Stabilisation and humanitarian access in a collapsed state: the Somali case

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Somalia today is the site of three major threats: the world’s worst humanitarian crisis; the longest-running instance of complete state collapse; and a robust jihadist movement with links to Al-Qa’ida. External state-building, counter-terrorism and humanitarian policies responding to these threats have worked at cross-purposes. State-building efforts that insist humanitarian relief be channelled through the nascent state in order to build its legitimacy and capacity undermine humanitarian neutrality when the state is a party to a civil war. Counter-terrorism policies that seek to ensure that no aid benefits terrorist groups have the net effect of criminalising relief operations in countries where poor security precludes effective accountability. This paper argues that tensions between stabilisation and humanitarian goals in contemporary Somalia reflect a long history of politicisation of humanitarian operations in the country.

Keywords: counter-terrorism, humanitarianism, neutrality, Somalia, stabilisation, state-building

Introduction

Somalia has been the site of one of the longest-running humanitarian crises in the world. It has also been the scene of some of the most ambitious, precedent-setting external stabilisation operations in the post-Cold War period. These operations have spanned the spectrum of what can be considered as ‘stabilisation’ objectives, including protection of humanitarian relief, promotion of reconciliation and state-building, protection of transitional governments, security sector support, and direct external military counter-terrorism and anti-piracy operations.

Throughout Somalia’s 20-year crisis, the relationship between ongoing, routinised emergency relief operations and episodic but intense stabilisation interventions has been contentious. This has been especially true since 2007, when a series of events produced a ‘perfect storm’ in the country. In that year, Somalia became the site of unilateral (Ethiopian) and multilateral (African Union) military intervention, a destructive insurgency and counter-insurgency campaign, intensification of Al-Qa’ida activities and counter-terrorism actions by the United States, an epidemic of piracy, massive displacement, and a humanitarian crisis deemed the worst on the planet. At the same time, Somalia earned the reputation as the most dangerous place in the world for relief agency personnel, and humanitarian access has been severely restricted.

The humanitarian stakes in Somalia have been exceptionally high since 2007. The security and political stakes have been very high as well, thanks to the increasingly globalised dimensions of the Somali civil war and the growing prominence of Al-Qa’ida and US security interests in the country. To the extent that humanitarian and
stabilisation interests have been in conflict in Somalia, space for compromise and concessions is small. There is simply too much on the line for either constituency to give much ground.

This paper reviews different phases of the 20-year Somali crisis and the tensions between humanitarian and stabilisation objectives in the country. It employs a broad definition of ‘stabilisation policies’ to take account of not only the direct injection of foreign military forces but also external state-building efforts in pursuit of stabilisation goals. It proceeds on the assumption that, as one of the most prolonged humanitarian crises, and one that has attracted some of the most robust external stabilisation efforts, Somalia is a ‘crucial case study’—one that broader security–development theories must adequately explain if they are to have validity.¹

Because the prolonged Somali crisis has passed through so many different stages since the 1980s, it also constitutes an opportunity to engage in a ‘within case’, longitudinal comparison of different periods of the crisis. Eight distinct periods are identified in the Somali case:

1. 1978–90: an era of politicisation of humanitarian aid under the dictator Siyad Barre.
2. The two year disaster of state collapse, civil war and famine in 1991–92.
4. The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) from May 1993–March 1995, characterised by an ambitious United Nations (UN) mandate to promote reconciliation and state revival, which was derailed by disastrous armed conflict between UN peacekeepers and a rejectionist faction.
8. The post-occupation period since January 2009, ushered in by the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces. The jihadist insurgency intensified, the humanitarian space shrunk dramatically, and US policy placed restrictions on humanitarian aid in shabaab-controlled areas, exacerbating tensions between stabilisation and humanitarian priorities.

The period since 2006 receives the most treatment in this analysis, as it captures the most compelling tensions between humanitarian and stabilisation operations, and
is of most immediate policy interest. But the earlier periods of humanitarian response are also given attention, as they help us to pinpoint broader patterns and trends in the relationship between humanitarian and stabilisation prerogatives. Some of the contemporary debates between humanitarian and politico-military actors echo concerns first voiced in Somalia 25 years ago, reflecting long-running and unresolved tensions between humanitarian and stabilisation priorities.

**Politicismation of humanitarian operations in the Siyad Barre era**

Tensions between humanitarian operations and security concerns have a long history in Somalia. The country first began producing large-scale humanitarian crises in the mid-1970s, first as a result of a severe drought (1973–74) and then as an outcome of the calamitous Ogaden War of 1977–78 between Ethiopia and Somalia. That war produced an estimated 300,000–400,000 refugees—mainly Somali Ethiopians—who regrouped in large refugee camps inside Somalia. The United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and a significant influx of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) oversaw the delivery of basic foodstuffs and services to these camps for 12 years. They immediately encountered problems with the Barre regime, which saw in the camps not crisis but opportunity. Government officials positioned themselves as intermediaries in the flow of resources to refugees, diverting much of the relief in what became a lucrative racket. The regime insisted on grossly inflated numbers of refugees—800,000—in order to double the amount of food aid supplies from aid agencies, and expelled foreign diplomats who dared to question government figures.

Worst, the Barre regime recruited large numbers of refugees into its military, transforming the camps into de facto training sites and the international aid into logistical support for those military units. Moreover, the mainly Ogadeni refugees recruited into the armed forces were primarily used in a brutal military occupation of the restless northwest portion of Somalia (known today as Somaliland).

International aid officials in Somalia in the 1980s were aware of all of this, but it remained the subject of carefully guarded conversations. The option of openly criticising the government’s egregious violations of humanitarian principles, or of calling for the suspension of aid to the refugee camps on the grounds that it was being misused, was not on the table. Somalia during the Cold War was too valuable an ally of the West. Security concerns thus entirely overrode and badly compromised humanitarian operations in Somalia in the 1980s. In the minds of Somali politicians this reinforced the sense that humanitarian aid was a resource to which they could help themselves as long as external actors had security interests to protect (Menkhaus, 1997, p. 129).

By the late 1980s, Somalia’s strategic importance to the West plummeted, and the equation shifted. US congressional investigations into the Somali military campaign
against northern Somalis in 1988 concluded that the atrocities had reached ‘genocidal’ proportions, prompting a freezing of US aid to the Barre government. Other donors soon followed suit. For its part, UNHCR announced that it was extracting its support to the militarised refugee camps. It was condemned by some media outlets for ‘abandoning’ the refugees. The personnel of aid and donor agencies were deeply frustrated at the predatory attitude of Somali government officials. There were few regrets as aid agencies and most international NGOs closed their doors and evacuated the country as the civil war reached the outskirts of the capital, Mogadishu, in 1990. As former US Ambassador Frank Crigler put it, the US ‘turned out the lights, closed the door, and forgot about the place’ (Lyons and Samatar, 1995, p. 28).

Attempts were made to learn lessons from the unhappy experience of foreign aid in Somalia. A 1994 evaluation by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) concluded that Somalia in the 1980s constituted the worst instance of diversion of food aid in the history of the Food for Peace programme (Pailthorp, 1994). A US Foreign Service Institute study echoed concerns about foreign aid in Somalia in the 1980s that were depressingly relevant two decades later. It criticised what it called the ‘baseless optimism’ and ‘bureaucratic inertia’ of donors; observed that ‘the United States structured its relationship with Somalia in the 1980s to support security interests but gave expression to the relationship largely through development assistance’; and highlighted the dilemma of providing security-sector training to armed forces used not to protect citizens, but to prey on them. ‘The United States and Italy’, it noted, ‘were training and equipping Somali armed forces to defend the security and independence of their state, not to turn against their fellow citizens’ (Rawson, 1993, pp. 45, 84, 115–116). In the 1980s, stabilisation programmes not only politicised and compromised humanitarian and development projects, but ultimately accelerated the erosion of public support for the Barre regime.

The civil war and famine, 1991–92

In the face of multiple armed opposition groups, the Barre government’s military engaged in scorched-earth policies and atrocities against civilians as it retreated towards the capital. Predatory behaviour by armed militias continued in the aftermath of the fall of the Barre regime in January 1991. Most of the violence and looting that ensued in the civil war of 1991–92 was directed at civilians. The atrocities, massive displacement and repeated looting that characterised the war in 1991–92 created famine conditions among vulnerable and poorly armed agricultural communities in southern Somalia by late 1991. The famine that ensued claimed an estimated 240,000 lives.4

In 1991, only a small number of external relief agencies—principally the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), along with a handful of international NGOs—were operating inside the country. All were forced to purchase armed protection from the local militias. Although the term had yet to be coined, Somalia was one
of the early ‘complex political emergencies’ presenting new conflict dynamics and new security and political challenges to humanitarian actors.

Thanks to extensive media coverage of the famine, the number of humanitarian agencies in southern Somalia exploded in 1992, creating an often crowded field of NGOs. Each arrived into the country and brokered its own logistical and security arrangements, relying on advice from the more established organisations. Security arrangements were brokered with local authorities, usually militia leaders, but occasionally with local communities enjoying at least a modicum of autonomy from their clan warlords. As a general rule, however, relief agencies were ‘captured’ by whatever clan militia controlled their area of operation and were, to varying degrees, beholden to their interests. Aid agency personnel were rarely targeted, but their aid, employment, housing and vehicle rentals, security guards, and contracts were almost the only source of revenue. The price of protection was very high. While this was rationalised in aid compounds as the ‘price of doing business’ to save lives, some sought to hide the costs from their headquarters by reporting security expenses as ‘technical support’. It was in this way that the feared Somali battlewagons—modified vehicles with mounted guns—came to be known popularly as ‘technicals’.

1991–92 was a brief era of complete dominance of humanitarian agendas and actors. Humanitarian response was the sole external agenda, and international NGOs enjoyed a powerful voice in framing media coverage of the crisis and driving policy debates. But there was a cost. The more the humanitarian agencies stressed the severity of the famine to mobilise international response, the more external observers came to understand that much of the food aid was being diverted by militias. Inside the humanitarian aid community, quiet discussions were held as early as mid-1991 on the extent to which food aid and NGO resources had become part of a war economy. Eventually these concerns manifested themselves in a public debate in the media, pitting relief agency spokespersons calling for armed humanitarian intervention in order to protect food aid deliveries against those arguing against such an intervention. The latter group included those who asserted that food aid diversion was exaggerated, as well as those who were opposed in principle to military intervention. This lack of consensus essentially meant that the powerful voice of the humanitarian community cancelled itself out. The split within the humanitarian community over whether armed intervention was a good or bad idea in Somalia mirrored, and helped to drive, a wider debate on humanitarian intervention in this period. It was the issue of humanitarian access, and the question of whether the price of access to famine victims was complicity in a war economy, that raised broader policy concerns and helped to frame the fateful decision on the part of the outgoing administration of US President George H.W. Bush to send an unprecedented, 28,000-strong peace-enforcement operation into Somalia in December 1992.3

UNITAF operation, December 1992–May 1993
The US-led, UN-authorised ‘Operation Restore Hope’ (known officially as the Unified Task Force for Somalia) transformed the political–security landscape of humanitarian
operations in Somalia and, although it lasted only five months before transitioning to the United Nations Operation in Somalia, it constituted one of the most important early post–Cold War tests of humanitarian–military relations. For humanitarian actors, their operating environment changed overnight from one of high insecurity but complete autonomy to one of temporarily improved security but with much greater operational constraints. Relations with the military were far from smooth.

The most immediate impact of Operation Restore Hope was rapid and dramatic stabilisation of the countryside and the unimpeded, protected flow of humanitarian relief to communities in need of emergency relief. Longer-term objectives of national reconciliation, state revival and economic recovery were to be left to the UN successor operation, UNOSOM II, reflecting an overriding determination to avoid US military casualties in an intervention that was difficult to justify in narrow national security terms (Menkhaus and Ortmayer, 1995). With improved security and humanitarian access, food aid flowed and famine conditions were ended within weeks. Relief agencies scrambled to shift resources towards other emergency needs, especially basic health and sanitation interventions.

The stabilisation operation under UNITAF was straightforward, limited, and, in the short term, effective. Somalis were instructed that under no circumstances could they carry weapons in public. Militias cantoned a portion of their weapons in established sites, but most of their arms and ammunition were kept hidden in weapons caches. They correctly surmised that they could outwait the peacekeeping mission. For humanitarian agencies, the absence of open militia and criminal gang activities provided a welcome improvement in access and security, although there were still serious incidents. However, aid agencies generally had to rely on arranged armed escorts by UNITAF forces. This in effect gave UNITAF power over NGO and UN specialised agency movement, reducing their autonomy. Military officers charged with civil–military relations tended to place high value on efficiency, advance planning, and coordination in responding to requests to protect relief convoys and movements, but that came at a cost of reduced flexibility for NGOs. The military’s organisational culture was at odds with the highly independent and non-hierarchical NGO community. UNITAF saw improved coordination in humanitarian operations as a self-evident priority; humanitarian agency personnel interpreted calls for coordination as a thinly veiled effort to control them. Neither the military nor relief agencies had much experience of one another in 1993, so the learning curve for both was initially steep. Calls for greater humanitarian coordination were echoed in the UN as well, as the UN specialised agencies expanded their operations in Somalia and were pressured to engage in inter-agency coordination via the newly established Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA).

A more significant tension between humanitarian actors and UNITAF was at the political level. For NGOs, any UN policy that angered local clans or militias ran the risk of compromising their security. Early missteps by the UN political team as it brokered a peace accord in March 1993 heightened criticisms from the humanitarian community. As with the humanitarian discourse during the famine in 1992,
though, NGOs were split, with some complaining that UN diplomats were asking for trouble by trying to marginalise top militia leaders while others vocally criticised the UN for empowering the warlords instead of engaging Somali civil society. To a degree, both criticisms were correct, because UN policy was inconsistent. But the net effect was that UN political officials quickly concluded that the humanitarian community was a group of contrarians with an inflated sense of moral high ground, and grew suspicious of all humanitarian agencies.

**UNOSOM, May 1993–March 1995**

The handover from the Unified Task Force to the United Nations Operation in Somalia in May 1993 did not have an immediate impact on humanitarian operations or civil–military relations. However, UNOSOM’s stated mandate from the UN Security Council was far more directly focused on stabilisation objectives than was that of UNITAF. UN Security Council Resolution 814 (1993) had a number of watershed clauses in this regard. First, it implicitly subordinated humanitarian operations to the higher objective of stabilisation, by calling on the UN ‘to provide humanitarian and other assistance to the people of Somalia in rehabilitating their political institutions and economy and promoting political settlement and reconciliation. . .’. Second, it reinforced the expansive political and state-building mandate of the mission by calling on the UN ‘to assist the Somali people to promote and advance political reconciliation, through broad participation by all sectors of Somali society, and the re-establishment of national and regional institutions and civil administration in the entire country’. Finally, it mandated the UN to re-establish the Somali police at the national and local level, to ‘assist in the restoration and maintenance of peace, stability, and law and order’. Collectively these constituted a virtually unprecedented level of direct UN intervention in the core political and security functions of a failed state.

The direct role that UNOSOM officials were asked to play in brokering peace, overseeing the revival of formal political authorities at the national and local level, and managing the rebuilding of Somali police forces was intended to promote a long-term solution to the Somali crisis. But it also placed the UN at the centre of a contentious, high-stakes political process in which the UN’s ability to maintain a semblance of neutrality would be under enormous strain. Every decision that UN political authorities made, especially in interpreting the very vaguely worded peace accord signed by the main factions in March 1993 (the Addis Ababa Agreement), created winners and losers among nervous Somali faction leaders (Menkhaus, 2009). Relations between the UN and the most powerful militia leader in Mogadishu, General Mohamed Farah Aideed, were particularly strained.

The expanded political role assigned to the UN had several implications for humanitarian agencies. The first was the problem of maintenance of neutrality, as international NGOs were linked to UNOSOM through their dependence on UN
peacekeepers for armed escorts. Humanitarian agencies expressed alarm and frustration, as they understood they were tethered to the fate of a UNOSOM mission whose political and stabilisation operations created dangerous tensions with local militias. When Aideed’s militia ambushed UN peacekeepers in June 1993, precipitating a disastrous, four-month period of armed conflict between the UN/US and Aideed’s Somali National Alliance (SNA), aid agencies found themselves in a bind. They had difficulty maintaining claims of neutrality when their compounds and convoys were protected by UNOSOM forces; they had reduced humanitarian access to some communities due to the fighting; and agencies that openly criticised or documented cases of abuse by UN peacekeepers against the local population did so knowing that they still had to rely on those peacekeepers for their protection.

A second problem was that UN military operations aimed at capturing Aideed and destroying his militia—a classic stabilisation operation intended to remove an armed spoiler—had the unintended consequence of producing a dramatic deterioration in security across the capital. By July 1993, daily SNA shelling and ambushes of UN forces—and UN forces launched counter-attacks—rendered parts of Mogadishu very insecure and inaccessible. At that point, the humanitarian actors were no longer weighing up the trade-off between the costs and benefits of external stabilisation efforts; they were coping with a stabilisation operation that was actually destabilising the capital. Once it became clear that the UN’s battle with Aideed and the SNA could not be won, what little support the humanitarian community had given to UNOSOM vanished. At that juncture, UNOSOM was seen by humanitarian actors as part of the problem, not the solution, and relations between humanitarians and UN political offices were rancorous.

Third, humanitarian agencies were also aggrieved at UNOSOM’s rushed state-building initiatives. The UN hastily established district councils in an attempt to rebuild the Somali state via a bottom-up approach, but in some cases this produced very flawed councils that occasionally led to renewed armed clashes locally (Menkhaus, 1996). Where established, district councils had virtually no resources. Not surprisingly, they typically focused on exercising control over the international relief agencies operating in their area. Humanitarian agency personnel who had been accustomed to working out arrangements with informal authorities now found themselves having to deal with a formal government. Many NGOs resisted.

Some humanitarian claims were valid. The district councils had little competence and questionable legitimacy, and their demands created delays and obstacles to efficient delivery of aid. Humanitarian agencies on the ground knew far more about local politics than did the UN officials who ‘helicoptered’ in and out, and rightly criticised the UN for occasionally botching the process out of ignorance of local realities. But critics of the aid agencies also had a point when they claimed the humanitarian actors had grown too accustomed to being a law unto themselves and had turned into de facto local governments controlling almost all of the resources, jobs and contracts, accountable to no one. Part of the NGO backlash against UNOSOM state-building, these critics claimed, was fuelled by NGO reluctance to part with that
extraordinary level of autonomy. What was clear was that UNOSOM’s state-
building project had the effect of creating an unavoidable clash with humanitarian
aid agencies, who at that time tended to see governments, especially weak and/or
corrupt ones, as a source of humanitarian crises and something to work around, not
through, in delivering basic services. This tension over state-building and humani-
tarian agencies in 1993 was a harbinger of things to come in 2007.

Fourth, some humanitarian actors—mainly the UN specialised agencies—came
under political pressure to harness their aid in ways that directly advanced the process
of political reconciliation and state-building. UN diplomats needed to produce a
‘peace dividend’ to win local support and turned for help to humanitarian actors,
most of which had begun shifting their work away from purely emergency relief to
projects on what was then called the ‘relief-to-development continuum’. The UN
DHA office sought to facilitate ‘quick-impact projects’ in the service of broader
political objectives. The precedent of humanitarian agencies being pressed to tailor
their assistance to support broader political objectives was thus set.

One aspect of the humanitarian experience of UNOSOM stabilisation efforts that
received little attention at the time, but which in retrospect was quite significant,
was the case of Luuq, a district near the Ethiopia–Kenya border that from 1991–96
came under the control of an Islamist militia known as Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiyya
(AIAI). The AIAI opposed the UNOSOM intervention and refused to allow it to
operate in Luuq, but it had no objections to UN and other humanitarian aid organisa-
tions operating in areas under its control, as long as they abided by strict rules on
personal comportment. The result was an unusual ‘black spot’ in southern Somalia
where humanitarian actors could work but not UN peacekeepers. The AIAI’s ter-
ritory was well-policed and secure, and problems of corruption or security threats
dealt with swiftly. For aid agencies, the AIAI’s restrictive policies were at times a
source of frustration, but the security environment that the AIAI created proved to
be much more durable than in UNOSOM-controlled areas. Humanitarian actors
consistently voiced a preference for dealing with the AIAI than with its factional
rival, the Somali National Front (Menkhaus, 1999). The pragmatic humanitarian
approach to working with the AIAI was a source of tension in UNOSOM head-
quarters, a tension that would resurface in 2007 as humanitarian agencies again sought
to work in areas controlled by hard-line Islamists against the objectives of UN and
US diplomats.


The departure of the failed UNOSOM mission in March 1995 put an end to ambi-
tious international state-building agendas in Somalia. For the next seven years,
Somalia remained ‘stateless’ but it did not fall back into a state of armed anarchy
and civil war. Instead, south-central Somalia witnessed the gradual demise of armed
factions and the rise of a somewhat more secure but much more complex mosaic of
localised systems of informal governance. This patch-quilt of governance included
clan elders, municipalities, neighbourhood sharia courts, neighbourhood watch groups, private business security forces, warlord fiefdoms, and self-declared regional states (Gundel, 2006a; Menkhaus, 2006).

This ‘messy’ post-1995 political environment meant that humanitarian agencies in Somalia had to negotiate access continuously, and often village by village. This was hardly ideal, but became a routinised modus operandi for humanitarian agencies. The operating landscape changed in other ways as well. For one thing, far fewer humanitarian agencies remained on the ground. The ICRC retained a sizable presence in south-central Somalia, as did CARE, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), but many others closed down their operations. Agencies that continued operating in Somalia did so as cross-border operations, with headquarters relocated to the safety of Nairobi, Kenya. Second, one major donor, the European Commission (EC), came to dominate the funding landscape, producing a lengthy and dysfunctional power struggle with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) over control of governance programming in Somalia. The EC Somalia Unit, based in Nairobi, possessed its own sectoral departments which, by merit of controlling most of the available project funding, were in a position to drive international aid policy on everything from health and education to security and governance. Both local actors and international NGOs had little choice but to accept the EC’s policies.

Third, most aid programming in south-central Somalia fell somewhere between straight-up humanitarian response and post-conflict rehabilitation work. On the one hand, Somalia was no longer suffering from famine conditions and ‘loud’ humanitarian emergencies associated with war and widespread displacement. Yet basic human development indicators were so low, food security so chronically poor, and malnutrition levels so high in some regions that the country still presented levels of need akin to that of a full-blown humanitarian crisis. Mark Bradbury and other observers voiced alarm that international donors were ‘normalising the crisis’ in Somalia by redefining what constituted a bona fide humanitarian emergency, allowing international thresholds for what constituted unacceptable human misery in Somalia to rise to reach shocking levels (Bradbury, 1998). In practice, the blurring of humanitarian and rehabilitation work meant that aid organisations normally focusing on rehabilitation projects found themselves addressing needs that in any other setting would have been ‘loud emergencies’.

The deterioration of security for aid agencies during this period became a major preoccupation, and prompted several policy responses. One response was to reduce the number of international staff in the field and to rely more heavily on national officers. A second, more innovative response was to shift the security burden for food aid deliveries from aid agencies to local contractors. WFP, the main deliverer of food aid, required local transport contractors to place a sizeable deposit in escrow before taking on shipment of food aid to regional warehouses and distribution sites. The money in escrow was only released to the contractor once WFP confirmed delivery of the food aid. Critics argued that the enormous costs associated with
required security deposits reduced the number of eligible contractors to a handful of local businessmen, and that some of those contractors developed an interest in perpetuate conditions requiring humanitarian response.

One of the most important responses in the mid-1990s was a policy developed by the Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB), a consortium of donors, UN specialised agencies and international NGOs operating in Somalia created in 1994. The 1995 SACB ‘Code of Conduct for International Rehabilitation and Development Assistance to Somalia’ made adequate security for aid agencies a precondition for rehabilitation operations, and placed primary responsibility for security of aid personnel on the shoulders of local authorities. In a way, the SACB Code of Conduct constituted an outsourcing of ‘stabilisation’ to local authorities, whether or not they were capable of delivering it. Often they were not. As Karin von Hippel (2007, p. 314) observed, ‘this policy rarely succeeded and in many respects it seemed unfair to put so much pressure on local authorities that exerted only partial control over the territories they claimed’. By imposing ‘security conditionality’ on foreign aid, the SACB also sent a clear message that the security it insisted on was for international aid agencies, not local populations (Menkhaus, 2008).

With security for aid agencies and their staff accorded increasingly high priority, the question arose as to who had the authority to assess local security conditions. Within the UN system, this authority fell to the UN security office known until 2005 as UNSECOORD (Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator) (subsequently renamed the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)). But it was only one of many sources of security monitoring and analysis within the UN family. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the late 1990s developed an impressive political and security assessment capacity of its own. Some UN specialised agencies maintained their own security officers, and outsourced political and security analysis on Somalia to outside consultants. For their part, international NGOs developed their own, parallel system, the NGO SPA (Security, Preparedness and Support) office, modelled on a similar programme in Afghanistan (Gundel, 2006b).

For all of the deep frustration associated with the post-UNOSOM period, some important progress was made in the humanitarian community in Somalia. A ‘smart aid’ reform effort launched by UN Resident Coordinator Randolph Kent made OCHA a major player in coordinating policy within the SACB, and the development of the Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU) allowed for more targeted and hence less disruptive humanitarian assistance. Adoption of a ‘livelihoods’ approach also improved humanitarian aid interventions in reducing dependence and improving sustainability (Le Sage and Majid, 2002).

**The post-9/11 era in Somalia, 2001–06**

The new millennium brought with it two important changes for humanitarian access and stabilisation programmes in Somalia. First, post-11 September 2001 concerns about
terrorist attacks on UN and Western aid agencies soared. Second, international concerns grew about the security threats that could emanate from Somalia’s ‘ungoverned space’, generating renewed interest in the promotion of state revival. The heightened external focus on security for aid agency personnel reflected a global trend for the UN system, as security conditions worsened in areas in which it sought to operate. Al-Qa’ida’s publicly stated view of the UN as a tool of the US placed UN aid personnel under enormous risk in the post-9/11 environment. A nascent jihadist militia in Somalia that eventually came to be known as shabaab was responsible for the assassination of several international aid workers in Somaliland in 2003, as well as the killing of numerous Somali national officers of international NGOs in Mogadishu who were accused of collaborating with US intelligence.

In the face of criticism for failing to anticipate and prepare adequately for the terrorist attack on the UN compound in Baghdad, Iraq, on 19 August 2003, the UNDSS began imposing much tighter security restrictions on UN staff around the world. The new organisational culture of risk-aversion was entirely understandable, but at the time critics argued that restrictions seemed designed more to protect the organisational interests of the UNDSS than to facilitate safe humanitarian access. The UNDSS accrued enormous influence over UN humanitarian access, as it could restrict or even prevent (by declaring an area ‘phase 5’) UN travel into areas deemed too insecure. To some local actors, the UNDSS appeared too much like a foreign intelligence agency, and in some instances Somali belligerents actively targeted Somalis working directly or indirectly with the UNDSS. Ironically, the very monitoring and analysis functions that were intended to improve security for humanitarian actors now made them vulnerable to charges of spying for the West.

2006–08: intervention and crisis

Seismic changes have swept Somalia since 2006, creating much more difficult political and security circumstances for humanitarian actors and reintroducing major external stabilisation operations that, from the perspective of humanitarian agencies, have contributed to, rather than reduced, instability and armed conflict. The series of events that produced these seismic changes are exceedingly complex, but can be summarised as follows:

- Creation of a Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in late 2004, following two years of internationally-sponsored peace talks in Nairobi. The TFG is dominated by a narrow coalition, internally split, dysfunctional, and unable to establish a presence in the Mogadishu in 2005–06.
- Outbreak of war in Mogadishu in early 2006 pitting a US-backed coalition of militia leaders against a coalition of Islamist militias that comes to be known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).
- Decisive victory by the ICU in June 2006, allowing the Islamists to consolidate control over all of the capital and most of the territory of south-central Somalia.
The ICU establishes high levels of public order and security, making it popular with war-weary Somalis, and begins creating a de facto governmental structure. • Creeping radicalisation of the ICU as hard-liners gain ascendance, producing mounting tensions with Ethiopia and the US, and culminating in a late December 2006 Ethiopian military offensive that quickly routs the ICU and drives its leadership into exile. • Ethiopian military occupation of Mogadishu in 2007 and 2008, accompanied by the installation of the TFG in the capital and the eventual arrival of ANISOM peacekeepers. • Robust international support extended to the TFG, with the intention of helping it strengthen its capacity and legitimacy. The TFG leadership remains adamantly opposed to power-sharing and demonstrates limited interested in building up its civil service. • Rise of a ‘complex insurgency’ in early 2007, led by a radical Islamist militia, shabaab, against the Ethiopian forces, the TFG and AMISOM. Shabaab openly advertises links to Al-Qa’ida, breaks with the exiled leadership of the ex-ICU, and introduces use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings into Somalia, inflicting heavy losses on Ethiopian forces and the TFG. • Heavy-handed counter-insurgency campaign, in which Ethiopian forces shell heavily populated neighbourhoods and uncontrolled TFG security forces terrorise the Mogadishu population, including widespread assault, rape and extortion. • Explosion of a massive humanitarian crisis in April 2007, the result of the displacement of a total of some 700,000 Mogadishu residents to the countryside. Other factors—disruption of commercial movement of food due to armed conflict and a rise in militia roadblocks, a spike in global food and fuel prices, an epidemic of counterfeiting of Somali shillings, and drought—add to the humanitarian crisis. By 2008, 3.5 million Somalis, or close to one-half of the total population of south-central Somalia, are in need of emergency food relief, making Somalia the worst humanitarian crisis in the world (Menkhaus, 2008). • Expansion of shabaab and other insurgents’ control over most of southern Somalia and much of Mogadishu, and the shrinking of the area under TFG/Ethiopian control. Aid agencies have little choice but to reach understandings with Islamist insurgent groups in order to have any access to most populations in need. • Designation of shabaab as a terrorist organisation by the US Department of State in March 2008. In May 2008 a US tomahawk missile strike kills the leader of shabaab, Aden Hashi ‘Ayro. Shabaab responds by declaring all American, Western and UN officials and organisations to be on its expanded list of targets, placing aid agencies in much greater peril.

The most immediate impact of this political deterioration was a dramatic shrinkage of humanitarian access. In 2007–08, TFG leaders, the paramilitaries operating in the name of the TFG, and Ethiopian military leaders were all deeply suspicious of humanitarian organisations and saw emergency relief as support to ‘terrorists’. Aid convoys were blocked or looted by TFG forces, and agency personnel harassed and
assassinated. An explosion in the number of freelance militia led to the creation of hundreds of roadblocks and the threatening of aid convoys and the kidnapping of aid agency staff. And in some instances, shabaab and other Islamist insurgents attacked or expelled relief agencies. The result was a highly non-permissive operating environment for humanitarian actors, and a deadly year for many aid agency staff. One-third of all humanitarian casualties worldwide occurred in Somalia in 2008, and most humanitarian operations were either suspended or curtailed (Stodard, Harmer and DiDomenico, 2009, p. 4). Although the ICRC, WFP and some others maintained food aid services where they could, important humanitarian actors such as CARE and the International Medical Corps had to suspend operations in 2008. One aid worker observed, ‘[f]ew agencies will admit the levels of security they have been forced to adopt and the level of risk with which they operate’.13

In this context, tensions between humanitarian and stabilisation operations rose to unprecedented levels. First, the imperative for unimpeded, efficient and neutral humanitarian access collided with the interests and agendas of local political actors. The first emerging local authority, the ICU (in 2006), demonstrated distrust of Western aid agencies and the Somali civil society groups with which they entered into partnerships. The ICU saw civil society groups as a potential rival and Western aid agencies as vectors of agendas and values with which the Islamists did not always agree. The dominant role of Somali women in these groups, and the importance of women’s issues in livelihood and other programmes, was viewed as a Western agenda. The ICU communicated to all NGOs and UN specialised agencies the requirement that they register with the ICU and have all projects approved by, and routed through, ICU authorities. The implication was that the ICU was a sovereign authority over the areas it controlled, and that it had both the right and the need to have full control over the activities of foreign organisations. Aid agencies were torn: they appreciated the much-improved public security produced by the ICU, but worried that the ICU was actively marginalising Somali civil society.

Relations between humanitarian actors and the TFG were unquestionably much worse in 2007 and 2008. While it possessed almost no administrative capacity at all, the TFG insisted on exercising its sovereign right to control the flow and direction of international humanitarian aid. This was mainly driven by the desire to block aid delivery to populations that the TFG deemed sympathetic to the insurgency—namely, most of the Mogadishu population. In the midst of the massive exodus of Mogadishu residents from the war-torn capital in spring 2007, the TFG blocked convoys of food aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs), claiming some of the food might be old and that it had to inspect each truck to protect Somalis from the threat of expired grain. In reality, the TFG had no inspection capacity at all and merely sought to stop the aid shipments. TFG officials also devoted considerable energies to more routinised forms of income generation at the expense of humanitarian actors, engaging in what one NGO official called the ‘bleeding’ of aid agencies through ad hoc official called the ‘bleeding’ of aid agencies through ad hoc taxes, duties and landing fees, all little more than extortion by individuals diverting the money for private gain.14 In addition, the TFG of 2007–08
exhibited a deep antipathy towards international NGOs and local civil society organisations involved in humanitarian response, seeing them as dangerous critics, watchdogs and potential political rivals. Ironically, deep distrust of NGOs and civil society was the one thing on which the Ethiopian government, the TFG and hard-line Somali Islamists all agreed. International humanitarian agencies responded in kind by avoiding contact with TFG officials whom they came to view as little more than predators.

But the most contentious clash between humanitarian and political interests played out at the international level. When the TFG rode the Ethiopian military’s coattails into Mogadishu in January 2007, the US, UN and Western donor states committed themselves to the success of the TFG. The TFG became, as diplomats and UN officials put it, ‘the only game in town’. Building up the capacity and legitimacy of the transitional institutions became the overriding objective. This translated into an array of state-building programmes, including direct financial support of TFG police.

At the same time, humanitarian aid agencies were trying to reach the rapidly growing number of people displaced by the insurgency and counter-insurgency. TFG security forces whose salaries and training had been paid for by the international community were actively complicit in the humanitarian disaster, preying on and driving away local populations in the capital and then blocking humanitarian aid, preventing it from reaching them. The contradiction was readily apparent: one hand of the ‘international community’ was strengthening the capacity of the TFG security forces while the other was trying to alleviate the humanitarian disaster those very forces helped to perpetrate. A showdown between humanitarian and state-building agendas was unavoidable.

Worse, key UN and donor state diplomats saw the massive humanitarian crisis as an embarrassment to the TFG that could potentially de-legitimise the entire government, and so they sought to downplay the scale of the humanitarian crisis, questioning the figures of aid agencies and, at times, their motives. At the centre of the international debate was the relationship between humanitarian relief operations and the TFG. Key donor states, as well as the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, wanted humanitarian relief to be channelled through the TFG to help legitimise it in the eyes of the Somali public. Ould-Abdallah repeatedly emphasised the need for permanent, long-term, political solutions to the Somali crisis, implicitly criticising humanitarian response as little more than a band-aid and a diversion from the greater task of political reconstruction. Part of this line of argument involved challenging the entire notion of ‘humanitarian neutrality’, which the SRSG did overtly in a 2009 opinion editorial. Implying that shabaab finances itself by controlling humanitarian aid in the interior of the country, Ould-Abdallah charged that ‘those who claim neutrality can also be complicit’ (Ould-Abdallah, 2009).

For many humanitarian agencies, this was an outrage—their view was that the entire humanitarian crisis was due to the abusive Ethiopian and TFG security sector behaviour that was uncritically backed by the UN SRSG, and that if anyone was complicit in the vast human suffering in Somalia it was the UN political leadership and key donor states backing the TFG.
The insistence by the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and donor states that humanitarian aid had to be routed through the TFG was a trap. The TFG was viewed by aid agencies, correctly, as corrupt, incompetent, and an active party to the ongoing war. To work with and through the TFG in order to deliver humanitarian assistance, in the name of the ‘greater good’ of state-building, would mean acquiescing to the overt politicisation of food aid and accepting the almost certain reality that the aid would never reach those in need. It would also require surrendering any pretense of neutrality in a war in which the TFG was an active participant, which would render the humanitarian aid agencies even more vulnerable to attacks. By mid-2007, relations between international political and humanitarian actors were poisonous. It was in many ways a replay of the tensions that emerged in the UNOSOM stabilisation operation of 1993–94.

Both sides possessed persuasive arguments. The ‘state-builders’ were correct to claim that only addressing the humanitarian dimension of the Somali crisis was helping to perpetuate it, and that the long-term solution—a durable, viable Somali state—required that external actors work to strengthen the government, not work around it. The ‘humanitarians’ were correct to argue that the TFG lacked both the capacity and the will to organise humanitarian response, that TFG security forces were a major source of the crisis, and that both for reasons of effectiveness and neutrality humanitarian aid needed to be delivered independent of TFG authorities. What the humanitarian agencies possessed in their favour in this debate was contextual political analysis. The state-building, stabilisation agenda only held up if a key assumption—namely, that the government was at least willing, if not yet able, to assist in the delivery of emergency relief to its own citizens—was true. That assumption was utterly untenable in 2007–08.

In response, the general trend was for relief agencies to adopt a ‘pragmatic’ approach on the ground—a codeword to justify working with whatever authorities they encountered on the ground. This was most politically sensitive for relief operations in areas under the control of a shabaab cell. Shabaab was internally divided on the matter of external aid agencies: some commanders rejected them altogether while others welcomed them. As the main deliverer of food aid, WFP came under particular political pressure from donors and UN diplomats for working with and enjoying the protection of shabaab. But through 2008 WFP and other agencies held their ground, arguing that the imperative of humanitarian access in the face of such a large emergency outweighed political considerations. In the end, even the UN consolidated air service relied on a small airport in the Bakool region that was controlled and protected by a local shabaab militia. In a 2009 interview, UN Humanitarian Coordinator Mark Bowden observed that if shabaab accepts aid operations according to established international humanitarian principles, how could aid agencies not agree to work there? (Abild, 2009, p. 34). Although donor states and UN diplomats grumbled, they acquiesced to this humanitarian pragmatism up until late 2009.

Importantly, stabilisation initiatives in Somalia were not limited to strengthening the capacity of the transitional government. They also included three distinct
international military operations. The first, the Ethiopian military occupation of 2007–08, was hostile to relief operations and helped to aid and abet the TFG’s policies of obstructionism. The second, the AMISOM peacekeeping force, was given a relatively broad mandate by the UN Security Council (UN Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007)), one which tasked it primarily with protection of transitional federal institutions, and stated, among other things, that it ‘contribute, as may be requested and within capabilities, to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance’. AMISOM has never been in a position to establish security conditions beyond a narrow section of Mogadishu, and has never attempted to provide military escorts for food relief convoys once they leave the seaport. Its counter-attacks in response to shabaab shelling have resulted in serious civilian casualties and deeply angered the Mogadishu population.

US counter-terrorism operations against foreign Al-Qa’ida and top shabaab figures are the third external military mission inside Somalia. It has manifested itself in a number of ways, ranging from support to local militia allies to occasional direct strikes against ‘high-value’ targets in Somalia. The decision to designate shabaab a terrorist organisation in 2008, and then to take out its leader with a tomahawk missile, created considerable problems for humanitarian access, as aid officials are seen as possible spies of the US. As long as Somalia remains the site of a confrontation between the US and Al-Qa’ida, international NGOs and UN specialised agencies will continue to have to cope with exceptionally high security threats.

Post-occupation Somalia, 2009–

The political and humanitarian situation in Somalia was bleaker than ever by late 2008. But hopes were raised in December of that year with the announcement of two major developments: an Ethiopian military withdrawal, and the establishment of a new, more broad-based TFG led by moderate Islamists, many of whom had been leaders in the old ICU. The expectation was that these two changes would defuse the insurgency, produce a government that would welcome and facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid, and bring an end to both the political and humanitarian crisis in the country. Those hopes were not realised in 2009. Instead, shabaab rejected the new TFG and declared it apostate for collaborating with the West and with Ethiopia. The hard-line Islamist insurgencies continued to wage war against the besieged TFG and the 6,000-strong AMISOM protecting the TFG. As a result, insecurity remained high, humanitarian need and displacement actually rose further in 2009, and humanitarian access remained as poor as ever. Despite these setbacks, Western donor states and the UN continued to press hard to ensure the success of the TFG, arguing that the newly reconstituted TFG was not merely Somalia’s best prospect for peace, but its only chance.

In the UN, this commitment to making the TFG work manifested itself in new plans to create a ‘heavy footprint’ for the world body in Mogadishu, possibly involving a ‘green zone’ in the city secured for UN aid agencies and political offices.
Both the UN SRSG and the UN Special Representative on Human Rights put strong, public pressure on humanitarian aid agencies to continue operations in the country despite extraordinary levels of insecurity (allAfrica.com, 2009). Instead, over the course of 2009, the UN and international NGO staff presence declined. By September 2009, the UN had no international staff on the ground anywhere in south Somalia; most of the 51 international UN staff members in the country were concentrated in the relatively secure north. NGO staffing figures were slightly better: 20 international NGO officials were on the ground in south Somalia, and a total of 120 were in the country (UNOCHA–Somalia, 2009, p. 4). Even when in-country, though, the heavily secured UN compounds, combined with sharp restrictions on movement, raised the question of how much access this fortified presence actually afforded the encased international humanitarian aid workers.

One of the most dramatic policy shifts affecting humanitarian access occurred in September 2009, when the US government withheld new food aid deliveries to aid agencies subject to a policy review to determine if the food aid it was providing via humanitarian agencies was being diverted in areas of Somalia controlled by shabaab (Gettleman, 2009). Any resources introduced into Somalia that benefit a designated terrorist organisation risk violation of the Patriot Act and the US Executive Order on Terrorism Financing of February 2002, contraventions that carry serious legal penalties for organisations receiving US funding and for the US personnel of those organisations. Because shabaab controls most of the countryside in Somalia, and because an estimated 60 per cent of the 3.5 million Somalis in need at this time are in shabaab-controlled areas, the suspension had the potential to be catastrophic, and produced disarray in the humanitarian community (Gettleman, 2009). It was unclear if the policy review was part of a political strategy designed to squeeze shabaab, which was understood to be strapped financially, or if it was strictly the product of legal concerns and procedures within the US government. No credible humanitarian actor disputes the US government claim that some of the food aid is diverted by shabaab. Relief agencies concede that south-central Somalia is an ‘accountability-free zone’ in which they possess only modest monitoring capacities, but argue that a cut-off of food aid could produce a massive humanitarian disaster that cannot be justified either on legal or strategic grounds. Humanitarian actors also dispute the highly legalistic position taken by US government officials, one of whom told The New York Times that ‘we were compelled to hold up [food aid shipments] once there were legitimate concerns that the aid might be being diverted’ . . . ‘[w]e have to follow the law’ (Gettleman, 2009). Aid workers interviewed subsequently noted that relief agencies in Somalia have long worked out arrangements in rebel-held areas and donors have quietly supported the deals they have struck for access, knowing a percentage of aid was being diverted. In some cases, such as south Lebanon and the West Bank in the eastern part of the Palestinian Territories, the US government issued a waiver to protect aid agencies from legal liability. But in the case of Somalia, no such waiver was granted. Thus shabaab’s designation by the US government as a terrorist organisation creates additional legal complications both for aid agencies
negotiating the delivery of aid and USAID officials ultimately responsible for the dispensation of that aid. Aid agencies argue further that a distinction must be made between food aid, which can be easily diverted and resold, and other types of humanitarian assistance such as medical aid, which can be delivered without serious concern about diversion.

This issue came to a head in December 2009, when WFP, the main purveyor of food aid into Somalia, announced the suspension of food relief into south-central Somalia. It cited insecurity, not US legal restrictions, although not all were convinced of this explanation. The ICRC continued to provide some food aid in Somalia, but the WFP suspension of food aid ran the risk of plunging southern Somalia into famine-like conditions. In the first six months of the suspension, a combination of good rains, strong diaspora remittances, and resilient Somali coping mechanisms saw the country through with elevated cases of malnutrition but no famine. In the longer term, the impasse between humanitarian aid and US counter-terrorism laws will remain a major problem, and underscores the fundamental tension between political and humanitarian agendas in Somalia.

Conclusion

Humanitarian access in Somalia has a long history of entanglement with stabilisation objectives. Humanitarian relief was manipulated to prop up a valuable client government during the Cold War; harnessed as an instrument to promote state-building; made conditional as a tool to pressure local authorities to provide security; used by both local and international actors as an informal means of gathering information and intelligence in pursuit of security aims; and blocked as part of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism policies. Local, national and international actors have all displayed an easy willingness to sacrifice humanitarian access in pursuit of other goals, and at times have demonstrated a surprising degree of hostility towards the principle of humanitarian neutrality. This ‘instrumentalist’ approach to humanitarian aid by political actors pursuing stabilisation goals in Somalia has been at its most unvarnished form in the period since 2006, and is responsible for the deep tensions within the donor, aid and diplomatic community in Nairobi.

The Somali case demonstrates that, when external stabilisation efforts in a failed state are pursued through a state-building initiative, humanitarian access can quickly become the target of political battles. This can occur for a number of reasons. First, humanitarian access is particularly vulnerable when the transition government becomes a party in renewed civil war, a setback that frequently occurs in fragile post-conflict accords. State-building and humanitarian enterprises are in that instance unavoidably at loggerheads, as humanitarian actors prioritise neutrality to avoid the security risks that emerge when they are seen as having ‘taken sides’ in a war. Second, humanitarian access can be compromised when the transitional government is weak yet donors pressure aid agencies to work through the state to legitimise it and enhance its capacity. Transitional governments emerging from wars are almost always weak,
making them an inefficient or even dysfunctional partner for humanitarian actors, for whom efficient response is a top priority to save lives. Third, when transitional governments are not only weak but venal and predatory, humanitarian access can be compromised by governments seeking to divert relief aid towards their own constituencies or into private pockets. Finally, in situations where state-building efforts take place in a zone of active Al-Qaeda or other global security threats, counter-terrorism operations intended to stabilise a country (by ridding it of Al-Qaeda operatives) can inadvertently destabilise humanitarian access, creating conditions in which radicals make no distinction between international aid agencies and US security and intelligence operations. In the case of Somalia, all four of these dynamics were present simultaneously in the period since 2006, contributing to the exceptionally high degree of dysfunctional relations between stabilisation initiatives and humanitarian access.

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**Endnotes**

1. This is in opposition to the frequent claim that Somalia is *sui generis* and such an extreme, complex case that it constitutes an outlier for a whole host of theories on state collapse, fragile states, state-building, peace-building, conflict analysis, mediation, and other fields. This paper takes the position that, while aspects of the Somali case are obviously unique, and that sensitivity to context and complexity must be privileged in both analysis of and policy towards Somalia, the country’s crisis is not so distinct that it precludes useful comparative analysis. Eckstein (1975) first articulated the notion of ‘crucial cases’. For a recent refinement of the approach, see Gerring (2009). The methodological approach of this study as a ‘comparative case” is informed by the work of George and Bennett (2005).

2. When a top UNHCR official questioned these figures in private correspondence to Geneva, his letter was intercepted by the government and he was arrested and threatened with execution. It took direct intervention by UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar to secure the official’s release.

3. Unless otherwise cited, evidence and anecdotes in this section of the paper are derived from the author’s personal experience of working with the humanitarian relief operation in Somalia in summer 1991.
As in other complex emergencies, the number of deaths attributed to war and famine in Somalia became the subject of debate and confusion. This figure of 240,000 is derived from the most systematic study of excess mortality in Somalia. See Refugee Policy Group (1994a).

When troop contributions from the 23 other countries were included, the total number of forces in UNITAF reached 37,000 in March 1993. See United Nations Department of Public Information (2010).

For details on civil–military relations during UNOSOM, see Kennedy (1997) and Refugee Policy Group (1994b).

DHA no longer exists; it was succeeded by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

For the latter view, see Middle East Report (1993).

Unless otherwise cited, evidence and observations in this section are derived from the author’s personal experience as Special Political Advisor in UNOSOM for a nine-month period in 1993 and 1994.

There were exceptions to this generalisation—for instance, the ‘El Nino’ floods of 1997–98 required airlifting of food aid to communities cut off by the floodwaters. See Bradbury and Coultan (1998).

UNHCR, for instance, outsources political analysis and forecasting to Writenet. See http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher/WRITENET.html.

A ‘phase 3’ designation does not automatically render an area off limits to UN staff, but it places heavy travel and security restrictions on UN staff.

Author interview, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2009.

Author interview, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2009.

The description ‘hard-line’ is emphasised here, as moderate Islamists have enjoyed good relations with civil society groups and both local and international NGOs.

Relations with the TFG improved somewhat in 2008, when the former Secretary-General of the Somali Red Crescent Society, Hassan Nur Adde, was appointed Prime Minister. He was actively supportive of humanitarian relief agencies but lacked the ability to control the TFG paramilitaries preying on relief operations.

The temptation on the part of donor states to harness humanitarian aid to advance state-building and security objectives is not new, and has been observed and critiqued in several studies. See, for example, Duffield (2001).

Correspondence with aid worker, October 2009.

Correspondence with NGO official, October 2009.

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