Involuntary Migration in Somalia: the Politics of Resettlement

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The resettlement of nomads recently has become a renewed topic of interest within the literature on development. The general purpose of most schemes is to sedentarise nomadic peoples through farm or manufacturing co-operatives to be able systematically to provide them with the necessities of existence, including health services and education, and to reduce their vulnerability to the vagaries of their day-to-day search for green pastures and water. Nomadism has been defined as 'the movement of the household during the annual round of productive activities', while its polar opposite, sedentism, is 'the immobile location of the household during the annual round of productive activities'.

Most scholars examining the process of sedentarisation have emphasised its economic nature. Such studies have included the economic rationality of pastoral nomads, the rôle of pastoral herds in the household economy, problems of income and rural poverty, sedentarisation as economic adaptation and response, and its contribution to national economic development. The political exigencies of pastoral resettlement programmes, however, are only peripherally discussed within the literature.

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5 Salzman, op. cit.
7 Elizabeth Colson, a noted anthropologist of the Gwembe Tonga, made this point perfectly clear during a discussion at the University of South Carolina in 1986. Those wishing to focus on such a sensitive subject as the politics of resettlement run a number of risks – even if their research proposal is not rejected, mobility may be restricted once in the country, and they may be denied readmittance for a second or third stage of their study at a later date.
The purpose of this study is to examine the political dynamics associated with sedentarisation, using the case-study of Somalia, which is relevant because the Government has pursued a consistent policy concerning pastoral nomads, and recently, has extended this to a burgeoning refugee population. In fact, the resettlement of refugees in Somalia becomes a programme of sedentarisation due to the large number of pastoralists involved - 70 per cent of the total according to Ahmed Hussein Haile, the Somali Director at the National Refugee Commission. Although the official aim is to 'guarantee the welfare of those affected by the drought and to help them realize economic and political self-sufficiency', the underlying purpose is to tie a highly independent, mobile population to the land. The former pastoralists, once sedentarised, are to become self-sufficient rural cultivators whose surpluses will be extracted by the state. Unfortunately, the politicisation of the process, including divisive domestic issues, the unresolved Somali-Ethiopian conflict, and the politics of donor relationships, have guided the formulation and have limited the successful implementation of resettlement programmes in Somalia.

INVOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES AND SEDENTARISATION OF NOMADS

A theoretical debate has long questioned the extent to which 'forceful resettlement' is typical of extant schemes in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World. Gary Palmer claims that even if a resettlement scheme is initially voluntary in nature, over time the element of compulsion creeps in - especially when the results fail to meet governmental expectations. Thayer Scudder states to the contrary that this is not necessarily the case, and that there exist great differences between voluntary and involuntary resettlement programmes. The present study sides with the former argument: the migration and resettlement of individuals or populations is the result of forceful relocation, with all government-directed schemes ultimately containing some element of coercion.

Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith provide the most recent and complete analysis of involuntary migration and resettlement.¹ Unlike a number of other authors,² 'forced' migration is seen not only as the result of conscious, direct government policies, but also as the outcome of natural ecological disasters – for example, drought – and domestic political upheavals. They argue that, after removal, the target population will generally follow a 'conservative policy', or cope with the stress of removal to an unfamiliar habitat by clinging to the familiar and changing no more than is necessary. This is achieved either by the transfer of old skills and farming practices to the new habitat, or relocating with kin, neighbours, or co-ethnics so as to be surrounded by familiar institutions and symbols. Furthermore, they point out that the large majority of those forced to move by development projects are the low-income, and low-status people who have little political power and scant access to national resources. Governments can and do move them with impunity... The majority of refugees set in motion by war or political oppression are also the low-income victims, as in Africa, which currently has the largest number of refugees of any continent.³

It is clear that sedentarisation, when defined in terms of forceful relocation can be due either to environmental factors – which in turn are subject to the often unpredictable exigencies of the state – or to the socio-economic and political directives of the government itself. But before proceeding further, three prominent misperceptions need to be clarified: (i) the notion of pastoral irrationality, (ii) the view that sedentarisation is an irreversible process, and (iii) the belief that pastoralism historically precedes settled agriculture as a way of life.

I. M. Lewis rejects the traditional stereotype of nomadic irrationality and obscurantism. Indeed, many westerners view pastoralism as an outmoded and illogical way of living in which the nomad must contend with extremely harsh environmental factors in order to achieve basic, subsistence-level needs. Lewis convincingly argues to the contrary that the pastoral tradition is a rational response to changing economic conditions within marginal societies. The pastoralist must have an 'impressive knowledge of the faunal resources of his environment and

³ Hansen and Oliver-Smith, op. cit. p. 268.
his adjustment of herd movements to secure the best grazing and watering conditions which are accessible to him'.

A second misperception of the sedentarisation process is its assumed non-reversibility. Philip Salzman, one of the leading scholars of pastoralism, presents three sedentarisation models supportive of this view which, he claims, usually lead to over-generalisation due to assumed universality. In the 'drought and decline' model, the pastoralist is viewed as being forced into sedentary agriculture because of the vagaries of nature. In the 'defeat and degradation' model, the pastoralist is militarily defeated (either by neighbouring tribes or by the government), also being forced into sedentary agriculture. Finally, the 'failure and fall away' model assumes that the individual pastoralist is incapable of supporting the family unit, thereby being forced to seek employment in the agricultural sector.

The major problem connected with these three models is that they assume that the sedentarisation process is not reversible. For example, Z. A. Konczacki argues that pastoral nomads 'strongly oppose such a change and submit to it only under duress'. Once the factors inhibiting the pastoral way of life recede, the nomad possibly may return to his/her cherished former way of living. William Irons found that the forcibly settled Turkmen of north-eastern Iran returned to pastoralism when the authorities substantially decreased their military pressures. Similarly, Abbas Mohammed found that sedentarised nomads returned to pastoralism when ecological and economic circumstances permitted - e.g. when drought conditions subsided.

A final misperception is that the stage of pastoral nomadism historically precedes that of settled agriculture. This argument is relatively straightforward: hunter-gatherer societies domesticate animals and, in time, turn to settled agriculture. Konczacki rightfully questions this assumption: 'It is a matter of logic to assume that domestification of animals took place in sedentary societies. Hunters and nomads would not have been able to produce domestic generations out of captive animals'.

It is clear that a more eclectic model of pastoral sedentarisation - keeping in mind the commonly held misperceptions outlined above - is

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1 Lewis, 'The Dynamics of Nomadism', p. 429.
2 Salzman, op. cit.
3 Konczacki, op. cit. p. 8.
6 Konczacki, op. cit. p. 3.
called for. Salzman outlines the adaptation and response model in which

sedentarisation is seen not so much as a forced, coerced, unavoidable process, to which no conceivable alternative but annihilation could exist, but rather as (in very many cases) a voluntary, uncoerced shift from one available pattern to another in response to changing pressures, constraints, and opportunities both internal and external to the society... This is of course not to say that all societal change is generated entirely by the preferences of the actors, for changing constraints and pressures not of their making are consequences of environmental, demographic, and external political and economic processes.¹

The pastoral nomad is viewed as a rational actor who, when faced with constraints or pressures impinging on his/her life style, chooses among a number of alternatives – one of which may be sedentarisation. Yet, the model does not assume the irreversibility of the process, nor does it ignore its political context. Salzman affirms that ‘nomadic mobility often has a political-military component and that government schemes for sedentarization are at base often political rather than economic’.²

Paralleling Salzman’s emphasis on the process of adaptation and response, Lewis discusses ‘contrived’ or ‘directed’ sedentarisation as the basis for a successful, nationally-directed resettlement programme. It is this type of model which is most relevant to our present study of government-directed sedentarisation policies in Somalia, the success of which is said to be achievable by ‘creating or fostering circumstances which produce forces and trends that seem as “natural” as possible to those involved and appeal to their entrepreneurial skills, for all nomads seem to make excellent entrepreneurs’.³ Incentives for the successful implementation of such a policy are described as being twofold in nature. First, they must engender a ‘survival-directed character’, providing basic support for pastoralists displaced by war, drought, or other natural disasters. Second, noting the adaptability and the rationality of pastoral nomads, they should also stress and maintain some type of profit motive. Lewis confidently states that

it should never be forgotten that those who are concerned with pastoral nomads are dealing with some of the thickest-skinned capitalists on earth, people who regularly risk their lives in speculation. Nomads seem to make especially good entrepreneurs, willing to adopt new techniques and economic concerns, in situations where they compete with people of other ethnic groups.⁴

It is important to understand why governments wish to sedentarise pastoral nomads, and Konczacki’s analysis offers at least four reasons.

² Ibid. p. 16.
⁴ Ibid.
First, since most third-world élites – whether from the rural or urban areas – have the cultural values of the settled population, they tend to view pastoralism in a negative fashion: as a backwards way of living in which the nomads must constantly struggle against nature in order to maintain a bleak and meager existence. Subsequently, sedentarisation is viewed as both positive and desirable. A second, more politically motivated purpose, ‘is to turn a “marginal” and insufficiently integrated group into quiet and docile citizens’: constantly-moving nomads without permanent residences simply are more difficult to control than settled populations. A third purpose is structurally to make the nomads contribute more productively to the national economy: stationary communities are easier to tax, count, and therefore include within national plans. Finally, a more altruistic purpose of sedentarisation is to facilitate the extension of public goods and services: these can be provided much more cheaply to a sedentary population in a fixed location, than to constantly moving groups.¹

POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF REFUGEE AND NOMADIC RESETTLEMENT

Both environmental and political factors in Somalia have contributed to the forced relocation of pastoralists, placing an enormous economic burden on the present Government – headed by President Siad Barre since 1969 – to maintain basic human services and to provide for the resettlement of refugees. Environmentally, the severe Sudano-Sahelian drought of the early 1970s and the ‘long-tail’ drought of 1973–5 caused the displacement of over 260,000 refugees in Somalia alone.² The already tenuous ecological balance maintained between pastoralists and rangelands during the 1970s was further exacerbated by the devastating drought of 1982 which is still affecting the peoples of Ethiopia and Somalia: refugees continued to cross from the Ogaden region into Somalia well into 1984, with over 115,000 traversing the frontier in 1985.³

In addition to environmental factors, the 1978 Somali–Ethiopian war over conflicting claims to the Ogaden – a struggle initiated by Somali ‘freedom fighters’ in the region, who were subsequently aided

¹ Konczacki, op. cit. pp. 60–1.
by the Somali Armed Forces – resulted in the defeat of Somalia and a massive influx of Ogadeni refugees.¹ This war was but the latest manifestation of Somali ‘irredentism’ – the major guiding principle of Somali foreign policy in both the pre- and post-independence periods – the aim being to reunify the Somali peoples currently under the political sovereignty of Djibouti, Ethiopia (Ogaden), and Kenya (Northern Frontier District).² Unfortunately, the disastrous effects of the drought have been exacerbated at least 10-fold due to the continuing determination of the Barre leadership to regain the Ogaden. Whereas in 1978 the official refugee population in Somalia was 80,000, by 1981 it had reached the alarming number of 700,000.³ The ecological disasters in the Horn, coupled with the historically-based enmity between federally-oriented Ethiopia and Somalia’s continued irredentist quest, have helped to create a seemingly unsolvable refugee and resettlement quandary.⁴

The politics of resettlement and its implications initially become clear when we examine the divided nature of Somali society. It is a well known fact that political tensions exist between clans from the formerly British-controlled northern and north-central regions of Somalia and those located in ex-Italian-ruled southern Somalia. While the Majertain clan (north-central region) wielded power in Somalia from 1961 onwards, the military coup d’état led by Barre in 1969 shifted the power base to the southern portion of the country, including the Ogaden. The net result of Barre’s subsequent centralisation of power was, and remains to this day, the stacking of important government positions with individuals from his clan groupings in the south: Marehan, Ogadeni, and Dulbahante (the so-called M.O.D. alliance). The policy implications of the divided nature of Somali society have been summarised recently as follows:

¹ The term ‘Ogaden’ is employed throughout this article to describe what Somalis call ‘Western Somalia’ or ‘Eastern Abyssinia’, while Ethiopians describe this region as ‘Eastern Hararghe’ or ‘Eastern Ethiopia’.
⁴ For an excellent overview of this topic, see I. M. Lewis, _Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa_ (London, 1983).
While not exactly a cultural factor, strains in relations between Northern and Southern Somalia are an important element of the nation’s political make-up. Northerners’ concerns that the central government is excluding them from the decision-making process are analogous to those of disenfranchised clan groups.¹

The significance of the divided nature of Somali pastoral society for government-directed sedentarisation programmes becomes clear through an analysis of the social organisation and characteristics of northern and southern Somalia. The latter consists to a large degree of sedentarised nomads who, in response to changing ecological conditions, migrated from the north from the twelfth century A.D. eventually to settle in the south. Lewis states that settlement has essentially changed the social organisation of the former or presently semi pastoralists: sedentarisation has contributed to the formation of stable politico-legal groups, the development of a hierarchical authority system, and the adoption of foreign clients as partners in agricultural programmes.² By way of contrast, the social organisation of northern Somalia reflects the fact that the majority of the inhabitants are highly independent nomadic pastoralists – settled agriculturalists make up only 28 per cent of the north’s population.

The political ramifications of sedentarisation and the subsequent societal structures are clear: the non-hierarchical, pastoral nature of northern Somali clans resists governmental attempts at centralisation and increased control, while the stable, hierarchical nature of southern clans is more susceptible to political manipulation and control. As Lewis has argued, history has shown ‘it is much easier to deal with stable authoritarian regimes than with those more genuinely democratic or republican in character’, i.e. the non-hierarchically organised northern Somali clans.³ It can be argued that it is the historically ecologically-induced process of sedentarisation which has enhanced the effectiveness of centralised political and economic controls in southern Somalia. It follows, therefore, that the induced sedentarisation of pastoral nomads could provide the basis for increased government penetration in the north.

The official response to the resettlement of pastoral refugees has systematically changed because of the political parameters forced upon it by Somali irredentist policies. As mentioned previously, the Ogaden war caused thousands of refugees to cross into Somalia to escape

retribution by Ethiopian and Cuban forces. The initial reaction of the Government in Mogadishu to the resettlement of refugees, after the withdrawal of Somali forces, was that they should be repatriated to their territory of origin, namely the Ogaden. The question of resettlement was politically charged; if Somalia had formally accepted to resettle the influx of refugees fleeing from Ethiopian-controlled Ogaden, it would have amounted to de facto recognition that they would never be returning and thus to a denial of Somalia’s claim to the region.\footnote{The constitution of 1961 states that the reunification of the Somali people will be pursued in Djibouti, the Ogaden, and the N.F.D. by peaceful and legal means. This strategy changed in 1971. Rather than make an ‘official’ claim to the areas in question, Somalia instead has insisted on the right of ‘self-determination’ for all Somali peoples, knowing fully well that they would unite together upon being granted independence.} Despite the evident suffering of the displaced Ogadeni, therefore, the best the Government offered was temporary placement in spontaneously formed refugee centres which were largely supported by international donors. The political goal of one day reuniting Somalia – only possible if Somalis continued to inhabit the Ogaden in larger numbers than other Ethiopian ethnic groups – overrode humanitarian concerns.

The continued hostilities between Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as the incapacity of the Somali economy to absorb the large numbers of refugees, meant that the Barre policy of repatriation was doomed to fail. This caused the Government to institute in 1982 a new refugee strategy based on self-reliance, whereby self-formed groups would be allowed to earn a small portion of their day-to-day needs. It was emphasised ‘that some individual refugee families would be allocated small farm plots for rainfed or irrigated agriculture and that small scale industries would be started’.\footnote{Jan Love and Peter Sederberg, ‘Euphony and Cacophany in Policy Implementation: SCF and the Somali refugee problem’, African Studies Association Meeting, New Orleans, 20–3 November 1985, p. 10.} Like the previous spontaneously created refugee camps, the new programme was to be temporary in nature because the Government was still hopeful that mass repatriation would take place.

Recurrent drought in the Horn compelled the unwilling authorities in Mogadishu to retrench from their position of self-reliance. Forced to swallow a bitter political pill,

[the Government] issued a ‘new’ policy statement affecting the conditions of refugees under its administration. While still emphasizing voluntary repatriation as the favoured durable solution to the chronic refugee crisis, the Government would promote the creation of ‘settlements’.\footnote{National Refugee Commission, op. cit. p. xv, my emphasis.}

As stated earlier, resettlement was the Government’s least desired
option because it entailed *de facto* recognition that the Ogaden region would remain under Ethiopia’s sovereignty.

Jan Love and Peter Sederberg show the rôle played by politics in the Somali resettlement programme:

The questions of complete integration and citizenship were postponed, however, and to the Somali government the concept of settlement meant keeping the refugees together in locations somewhat separate from local Somali populations. Relocation of some refugees might be necessary to make settlement viable, but they were still to be placed in locations largely segregated from indigenous Somalis.¹

There is little doubt that the régime wishes to exert tight political control over the refugees because they are located in regions in which anti-Barre forces are active. Furthermore, the camps appear as perfect targets for guerrilla infiltration into Somalia under the guise of fleeing from life-threatening situations in Ethiopia. The refugee camps in south-west Somalia, for example, are situated in the heart of an area traversed by members of the Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia, an organisation that is based in and funded by Ethiopia. Yet, the D.F.S.S. recently has been weakened by the loss of what may be described as ‘moderate elements’, and by a concerted governmental campaign calling into question its legitimacy, since the Ethiopian link is a source of displeasure even for those who oppose Barre.

Likewise, the refugee camps in north-west Somalia are located in territory traversed by the Somali National Movement, an Isaq-based group that is increasingly gaining national support, especially in the north.² The rise in popularity of the S.N.M. is congruent with our previous analysis: the non-hierarchical, highly independent northern clans, which systematically have been excluded from power, embody a social structure conducive to anti-government movements and resistance to almost any aspect of central penetration and control.³

Yet, others have argued that the reason for the continued segregation of refugee settlements along the Ethiopian border—despite requests for them to be further inland—is the hope that the occupants will return

¹ Love and Sederberg, op. cit. p. 13.
³ The Isaq clans have been weakened by the Government because of their alleged support for the S.N.M. For example, the north-west region of Somalia has been reduced in size so that this is now almost entirely inhabited by the Isaq, while the Gaderbursi and Issa, who predominate in the new region of Awdal, do not allow the S.N.M. to have the free movement which was the case when the Isaq were dominant within the entire region.
eventually to Ethiopia. According to Abdi Awaleh Jama, former Director-General of Public Relations and Information in the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government has never embraced the permanent resettlement of Ogadeni refugees as a viable option, but merely as a temporary palliative.¹ According to Somalia’s Minister of Information, Mohammed Omar Jess, the new refugees are kept segregated in border camps lacking adequate health and sanitation facilities in order to discourage others ‘from crossing the border for assistance’.²

It might be assumed that a disproportionate share of refugee funds would be spent on camps in areas where guerrillas are very active, in order to deprive them of a potential base of support. Furthermore, the Government might be expected to concentrate on developing the north in general, in order to lessen anti-south sentiment and promote national integration. Contrary to logic, however, the majority of funds for refugee resettlements are targeted towards the Juba river area south of Mogadishu, the region of Barre’s clans, being supposedly the most economically capable of sustaining development and largely free from guerrilla insurgency. It is no wonder that camps located in Merca and Qorioley are the ‘showcases’ for visitors to Somalia, including the author: the area is relatively free of guerrilla activity, and expensive, high-visibility projects suggest that the donors are making a substantial contribution.

Political conflicts have also surfaced between the Barre Government and international donor organisations due to changes in Somali resettlement policy which have been adopted without consideration for the goals or already implemented programmes of the donor organisations. Love and Sederberg demonstrate this problem through an analysis of the work of the Save the Children Fund (S.C.F.) in the Qorioley camps located just east of Somalia’s capital, Mogadishu. A scheme of development was formulated, based on the Government’s stated policy of self-reliance, whereby the S.C.F. was to provide 0.1–0.2 hectare plots for refugees, ‘with the intention of supplementing family incomes, not wholly maintaining them’.³ As soon as resettlement became the strategy adopted by Barre – including demands by the régime that 2 hectares be distributed to each refugee family – it became clear that this could not be complemented due to lack of land.

¹ Interview, Abdi Awaleh Jama, University of South Carolina, Columbia, 1986.
² Rule, loc. cit. p. 6. Although referring to the arrival of predominantly Oromo refugees, the reaction of Mohammed Omar Jess can be applied to Somalia’s refugee stand in general.
³ Love and Sederberg, op. cit. p. 17.
Furthermore, it completely changed the nature of the original scheme by calling for inputs and skills that were unavailable to the S.C.F. Consequently, the land distribution problem erupted into a dispute between the S.C.F. and the Government ‘that has yet to reach full resolution’. The problem with working with numerous donor agencies has been summarised by Hussein Kulmieh Afrah, the Somali Second Vice-President and Minister of Planning: ‘Development priorities can only be established by the country itself. With donors, you can’t play the same cards for everybody, each donor has his own way of doing things.’

The most important political aspect of Somalia’s ever-changing resettlement programmes is the manipulation of statistics for refugees so as to further national economic and political goals, often with dire results for those involved. The Government had been quoting a figure of close to 1.3 million refugees in 1981, as against estimates of 550,000 to 700,000 by various donor agencies. According to Jonathan Tucker, ‘Because the donors complied with the inflated refugee figures, the trade in refugee commodities soon became the largest industry in Somalia, increasing the country’s GNP by an estimated 40 percent in 1980’. More important, this author claims that refugee commodities soon became an important aspect of Somalia’s black-market economy. The following quotation indicates the nature of the mismanaged international aid:

The diverted refugee food soon spread throughout the economy, swelling the private coffers of government officials and providing a vital infusion of wealth into the stagnant Somali economy. Markets appeared near every refugee camp, where relief food was sold openly to buyers from surrounding villages. The refugee food also took pressure off the Somali government by feeding the large military establishment along the tension-ridden border, supplying the WSLF guerrillas who were still fighting in the Ogaden, and concealing the government’s dismal failure to improve agricultural production, or to reduce the nation’s serious balance-of-payments deficit. Some of the food was even transshipped to Kenya, where it was sold for a more desirable currency than Somali shillings.

The Somali Director at the National Refugee Commission (N.R.C.) has admitted that the proper administration of food ‘was not as strict as it might have been in insuring that supplies reached their destinations’. Wishing to resolve the controversy over food aid, the

1 Quoted in ‘Country Reports: Somalia’, p. 16.
3 Ibid. p. 22.
Government has turned over its administration to a specialist Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) team selected by donor countries and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

The 1981 attempt by the U.N.H.C.R. to undertake a refugee-camp census provides an interesting example of the nature of the politics involved. It is common knowledge among donors that Somali refugee camps currently hold from 25 to 40 per cent less than their officially quoted population. The U.N.C.H.R., in an attempt to settle the issue once and for all, sent out regional teams to count the number of refugees in each camp. But although the census-takers were instructed to dip each refugee’s finger in indelible ink so that they would not be able to pass through a second time, the Government successfully thwarted this control by setting up ‘ink-cleaning’ stations (using chlorine) outside each camp, thereby making it feasible for refugees to ‘pass through’ many times. The result of the census in Jalalaqsi, for example, was as follows: N.R.C. figure: 32,000; census figure: 20,000; relief agency estimate: 14,000.\(^1\) Ultimately, surplus rations for 6,000 were ‘diverted to camp officials and to certain privileged refugee families... instead of being distributed equitably’.\(^2\)

Of particular political salience are donor claims in 1985 that, due to the return of rains to the Horn, tens of thousands of Somali refugees moved back to the Ogaden, further decreasing camp-site populations.\(^3\) Once again the Government has denied that the ‘returnees’ exist:

recent claims to the contrary are pure fiction and have not been in any way substantiated by or supported either by the UNCHR office in Somalia or by CARE, to whom the Government has entrusted the day-to-day administration and distribution of relief supplies, or by any of the many concerned international and voluntary agencies assisting the National Refugee Commission in the enormous humanitarian tasks resulting from the massive flows of refugees who have long sought, and are still seeking, safe sanctuary in Somalia.\(^4\)

Unfortunately, the people who suffer the most from these policies are the refugees themselves. For example, although one camp entitled Dari Mane has an estimated population of 25,000, the official figures, as well as the physical capacity, are grossly exaggerated. The Government is asserting, however, that all camps are full because only then can a call be made for increased assistance for refugees. As a matter of fact there is evidence that some are turned away from the camps:

\(^2\) Ibid.  
\(^4\) National Refugee Commission, op. cit. p. 31.
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because to accept more refugees at such a camp would expose the inaccuracy of official figures... The result is spontaneously settled and poorly planned sites like Ganed, with a host of concomitant problems such as lack of proper health, sanitation or housing facilities, which have fostered the rapid spread of infectious diseases.¹

It was reported that over 1,000 refugees had died at Ganed in July 1985 due to an outbreak of cholera.²

RESettlement of Pastoralists: Towards a Solution

This section will briefly analyse salient aspects and failings of three Somali resettlement programmes. An argument will be made for a ‘region of origin’ approach, based on the political resolution of the conflict with Ethiopia, aimed at solving the structural nature of Somalia’s refugee/pastoral problem, in the light of encouraging findings from the resettlements undertaken in Kenya’s Northern Frontier District.

1. The Fisheries Projects

During 1975, attempts were made to diversify the Somali economy by resettling 14,000 displaced nomads from the previous year’s drought in fishing villages that were constructed to ’Eel Haamed, Eyl, ’Adale, and Baarawe. The planning expectations were high because these nomads, when faced with a choice, might be expected to favour fishing to farming. Furthermore, Somalia’s coast-line is so vast – the largest in independent Africa – that the sea offers a previously untapped and potentially highly lucrative source of income. According to Mohammed Issa Abdi, the Somali Director of Planning in the Ministry of Public Works and Housing:

Nomads prefer fishing to farming. They can see the result of a day’s work at the end of each day. As farmers, they stay in the same places, their backs are bent, and they must wait a season to see any result at all.³

Relying largely on Russian expertise and aid in implementation, it was felt necessary to supplement the catch expected from outboard-motor boats with a fleet of trawlers, and unfortunately these were removed as soon as Mogadishu broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1977.

When the Soviets left Somalia, so did their boats, and the Somalia government has procurred replacements from Austria and Italy. But the co-operatives have

¹ ‘Somalia’, p. 46.
not been self-sustaining. When the Soviet advisors left, the annual catch was in the thousands of tons; by 1980, less than 500 tons of fish and lobster were caught.¹

Numerous problems have been experienced with these settlements. First, the cultural disdain of pastoralists for fishing as well as the consumption of fish, insured that once rains had returned to the Horn, a large number would want to change back to their nomadic life-style. As explained by Salzman, the pastoral trait is strong enough to guarantee that sedentarisation will not necessarily be unidirectional, but is indeed reversible. Second, the highly capital-intensive nature of the inputs insured that once Soviet trawlers were removed, the financial basis and vitality of the projects would be devastated. According to Jan Haakonsenn, the newly relocated pastoralists were unable to make a profit due to a lack of infrastructural support, inadequate local consumption, the loss of a large foreign market (the Soviet Union), and the high price of petrol for running the motor boats.² This aspect of the project nicely illustrates Lewis's core thesis for successful 'directed' sedentarisation: that a project must first and foremost engender a survival-directed character (the 1974 drought), subsequently stressing and maintaining some type of profit motive (lacking in the fisheries projects).³

Although the Somali Government continued to stress the development of fisheries in its 1982–6 national plan, it seems that this will prove to be ineffectual for the future resettlement of refugee pastoralists on the scale envisioned in 1975. In the words of a recent I.L.O. report 'a cautious approach' needs to be adopted as regards the development of fisheries, and certainly 'massive opportunities for the employment of the additional labour are unlikely to exist in this sector, at least not in the near future'.⁴ While some limited success may be achieved, these particular projects will depend on slow evolutionary changes in attitudes among pastoralists as limited, albeit growing communities attempt to prosper along the coast in the face of such constraints as lack of spare parts, rusting unrepaired boats, and irregular markets.

2. The Central Rangelands Development Scheme

Efforts have been made to enhance the number of pastoralists that can be supported by the rangelands. Despite a World Bank report that

² Haakonsenn, op. cit.
³ Lewis, 'The Dynamics of Nomadism'.
they are 'overpopulated by as much as 200 percent', U.S. A.I.D. has taken the view that 'production might be increased by as much as 20 percent with better management'. Hence the American support given to the creation of town and village reserves so as to regulate and enhance the rangelands.

Unfortunately, however, according to a Boston University study, although famine reserve areas were delineated, 'no water points or grazing reserves were implemented'. Moreover, the range-grazing reserves put aside by the Government merely encompassed traditional transhumance patterns or the 'existing management system', simply maintaining the status quo. Finally, the town reserves established were settled by sedentary farmers seeking (successfully) to zone the centres in favour of the villagers rather than the pastoralists.

Ironically, then, the very people brought into a settlement to work on a project aimed at serving pastoralists find themselves supporting grazing rules designed to exclude their ostensible 'clientele', the pastoralists.

It seems that this central rangelands scheme has suffered from a lack of genuine interest by the Government in fostering its full implementation, probably because the President is still preoccupied with the development of the southern portion of the country. But even if fully institutionalised, following the positive predictions of U.S. A.I.D. that production can be enhanced, the programme is not likely to lead to the successful resettlement of vast numbers of refugee pastoralists.

3. The Save the Children Fund Programme

An attempt by the Save the Children Fund to aid 40,000 Qorioley refugees to seek some level of self-reliance has been turned into a permanent settlement, based largely on irrigated farming, in the expectation that such a model project can be duplicated among the remaining refugee camps.

Unfortunately, the erratic nature of the flow of the Shabelle river calls into question the year-round viability of any sizeable irrigation. According to Love and Sederberg there is a dangerous possibility that the part of the Qorioley refugee agricultural settlement which is dependent on irrigation will be left without necessary water sources for providing farmers and their families with a self-sufficient agricultural base regardless of whether or not the canal is successfully completed.

1 U.S. A.I.D., op. cit. p. 11.
3 Love and Sederberg, op. cit. p. 31.
The land as it currently exists is simply not fertile or vast enough to provide a primary means of support for all of the families involved.

In fact, Somali agriculture in general is restrained by lack of water for irrigation. A long-term solution to this problem would be to construct the Bardheere dam in southern Somalia – a project capable of supporting 175,000 irrigated hectares of farmland – and although this has been on the drawing board since the Italian colonial administration drew up the original plan in 1924, first pledges of support were only received from the European Economic Community in 1981. Yet, even if construction actually began in 1986, the earliest completion date is likely to be 1992, making it infeasible to solve Somalia’s current, pressing resettlement needs.

A second weakness of this S.C.F.-funded programme is that the women stay in the camps to collect their subsistence rations while many of the pastoralists return to the bush. Love and Sederberg claim that this institutionalises a form of dependence, because since ‘the women and children alone cannot make a satisfactory living inside and the man alone outside cannot support the family’, they can only survive by a ‘combination of economic efforts supplemented by rations from donor agencies’. The existence of donor fatigue, however, must raise doubts about the future feasibility of such continued economic inputs.

The concept of turning refugee camps into permanent settlements in general must be called into question, despite the S.C.F.’s ‘showcase’ at Qorioley. If one accepts that this programme is inherently flawed, then the ability of other camps – many of which have even less water and are at a much lower level of development – to achieve a favourable resettlement standard is also called into question.

It would seem from the above three projects – all of which have only achieved varied degrees of partial success – that the influx of large numbers of refugees simply cannot be handled by the settlement programmes within Somalia. Gaim Kibreab provides the proper perspective:

It is not difficult to assume that under the present circumstances, the massive influx of refugees into the underdeveloped economies of the African asylum countries is far too great to be absorbed and to be productively utilized by these stagnant economies. As long as the snail tempo of their rate of growth is maintained, these economies will remain faced with serious problems of accommodating their own citizens let alone absorb them.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Ibid. p. 32.

The Garissa project in Kenya’s Northern Frontier District has been relatively successful in relocating and sedentarising Somali pastoralists who had been subjected to extreme drought conditions (1972), as well as the devastating impact of warfare between ‘secessionist guerrillas’ (wishing to unite with Somalia) and the Kenyan Armed Forces.\(^1\)

James Merryman enumerates several factors that have contributed to the Garissa success. First, the pastoralists were not geographically displaced, but rather resettled in their region of origin, thereby ensuring that their adaptation as a response to dislocation was maximised. As Scudder had discovered previously, ‘migrants are most willing to move the shortest psychological and sociological distance from their home areas’.\(^2\)

Second, the irrigation of the settlements at Garissa has enabled the women to become active sedentary farmers, rather than relying on international organisations for ‘handouts’, while the men continue in their pastoral tradition. Once sedentarised, the economic role of the women is greatly enhanced. Thus in the context of sedentary agriculture the domestic and production units are adjacent. Women in the agricultural sector contribute to production in addition to routine domestic duties. Somali women in settlements perform all but the most technical tasks. Males and females work in mixed labor forces, in contrast to traditional patterns of separate male and female task assignments.\(^3\)

The Kenyan Government has successfully fostered the maintenance of natural cultural patterns – including traditional livestock values – combining them with the positive aspects of a sedentary lifestyle.

A third reason for the Garissa success has to do with the sensible economic strategy adopted by the Government, whereby the growth of produce was fostered that had a natural market in Kenya’s central highlands, aiding distribution by creating a viable marketing infrastructure, thereby nicely summarising Lewis’s model for the successful ‘directed’ sedentarisation of nomads. The programme engendered a survival-oriented outlook and insured the viability of a profit motive for the pastoralists.

It must be noted that Garissa initially relied on imported technologies for success, including an expensive sprinkler irrigation system, not to

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1 The Somalis refer to these ‘secessionist guerrillas’ as ‘freedom fighters’, while they are known in Kenya as *shiftas*, a derogatory term meaning ‘bandits’.
3 Ibid. p. 113.
mention rising petroleum costs. This made the replication of the project on a mass scale impracticable, as well as calling into question the continued economic viability of the original settlement. The project was saved through the adoption of labour-intensive strategies based on pastoral innovation and recommendations. One such example was the adopted use of the shadoof, ‘an ancient and inexpensive human-powered devise that simply but effectively solved the problem of a 10-to-15 foot lift of water from the Tana to its banks’.1 The use of local technology and ideas, rather than foreign controlled capital-intensive equipment (as was the case in the Somali fisheries), ensured that the Garissa programme would enjoy growing support from the pastoralists, as well as stay within their budgetary limits.

THE ADVANTAGES OF A ‘REGION OF ORIGIN’ APPROACH

Somalia is a nation beset by ecological problems that have caused recurrent droughts and the gradual desertification of grazelands. To make matters worse, the influx of refugees has been exacerbated by the Ogaden war, primarily carried out for political reasons. As shown by the fisheries, rangelands, and S.C.F. projects, Somalia cannot successfully absorb all the refugees currently maintained within its territory, due to numerous economic and grazeland shortcomings. The Kenyan example has shown that pastoralists displaced because of ecology and war have been successfully re-integrated into their region of origin. A large factor contributing to this is the political modus vivendi extant between Somali and Kenya, defusing irredentist sentiments in the Northern Frontier District.

A viable resettlement strategy for the displaced Ogadeni nomads, therefore, seems to depend on their return to those fertile areas of the Ogaden where the Kenyan example can be replicated. This ‘region of origin’ policy is, of course, only possible if the Barre Government drops or de-emphasises its claims to sovereignty over the Ogaden. Otherwise, continued hostilities, especially when matched with future droughts, will continually force more and more Somalis to cross the border into Somalia proper – into a society which can accommodate them neither economically nor politically. In essence, the current refugee resettlement problem, which was largely the result of political manoeuvring, initially requires a settlement at the macro-political level.

This does not imply, however, that other developments in Somalia should not be continued. The enhancement of the fisheries projects,

1 Ibid. p. 115.
although limited at present in terms of resettling large numbers of pastoralists, can eventually tap one of Somalia's greatest unused resources: the sea. Similarly, the rangelands should be further improved, albeit with modifications, to lessen the effects of desertification – although this depends on the settling of internal Somali politics, which is an entirely different question. Finally, the S.C.F. model should be strengthened in the short-run, with attempts being made to create a viable marketing strategy for subsistence crops needed in the urban areas. A significant extension of these three programmes could go a long way to meeting basic human needs in Somalia – especially when the Bardheere dam becomes operational. The first step, however, must be the resolution of Somalia's dispute with Ethiopia.

Considerable progress has already been made on other fronts: the Government is no longer actively seeking to incorporate Djibouti within the Somali Democratic Republic, and has implicitly accepted Kenyan sovereignty over the N.F.D., largely due to Kenyan efforts at insuring that services are provided to ethnic Somalis and that they are drawn into the mainstream of Kenyan society. Laitin argues that rather than call for the self-determination of the Ogaden – a prospect highly unlikely considering the current power configurations of the Horn – Barre should instead be trying to work out an equitable political solution whereby ethnic Ogadeni Somalis would be guaranteed basic rights and services within an Ethiopian federation. According to Laitin, the guarantee of freedom and dignity of Somalis within an Ethiopian state would make the question of self-determination moot, and he presented this argument to Barre during an interview in 1983: 'The President replied that mine was a good idea and worth exploration. He challenged me to pursue that idea elsewhere'. Only by solving the macro-political issue of sovereignty will both Governments be able to stem the dislocation of peoples from their respective territories, further enabling them to re-route funds spent on military weapons to resettling pastoralists for natural reasons, such as drought.

Recent developments in the Horn of Africa suggest that the political solution called for in this study is both feasible and within reach. Relaxed tensions during 1985 allowed for the voluntary repatriation of 700 refugees from Somalia's Qorioley camps back to Ethiopia, the significance of which was emphasised by Somalia's refugee co-ordinator, Yusuf Abdi Shirdon: 'It's important because it's the first example of

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a durable solution for Somali refugees... if they are well received, others will follow'. A recent policy statement shows that Barre is clearly cognisant of the need for a political solution before development objectives can be achieved:

Anyone with ordinary prudence will not fail to see that the refugee problem cries out for a prompt, just and permanent solution which must be geared towards the core and root cause of the problem. This means that bold steps must be taken to stop the causes which force these unfortunate people to seek sanctuary in the Somali Democratic Republic.

Subsequently, Barre met the Ethiopian President, Haile Mariam Mengistu, in Djibouti in January 1986 to begin the peace process.

CONCLUSION

Present-day pastoral patterns should be viewed as rational responses to ever-changing conditions, with any programme of sedentarisation requiring an understanding of the political exigencies involved. Certainly, the process should not be viewed as being unidirectional in nature, but rather as a dynamic evolution whereby pastoralists alternate between varying degrees of pastoral and sedentary modes of living.

The politics of resettlement in Somalia stem from three major factors: the bifurcated nature of Somali society between north and south; Somali irredentist claims to the Ogaden, resulting in a war and the dramatic influx of refugees, exacerbating other movements due to drought; and, to a lesser degree, the appearance of guerrilla factions challenging the Barre régime. Clearly the authorities in Mogadishu have manipulated the relevant data to further their political and economic goals – unfortunately, at the expense of the refugees themselves. Also, these policies have led to political confrontation between the Somali Government and the international organisations actively involved in the resettlement programmes.

This study calls for a 'region of origin' approach to be adopted in solving Somalia's pastoral-refugee problems. Lessons are to be learned from the relative success of the Garissa scheme in Kenya, as well as from the shortcomings of Somalia's fisheries, rangelands, and S.C.F. projects. Most important of all, a long-term resolution of the refugee/pastoral dilemma in the Horn requires agreement at the macro-political scale. Resettlement, already floundering in Somalia, cannot be fostered if a

1 'Première vague de rapatriement vers l’Ethiopie', in Réfugiés, 24, 1985, p. 33.
continuous flow of refugees persists in entering an economy in which resources are stretched to the breaking point.

Clearly, there exists a need for more scholarly studies on the impact of resettlement programmes in Somalia. All that exists now are scattered reports largely hidden away in various development agencies throughout the world, and even then little has been written about their own rôle. In addition, an analysis must be made of the success or failure of co-operation between governments and various international organisations – especially as the latter often have conflicting goals – in implementing agreed strategies. A closer examination needs to be made of the rôle played by politics in resettlement, especially at the sub-national level. Finally, a greater emphasis should be placed upon analysing adaptive strategies suggested and implemented by the pastoralists themselves. The success of any new socio-economic programme hinges on making them integral partners in the process of development. As shown by Garissa, the correct strategy will allow the refugees, aided by government inputs in the short-term, to adopt and adapt approaches that will ensure the future success of their own resettlement.