



Chapter Seven

Deegaan, Politics and War in Somalia

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Introduction

There are two important reasons to assess the ecological sources of conflict in Somalia. First, out of the 40 years that Somalia has been independent, the country has experienced over ten years of civil war beginning in 1991. During this time there were numerous peace and reconciliation efforts, none of which have taken root. Changes in government, furthermore, have not helped to further peace building and national reconciliation.

Second, local and international peace efforts have not considered the environmental and ecological factors of the Somali conflict. Given the importance of land and resources to the livelihood of most Somali, as well as the relative power of different ruling groups, it is essential that the role of ecology in the onset and duration of conflict be evaluated. Doing so may uncover relevant tools and techniques to manage the Somali conflict and prevent further turmoil.

This chapter shows that *deegaan*, or a land base and its resources, is significant to understand the conflict in Somalia. The Somali conflict involves many clans and sub-clans. Shifting alliances were formed between different clans and sub-clans to gain leverage in the conflict and to stake stronger claims to particular *deegaan*. In particular, the ecological conditions of the Jubbaland region in southern Somalia are rich compared with the rest of the country, and provide a major source of income and sustenance to Somalis. Thus, control of these resources is a major source of the conflict in Jubbaland, as this study shows.

Background to the Conflict

Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Its population, estimated to be between 9 and 12 million people, shares a common language (Somali), religion (Sunni Muslim), and the same ethnic origin (the Somali tribe). The majority (estimated at 65%) of the population adheres to a primarily pastoral nomadic tradition.¹ The country is currently embroiled in civil war, which broke out in early 1991 after the

former Somali president Mohammed Siad Barre was ousted by armed Somali rebel groups.

The sources of the overall conflict are structural and predate the current civil war. A central factor of instability is the cumulative impact of armed conflicts in Somalia. War existed in the Horn of Africa throughout the last century. Between 1900–1920, Italy and Britain fought against Sayyid Mohammed Abdulle Hassan, the Dervish or Mad Mullah. In the 1920s to 1930s Somalis fought Italian fascist rule. During the Second World War, Italy and Britain themselves fought over Somalia. During the 1960s and 1970s Somalia fought border disputes with Kenya over the northern frontier district in 1963, and with Ethiopia over Ogaden in 1977–78. Other factors include political and administrative inefficiencies, corruption, and nepotism practised by both the former Somali governments and the earlier colonialists. Cold War competition between the United States and former Soviet Union also contributed greatly to the conflict.

A number of peace and reconciliation efforts have been carried out by the international community, including interventions led by the United Nations (UN), the European Commission (EC), and the Djibouti government. Yet none has taken root. By the eleventh year of the Somali civil war (2001) the conflict had escalated into a regional conflict with different warring groups receiving support from different countries including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Kenya and Djibouti, each with its own interests and concerns. External engagement in the Somalia conflict by regional governments will be explored later in this chapter.

Historical Context

Historical claims to land and resources by different Somali clans play an important and sometimes powerful role in current political debates in Somalia. While interpretation of Somali history is itself a contentious political issue, it is important to trace some of the key historical themes and events that shape contemporary Somalia.

Somalia has a long history of migration, conquest and assimilation, a pattern that was accelerated by the 1991–92 civil war.² Before Somali pastoralists migrated into the eastern Horn and the inter-riverine regions of southern Somalia from southern Ethiopia in the 10th century, the Somali interior was inhabited by Oromos, an agro-pastoral group in neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia, as well as by other pastoral tribes and other hunter-gatherer groups. Predominately fishing peoples such as Brawanese and Swahili settled the southern coasts, including trading centres such as Kismayu. Agro-pastoralists settled in the inter-riverine regions. Most areas beyond the coast and inter-riverine areas were inhabited by interacting groups of nomadic pastoralists. The harsh environmental conditions prevailing throughout southern Somalia

meant that pastoralists had to migrate in search of sufficient resources to support grazing livestock. Nomadic pastoralism remains the prevailing mode of production for most Somalis today.³

In the 19th century, clans from Somalia's central and northern regions crossed the Jubba River and migrated throughout south-western Somalia all the way to the Tana River in Kenya. At the same time, Somali pastoralists along the Benadir coast imported slaves from East Africa to provide labour for a rising slave-based grain export economy along the Lower Shabelle River.⁴ The Bantu people known as *Jareer* in Somalia are the descendents of these imported slaves. Migration served to scatter clans across large areas of the physical environment. For example, the Ogaden clan is found throughout the present-day Ogaden region of Ethiopia, southern Somalia, and north-eastern province in Kenya. Migration also enabled Somalis to establish a dominant presence throughout the region, which has been reinforced over time by the strong lineage identity of most Somalis.

Pre-colonial Somalia was by and large a stateless society. Although some parts of Somalia did at different points in history sustain Sultanates or quasi-state polities,⁵ in most areas of Somalia, customary law or *Xeer* was used to manage relations within and among Somali communities. *Xeer* approximates a body of social conventions and contracts, and vests decentralised political authority in community elders and clan leaders. *Xeer* is an institution to mediate social and political arrangements in present-day Somalia, where anarchy and state collapse continue. It is one of the few systems of conflict prevention and management that survives to the present day. One other is *diya*, or the customary blood compensation system that derives from Islamic *Sharia* law and customary *xeer*. Compensation under *diya* was negotiated between the aggrieved clan and members of the group that committed the crime. Generally, *xeer* and the *diya* helped to prevent not only communal conflicts and crime, but also served to contain lawlessness in pre-colonial Somalia.

Colonialism in this eastern part of the Horn had significant political and administrative repercussions for Somalia. The scramble for Africa in the late 19th century split Somalia and the Somali peoples into five different polities: southern Somalia, administered by Italy; northern Somalia or Somaliland Protectorate administered by Britain; the Northern Frontier District of Kenya also administered by Britain; Ogaden administered by Ethiopia, and Djibouti (France). They were later parcelled into four different countries including Djibouti, Ethiopia (Ogaden), Kenya (Northern Frontier District) and Somalia (north-west and south).⁶ This was done as part of an agreement reached between colonial powers during the First World War. Several attempts were made following the Second World War to consider uniting the Somali inhabited portions of the different countries into a united Somalia, but to no avail.⁷

Colonialists introduced the state system to Somali peoples. The system of statehood fuelled Somali nationalism and fostered Somalia's integration

into both the regional and global economy, especially through the expansion of export-oriented plantation agriculture.⁸ The state system favoured by the European colonialists and their Ethiopian counterpart enabled them to tax, conscript a labour force and to exploit the resources lying in areas inhabited by Somali clans. Many scholars argue that since Somalis were predominately a pastoral society they were less able to adapt to a central state system.⁹

Colonialism also introduced agrarian and urban lifestyles to the Somali people that were substantially different from their traditional nomadic pastoral background. Although historically agricultural commodities from Ethiopia and Somalia were exported from Somali ports,¹⁰ Somalia was integrated into the regional and global economy through the development of an irrigated plantation economy based initially on cotton and later on bananas in the Lower Shabelle and Lower Jubba areas.

The other significant change that colonialism brought to Somalia was the rapid growth of urban centres such as Mogadishu in the south and Hargeisa in the north. Mogadishu, Hargeisa, Kismayu and Baidoa served as centres of political life for politicians and business people who had an interest in politics to safeguard their businesses and wealth. These towns provided opportunities to generate and accumulate wealth. They also altered the mandate of leadership from regulating kin relationships, and entitlements to resources such as water, pasture and the like to regulating access to the political, economic and social benefits of the state.¹¹

Somalia has experienced three distinct political periods during its four decades of independence. The first was the period of multiparty democracy and civilian rule from 1960–1969. On 1 July 1960, Somalia was granted independence and merged with the former British Protectorate by agreement with the UN Trusteeship Council. The first Somali president, Aden Abdulle Osman, ‘Aden Adde’, was elected during this period. His former prime minister, Abdirashid Ali Sharma’arke, defeated him in 1967. Two years later President Abdirashid was assassinated by one of his bodyguards. This period was one that some Somalis recall as a golden period, while others characterise it as a time of corrosive and paralysing clannism.

The second period was a time of militarisation and scientific socialism. From 1969–1990 Somalia was led by President Mohammed Siad Barre who attained power through a bloodless coup on 21 October 1969. This period of military rule can also be divided into several distinct periods. The first was the initial period of military rule and scientific socialism in the early 1970s, remembered by many Somalis as a time of real social and developmental progress and as evidence that clannism could be overcome by mobilising nationalist sentiments. The scientific socialism ideology was based on a combination of ideas borrowed from the Islamic *Sharia* law, the Somali customary law and communism. This was followed by a period of militarisation

and irredentism, joined with the scientific socialism that was more Siyadism than socialism.¹² Lewis argues that Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung and the peripatetic Kim Il Sung (to say nothing of Mussolini) all had some influence on the homespun philosophy of development and power constructed in this final phase of the Siad regime.

Barre's militarist expansion of the late 1970s and early 1980s helped to foster a more nationalist political environment and helped to revive the irredentist feelings of some Somali leaders. Barre's Somalia first supported Ogaden freedom fighters with both men and military equipment and then invaded Ogaden itself. The support of Somali rebel fighters in neighbouring countries was the policy of the former Somali governments. To them the creation of a greater Somali union was viewed not as an act of colonialism, expansionism or annexation, but rather as a positive contribution to peace and unity in the region. However, the use of force by Barre served to engender enmity between Somalia and its neighbours. As a result of this, Ethiopia and Somalia went to war over Ogaden, and Kenya and Ethiopia entered into a mutual defence pact to prevent Somalia from becoming a regional power and thus destabilising the subregion.

Then, both Barre of Somalia and Mengistu of Ethiopia began arming dissident factions of the other's country until each fell from power as a result of externally supported armed groups. Barre fell from power in January 1991, with Mengistu following in May. The third period of Somalia's post-colonial history is the collapse of the state and civil war.

The fall of Barre dampened prospects for peace and security and did not bring about an anticipated coalition government formed by dissident factions. These factions instead turned the whole country into fiefdoms run by marauding militias answerable to their respective warlords only. Many people hold Barre and his supporters responsible for instigating Darod-Hawiye animosity in an attempt to divide the opposition not only during his final years in power but also during his attempt to regain power. Others hold the faction leaders, mainly Ali Mahdi and General Aideed, responsible owing to their massive manhunt against the Darod clan members in Mogadishu and other places they controlled.

Despite the fact that the anarchy following the collapse of the Barre regime affected the entire country, the minority groups, mainly the Bantus, Brawas and the Rer Hamar from the coastal areas, were the hardest hit. The war, coupled with the 1992 famine, greatly affected infrastructure in the pasture and the agricultural heartland, mainly the Bay and Bakol regions in southern Somalia. Like most other famines, the Somali famine of 1991–2 was highly selective, primarily striking two groups: the inhabitants of the riverine areas and those displaced by the fighting.¹³ Coupled with hunger caused by looting by the factional militias, the famine of 1992 hit many parts of Somalia hard.

Key Actors

All of the main Somali clans are involved in the Somali conflict. The Hawiye, Darod, Isaq, Dir, Rahanweyn and others including almost all the minority groups are involved. Each clan has its own faction or is part of a coalition of factions. Some groups have dominated the others, forcing the oppressed to look for and use any other means it can to survive in lawless Somalia, thus making each and every clan an actor in the conflict.

The Jubbaland conflict involves almost all the Somali clans, since each and every Somali clan claims at least a partial ownership of Kismayu or the Lower Jubba region. Kismayu is the capital city of the Lower Jubba region, which itself consists of five main districts: Kismayu, Jamama, Afmadou, Badhadhe and Hagar. Historically the Ogaden and Marehan clans took over Kismayu from the Galla tribe (a mixture of Borana/Oromo and Wardey). The traditional Ogaden elders claim they captured Kismayu from the Galla tribe with the help of their Marehan counterparts, while the traditional Marehan elders claim they were the first who crossed the Jubba River and who captured the region from the Galla. The Majerten clan elders argue that the Harti clan lived in the region for more than a century making the Lower Jubba region and Kismayu in particular a place to which each and every Somali clan claims at least a partial ownership.

Other clans in the area are the Harti sub-clan of the Dulbahante, the Bartire of Absame, and a group of other minority sub-clans mainly from the Hawiye clan: Doqondide, Shekhal, and Galjecel. In Kismayu there are many other Hawiye clans such as the Habar Gidir and Hawadle, and non-Somalis like Bajunis, Brawas, Arabs and Swahilis who all claim that the town has been captured from them.

Although the current conflict is political rather than environmental, control of *deegaan* is central to the onset and continuation of conflict in Jubbaland and Somalia more widely. The current political conflict is between the Jubbaland Alliance, led by the Marehan Somali National Front (SNF), and General Mohammed Said Hersi Morgan's Harti Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), presently exiled in Baidoa. The SNF-led coalition and the SPM forces are allied with the Transitional National Government (TNG) and the Ethiopian-backed Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) respectively. The Ogaden clan, which both the Marehan and the Harti clans recognise for their prominent role in the Kismayu and Jubbaland politics and *deegaan*, is also divided between the different factions. Some of their prominent leaders are working with General Morgan while others are allied with the Jubbaland Alliance. Politics aside, the issue of the *deegaan* and the control of Kismayu and the surrounding region is at the core of the conflict.

A number of external actors are also engaged in the Somali conflict of which Ethiopia's involvement is crucial. The government of Ethiopia has facilitated

several peace and reconciliation efforts held in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). It has also intervened militarily in Somalia by capturing three main districts in the Gedo region. Ethiopia's interest is to promote a decentralised state system in Somalia that will have less influence and power in the Horn of Africa region, reflected in the good relations between Ethiopia and Somaliland and to find alternative access to the sea following the secession and war with Eritrea.¹⁴ Egypt's interest is a centralised state system that can be controlled and that is capable of increasing tensions on Somalia's border with Ethiopia.¹⁵ Doing so would occupy the government of Ethiopia and divert its attention and resources from the development of Nile waters. Egypt has realigned with the government of Sudan in competition over access to and control over Nile waters. Both countries have the support of their respective regional organisations. In addition, the Arab League supports Egypt while the Ethiopian government has the support of IGAD.

The Ethiopian-Eritrean war complicated the competition between Egypt and Ethiopia over Somalia. Proxy wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea were fought inside Somalia. Eritrea was accused of supporting factions in Somalia fighting against Ethiopian-backed groups in Somalia. Libya and Sudan support the Mogadishu-based factions, Aideed in particular, purely for their anti-United States policy while Yemen hosts a large number of Somali refugees and maintains strong commercial ties with Somalia.

Kenya's interest lies in the *qat* trade and its need to contain lawlessness on its border with Somalia. The Somali refugee burden is another issue motivating Kenya's concern for political developments in Somalia. It is quite clear that key Somali players, the new breed in Somali politics, are manipulating differences between external actors.

Peace and Reconciliation Initiatives

The UN, the EC and the Djibouti government have facilitated a number of peace and reconciliation efforts. Although they have failed to take root, some of them have had positive impacts. The UN tried official diplomacy by targeting the direct warring groups, mainly the warlords, while the EC and the Djibouti government tried unofficial diplomacy by targeting members of the civil society. None of these initiatives have considered the importance of land issues or the relationship between *deegaan* and political strength.

The United Nations in Somalia

With the assistance of the Ethiopian government, the UN facilitated itself in two peace and reconciliation efforts in Addis Ababa in January and March

1991. Fifteen factions attended the two national reconciliation conferences and produced the Addis Ababa Accords. The Accords were never implemented, however, owing in part to the focus on the warlords (whom many Somalis considered criminals) and the political aspects of the Somali conflict.¹⁶

In late 1992, following intense media coverage, the United States decided to join ongoing international efforts in Somalia, and to lead what it termed “an international humanitarian intervention” in Somalia. They came under the name Unified Task Force (UNITAF), later code named United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), when the nominal command was transferred from the United States to the United Nations. Their intent was to stop the factional fighting and to end the famine. The UNOSOM intervention force was created on the basis of Security Council Resolution 751 and was mandated to undertake a peacekeeping mission with the consent of the Somali factions.

Later, the United Nations was drawn into an armed conflict with General Aideed, a powerful warlord in Mogadishu at the time. The conflict became one between the UN-led international forces and General Aideed’s United Somali Congress (USC) forces, and eventually led to the loss of 24 Pakistani and 18 United States troops, as well as thousands of Somalis, both Aideed’s militiamen and civilians. Following these losses the United States announced a phased withdrawal, with most western forces in the UN following suit. UNOSOM completely withdrew from Somalia in March 1995 with neither a national peace nor a revived government structure in place.

The European Commission in Somalia

In addition to the UN initiatives for Somalia, the European Commission was pursuing its own approach for peace and reconciliation. The EC commissioned the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1995 to conduct a comparative study to assess the implications of various types of political and administrative decentralisation in Somalia, and to avail this information to both the general public and leading Somali intellectuals and decision makers.¹⁷

The report, *Study of decentralization structure for Somalia: A menu of options*, focused on four models: (1) confederation, (2) federation, (3) a decentralised unitary state, and (4) a community-based type of power sharing known as consociation. The EC sponsored two seminars each in Naivasha and Nakuru, Kenya in June and November 1996 to discuss the studies’ findings. Somali traditional and religious leaders, intellectuals, professionals, women and other representatives of the Somali civil society attended the seminars, and supported the concept of establishing “a decentralized state with constitutional guarantees for the full autonomy of the constituent units”.

In addition to the seminars held in Kenya, three follow-up seminars were held in Somalia. Aside from establishing the ‘Puntland’ regional government

in north-eastern Somalia, Somali sentiment and the nature and extent of the civil war remained unchanged. The limited effectiveness of the EC initiative was probably due to the fact that it focused on constitutional debates, rather than on conflict management, and did not include the grass-roots people or the warring factions.

The Djibouti Initiative

President Gelle of Djibouti initiated a long-awaited peace process in September 1999 when he appealed to Somali leaders and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states to join him in addressing Somalia's situation. The Djibouti president hosted a preliminary conference in Djibouti with over 60 intellectuals to discuss how best to approach the reconciliation process. He focused on the civil society, the traditional clan leaders, community elders and prominent political figures from past Somali governments, and also asked IGAD member states to provide him the necessary support and back up for the peace process.

The peace process began during May 2000 in Arta, Djibouti with delegations from all corners of Somalia. The discussions continued for over four months and concluded with the election of a transitional National Assembly (TNA) of 244 members, an interim president, Abdiqassim Salad Hassan and a Transitional National Government (TNG) led by interim prime minister, Ali Khalif Gallayr. The first interim government for Somalia for more than a decade moved to Mogadishu in September 2000 and was overwhelmingly received by Mogadishu residents, although its *de facto* authority was soon to be restricted to the environs of Mogadishu.

A number of faction leaders have subsequently resisted the TNG and formed a coalition of opposition groups with a rotating chairmanship called the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC). The interim government continues to meet resistance because the opposition groups believe that labelling warlords as criminals and sidelining them prevented them from participating in and contributing to the peace process. Like the EC initiative, the Djibouti Initiative delegates focused on institutional and constitutional solutions to the conflict, instead of reconciliation.

As the security and humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate, IGAD member states established a technical committee consisting of representatives from the front-line states of Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia. The mandate includes monitoring the Somali peace process and drawing up the terms of reference for the resumption of broad based talks to look at the completion and implementation of the Arta agreement against a backdrop of public expressions of disappointment by Hassan at the lack of support from the international community for the rehabilitation of Somalia as well as the poor progress with the internal political process, stating that "external interference" in the country's

internal affairs, the supply of arms to the warlords and the lack of support from the international community were “the main hurdles standing in the way of progress”.¹⁸ On the eve of the resumption of talks during September 2002 in Eldoret, Western Kenya, the EU offered financial and technical support to a “provisional, all-inclusive, broad-based” government in Somalia, as successor to the TNG. In order to encourage a “bottom-up approach”, the EU would support “emerging regional governance” which had effective control of population centres and economic infrastructures, and demonstrated a commitment to peace.¹⁹

The Republic of Somaliland

Although the recent conflict affected most parts of Somalia, parts of central and all of northern Somalia were spared from open, violent conflict. In the north-east, a brief episode of armed conflict between the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the Al-Ittihad Islamic Group resulted from “the region’s isolation, its clan homogeneity and the strength of its traditional leaders”.²⁰

There are positive political developments in the north-west region of Somalia. Hargeisa declared independence from the southern part of Somalia in May 1991 and elected as its first president the chairman, at that time, of the Somali National Movement (SNM). Intra-Isaq fighting broke out in 1991. In May 1993 an assembly of elders established peace and elected Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, a former Somali premier, as the second president. Since then the Republic of Somaliland has been rebuilding its capacity with a new administration and striving for international recognition, although conflict has returned to this troubled region.

Until his untimely death from complications arising from bowel surgery, Egal’s administration made advances in extending its authority and control in much of north-western Somalia except for border disputes with Puntland over the Sol and Sanag regions and the district of Buhodle in the Togdher region. Somaliland also recently held a vote of referendum supporting its intent to secede from the former Democratic Republic of Somalia, with government officials claiming over 97% of the vote supported such an action.

Within hours of the Egal’s death, Vice-President Dahir Riyale Kahin, from the Samaroon tribe in the west was sworn in as president. Elections are scheduled at presidential, national and municipal level towards the end of 2002.

Civil Society Initiatives and Alternative Strategies

There are no formal governmental policies at this time because the formal state has collapsed. Nomadic communities use *xeer* to negotiate access to and use of resources in the absence of government policy.

Various local and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) are implementing environmental projects, but donors have recently begun requiring NGOs to conduct environmental impact assessments for any project proposed in Somalia. Very few NGOs are involved in awareness-raising projects, or promote more equitable and non-violent ways of sharing natural resources. Access to and ownership of land remains a very sensitive issue and NGOs, whether local or international, face difficulty openly discussing land issues since no real grass-roots peace and reconciliation process has been established.

A conference held in Kismayu in early 1993 during the UN operation in Somalia convened elders and politicians from the Lower Jubba region. They agreed on a ceasefire, disarmament, reopening of roads, reunifications of the people and communities and to return looted properties.²¹ These agreements were memorialised on 6 August 1993 with the signing of the Jubbaland Peace Agreement.

The communities in the Gedo and Bay regions of Somalia organised and held another important conference in early 1994. Representatives of the Somali National Front (SNF), the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) and a large number of community elders, clan leaders, and intellectuals from both regions attended. The purpose of the conference was to reconcile the warring factions, the SNF and the SDM, and to unite the peoples of the two communities. The conference endorsed the Bardera Agreement, which included General Morgan's Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). It has allowed the peaceful interaction of the communities of Gedo, Bay, Bakol, the Middle and Lower Jubba regions.

Overview of the Environment

The decade-long civil war has resulted in a breakdown of policy and law governing the access to, use of and ownership of land and resources in Somalia. Some NGOs are presently carrying out environmental awareness programmes, but are giving little attention to issues such as rights and ownership that underlie violent conflict. In addition, Somalia remains heavily dependent on relief and development assistance. Because of the absence of a central government in Somalia, the centrality and importance of environmental issues remain a problem.

Physical Environment

Somalia is located in the eastern part of the Horn of Africa and covers a total land area of 637 540 square kilometres.²² Its semi-arid climate favours pastoral nomadism. Water scarcity readily provokes communal conflict over

water points in most parts of the country, as nomads rely primarily on wells rather than on surface water catchments. Rainfall is unpredictable and often comes in heavy downpours, leading to recurrent periods of drought and flooding.²³

Somalia borders the Gulf of Aden to the north and the Indian Ocean to the east and south. Hugging the tip of the Horn of Africa, Somalia borders Ethiopia to the west, Kenya to the south-west and Djibouti to the north-west. The country has a long coastline extending for 3 025 kilometres, but has few natural harbours. A sandy coastal plain straddles the Gulf of Aden in the north. A series of mountains ranging in elevation between 915 and 2 135 metres dominate the northern part of the country. To the south, the interior consists of a rugged plateau. A wide coastal plain bordering the Indian Ocean dominates the landscape in the south of the country. Somalia has two major rivers, the Jubba and Shabelle, which cross the southern plateau and the south central region of the country. Both rivers originate in the Ethiopian highlands.²⁴ There are also two major streams in the north, the Nugal and Darroor.

The climate of Somalia ranges from tropical to subtropical and from arid to semi-arid. Temperatures usually average 28°C (82°F), but may be as low as 0°C (32°F) in the mountain areas and as high as 47°C (116°F) along the coast. The monsoon winds coincide with a dry season lasting from March to May. Somalia is entirely situated within the arid and semi-arid zones and has a rainfall varying from a maximum of 600 to 700 millimetres in the south and less than 100 millimetres on the northern coastal plains.²⁵ The average rainfall is only 280 millimetres. There are two wet seasons, both of which bring erratic rainfall, lasting from April to June and October to December.

Vegetation in Somalia consists chiefly of coarse grass and stunted thorn and acacia trees. Aromatic flora, including frankincense and myrrh, are indigenous to the mountain slopes. Eucalyptus, euphorbia, and mahogany trees are found in southern Somalia. Wildlife, including crocodiles, elephants, giraffes, leopards, lions, zebras, and many poisonous snakes, is abundant in Somalia.²⁶

Resources and Uses

Natural resources form the basis of rural livelihoods in Somalia, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁷ Examples include water for domestic use, watering livestock, and for irrigation; pasture for grazing livestock; medicinal and edible plants; fish, and trees for fuel wood and building timber. Pastoralism is the principal land use in Somalia. Accuracy of aggregate data on livestock is dubious at best. Nonetheless, in 1999 it was estimated that Somalia had 19.7 million goats, 13.2 million sheep, 4.8 million cattle and over 6.6 million camels.²⁸ Distribution of herds is variable. Somalia's chief export is livestock and this makes land for livestock grazing critical to the sustainability of pas-

toralist systems and livestock exports. *Deegaan* is fundamental, therefore, to the viability of customary nomadic grazing systems.

However, although livestock remains Somalia's chief export, a combination of factors restrict livestock production in Somalia, including infrastructural bottlenecks, the multitude of brokers, absence of price regulation or quality control policies, dependence on the export market, as well as a recent livestock ban on the import of Horn of Africa livestock. The ban on the import of Horn of Africa livestock was imposed by Saudi Arabia and by some Gulf countries over suspicion of Rift Valley fever in 2000. Pastoralists in northern Somalia are particularly affected by the ban.²⁹ The value of their livestock has fallen while upkeep costs have increased. Underprivileged pastoralists with few livestock assets and low cereal stocks are the worst affected group. Agro-pastoralists are better off. While suspicion of Rift Valley fever in Somali livestock is the major cause of the ban, leaders of the Republic of Somaliland in the north-west and the regional Puntland state of Somalia in the north-east believe that Gulf states imposed the ban as an economic sanction and to support the Transitional National Government (TNG) in Mogadishu. Regionally, the disease has led to losses estimated at between US\$ 200 million to US\$ 400 million with Somalia being the worst affected.³⁰

Rain-fed and irrigated agriculture is practised in southern Somalia. The principal crops are cereal grains including maize and sorghum, and fruits including bananas and sugarcane. Most of the agricultural crops showed a significant improvement from yields in the early 1990s when agricultural activity was severely curtailed as a result of drought and the breakdown of the Somali state in 1991. The plantation economy also remains underdeveloped. Bananas are Somalia's principal cash crop and second most important export after livestock. Production, generally as rain-fed farming, takes place in 11 of the 18 regions of the country. The Middle and Lower Shabelle regions as well as the Lower Jubba region have a special status within this group as they are the only zones where irrigated agriculture is practised and as such are classified as 'typical surplus areas'.³¹

Crop production is suffering from a scarcity of agricultural inputs, lack of extension services, shortage of funds and poor access to small-scale or large-scale credit schemes, all of which result in a low agricultural yield and poor land use. The domestic grain supply is supplemented by international food aid. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) alone provides an annual humanitarian aid package of US\$ 26 million to Somalia, mostly used for emergency food aid.³² Food insecurity is a perennial problem in many parts of Somalia. The Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) for Somalia warned in a 2001 report of a fragile situation that would impact over 400 000 people.³³ The report predicted that any further constraints on people's ability to cope could result in up to 50% of the population suffering a 40% food deficit in 2002.

Sufficient availability of water is a perennial environmental problem in most of Somalia, where rainfall is unpredictable and patchy. Various water sources exist in Somalia. In rangeland areas herders use wells, shallow wells, water catchments and government-built boreholes. Currently, however, very few wells or water catchments are functioning. Water scarcity is a severe problem that commonly leads to localised competition, such as between interacting pastoralist groups over access to and control of key water points. Competition for scarce water resources and the livelihood options that derive from the control of water are deeply ingrained in Somali life and culture.³⁴ In most parts of the country, there is a history of water scarcity. But scarcities have worsened owing to widespread destruction and looting of water supply installations and the general lack of maintenance.

A small forestry sector exists in Somalia and is dominated by production of frankincense and myrrh for export. Massive charcoal production for export continues in parts of north-west and southern Somalia as well.³⁵ With regard to fisheries, production was poor in the past. The sector showed modest growth during the 1980s but remained a minor economic activity for coastal people. In 1997, 15 700 metric tons of fish were caught and fishing provided for both local consumption and exports. Somalia's mineral sector makes an insignificant contribution to the overall economy (in 1998 it represented only 0.3% of GDP). There was also some production of salt using solar evaporation methods, mining of meerschaum (sepiolite) in the Galgudud area and some mining of limestone for cement in the Berbera and Bardera areas. Somalia also has some large uranium deposits in the Galgudud and Bay regions. In the Bay region, there are also large iron ore deposits. Somalia's 1986 Development Plan reported that indications of favourable oil and gas resources in the country persisted. Currently no mining is taking place in the country.

Domestic wood, charcoal and imported petroleum provide basic sources of energy in Somalia. The significant hydroelectric potential of the Jubba River remains unexploited and the four small-scale wind turbine generators no longer operate in Mogadishu. The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Hydrocarbon study carried out in 1991 indicated good potential for oil and gas deposits in northern Somalia. In view of the civil war in Somalia following the fall of Siad Barre, however, various foreign oil exploration plans were cancelled.

Exploitation of uranium is largely through open mines. Other valuable natural resources, such as iron ore, tin, gypsum, bauxite, copper and salt are largely unexploited. However, unconfirmed reports state that precious stones and other natural resources are exploited and exported outside Somalia by well-connected foreigners usually through faction leaders and under the banner of some aid agencies.

There are no overriding policies for land and natural resource management owing to the break-up of the formal Somalia state. Instead, the three different regional governments in Somalia control and manage land and natural resources differently. Throughout Somalia, land and natural resources are not managed according to a legal or policy precedent. Strategies are highly specific to local social, political and ecological contexts. Different clans and groups formulate and enforce their own, informal policies for managing natural resources. In places where there is some level of authority, a combination of *xeer*, Islamic *Sharia* law and the pre-1991 penal code are used to decide control over and specific uses of land and natural resources. In addition, there is an absence of an enabling policy environment and supportive infrastructure to promote production and to add wealth to natural resources. The absence of a policy framework to promote fair distribution and effective use of land and natural resources is manifest in a number of environmental problems.

Land

In the past, there were bundles of tenure rights to different land and resources for different individuals and groups. For example, rangelands were communally owned but individuals and families owned livestock. In pre-colonial times, traditional claims and inter-clan bargaining were used to establish land rights. A small market for land, especially in the area of plantation agriculture in southern Somalia, developed during the colonial period and into the first decade of Somalia's independence. Land was owned by individual families and inherited from one generation to the next.

Barre's government sought to block land sales and tried to let all privately owned land as concessions to powerful clan leaders and overseas investors, but in vain. The national land registration procedure was cumbersome, required a great deal of time and money for small farmers, was centralised in Mogadishu, and was easily abused and manipulated by well-connected officials and their proxies in the capital.³⁶ Land rights then and now remain a critical issue for minority groups. The Italians alienated large tracts of riverine farmland from peasant farmers to establish foreign-owned banana plantations. After independence, a new class of Somali entrepreneurs began acquiring land for irrigation, using their government connections and, if necessary, force, to claim land. Thousands of civil servants, politicians, merchants and army officers alienated large tracts of riverine land in the 1980s. They used provisions in the ostensibly progressive 1975 Land Reform Act to register land titles in their own names, while local smallholders were unable to navigate the complex bureaucracy or pay the bribes necessary to protect customary rights to land they inhabited and farmed.³⁷

Following the fall of Barre's government, the civil war escalated competition to control land. Militia fighters and their kinsmen claimed farm lands. In

many areas, more powerful clans pushed their herds onto the farming and pasture lands of weaker groups and clans, and freely grazed livestock on their crops. Widespread alienation of land and resources from weaker clans and groups is ongoing today.

Following the break-up of the formal state in Somalia, occupation of land for political purposes aggravated existing resource scarcities felt by underprivileged peasant cultivators and pastoralists. Although confusing and complicated in explanation, occupation of land for political reasons has become a severe problem in war-torn Somalia. While some people use the occupied land for farming purposes, the majority claim land ownership for political motives. Most factions in Somalia occupy lands that are outside their areas of customary control. Political occupations of land are common throughout the Lower Shabelle region, where land rights are claimed by the Digil-Mirifle clan who are native to the Bay and Bakol regions. Another area is Jubbaland, where competing Somali clans claim ownership of specific land (or *deegaan*).

Land and resource tenure is related to other environmental problems. Structures to administer land in Africa suffer from the same weaknesses as other components of the state. They are often highly centralised and attempt to reach and implement decisions in a top-down manner, yet are ineffective in practice because of resource constraints, corruption and 'capture' by private interest groups.³⁸ In the case of Somalia, the absence of land use policies causes uncertainty and conflict among various user groups, including pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers. Insecure rights to access and control land and natural resources hinder development and the fair sharing of benefits. Resolution of land disputes remains a prominent challenge for the TNG, authorities of the ruling Jubbaland Alliance in southern Somalia, as well as the judiciary of any future broad-based Somali government.

Apart from the natural resources available in the area, occupation of land for political reasons is another recent and very problematic trend. These land occupations create a powerful disincentive to negotiate on the part of some clans who find themselves in possession of other lands which are not theirs, but which they hold to help bargain for a bigger share from the future national cake. In the past, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists fought over water and pasture. The civil war introduced another significant problem of land disputes in urban settings.

In Somalia, access to and control of land relates to power, to centre-periphery relationships, and to resource allocations. It centres, in other words, on politics.³⁹ Indeed, control of land and resources are central to politics and conflict in contemporary Somalia.⁴⁰

Deegaan and Conflict in Jubbaland

The Jubbaland region is located in the south-western part of the Somali Republic bordering Kenya. The capital, Kismayu, lies in the south on the Indian Ocean. Jubbaland covers roughly a quarter of the total landmass of the Somali Republic. Its ecological conditions are variable and support a diverse range of flora and fauna. The Juba River cuts through Jubbaland and deposits fertile alluvial soils a few kilometres to the north of Kismayu. This region's history was marked by violent competition to control its resources by different waves of immigrants, explorers, traders, merchants and imperialists. However, these different waves had far-reaching impacts on the social, economic and political developments of Somali peoples.

The conflict in this area is complex and multifaceted, involving divergent clans, groups and issues. At the core of the conflict in the Jubbaland is ownership and control of *deegaan*. At one level, the different clans and sub-clans in conflict in Jubbaland are fighting to control *deegaan*. At another level, as the following analysis will show, this competition is part of the larger national and regional conflict to control the Somali state.

Like the greater part of the Horn of Africa, there is evidence of environmental degradation in the Jubbaland region.⁴¹ This has influenced changes to economic activity: some groups were able to cope, while others were adversely affected and increasingly susceptible to hunger and malnutrition. Thus whereas some privileged groups are capable of adapting to increasing environmental stress, such as through transhumant movements, other underprivileged individuals and groups are less capable of adapting to changing ecological conditions. These have become increasingly dependent on kin networks and aid to sustain livelihoods. Consequently, ecological changes have accentuated existing social differences and encouraged inter-clan conflict.

Resource Geography

Jubbaland region is made up of several districts. Its largest city is Kismayu, which also serves as the main port of the southern region of Somalia. There are other towns in the interior such as Afmadu, Bardere, and Buala. Particular clans dominate specific interior areas, although other minority clans can be found. Control of these areas and the port city of Kismayu means access to resources generated through port taxation and taxation of goods brought to urban markets by traders.

Land forms the basis of material wealth in Somalia.⁴² According to Kirk, "land, as a single natural resource, provides several goods and services. Its productive use often depends on complimentary resources, such as water, and people in rural areas do not exclusively make a living as pastoralists but

are instead using many of the natural resources simultaneously.”⁴³ Productive land is very scarce in the rest of southern Somalia except along the River Shabelle, the other major river that traverses the region. Except for the areas near the Jubba River, the entire region is arid and semi-arid and sparsely populated by nomadic pastoralists of the Ogaden and the Marehan clans.

Compared to the rest of Somalia, Jubbaland region is well endowed with natural resources, including rich arable farm lands. It enjoys a reliable water supply from the Jubba River, which deposits fertile alluvial soils throughout the Jubba River valley.⁴⁴ The greater part of Somalia is arid, the availability of resources is patchy, and suffers from chronic and extreme changes in rainfall. Hence, there is a critical need to devise flexible strategies so as to cope with the changing and uncertain environment. Like pastoral areas elsewhere in Africa, the need to have large grazing areas in Jubbaland is an insurance against ‘weather shocks’ such as rainfall variability and other climatic uncertainties.⁴⁵

Due to the harsh ecological conditions prevailing in southern Somalia, pastoralists and farmers have developed coping mechanisms such as transhumant migration, shifting cultivation and engaging in petty trade. Transhumance movement between different ecological zones is a key pastoralist strategy to overcome resource limitations and uncertainty.⁴⁶ Access to *deegaan* is particularly complex in a context where transhumant migrations predominate.⁴⁷ Through migrations, different resource users maximise benefits from ecological change, such as changes in rainfall or the availability of pasture.

Similarly, like pastoralist populations in Sahelian West Africa that experienced population movement towards the coast, in Somalia the population has also shifted southwards from the ecologically stressed areas in the northern regions of the country to the Jubbaland and along the coast.⁴⁸ More certain and resource-abundant conditions exist in coastal areas and in the Jubba River valley where there is sufficient rainfall to sustain agriculture and pastoralism. Rainfall averages are higher along the coast and near Kismayu where maritime winds increase rainfall amounts.⁴⁹ Such areas have higher population densities and support more diverse economic activities. For example, the Jubba River sustains a significant riverine forest that is important to regional charcoal production. Export of charcoal to the Middle East provides an important source of income for some groups and clans. Charcoal producers export charcoal in cooperation with clan and militia leaders, who defend and benefit from their involvement.⁵⁰

Like the rest of Somalia, there are four seasons in Jubbaland. These seasons influence resource availability throughout the region.⁵¹ For example, forage is typically only available along the river during the *Jilaal* or dry season; this situation frequently results in violent competition between farmers and pastoralists over the use of the water and forage resources along the Jubba River. Powerful sub-clans have access to the water and forage during the

Jilaal season. Farmers in the Jubbaland keep some form of livestock and hence wish to protect their crop residues for use during the *Jilaal* season. Conflict between the groups is frequent. During the *Gu* or rainy season, water and forage is available over a wider area and during this time pastoralists clash to control grazing resources in areas separating different clans.

The ecology of the Jubbaland region is highly conducive to agriculture, including areas along the river and on the coastal plain. The flood plains of the Jubba River provide very fertile soils for crop production throughout the year. Commercial plantations border the river. These plantations produce mainly bananas for export to overseas markets. The minority Habar Gedir and their Marehan supporters control the commercial plantations. These two sub-clans possess the military capacity to protect their interests in commercial farming from rival clans such as the Ogaden and their Majertein allies. The farm labourers on commercial plantations are Bantu and related groups who historically inhabited and cultivated these areas, but who are unable to defend themselves militarily from the incoming Habar Gedir sub-clans and their Marehan allies.

Peasants also cultivate small plots along the river or in areas where there is adequate rainfall to sustain cultivation. They cultivate a variety of crops, including sorghum, Indian corn, sesame, beans, squashes and manioc, as well as fruits and sugar cane. Subsistence farmers native to the Jubba River valley have experienced waves of land alienation and obstruction of customary patterns of resource use. The independent government of Somalia in the 1960s introduced purportedly modern methods of agriculture in order to produce food on a large scale. The introduction of large-scale irrigation resulted in the displacement of subsistence farmers, thus obliging them to become part of the new schemes as labourers or farm workers.

The land rights of subsistence farmers were widely alienated under the former Barre government, which attempted to irrigate these lands to produce food crops as well as increase the export of lucrative cash crops. As part of this policy, the Barre government settled pastoralists along the Jubba River. The Barre government wanted to meet national food requirements and to earn foreign currency. Jubbaland was key to meeting these strategic objectives. Thus the exploitation of Jubbaland's agricultural potential meant the imposition of new tenure rights that disadvantaged local inhabitants who were minimally consulted.

Many pastoralists were settled along the Jubba River, for example. In the process, the original landowners were displaced either physically or through the imposition of new tenure arrangements. The areas where pastoralists were settled were saturated; thus the denial of land and resource rights for some groups was inevitable.⁵² It was impractical and ecologically disastrous to settle pastoralists in farming areas, because the settled pastoralists had little knowledge of farming practices. Nor were they familiar with the ecological conditions

of the riverine environment.⁵³ In addition to competition for the resources, there was also social friction between the communities. The pastoralists typically viewed the farmers as inferior and tried exploiting them for labour and by selling commodities at very high prices. The land and resource rights of many cultivators native to the region receded further following the fall of the Barre regime.

By and large, the areas outside the Jubba River valley and coastal plain in southern Somalia do not support cultivation. Pastoralists use rangeland areas lying beyond the river valley and coastal plain. There is a steady supply of water in Jubbaland, both from the Jubba River as well as rainfall during the two rainy seasons. Rainfall patterns and the availability of forage enable pastoralists to use rangeland areas through a transhumant system. Grazing resources including pasture and water are the common property of all sub-clans. However, semi-arid and arid areas of the Jubbaland used by pastoralists are experiencing localised degradation and growing scarcity of important grazing resources, including pasture and water, further stressing pastoralist production systems. In the past, small-scale subsistence farmers permitted pastoralists to use crop residue as forage. In exchange the herders gave products, such as milk, hides and skin to farmers and also exchanged livestock with them.⁵⁴

Pastoralists in Jubbaland rear livestock for both the domestic market and for export. The availability of local and international markets has added value to livestock production in Jubbaland. The once lucrative livestock market in Kismayu is not operational owing to rampant insecurity and inter-sub-clan wars.⁵⁵ Small-scale pastoralists mainly supply local livestock markets, while commercial traders, specialising in fattening livestock, supply livestock for export overseas.⁵⁶ Livestock is exported to Kenya where the prices are relatively high. In the recent past, raided cattle were sold in the livestock markets of major towns or urban centres, such as Nairobi and Garissa in Kenya. Powerful Ogaden cattle traders have sponsored raids on weaker clans in Jubbaland and have repeatedly sent forays into the Bay and Bakol regions. Still Ogaden sub-clans, who levy taxes, control the routes to the markets in Kenya. Livestock hides and skins are exported to the Middle East and other countries through the port in Kismayu.

History of Settlement and Conflict

In the early 20th century, the Ogaden sub-clans settled in Jubbaland, in the process displacing the original Oromo inhabitants of the area. These Oromo communities were pushed further south across the Tana River into what would later become Kenya.⁵⁷ The Ogaden clans were in turn pushed southward by the Marehan clans who were moving southward in search of grazing land and water for their livestock. Clans migrated in search of reliable

water sources and pastures to replenish depleted herds.⁵⁸ Hence, clans such as the Ogaden and the Marehan were forced to migrate in search of resource-rich environments in order to sustain and expand their herds.⁵⁹ It is these migrations that were the genesis of the competitions between the migrating pastoralists and the farmers who were settled near to the Jubba River.⁶⁰

Somalis who have lived in the Jubbaland region for centuries can be found along the coast and along rivers. They include Arabs, Bajunis and other groups who founded the cities all along the Somali coast. They came as traders, slaves and rulers, with the latter group having come from Arabia.⁶¹ They engaged in trade with the Somali and Oromo groups that lived in the hinterland. However, the Bantu inhabited the region longer than any other group. Arabs and other slave traders brought the Bantu, who became settled farmers, to the area as slaves. Bantu settled along the rivers and farmed various crops for subsistence. The Italian colonialists also used them as a readily available labour supply in order to cover administration costs. The creation of large-scale Somali farms in post-independent Somalia has further alienated the Bantu and other minority farmers from their traditional lands.

Somali clans which inhabited the region since the early 20th century include the Ogaden and Biyamal clans. The Ogaden and the Biyamal clans migrated southward in the early parts of the 20th century ahead of the Abyssinian incursions and the nationalist movement of Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan.⁶² The Ogaden were migratory pastoralists in search of water and grazing lands for their livestock. The pastoralist Ogaden developed a reciprocal relationship of exchange with the farmers along the Jubba River. Ogaden pastoralists developed exchange mechanisms with riverine farmers in order to acquire goods that they were unable to produce in the interior areas where harsh ecological conditions prevailed. Furthermore, pastoralists used resources near to the river on the understanding that they were to be shared with the farmers.⁶³ This interdependence ensured the survival of the different groups, although conflict occasionally developed.⁶⁴

Recent immigrants to the Jubbaland are those who moved to the region in the post-independence period. Past Somali governments encouraged free and unrestricted movement of pastoralists as well as traders from all clans into the region. Authorities rarely protected the rights of the local inhabitants who were by and large ignorant of their rights to access and use the resources that were allocated by the government to newer immigrants. However, since 1991, following the break-up of the central state, there have been massive migrations of people into the region seeking access and use of resources.

Conflict to control *deegaan* in Jubbaland in part results from these uncontrolled migrations that are rooted in famine, drought and conflict in the Bay and Bakol regions to the north of Jubbaland. Migrations of internally displaced populations from the Bay and Bakol regions increased the population of the Jubba River valley and aggravated resource scarcities, leading to

encroachment onto lands occupied by other farmers and agro-pastoralists. Many 'displaced' pastoralists from the north are part of powerful alliances to defend claims to land and resources and have thereby occupied land of farmers from weaker clan alliances. Displaced farmers in the Jubba River valley have either emigrated elsewhere, agreed to become *sheegad* of the pastoralists, or have competed to recapture *deegaan* lost to other clans.⁶⁵

The nature of the conflicts has changed since colonial times from reciprocal raiding of land and resources to the use of heavy weapons to establish exclusive control over valuable land and natural resources. Indeed, the use of modern automatic weapons, whether heavy or light, has intensified the conflict between the Ogaden and the Marehan.⁶⁶ To contain disputes and conflict, the colonial government tried separating the various clans by creating buffer zones and regulating grazing blocks between them. Through these measures, the colonial government managed to contain the conflicts between the various clans over water wells and grazing lands. In these arrangements each clan had a defined zone for livestock grazing and their areas of operations.⁶⁷ During the pre-colonial and colonial eras before guns were widely available, the power of the spear determined control of *deegaan*.

Yet the nature of conflicts in Jubbaland changed during Somalia's post-independence period. This is because the independent Somalia government rarely regulated grazing zones for different clans. Instead, certain clans like the Marehan received preferential rights to grazing lands and access to government resources and technical advice. The Barre government settled large numbers of its Marehan clanspeople in the major port city of Kismayu. The Marehan then controlled not only the government, but also regulated and benefited from the trade that passed through the city. There were various attempts to settle pastoralists among the farmers along the Jubba River and in urban areas, as described earlier.

The present intense conflict in the Jubbaland dates back to the days of the Siad Barre's regime when large numbers of people were settled in the Jubbaland, displacing customary inhabitants who were in many cases forcibly removed from their farm lands and settlements. For example, the Barre government favoured the Marehan clan and to a lesser extent the Ogaden clans, but marginalised and excluded the other clans that inhabited the region. The Bantu and the Rer Goled, for instance, were not allowed to own large tracts of land and were confined to smaller acreages along the Jubba River where they survived as smallholder peasants. Lack of a known mechanism for sharing resources has worsened conflict because different sub-clans move across a wide area with no clearly marked boundaries. Since there are no clearly delineated boundary lines between sub-clans, mobility of one sub-clan into the area of another causes localised competitions over scarce resources, but which are connected to national and regional political developments.

Understanding Deegaan

Deegaan is central to the conflict in Jubbaland. To Somali, it connotes exclusive control by a group sharing similar language, identity or clan affiliation of a land area and the natural resources found there. *Deegaan* can further include an area where one lives, operates a business, and feels secure enough because of the presence of a large number of one's clansmen in the wider physical area. The nearest western concept to *deegaan* is land tenure, which according to Kirk "comprises the customary and legal rights that individuals or groups have to land, and the resulting social relationships".⁶⁸ *Deegaan* is synonymous with entitlement, security, usage and identity.⁶⁹ *Deegaan* is important to understanding the anatomy of the conflict for a number of reasons. *Deegaan* is important politically and socially: the process of acquiring *deegaan* is delicate and complex and involves continuous negotiation between different sub-clans and groups for access to specific *deegaan*. These issues will be explored later in the chapter.

However, like other regions of Somalia, conflict in Jubbaland involving *deegaan* is "embedded in larger interaction sequences".⁷⁰ Such 'interaction sequences' typically include several factors that shape the outcome of conflict or peace, including transhumant grazing, trading activities between two sub-clans and intermarriages that eventually blur group identities and claims to own particular *deegaan*. The process of claiming and defending *deegaan* causes conflict between the various clans and sub-clans. *Deegaan* is acquired by various means ranging from peaceful bargaining to actual military conquest. The process of acquiring *deegaan* more often results in conflicts between various would-be claimants of the land.

Occupancy of uninhabited land was considered a legitimate way to claim *deegaan* historically. Defence of these lands by occupants was perceived as legitimate.⁷¹ Similarly, if a clan has inhabited a particular area for generations, like the Ogaden in Jubbaland, then their rights to ownership of land are stronger.⁷² Another way of gaining access to land and resources was to become a client of a land-owning clan, or *sheegad*, while trying to enlarge claims to land and resources. Becoming *sheegad* is still a common strategy to secure land and resource rights in Somalia today, particularly among weaker clans which are unable to defend their claims and do not enter into protective alliances with stronger clans with whom they share *deegaan*.⁷³ Becoming *sheegad* is one way for weaker clans to access land and resources that otherwise would be lost to more powerful clans and clan alliances.

Force is also used to stake new claims to *deegaan*, as well as to protect historic claims. In Jubbaland, heavily armed and powerful groups and sub-clans have formed a number of alliances to claim *deegaan*. Some Marehan sub-clans actively sought the support of the Habar Gedir to forcefully remove the Ogaden from Kismayu and the Jubba River basin. Ogaden sub-clans, such as

the Awlyahan, meanwhile, have formed alliances with the minority Majertein clan. However, control of *deegaan* through force in some cases is insufficient to stake claims that 'stick', and effective occupancy is sometimes more important to determining effective ownership of land.⁷⁴

Deegaan as a Source of Conflict

The conflict in Jubbaland is very complex: many groups are involved and the issues framing the conflict transform over time. However, access to and control of the pockets of productive land is at the core of the conflict in Jubbaland. Control of productive environments in the Jubba River valley is a chronic source of conflict, beginning before the arrival of Italian imperialists. The potential for land and resources in the Jubbaland to generate livelihood and political benefits motivates different groups and clans to stake claims. Political competition and the role of land and resources in these have indelibly shaped the nature of conflict in Jubbaland and Somalia more widely. Cultural attitudes toward the land and resources, furthermore, are important to understanding the conflict in Somalia. For example, in Somalia it is widely accepted that land and natural resources are gifts from God and, therefore, that no one individual or group should claim exclusive control. Cultural attitudes such as these have stoked competing claims to *deegaan*.⁷⁵ Availability of resources alone does not lead to competition and conflict. However, it is the perception of resource scarcity and the resulting claims by different groups that leads to the onset of conflict. There is a perceived scarcity of resources in Somalia that has encouraged different clans to stake claims to the rich resources in the Jubba River valley.

With the eventual collapse of the Barre government in 1991, sub-clan disputes over land and natural resources intensified. From 1991, with no central authority to distribute resources and mediate competing claims, rights to access, use and own land and resources became increasingly fragmented as competing clans asserted their claims to different land and natural resources in Jubbaland. Rights under customary tenure systems in many cases were challenged during the period following the fall of the Barre government, a situation that persists. Even today, the process of reconciling different claims is often violent. Conflict is common, although there are a few examples of peaceful resource sharing. Customary rights to control the land and its resources in this context have proved inconsequential. Instead, population displacements by invading factions and land occupations prevail. Customary rights are widely challenged by sub-clans and groups from throughout Somalia, most of whom claim their own historical rights to land and resources in Jubbaland. Instead, more powerful clans such as the Habar Gedir or the Majertein stake broad claims to land and resources in Jubbaland, although they lack customary rights by definition.

Few clans or sub-clans are able to dominate politically on their own, hence the formation of alliances between different groups. The need to garner greater political power nationally is an important driving force underlying the Marehan-Ayr alliance or the alliance between the Awlyahan and the Majertein. So is control of productive lands. Access to and control of land and resources in Jubbaland, moreover, is now determined by the relative strength of different groups and sub-clans, and the alliances formed between these to defend claims to *deegaan*. Those clans and communities that have ready access to guns and are part of more powerful clan alliances are stronger and therefore more capable of defending their claims to *deegaan*.

The ultimate aim of clan alliances, therefore, is to access key resources and to gain political leverage at the national level. Minority sub-clans, in particular, strengthen their claims to *deegaan* by allying with larger clans. The emergence of powerful warlords from minority clans in Jubbaland can be attributed to the support they get from powerful clans at the national level. This also happened during the Arta peace process that eventually led to the formation of the TNG. Some powerful warlords, such as Mohammed Said Morgan from the minority clan of the Majertein in Jubbaland, emerged owing to the connivance and support of the Awlyahan sub-clan of the Ogaden.

Alliances, however, undergo constant negotiation between different clans and sub-clans. Control of *deegaan* is subject to these negotiations, and therefore is highly tenuous. To complicate matters, different sub-clans of the same clan support different alliances, making the overall claims to *deegaan* for different majority clans, such as the Ogaden and Marehan, highly uncertain. For example, the Ogaden are divided into several opposing sub-clans such as the Mohammed Zubeir who support sub-clans belonging to the Habar Gedir, whereas the Awlyahan support the Majertein clan. Likewise the Marehan are divided into opposing factions and ally with different minority clans and sub-clans, mostly the Hawiye clan. Some sub-clans of the Marehan, for example, are supported militarily by the Ethiopian government, which has established permanent bases in the northern Gedo region to the opposition of other Marehan sub-clans, as well as other clans such as the Ogaden.

Alliances in many cases are mutually beneficial for the different clan and sub-clan partners. Powerful clans such as the Marehan, who lack direct territorial claims in Jubbaland, have forged alliances with minority clans and sub-clans native to the Jubbaland to enhance the legitimacy of their (Marehan) claims. Minority clans and sub-clans who form alliances with more powerful clans such as the Marehan are ultimately better positioned to stake stronger claims to *deegaan*. Thus political dominance and control of land and resources depend on the strength of the different clans at particular times, which may largely be a factor of the support it gains through alliances with other clans and sub-clans. The dictum that power emanates from the barrel of the gun is a true reflection of the situation in Jubbaland.

Control of land and resources, in turn, is important to maintain the social relationships that underpin the relative power of different alliances and the strength of their claims. Powerful clan and group leaders declare rules and stake land and resource claims to enhance the position of their group in terms of access to resources locally and nationally at the expense of rival clans and sub-clans.⁷⁶ Informal rule making by factional leaders is intended to secure and entrench their claims to *deegaan* and for their exclusive benefit. Indeed, more powerful pastoral sub-clans, including the Marehan and the Ogaden, have favourable access to resources throughout the year.

Deegaan and Power

The conflict to own and control *deegaan* in Jubbaland is a microcosm of conflict at the national level; it is inseparable from national level struggles to capture the state, where control of *deegaan* ensures some measure of political supremacy. According to Markakis, “competition for resources in conditions of great scarcity and the role the state plays in controlling the allocation of such resources” are “the catalysts to endow ethnicity with the potential for political conflict”.⁷⁷ Thus conflicts between central actors at the national level in Somalia to control the institutions of the state manifest themselves in inter-clan wars to control scarce land and resources in southern Somalia, as their counterparts in Kenya express themselves in ethnic clashes.⁷⁸

Political power is the means through which access to and control of land and resources is ensured. Similarly, conflict in Jubbaland centres on control of *deegaan*, which is required to maintain political power. More powerful clans such as the Marehan and the Habar Gedir have greater access to a wider variety of land and natural resources than do less powerful clans and clan alliances. Their power emanates from a complex combination of strategy and military superiority. Indeed, both the Marehan and the Habar Gedir inherited large stocks of weapons from the Barre government and from outside the country.

Allocation of rights to access, use and own resources in Jubbaland is a function of the power of those particular clans. Power is essential to gain access to pasture and water points in the Jubbaland interior. Power is necessary to access and control vital trade routes including the port city of Kismayu where agricultural and livestock commodities are exported. Majority clans reinforce their power base by forming alliances with weaker clans with whom they share control of *deegaan*. Power is derived from a combination of interacting variables. Thus a clan that is able to mobilise its youth, its financial resources, and is able to ally with other clans is stronger than a clan that does not.

The political strength of different clans and the alliances they form rest on their capacity to claim and defend land and resources for the political benefit of their group, and is bolstered by their ability to access weapons and

arms. Powerful clans use weapons to defend their newly acquired *deegaan* and the resources therein. Weaker clans who do not have access to weapons are pushed to the periphery and denied land and resource rights. They are also marginalised because they must operate at the periphery of economic and political decision-making processes.

The desire to increase political strength at the national level is the foremost reason different clans and alliances compete to control specific *deegaan*. Through control of *deegaan*, clans and clan alliances are stronger politically and can claim greater representation in important national decision-making processes. Greater political power implies greater access to resources both at the local and national level. The Ogaden and the Marehan sub-clans have fought for supremacy in Jubbaland in the hope of becoming the 'legitimate' holder of *deegaan*. Thus the Marehan, considered by many observers to be a minority albeit powerful sub-clan, are stronger politically at the national level than are the majority Ogaden. The Marehan were able to capture greater *deegaan* in Jubbaland, which they invested in strengthening their political representation at the national level.

The Marehan have encroached into Jubbaland since the time of the Barre government, which favoured the Marehan, as it was observed earlier. During Barre's regime, the Ogaden were displaced from towns such as Bardere that were traditionally in their area of control.⁷⁹ Their sense of ownership of the Jubbaland region was slipping away from them. Therefore, the Ogaden feel obligated to defend it from their rival Marehan and other sub-clans. Unruh offers an alternative explanation. He argues that by denying outsider and weaker clans access rights to *deegaan*, clans such as the Ogaden are defending it from being overgrazed and otherwise degraded by overuse. In that sense, defence of *deegaan* can be seen as a technique to conserve key land and natural resources.⁸⁰

Reconciling Completing Claims to Deegaan

Internal as well as external intervention in the conflict around Jubbaland has not led to peace or stability.⁸¹ Various international efforts led by the UN and neighbouring countries have only compounded and complicated the journey towards a peaceful coexistence of the various clans that inhabit the Jubbaland region. External intervention in the conflict focused on the leadership, primarily warlords, many of whom benefit directly from continued conflict, but did not address the role of *deegaan* in the conflict. The failure of these interventions shows the great need to integrate the various issues underlying the conflict and parties involved to adequately resolve the conflict.⁸²

The various clans that inhabit the Jubbaland region have long discarded traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution though they are still applied in localised contexts where one particular sub-clan dominates.⁸³ Among the

Ogaden, the customary law is still applicable and is used to resolve conflict between various sub-clans though its effectiveness has been reduced. *Xeer*, or customary laws, as one study notes, “are harder to locate after prolonged conflicts that have destroyed local populations, infrastructure, and institutions”.⁸⁴ Elsewhere in Somalia, the *Xeer* laws have been largely abandoned during the post-independence period. The recession of customary conflict resolution strategies was a gradual process that began in the colonial era and intensified during the post-independent period in Somalia. The traditional *Xeer* was formerly used to mediate disputes, including localised competitions over land and resources. Although competition to control *deegaan* in Jubbaland is far more complicated today than in the past, the extent to which *Xeer* could be revived and used to reconcile competing claims should be assessed.

The process of reconciling different claims to *deegaan* entails understanding the benefits that different alliances derive from particular *deegaan*, such as political representation, and ecological goods and services. There are, as already noted, different land and resource use systems in Jubbaland. Resources are used with varying degrees of intensity and the different clans rely on varying strategies to defend their use of and access to specific land and resources. The Habar Gedir and their Marehan allies would not allow sharing of Kismayu port and airport facilities with other rival clans. Likewise, sub-clans of the Ogaden such as the Awlyahan would not allow their rival sub-clans to tax them in their own towns.

The challenge, therefore, is to create a policy environment in which different clans can coexist and share access to and control of resources without violence. Nomadic herders in the hinterland where resources such as forage and water are scarce require seasonal access to resources in riverine areas in the Jubba Valley. On the other hand, farmers who hold customary rights to land by occupation require tenure security and protection from encroaching pastoralists. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, conflict in Jubbaland occurs when conflict is perceived by one or both sides to be more effective than cooperation.⁸⁵ Various clan warlords and their advisors should be incorporated in the peace process and be educated of the benefits of sharing resources.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to identify and assess the extent to which ecological factors are sources of conflict in Somalia. This is extremely challenging in view of the manifold conflicts in Somalia, as well as the extraordinarily fractured political landscape existing at this time. It does not offer an exhaustive review of ecological sources of conflict in Somalia. Rather, it examines and reflects on a narrower segment of this very complicated relationship: the relation between *deegaan*, politics and warfare.

An important part of the preceding assessment of *deegaan* and conflict in Jubbaland is how competition to control access and to own *deegaan* in Jubbaland articulates with conflict at the 'national' level in Somalia. The interplay between local competitions involving land and natural resources and national level conflict is an important area of analysis in this and other studies on the ecological sources of conflict.

It is evident that land and resources alone are not the ultimate sources of conflict in Jubbaland or Somalia. Rather, land and resources are embedded among many other interrelated factors, including conflict to control the state, engagement of third parties, including neighbouring governments, ineffectual or missing state institutions, and official policy that carried favour with minority groups through patrimonial favour, but excluded most other groups.

Land and natural resources distribution are important variables in understanding conflict in Somalia. More specifically, they are important to knowing how contractual agreements are formed between different groups. In Jubbaland, for example, alliances between minority and majority clans are important for determining access to and control of *deegaan*. Minority clans with historical claims to *deegaan* in Jubbaland ally with majority clans who lack customary rights, but who possess the power to maintain access to and control over *deegaan*. Majority clans in Somalia can bring legitimacy to their current claims by allying with minority clans. *Deegaan*, therefore, is the basis of contractual arrangements between different clans in the Jubbaland. Contractual arrangements, in turn, determine political and negotiating strength in conflict and, ultimately, the relative power of different clan alliances. *Deegaan* is important for making power in Somalia.

Owing to southern Somalia's overall resource scarcity, Jubbaland has remained volatile and unstable, with competing claims by Ogaden and Marehan clans to own *deegaan*. Jubbaland is relatively endowed with productive lands, including reliable supply of water and pasture, as well as fertile alluvial soils that can support extensive and intensive farming. The conflict in Jubbaland concerns ownership and control of *deegaan* and is inseparable from national struggles to capture the state. *Deegaan* engenders political strength, as well as livelihood security and group identity. *Deegaan* is a bargaining chip for regional and national political position and hence access to national as well as regional resources. Without claiming a particular *deegaan*, clans feel disenfranchised from national political processes. Hence, clans such as the Marehan and the Ogaden claim ownership of *deegaan* in Jubbaland for the political as well as economic well-being of their respective groups.⁸⁶

The importance of *deegaan* to the formation and maintenance of contractual arrangements between different clans in today's Somalia mirrors the importance of land and resources more generally to the organisation of social groups in Somalia customarily. These were founded on the need for frequent and unpredictable movements between different key resource environments

to sustain livestock herds, which are the basis of pastoral livelihoods. Historically, different pastoral groups in Somalia moved in response to fluctuating resource conditions. These movements were carefully planned and tailored so as to access key resources.

A network of social relations was important to access land and natural resources over a large area, including beyond the area recognised as an individual's or group's *deegaan*. Gaining access to resources through social networks permitted livestock movements over large areas. By sharing resources, it was possible to become familiar with other social groups and to tighten the bonds constituting an individual or group social network. Land and natural resources were and remain a way to forge stronger social ties to other pastoralist groups.

The variability and uncertainty of ecological conditions in Somalia necessitated delicate arrangements for sharing resources, quick decision making, and sophisticated communication systems to share information regarding ecological conditions and animal health. Governance structures in pre-colonial Somalia were flexible, complementing the fluid organisation of social groups that were attuned to asymmetric ecological dynamics. Power was substantially decentralised; individual elders represented clans and sub-clans and negotiated with other groups on a variety of issues, helping to maintain good relations between different clans, as well as formulating and upholding agreements to share land and resources. Dialogue between elders enabled herders to negotiate access to resources with individual herders and groups of herders at a local level. Through agreements brokered by elders between different clans, individual herders and small groups from different clans were able to interact regularly and peacefully, building familiarity between different clans and sub-clans. Decisions by individual herders and small groups on livestock movements cultivated better relations between different clans as well. In the long term, familiarity engendered reciprocity in access to and use of critical ecological resources.

It is clear that in the period since the imposition of the central-state model under Italian colonial rule, the rules and norms governing access to and control of land and resources have changed tremendously. There are many inherent inconsistencies between the central-state model and customary Somali social formations. For example, power and decision making were centralised under the state model imposed during colonial rule. It became extremely difficult for different clans and sub-clans to meaningfully negotiate on important matters, including resource access and control, independently of central authority and oversight. Furthermore, because power was concentrated at a central level, it was possible for elite groups to dominate the institutions of the state, thereby excluding groups not represented. Exclusivity replaced reciprocity as the guiding principle in the domain of allocating rights to access and control land and resources. In the Somalia under the central state, control of land and resources was correlated with power and control of the state. Sharing access to land and resources was not open to negotiation.

The impacts were devastating for subsistence producers. In the Jubba River valley, for example, the 'state' (both the colonial and post-independent) established large commercial agricultural plantations, displacing peasant farmers who shared access to pasture and water with mobile pastoralists. Secondary and tertiary access rights to resources, however, were eliminated once commercial plantations were established. Unable to sustain customary production systems, many peasants and pastoralists became destitute. A large pool of cheap and disempowered labour emerged to supply the colonial plantation economy. Many continued to be dependent on the state in the period following independence, even though the state was inimical to the interests of the rural poor. The only chance for security for many subsistence producers and destitute people was to gain patronage from the ruling elite.

The break-up of the central state in 1991 has led to a further transformation of rules and norms for accessing and controlling land and resources. However, political power, infinitely ordered and meticulously negotiated, still ultimately determines land and resource rights in Somalia. Strength to claim and/or maintain rights to access and control land and resources has converged around contractual agreements between different groups. As was observed in the case of Jubbaland, supremacy and control over land and resources depends on the power of different clans and sub-clans at particular times, which is largely a factor of the support clans acquire through agreements with other groups. Control of land and resources confers greater political power, which clans use to stake greater land and resource rights through political bargaining with other groups. Conflict in Somalia involving land and resources, therefore, ebbs and flows as different groups make and unmake power in a seemingly endless struggle to capture, ultimately, the greatest prize: control of the state.

For conflict managers and peace makers, it is important to recognise that there is a strong background to dialogue, negotiation, reciprocal agreement and resource sharing in Somalia. Elements persist to this day, albeit in reconstituted forms in the anarchic period following the break-up of the Somalia state in 1991. In spite of the ongoing civil war and further disintegration of the former 'state' into different political units, this process continues. As De Waal⁸⁷ observes, international intervention undermined many positive opportunities to rebuild customary political structures in Somalia following the disintegration of the state. The break-up of the central state may enable Somalis to forge a new *politik* incorporating custom. This process must be encouraged as an integral aspect of conflict management and peace building through a variety of diplomatic and policy-making channels.

The lessons emerging from this case-study for conflict managers and peace makers are many. One is that land and resources are clearly important to understanding the dynamics of conflict in Somalia. The exact extent of their importance is impossible to quantify, but land and resources play an important role

in the onset and duration of conflict in Somalia. A second lesson, and relating to the first, is that local competition to access and control land and resources articulate with national level conflict to control the state. Control of *deegaan* plays a critical role in determining political strength at the national level. Clans and clan alliances claim greater power in national level decision-making processes through control of *deegaan*. Therefore, competition between different groups at the local level to control *deegaan* are firmly linked to conflict at the national level to control the state, and thereby dominate the institutions and laws that determine the allocation of national wealth, including land and natural resources.

A third lesson is that control of land and resources plays a critical role in both the unmaking of old power and the formation of new contractual agreements and power in Somalia following the collapse of the central state. Finally, a fourth lesson is that there is a custom, incorporating dialogue, negotiation and reciprocity that can serve to constitute new policies and processes for conflict prevention and management. Examples are particularly rich in the many ways that different social groups in Somalia historically use land and resources to establish durable and reciprocal social and economic ties.

The lessons from earlier attempts to end the civil war in Somalia squarely point to the need to build peace matched to the peculiarities of the Somali context.

Proposals for new policies and legislation on land and resources can establish rules and norms that are useful in peace building and the broader construction of a new political system for Somalia. For example, equitable and fair distribution of land and natural resources is one way to peacefully reconcile competing groups. Land ownership, access to resources, and a hierarchy of first rights are ingrained in Somali society. Equity should be a guiding principle in the formation of new policies and legislation for land and resource rights, bearing in mind time of occupancy, customary rights, land use, group affiliation, gender, and age of the many competing actors and groups. A future broad-based Somali government, in consultation with local leaders, civil society representatives and the international community, should formulate new policies to redress land and resource issues, all the while seeking to promote equitable distribution and broader benefit sharing.

Any future conflict prevention and management strategy must be inclusive, incorporating all factions throughout the process of managing conflict and building peace. (This will include all factions inside Somalia, as well as their patrons in eastern Africa and the Middle East, notably Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya.) The legitimacy of many past initiatives was undermined because only certain factions were represented, excluding (intentionally or not) other large and small factions. Despite the vested interests by many of the armed groups to prolong the conflict no group, including

women, youth or militants, should be excluded from negotiations to end conflict and promote peace.

But more than any other factor, any peace-building framework for Somalia must address the core sources of conflict, as well as those factors that prolong conflict – including the issue of land..

Customary methods deserve intensive analytical and policy consideration. These were overlooked in many past conflict prevention and management strategies for Somalia. Arguably, the failure of past conflict management and peace-building initiatives is the result of a large-scale policy emphasis on international intervention and externally imposed peace formulas. At best these failed. At worst, they were destructive to customary forms of negotiation, agreement and reconciliation.

From past experience, it is evident that Somalis themselves must guide the process of peace building and national reconciliation, drawing on both customary and modern methods. Traditional methods of conflict prevention and management including *xeer* and *diya* could serve as a solid foundation to formulate new hybrid strategies that build on the comparative strengths of customary and modern approaches.

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