VOLUME 92

Somalia

Mark W. DeLancey
Sheila L. Elliott
December Green
Kenneth J. Menkhaus
Mohammed Haji Moqtar
Peter J. Schraeder

Compilers

CLIO PRESS
OXFORD, ENGLAND · SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
DENVER, COLORADO
Contents

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. xi
THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE .................................................. 1
GEOGRAPHY ................................................................................... 4
TRAVELLERS' ACCOUNTS ............................................................... 7
FLORA AND FAUNA ....................................................................... 11
ANTHROPOLOGY ........................................................................... 17
HISTORY ........................................................................................ 28
LANGUAGE ...................................................................................... 43
RELIGION ....................................................................................... 50
POPULATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE .................................... 54
URBANIZATION AND MIGRATION ................................................ 64
POLITICS ......................................................................................... 66
ADMINISTRATION .......................................................................... 78
CONSTITUTION, LEGAL SYSTEM AND LAND TENURE ............... 82
FOREIGN RELATIONS ..................................................................... 87
ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ................................ 99
TRADE .......................................................................................... 104

ix
Contents

INDUSTRY, POWER, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS ........................................ 108
AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY ....................................................... 111
EDUCATION ........................................................................................................ 118
ART AND MUSIC ............................................................................................... 124
LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE ........................................................................ 128
STATISTICS ......................................................................................................... 141
PRINTING, PUBLISHING AND BROADCASTING ............................................. 145
LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES ......................................................... 149
PERIODICALS ...................................................................................................... 151
BIBLIOGRAPHIES .............................................................................................. 153
INDEX OF AUTHORS ......................................................................................... 159
INDEX OF TITLES ............................................................................................... 167
INDEX OF SUBJECTS ........................................................................................ 177
MAP OF SOMALIA ............................................................................................... 193
Introduction

The purpose of this introduction is to provide the reader with a brief overview of the economy, polity and society in Somalia while also providing a summation of the scope and depth of the literature within a number of topical areas comprising the field of Somali studies.

Somali studies itself is a rather recent arrival as until 1978 all fields of interest involving Somalia were placed under the obviously unsatisfactory category of Ethiopian studies. Since 1978 there has been a resurgence of interest in Somalia and while it would be impossible to place a date on the opening of this 'renaissance' the theme of a panel at the 1978 African Studies Associations meeting, Recent developments in Somali studies, indicated a new focus of interest.¹

Consequently, a steadily growing number of academics has been added to the previously small group devoted to Somali studies. Thus, the field of northeast African studies as a whole has not only broadened, but has also been enriched. Significant in this renaissance are the triennial Congresses of Somali studies which bring together Somali specialists from all over the world. The 1986 Congress was held in Rome and the next will be in Mogadishu.

However, such a renaissance (as represented by S. S. Samatar, N. Farrax, L. Cassanelli and D. Laitin) would not have been possible without the work of an earlier generation of writers like Galaal, Adam, Andrzejewski, Lewis and Castagno and an even earlier group of unnamed Somali poets and historians.¹

Much of the newer work shares the emphases of its predecessors. The result is that the field we now call Somali studies tends to be characterized by a rather pointed concentration of interest in certain areas and neglect of others. One of the major contributors to the field, L. Cassanelli, has drawn attention to this limitation, noting that literature, archaeology,
Introduction

history, anthropology and international relations form the core of Somali studies.²

While, since the late 1970s, the same disciplines continue to form its core other areas of the field have been opened up (notably development studies) and gaps within the traditional fields of interest are beginning to be filled. The following introduction will provide general information on Somalia, indicating the range and depth of the literature available on each area as well as pinpointing areas which have been relatively neglected.

In this bibliography the sources named are included principally because they concern Somalia, are available in English and were written in recent years. All the sources cited are available in the United States and include the most important works in the field. The emphasis is on books, though articles, documents and monographs are also cited as are doctoral dissertations in subject areas where little published material is available. Although there is a large body of material available in Italian we have made reference to this literature only when no relevant English-language material is available. Those wishing to study the Italian materials should refer to the bibliographies by G. C. Stella, *Africa orientale* (Ravenna: the author, 1986); F. Carbani, *Bibliografia Somalia* (Rome: Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, 1983); and M. K. Salad, *Somalia* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1977).

Geography

Located in East Africa, Somalia comprises a land area of 246,155 square miles (slightly smaller than Texas), with a coastline of 2,000 miles, one of the longest in Africa. The Somali coast runs along the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, forming the Horn of Africa. Perhaps best known internationally for the boundary wars with its neighbours, Somalia shares borders with Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, the most contested being that to the west, formed by the Ogaden area.

The topography of Somalia is comprised mostly of flat plateaux and plains, with the Ogo and Golis mountain ranges running east to west in the far north and an extremely dry plateau in the northeast. There is also a smaller, lush region suited for agricultural production in what is known as the interriverine area. Originating in the Ethiopian highlands the rivers contributing to
the agricultural production of Somalia are the Juba and Shebelle. Further south, between the Juba and the Kenyan border, is an area of low pastureland.

Rainfall, averaging annually at less than seventeen inches over most areas, is not dependable and droughts are frequent. Seasons are defined by rainfall with two wet seasons of erratic rain (heavier in April-June and lighter in October-November).

The climate is tropical, with little seasonal change in temperature through most of the country. While the mean temperature is 24-31° centigrade the interior and area on the Gulf of Aden are hotter and the plateaux cooler.

The major urban areas are the capital, Mogadishu (1981 population estimate 500,000), Hargeisa (70,000), Kismayu (70,000) and Berbera (65,000). While demographic estimates of all sorts are unreliable the United Nations, in 1984, estimated the national population to be 4,539,000, not including an estimated one million refugees from Ethiopia. Somalia is characterized by high birth (its crude birthrate is estimated at 44.6 per 1,000) and high infant mortality rates. While it currently is not considered by standard measures to be overpopulated many development planners warn that Somalia’s harsh environment can only provide for a relatively small population.

People

Often considered one of the most homogeneous of African populations, the Somalis are comprised of two major groups: the dominant Samaale (75 per cent of the population) and the Sab (20 per cent). There exists some controversy over whether the Sab have been fully incorporated as Somalis for they have traditionally been distinguished as sedentary or semi-sedentary agriculturalists inhabiting the interriverine area, while the Samaale are pastoral nomads.

The Samaale are believed to be Hamitic in origin whereas the Sab are Bantu, migrants from the equatorial lakes of Africa. It is hypothesized that the Samaale have inhabited the Horn for at least 1,000 years, driving out or subjugating the populations of the interriverine areas as slaves. However, much of the literature maintains that the two groups have been integrated through intermarriage and that they are now considered as one. Recent studies by archaeologists will provide information that may alter much traditional thought on this subject.
Introduction

Perhaps the dominant form of social organization is the clan system, which, although officially illegal, is still a major point of identification for Somalis. There are many different clans based on common descent through the male line and although clan ties are based on kinship more than locality, accusations of clan and regional favouritism have been levelled against the government. The basis of this accusation is that most development projects are located in the south, ignoring the north which is so crucial to the export economy. This preferential treatment of the south excludes many clans, engendering increased hostility to the government.

In attempts to defend itself from such criticism a recurrent theme of the Barre government’s speeches has been the need to combat the clan system because of the animosity it engenders due to constant competition between clans for water and grazing, as well as political appointments and the distribution of development projects. Accusations of nepotism within the government are also common. For the last fifteen years high positions in the government have been held predominantly by people belonging to three clans: President Barre’s father’s clan (Mareehaan); his mother’s clan (Ogaadeen); and a clan linked to him by marriage (Dhubbahante).

Although the government publicly downplays the importance of the clan system its most active opposition comes from the north, from the Issaq and Majorreet clans. The opposition in the north, with the support of a large émigré population, had (by the early 1980s) formed two main groups, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the Somali National Movement (SNM). However, these groups also suffer from infighting and clan divisions. Since 1982 they have developed a working alliance but still fail to offer any policy alternatives. While it probably has hurt the oppositions’ popularity in Somalia, Ethiopia, by providing military support for the opposition groups, has made the SNM and SSDF an increasing source of concern for the Barre government.4

It has been the SNM that has proven especially troublesome to the government. SNM activities increased in 1984, and have become more violent as, according to the SNM, the government’s activities against dissent have become more hardline. The SNM reports increased government repression in the north; summary executions have not been uncommon. Recently, it was reported that 100 people were shot by the government at a demonstration in Burao, although there is no conclusive evidence to document
this number. The most widely publicized and embarrassing of dissident activities was the 1984 hijacking of a Somali airliner by three Somali army officers.

However, even with clan competition, relative to ethnic divisions in other countries Somalia is one of the most homogeneous states in Africa. One crucial aspect of this homogeneity is the Somali language which unites the entire country. While a script was only agreed upon in 1972 (and there are several dialects) Somali is the official language. Classified as a lowland eastern Cushitic language, Somali is the subject of many historical and policy-oriented works. In addition to Somali much of the population speaks Arabic, Italian and English, depending on the area. Arabic is employed primarily in religious matters while European languages predominate in official documents. Since late 1983 there has been a sustained government effort to persuade Somalis to learn Arabic.\(^5\) While Somali is used in all primary and secondary schools both Arabic and Italian are taught. Among the faculty of the Somali National University, however, Italian predominates.

Another factor contributing to the homogeneity of Somali culture is religion. Islam is the religion of state and it is estimated that 99.8 per cent of the population is Muslim. While most Somalis are Sunni (of the Shafi’i sect), many belong to brotherhoods (e.g. Qadiriyyah, Salihyyah, Ahmadiyyah) and much of the literature on religion in Somalia deals with these communities. In addition, much work concentrates on the penetration of Islam in the Horn and its conflict with Christianity. Christianity is of minor importance in Somalia compared to Islam, but a strict interpretation of Islam is not found everywhere since pre-Islamic traditions are still important in rural areas.

Religion is a common theme in Somali literature, which is dominated by oral literature. Much of that literature is comprised of poetry, plays and proverbs and centres around nationalistic themes, as well as love stories and children’s stories. The very famous Somali writer, Nuruddin Farah, now in exile because of his political views, combines political criticism with insight into the condition of women in Somalia. Many of the sources found in this section of the bibliography provide analyses of his written works, as well as analyses of oral literature. Much less research and publication is available on Somali art and music, but the recent volume, *Somalia in word and image* by K. S. Loughran (et al.) is an important step in rectifying this lapse.
Introduction

History

History is one area well represented in the literature on Somalia. However, those working in this field would probably be the first to point out that there are still many gaps in our understanding of the history of the country.

The great majority of extant works included in this bibliography cover the modern period, especially the period of European administration and Somali resistance.

In ancient times, known as the land of Punt, the territory we identify as Somalia was famous among the Egyptians for its incense and herbs. It is believed that in the 9th or 10th century the people now called Somalis came south to this territory from Aden. Based on the accounts of travellers such as Ibn Battuta we know that by the 13th century pastoralists inhabiting the hinterland traded hides, skins, ghee and other commodities not only with Egyptians but with southeast African, Arabian and Persian merchants. Foreign trade settlements were established on the coast.

In the 15th and 16th centuries Portuguese attempts to control then more important East African coastal areas (including Mogadishu) led to the destruction of many trading cities in southern Somaliland. External involvement in Somaliland continued in the 19th century, when coastal towns were taken by the Egyptians. Somali resistance to these encroachments held off Egyptian expansionism but it was Egypt’s concern over uprisings in the Sudan which led to the Egyptian withdrawal from Somaliland in 1876.

European involvement in Somaliland was first marked by an 1827 commercial treaty between a Somali clan (the Issa) and the British East Africa Company. Originally British interest in Somaliland was limited to ensuring safe passage for British cargo ships along the Somaliland coast. Later the British realized the strategic value of their position in Somaliland, especially as a point for expansion into the Indian Ocean.6

Once the British acted on this interest in establishing a strategic base in Aden (1839) their ties with Somaliland were quickly strengthened, as the British desire for fresh meat for its men at Aden provided Somali pastoralists with a guaranteed market. However, as British influence in the area continued to grow, what started as an economic interest in Somaliland became a desire for political control.
Introduction

In the 1880s protectorate treaties were signed between many Somali clan leaders and Great Britain. However, while certain clan leaders cooperated with the Europeans, other groups, including a Dervish movement led by Mohamed Abdille Hassan (nicknamed by the British 'the Mad Mullah'), fought strenuously against foreign intervention. Although Mohamed Abdille Hassan was defeated in 1920 he remains an important figure in Somali history and nationalism.

Although the Italians became involved in Somaliland comparatively late they began to carve out protectorates for themselves along the southern coast and in the interriverine area. They had first become interested in Somaliland in the late 1880s, driven by a desire for overseas markets and by the need to deal with overpopulation at home. Like the British, the first Italians active in Somaliland were representatives of trading companies. Originally it was planned that Somaliland and other parts of the Italian East African empire would form settler communities.

While Italy was granted protectorates by a number of Somali sultans the Italians were not so successful in neighbouring Ethiopia with unfortunate consequences for Somaliland. After the Italian defeat at Adowa in 1896, the Ethiopian Emperor, Menelik, expanded into Somali territories and claimed almost all of northeast Africa as Ethiopian domain. The other European powers active in the area acquiesced to some degree, the French drawing back towards the coast of the small territory they held as French Somaliland and the British, in a treaty signed with Ethiopia in 1897, abandoning 67,000 square miles of Somali territory to Ethiopia. That area is today known as the Ogaden.7

In the south Somalis managed to resist Ethiopian incursions only to become more firmly tied to Italy. In 1905 Italy took direct control of southern Somalia, rapidly increasing its authoritarian powers. By the 1930s the Italians had built such a base of power over Somalia that they were able to launch an attack on Ethiopia, taking the Ogaden and conquering Ethiopia. However, by the end of World War II, the British controlled all of Somalia (except French Somaliland) and continued to administer the territory until 1950. At that time Somalia was again divided as the Italians were granted a trusteeship over southern Somalia and the Ogaden was returned to Ethiopia.

This decision to allow Italy to supervise the trusteeship was hotly debated in southern Somalia and British Somaliland, ending in riots that killed over sixty people and injured many more. However, the terms of the trusteeship limited Italy's
Introduction

prerogative in southern Somalia since, among other things, the trust agreement included provisions setting the date of Somali independence (1960). Another key aspect of the trusteeship was Italy's responsibility to gradually prepare the country for independence, turning over the reins of power to Somalis.

Anxious to finally take their position in politics, even prior to the decision for trusteeship, Somalis had again rallied for their independence. In 1943 the Somali Youth League (SYL) was established and later became the dominant party in Somali politics. By the 1950s a number of other parties had sprung up, many of them associated with certain clans or regions. These parties competed in the 1954 municipal elections. By 1956 the Somalization of the government was well underway with the SYL holding a large proportion of governmental positions.

In the north the British engaged Somalis in negotiations over union with southern Somalia. Once the United Nations General Assembly had decided that the trusteeship should be terminated on 1 July 1960, a debate began in northern Somalia over whether to unite with the south immediately upon independence, or to postpone unification until some of the many administrative differences between the two regions could be ironed out. Although these differences were wide-ranging and fundamental in some instances, the nationalist fervour for Greater Somaliland led to the decision to unify upon independence. Though not without controversy the terms of the trusteeship were met and just five days after the British area was released from its status as a protectorate, on 1 July 1960, the rest of the country became independent and the two areas, ex-Italian southern Somalia and ex-British Somaliland, were united.

Politics

Politics is another major focal point of scholarly attention in Somali studies. Many well-received sources deal with Somali irredentism and the superpower rivalry in northeast Africa. In addition, a number of articles cover these themes and consider how they affect the performance of the Barre régime.

From independence in 1960 and elections in 1961 a parliamentary democracy ruled the country. The president of Somalia, Adan Osman, was a senior member of the SYL and had won by a very narrow margin. However, under the Somali constitution, it was the Prime Minister who effectively held power, since it was he who selected the cabinet and led the government in decision-
making. The post of Prime Minister was first filled by Cabul-Rasheed C. Sharmarke, also a member of the SYL. This dominance of the government by one party and concern about northern favouritism led to early criticisms of the Sharmarke administration. Furthermore, the new government was faced with two major problems, namely, the unification of administrative systems of the north (ex-British area) and south (ex-Italian Somalia) and the pressing need for a clear formula for socio-economic development. These problems dominated the agenda of the Sharmarke government throughout its term, although tense relations with Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia were also important.9

President Osman was succeeded by his Prime Minister, Sharmarke, in June 1967. During the period of the Sharmarke presidency the government was known for its efforts towards a rapprochement with Somalia’s neighbours (Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia). These efforts, along with the unpopularity of a government known for corruption, later provided the basis for the 1969 coup.

Much of the controversy centered around President Sharmarke’s Prime Minister, Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal, who was pivotal in the decision to seek better relations with Somalia’s neighbours. Prior to this time, relations with Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia were tense over border questions, as Somalia remained ever-determined to liberate areas within these three countries which were populated by ethnic Somalis. However, in 1967 the Egal government did a volte-face, initiating a dialogue with its neighbours. With President Kenneth Kaunda as mediator, Prime Minister Egal met with President Jomo Kenyatta in Arusha. Their talks paved the way for resumed trade and diplomatic relations, along with a Memorandum of Understanding in which Somalia and Kenya agreed to examine possibilities for ending hostilities.10

A similar policy was pursued with Ethiopia, as meetings were held between Emperor Haile Selassie and Prime Minister Egal in the same period. The result of these meetings was a communiqué calling for a joint ministerial Consultative Council to meet periodically for discussion of the many difficulties between the two countries and to make recommendations for their resolution.11 Similar inroads were made with the French concerning the rights of ethnic Somalis in Djibouti. As a further indication of the government’s interest in normalizing relations with its neighbours Somalia applied for membership of the East African Economic Commission.
Introduction

Although Egal's meetings only amounted to agreement to begin a dialogue with Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, Egal's reception at home was not very warm. Many Somalis viewed these meetings as the government's decision to reneg on its promises to ethnic Somalis in neighbouring territories. General and increasing hostility toward the government came to a head with the assassination of President Sharmarke in October 1969. In compliance with the constitution, elections for a new president were to be held within thirty days in the Parliament.

On 21 October, the morning of the day Parliament was to hold elections, army commander Major-General Mohammed Siad Barre and a group of officers took control of key installations and guarded the homes of the Prime Minister, cabinet members and other important political figures. A curfew was imposed and meetings of more than three persons were banned.\textsuperscript{12}

This 'bloodless coup' was overwhelmingly supported by the majority of people in the capital. Since the coup Somalia has evolved into a highly centralized system. Somalia, a one-party state, is said to be moving toward 'democratic centralism', which is evidenced by its reliance on authoritarian rule, party organization, a constitution and an elected assembly. Led by Barre, the government's 'scientific socialism' borrows heavily from Marxism-Leninism while, at the same time, diverging from it in important ways. Soon after the coup Somalia's form of socialism, but not necessarily its war against Ethiopia, was supported by large-scale Soviet assistance. In recent years the Somali economy has become increasingly privatized as Western aid (especially American) has increased.

Originally the top man in a committee of the military and civilians (the Supreme Revolutionary Council), and later Secretary-General of the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party (SSRP), Barre was elected to the presidency in 1980 and again in 1986. In January 1983 he reshuffled all SSRP posts, making the government officially civilian. However, his cabinet is overwhelmingly represented by the military. As head of state, Barre holds all key positions in the government and has resorted to imposing a state of emergency several times.

Barre has remained in power despite political and economic problems such as clan division, drought and sporadic fighting in the Ogaden. His problems have been compounded since the early 1980s and growing internal dissent is one consequence of his repressive policies. Reports show that there has been mounting political instability since May 1986, especially in the north. There
is also evidence of a turnaround on the long-term policy of
reuniting Somali territories, in part due to the losses associated
with the war. 13

Compounding these troubles Barre is already well into his
seventies, and his involvement in a serious car accident in 1986
led to much speculation about a change of leadership. However,
Barre recovered, was named the only candidate by the Party and
was elected by a majority in the country’s second direct elections
in 1986. 14

Like other states, but perhaps not to the same degree,
Somalia’s domestic policy has been related to its foreign policy.
Somali irredentism and East-West rivalries in the Horn have
been the subject of many publications. The Ogaden has been the
focus of most of this irredentism. A semi-desert, roughly half
the size of Somalia, the Ogaden is crucial for pastoralists in
Somalia, as many important wells are located there. Somali
transhumance patterns involve the complex movement of Somali
pastoralists through this region at regular intervals and many
Somali people consider the Ogaden to be their home.

Since Somali independence in 1960 the issue of the Ogaden has
been at the forefront of Somali international concerns. Officially
the Somali government supports the ethnic Somali guerrillas of
the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in its efforts for
self-determination. It is unclear whether Somalia ultimately has
plans for annexation of the territory, although Somali initiation
of the 1977-78 war demonstrates its determination to end
Ethiopian control of the Ogaden. 15 It has been reported that the
WSLF has recently become concerned over the prospect of
Somali annexation, resulting in splits within the WSLF. Although
the official reason for a decline in military activity was the
drought, this internecine fighting may also have contributed to
the temporary ceasefire. 16

Somalia, in its relationship first with the Soviet Union and later
with the United States, has used ideology as a lever in attaining
military assistance to continue its war with Ethiopia. However,
when Ethiopia became a Soviet client in 1977 and defence
assistance to Somalia was decreased, relations soured and Barre
expelled all Soviet advisers. Once the Soviets were out Somalia
turned to the Arab states for support. Through Anwar Sadat,
Egypt played an instrumental role in opening Somalia to the
West.

Primarily due to an interest in developing the Berbera area as a
staging base for the United States’ activities in the Gulf the
Introduction

United States signed agreements in 1980 promising military and economic assistance. While its relationship with America continues to dominate its foreign policy in matters of security, Somalia is not entirely satisfied with the amount and type of assistance provided by the Americans. This dissatisfaction has been exacerbated by a sense of a renewed Ethiopian threat, manifested in Ethiopia’s support for Somali guerrillas.

Obviously these attacks have proved to be a source of irritation for the Somali government. However, because the United States and other donors do not want to further destabilize the area by encouraging Somali initiatives against Ethiopia, the military assistance provided has been only defensive weaponry. Somali dissatisfaction with this situation may affect the American position in the Horn, now especially valuable to them for the port and landing rights at Berbera. Already the Somali government has hinted that it might be interested in normalizing relations with the Soviets. 17

Somalia’s relations with other countries which are important for ideological and economic reasons (such as Saudi Arabia) are beginning to receive more attention from scholars. A member of the Arab League, Somalia has close ties with pro-Western Arab states. Similarly, Somalia maintains an important economic relationship with the European Economic Community (EEC) countries, especially Italy. Indeed, Somalia is the largest Third World recipient of Italian aid. Besides being a member of the United Nations and active in its specialized agencies, Somalia’s position within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has improved, since it appears to be no longer in complete disagreement with the OAU’s 1964 resolution sanctifying colonial boundaries. While Somalia does continue in the border dispute with Ethiopia it has renounced all claims to the Northern Frontier Province in Kenya.

It appears that non-superpower states are having increased influence on Somalia’s policies. Economic incentives provided by donors may lead to some reduction of tensions in the Horn. In January 1986 a return to the policies of its predecessors was begun, as the leaders of Ethiopia and Somalia started talks to solve their major points of conflict. It has been suggested that the reason for this shift in policy stems from an offer by the EEC to provide $40 million in aid to both parties if the dispute over the Ogaden is settled. 18 Indeed, it seems that Somalia may have recognized the need to divert spending from defence to development. Economic difficulties, exacerbated by a constant
influx of refugees and opposition in the north, are assumed to have contributed to this new emphasis on development as opposed to defence. This alternative approach is based on the hope of co-opting opposition by demonstrating more government resolve to contribute to the development of the north. However, Somalia’s military continues to take the lion’s share of funds. With the United States, Italy, France and China as its major suppliers, in 1982 Somalia spent $97 million (20 per cent of the budget) on defence. Pro-Western Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are known also to have contributed to Somalia’s defence. However, this emphasis on defence is not entirely new since it is estimated that between 1966 and 1975 the Soviet Union granted $134 million in defence assistance with $100 million more being provided before the Soviets were expelled in 1977.\textsuperscript{19}

Others argue that the Somali government cannot afford to appear to withdraw support from the military. There are already disturbing indications of problems within the armed forces. While military service is officially voluntary, a recent shortage of recruits has led to reports that students who lack proof of military or other national service have been forced into duty.\textsuperscript{20} Such a trend may suggest a decline in support among the general population for conflicts in the Ogaden and against guerrillas. Correspondingly, there are reports of defections by government soldiers to join the guerrillas.\textsuperscript{21}

The legal system

Somalia’s legal system reflects its past and present relationship with other states. Certainly the influence of the sharia, British and Italian law, have been important in defining Somalia’s legal system. Clan law also holds a position in Somali jurisprudence. While relatively little has been written on the Somali constitution, useful sources on penal codes, the court system and Islamic law are included in this bibliography.

The judicial system has a poor reputation. In the past, although imprisonment of dissidents was common, executions for political offences were rare. In recent years, however, Somalia has been targeted for criticism by human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, for the harsh conditions within prisons and the numbers of political detainees incarcerated without trial. Since 1984, death sentences for political offenders, murderers and bandits are no longer uncommon or infrequent.\textsuperscript{22}
Introduction

Economy

Compared to other Somali issues, little (except foreign aid agency reports) has been written on the Somali economy. One of the poorest countries in the world, it is estimated that 70 per cent of the population lives at a subsistence level in good years. The drought, inflation and oil price increases of the 1970s compounded the damage on this already weak economy. Normally though, the majority of the population (estimated at 60 per cent) is nomadic, relying on the sale of livestock. In 1983 approximately 79 per cent of Somalia’s export earnings came from the sale of live animals, and livestock is considered by many to be the most vibrant sector of the economy. In the mid-1970s the government estimated that there were 34 million domestic animals in the national herd. However, this sector has not recently proved reliable as a 1983 embargo based on a rinderpest epidemic meant a loss of sales to Saudi Arabia (its largest market) and grave repercussions for the economy. Catastrophe was only avoided because of a trade agreement with Egypt in which the Egyptians accepted Somali livestock. Still, Somalia is heavily dependent on the sale of livestock to Arab states and, perhaps not surprisingly given this dependence, Somalia suffers a persistent trade deficit.

Another 15-20 per cent of the population is comprised of settled cultivators, many of them working in a dry farming sector producing maize, sorghum and other crops.

There is a smaller commercial farming sector of large state farms and private plantations, employing advanced irrigation techniques and producing bananas, sugar cane and cotton. However, state farms have not had much success. Plantations dominate in this enterprise but the marketing of crops was, in the past, carried out by the state. Bananas are now marketed by Somalifruit, a joint venture between the government and private Italian capital. Bananas are Somalia’s principal cash crop and its second most important export.

One other source of employment for many Somalis is as labourers in the oil-producing Arab states. It is estimated that a quarter of a million Somalis work in the Gulf, most of them contributing to the Somali economy through the franco valuta system. The system involves Somali workers in the Gulf bringing merchandise home as gifts and then reselling the merchandise in Somalia (without the normal tariff). Although the practice was forbidden by the government in 1981 it was viewed for many years:
years as critical to the economy and continues illegally.

While the vast majority of Somalis do not include fish in their diet and have disdained fishing as a legitimate employment, with Somalia's long coastline it is difficult to ignore the fact that fishing remains a potential sector for economic diversification. It is estimated that potential catches could reach as high as 20,000 tons a year. Given such promising estimates fishery development has become something of a priority for the government. The government has begun a campaign to resettle refugees and unemployed pastoralists in fishing. This policy has been encouraged by offers of technical assistance from donors such as China, Italy and Romania.

The weakness of Somalia's economy is reflected in the 1983 statement by the Ministry of Planning which suggested that self-sufficiency in food is a remote prospect. A 1981 study found that only 13 per cent of the land is suitable for agriculture and 50 per cent for grazing. Ecological stabilization has been a prime target of development efforts because of rapid denuding of the landscape. The main reasons for this degradation are overgrazing on the rangelands and sand-dune expansion in coastal areas.

Facilitating projects such as land reclamation is Somalia's position as a recipient of increasing amounts of foreign assistance, especially due to drought and the influx of refugees. It is hoped that large-scale schemes, such as the Bardhere Dam, will make major contributions toward self-sufficiency through tapping the potential of the Juba and Shebelle. However, the Bardhere Dam project has caused much controversy, not only over the issues of cost and appropriate technology, but also over the possibility that it may become another source of conflict with Ethiopia if Ethiopia attempts to control the upper course of the river.24

Industry is making a slow start, as it currently uses only 6 per cent of the labour force. The majority of this small-scale industry produces sugar, textiles and leather for domestic needs, or provides the packing for Somalia's agricultural exports. The largest industries are government-operated, yet some small and medium-sized operations are private and generally Italian-owned. It is hoped that in the near future, given Somalia's trade imbalance, industry can be developed to produce consumer goods.

A further complication concerning Somalia's trade imbalance is the fact that it is currently entirely dependent on imports of energy. While there has been little exploitation of mineral resources several geological studies have been made in an
Introduction

attempt to find local sources of natural gas and petroleum. A source of natural gas was found near Afgoi and efforts are under way to tap it. Evidently there is reason for some optimism about the deposits, since at least five foreign companies hold concessions for exploratory drilling over half of the land surface of Somalia. One oil refinery (built with Iraqi assistance) does operate in Somalia and oil has been provided at no charge by Saudi Arabia since 1982. However, charcoal and firewood remain the dominant domestic sources of energy.

Somalia’s foreign debt has spiralled in recent years. Until 1971 it seemed that the debt was under control, roughly commensurate with earnings from exports. However, by 1979 Somalia owed over 4,000 million Somali shillings which would equal (at the 1978 export rate and price) Somalia’s total export earnings for bananas for 75 years. While most of the loans are on soft terms and neither the Eastern bloc nor the OECD countries expect to be repaid, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank monitor Somali economic policy closely.  

Social services and education

Social services provided by the government are weak compared to services provide in other East African countries. Modern health care is virtually unavailable to rural dwellers and campaigns in urban areas supported by international agencies have been little more effective. Most care is centred in Mogadishu and other urban areas and is comprised of hospital-based curative care. In addition to a geographical imbalance in the provision of care Somalia faces real shortages in medical personnel. Such personnel is especially needed because of high maternal and infant mortality rates. Malnutrition, diarrhoea and other related diseases are prevalent.

In the field of education the introduction of the Somali script in 1972 was a watershed event, leading to enormous efforts to combat illiteracy. However, literacy rates remain low as (in the early 1980s) it was estimated that only 11 per cent of all men and 3 per cent of women can read. The government is continuing in its efforts, with education being provided free of charge and school attendance growing rapidly. Still, there is a problem with reaching the nomadic population. While formal education does not reach all children, primary education is officially compulsory for those aged 6-14. However, higher education is still a luxury as, in part, a result of social constraints on girls’ education.

Aid and relief

Drought and famine have become more frequent since 1987 as the civil war in the country continues. Some 300,000 refugees and 200,000 internally displaced persons have fled the country. Somalia has some 100,000 registered refugees. The government is only able to provide assistance to about one in five of the refugees. While no flights of women and children were observed with those who fled the country.

While some 800,000 people are technically classified as poor, the figures do not reflect the extent of deprivation experienced by most. According to government figures, only five per cent of the population is connected to the electricity grid and the estimates of the number of households with access to clean water and the availability of food is lower than the official figures, which are universally considered to be conservative.

In March 1986 the government took what it thought was a radical decision to reduce the number of refugees it would accept. The move was prompted by the fact that the Somali government was in debt to UNHCR, which had been providing much-needed assistance to the refugees. On 21 March 1986, the government announced that it would no longer accept any new refugees. The move was met with widespread criticism, both from the international community and from many Somalis who had fled the war-torn country. The government claimed that the decision was necessary to conserve foreign exchange and to stop the flow of refugees from Somalia.
as, in 1980, only 6 per cent of the population attended secondary school.

Aid and refugees

Drought is a recurrent problem in Somalia and one that seems to become more severe as the periods between droughts become shorter (1964, 1966-67, 1973-74, 1977-78, 1984, 1987). The year 1987 marks the most recent drought, affecting what is estimated to be hundreds of thousands when two rainy seasons were missed in the central region. This adds to the many refugees still living in Somalia, some of them from the 1978 war in the Ogaden and some from the 1984 drought. In 1984 there were thirty-five refugee camps in Somalia. The population of those camps can only be estimated because of a constant flow of refugees in and out of the camps, but there were believed to be at least 700,000 refugees in Somalia in 1984, the vast majority of whom were women and children. As one writer has put it, men are either with what remains of their herds, seeking employment outside the camps, fighting as guerrillas or dead.26

While some refugees have been integrated into the Somali population through government resettlement efforts, or through family ties, others have returned to their homes. However, it is reported that more and more refugees are ‘hard core’, with no remaining herds or family. It is clear that the demands upon the government associated with refugee problems will accelerate in the near future. Such a huge refugee population has already stretched the capacity of the government to administer aid and coordinate donor policy. It is often reported that much of the aid never reaches refugees, as food and medicine disappear at the ports.

In addition, there are problems concerning the government’s credibility in the claims it makes about the refugee population. It is reported that once a refugee is registered she stays on the list forever, no matter what happens to her.27 Thus, there are accusations that the government consciously misrepresents the numbers in refugee camps to receive more assistance. Already Somalia is the site of one of the world’s worst refugee problems and the government is completely dependent on international assistance for their care. In 1986, major donors such as the United States, the EEC, Italy and the Arab states contributed a total of $450 million (three times larger than Somalia’s 1986 revenues) in foreign aid.28
Introduction

References


5 Ibid., p. B261.


8 Ibid., p. 150.

9 Ibid., p. 162.


11 Ibid., p. 199.

12 Ibid., p. 174-75.


20 Ibid., p. 165.

21 Ibid., pp. 168-9.


25 Laitin and Samatar, op. cit.; p. 69.

