THE HORN OF AFRICA: CHANGING REALITIES
AND U.S. RESPONSE

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to be important. No one is going to pay any attention to a technical team.

Mr. COHEN. You may be right. We will certainly see the results of this team.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Thank you.

Senator SIMON. On that diplomatic note, Mr. Secretary and Mr. Natsios, we thank you very much.

Our next panel, Dr. Peter J. Schraeder, assistant professor of political science at Loyola University of Chicago; Ms. Leah Leatherbee, the director of Horn of Africa Program, Fund for Peace; Dr. Hussein A. Bulhan, president of Basic Health Management, Silver Spring; and Dr. James Sulton, fellow of African studies, University of Wisconsin.

If you could join us here.

Dr. Schraeder, since you are from the State of Illinois you get preference over the other witnesses. We are very pleased to have you here.

STATEMENT OF DR. PETER J. SCHRAEDER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, CHICAGO, IL

Dr. SCHRAEDER. Thank you very much.

Senator SIMON. Let me just add that we will enter any formal statements in the record, so if we could limit each statement to 5 minutes so that we can use the time for discussion.

Dr. SCHRAEDER. Thank you very much. I am very pleased to be here. I am very pleased with the fact that the subcommittee is holding this hearing. I would also like to thank the enormous number of people behind me, the attendance of whom definitely reflects a growing interest in the Horn of Africa. As a specialist of the Horn of Africa, it makes me very happy. My comments will be brief.

I would like to start out by noting that several people who focus on the country of Djibouti usually have resorted to several metaphors to describe the country. Perhaps the most relevant one in the past has been to describe the country as the "eye of the cyclone." What they meant by this is that, due to the country's special role as an island of stability within the troubled region of the Horn of Africa, it in essence was not unlike the eye of the cyclone.

However, I think an author has come up with a more apropos metaphor for the current period. She noted that you could now consider Djibouti to be a "boiling caldron." What she meant by this is that in reality there have always been significant ethnic tensions just below the surface of this seemingly calm society. In fact, these tensions boiled over in November 1991 when an ethnically based guerrilla insurgency based among the Afar ethnic group entitled the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy, the FRUD, achieved substantial military victories in the northern portion of the country against the Government of Hassan Gouled Aptidon. As most people recognize, that Government is dominated by the Issa ethnic group and has been since 1977 when the country achieved independence.

Since the history of ethnic conflict in Djibouti is contained in my written statement, I would like to focus on simply one question,
and that is in reality who are the guerrillas? Are they a legitimate or an illegitimate force?

Now if you talk to members of the Djiboutian Government—and in fact we had the Djiboutian Ambassador at today’s talks this afternoon on the Horn of Africa—they accuse the FRUD of being an “illegitimate” external force which is threatening Djibouti’s sovereignty. In reality, this position is not supported by the other governments within the region of the Horn of Africa.

Now on the other hand, the FRUD claims to be a “legitimate” internal force, and they argue that they are seeking democratic reforms. In reality, this is the position supported by France and the other Western powers. In fact, if I understood him correctly, Assistant Secretary of State Cohen noted the exact same thing just a few minutes ago.

Now what is the reality of this? Are they legitimate, or are they illegitimate? The reality is we have to look at it as a kind of mixture. I think that we have to recognize, first of all, that the leadership is definitely from within Djibouti. What I mean by this is that it is composed of disaffected members of the Afar ethnic group who feel they have not been given a legitimate share of power within the Government. This is not something that has just recently occurred. It is something which stretches back since independence in 1977. In fact, one can argue that in reality ethnic conflict has been exacerbated by the recent troubles in Ethiopia because of the overthrow of the Mengistu regime and the tremendous number of weapons that were available. That would be the first point.

The second point is that not only is it the disaffected members of the Afar leadership, but in reality we also have Issa members of the Government who have become increasingly disaffected with the Djiboutian Government of Hassan Gouled Aptidon. In particular, I would like to draw attention to Mohamed Djamal Elabe, who is the former Minister of Health. In fact, he is an Issa who resigned the Government because of his belief that the Gouled regime was no longer capable of dealing with the opposition in a democratic fashion.

You have another person, and perhaps this is even more damaging, Mohamed Moussa Kahin, who was the former Director of Planning. In fact, he is from the President’s ethnic group as well as from the President’s subclan, which is the Matarassan clan of the Issa ethnic group. What is interesting about this is that he played a key role in creating an opposition movement to the Gouled regime which is the Movement for Unity and Democracy, or the MUD. This was created in 1990.

Now having said that about the leadership opposed to the Government, I think we also have to note in order to be balanced that although this guerrilla movement, the FRUD, has a lot of support within the Afar-inhabited northern portion of the territory, because of the troubles in Ethiopia many of the guerrilla fighters come from the Afar regions of either Eritrea or Ethiopia. In terms of exact numbers, I am not exactly sure of how many of the roughly 3,000 fighters of the FRUD are from within Djibouti proper or come from the outside. My hunch, based on information from people that I have talked to who have recently returned from Djibouti is that the external fighters constitute the minority. They are not the majority
of these forces. Again, I do not have the exact figures as to how many came from the Ethiopian side of the border or the Djiboutian side. Perhaps we can discuss this during the question-and-answer period.

In terms of some final comments because I want to stay within my time limit, I would like to just basically give a few points as to what I feel, should be the basis of U.S. foreign policy toward Djibouti. I think that we should try to focus on four major points.

The first one is that I think we should support new French initiatives within the region which emphasize the internal nature of this conflict.

The second point is that I think we should try to pressure the Gouled Government to recognize the FRUD as a legitimate opposition force.

Third, in order to be balanced, I think we should also pressure the FRUD to disavow the attainment of its objectives by military force.

Fourth, and I think this is the most important aspect, we need to support a negotiating process designed to create a multiparty political system. I think the key here is that we need to begin with the idea of a constitution, because as people who focus on Djibouti and the Horn of Africa are well aware, the Djiboutian Government still lacks a formal constitution. Supporting the process whereby such a constitution could be formulated would be the best starting point for resolving ethnic conflict in Djibouti.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Schraeder follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER J. SCHRADER *

"DJIBOUTI: FROM 'EYE OF THE HURRICANE' TO 'BOILING CAULDRON'"

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Djibouti, formerly known as the Côte Française des Somalis (French Somali Coast) and the Territoire Français des Afars et des Issas (French Territory of the Afars and Issas), became one of Africa’s newest states on June 27, 1977, when it achieved independence from France. Unlike the majority of African countries, Djibouti constitutes a “mini-state” that, over the years, has been described as a “cross-roads” country at the intersection of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, the “hell of Africa” due to its often inhospitable climate, and the “eye of the cyclone”—a reference to the country’s once special role as an island of stability in the troubled region of the Horn of Africa.

A new, perhaps more apropos, metaphor—“boiling cauldron”—was coined by a French reporter, who felt that the basic theme of this metaphor is that there have always been significant, particularly ethnic, tensions just below the surface of this seemingly calm society. And, in fact, these tensions “boiled over” in November 1991 when a guerrilla insurgency within the portion of the country inhabited by the Afar ethnic group and entitled the "Front pour le Restauration de l’Unité et la Démocratie" (FRUD)—The Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy) began a military campaign which continues to threaten the regime of President Hassan Gouled Aptidon—a government which, since 1977, has been dominated by the Issa ethnic group.

* Portions of this essay were drawn from an introductory essay originally written for an annotated bibliography of Djibouti. See Peter J. Schraeder, Djibouti (Oxford, England; Santa Barbara, California; Denver, Colorado: Clio Press, 1991) (Volume 118 of the World Bibliographical Series).

The purpose of this article is to offer a brief overview of the politics and economics of what historically has been a neglected country within scholarship devoted to the Horn of Africa. Specifically, this article explores the origins and unfolding of ethnic conflict within Djibouti. The first half of the article is divided into four sections and explores the geographical, ethnic, economic, and social dimensions of conflict in Djibouti. The second half focuses on the evolution of political conflict in Djibouti, inclusive of four separate sections devoted to the political history of the country prior to independence, the nature of political and administrative structures in the post-independence period, the evolution of domestic politics during the independence period, and the outbreak and intensification of civil war in 1991. A final section offers several brief guidelines for U.S. foreign policy toward Djibouti.

BACKGROUND TO POLITICO-MILITARY CONFLICT

The Geographical Dimension

Located in the Horn of Africa, Djibouti comprises a land area of 23,200 square kilometers (approximately the size of Massachusetts). Despite its small size, the country historically has generated a large degree of international interest due to its borders with its larger neighbors of Ethiopia (420 kilometers) and Somalia (80 kilometers), as well as its strategic location straddling the Straits of Bab el Mandeb. With a coastline of approximately 370 kilometers ranging from Ras Doumeira in the northeast to Loyada in the southeast, Djibouti commands the southern entrance of the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. This coastline is broken by the extremely large and picturesque Gulf of Tadjoura. In addition to Djibouti City, which constitutes both the capital and major port, the major urban areas include Ali Sabieh, Dikhil, Obock and Tadjoura.

The topography of Djibouti is most noted for a largely barren, flat landscape composed of black volcanic rock. The harsh beauty of these plains is broken by the saline range north of the Gulf of Tadjoura where the mountains range from 800 to 1,750 meters in height. The highest geographical point in the territory is the Moussa Ali mountain range (2,063 meters above sea-level), whereas the lowest point is Lake Assal at 155 meters below sea-level. The other major inland body of water is Lake Abbé, located on Djibouti's southwestern border with Ethiopia. Despite the existence of some subterranean rivers, the country is completely devoid of any permanent, above-ground rivers.

The average annual rainfall is 128 millimeters and is usually spread out no more than 20 days. Different regions of the country, however, receive varying amounts of rain. For example, the coastal regions receive between 60 to 70 millimeters of rainfall per annum, while the northern portions of the country receive between 120 and 140 millimeters. The rainy season lasts between January and March, with the majority of precipitation falling in quick, short bursts. One sad outcome of this erratic rainfall is periodic flash floods which devastate those areas located at sea level, such as the April 1989 flood that killed eight and destroyed the dwellings of approximately 150,000 people in Djibouti City.

The often torrid climate, which has earned the country the nickname of the "hell of Africa," varies between two major seasons. The cool season lasts from October to April and typifies a "Mediterranean" type climate in which temperatures range from 23 and 30 degrees Celsius with low humidity. The hot season lasts from May to September. In addition to the dry, sand-filled "khamsin" winds which push temperatures from a low of 30 degrees Celsius to a stifling high of 45 degrees Celsius, this time of year is also noted by days in which humidity approaches 100 percent. Among the coolest areas of the territory is the high-altitude Day Forest in which temperatures as low as 12 degrees Celsius have been recorded.

The Ethnic Dimension

Djibouti is an ethnically diverse country where population statistics are subject to controversy and range from conservative estimates of roughly 300,000 to official Djiboutian government estimates of 500,000. Despite a rather high population...
growth rate of 3 percent per annum, the average population density for the entire
country is only estimated at roughly 15 inhabitants per square kilometer. This lat-
er statistic masks the crucial distinction that, unlike most African countries, the
majority of the population (some as high as 80 percent) lives in the urban cen-
tres, with the capital of Djibouti City serving as the largest urban agglomeration
(roughly 65 to 75 percent). The process of urbanization, specifically tied to the
growth of the port city of Djibouti City and the construction of the Djibouti-Addis
Ababa railway, constitutes an important transformation of a society that historically
was largely pastoral in nature.

As indicated by the pre-independence name of the French Territory of the Afars
and Issas, these peoples comprise the two dominant ethnic groups which historically
inhabited the territory. The Issas constitute the largest ethnic group (roughly 33
percent of the population) and inhabit the southern one-third of the country below
the Gulf of Tadjoura and east of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway. Divided by the
arbitrary imposition of colonial borders, the Issa people spill over into both Somalia
and Ethiopia where they number 60,000 and 200,000, respectively. The Issas con-
stitute but one subgrouping of the Somali peoples who inhabit Djibouti, Kenya,
Ethiopia and, of course, Somalia.

The Afars, also known as the Danakil, constitute the second largest ethnic group
(roughly 20 percent of the population) and inhabit the northern two-thirds of the
country above the Gulf of Tadjoura and west of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway.
Also divided by ill-conceived colonial boundaries, the Afars spill over into the southern
portion of Ethiopia’s province of Eritrea and extend southward as far as the
Ethiopian town of Nazareth in numbers that surpass 600,000. The combined Ethiopian
and Djiboutian territory inhabited by the Afar peoples, due to its elongated,
triangular shape, is often referred to as the “Afar triangle.”

The remainder of Djibouti’s population is divided among five major groups (largely
living in Djibouti City) which were not historically indigenous to the area. The
Gadabouis (15 percent) and Issaks (13.3 percent), also subgroupings of the Somali
peoples that inhabit the Horn of Africa, migrated from northern Somalia during the
twentieth century. They were attracted by work associated with the construction of the
Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway and the expansion of the port at Djibouti City.
Arabs and, particularly, Yemenis constitute a third major group. Largely working
in the commercial sector of Djibouti City, they constitute approximately 6 percent
of the overall population. A fourth group, comprising approximately 4 percent of the
population, includes a large number (roughly 10,000) of French and other European
nationals who work at nearly all administrative levels of the Djiboutian govern-
ment. Of particular significance are the nearly 3,500 French troops and family mem-
bres (a total of 6,000) maintained by the French government on Djiboutian territory
since independence in 1977. And, fluctuating numbers of refugees and illegal eco-
nomic migrants from both Ethiopia and Somalia have periodically comprised up-
wards of 10–15 percent of the country’s population at any given time. This final
grouping has strained the limited capacities of the Djiboutian government and,
therefore, has contributed to often acrimonious political debates and international
controversy.

In addition to sharing a common nomadic tradition that places a high value on
livestock and virtues of bravery and individualism, a strong adherence to the Is-
lamic faith, and an oral tradition that places singers and poets in high esteem, the
country’s two dominant ethnic groups—the Afars and the Issas—have maintained
strong social networks that form the basis of everyday life, especially within the
rural areas. The Issas maintain an especially egalitarian form of social organisation
based on clan membership in which all “men” are considered equal and each has
the right to voice his opinion concerning the affairs of his clan. As such, decisions
are arrived at through consensus. The Issas are divided into two major clan fami-
lies, each of which is further subdivided by several subclans. The Abgal clan family,
which accounts for three-quarters of all Issas in the Horn of Africa and two-thirds
of those living in Djibouti, includes the following four sub-clans: Yonis-Moussa,
Saad-Moussa, Manoussan and Ourweine. The Dalol clan family, which accounts for
only one-fourth of all Issas and roughly one-third of those living in Djibouti, is simi-
larly divided among four sub-clans: the Fourlaba, Horoneh, Walaldon and Wardick.
The spiritual head of all the Issa clans resides in Ethiopia and is known as the Ögaz.

Despite a similar emphasis on clan membership as the basis for everyday life, the
Afars maintain a hierarchical form of social organisation that derives from tradi-
tional chieftoms and sultanes, such as the still existing Tadjoura, Raheita and
Aussa sultanes. Decisions and debate among the Afars, unlike among the more
egalitarian Issas, are more the reserve of recognized leaders and the heads of clans.
For example, the sultans of Afar sultanes historically made decisions based on the
advice of viziers and councils composed of the heads of sub-clans and notables. In this regard, there is an important distinction between the so-called "noble" Assaitiméra ("red") clan and the less prestigious Adichiméra ("white") clan. Among the five major sub-clans represented in Djibouti are the Adaramaron and the Debné, both of which are prevalent in the Dikhil region; the Adail and Badoita-Mela, which are located in the region of Obok; and the Hassobs, which is representative of the Tadjoura region.

The Economic Dimension

Almost completely lacking in natural resources and any meaningful agricultural or industrial capacity, Djibouti suffers from economic problems indicative of most African countries, including rising budget deficits, increasing foreign debt and high unemployment. Yet, Djibouti is unique among African countries in that the "services" sector has constituted the mainstay of the economy since independence in 1977. Djibouti's leaders have sought to capitalize on the geographic location of the country by strengthening and expanding its role as a financial, telecommunication and trade hub for the Horn of Africa. Indeed, the Gouled regime would like to make Djibouti the "Switzerland" or "Hong Kong" of Africa.

Due to Djibouti's harsh landscape and limited levels of arable land, the country produces less than 8 percent of its food requirements. As a result, almost all agricultural products must be imported at great cost to the local economy. The government has attempted to overcome this external dependency by sponsoring experimental agricultural projects and the development of fisheries projects in conjunction with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In case of a agricultural development, advances in sedentary agriculture have led to growth in the number of small-scale farms producing vegetables and fruit from 180 in 1980 to 930 in 1985. As far as the fishing industry is concerned, Djibouti's Livestock and Fisheries Service (SEP) and the Marine Fisheries Cooperative Association (ACPM) have succeeded in producing marketable yields exceeding 400 metric tons. However, the rejection of fish as food by the Cushitic peoples of the Horn of Africa constitutes a major constraint on fisheries development. For example, the extent of disdain for fish among the Somali peoples of the region is noted by the following traditional Somali proverb: "Speak not to me with that mouth that eats fish."

Djibouti is also heavily reliant on the import of consumer products due to the rather limited development of its manufacturing and industrial sectors. Despite liberal investment laws and Djibouti's status as an economic free zone, high labour and energy costs, a small domestic market and regional instability have hindered the attraction of foreign investors. The government has sought to overcome this handicap by sponsoring the creation of publicly-sponsored companies (parastatals) in specifically targeted industries. Among these are the construction of a mineral-water bottling plant at Tadjoura, a dairy plant outside Djibouti City and the exploitation of significant geothermal activity in the hopes of making the country energy self-sufficient. As in many African countries, however, the parastatal sector has been plagued by inefficiency and, thus, the need for significant budget subsidies. For example, political motivations have led to the doubling of the number of parastatal employees almost every 3 years since independence despite the lack of commensurate growth in revenues from these same companies. As a result, the Djiboutian government since the mid-1980s has initiated a privatization campaign in order to make these companies more profitable and productive.

Problems in the agricultural and industrial sectors are compounded by high unemployment and recurring budget deficits. Estimates of Djibouti's unemployment rate range from 40 to 70 percent of the national workforce, an alarming statistic that is compounded by thousands of illegal economic migrants willing to work for sub-minimum wages. As concerns the budget, recurring deficits have been recorded since 1982. These deficits have only been brought into balance by generous gifts from France and other international donors, as well as greater reliance on international loans. As a result, Djibouti's external debt more than tripled from $106 million in 1982 to approximately $300 million in 1988, with debt service payments constituting nearly 10 percent of government revenues in 1987. Attempting to reign in the budget—one of the key demands of foreign and, particularly, French donors—is a very delicate issue. Public spending not only provides the government with po-

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7Interview with a French "coopérant" in Djibouti City during 1987.
litical patronage to reward political supporters and reduce unemployment, it also constitutes one of the largest mainstays of the economy (roughly 35 percent of GDP).

The services sector, which contributes to an estimated 40 percent of Djibouti's GDP, is the most crucial element of the economy and the basis of plans for future development. In the financial realm, Djibouti boasts a currency (the Djiboutian Franc) that is pegged to the U.S. dollar at a fixed parity and is freely convertible into any currency. Moreover, liberal investment and banking laws allow businesspersons free movement of capital. Subsequently, foreign and, particularly, Somali and Ethiopian businesspersons have utilized Djiboutian banks as financial havens for investment capital and as centers for generating import transactions in order to avoid the more regulated banking systems of their respective countries. The downside of Djibouti's liberal financial system, however, has been the depreciation of the Djiboutian Franc during the 1980s in conjunction with the decline of the U.S. dollar.

The second component of Djibouti's services sector is an increasingly sophisticated telecommunications system designed to facilitate the country's role as a financial and business hub. In addition to the 1985 upgrading of an international telephone exchange, a new "earth station" was built in 1980 linking Djibouti to the Arab Satellite (Arabsat) Communication Organization. And, the connection in 1986 of a new undersea cable with Saudi Arabia made Djibouti the African landlink of the Western Europe-Middle East-Southeast Asia telecommunications system.

The most vital aspect of Djibouti's service economy and the key to its continued economic prosperity is its role as a regional trading center, built upon its modern international port and the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway. Djibouti's international free port provides capabilities for bunkering, transit of goods to Ethiopia and Somalia and transhipment of goods to other countries in the region. Although proceeds from the port account for over 50 percent of the government's service earnings, revenues dropped off in the early 1980s as the number of ships calling at Djibouti have dropped from 1,474 in 1977 to 955 in 1986. According to Djibouti's Port Authority, this drop-off in revenue was due to the worldwide collapse of refueling and oil traffic as ships have become bigger and more technologically advanced. Attempts at diversification, most notably by the construction of a new "roll-on, roll-off" container terminal in 1985 and the refurbishment of two berths in 1986, centered on capturing a larger share of the worldwide transhipment of goods along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Although still operating well under its maximum capacity, the port received a greater number of military ships (and increased port revenues) during 1990 and 1991 as part of the U.S.-led military operation against Iraq.

The 778 kilometre Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway constitutes another important source of financial revenue for the Djiboutian service economy. Upgraded with the financial support of the European Community (EC), the railway transported over 198,000 tons of transit goods in 1986 to Ethiopia, the majority of which consisted the importation of food staples and agricultural products. Also important from a revenue standpoint are the nearly 1.15 million passengers transported yearly by the rail system. Sadly, although revenues from rail traffic gradually increased during the 1980s after closure of the line in 1977-78, the railroad does its best business when famine conditions affect Ethiopia and Ethiopian ports (such as Assab) cannot handle the enormous traffic of food aid. Such was the case during the 1983-85 drought, which accounted for increased Djiboutian revenues during 1984 and 1985. A Djiboutian-Ethiopian trade agreement signed in 1986 was designed to stabilize trade between these two countries and reduce Djibouti's significant trade deficit with Ethiopia.

Since 1982, however, Djibouti has suffered from an overall trade deficit. The country imports almost all goods for final consumption and almost all goods listed as "exports" are either re-exports for neighboring countries or for the nearly 10,000 expatriate personnel living within the country. Due to its former colonial links with France, it is not surprising that roughly 29 percent of Djibouti's imports come from France, with nearly 50 percent coming from the EC in general. Similar to most other African countries, its regional trade is minimal, with its dominant regional trading partner being Ethiopia. Indeed, the darker side of Djibouti's trade habits concerns its daily importation from Ethiopia by air and, to a lesser degree, rail of 8–10 tons of khat. This item of trade, which is managed by a government-sanctioned private syndicate, is said to constitute nearly one-quarter of Djibouti's total imports and represents a financial drain of roughly $20 million. The Djiboutian government continues to support the khat trade, however, because it employs nearly 8 percent of the working population and contributes to a windfall in government revenue through taxes.
The Social Dimension

Although Djiboutians traditionally have perceived themselves as better off than the populations of their immediate neighbours, the social fabric of Djiboutian society suffers from several ills. First, the combination of Djibouti’s high unemployment rate and the growing numbers of high school and college graduates unable to find jobs within the economy constitutes a structural problem that will be difficult to resolve. One small step in seeking a solution was the creation in 1987 of the Association Nationale pour le Développement Economique et Social (ANDES; National Association for Economic and Social Development), an organization specifically targeted toward Djibouti’s unemployed youth and designed to support private sector initiatives, especially the creation of small and medium enterprises.

A second social problem concerns the issue of infant mortality. In an attempt to gather data such that the problem could be addressed properly, the Djiboutian Ministry of Health, in conjunction with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund, interviewed a total of 5,036 households in Djibouti City from April 27 to May 16, 1985. The results of the survey were rather alarming: the mortality rate in 1984 was 200 per 1,000 births (20 percent) meaning that 2 out of every 10 infants born did not survive past their first birthday. Of the 20 percent that die in their first year, 4.6 percent die within the first 10 days, 1.7 percent between 11 and 38 days, 45.2 percent between 1 and 6 months, and 48.5 percent between 7 and 11 months. The most frequent causes of death are diarrhea (49 percent), respiratory illness (17 percent) and measles (9 percent). Not surprisingly, the higher the education level of the parents, the lower the rate of infant mortality,9

A third social problem concerns the widespread chewing of khat throughout Djiboutian society, the usage of which is at least partially the result of the high unemployment rate within the country. In an attempt to gather data on the problem prior to the convening of a conference in Djibouti from December 17–20, 1984, the Djiboutian Ministry of Health and WHO carried out a survey of 500 households in Djibouti City. Similar to the above-mentioned report on infant mortality, the results of this report were rather alarming: 78 percent of all households chew khat; 86.4 percent of the chewers are men; 72 percent chew daily (16 percent 2–3 times weekly); 75 percent chew at home; and the average time spent chewing is 5.5 hours daily.10 In addition to the obvious negative physical side effects associated with prolonged usage, an important economic dimension of this drug’s widespread usage is its effect on that portion of the Djiboutian work force which is gainfully employed. Indeed, it is widely recognized that the drug severely impacts on labour productivity.

The debate over “legitimate” refugees (who face a well-founded fear of political persecution should they return home) and “illegitimate” economic migrants (who migrate simply to improve their economic condition) constitutes a final social problem which (prior to the outbreak of military conflict in 1991) generated the largest amount of international criticism of the Gouled regime. In addition to the thousands (who sometimes number as high as 20,000 at any given time) of illegitimate economic migrants who, on an ongoing basis, clandestinely enter Djibouti and illegally assume a variety of jobs, usually in Djibouti City, the country periodically has been inundated with waves of legitimate refugees fleeing political persecution in neighboring Ethiopia and Somalia. At the end of the 1970s, for example, Djibouti was host to over 40,000 Ethiopian refugees who had fled their country due to a combination of drought and famine and the political excesses of the Mengistu regime. At the end of the 1980s, the intensification of the Somali civil war led to the arrival of an estimated 30,000–40,000 Somali refugees. In both cases, the Gouled government’s handling of the refugees caused international outcries. As concerned the Ethiopian refugees, a “voluntary repatriation” program overseen by the UNHCR (which eventually repatriated over 25,000 refugees) included several cases of mistreatment of refugees. Among these were an incident on December 20, 1986, in which five Ethiopians being returned by rail to the border suffocated to death in a closed box-car, as well as a hunger strike turned riot at a Dikhil-based refugee camp that led to the involuntary return to Ethiopia of three UN-recognized refugees. In the case of the Somali refugees, the Djiboutian government refused to recognize their status as legitimate refugees and, therefore, their right to international protection. As a result, the UNHCR was unable to provide either legal or practical assist-

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ance, except in a few cases. The Djiboutian government’s actions were resoundingly denounced by Africa Watch, a non-governmental organization headed by Rakiya Omaar and which monitors human rights practices in Africa.10

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL CONFLICT IN DJIBOUTI

Impacts of French Colonial Rule

Historical records clearly demonstrate that the Horn of Africa was known to ancient seafarers and geographers. As demonstrated by The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, accounts were being made of the trade and peoples inhabiting the coasts of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean as early as the first century A.D. For the region currently known as Djibouti, one finds references to the port of Tadjoura as early as the seventh century in the Géographie d’Alfrède. One century later, one finds references to the Afar peoples of the region in the writings of Ibn Said, an Arab geographer. Similarly, during the ninth century, Ibn Battuta, another Arab voyageur, described the existence of Somali peoples inhabiting the coastal regions ranging from Zeila to Mogadishu.11

The Arabs largely dominated the trading of the Horn of Africa prior to the nineteenth century except for a period of competition with the Portuguese that reached its height during the sixteenth century. A highly sophisticated caravan trade system linked coastal trading centers, such as the Djiboutian port of Tadjoura and Somalia’s coastal city of Zeila, with the inland plateau region of what currently constitutes Ethiopia. The caravan traders were forced to pay transit fees to the Afar sultanates and Issa leaders who controlled the region. Whereas on the inland journey such goods as imported cloth, salt slabs from Lake Awal and, more significantly, firearms were carried, such goods as coffee, wax, hides, perfumes and, most importantly, slaves were carried on the coastal journey.12 For example, it has been documented that, as early as 1839, the Ethiopian empire was even importing several “small cannon” in return for one female slave for each camel required for transportation.13

It was specifically at the beginning of the nineteenth century that imperial competition among European powers and growing French interests in the Horn of Africa gradually contributed to the establishment of a French colony at Obock. In 1862, a treaty was signed in Paris between the French government and Afar chiefs that ceded to France the port of Obock and adjoining territories. This treaty was favored by French commercial interests hoping to unlock the possibilities of Franco-Ethiopian trade. After a short period of official neglect, the French government commissioned the Messener Company in 1883 to create a coaling station at Obock capable of supporting French colonial expansion and wars, particularly in Indochina and Madagascar. The growing importance of Obock in French imperial thinking was marked by the appointment in 1884 of Léonce Lagarde as commander and, 3 years later, as the first of 22 French governors to administer this small colony. Governor Lagarde ensured the consolidation of the French presence in the Horn of Africa by signing a variety of treaties and protectorate agreements with Afar leaders. These treaties acquired rights of passage and protection for French caravan trade, as well as adding additional territories to the growing French colony.

The new colony of Obock turned out to be less than ideally situated for an expansion of trade with Ethiopia, particularly in the context of the construction of a railway from the coast into the hinterland. In addition to Obock’s inability to handle heavy tonnage shipping, the mountainous region north of the Gulf of Tadjoura made the construction of a railway impracticable. As a result, French eyes turned to the less densely inhabited territory south of the Gulf of Tadjoura. In a move that would forever transform the politics and economics of the region, in 1885 the French government signed a treaty with Issa leaders that traded French protection of the region from other foreigners for favored access to Issa territory. Stimulated by the movement of French commercial interests from Obock to the southern side of the Gulf of Tadjoura, in 1888 Governor Lagarde transferred the French colonial administration to what would become known as Djibouti City—an act which became official in 1892. In 1896, the new title of the French colony—the French Somali

12 For an excellent brief discussion of this period from which much of this section is drawn, see Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Djibouti and the Horn of Africa (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 3–22.
Coast—reflected the importance that France attached to its new relationship with the Issas at the expense of traditional French ties with the Afar peoples to the north.

Originally a barren area devoid of any permanent dwellers, Djibouti City grew by leaps and bounds due to the construction of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway and the subsequent expansion of the port. The concept of the railway reached fruition in 1894 when Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia authorized the establishment of the Imperial Company of Ethiopian Railroads. Two years later, the French government approved the building of a railroad from Djibouti City that would cross the approximately 100 kilometers of French territory that lay within Issa-inhabited territory. Among the milestone dates in the project were the commencement of construction in 1897, achievement of the Djibouti-Ethiopian frontier in 1900, and the completion and opening of the Djibouti City-Addis Ababa link in 1917. As the railway line continued to prosper, the traditional caravan trade routes declined, both Tadjoura and Zella were replaced as important coastal trading centers, and Djibouti City became a magnet for individuals seeking their fortunes.

French administration of Djibouti underwent several consecutive changes in the aftermath of World War II that slowly, but surely, led to pressures for self-governance and, ultimately, independence in 1977. In 1946, a Representative Council was created that was partly elected and, for the first time, included personnel from the local indigenous population. Among the various functions of the Council were voting on the territorial budget and passing legislation dealing with some local matters. In addition, elections were held for a deputy and a senator that were allowed to take part in the French parliament. In 1956, the French loi-cadre (enabling act) transformed the Representative Council into a Territorial Assembly and created a Government Council that included a president who served as governor, a vice-president from the local, indigenous population, and ministers.14

The first test of Djiboutian desires for independence came in 1958 when, along with French citizens and other overseas territories, Djibouti voted on the constitution of the Fifth Republic. In a referendum in which voters had the option of choosing independence or a new form of autonomy within a restructured French community, nearly 76 percent of all votes cast (11,732 out of a total of 15,914 registered voters) favored continued association with France. An important factor guiding the “yes” vote was Afar fears that independence meant ultimate annexation and, therefore, domination by the soon-to-be independent Republic of Somalia. By 1958 it was already clear that the British and Italian Somaliland territories would achieve independence and unity as part of a “Greater Somaliland” movement. Moreover, Somali politicians were pressing for the inclusion of the three other “lost” portions of the Somali nation that wrongly had been divided by colonial conquest. Among these were the Northern Frontier District in British-controlled Kenya, Ethiopia’s Ogaden region and, most important, French-controlled Djibouti (or at least that southern portion inhabited by Somali Issas). As a result of this referendum and growing Somali pressures for French abandonment of Djibouti, France initiated a conscious policy that began to politically favor their traditional Afar allies at the expense of previously growing French-Issas ties.

Growing pressures for Djiboutian independence during the 1960s led to a second referendum in 1967 concerning Djibouti’s status within the French community. The idea for a referendum emerged in 1966 when, during a visit to Djibouti by French President Charles de Gaulle, independence demonstrations turned into riots that officially left 4 dead and 70 wounded. Similar to the 1957 referendum, nearly 61 percent of the electorate (22,823 out of a total of 37,257 votes cast) voted “yes” for continued association with France. Votes were cast largely along ethnic lines, with the vast majority of Afars voting “yes” and the vast majority of Issan voting “no.” Most importantly, France was accused by both Somalia and disgruntled Djiboutians of Somali heritage for manipulating ethnic cleavages—most notably by expelling thousands of Somali youth to the referendum—to ensure continued Afar domination of the Djiboutian political scene and, thus, continued association with France. Indeed, in a move that subtly underscored the growing French tilt toward the Afars, the name of the territory was changed in 1967 from the French Somali Coast to the French Territory of the Afars and Issas. The significance of this carefully crafted French policy was emphasized when Ali Aref and his Afar-based Regroupment Démocratique Afar (RDA; Afar Democratic Reassembly) won 26 out of 32 seats in the 1968 elections for the Chamber of Deputies.

Events during the 1970s, however, forced France to reassess its tilt toward the Afars and, ultimately, cede independence to its last colony in Africa. First, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other non-governmental bodies, such as the France-based Collective of Christians for Self-Determination of Overseas Departments—Overseas Territories (DOM-TOM), were pressing for independence. Second, the dramatic rise of Somali immigration, inclusive of those individuals who earlier had been expelled from the territory, was leading to greater Afar-Issaa ethnic conflict. Third, the Afar-based government of Ali Aref was losing domestic support in favor of the Somali-dominated official opposition party, the “Ligue Populaire Africaine pour l’Indépendance” (LPAI—African Popular League for Independence). Fourth, the territory was increasingly being subjected to attacks by Somali government-supported rebel groups, such as the “Front de Libération de la Côte des Somalis” (FLCS—Liberation Front of the Somali Coast). And, the unfolding revolution in Ethiopia led by Mengistu Haile Mariam, a self-proclaimed African-Marxist, raised fears of Djibouti’s absorption by the new leadership in Ethiopia. Indeed, among those military groups supported by the Mengistu regime were the “Movement Populaire de Libération” (MPL—Popular Movement of Liberation) and the “Union Nationale pour l’Indépendance” (UNI—National Union for Independence).15

The net result of these combined pressures was a referendum held on March 19, 1977, in which the vast majority (94.5 percent) of those who took part (79,789) overwhelmingly voted for independence. Three months later on June 27, 1977, the French Territory of the Afars and Issas achieved independence as the Republic of Djibouti. In a significant change in the pro-Afar policies that dominated French political thinking in the post-1968 period, the first independent government reflected an important shift in internal Djiboutian politics: Hassan Gouled Aptidon, an Issa Somali and leader of the LPAI, became the first president of the republic, and Ahmed Din, an Afar and secretary-general of the LPAI, assumed the position of prime minister.

Domestic Politics in the Independence Era

The Djiboutian political scene has been dominated since independence by President Gouled, a veteran politician who is reported to be over 80 years old. Similar to the majority of African leaders during the post-World War II period, he has oversaw the strengthening of a single-party system increasingly subject to his personal control and restrictive of popular debate. According to the National Mobilization Law passed by the National Assembly in October 1981, for example, Djibouti officially transformed itself into a single-party political system in which the only legal party is the state-controlled Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès (RPP—Popular Assembly for Progress). As such, only those politicians approved by the RPP are allowed to present themselves as part of a single-party slate during election periods. It is at least partially (some would say completely) for this reason that President Gouled—the only choice offered to the electorate—received an overwhelming number of votes cast in presidential elections held in 1981 (84.66 percent) and 1987 (87.42 percent). The Office of the President is further strengthened by the fact that Djibouti’s army and security forces fall under the direct control of the president as commander-in-chief. Throughout the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Djiboutian National Army numbered approximately 2,600 soldiers, including a 900-strong infantry commando regiment, a 200-strong armored company, an 800-strong frontier commando unit, and a 300-strong gendarmerie force. In addition, internal security forces numbered approximately 1,400, inclusive of 1,200 members of the National Security Force. These Djiboutian forces are buttressed by nearly 3,500 French soldiers stationed throughout the country who fall under the command of the Commanding Officer of French Forces in Djibouti. Although the majority of these soldiers are associated with the French Army, including the 13th Demi-Brigade of the French Foreign Legion, the French Air Force (840 personnel) and Navy (134 personnel) also are represented. Djibouti constitutes one of the few remaining French bases on African soil.16

President Gouled’s power is further strengthened by a political system that, 15 years after independence, still lacks a formal constitution. As a result, the functioning of the system is based on a series of ad hoc rulings issued by the Office of the President, as well as laws passed by the 65-member National Assembly—a body presided over by a prime minister who, in turn, is appointed by the president. For

example, according to an electoral law passed by the National Assembly in February 1981, the president is elected by universal suffrage for a period of 6 years and may serve no more than two terms. Another electoral law passed in October 1984 specifies that, in the event that the office of the president falls vacant, the head of the Supreme Court shall assume the presidency for no less than 30 days, during which period a new president is to be elected. Neither of these two laws as of 1992 have been put to the test. In short, President Gouled enjoys wide discretion and powers.

Despite the fact that President Gouled has enjoyed wide discretion and powers, he consistently has sought to craft a ruling coalition which transcends ethnic lines. In an unwritten power-sharing agreement worked out prior to independence and maintained ever since, the office of the president is occupied by an Issa and the office of prime minister is occupied by an Afar. Among the Afar politicians who have occupied the office of prime minister include Ahmed Dini (1977–78), Abdallah M. Kamil (1978), and Barkat Gourad Hamoud (1978–present). Indeed, despite the restriction on multiparty debate within Djibouti, President Gouled carefully has sought to maintain an ethnic balance that caters to all major ethnic groups. For example, President Gouled’s Cabinet has always included one representative each from the Issas, Gadaboursis and Arab groupings within the country, as well as a mixture of the remaining positions that ensured one more Afar than Issas. Toward this end, the first independence cabinet included seven Afars and six Issas, whereas the 1982 cabinet included six Afars and five Issas. Care was also taken to ensure proportional representation of the various clans within each ethnic group, such as the equal sharing of positions between the Abgal and Dalol clans families of the Issa ethnic group.

President Gouled’s desire to maintain an ethnic balance in politics has also played a role in elections governing membership in the National Assembly. Under a power-sharing agreement worked out prior to independence and maintained by President Gouled, the 65-seat National Assembly is divided along ethnic lines. Whereas Issas and others of Somali origin (Gadaboursis and Issaks) are guaranteed a plurality of seats, Afars are apportioned the slightly smaller number of 33 seats. And, 33 seats, the Afars are apportioned the slightly smaller number of 30 seats. A major complaint of Arab opposition candidates concerning this arrangement is that the single slate of candidates presented to the public is chosen and approved by the Issa-dominated RPP and, therefore, ensures Afar candidates who potentially are more beholden to President Gouled than their own people. In any case, the slate of candidates presented to the voting public in the 1982 and 1987 legislative elections were overwhelmingly approved by margins of 90 and 87 percent, respectively.

An important aspect of Djibouti’s delicately balanced political system is the often disruptive impact of external and, particularly, regional events on inter-ethnic relations. This problem obviously stems from the simple fact that, while many Djiboutian Afars feel a special affinity for their counterparts in Ethiopia, as well as their Somali neighbors, they also have strong feelings for and against the central governments that have held power in Addis Ababa, many Djiboutian nationals who have been captivated by the thought of Djibouti becoming part of a "Greater Somalia" in which all Somalis in the Horn of Africa would become part of a Somali state. During the 1977–78 Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia, for example, these affinities were manifested by Djiboutian nationals taking arms against each other and supporting both Ethiopia and Somalia. In one of the clandestine movements supported by both Ethiopia and Somalia, in one of the clandestine movements supported by both Ethiopia and Somalia. In one of the clandestine movements supported by both Ethiopia and Somalia. In one of the clandestine movements supported by both Ethiopia and Somalia.

The conflict occurred because Habudabouris living in Somalia, who tended to side with the Siyad government and were recruited to serve in the Somali military, had taken part in repression targeted against Issas in northern Somalia who, in turn, tended to support the Somali National Movement (SNM), a guerrilla movement which was seeking to overthrow the Somali government. In such cases, President Gouled has not hesitated to exert pressure on targeted ethnic groups considered to be a threat to the security of the state.

Despite the conscious efforts of President Gouled to maintain some degree of ethnic balance within the government, the Afars increasingly have felt slighted by the Issa-dominated regime during the post-independence era. As noted earlier, the Afars

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3See, for example, the following articles carried in The Indian Ocean Newsletter: "Djibouti: Issa-Issak Deal" (2 February 1990); 1, 4; "Djibouti-Somalia: Tension Mounts" (12 May 1990); 1, 2; "Djibouti: Gadabursis—A Target" (19 October 1990); 1, 3.
largely dominated the pre-independence political scene in Djibouti, a fact that was changed by independence and the accession to power of President Gouled. Indeed, since 1977, real power has resided in the hands of the Issa who increasingly have dominated the civil service, the armed forces and the RPP. Issa domination is favored by the simple facts that they constitute the largest ethnic group and that their power base, Djibouti City, is the political and economic centre of the country. As a result, many Afars feel that those among them, such as Prime Minister Hamadou, who have accepted positions with the Gouled government, are corrupt and inept officials who merely serve as "window dressing" for an Issa-dominated government rather than serving the legitimate needs of their own people. Most important, Afar dissatisfaction increasingly had been transformed into significant opposition movements. For example, in 1979 the leaders of the Ethiopian-supported MPL and UNI movements created a Joint military organization, the "Front Démocratique pour la Libération de Djibouti" (FDLD—Democratic Front for the Liberation of Djibouti), the primary goal of which was to overthrow the Gouled regime by force. And, in the political realm, former Prime Minister Ahmed Dini attempted to break the monopoly of the ruling RPP in 1981 by forming the "Parti Populaire Djiboutien" (PPD—Djiboutian Popular Party), an opposition political party which was quickly outlawed by the Gouled regime. The net result of more vocal Afar opposition was an escalating cycle of violence in which military attacks by Afar guerrillas inevitably was countered by government repression, particularly within the northern Afar-inhabited territories.

Although the Gouled regime was able to stifle Afar demands for greater political power within the political system during the 1980s, the end of the Cold War and, particularly, the decline of single-party rule in both Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, led to growing pressures for multiparty politics throughout Africa, inclusive of Djibouti, at the beginning of the 1990s. The most notable aspect of this trend was increased dissatisfaction within Gouled's own ethnic group over the increasingly authoritarian nature of single-party rule in Djibouti. For example, Mohamed Mahamoud, former director of planning and economic adviser to President Gouled, clandestinely formed the "Mouvement pour l'Unité et la Démocratie" (MUD—Movement for Unity and Democracy), an organization committed to the introduction of a multiparty political system in Djibouti. Kahini's actions especially were significant as he had been the first member of President Gouled's ethnic group (Issa) and clan (Mamassan) to openly break with the government. Similarly, Aden Robleh Awaleh, an Issa of the Yonis-Moussa clan who fled Djibouti in order to avoid life imprisonment amidst charges of having fostered political destabilization, formed the "Mouvement National Djiboutien pour l'Instauration de la Démocratie" (MNDD—Djiboutian National Movement for the Establishment of Democracy). And, in a move designed to unify the opposition in its quest for a multiparty political system, both the Issa-based MNDD and the Afar-based FDLD formed a joint organization known as the "Union des Mouvements Démocratiques" (UMD—Union of Democratic Movements) in January 1990. The UMD claimed that it was seeking to "unite all ethnic groups and different political persuasions within the country" so as to put an end to the chaotic situation which the people of Djibouti are in due to their tribal and obscurantist regime.19

Rather than entertaining the idea of multiparty politics, however, the Gouled regime increasingly resorted to authoritarian tactics at the beginning of the 1990s to silence opponents. As documented in its first major report related to Djibouti, "Djibouti: Torture and Imprisonment Politique," Amnesty International concluded in July 1991 that various methods of torture were "systematically being employed by the security forces against a variety of opponents of the Gouled regime." After the October 1990 bombing of the Café de Paris in which a French child was killed and 14 people were injured, over 200 members of the Gadabouri ethnic group were arrested and tortured. Similarly, in the aftermath of a military attack against a government military barracks in Tadjoura, hundreds of Afars were arrested and tortured after being charged with seeking to overthrow the government. Among the most prominent of those arrested was Ali Aref Bourhan, a member of the Hassoba sub-clan from Tadjoura who was one of the French-favored leaders of the territory prior to 1977. "The government said 11 years ago that torture would be stopped, but the evidence shows that it is still happening," Amnesty International announced

on November 6, 1991. "We're again calling on the government to urgently tackle both the problem of torture and other human rights issues."21

The Outbreak and Intensification of Civil War

Rising frustrations within the Afar community reached a turning point in November 1991 when the FRUD, a military force of approximately 3,000 guerrilla fighters primarily from the Afar ethnic group, launched a sustained military offensive that eventually captured all the major areas in the north except for the towns of Tadjoura and Obock. Signalling the end of Djibouti's special position as the "eye of the hurricane," the offensive was begun by Afar leaders calling for the removal of the Gouled regime and the installation of a multiparty political system. Indeed, the military leaders of the FRUD undoubtedly sought to duplicate guerrilla victories in neighbouring Somalia and Ethiopia which had led to the overthrow of the Siyaad and Mengistu regimes during the first half of 1991. As for the Djiboutian government, it declared a state of emergency, arrested hundreds of Afars in the northern region, ordered the mobilization of the entire population, and, most important, invoked a Franco-Djiboutian defense treaty signed in 1977 that provided for French aid in the event that Djibouti was threatened with "external" aggression.22

An extremely controversial aspect of the Gouled government's position was whether the military operations of the FRUD constituted an external invasion or an internally based guerrilla insurgency—the implications of which would determine the legitimacy of the opposition's demands and, perhaps most important, the legality of French intervention. The Gouled government predictably accused the FRUD of being an externally based "illegitimate" invasion force which was threatening Djibouti's sovereignty. Similarly, the FRUD predictably replied that it constituted an internally based (and, thus, "legitimate") guerrilla insurgency.23 As a result, whereas the Djiboutian government demanded swift intervention on the part of France to contain the ethnically based insurgency, the FRUD requested French military constraint, as well as humanitarian aid and possible mediation between the two sides of the conflict.

The reality of what was transpiring on the battlefield lay somewhere in between the two mutually exclusive interpretations advanced by both sides. It is very clear, for example, that the leadership of the FRUD is composed primarily of disaffected members of the Afar community from within Djibouti (although, as was noted above, leaders within the less community have also become increasingly critical of the Gouled regime). For example, the President of the FRUD is Mohamed Adoyta Youssouf, an Afar who served as the secretary general of the FDLR and was a member of the executive committee of the MPL. Similarly, the principal spokesperson of the FRUD is Abbate Edo Adoe, a medical practitioner and veteran Afar opposition figure who resides in Djibouti City and was arrested by the Gouled government on December 18, 1991. Moreover, the FRUD enjoys widespread popular support within the Afar-inhabited areas of northern Djibouti—especially among a disaffected youth increasingly prone to seek redress by military means. However, despite significant levels of elite and popular support for the FRUD within Djibouti, it is also very clear that at least a portion (exact figures are unobtainable) of the roughly 3,000 guerrillas come from Afar-inhabited territories of both Ethiopia and the provisional government of Eritrea. This situation is obviously at least partially due to the large number of government troops, refugees, and, most significant, light arms and weaponry that streamed into Djibouti in the aftermath of Mengistu's overthrow in May 1991.24

It is important to note, however, the difference between the movement across borders of guerrilla fighters based on ethnicity and the provision of aid by external governments or movements. In this regard, if one attempts to find a basis for the argument that the FRUD is an externally supplied invasion force, one immediately runs into the dilemma of nailing down a foreign power which is seeking to overthrow the Gouled government by military means. An obvious turn to the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) based in Ethiopia is problematic because the historical platform of this

group—the creation of an independent “Afaristan” nation out of portions of present-day Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea—runs counter to the FRUD’s repeatedly stated goal of maintaining the territorial integrity of Djibouti. Second, both the transitional government of Eritrea (led by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front—EPLF) and the guerrilla leadership of Ethiopia (the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front—EPRDF) oppose a military victory by the FRUD due to a concern that turnover of the Gouled government will strengthen separatist Afar movements within their territories. And, even the secessionist northern portion of Somalia currently known as the SomaliLand Republic and dominated by the SNM guerrilla movement is opposed to the FRUD due to a desire to maintain a working relationship with the Gouled regime. In short, the Djiboutian civil war appears to be a largely internal conflict in which an internally-based leadership lacks external military patrons but, nonetheless, enjoys the support of an undetermined number of migratory guerrilla fighters and a ready supply of light weapons from black markets in both neighboring Somalia and Ethiopia.

It is the above noted interpretation of the civil war which generally guided French foreign policy toward the Gouled regime and created somewhat of a crisis for France-Djiboutian relations. In the early stages of the FRUD offensive, French officials strongly tied to the Socialist Party, such as Ministre Délégué des Affaires Etrangères Alain Viven, emphasized that French military forces would not become involved in what was perceived in Paris as an internal conflict between the Gouled government and the Afar opposition. Rather, France offered to act as a neutral mediator in negotiations ideally leading to the creation of a multiparty political system—the critical demand of the opposition as well as the growing opinion of French specialists increasingly wary with the corrupt and authoritarian practices of the Gouled regime. In order to achieve such an outcome, it was believed that, as part of a general cease-fire arrangement, the FRUD had to renounce the achievement of its aims by pulling the territorial battle lines at the same time that the Gouled government had to recognize the FRUD as a legitimate internal opposition force. Although French policy became somewhat less neutral (and more explicitly pro-Gouled) in February 1992 when French troops were ordered into Dikhil in order to prevent the FRUD from capturing the city and opening a major southern front (the net result of which might have been the downfall of the Gouled regime), the French continued to emphasize a negotiated end to the conflict and the creation of a more inclusive multiparty political system.

Unwilling to compromise with the FRUD opposition, the Gouled regime sought to achieve a military victory by reportedly recruiting trained guerrilla fighters among the Issa populations residing in Ethiopia and Somali, as well as within the ranks of the SNM, to bolster the Djiboutian Armed Forces. One outcome of this general trend toward the militarization of policy was a massacre in the Arhiba district of Djibouti City in which at least 30 were killed and 80 were reportedly wounded by government security forces on December 18, 1991. “According to eyewitness reports,” noted an Amnesty International report of the incident, “the security forces rounded-up over 100 people in searches and identity checks before dawn and then shot people who refused orders to enter trucks to be driven away or who tried to escape.” One Afar member of the security forces was apparently executed himself,” the report continued, “when he refused to fire in fleeing civilians.”

The Arhiba massacre served as a significant turning point in the Djiboutian civil war in two major respects. First, less than 24 hours after the massacre occurred, President Gouled, for the first time announced his willingness to entertain the idea of establishing some sort of multiparty political system. Toward this end, a committee was established on January 25, 1992, to prepare a draft constitution that would be subjected to a popular referendum as soon as 6 months after completion. Although opposition figures rightfully questioned whether this simply constituted a delaying tactic—Gouled announced, for example, that such a referendum could only be held after the “foreign” invaders had withdrawn from Djibouti—the actions of the Gouled regime nonetheless opened up a process of political reform which, if similar

27 This more conservative trend was marked by the arrival in Djibouti City of career diplomat Paul Djoudi, Directeur des Affaires Afriques et Malgaches, as a trouble-shooter for the Mitterrand government just prior to the movement of French forces.
to events in other African countries attempting to wrestle with the concept of multiparty rule, may become increasingly difficult for President Gouled to control. A second major outcome of the Arhiba massacre was growing dissension at the highest levels of the Gouled regime. In an effort clearly designed to cause a crisis of governance, for example, the Djiboutian minister of health, Mohamed Djama Elabe, accused the Gouled regime of being incapable of solving the country's ills and resigned his post. Elabe's resignation carried a lot of weight due to his status as France's favored candidate to succeed Gouled as president of Djibouti. (A member of the Fouriba subclan of the Issa ethnic group, Elabe is well respected among the Afar and, therefore, is potentially capable of building a coalition that could transcend ethnic lines.) However, the mass resignations which were expected to follow that of Elabe did not materialize although the prestige of the Gouled government obviously had been challenged and even weakened.

The most notable aspect of the post-Arhiba period has been a growing realization within both the Gouled regime and the FRUD leadership that an outright military victory for either side is highly unlikely. When the FRUD attempted during February 1992 to expand military operations into southwestern Djibouti, for example, French mediator Paul Djoudj, Directeur des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced that victory by military means was "futile" and that a "peace mission" of French troops was "to ensure the maintenance of the status quo." And, despite its preference for a military victory against the FRUD, the Gouled regime similarly has been the target of growing French pressures to seek some type of political accommodation with the Afar opposition. Indeed, in response to a FRUD declaration on February 26 which established a unilateral cease-fire and underscored a commitment to French mediation, the Gouled regime the very next day released from detention Dr. Abatte, the spokesperson of the FRUD, and lifted an economic blockade of the north as witnessed by the reestablishment of sea transport connecting Djibouti City with Obock and Tadjoura.

TOWARD RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

Although the Djiboutian civil war is far from being resolved, initial steps taken by both sides during the end of February 1992 potentially could serve as the basis for achieving a long-lasting peace. As the former colonial power with the greatest economic and political stakes within the country, France rightfully has taken the lead in seeking an accommodation between the Issa-dominated Gouled government and the largely Afar-based FRUD opposition forces. These actions should be supported by a proactive U.S. policy that recognizes the interlocking nature of conflicts within the region. Specifically, the State Department's Africa Bureau should take the lead in pressing for a four-fold approach that (1) supports French initiatives emphasizing the internal origins of the conflict; (2) presses the Gouled government to recognize the FRUD as a legitimate opposition force; (3) presses the FRUD to disavow the obtaining of its objectives by military force; and (4) supports a negotiating process designed to create a multiparty political system based on popular involvement and the protection of civil and human rights.

The fourth element of this four-fold approach—the negotiating process—lies at the heart of fashioning a long-term solution to Djibouti's ethnic problems. Although it is important to recognize that there are many different pathways to achieving such a solution and that, ultimately, the fate of the country will be determined by the interests and desires of those Djiboutians actively involved in the negotiating process, the following five-step program perhaps can serve as the basis of debate.

First, any viable peace solution must allow President Gouled to leave office with dignity as the founding father of the nation. Toward this end, he should occupy the Office of the President until the scheduled end of his second term of office in 1993. At this point, a transitional government headed by a leader acceptable to all ethnic groups should assume power for a period of no more than 2 years. As noted earlier, Mohamed Jama Elabe, who is respected by many within the Issa, Afar, and French communities, perhaps would be the ideal candidate to serve as a transitional president during this period.

The second step of the process would entail the convening of a "national conference"—a proven vehicle for ensuring the relatively smooth transition to a multiparty political system in several African countries—by the transitional government within 1 month of taking power. Among those invited to take part in such a conference would be the heads of all the major and minor ethnic and political interest groups, inclusive of traditional elders. The primary objective of the conference would be the articulation of Djibouti's first post-independence constitution. This constitution could be submitted to a popular vote (perhaps as early as mid-1994) under the auspices of a referendum monitored by France and other interested foreign powers. This third step subsequently could be followed by the formation of political parties (step no. 4) in 1994 with the objective of holding Djibouti's first multiparty elections (step no. 5) sometime during 1996. In short, the United States could aid France in serving as foreign facilitators of a 2-year political process that hopefully could permanently resolve Djibouti's historical ethnic problems.

Senator Simon. Thank you. For a faculty to get it in in 5 minutes is a real accomplishment, and we thank you very much. Dr. Bulhan.

STATEMENT OF DR. HUSSEIN A. BULHAN, PRESIDENT, BASIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT, SILVER SPRING, MD

Dr. Bulhan. Thank you, Senators. I am a health professional, and I have been an associate professor at Boston University for 10 years. Thank you for inviting me to present on one of the most troubled and tragic societies in the world today.

I am speaking to you as an American citizen whose mother tongue is Somali, whose fate but for the grace of God would have been the same as millions of Somalis now displaced, starving, disabled, or dead. I am indeed fortunate to be spared all the hardship and humiliation these voiceless millions are enjoying today.

Yet, like many Somalis in the audience and elsewhere, I feel both anguish and shame about the state of helplessness, despair, and total ruin to which the Somali people have been reduced. My anguish comes from having lost relatives and friends but also from the daily reports that innocent people, infants and children, mothers and fathers, women and men, are dying due to a cycle of violence that few understand and the international community is unable to stop.

My feeling of shame derives from the conviction that I am duty bound to do something to help, that I want to help, that I can help but I have not found a way of making a difference in the current systems and politics of aid.

Senators, in the few minutes I have I want to speak for the voiceless millions of Somalis who are driven into homelessness and despair. We hear too much about warlords and so-called leaders, but we really hear little about the voiceless millions that are there. I want to speak briefly on that, and then I would like to conclude with a few suggestions of my own about what we could do in terms of assistance. I have a longer document which I will pass on to you.

Senator Simon. We will enter the full document in the record.

Dr. Bulhan. The silent millions of Somalis would say to you the following in a nutshell.

Not long ago we possessed self-respect and a sense of belonging. We were one people, one nation. We had land. We had homes. We had families. We had neighbors. We had friends, and we had dreams. We owned little material wealth, but our culture was rich. We had a social system which assisted the needy, protected the