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Realpolitik and Humanitarian Intervention: The Case of Somalia[1]

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Abstract. This article examines factors that motivate major powers to participate in humanitarian interventions, with a case study of US intervention in Somalia during the period 1992-93. Two potential explanations are assessed: First, the article considers the conventional perspective that the United States intervention was guided by humanitarian considerations, particularly a desire to attenuate effects of famine, war, and political disorder in Somalia. Second, US intervention may have reflected *realpolitik* considerations, e.g. maintaining control over traditional spheres of influence for reasons of national power and prestige, as well as gaining access to potential oil supplies. While altruistic concerns may have had some influence on US conduct, this study finds that humanitarianism was (at best) mixed with considerations of national interest.

Introduction

With the termination of the Cold War, it is often asserted that international relations no longer have a basic logic or common thread. A contrary view holds that many analysts' confusion about world politics stems from the irrelevance of *realist* paradigms. Indeed, Charles Kegley's 1993 Presidential Address to the International Studies Association raised the possibility of realism's obsolescence for the current era. Kegley argued that recent events could herald a return to Wilsonian idealism.[2] The view that we have entered a "neo-Wilsonian" era is widespread.

One manifestation of this neo-Wilsonianism is the rise of humanitarian intervention. It appears that the post-Cold War era has finally inaugurated a world order where great powers use their military force not as an expression of *realpolitik*, as was true earlier, but as a technique to restore democratic governance, overcome famine, or protect minorities. Even Jack Donnelly, a skeptic, acknowledges that "human rights and issues of humanitarian politics more generally, have achieved an international prominence at least as great as at any other time in modern history."[3]

Humanitarian intervention also has transformed the ideological character of debate on international relations. Liberal activists, often of feminist and/or pacifist orientation, and hostile to foreign intervention, have in recent years become enthusiastic supporters of the concept, provided that intervention is of the humanitarian variety. Indeed, in the debate over intervention in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Kosovo, many of the strongest advocates of force had previously been staunch opponents of US intervention in Vietnam or Central America during the Cold War.[4] This article

examines humanitarian intervention in the case of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia during December 1992-May 1993.

Humanitarian intervention may be defined as forceful interference in the internal politics of one country, undertaken by another country or countries, motivated primarily by altruistic considerations. Such interventions have often been undertaken in the context of peacekeeping operations, although humanitarian intervention differs in key aspects from classical peacekeeping. In classical peacekeeping, international military forces are assumed to refrain from any intervention in the affairs of the country or countries where they operate. Peacekeepers are deployed only with the permission of the affected parties, and they adhere to the norm of *nonintervention* and strict impartiality.[5]

Humanitarian intervention, by contrast, has dropped the nonintervention injunction and, by implication,the doctrine of impartiality – if impartiality means that the interveners fail to take sides. In cases of humanitarian intervention, the interveners are *supposed to take sides*.[6] The most important point, however, is that the intervening power, acting on humanitarian grounds, should serve universalistic goals common to all humanity; the power must also eschew parochial considerations of national interest, which tend to compromise the operation's humanitarian character.

As a corollary, countries that field troops in humanitarian interventions ought not use the operation as a cover to further their own interests. Such an activity would clearly violate basic norms of humanitarian intervention and would, at least, compromise the mission's purported humanitarian intent. Herein is the key problem: How does one know whether or not an intervention is "humanitarian" and that national interests actually are eschewed? How can one know whether official *claims* to humanitarian intent are genuine or are mere pretenses or rationalizations for foreign policies based on old fashioned notions of national or material interests? These are questions to be examined in the Somalia case.

An important component for any theory of humanitarian intervention would be a conception of conditions that make such interventions possible and ensure that participants serve cosmopolitan interests. Three factors may be offered: First, humanitarian interventions are generally multilateral operations undertaken simultaneously by several countries. Such multilateralism tends to dilute the influence of any single state and increase the likelihood that international and cosmopolitan interests are served by the operation. Purportedly humanitarian operations undertaken unilaterally by a single state, such as French peacekeeping in Rwanda or various Russian operations in the former USSR are therefore suspect, although they may be endorsed by the UN Security Council.[7] Truly humanitarian operations are presumed to have a broad multinational character, both in the operation's overall spirit and in the way forces are constituted.

Second, humanitarian operations are expected to obtain prior authorization from the United Nations Security Council, to ensure further that national interests of participating powers will not corrupt the operation. The UN is thus expected, at least in principle, to undertake some supervisory function. To be sure, this principle was weakened by recent NATO bombing in Kosovo and Serbia, initiated without UN authorization. Whether and to what extent this will set a new precedent remains to

be seen. This exception notwithstanding, some degree of UN involvement is generally considered a *sin qua non* for humanitarian interventions in the post-Cold War era.

Third, and most important, humanitarian operations are usually undertaken in regions believed to be of marginal economic or strategic value. This fact is often cited as evidence that specific operations are humanitarian in substance, as well as in name. According to this logic, a realist state would not intervene in such strategically marginal regions as Somalia since this would constitute a waste of resources. Thus the US intervention in Somalia must imply humanitarian motives.[8]

Great powers are motivated to participate in humanitarian operations for reasons of principle; considerations of national interest, if not absent, are moved into the background. The basic problem is this: Advocates of humanitarian intervention too often assume altruistic motivations, without demonstrating their salience through empirical research. Realists, in contrast, tend to be so skeptical of humanitarian motivations that they avoid the question altogether.[9] The crucial third factor – regarding the strategic irrelevance of target countries – especially is asserted more often than it is demonstrated. There is, of course, the danger of tautological reasoning. That humanitarian interventions occur in strategically marginal areas may be "demonstrated" by intervention of multilateral forces in such regions is one such tautology.

Post-Cold War humanitarian interventions may not reflect altruistic motivations of participating states. International intervention in Somalia is an excellent case study since it was one of the largest and most complex cases of humanitarian intervention undertaken to date. This assessment offers no comprehensive analysis of what caused US and international intervention. Instead, I focus on the conduct of the intervention after the initial deployment. In particular, I assess the most significant and controversial feature of the peacekeeping operation – the decision by the US and the UN Secretariat to begin a process of military confrontation with the militia of Mohammed Farah Aideed. In the process of analyzing these events, we reassess the thesis that this operation was motivated by altruistic motivations and was not substantially influenced by US or other national interests.

Origins of Operation Restore Hope

Although it has become commonplace to view Somalia as of little strategic or economic interest, this was not always the perception. During the Cold War, indeed, Somalia was accorded an important strategic status. The significance of the country was primarily its geographic location – close to Red Sea shipping lanes and, more important, the Bab-el-Mandeb straits. The latter is a narrow channel of water, located where the Arabian Peninsula almost (but not quite) meets the African continent. Through this channel passes most of the oil shipments that travel between the Persian Gulf and Western Europe. The Bab-el-Mandeb "chokepoint," as it has been termed, was considered a major area of interest for the US military during the course of the Cold War, and was depicted – not altogether accurately – as the economic lifeline of Western Europe.[10] Somalia's shoreline lay close to the Bab-el-Mandeb.

Western interest in Somalia grew considerably during the 1970s,partly in response to the OPEC oil embargo of that decade and subsequently heightened interest in oil and oil-shipping. During this period, Somalia was ruled by the military dictatorship

of Mohammed Siad Barre. Originally Soviet-backed, Siad Barre sought and gained Western support beginning in 1978. The United States eagerly supported his regime, despite its nominally Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, and replaced the Soviet Union as the principal source of aid. Other NATO powers, notably Italy, the former colonial ruler, supplied substantial support as well.[11]

In return, Siad Barre allowed the United States access to the Soviet-built naval base at Berbera in the north of the country not far from the Bab-el-Mandeb, as well as the southern port of Kismayu. A considerable amount of effort was spent upgrading these cities' infrastructure during the 1980s for eventual use by the US Central Command. Berbera did not actually become a permanent base for the US Navy, but the Navy clearly sought to make the base available in the event of need. In response, Siad Barre received economic and military aid, as well as diplomatic support that proved crucial to his regime. Between 1979 and 1991, Somalia received over $800 million in both economic and military aid from the United States.[12]

As Cold War tensions abated, Somalia and the Bab-el-Mandeb straits declined in geostrategic importance. But it would be wrong to assume that the Bab-el-Mandeb and Somalia lost all significance for Western defense planners. US Senate testimony by General Norman Schwarzkopf in 1990 reaffirmed the strategic importance of this area. Securing this area was a major objective of the US Central Command during the post-Cold War era:

> The Red Sea, with the Suez Canal in the north and the Bab-el-Mandeb in the south, is one of the most vital sea lines of communication and a critical shipping link between our Pacific and European allies... Since a significant part of USCENTCOM's forces would deploy by sea, ensuring these waterways remain open to free world shipping must be a key objective.[13]

And General Schwarzkopf added: "Access to facilities in Somalia continues to be a part of USCENTCOM's regional strategy." Overall,it is important to note that Somalia was not so remote from Western strategic interests as is commonly believed.

The Siad Barre regime began to disintegrate at the end of the 1980s due to a combination of declining production of Somalia's principal exports (hides, meat, cattle, bananas)[14] and growing domestic opposition to the increasingly repressive and megalomaniacal rule of Siad Barre. Although Somalia is relatively homogeneous with virtually the whole population speaking Somali and practicing Islam, the country remains divided by region, clan, and sub-clan groupings. The opposition to Siad Barre accordingly raised militias based on clan allegiance, united only on the basis of opposition to the regime. When Siad Barre was driven from Mogadishu in January 1991, the opposition militias turned on one another, reducing most of the country to the anarchic Hobbesian state of nature that has been a staple of Somali politics to the present day.

The Role of Aideed

Mohammed Farah Aideed had been a key player in the overthrow of the Siad Barre dictatorship, and, afterwards was a major factor in the country's destabilization. Aideed had long opposed the regime and spent several years in a political

prison. At other times, he had served Siad Barre as military commander and, in his last official position, as Ambassador to India – presumably a form of diplomatic exile. In 1989, he joined the United Somali Congress (USC), a key opposition group based in Rome and headed by Ali Mahdi, a rich hotel proprietor. Aideed opened an Ethiopia office for the USC and proceeded to organize a military force to infiltrate into the country.[15] Later, Aideed would break with Mahdi in a struggle for power during the final days of the old regime. Aideed and Mahdi, now with separate militia forces, would emerge as the principal protagonists in battle for control of Mogadishu after Siad Barre fled in early 1991.

On December 9, 1992, Operation Restore Hope was launched and 28,000 US forces stormed ashore in Mogadishu in what was described by *Le Monde* as the "most media saturated (*mediatisé*) landing in military history."[16] Twenty-four other countries sent additional contingents,[17] although the American forces exceeded in size the combined forces of all other participating countries. Robert Oakley, a former US ambassador to Somalia, was appointed by President George Bush to direct the operation, with the title of Special Presidential Envoy.

Operation Restore Hope began with a high level of cooperation between the United States and Aideed. In fact, Aideed at first expressed a respectful attitude toward the United States and welcomed US intervention. Aideed's pro-American views stemmed from a close relationship he enjoyed with the US-based Continental Oil Company (Conoco). Apparently, Aideed expected that his ties to Conoco would promote close relations between him and Ambassador Oakley and US forces.

At the same time, Aideed was intensely hostile towards the United Nations and in particular to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. This animosity was long-standing. Prior to his work at the UN, Boutros-Ghali had been an Egyptian diplomat, and a supporter of the Siad Barre dictatorship.[18] More importantly, in 1991, Egypt co-sponsored a meeting of Somali political figures at which Aideed's rival Ali Mahdi was declared "president" of Somalia. The title of president was essentially meaningless since Mahdi was never able to control even the capital, let alone the whole country. However, this event established that Egypt, and by implication Boutros-Ghali, was partial and opposed to the interests of Aideed and his supporters.

Aideed's attitude toward Operation Restore Hope can thus be politely termed as complicated. On the one hand, Aideed strongly favored the American role while, on the other hand, Aideed was critical of the organization that had endorsed the operation and had given it legal legitimacy, i.e. the United Nations. Aideed surely must have been concerned when US troops landed in December, since it was made clear that this unilateral intervention would be brief. It was always intended that the Operation would lay the groundwork for a full-fledged UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia, to be administered by the UN Secretariat.

In any case, Aideed's supporters proceeded to praise the United States, while they attacked the UN. Oakley and the American forces returned the compliment and worked closely with Aideed. Several days after landing, US forces discovered a large arms cache belonging to the Aideed faction, containing significant quantities of heavy weapons, all within one block of the closed US embassy, but they took no action.[19] Alex De Waal, director of African Rights and formerly with Human Rights

Watch, provides the following account:

> So Oakley cosied up to General Aideed. For example,Oakley chose to rent his house from Aideed's chief financier Osman "Ato," use Aideed's moneychangers for the lucrative business of converting US dollars to Somali shillings, and gave the General a series of public relations coups by heralding "breakthroughs" in peace talks that had in fact been negotiated by UN diplomats some months earlier.[20]

Aideed told a former US ambassador that, "'Only American diplomats'... could understand Somalis' differences, solve the country's political problems, and bring its people together... 'Only American troops,' he added for good measure, were 'impartial, disinterested, and welcome among Somalis as peacekeeping forces.'"[21] US favoritism toward Aideed occurred despite evidence that Aideed had intermittently collaborated with the government of Sudan, which was perceived as a purveyor of Islamic fundamentalist ideology and an enemy of the United States. On the other hand, despite ties to Sudan, Aideed's organization remained essentially secular, more driven by a hunger for power than by ideology.[22] And, Aideed's Sudanese flirtations apparently were outweighed in the eyes of the Americans by his close association with Conoco, the largest US investor in the country.

Although in this initial phase the United States and the entire peacekeeping operation were technically neutral, there was a strong sentiment among the other factions that Oakley was not really neutral and instead was promoting Aideed's ambitions at the expense of arch-rival Mahdi. This perception became embarrassing for Oakley, particularly when he initiated a series of peace conferences to work out cooperation among the various militias and, at one conference in Addis Ababa, Aideed began boasting about his US connections. This caused the State Department to complain directly to Oakley about the perception of favoritism. In addition, Boutros-Ghali was incensed by Aideed's continued vituperation against the United Nations (and against Boutros-Ghali personally), and this, too, became a source of complaint. The *Financial Times* reported that, "Some angry UN officials allege privately that the US is encouraging the anti-UN camp, and as a concession to [General] Aideed has breached a number of agreements, such as operating under a UN flag and providing proper security to the UN."[23]

In the context of these objections, Oakley began to distance himself from Aideed or to project the impression that distance was being created. On January 7, with considerable fanfare, American forces attacked an arms depot belonging to Aideed's militia in Mogadishu; helicopter gunships and armored vehicles were used to dislodge pro-Aideed forces. In an interview with the author, Oakley acknowledged that he was receiving complaints from several directions about alleged US partiality toward Aideed; in response, he told critics that they should "wait twenty four hours." The next day the attacks against the arms depot commenced.[24] And in his coauthored memoirs, Oakley notes that the raid "put an end, at least temporarily to rumors of favoritism."[25]

General Aideed was surprisingly understanding of the whole situation and – perhaps feeling guilty about his earlier boasting that had been so awkward for Oakley –

the general did not publicly criticize the raid. Indeed, he continued to praise the United States even as he continued to attack the UN. According to a former US diplomat,"US intervention is quite different in Aideed's mind from foreign intervention and is much more acceptable."[26]

At the January 1983 Addis Ababa peace conference, Aideed continued to adopt an intransigent position, demanding that other faction leaders acknowledge his dominance.[27] Apparently, he continued to believe that he had US support, and this was confirmed by events. During the conference, a battle took place in the southern port city of Kismayu, where pro-Aideed forces under Omar Jess were seeking to hold the city against attacks by Said Hersi (known by his *nom de guerre*, "Morgan"). The battle was crucial since Kismayu was a major port in the southern sector of the country and a strategic prize. In late January, the United States intervened with helicopters, supported by Belgian ground forces which attacked Morgan's troops as they prepared an attack.[28] This move enabled Aideed ally Jess to retain control of Kismayu, at least for the time being. Oakley personally informed Aideed of the helicopter attack, which undoubtedly must have been pleasing to the warlord.

The Politics of Oil

Somalia had long been known to the international oil industry as a potential source of untapped crude. Sizable oil finds in neighboring Yemen in the 1980s increased interest in Somalia since Somalia lay in the same general geological zone. Although the size of the oil reserves in Somalia and the economics of exploitation are unknown, there can be little doubt that significant reserves do exist. In a 1991 study, the World Bank assessed the potential of eight African countries as petroleum suppliers – Somalia was at the top of the list.[29]

Four American oil companies had signed exploratory agreements with the Said Barre regime. During the disorder that followed the regime's collapse, three of the four oil companies abandoned their activities due to the absence of security and the fact that agreements signed with Siad Barre were now unenforceable. Conoco, however, proved more tenacious and retained some of its staff in Mogadishu.[30] Its local director, Raymond Marchand, developed a close relationship with Osman Ato, chief advisor to Aideed; Ato was in fact the owner of the property that contained the Conoco compound in Mogadishu. Ato had a longstanding connection with the American oil industry, having worked as a contractor for Western Geophysical Corporation, which undertook nearly "all of Conoco's seismic survey work in Somalia."[31] The relationship with Ato proved advantageous for Conoco, since this provided the company with at least some source of security and political protection.[32] Ato and Aideed,in turn, obtained revenues with which to pursue their political and military ambitions. It is important to note that Conoco's close ties to Ato were well known in Somalia – they were a matter of "public notoriety"[33] according to one journalist – even if this association was little reported outside Somalia (at least in the English-language press). Through this connection, Conoco was also linked to Ato's boss, General Aideed.

The Conoco executives had excellent ties to US government officials as well. It is, after all, not uncommon for large oil companies to have foreign policy connections,[34]

but Conoco had the additional advantage of being virtually the only functioning American entity in Somalia. During the period of anarchy in 1991-92, the Conoco compound proved useful for US diplomats. When Jan Westcott, the US emergency relief coordinator for Somalia, paid a visit to Mogadishu in April 1991, "security and logistical support provided by the president of Conoco-Somalia proved crucial."[35] Conoco also played an important role in planning the logistics for the US marine landing in December 1992. American officials were sufficiently pleased that Brigadier General Frank Libutti, a top US commander in Operation Restore Hope, sent a letter of commendation to Conoco's Marchand, praising his assistance, noting: "Without Raymond's [Marchand's] courageous contributions and selfless service, the [landing] operation would have failed."[36] In addition, Conoco officials who were generally well informed on internal politics in Somalia provided intelligence to the US mission. The Conoco connections to US officials in Restore Hope were sufficiently close that they aroused hostility among competing oil companies with interests in the region.[37]

It is not known whether Conoco actually lobbied the State Department in favor of launching the intervention, but there is no doubt that Conoco executives, as well as those of other oil companies with interests in Somalia, were pleased when it did occur. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* noted that,"Industry sources said the companies holding the [Somali exploration] rights to the most promising concessions are hoping that the Bush Administration's decision to send US troops... will also help protect their multimillion dollar investments there."[38]

Whatever caused Restore Hope to take place, it probably did not result from Conoco's urging. Yet, once US forces were on the ground, it seems likely that Conoco influenced the conduct of the operation. The very close relations between Conoco staff and top level officials in Operation Restore Hope would have given the company exclusive channels of influence. US officials were so comfortable with these connections that they developed a rather insouciant attitude: The Conoco compound was the headquarters for Oakley and his staff and functioned as the *de facto* US embassy. At least one US official made a habit of wearing a shirt and hat with the Conoco logo on it,[39] which no doubt made it difficult for Somalis and also some foreign journalists to distinguish between the American government and the Conoco oil company. While Conoco was making itself helpful to US officials, it simultaneously upgraded its already strong connections to Aideed. That Aideed had a record of great brutality and held a world view somewhat distant, at the very least, from the ideals of Jeffersonian democracy are certain. But, Aideed's unsavory qualities[40] did not arouse too much concern among the Conoco officials or Oakley and his staff; after all, they had done business previously with Siad Barre, an equally unpleasant figure.

According to the Rome daily *La Repubblica*, early in Operation Restore Hope Conoco made an agreement with Aideed that it would continue to back him if, in exchange, Aideed would grant Conoco exclusive rights to all oil exploration activity as soon as his militia established full control.[41] In other words, Conoco sought an arrangement that would freeze out potential competitors, and this seemed advantageous to all parties. Conoco evidently assumed that Aideed would be the most promising possibility for a national leader, while Aideed expected Conoco to generate diplomatic support from the United States.[42] It is likely that this alliance with Cono-

co was an important factor in Aideed's openly pro-American sentiments at the outset of Operation Restore Hope. Aideed's Conoco connection, in short, provides vital context in comprehending his favorable attitude toward American forces, as well as the willingness of the Americans to advance Aideed's agenda.

This alliance proved short-lived. In February 1993, Conoco executives were less than impressed by the military performance of Aideed's ally Omar Jess during the battle for control of Kismayu. Although Jess had initially repulsed an attack by opposing forces, it required direct American and Belgian intervention. This less-than-stellar military performance by one of Aideed's key allies created doubts that Aideed was the best horse to back, so to speak. These fears were confirmed in February when Jess lost control of Kismayu altogether. Accordingly, Conoco switched sides and established a new alliance with Aideed's principal adversary, Ali Mahdi. According to *La Repubblica*, Aideed discovered that, "Mahdi had signed a temporary agreement for exclusive oil rights for the time when the war would end. The Americans had dumped [Aideed], since they did not believe he could remain predominant over other clans anymore."[43]

Aideed not only lost support from Conoco, but also from the US staff in Operation Restore Hope. With the loss of both Conoco and US support, Aideed began, for the first time, to openly criticize the Americans, blaming them for the fall of Kismayu. By the end of February, Aideed "urged supporters in a radio broadcast to turn against the Americans."[44] A wave of rioting by Aideed supporters erupted in the streets of Mogadishu.[45] Thus began the long process whereby Aideed became the principal villain,at least from the standpoint of US foreign policy. This negative view of Aideed was quickly adopted by mass media – and it has been adopted retrospectively by some academic accounts of the operation.[46] What such interpretations ignore, however, is the initial period of the operation when the Americans worked closely with Aideed and disregarded his violent background. In any case, the schism between Aideed and the Americans was now clear, and it continued to widen.

In May 1993, Restore Hope was terminated and the UN assumed a more direct role. The replacement force for Restore Hope, termed UNOSOM II,[47] was at least technically administered by the UN Secretariat. During the UNOSOM II period, Aideed would be further demonized, leading to direct military confrontation with the UN forces from June to October 1993. The decision to use military force against Aideed was one of the most controversial – and also one of the most lackluster – actions in the history of UN peacekeeping operations.

Analysis

A close examination of this matter reveals that the conduct of US forces varied considerably over time, from one of close cooperation with Aideed and favoritism toward his position, to a later stance of hostility and ultimately military confrontation. The conventional view is that US confrontation with Aideed resulted from idealistic and bureaucratic considerations. The United States, it is argued, was repelled by Aideed's intransigence and proclivity toward violence; American and later UN forces over-reacted to the disruption that he and his militia were causing by using military force. In addition, the operation suffered from the familiar bureaucratic

phenomenon of "mission creep," whereby a relatively limited objective of famine relief evolved into a much broader effort to reconstitute the Somali state;[48] Aideed stood in the way of this expanded objective, reinforcing the atmosphere of hostility. Thus, it was General Aideed's obstructionism, combined with UN objections to the General's amoral tendencies, that led to confrontation.

The above interpretation, by far the most common one of the Somali operation, is not well supported by the facts. It fails for two reasons. First,it assumes consistent US hostility toward Aideed from the beginning of the operation, growing in intensity over time. As we have seen, this view is mistaken, since there was a close US relationship with the militia chief at the beginning, only later replaced by hostility. Also, Aideed's less savory qualities were well known at the initial troop landing, but his character did not seem to have bothered Oakley, his staff, or their counterparts in Conoco. A French journalist noted (with a heavily ironic tone) the eagerness with which the Americans sought out Aideed:

> To work out the conditions of the [marine] landings, Robert Oakley and Frank Libutti met with... General Aideed! The principal figure in the Somali war? The man who used the orphanage of [aid organization] SOS as a human shield? Who... had shelled the capital during the "second battle of Mogadishu" producing... thousands of deaths, nearly all civilians? It was him, General Aideed. It was with him that the American officials negotiated the arrival of forces, before they went to see in north Mogadishu [Aideed's rival] Ali Mahdi.[49]

The policy of distance and ultimately confrontation with Aideed was a *shift* in policy by the peacekeepers, which cannot be explained by the conventional view.

A more satisfactory account of these facts is that the United States allowed itself to use the circumstances of a humanitarian intervention,and all the legitimacy that this conferred, to advance the interests of a US investor, Conoco. Conoco's interests in Somalia may not have caused the intervention — original causes of the operation are not the subject of this essay. I am arguing, instead, that sympathy for Conoco led US forces to act the way they did once on the ground.

This interpretation fits well with the facts and, crucially, accounts for the shift in policy. Conoco had close connections with Aideed's militia at the beginning of the operation and so the American forces, accordingly, established close relations with Aideed. When Conoco's relations with Aideed deteriorated after the fall of Kismayu, American forces distanced themselves from Aideed. When Conoco opted to shift its support to Mahdi, the American forces did the same and Mahdi became the favored Somali political figure. The parallel between the interests of Conoco and the actions of American troops is clear and impressive. And, crucially, the interpretation that Conoco caused the US to act as it did produces a better fit with historical facts than does the conventional view that emphasizes a combination of idealism and bureaucratic politics as motivating factors.

Let us, finally, consider the Somalia case in light of the theory of humanitarian intervention, as outlined in the introduction. The theory of humanitarian intervention is above all a theory of constraint. It is presumed that specific states may always be tempted to exploit humanitarian intervention to further that state's own national interest, thus compromising the operation's integrity. Even the most idealistic analysts implicitly recognize that humanitarian or peacekeeping operations can be used as cover for a country seeking to project power and/or to protect its sphere of influence. There are three aspects of humanitarian intervention that constrain such potentially self-interested behavior. Let us reconsider these three factors in light of the Somalia case.

The first constraining factor in humanitarian operations is the multinational quality typical of such operations. A second and closely related constraint is UN supervision. In the Somali case, neither factor constrained the United States. Although Operation Restore Hope was a multinational military force with contributions from twenty nations, the American component constituted such an overwhelming proportion that it is difficult to see how the other nations offered anything but legitimation for the operation. Nor is there any evidence that the UN authorization constrained American policy to any great extent. Indeed, the US continued to work closely with Aideed in the early phase of the operation despite strong objections from the UN Secretariat. According to one analyst, "The Secretary General (Boutros-Ghali) acknowledged that the UN cannot undertake any major military operation unless the US participates actively. But when it does, it insists on running the whole show and uses the UN simply as a fig leaf, as in Iraq and Somalia."[50]

The third, and potentially most salient constraint on great power opportunism is that Somalia was supposed to be a country without strategic or economic significance. This view, although widely held, is inaccurate. As we have seen, Somalia had long been regarded as strategically important due to its proximity to oil shipping routes through the Red Sea area. More important, it was the site of significant oil exploration activities by Conoco. Thus, there was little in the way of structural constraint to prevent the United States from using the operation to further its interests if it sought to do so.

It must be emphasized that this argument does not deny that humanitarian motives influenced the Somalia operation; evidence presented here does not permit so broad a finding. My purpose here is more limited – to demonstrate the considerations of *realpolitik* in the Somalia case,and the considerably greater role of such considerations than is commonly recognized. Above all, the Somali case underscores the importance of in-depth and critical research on peacekeeping. It is too easy to assume that peacekeeping and humanitarian operations are altruistic; too often researchers have simply accepted these assumptions without concrete evidence. In the end, assessments of humanitarian interventions should, like everything else, be based on critical analysis, rather than wishful thinking.

NOTES

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2. Charles W. Kegley, Jr., "The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 21 (1993), pp. 131-147.
3. Jack Donnelly, "Human Rights, Humanitarian Crisis, and Humanitarian Intervention," *International Journal*, Vol.48, No. 4 (1993), p. 607.
4. For a useful survey of liberal responses to the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo, see Paul Starobin, "The Liberal Hawk Soars," *The National Journal* (May 15, 1999), pp. 1310-1317.
5. Regarding the importance of peacekeeping impartiality, see the following: A. B. Fetherston, *Towards a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Michael Harbottle, *The Impartial Solder* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse, *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1996); Raimo Väyrynen, "Preventive Action: Failure in Yugoslavia," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.3, No. 4 (1996), pp. 21-42; Mats Berdal, *Whither UN Peacekeeping?* (London: Brassey's, 1993); Marrack Goulding, "The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping," *International Affairs*, Vol.69, No. 3 (1993), pp. 451-464.
6. Of course,it may be argued that humanitarian intervention can still be considered impartial in the larger sense of the term in that interveners reasonably act to further ethical principles.
7. This is argued at length in Laura Neack, "UN Peacekeeping: In the Interest of Community or Self?" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.32, No. 2 (1995), pp. 181-196.
8. It is widely believed that Operation Restore Hope resulted from humanitarian motives emanating from elite government circles, the mass media, and/or the general public. The latter two elements have been emphasized as part of the so-called "CNN effect," whereby media coverage generated public pressure to "do something," which caused the US intervention in Somalia. For a critical assessment of this phenomenon,see Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus,"Humanitarian Crises and US Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered," *Political Communication*, Vol.12, No. 4 (1995), pp. 413-429.
9. Kenneth Waltz accordingly makes no mention of humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, or human rights in his analysis of international relations after the Cold War. See Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Relations," *International Security*, Vol.18, No. 2 (1993), pp. 44-80.
10. The reason for the qualification is the following: The military logic assumes that the shipping lanes that pass through the Bab-el-Mandeb are in fact vital for the economies of Western Europe and, if the shipping lanes were blocked, the European economies would be irreparably damaged. This is not really accurate since the shipping lanes *were* in fact blocked due to intermittent fighting between Israeli and Egyptian forces during the period 1967-75. During that period, oil ships simply rounded the African continent, without any severe damage to the European economies.
11. On this period see John G. Sommer, *Hope Restored? Humanitarian Aid in Somalia, 1990-1994* (Washington, DC: Center for Policy Analysis and Research on Refugee Issues, Refugee Policy Group, 1994), p. 7. See also Jeffrey Lefebre, *Arms for the Horn* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press,1991).

12. Sommer, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Also, Keith Richburg, "Orphan of the Cold War: Somalia Lost its Key Role," *Washington Post* (October 15, 1992), p. A24.
13. General Norman Schwartzkopf testimony March 6, 1990, published in US Senate, *Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1991*, S. Hrg. 101-936, pp. 143, 151. I thank James Petras for drawing my attention to this citation. Note that Berbera was located in what had become by 1991 the de facto state of Somaliland. Owing to US nonrecognition of Somaliland, the Berbera base was not refurbished and reoccupied during Operation Restore Hope. However, the US armed forces made extensive repairs to air and port facilities in Mogadishu and several other locations. A US businessman with experience in Somalia, "strongly suspects" that the US nonrecognition policy toward Somaliland resulted in part from poor relations between the Somaliland government and the principal US oil company with interests in the region, Conoco. Information from interview with Robert Jackson, an independent oil exploration specialist with experience in Somalia, now based in Tulsa, Oklahoma,USA. Interview conducted October 19, 1998.
14. See Y. Hossein Farzin, *Food Import Dependence in Somalia: Magnitude, Causes, and Policy Options* (Washington, DC: World Bank,1988).
15. This information is from John Drysdale, *What Ever Happened to Somalia?* (London: Haan Associates,1994), pp. 22-26.
16. Alain Frachon,"L'Operation Militaire en Somalie," *Le Monde* (December 10, 1992), p. 4. Translated from the French by the author.
17. Sommer, *op cit*., p. 33.
18. Gérard Prunier, "The Experience of European Armies in Operation Restore Hope," in Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, eds., *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), p. 146; John Drysdale,"Foreign Military Intervention in Somalia: The Root Cause of the Shift from UN Peacekeeping to Peacemaking and its Consequences," in Clarke and Herbst, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
19. William Claiborne and Barton Gellman,"Rival Warlords Sign Peace Pact in Somalia," *Washington Post* (December 12, 1992), p. A1.
20. Alex De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia," *New Left Review*, No. 230 (1998), p. 132.
21. Frank Crigler, "A Flaw in the Somalia Game Plan," *Christian Science Monitor* (January 11, 1993), p. 18. This quote is from Crigler, who paraphrases Aideed.
22. However, after the US-UN confrontation with Aideed beginning in June 1993, there was growing evidence of an opportunistic Aideed association with both Sudan and Iran. Regarding the Islamic/Sudanese/Iranian angle to the Somalia crisis, see, Mark Huband,"Uneasy Landfall for US Marines," *London Guardian* (December 5, 1992), p. A10; "Why Peace Eludes Mogadishu," *West Africa* (October 11-17, 1993), pp. 1818-1819; "Somalie:Liaisons Aeriennes avec le Soudan," *La Lettre de l'Ocean Indien* (September 11, 1993), electronic version;"Les Frustrations du Nord-Est," *Le Monde* (December 15, 1992), p. 6; Marc Yared, "Ce qui Attend les Marines sur le Terrain," *Jeune Afrique* (December 10-16, 1992), pp. 18-20; Kathy Evans, "US Warns Off Khartoum," *London Guardian* (December 10, 1992), p. 13.
23. Julian Ozanne, "Warlords Drive Wedge between US and UN: The Limits of Peace Efforts have been Exposed," *Financial Times* (January 6, 1993), p. 4. Information on Aideed's conduct at Addis Ababa is from Robert B. Oakley, interview, September 21, 1998.
24. Oakley interview, September 21, 1998.
25. John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 1995), p. 60. It should be noted for the record that the Oakley/Hirsch account implies that the rumors of US favoritism toward Aideed were unfounded.
26. Quoted from Crigler, *op cit*.

27. Jennifer Parmelee, "Somalis at Peace Parley Jockey for Power," *Washington Post* (January 14, 1993), p. A24.
28. Keith Richburg, "US Envoy in Somalia Viewed as Linchpin of Reconciliation," *Washington Post* (February 2, 1993), p. A14. See also Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: Brookings,1995), p. 47.
29. "Somalia is 'Sitting on an Oil Fortune,'" *African Business* (April 1993), p. 42. See also Houston Dev George, "Will the Majors Return to Somalia?" *Offshore* (October 1995), p. 8; and Maria Kielmas, "Oil Hopes Hinge on North Somalia Oil Exploration," *Petroleum Economist* (October 1991), p. 19.
30. In addition, Phillips Petroleum held a 25 percent stake in a Conoco concession and, therefore, it also retained an interest. Roger Benedict,"Phillips, Conoco Closely Monitor Peace Talks in Somalia for Effect on Exploration Activity," *Oil Daily* (February 16, 1993), p. 11.
31. Jonathan Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), p. 24; information concerning Ato's ownership of the Conoco compound was supplied by Oakley, interview September 21, 1998.
32. It is commonplace for multinationals that face extended political stability to pursue policies of supporting political factions or militias in the areas where they operate. Such a strategy can influence the politics of unstable regions or civil wars, since even small amounts of financial support can sway the balance of power. The politics of multinational companies in such situations is the object of a small but growing academic literature. See for example, William Reno, "New Constitutionalism in Africa," in Ronald W. Cox, ed., *Business and the State in International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996).
33. Stephen Smith, *Somalie: La Guerre Perdue de l'Humanitaire* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1993), p. 113. Translated from the French. Ato's ties to Conoco are also noted in the Italian press. See "Catturato il 'Cassiere' dell'Organizzazione Osman Ato – Uccisi a Mogadiscio Tre Soldati Pakistani; I Ranger Arrestano il Braccio Destro di Aided," *Il Sole 24 Ore* (September 24, 1993), p. 4.
34. On the historical connection between major oil companies and US foreign policy during the Cold War period, see the classic study, John Blair, *The Control of Oil* (New York : Pantheon Books,1976).
35. Sommer, *op cit*., pp. 12-13.
36. Brigadier General Frank Libutti quoted in Mark Fineman, "The Oil Factor in Somalia," *Los Angeles Times* (January 18, 1993), p. 1.
37. Interviews with Robert Jackson,October 17, 1998 and October 19, 1998.
38. Fineman, *op cit*.
39. Stevenson, *op cit*., p. 23.
40. On Aideed's record of atrocities,see Smith, *op cit*., p. 113.
41. Fabio Scuto and Mario Tedeschini Lalli, "In Somalia a Caccia di Petrolio," *La Repubblica* (August 3, 1993), p. 18.
42. It was widely believed among Somalis during the early part of Operation Restore Hope that the United States was backing Aideed, and that such US support was related to Aideed's ties to Conoco. "I Soldati Italiani Mandati in 'Provincia,' Bush, Natale a Mogadiscio," *La Stampa* (Turin) (December 18, 1992), p. 8.
43. Quoted from Scuto and Lalli, *op cit*. Translated by Renato Corbetta.
44. Bernard Morris, "US Seeks Way Out of Somali Bloodbath," *Sunday Times* (February 28, 1993), electronic version.
45. Scott Peterson, "Anti-West Mood Imperils Security as Somalia Operation Shifts to UN," *Christian Science Monitor* (March 18, 1993), p. 7.

46. See, for example, Ken Menkhaus,"International Peacebuilding and the Dynamics of Local and National Reconciliation in Somalis," in Clarke and Herbst, *op. cit*., pp. 44-48.
47. UNOSOM stands for United Nations Operation in Somalia. UNOSOM I referred to a small scale UN peacekeeping mission that operated for several months in 1992, prior to Restore Hope.
48. The phrase "mission creep" is believed to have been first used by General Joseph Hoar of the US Marine Corps. See "Clinton's Quick and Dirty Route to a Fiasco in Somalia," *London Guardian* (March 17, 1994), p. 12.
49. Smith, *op cit*., p. 168. The quotation was translated from the French.
50. Boutros-Ghali is paraphrased in Herman J. Cohen,"Intervention in Somalia," in Allan E. Goodman, ed., *The Diplomatic Record,1992-1993* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), p. 73.

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