election day its armed forces had been reduced to 10,000 troops. Alternatively, UNITA had maintained or was quickly able to mobilize a force estimated at between 30,000-35,000 soldiers.[93]

In the early days of fighting, the government had relied on its elite police force and the pro-government vigilantes to maintain its hold on Luanda. Reports in early 1993, however, noted that the Government had introduced compulsory military service and was redrafting previously demobilized soldiers.[94] On April 23, 1993, the government unilaterally declared that the "triple zero" provision in the Bicesse Accord banning military aid to either party was now dead. Luanda called on "all countries with which the Angolan government has diplomatic relations of cooperation to help it equip its forces with material and logistical means." By August 1993, all three members of the "Troika" which had pledged to observe "triple zero" (Russia, Portugal and the United States) as well as other countries (such as the United Kingdom) stated their intention to lift their bans on military aid to Angola. As the fighting continued the government invested heavily in its armed forces and acquired an

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[92] Cited in Kenneth B. Noble, "Angola President Says His Forces Are Rearming After Rebel Gains," *New York Times*, February 2, 1993, p. A6.

[93] Noble, "Angolan Rebels Rebound," *New York Times*, April 13, 1993.

[94] Noble, "Angolan Rebels Rebound," *New York Times*, April 13, 1993.

estimated $1-2.5 billion in new military hardware.[95] An additional $1 billion was purchased between January and July 1994.[96] Further purchases of arms reportedly came from Brazil, France and Israel. Human Rights Watch claims that to allow the rearmament program to proceed the government was forced to mortgage the next seven years of oil production.[97]

Executive Outcomes and Other Mercenaries. A third element in the Government's regaining of military superiority came with the hiring of *Executive Outcomes* (EO), a relatively small band of former SADF soldiers and officers who fought on behalf of oil interests in Angola and, by extension, the Angolan government.[98] As in the mid-1970s the Angolan government did not hesitate to look to outside military forces to address its military needs. "The government was unable to defeat UNITA on its own," noted a former EO employee. "It took *Executive Outcomes* to win the war for them."[99] "The contribution of *Executive Outcomes* was such that UNITA was forced to the negotiating table" noted another EO employee. "Until then, it was always sort of a stalemate." EO, he says, "tipped the balance" in favour of the government.[100] While such claims might seem over-inflated —

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[95] John Battersby, "A Step Closer to Peace in Angola," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 14, 1994, p. 6; Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 36.

[96] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 36.

[97] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 39.

[98] *Executive Outcomes* personnel object to the term "mercenary" claiming that they only fought on behalf of legitimate governments. They were frequently referred to as "security consultants." In an effort to gain greater legitimacy EO began an effort to persuade governments and international organizations that they could make a positive contribution to stability in Africa. Before the South African parliament the head of EO in Angola, Nick van den Bergh, stated that his corporate vision for EO was "the creation of an environment conducive to peace." He added, "We would love to be accredited by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations." See "We Make Africa Safe for Investors, Pro Soldiers Say," *Reuters*, October 16, 1997.

[99] Confidential Interview #2.

[100] Confidential Interview #3.

particularly given that the number of EO personnel in Angola never exceeded more than several hundred men — UNITA officials do not deny the significance of the role EO played in changing the course of the war in Angola: "*Executive Outcomes* was crucial as far as rebuilding the government's military strength," noted UNITA's Abel Chivukuvuku. "It was crucial."[101]

The involvement of *Executive Outcomes* began at the time Soyo was captured by UNITA troops in January 1993. At that time white mercenaries were reportedly fighting on both sides of the conflict.[102] The original and stated purpose of *Executive Outcomes* was to reorganize the Angolan army, train its troops and to direct the fighting against UNITA. Few EO employees deny, however, that they also became directly involved in the fighting against UNITA. "I think we had the best experienced guys that were available from the old SADF," noted one EO commander. "We concentrated on training, making the plans, directing the fight." While in the Cold War years the Russian advisors had been well-behind the frontlines, "we were there where things were happening. This is the best motivation you can give to the troops."

Executive Outcomes personnel claim that their most significant role was in training

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[101] Chivukuvuku interview.

[102] These claims are noted in John Battersby, "Rebels Blamed as Angolan Talks Derail, *Christian Science Monitor*, March 2, 1993, p. 6; and Human Rights Watch, *Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 30. Little is known about mercenaries that were apparently fighting on behalf of UNITA. It is believed, however, that elements within the SADF continued support for UNITA even after Pretoria officially ended its support for the rebels. Indeed, the Angolan government claimed that UNITA was receiving military supplies from South Africa but would not name the South African government specifically. Patrick Evans, a South African Foreign Ministry spokesman, stated that it would have been "our natural preference" for Savimbi to have won the September 1992 elections, but that his government had not provided any help to Savimbi since the 1991 peace accords. See Bill Keller, "As Civil War in Angola Intensifies, Pretoria denies Aiding Rebels," *New York Times*, January 25, 1993, p. A7.

the troops of the FAA in basic fighting skills that had been lost since the pre-election demobilizations. "They had lost their cohesion as fighting units," one EO employee stated in a confidential interview. "Keep in mind the fact that the Angolan troops were battle-fatigued." He points out how many Angolan troops had been born into war and had spent a lifetime coping with the hardships of war, and concludes "maybe that is why they were not aggressive enough." The former fighter notes, "We tried to get it into their heads that if you really want to end this war, you must go in aggressively and break their backs." He concludes, "We don't just throw bombs and make noise. You cannot win a war by losing troops, losing troops and losing troops. You must go in there and get it done with."

Executive Outcomes largely made use of existing weapons and troops to tip the balance of power in favour of the government. EO deployed government-owned military equipment provided earlier to the Angolan Government by the Soviet Union and equipment that had been purchased under its post-election acquisition effort. In interviews, several former EO employees commented that the equipment provided to them by the Angolan government was superior to that they had had access to in the SADF during the war. To a large extent, EO also relied on Katangese troops originally from Zaire to carry out the fighting because they were reportedly much more aggressive than the government's own troops. "They were the ones who were more likely to stand and fight rather than run away," noted one EO commander. He adds that now — post 1994 — the MPLA and the FAA have become much more aggressive and will not tolerate UNITA control of territory.[103]

Angolan officials acknowledged that without military superiority UNITA would

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[103] The Angolan Government's contract with *Executive Outcomes* was terminated in January 1996.

never commit to a peace accord. The Angolan Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General João de Matos, noted "if there is military equilibrium, which is what we have at the moment, there will not be a lasting agreement. ... It is necessary to have a military imbalance to reach an agreement." However, he also acknowledged that military might alone was insufficient to bring peace and reconciliation to Angola. In the end, he noted, "there is no military solution for Angola."[104] The most significant government victories with which *Executive Outcomes* was associated were the recapturing of the oil town of Soyo in late 1994 and Cafunfu in the northeast diamond region in July 1994. While UNITA continued to have access to diamond mines, these military defeats are cited as having been instrumental in persuading UNITA to make peace at the negotiating table.[105] Later, without the direct assistance of *Executive Outcomes*, Government forces retook Huambo where UNITA headquarters had been located. While UNITA had claimed they would fight to the death to maintain a hold on Huambo and even threatened a "generalized armed resistance throughout the country" if Huambo were attacked, in the end UNITA troops withdrew from the city on their own. "Things are different because the Government has the upper hand militarily," noted Chico Montenegro, the government's administrator in Balambo. "Knowing what happened last time, we are being more accountable."[106] Evidently, the government had gained the upper hand militarily and began to push for a political settlement which would protect its own interests and go

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[104] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, pp. 25-26.

[105] The towns of Soyo and Cafunfu were seen as strategically more important because they provided the government with access to key oil and diamond areas. The victory in Huambo, being the headquarters for UNITA, is cited more for the boost in psychological terms.

[106] Bill Keller, "New Path to Peace in Angola: Clamp Rebels and Hold Tight," *New York Times*, November 6, 1994, sec. 1, p. 1.

some way to accommodating the concerns of UNITA.[107]

Finding an Acceptable Political Agreement

The second condition required to end the civil war in Angola involved establishing a political settlement which was inclusive of UNITA. As war raged during 1993 and 1994, a series of negotiations took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and finally in Lusaka, Zambia. UNITA refused to cut a deal while it had the upper hand militarily during the early stages of negotiations. In failing to do so, it allowed the government to regain its military strength such that it eventually eclipsed UNITA and was able to dictate the terms of a military settlement to UNITA. We will briefly examine how these negotiations proceeded and consider how UNITA was induced into signing an agreement.

UN-mediated talks between the MPLA and UNITA got underway in Addis Ababa in late January 1993. At this time UNITA was gaining the upper hand militarily after having been forced out of Luanda and, as a result, was not yet ready to negotiate seriously.[108] Further negotiations scheduled for February 10, also in Addis Ababa, were canceled because UNITA claimed that fighting prevented it from reaching an airstrip outside of Huambo (a claim Anstee did not find credible given that, by its own pronouncements, UNITA had been

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[107] For other reports on *Executive Outcomes*, see John Liebenburg, "Among the Dead in Angola," *New African*, June 1993, pp. 32-33; and Alan Rake, "Dangerous Dogs of War," *New African*, November 1995, pp. 10-12.

[108] According to Anstee, American negotiators involved in the talks became so exasperated with the slow process of the talks that finally, with the assistance of the Portuguese, they presented their own proposal to try and accelerate the peace process. Anstee claims, however, that there was "no point in coming up with an instant solution if it did not engage the commitment of the parties to the conflict." Anstee, p. 387.

in control of a large part of the city and its surrounding countryside).[109] After UNITA failed to show up on two further occasions when talks were scheduled, the UN finally canceled the talks altogether. It was apparent that UNITA was not prepared to come to the negotiating table until it had captured Huambo outright and could bargain from a position of strength.

Once Huambo was captured on March 6, 1993, Savimbi demanded that the UN's Special Representative to Angola, Margaret Anstee, be replaced and stated he would not participate in any negotiations in which she was involved. By this time, UNITA intransigence had infuriated the international community. On March 11, the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, stated his confidence in Anstee's stewardship of the peace process and claimed that the United Nations operation in Angola, UNAVEM II,[110] would not be renewed beyond April 1993 unless progress was made toward resolving the conflict. Earlier, after UNITA's failure to appear for the talks on February 14, Portugal, Russia and the United States issued an ultimatum stating that without UNITA's compliance in the peace process, they would "not fail to draw the necessary conclusions."[111] For its part, the MPLA government felt it had "shown up in good faith" at the negotiations and was now "being led by the nose." It began to weigh its own options: a continued willingness to negotiate was evidently being interpreted by UNITA as a "sign of weakness."[112] "When I saw the President," notes Margaret Anstee, "it was clear that the hardliners had the upper hand.

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[109] The United Nations had also pledged to send helicopters right into Huambo itself to retrieve the UNITA delegations. Anstee, p. 409.

[110] United Nations Angola Verification Mission.

[111] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 124.

[112] Anstee, p. 416.

Although he was very cordial, expressing warm appreciation of our efforts to bring off the Addis Ababa meeting, he made no bones of the fact that the Government had had enough."[113]

A second round of negotiations did get underway, this time in the Ivory Coast in April 1993. Prior to the meetings between UNITA and the MPLA, Anstee met with President dos Santos and agreed that "power-sharing was the key item on which all else depended." The difficulty was in determining what role could be offered to Savimbi short of naming him head of state, yet with sufficient influence that he would be politically satisfied. Dos Santos stated his willingness to consider "UNITA's participation in civilian government at all levels" provided that the government could still "carry out its mandated programme" (a programme which he claimed all government members had to endorse), and that participation would be of the "widest nature, embracing other parties and civil groupings besides UNITA."[114] UNITA continued to obstruct progress and negotiations were suspended on several occasions prompting Anstee to comment that "in Angola it was difficult not only to get the two sides to tango but even to persuade them to step onto the same dance floor at the same time."[115] There seemed to be few opportunities for powersharing.

Nonetheless, a formula for powersharing was worked out along with agreements on a ceasefire, the cantonment of troops and a second round of elections. But the process came unglued when UNITA refused to agree to withdraw its troops from territories it had controlled since hostilities began in 1992. Since the deal was underpinned by an exchange

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[113] Anstee, p. 410.

[114] Anstee, pp. 444-445.

[115] Anstee, p. 446.

whereby political concessions would be made by the government in return for military concessions from UNITA, the agreement could not be implemented. A decision was made to enlarge the UNAVEM mandate to allow "blue helmets" to be deployed in areas vacated by UNITA troops to ensure the security of UNITA supporters. But it too broke down when the United Nations conditioned its provision of "blue helmets" on a signed agreement, and the local parties insisted on a guarantee of blue helmets prior to their signing the agreement.[116]

A third and final set of negotiations began in Lusaka in January 1994, this time under the mediation of Anstee's Malian successor as Special Representative, Alioune Blondin Beye.[117] While there were reports of early progress, negotiations soon became deadlocked on various power-sharing formulas. By April 1994, the Clinton administration decided to involve itself more directly in the peace process and sent two letters to dos Santos urging him to accept proposals drawn up by mediators in Lusaka. The Angolan delegation signaled its conditional acceptance of the proposals before UNITA outlined its own views. Under the formula put forward, UNITA was offered political offices at all levels of government including four ministerial posts, seven vice-ministerial posts, six ambassadorships and three

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[116] Noting this "chicken and egg problem," Anstee recorded her exasperation at apparently having come so close to an agreement only to fail as a consequence of the UN's bureaucratic rigidity and the intransigence of the local parties. In a remarkably candid comment, Anstee states, "I felt very like hitting Dr Valentim [UNITA's Minister of Information, and leader of their delegation] — not so much for having led UNITA's obstruction, which had caused the downfall of the talks, but for his blatant indifference to the tragedy that would inexorably follow from their failure. Anstee, p. 489. See also Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, pp. 125-127. A notable additional problem was that, even if the UN had been willing to send troops, they could not have been delivered for another six to nine months after the agreement was signed.

[117] In fact, the negotiations began in November 1994 but were quickly suspended following reports that government jets had bombed the town of Kuito in central Angola, which was still under UNITA control.

governorships. Savimbi's own role remained uncertain. UNITA accepted the governorships as proposed by the mediators but insisted that, in addition to certain exchanges over ambassadorial appointments, it retain political control over Huambo where its troops continued to reside. In a statement, UNITA said that "the addition of Huambo to the list of provinces to be administered by UNITA is fundamental. To ignore the logic of this request is to close one's eyes on the reality of conflict resolution."[118]

Neither side appeared willing to compromise on the issue of Huambo. But there were improvements in other areas. On June 11, 1994, both sides agreed that UNITA could send its members to sit in the 70 seats it had won in the 223-seat parliament during the 1992 elections. Finally on October 17, 1994, Blondin Beye stated that UNITA and the MPLA negotiators in Lusaka had reached an agreement. The deal called for a ceasefire and the acceptance of the 1992 peace accords, the withdrawal and disarming of rebels, and the completion of the formation of an integrated Angolan Armed Forces (F.A.A.).[119] Also included were provisions inviting UN troops to provide security and, unlike the earlier Bicesse Accords, specific articles outlining the political offices to be reserved for UNITA members.[120] Fighting, however, continued as both sides attempted to better position

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[118] Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Arms Trade and Violations*, p. 130.

[119] The Lusaka Protocol (Annex 4) called for the "existence of one single, national and non-partisan armed forces obeying the sovereign organs of the Republic of Angola. The composition of he Angolan Armed Forces will reflect the principle of proportionality between Government and UNITA military forces as provided for in the Bicesse Accords."

[120] As part of its provisions on national reconciliation (Annex 6), the Lusaka Protocol states that members of UNITA will be given the opportunity to "participate adequately at all levels and in the various institutions of political, administrative and economic activity." According to the Lusaka Protocol, the posts within the central administration reserved for members of UNITA included four ministries (Geology and Mines, Trade, Health, and Hotel Business and Tourism), seven deputy ministries (one of which is Defence), and six ambassadorships. Below the central administration, UNITA was invited to send representatives to fill the

themselves militarily before the final signing which took place in Lusaka on November 20, 1994.

Commentators claimed that the agreement signed in Lusaka gave UNITA more than it would have got as the losing party in the 1992 elections. But by now the balance of military power had shifted so decisively back in favour of the government that the longer Savimbi delayed in making an agreement, the more his potential share of power or territory under UNITA control slipped away. Antonio Monteiro, the head of the Portuguese Observer Delegation stated in an interview,

> In Abidjan we elaborated I think a very balanced agreement that could have worked. It was basically the same that was later signed in Lusaka. The only thing [is that] it was better for UNITA; UNITA had a better share of power than they ended up having in Lusaka. Because any time that UNITA postponed — because of Dr. Savimbi's personal decision — the next time the agreement was a lesser share [of political power for UNITA] than the time before. In Abidjan they had it, and they refused. And after they accepted Lusaka because the military situation was changing and they were facing serious difficulties.[121]

Similarly, UNITA's refusal to make early concessions on the issue of Huambo proved to be costly. Following UNITA's rejection of an agreement in June 1994, the government began to mobilize its forces in preparation for an advance on UNITA's last major stronghold. While there was strong pressure from the international community on the Government to ensure that both UNITA and the offers of power-sharing in the as-yet unsigned Lusaka Protocol remained intact, government forces went ahead to retake Huambo in November 1994. Evidently, just as UNITA had done during the talks in Addis Ababa, the government

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following posts: 3 provincial governorships, 7 deputy provincial governorships, 30 offices as municipal administrators, 35 offices as deputy municipal administrators, and 75 offices as commune administrators.

[121] Monteiro interview.

was determined to have conquered certain symbolic prizes before signing any agreement.

Making an agreement at this point, however, still had advantages for UNITA. "It was a strategic move on UNITA's part in that at a certain point the tide of war had started to turn against them," noted one observer in Luanda. "I think they felt this was an opportunity to freeze the battle lines or the cease-fire in a way that favoured their control over maximum territory."[122] Indeed, despite its now-apparent military superiority, the government still controlled a significantly smaller percentage of territory than did UNITA. There was also a strong feeling in the army that the ceasefire was not in the government's favour and that they had never been given the chance to defeat UNITA decisively. UNITA in late 1994 was more interested in withdrawing than in standing and fighting and in November pulled out of Huambo with much of their military machinery intact. "UNITA is basically left today with the military hardware — and probably overall a military machine at least as strong as it was in 1994," noted Allan Cain in an interview.

In fact, however, UNITA was required to demobilize its troops and continue the transformation from a military organization to a political party. There was an element of reciprocity in the Lusaka process which sought to defang UNITA *and* provide it with a measure of political power. "The whole process is designed to demilitarize UNITA completely," noted David Wimhurst, the former UN spokesman in Angola:

> Which is why the Protocol addresses most of the tasks that have to be done to UNITA. In return for which you have this powersharing. That is the theory of the Protocol. So 90 percent is UNITA's job and the remaining part of it — the

[122] Cain interview.

powersharing — is the government's job.[123]

The "Peace" in Post-Lusaka Angola. Since the Lusaka Protocol was signed in November 1994, Angolans have lived in a situation frequently described as *nem guerra, nem paz*: neither war nor peace. The peace agreement did bring an end to the fighting but since then progress has been slow and tensions have persisted. UNITA has been reluctant to disarm and there have been reports even after the signing of the Protocol that UNITA is continuing to receive military support from abroad.[124] Moreover, it was not until April of 1997 that the members of UNITA came to Luanda to participate in the newly established Government of Unity and National Reconciliation.[125] Nonetheless, observers offer conditional approval of the current situation. "It's definitely a victory," noted Allan Cain:

> The years of 1993 and most of 1994 were terrible, terrible years here [in terms of] the destruction and the loss of life.... The UN claims that at a certain point a thousand people were dying a day in some of these besieged cities — from starvation and shelling. It was a frightening period of time. The cease-fires are better than that. People are not being killed in that way.[126]

With regard to the current government in Angola, he adds,

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[123] Wimhurst interview.

[124] Strategic Survey, in its 1995/96 summary of world events, wrote that "in Angola, the site of Africa's longest-running war, nothing has changed. The United Nations demobilization stations are almost empty and the process is months behind schedule. It is clear that Jonas Savimbi ... has no intention of trading his army for a seat in government. He will instead hold out for both, using, as ever, his dual track policy of diplomacy and war." See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey, 1995/96* (Oxford, 1996), p. 210. *Angola Peace Monitor* cites another report on ongoing weapons supplies to UNITA. In 1977 the UN Secretary General noted that suspicious flights to UNITA controlled territory were continuing. He noted that "the landing of over 120 flights between 1 and 30 July [1997] at UNITA-controlled airstrips scattered throughout the central and eastern parts of the country, which MONUA were not allowed to verify, are clear indications of extensive military preparations." *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol 4, no. 1 (October 2, 1997), p. 3.

[125] For a list of UNITA nominees to Government posts see *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol. 3, no. 5 (January 29, 1997), p.4-5.

[126] Cain interview.

> the GURN is in place and is functioning. The parliament sits and there is free debate. It is a very open and exciting institution. It gets reported in the national press and UNITA deputies speak openly and criticize the government. It functions like any good parliament should with a good opposition. That's what provides some hope in all of this.

Other international observers agree that the process is open and free and has allowed more constructive, if not still fervent, interaction between UNITA and the MPLA. UN spokesman, David Wimhurst, notes:

> It's not bad. I mean they have very open and free debates which are televised — and they call each other all sorts of names, which is great. They are getting it out. They are airing [their views], they are lancing the boil. ... A war of words rather than a war of bullets, that's what we say.[127]

Most important for the success of the peace effort, however, is that members of UNITA feel that the GURN affords them some opportunity to influence government decisions. Marcus Samondo, a member of UNITA and the Minister of Geology and Mines in the Government of National Unity, stated in an interview:

> I think with the Government of National Unity, it is very important as far as the country is concerned, because [it is] a real symbol of unity. Obviously it starts from the top level and needs to go also to the bottom level. ... We work as a team. ...Once you are here, you are not invited as a Minister from UNITA. You are a Minister of Angola. And within the Ministry you work with the people. You have the laws. There is a program established with the people working at the Ministry, and you try to do your best.[128]

Despite these sentiments, however, the most senior members of the UNITA leadership — most notably Jonas Savimbi — remained outside of the GURN. Several roles were considered to get Savimbi to be a part of the political process — including that of a

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[127] Wimhurst interview.

[128] Samondo interview.

leader of the opposition, a vice-presidency, the head of a government organization charged with the reconstruction of the country or some other form of "special status."[129] Savimbi, however, has continually refused even go to Luanda.[130] Observers attributed Savimbi's reluctance to accept one of these roles to his own sense of personal insecurity, his indecision about what role he should play, and to his continuing reluctance to give up the military option for a subservient political role with his archenemy.[131]

The reality of having lost the war, however, is that in the Lusaka Protocol there is not power-sharing in the sense of equality between parties. While it is a peace offering, it is a winner's peace forced upon UNITA by the victorious Angolan Government. While UNITA now has representatives in parliament and in various political posts, the agreement will likely be seen as having failed if it is not embraced by the senior-most levels of UNITA. Many members of UNITA see no contradiction in the fact that they lost the elections and the war, and their desire for equality in the government. Rather, they claim that equal power-sharing is the means that should have been taken and which should still be considered in order to end

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[129] Annex 6 of the Lusaka Protocol states that "in addition to the status specified in Article 77 (2) of the Constitutional Law and taking into account his position as President of the largest opposition party, the President of UNITA shall be guaranteed a special status."

[130] The post of vice-president was offered to Savimbi following the June 1995 meeting of the MPLA Central Committee. The initiative required changing the Constitution of Angola to allow two vice-presidents to be appointed (the other vice-presidency was to be held by the MPLA). Savimbi rejected the offer. *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol. 1, no. 7 (August 10, 1995), p. 4. While Savimbi's "special status" remained a contentious issue between the government and UNITA as late as March 1998, he now appeared willing to accept the title of leader of the Angola's largest opposition party.

[131] In an interview with the author, MPLA member Paulo Jorge noted the decision to create two vice-presidencies and to offer one of them to Savimbi. "We knew at the time that he [Savimbi] was not so happy because there were two vice-presidents. Of course, you can understand that in Angola we are not politically naïve. How can we create one vice-president if by some impeachment of our President, Savimbi would automatically become President? And I said to my colleagues that I didn't believe that Savimbi would accept. Why I thought this was because, in my opinion, Savimbi would not accept to be subordinate to anybody." Interview with the author, #2, December 4, 1997.

any possibility of violent conflict between the two parties. There has been, however, some fracturing in the ranks as some UNITA members have opted for an exclusively political course while other more militant members continue to hold out for a better deal or a shift in military power relations. But as long as the top leadership is not included in positions of power — either because such positions are not offered or are not accepted — they may still have the capacity to consider a non-political route.

Another central part of power-sharing in Angola, however, has involved the sharing of Angola's key resources and wealth between the Government and UNITA. Control of diamond areas had been, according to Savimbi, "a question of survival." In 1992, he argued, "the Government was supposed to finance our campaign. It did not do so. We therefore had to secure our own means of finance, because, one day, there will be lots of new elections, and we must finance the campaign."[132] Undoubtedly, diamonds were also a key source of funding for the war effort and UNITA was reluctant to give up this resource by ceding further territory to government control.[133] When the government grew impatient with the slow progress of extending government administration to areas under UNITA control, it made a surprise announcement in 1995 that it was about to clear out the bandits. The threatening announcement caused unease within UNITA and the peace accords suddenly appeared to be in jeopardy until the government finally backed down and sought another

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[132] *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 9, (May 27, 1996), p. 4. The quotation was translated from an interview by the French daily *Figaro* on May 15, 1996.

[133] Once sources claims that UNITA smuggled a minimum of $2.1 billion worth of diamonds between 1993 and 1996. *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol. 3, no. 4 (December 16, 1996), p. 2.

tack.[134] "There were all sorts of initiatives taken to try and resolve the problem of the diamonds," noted UN spokesman David Wimhurst. "Luanda recognized that the only way to get UNITA to agree to the return of territorial administration to central authority was to do a deal on the diamonds." In this way another exchange of sorts was worked out whereby UNITA allowed government control to be extended in return for its right to legally exploit the diamond resources for its own benefit. "You legalize it essentially," Wimhurst continues. "You become a partner in an international consortium and you get the profits according to the share you put in. ... It's a pragmatic solution to a thorny problem — and it has nothing to do with the Protocol. ... But at the same time we recognize that if they can't resolve the diamond thing we won't move much further."[135]

Since the signing of the Lusaka Protocol, the Angolan Government has become more aggressive in its effort to cut potential military supplies to UNITA and to keep UNITA isolated politically. From the Cold War years when Angola was surrounded by countries whose leaders allowed their territory to be used as conduits or bases for UNITA rebels, to the current situation where virtually all of Angola's neighbours are led by leaders installed by, or friendly to, Luanda, the balance of power has continued to shift in favour of the MPLA government.[136] Internationally, Angola provided military support to Laurent Kabila's seven

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[134] Daley, "Foes in Angola...," *New York Times*, September 15, 1995.

[135] Wimhurst interview.

[136] See "Angola's dos Santos Seen Closing in on UNITA," *Reuters*, October 27, 1997; "Congo, Zaire Conflicts Helped Angola Against UNITA," *Reuters*, October 18, 1997. Remaining countries who may be continuing military supplies to UNITA include Zambia and South Africa. There were some suspicions that the Angolan government was behind an unsuccessful *coup* against the government of Frederik Chiluba in Zambia, but authorities in the field deny that this was the case. Elements in South Africa were thought to be using an airbase in Ndola Zambia but this is undoubtedly not sanctioned by Pretoria.

month struggle to overthrow Mobuto Sese Seko in Zaire ending in May of 1997. Mobutu had been a long and staunch supporter of UNITA and his overthrow meant an end to Zaire's military support both to UNITA and to separatist rebels in the oil-rich Cabinda region. The 1997 overthrow of President Pascal Lissouba in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville, where UNITA and Cabindan rebels had some of their last external bases, further weakened armed opposition to the Angolan government. Moreover, UNITA's continuing intransigence and the government's ostensible willingness to accommodate UNITA in a powersharing government has generated greater tolerance from the international community. The government has been given virtual *carte blanche* support to take aggressive action against UNITA when the latter does not live up to its pledges in the Lusaka Protocol.[137] Of course, the Angolan government has also sought to consolidate its own power. Angola's oil and diamond sectors continue to expand and to provide enormous wealth for the government and, consequently, the resources for Luanda to continue to arm itself.[138] While most observers contend that UNITA has sufficient weaponry and political support to preclude its outright defeat, it is also true that at the moment there is little chance that UNITA could challenge the

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[137] For instance, in the fall of 1997 after UNITA's failure to demobilize and hand over territory to the government, the United Nations imposed sanctions on UNITA. Allan Cain notes in an interview: "The sanctions are clearly a message to UNITA. But I think that the hidden message here — which I think isn't so hidden — to the government is that if the next stage of the sanctions fail the international community would have no objection to the government reasserting their authority in whatever way they feel appropriate — which probably would be military or police actions." Interview with the author.

[138] Wimhurst interview. One report claims that Angola's oil production as of early 1998 has reached 700,000 bpd. Angola is expected to eventually overtake Nigeria as Africa's leading oil producer. See "Angola Looks to Oil Wealth to Fund Post-War Budget," *Reuters*, February 4, 1998.

Angolan government in a pitched confrontation.[139]

Using its military strength as a means of limiting UNITA only to political options is an approach both the international community and the MPLA have come to accept. UNITA's ability to come within a hair's breadth of overtaking the country, including Luanda, led the MPLA to vow never to let itself to be so unprepared again. Ongoing tensions and mistrust between the two movements are still sufficient enough not to allow either to let its guard down. Militant members of the MPLA continue to emphasize the need for vigilance against a possible UNITA offensive in future or to ensure UNITA's compliance in the peace process. "UNITA only understands one language — force, hard line," notes one such MPLA militant.[140] "When we took these hard positions, UNITA became more flexible." Representatives of the international community are more cautious and diplomatic, noting that UNITA,

> probably has enough men in arms to cause damage, disruption and so on, but it can't win the day. Now what can you do in that situation? Of course, if you're trying to be rational about this, you say well you find other alternatives. Because essentially we are trying to close off all the military options and leave open the political option, the democratic option. And that's the door through which UNITA has to go.[141]

Indeed, observers claim, that UNITA members in the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation are increasingly finding value in respecting the Lusaka Process — but not simply because they are being bullied by a sometimes self-righteous and patronizing

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[139] While there are obvious reasons to doubt his claims, Savimbi states that "UNITA has no intention of returning to war" and could not do so, in any case, because "it does not have the means since we have disarmed our troops. People say we still have 35,000 men [under arms]. It's false." See "Savimbi Says UNITA Has Lost Capacity to Wage War," *Reuters*, November 19, 1997.

[140] Jorge interview # 1.

[141] Wimhurst interview.

MPLA. Rather it is because they see value in a more democratic process which might, in future, allow them the political role they lost in the 1992 elections. While the military route is less of an option than ever before, members are more inclined to try to expose the political weaknesses of the government: "In the political arena they certainly have nothing to lose and probably a lot to gain," notes Allan Cain. "The government is not popular. A good opposition in parliament could win them [the government]. And, they only need a 10 percent or a 5 or 6 percent swing."[142]

IV

Conclusions

The end of the Cold War did not end the fighting in Angola. While the post-independence civil war in was largely fueled by superpower aid and weaponry, the cessation of direct superpower involvement in the conflict did not preclude local actors from finding other means to continue the violence. Indeed, by some accounts, the conflict which followed the 1992 elections was more violent than ever before. In an interview, Luis Graciano, a former Angolan soldier who fought on both the side of UNITA and the MPLA, asked what had been accomplished in all of these years of civil war in Angola. "When someone comes to fight," he noted, "he fights for better things in the future. But we have not realized this. The agreement that they have negotiated now, is the same agreement that we had in 1975.

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[142] Cain interview.

This is renegotiating Alvor."[143] While there are important differences between the Lusaka Protocol and its predecessor of 20 years, this sense that no progress has been made since independence (and, on the contrary, that much destruction has been visited on Angola's people) is widespread. "If the most important thing for them was really independence," Graciano continues, "we could have had a quiet country, a developed country, with more than we have now. We did nothing from 1975 until today."[144]

Indeed, as in Somalia, there was no shortage of criticism for the manner in which the most recent Angolan peace process evolved. But also like the Somali experience, it is not clear that measures proposed by these same critics could have precluded conflict. For example, the UN was blamed for delaying the announcement of the September 1992 election results and thus having failed to recognize the MPLA government in a way which might have allowed it to better consolidate its power. Similarly, the United States delayed its recognition of the elected Government of Angola until May 1993. In both cases, however, the reported purpose of the delay was to continue efforts to keep Savimbi and UNITA *within* the existing political process. Indeed, there are indications that the effort might have paid off had the stated intentions of the respective leaders to have a second round of voting not been overtaken by events. Similarly, the inelastic timetable for elections was also seen as a contributor to the eventual breakdown into violence insofar as demobilization of the respective armed forces could not be ensured before election day. But given UNITA's

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[143] The Alvor agreement was signed by the MPLA, the FNLA and UNITA following the Portuguese *coup* in 1974 and set out the terms for Angola's independence.

[144] Graciano interview.

continued reluctance to disarm, even today, it is unclear that any degree of scheduling elasticity would have led to elections within a reasonable period of time. This is not to claim that nothing could have prevented the post-election resort to conflict in Angola. Rather it is to stimulate a sober understanding of the limitations of any effort — including power-sharing and demobilization — towards creating the conditions for peace.

Despite the disenchantment among Angolans, however, there are examples of progress since independence. Not least of these, Angola has finally extricated itself from a web of conflicting external-power interests and now stands as a future regional power on its own right. Angola has also been through a democratic process which, until the resumption of war in late-October 1992, was embraced by Angolans of all political stripes and ethnicity. It is notable that the most lasting period of peace in Angola did not come until the government supplemented its efforts to gain military superiority with genuine offers of power-sharing. Notwithstanding the fact that the current power-sharing agreement does not divide power equally, representatives from both UNITA and the MPLA emphasize that inclusiveness of one sort or another is the only realistic option to maintain peace in Angola in future. Indeed, despite the violence that followed the elections, discussions with Angola's political leaders and diplomats reveal that the experience has also been valuable in highlighting the pitfalls of certain types of electoral processes and the enormous consequences in failing to respect the limits of these processes.

For example, if the Angolan case demonstrates that power-sharing can work, it also shows that leaders will have little inclination towards it on the first go round. Power-sharing is often viewed with suspicion as a "second-class" form of democracy foisted on the Third

World by the West. But these considerations were overlooked when the Bicesse Accords were negotiated. Instead, there was an expectation among some observers that the close finish between dos Santos and Savimbi would *force* them into a power-sharing agreement. In fact, because of the high-stakes nature of the Angola's elections, the main participants could not afford to lose — particularly given that so many lives had already been sacrificed for their respective causes. Consequently, it is not surprising that Savimbi once again resorted to war in a desperate effort to regain political and economic control. Evidently, one cannot expect two armed movements who have been at war to suddenly govern together. On the other hand, the decision to subject armed movements to a winner-take-all format after so many years of conflict can only be seen as foolhardy.

As an incentive to consider a power-sharing agreement, then, parties in tightly-contested elections have to be forced to face the possibility that they might lose. Even this is a difficult task. Powersharing was not seriously considered prior to the 1992 elections in Angola because both sides were convinced that victory was theirs. Anticipating electoral outcomes is never straight-forward and, as the Angolan case demonstrates, the expected winner does not always prevail. Alternatively, leaders can be induced into accepting power-sharing by limiting the length of time such an agreement will be in place. Finite power-sharing might be a means of reducing the political and economic stakes and of acclimatizing both politicians and voters to the democratic process. The international community must also make indisputably clear that they will recognize no government other than one which has been democratically elected. Not until all other options and means of support are closed will local actors genuinely commit themselves to power-sharing.

Regrettably, despite the Angolan government's efforts towards reconciliation and its offer of power-sharing in the Lusaka Protocol, it now seeks to maintain military superiority for the sake of its own security. One unfortunate lesson for the Angolan government was that it was to no benefit, and at considerable risk, that they followed their pre-election demobilization orders. Now, as a consequence, the government in Luanda remains paranoid about UNITA's future intentions and is determined not to let itself be caught again in such a weakened position. Its continuing efforts to bolster its military strength and to isolate UNITA diplomatically in turn exacerbates the insecurity of those UNITA members who remain outside the political process and forces them to maintain a military posture. Tragically, despite Angola's enormous wealth, resources continue to be poured into ensuring the military security of the government and rebels, and few resources are directed toward Angola's people who, without a doubt, have endured the greatest suffering as a result of Angola's wars.

A peaceful future for Angola is now contingent on taking small steps beyond this limited power-sharing and demonstrating to all Angolans that losing elections does not mean losing access to all political and economic power. There is no doubt that ordinary Angolans are tired of war; the achievement of peace, however, will require an ongoing commitment by Angola's political and military leaders to peaceful forms of political change.

PART THREE

Conclusions

Chapter 8

Conclusions: The Promise and Challenge of Power-Sharing

On its own the argument presented in Chapter 1 is not prescriptive. Rather it lays out how different distributions of power and governing agreements can be expected to lead to different outcomes of peace and conflict. In this concluding chapter, however, there is an opportunity not only to draw conclusions on the merits of the argument in predicting conflict outcomes in general, but also to look at the argument in a normative perspective to consider what actions should be taken by local actors and international mediators to encourage more desirable peaceful outcomes and to avoid unwanted violent outcomes. Such policy prescriptions are written not only with international mediators in mind but, more importantly, for local actors themselves since, as is most often the case, it is the latter who must ultimately make agreements work.

Two of the three regimes considered here did not survive the transition from the Cold War to the post Cold War international system. In both of these cases the leadership continued in their refusal to offer meaningful political concessions to their respective adversaries until they were too weak to resist challenges from rebel groups. Only in Angola did the more pragmatic government correctly understand the message of its superpower

patron that unlimited military aid would not continue indefinitely and adjust its strategy with the rebels accordingly. Let us quickly re-examine the trajectory of conflict in each of the case studies.

In Ethiopia, while Mengistu incorporated individuals from other ethnic minorities into his government, the regime in Addis Ababa was largely perceived as representing Amhara political culture and domination. Aside from its exclusion of opposition groups, the regime was arguably the most draconian of the three regimes considered in our case studies. During the 1970s and into the 1980s it succeeded in forcefully suppressing the most threatening military activities of northern rebel groups and instilling a sense of fear among ordinary Ethiopians. Military might was the central means the regime used to sustain itself during the 1980s. Since the Ogaden war in 1977-78, the Soviet Union had provided its Marxist client with enormous quantities of military hardware and security personnel which reduced the likelihood of a successful challenge to the regime. While the government did initiate token gestures of reconciliation in the mid-1980s in the form of a new constitution and regional autonomy, Mengistu personally over-ruled any movement towards genuine decentralization. Accordingly, in terms of our argument, the situation at this time alternated from one of *government suppression with low-level guerrilla warfare* to one of *continued war*.

Ethiopia's two most powerful rebel groups, the EPLF and the TPLF, however, were able to draw on the alienation the regime imparted on its own citizens and continued to grow and control ever larger amounts of rural territory. Mengistu's ruthless tactics also eventually alienated his Soviet patron, which was now led by reformist-minded Mikhail Gorbachev.

The first signs of a decrease in military support from Moscow to Ethiopia came in 1988 — by which time rebel groups in the north were joining forces and had attained an extremely high level of military sophistication and organization. *War* raged in the north until May 1991 when the rebel groups dismissed last minute appeals from the government and forced Mengistu out of the capital.

Ethiopia was an extreme example of a regime's reliance on military strength. No concessions were made to rebels and the rebels in turn saw no other means to their objectives than the regime's military overthrow. The case shows then that, in the absence of a governing agreement, violence can occur regardless of the distribution of power amongst the key players.

Promising elections in the near future, the TPLF-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) installed itself in the capital and followed through on its promise to allow Eritrean succession, thereby eliminating the only group which could realistically challenge its hold on power in the capital. For the first time since the 1960s when Eritrean rebel groups began to contest Addis Ababa's power in the north, peace had come to Ethiopia. Members of other groups — most notably the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and various Somali factions — were brought into the transitional government in what was nominally a *power-sharing* agreement. Partly as a result of their own disorganization and inability to present a united alternative to the EPRDF and partly because of their disenchantment with what they saw as a multi-ethnic cover for Tigrayan dominance of Ethiopia's political landscape, many of these groups left the government in the months prior to the June 1992 elections which the EPRDF was expected to win. The EPRDF arrogantly

accused these groups of backing out of the elections after their organizational incompetence and anticipated electoral failure had become evident but it also claimed that the door was open for these groups to return and exercise a voice in Ethiopia's affairs. On its own initiative, the EPRDF government proceeded with its plans to allow ethnic self-determination by redrawing Ethiopia's provincial boundaries around the country's most significant ethnic groups — a move which to some extent may have pacified potential opposition among some of these groups.

Regardless of whether one sees the current situation as *no agreement* (given the withdrawal of the OLF and other groups from the pact), *power-sharing* (insofar as there was the explicit sharing of power across *ethnic* groups) or *winner-take-all* (in light of the fact that the most recent elections in 1995 gave almost exclusive power to the EPRDF and its affiliated parties), there is no question of the EPRDF's military superiority over any prospective challengers. Despite its increasingly dubious human rights record and its intimidation of opponents, the EPRDF has continued to maintain the backing of Washington which has only had to look to ongoing chaos in Somalia for reassurance that it is carrying out the correct policy with regard to Ethiopia. Moreover, to the extent that ethnic groups were explicitly incorporated into the government or that politics was reorganized across explicitly ethnically-defined states, the EPRDF likely took the edge off of the most serious ethnically-based demands from its population. Consequently, the EPRDF has managed to maintain order and achieve *stable peace* — though, arguably, not harmony — within its borders. The post-Mengistu case, however, highlights several other practical problems. For instance, the international community seems unclear as to how it should respond to situations

where one group believes it deserves power and has military and organizational capacities which are far superior to any other group, but which has imperfect democratic credentials. Moreover, it is not clear on how one gets these groups — both opposition and government — to moderate their political demands when their respective histories have been entirely directed toward violently overthrowing an incumbent regime.

Like Ethiopia, Somalia was also a heavily militarized state as a consequence of its close relations, until 1977, with the Soviet Union and, subsequently, with the United States. The regime's relative stability also came from its reliance on three powerful clans within one of Somalia's most significant clan families, the Darods. The regime's first challenge emerged from the north, a region inhabited largely by Isaaqs who felt increasingly marginalized by the regime's economic and political preoccupation with the south. There was, however, no agreement between the government and the most active movement in the north, the Somali National Movement (SNM). In fact, until the mid-to-late 1980s the government was reasonably successful in forcefully suppressing most challenges to the regime so that, compared with our other case studies, Ethiopia and Angola, violent conflict was limited. The situation in Somalia was, then, one of *state suppression*.

Increasing disarray in the government and the military following Siad Barre's 1986 car crash, however, emboldened northern rebels to step up the level of guerrilla activity. While the regime continued to hold the upper hand, the situation increasingly resembled one of *continued war* resulting from *no agreement* between *viable disputants*. A 1988 peace agreement with Ethiopia was expected to allow the regime to regroup against the SNM; the result was, in fact, to force the hand of the northern rebels into making even more violent

attacks on government installations. The regime did not collapse, however, until it had sufficiently alienated two of the three main clans which comprised the government's ruling M.O.D. coalition.

In January 1991 the Siad Barre government was overthrown by several factions of the United Somali Congress (USC), a movement based not on northern Isaaqs but on the more proximate Hawiye clan of central Somalia. Almost immediately following Siad Barre's departure from Mogadishu, however, two members of the USC — Mohamed Farah Aidid and Mohamed Ali Mahdi — declared themselves to be president. A series of conferences and meetings followed and were attended by a multitude of Somali factions and clan based movements. The respective wings attempted to forge alignments with powerful allies, but no one faction was powerful enough to impose order nor influential enough to secure a lasting coalition. Contending factions were able to sustain themselves, however, as a result of the increasing involvement of the international community which inadvertently provided the clans with money and food aid which could then be sold to purchase additional weaponry.

The post-Siad Barre conflict in Somalia also came to directly involve the international community when a relief operation was sent to the region in December 1992 to provide humanitarian relief for starving Somalis. After Somali militiamen attacked Pakistani U.N. peacekeepers in June 1993, General Aidid was identified as the individual most responsible for the continuing violence in Somalia and his removal was seen as essential to the achievement of peace. Almost simultaneously, however, Aidid was regarded by members of the international community, including the United States and the United

Nations, as the key to successful nation-building, which had also become an objective of the interventionists in Somalia. Not only did Aidid represent the most formidable military power but he came to command respect from the largest number of Somalis of any of the major clan leaders (though this was no doubt as result of the international community's efforts to capture him). Consequently, while American elite troops were attempting to disarm and even kill Aidid, there was also a desperate effort to try to include him in the political process. Indeed, as the argument suggests in Chapter 1 and as distasteful as it may be, the most desirable peaceful outcomes are most likely when those who control the most formidable political and military power are recognized and included in the political process.

In Angola, following independence, the Soviet and Cuban-backed MPLA government remained the country's most formidable military force. While the FNLA eventually dissolved, support from the United States and South Africa allowed UNITA to carry out low-level guerrilla warfare against the government. UNITA claimed that, having been excluded from power, it sought only to force the government into negotiations which would then give it a voice in Angola's political affairs. The situation could be described at that time as *state suppression with low-level guerrilla warfare*. The complexity and intensity of the war increased when UNITA became subject to the Reagan Doctrine during the 1980s, an event which emboldened South Africa to increase its support for UNITA as well. Both the MPLA and UNITA were becoming more powerful militarily and the conflict situation was increasingly one of *continued civil war* as pitched battles occurred between the two disputants and their backers in the southern regions of the country. While the New York Accords of December 1988 led to the ending of direct South African and Cuban involvement

in the region and appeared to clear the way for a deal between the local disputants, UNITA and the MPLA were unwilling to make a peace agreement until their superpower backers threatened to end all support. Peace came to Angola for the first time when an agreement was reached in 1991 to hold what were essentially *winner-take-all* elections the following year. While both groups ostensibly entered a process of demobilization, at the time of the elections in September 1992 UNITA maintained considerable military forces in reserve. The government somewhat unexpectedly won the elections, but its demobilized forces were comparatively unprepared when UNITA *returned to war* in frustration at its electoral loss and anticipated exclusion from power. Mortgaging its future oil wealth to purchase weapons and hire foreign mercenaries, the Angolan government staved off total defeat and eventually regained fighting form. Once it had the upper hand militarily, the government drew UNITA into a power-sharing agreement in 1994 in Lusaka Zambia. The agreement did not meet all of UNITA's demands and UNITA has maintained some of its forces intact. Consequently, while peace had again returned to Angola by 1995, it remains an *unstable peace*.

Having briefly re-examined the cases we can now offer more generalized conclusions based on the experiences of these countries. One conclusion is that the weaponry and support provided by the external powers was central to each regime's ability to sustain itself against domestic challengers. This was not simply because the superpowers always kept their clients bristling with military power (which they clearly did not do, as Washington's relationship with Somalia during the 1980s demonstrates), but because during the Cold War the superpowers preferred to rescue an imperilled regime rather than risk losing a client. Even as late as 1988 Washington could not refuse Siad Barre's desperate plea for military

aid, albeit a small amount, despite the likelihood that it would be used against civilians. Similarly, both South Africa and Cuba sought to rescue their respective clients in 1987 when opposing troops threatened to overrun them. Alternatively, in each of these cases, with the reduction of military aid there was a leveling in the balance of power between the regimes and insurgents. With little prospect that poor African regimes such as those in Ethiopia and Somalia would ever exercise the same kind of military might as they did as client states and with no chance of rescue from their external patrons, there were few options but to extend political power, or at least the opportunity for power, to opposition groups — particularly given the increasing sophistication and organization of the opposition groups. Only the MPLA, however, exercised this option.

With the end of the Cold War it is preferable to make normative judgements about issues of governing agreements rather than of balance of power. Stability might be achievable as a result of one group's military predominance, but it is equally obvious that there is a greater chance for *harmony* between groups if each group's political and economic security can be assured. Moreover, it is essential to recognize the links between the distribution of military power and governing agreements since it is the combination of factors which determine conflict outcomes. Attempts to deal exclusively with power balances ended in failure in two of our cases: in Somalia, efforts at disarmament only invited attack from threatened fighters; in Angola, a failure to disarm allowed insurgents to return to war after elections threatened to exclude them from power. On the other hand, the fact that leaders do have choices means that power-sharing agreements *can* be worked out among willing parties *in spite* of domestic power balances. Indeed, the argument holds that power-

sharing is a means of bringing about a peaceful outcome regardless of the local power balances. Getting to an integrated solution where parties are politically satisfied means that the military power balances then become increasingly irrelevant to their sense of security. Accordingly, the focus of disputants and mediators in the post-Cold War era should be not just on readjusting local balances of power through disarmament but on negotiating a political agreement.[1] Efforts need to be directed toward eliminating the conditions which led groups to take up arms in the first place. In this way the two conditions of governing agreement and military strength are linked and can occur in lockstep. By having a generous agreement of accommodation a group can feel secure enough to end its belief in the need to remain an armed movement. Thus, for instance, if UNITA can be convinced that its security and place in government is assured over the long term will there be a more realistic chance of it foregoing its weaponry. Ending UNITA's belief in the need to continually arm itself, in turn, will reassure the government of UNITA's peaceful designs. Similarly, in Ethiopia, only by giving the OLF a genuine role in government will they have a reason to give up their *armed* struggle. The key is to get to an agreement which then allows groups to feel comfortable enough that they will disarm themselves.

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[1] This is not to say that efforts to disarm groups or limit arms transfers are misguided but they can be extremely difficult to implement and the results are often unpredictable. The decision to disarm clan factions in Somalia appeared to have been the wrong one because it threatened militias who then lashed out at interventionists — who were in a much weaker position politically to take casualties. On the other hand, in Angola a failure to ensure that parties complied with their pledges to disarm appears to have been a mistake because it left one of the key political actors in a position to contest power when it lost elections. Disarmament must be seen as a delicate process requiring considerable patience. It must be perceived as being carried out equally and with transparency. Punishment, if used at all, must be seen as a last resort. Instead, armed groups must be encouraged to volunteer their weapons under conditions which enhance their security (rather than jeopardize it), should be linked with incentives and rewarded when progress is made, and efforts must be directed towards providing alternative means for demobilized soldiers to gain a livelihood. If possible elections timetables should retain some flexibility and be contingent on disarmament being completed.

There are moments when political leaders will be amenable to negotiating an end to violent conflict. The cases examined here indicate that there is an element of timing required in reaching an agreement particularly given the shifting power relations among actors. A strong actor who is getting weaker or who risks defeat, for instance, may want to reach an early agreement before its power is drained away. In the Angolan case in 1994, UNITA was eager to cement an agreement before it was emasculated on the battlefield. As it became clear that it would not prevail militarily, it sought to cash in its existing military strength through negotiations. Had it waited longer before forging an agreement, it might not have had the military strength to negotiate at all much less an agreement which gave it a share of power. In Ethiopia, the Derg did on occasion indicate a willingness to negotiate. But Mengistu's inability to foresee that its military strength would continue to weaken precluded it from making the concessions that might have induced the rebels into a deal while it still had the chance. Alternatively, a weak actor which sees itself as only getting stronger may avoid an agreement which is incommensurate with what its military power will become. As Eritrean and Tigrayan liberation fronts continued to win-over government troops and to capture military hardware, it refused to make a deal with the hated Derg. Once the war changed from a stalemate to a situation where the government was actually losing, the rebels saw little need to compromise. In Angola, UNITA refused to even send its delegation to talks in Addis Ababa in 1993 because it wanted to capture the city of Huambo and then bargain from a position of greater strength. In Somalia, General Aidid saw his power as only increasing as American and UN troops continued their search for the warlord. His objective in some respects must have been to prolong the hunt for as long as possible. While he

undoubtedly needed to reach an agreement in the long-term, he must also have recognized that his power would dissipate. Making an early deal which did not recognize his authority would only undercut the support the hunt was generating towards him from ordinary Somalis. Appreciating trends in the shifting balance of power and the moment disputants are most likely to be amenable to a deal are,then, important tools in facilitating an agreement.

Another conclusion is that *winner-take-all* elections should be used with caution. Competitive winner-take-all elections will undoubtedly be a standard feature of democracy in Africa and other regions. The fact of democratic elections, however, certainly does not guarantee peace and stability in the future. Indeed, the Angolan case highlights most clearly how the prospect of a winner-take-all election can create the illusion of a peaceful settlement while doing nothing to resolve the central issues at stake. The disputants in the Angolan conflict had accepted a winner-take-all format because it offered the possibility of achieving everything they had striven for during the civil war. In particular, it promised to confer legitimacy on the winner which had until then been elusive. But it came with the risk that the losing party would not accept the results and might return to war. Indeed, the central feature which had driven them to war in the first place was never resolved because the objective of both parties — total political power — could only be achieved by one of them. One should recall that the participants in these conflict situations are armed movements who have already resorted to war, and not political parties in the conventional sense. Once excluded from power by what they may perceive to be a fraudulent election process, armed movements see little reason not to once again make a military challenge.

Consequently, another conclusion is that power-sharing represents an important

means by which conflict can be mitigated or even avoided. In the high stakes of African politics, an agreement is of little use if, in the end, it produces losers as well as winners. The sincerity of a pledge to stop fighting must always be in doubt if losing an election means that a disputant is worse off than had it continued the war. Power-sharing, on the other hand, creates conditions where all the parties are at least partial winners; it reduces the perception that an election is a zero-sum game where losing at the ballot box necessarily entails losing (perhaps permanently) everything and endangering the survival of an ethnic group. Indeed, in each of our cases, efforts towards power-sharing or inclusion went some way toward the overall reduction of conflict. Ethiopia, for example, was at its most peaceful in the interim immediately following the overthrow of the Derg when the two most significant parties, the OLF and the EPRDF, were bound together in a common agreement. The EPRDF was also able to gain the support of a number of other smaller groups by including them in the political process and frequently under the EPRDF banner. Similarly, in Angola, despite a war which had raged since independence in 1975 and the failure of a winner-take-all agreement in 1991, a semblance of peace was achieved when the two parties signed the 1994 Lusaka Protocol which offered UNITA a number of political offices in a government of national unity and reconciliation. In Somalia, on the other hand, despite the overthrow of its own brutal regime, peace was not achieved among the many claimants for power because none of them were willing to settle on a substantive political agreement let alone one which involved the sharing of power. The most significant clan leaders were willing to make agreements with other lesser local warlords — and to this extent peace could be brought about between those groups — but these agreements were for the purposes of aggregating

military power rather than an overall peaceful settlement. Somalia's warlords were unable to make agreements which reached across to the most politically and militarily significant clan leaders.

Indeed, a cynical, if more practical, approach to power-sharing can be derived from our examination of regime stability during the Cold War years. While Cold War Somalia was far from a democracy, Siad Barre's inclusion of key groups in the regime no doubt helped to ensure the regime's stability for over twenty-one years. He made the minimum number of alliances and concessions which allowed him the greatest amount of power and the greatest freedom of action. Alternatively, efforts by Somali warlords in the post-Siad Barre era were often directed towards many smaller players. Such coalitions brought the major warlords neither sufficient power to ensure stable rule nor the freedom for them to act effectively. Power-sharing for power-sharing sake does not bring stability. Political and military leaders have to be induced to make the deal that counts and this usually means making one agreement with a few significant adversaries rather than multiple alliances with many weak friends. The fewer the number of groups required to achieve this favourable balance, the fewer the number of compromises that need to be made and, in theory, the longer the coalition should last.

The problem is, however, that cases where power is genuinely shared by the most significant groups are few and far between and even then they are sometimes difficult to identify. In no case did we see power-sharing in any sort of ideal sense whereby the most prominent political parties and leaders shared the most important political posts equally (though Ethiopia in 1991 arguably comes closest). In most cases what was achieved was a

diluted version of power-sharing brought about by distributing lesser posts or seats to other ethnic groups (but not the parties themselves) or by creating new parties that were almost guaranteed to cooperate or follow the government's own political agenda. Indeed, despite the conclusion that power-sharing can reduce violent conflict, power-sharing agreements remain extremely difficult to arrive at, even more difficult to implement, and rarely do they stand the test of time. Not only is power-sharing frequently seen as a "second class" form of democracy but the compromises it requires in terms of a leadership's prestige and its ability to exercise power are often sufficient that local leaders find it to be an undesirable form of governance. This is particularly true — as was the case in both Ethiopia and Somalia — if a leadership believes it has made the greatest sacrifices during a liberation struggle and is reluctant to cede power to another group which it perceives as having done too little to liberate the country. In Angola, government leaders were also reluctant to cede power to its main adversary whom they accused of having negotiated in bad faith and of having gone back to war once it lost a free and fair election. Because power-sharing necessarily seeks to be inclusive, it also suffers from the problem of having to decide which individuals, parties and movements should be incorporated into the process and which ones should be excluded. Both the Ethiopian and Somali cases show that the freedom to organize which came with the fall of their respective dictatorships led to a proliferation of parties and movements who were eager to participate but only some of which represented genuine constituencies. Including all of them, while desirable in theory, often proved to be unwieldy in practice. To exclude any one of them, on the other hand, risked charges of being undemocratic.

Worse still, there does not appear to be a optimal moment when agreements which specifically involve power-sharing are more likely to be brought about. Respective parties will see little need to consider power-sharing agreements in the early stages of a dispute when violence seems a remote possibility; once violent conflict has broken out the respective adversaries are frequently too embittered to do the kind of *sharing* that power-sharing requires. In Angola, UNITA and the MPLA government paid, at best, lip service to any ideas of power-sharing prior to the 1992 elections because they were certain that they would win winner-take-all elections and, therefore, they preferred not to restrict their opportunity for complete control. Only once they had been defeated at the ballot box and on the battlefield did UNITA officials speak about the merits of power-sharing. While there has been progress towards power-sharing since then, the suspicion and hostility between the parties caused by the return to war in 1992-1993 remains high and continues to hinder the progress that is required for lasting peace. While it may be too soon to make conclusive statements about the longevity of Angola's most recent effort at power-sharing,[2] the Ethiopian case showed that such an agreement was not long for this world. The OLF maintained that it was continually harassed by EPRDF officials and was the victim of an unfair election campaign and eventually pulled out of the political process. This is a particularly worrisome finding given that, unlike Angola, both the OLF and the EPRDF had fought a *common* enemy rather than each other. In other regions of the world the prospects for long-term power-sharing are also not encouraging. In South Africa, after sharing power

[2] Despite the fact that the Lusaka agreement was signed in 1994, it was not until late 1997 that UNITA sent representatives to Luanda to assume their ministerial posts. As late as June 1998, Jonas Savimbi has refused to come to Luanda to assume his official role in the government.

with the ANC, the National Party announced in May 1995 that it would remove itself from the existing coalition government and become an opposition party because of on-going tension between President Nelson Mandela and Deputy President F.W. de Klerk (though to South Africa's credit, the National Party was able to withdraw without the collapse of the entire political system).[3] Similarly, in Cambodia, Second Prime Minister Hun Sen ended his power-sharing arrangement with his coalition partner Prince Norodom Ranariddh in 1977 once he believed it had regained a more favourable distribution of power.[4]

Despite being frequently advocated, intuitively agreeable and its possibilities for ending violent conflict, then, power-sharing will not always be readily accepted by political and military leaders. The central weakness of power-sharing is not that it fails as an idea but that it fails when it is put into practice. The compromises and give-and-take which are required in any sort of power-sharing agreement frequently cannot withstand the clashes of ego and the kind of maximalist demands that ethnic groups and leaders insist on. But this research does highlight ways in which intransigent leaders might be induced to consider power-sharing, means by which the obstacles to implementation of agreements might be overcome, and ways in which agreements might be made more lasting.

First, political leaders might be more willing to consider power-sharing if it is seen as a transitional agreement or an intermediate step toward more competitive elections. Having limitations on the length of time parties are required to share power means that

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[3] See Suzanne Daley, "De Klerk's Party Quits Government," *New York Times*, May 10, 1996, p. 1.

[4] See Seth Mydans, "Hun Sen Says He's Enjoying Being Cambodia's Sole Ruler," *New York Times*, July 11, 1997, p. A1.

political leaders are less likely to see the arrangement as permanently compromising their right to power. On the other hand, such transitional agreements still allow voters to familiarize themselves with democratic procedures, for tensions between groups to subside and, ideally, for the integration of former disputants into common institutions before a non-power-sharing system is adopted. Even if victory is assured, as it was for the African National Congress in South Africa, time-limited power-sharing can go some way toward getting more extreme elements on board. In Angola, interviews with members of UNITA who are now also part of the government of national unity and reconciliation (GURN), suggest that such individuals are able to work effectively with their counterparts in the MPLA and to speak of their common interests and goals while still retaining their party, regional and ethnic identities. Having a stake in the continued existence of the current government, if only for the short term, also means that these political leaders develop a greater appreciation for the need to sustain peaceful democratic government in future.[5]

Second, power-sharing agreements are more likely to be attractive and to be implemented if they can be linked to rewards and punishments which correspond with agreement compliance. The provision of incentives directed towards keeping actors in the political process and costly repercussions for those who return to war are important contributions that external actors can make. Evidently local actors do observe their commitments when they believe that external actors will also follow through on delivering rewards or imposing punishment. Both the MPLA and UNITA, for instance, became more

[5] The liability of short-term power-sharing, however, is that it may further complicate efforts to disarm the disputants. Movements may prefer to keep themselves armed for the interim in the hope that they will be in a better position to achieve power later on.

serious about reaching an agreement (though one which, in the first instance, did not involve power-sharing) once their former patrons finally linked future assistance to their reaching a political agreement. Alternatively, a belief by UNITA that the West could or would do little if it failed to comply with its earlier pledges to take its seats in the GURN led to intransigence. On a smaller scale, Somali clan leaders became more serious about reaching agreements only when the United Nations threatened not to pay their rather substantial hotel bills unless a settlement was achieved. In Ethiopia, the EPRDF might not have implemented its, albeit imperfect, series of elections had the achievement of democracy not been so explicitly linked with foreign aid and support at the time of the Derg's overthrow in 1991. Outside actors tended to have more leverage during the Cold War when threats to cut off military aid and other kinds of support were especially threatening. But even now in the post-Cold War era, when there is only one superpower, local actors must be careful not to alienate potential external allies who may be essential in providing later assistance.

The role of external actors in negotiations and the subsequent implementation of power-sharing agreements, however, must be carefully circumscribed. While external powers are frequently the only entities that can provide sufficiently generous incentives and impose meaningful punishments, the appearance of external actors forcing an agreement on local actors through the threat of punishment can often times create resentment among the local parties. Despite the international community's apparent willingness to provide assistance to Somalia in 1992-93, Somali leaders — most notably Mohamed Farah Aidid — resented foreign meddling in Somali affairs. External intervention should not come at the expense of bargaining and concessions by the local actors themselves since compliance with

an agreement's terms will likely only come if they have the unqualified blessing of those who have to live with them in future. External actors can facilitate agreements but only the domestic actors can judge if the resulting agreements are fair and meet their needs. External actors, then, should focus their attention first on this process of *facilitation* — bringing together key groups and leaders (often a not inconsiderable task given the lack of transportation and infrastructure in many post-conflict societies), providing venues and ensuring that communication can take place between the parties. Subsequently, external actors should focus on incentives for compliance rather than on punishment for noncompliance, and publicize agreements signed by the local leaders to ensure that it is the local citizenry rather than the external actors who are holding political leaders to deals that have been signed. Direct involvement by the local actors in the negotiation process is also the first step in acclimatizing local participants to the rigours of give-and-take that will be part of the agreement's subsequent implementation.

Even if a power-sharing agreement is for a transitional period, actors need to be *assured* of the agreement's longevity. In the Somali case there was little to bind the various clan militias to an agreement and the numerous pacts which were made just as quickly fell apart. In Angola, the consequences of reneging on a political agreement were and, given their continued military viability, could again be catastrophic. The key, in this respect, is to make it in the interest of the former disputants to be part of a functioning government rather than a guerrilla in the bush. Longevity can be increased in several ways. First, mechanisms can be built into agreements which ensure that disputants have a stake in the agreement's continued existence. The 1998 negotiations on Northern Ireland may be instructive in this

respect. Here negotiators included a "mutual assured destruction" clause in the agreement whereby each participant's preferred institution of representation would collapse if the parties failed to follow through on their earlier pledges.[6] Long term stability also requires more than just interim power-sharing. It requires measures which both prevent the collapse of the entire system in the event that one of the players becomes dissatisfied and yet which allow peaceful change when the political circumstances themselves change.[7] Decentralization is a key component of this strategy because it lessens the stakes (and thus the motivation) for violent struggle and because it compartmentalizes potential struggles away from the capital city. Other measures include the separation of executive, legislative and executive powers; guarantees of political, social and economic equity; and a system of checks and balances. Together these measures should seek to accommodate changing needs but also to reduce the possibility that dissatisfied participants can upset the system.

The type of power-sharing agreement is, of course, also significant in ensuring long-term compliance. As our discussion in Chapter 1 illustrates, there are different approaches to power-sharing which allow local actors a voice in their own countries affairs and yet which do not have to be seen as "second-class" forms of democracy. Power-sharing which consists of the formation of pre-election coalitions, as outlined by Sisk and Horowitz for

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[6] During negotiations, *Sinn Fein* leader Gerry Adams was convinced that the so-called North-South consultative bodies would be sabotaged by the Northern Ireland Assembly, where Protestant Ulster Unionists were the majority. Unionist leader David Trimble in turn believed that *Sinn Fein* wanted to delay the implementation of the Assembly. The "mutual assured destruction" paragraph stated that neither body would function without the other. See Steven Erlanger, "In Ireland, Courage and Good Timing," *New York Times*, April 19, 1998, sec. 4, p. 18.

[7] The example set by the National Party in post-apartheid South Africa is instructive in this respect. The National Party withdrew from the power-sharing agreement with the African National Congress without the system collapsing.

example, might be preferable to that offered by Lijphart insofar as it maintains the competitiveness which many see as the *sine qua non* of contemporary democracy. The Lijphart variety of power-sharing which revolves around the idea of a grand coalition, on the other hand, seems more in line with the consensus building which many Africans see at the heart of traditional forms of governance. Radical decentralization and regional autonomy short of outright independence may also be a desirable option and, as the contemporary situation in Somalia demonstrates, may come closer to reflecting the actual situation on the ground than any sort of forced power-sharing arrangement.[8] Not only does regional autonomy usually present a solution that groups can live with, but it is frequently one which they already advocate in their political platforms. Moreover, genuine decentralization and regional autonomy means that there is less opportunity for resentment towards what is often thought to be an unaccountable foreign (insofar as it is comprised of other ethnic groups) government in a distant capital city. Notably, such solution a solution is also compatible with powers-sharing insofar as it does not preclude a government with limited powers and made up of regional and ethnic representatives at the federal level. The key for all of these possibilities is, of course, to find suitable forms of power-sharing and degrees of decentralization which respect, or is compatible with, existing or traditional forms of government and which is agreeable to all parties. Equally important, is to maintain flexibility in the agreements which allows reasonable change when conditions (such as

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[8] Radical decentralization may be messy but it is less messy than total break-up of states. There have been few instances where respective groups have been able to agree on, for instance, border divisions and what breakups that have taken place have frequently been violent affairs. Even in situations such as Ethiopia where Eritrea's independence was (in the end) a relatively peaceful affair, the respective parties have not been able to agree on border divisions and violence has been the result. See, for example, James C. McKinley, "Ethiopians and Eritreans Resume Battle Along Border," *New York Times*, June 4, 1998, p. A6.

changes in proportions) warrant.

The problem is that these measures cannot easily be implemented in the quick passing windows of opportunity that occur when long-standing dictators fall. While new regimes often claim to embrace democratic values, more often than not, in the longer term they are more concerned with consolidating their authority than in taking the additional steps to ensure a commitment to these values is sustained beyond their own rule. Yet these moments are often the only opportunities for new political arrangements to be established. Additionally, given the earlier recommendation to consider power-sharing as a transitional arrangement, this has to be weighed against the need to break the mold of personal rule and to encourage greater institutionalization — a process that can take generations to develop.

There is also a need to recognize that the structure and composition of government alone cannot be expected to overcome all of the animosities within a country. Good governance must be supplemented by other measures which, in a sense, diminish the importance of governance or at least the necessity of controlling government. Efforts have to be directed towards facilitating the improvement of life *outside* of the government so that government is not the only game in town and its control a matter of life and death. Personal and group security has to be assured even if one is not included in the hierarchy of patron-client relationships which underlie government power. Opportunities must also be provided for former soldiers to develop a livelihood in civilian life. This can only be achieved, in turn, through programs and initiatives for economic development which targets all of a nation's citizens. Not only does a generalized effort toward economic development increase standards of living for all citizens but it also means that the control of government is not the

sole objective of all groups and individuals. Larry Diamond has argued that peaceful democratic systems require moderation and restraint; citizens must care enough about politics that they will want to participate but not so much that they cannot contemplate defeat.[9] By encouraging generalized development which does not focus only on government, individuals are able to ensure personal safety and security even if they do not win elections.

Peace and conflict are not simply a matter of power balances and governing agreements. Indeed, there are many factors which can contribute to outcomes of peace and conflict and one must guard against oversimplifying complex issues. Power balances and governing agreement are, however, key factors which help condition such outcomes. Indeed, the considerations of governing agreement takes conflict analysis one step further than some earlier considerations of *international* conflict which relied solely on balance of power. Somewhat contradictorily, the argument suggests that militarily centralization (to the extent that a military force is required at all) and political decentralization are the key to peace. Many of the conclusions, just discussed, which flow from this are obvious: ensure that political agreements are inclusive and parties are politically empowered so that they feel less need to seek military means to their security; consider power-sharing at least for the short term; encourage external actors to facilitate and support fragile peace processes; create mechanisms and encourage development which lead actors to adherence to agreements and to see peace and prosperity as preferable to ongoing violent conflict. Africa's political leaders need only the courage to embrace and implement such an approach.

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[9] Larry Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism & the Struggle for Democracy," in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz & Seymour Martin Lipset eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries: Vol 2, Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), p. 69.

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