



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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## NAVIGATING A BROKEN TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN RULE: SOMALILAND, 1991 - 2001

### SYNOPSIS

After nearly a decade of civil war, Somaliland declared independence in 1991 amid high expectations. Though the war had left the East African country desperately poor and deeply divided, the rebel organization that had won liberation, the Somali National Movement (SNM), had taken steps to ensure that peace and public order would be preserved in the run-up to a transition to civilian government in May 1993. Yet scarcely a year into its administration, the SNM imploded, unleashing a spiral of violence that threatened the country's future. As the prospect of all-out warfare loomed throughout 1992, the government of SNM Chairman Abdulrahman Ahmed Ali Tuur struggled to navigate the stormy transition from fragmented rebel rule to a legitimate civilian administration. This case study describes these efforts and focuses on the political consensus building that brought Tuur's successor, President Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, to power. Egal's early efforts to build coalitions, manage political opponents and disarm clan militias were more successful than Tuur's, although problems of insecurity and violence persisted. The case offers broader insights into ensuring peace in post-conflict societies and demonstrates how many of the actions needed to build short-term political consensus can come at the expense of long-term efforts to bolster good governance.

*Richard Bennet and Michael Woldemariam drafted this policy note on the basis of interviews conducted in Hargeisa, Somaliland, in October 2010. The companion case study, "Nurturing Democracy in the Horn of Africa: Somaliland's First Elections, 2002–2005," examines how Somaliland successfully avoided violence and instituted efficient electoral processes.*

### INTRODUCTION

On 5 May 1993, in the Somaliland town of Borama, a conference of clan elders deliberated over who the next president of Somaliland would be. Much hinged on the decision of this conference, as the transitional administration of President Abdulrahman Ahmed Ali Tuur had largely failed to prevent a breakdown of public

order. A former Somali diplomat turned rebel leader, Tuur had relied on decades of political experience in holding his new country together. But he was barely succeeding. According to Mohammed Fadal, a former minister of planning who attended the Borama conference, Tuur claimed that he "just kept the place together." Yet a formidable array of opponents

were now violently contesting his authority, and with it, the peace and stability of Somaliland. “He suffered, he was humiliated. At certain points they slandered him,” Fadal said of Tuur, who died in 2003. With Somaliland’s sitting president marginalized, and the politics of the country broken, the fate of the nation rested on the Borama delegates.

Somaliland arose as an experiment in peace building toward the end of the Somali Civil War (1981-1991). Named by its colonial creators, the region in the extreme northwest of Somalia had been the target of heavy bombing by the Mogadishu-based government of Mohammed Siad Barre. The region’s major city, Hargeisa, had been reduced to rubble. Adan Yusuf Abakor, a prominent civil-society member whose imprisonment in 1982 ignited Somalia’s civil war, was in Hargeisa with German aid workers after the bombing campaign. He recalled the devastation: “The day we entered Hargeisa in 1991, together with the German team, a German doctor starting crying. I couldn’t stop her from crying. She said, ‘This place looks unimaginable.’” Hargeisa reminded the doctor of her hometown of Dresden, a major German industrial city that was largely destroyed by bombing and a resulting firestorm during World War II.

Prompted by this legacy of war, and against the backdrop of decades of perceived economic and political domination by southern-based elites, the northerners decided to stake out a new course. At a conference of political and clan leaders in Burao in May 1991, Somaliland declared independence, severing the union with Somalia that had existed since 1960. In the initial aftermath of the Burao conference, Somaliland’s prospects looked promising, as the euphoria of independence masked the tensions inherent in a desperately poor, deeply divided, war-ravaged society.

By February 1992, the veneer began to crack. While the Somali National Movement

(SNM), the rebel organization that liberated Somaliland from Barre’s rule in 1991, had mandated a two-year transitional period through which the SNM would cede administration to a civilian government, such a peaceful transition of power looked increasingly unlikely. The transitional government of SNM Chairman Tuur teetered, as conflicts over government revenue erupted between SNM elites and the ill-disciplined clan militias that supported them. As political unity gave way to discord, Somalilanders openly wondered whether their society would soon mirror the chaos and disorder of their cousins to the south.

Largely spurned by international donors who worried that Somaliland’s independence would spawn a generation of aspiring would-be states, Somaliland embarked on an effort to save the peace and create a sustainable political settlement. Frustrated and marginalized, Tuur soon faded from the scene, retreating into self-imposed exile in southern Somalia.

In 1993, SNM leaders and clan elders elected a new president, Mohammed Ibrahim Egal. Recognizing the limitations of his predecessor’s political strategies, Egal sought to co-opt potential opponents by first including them in his administration and then effectively marginalizing them. Furthermore, he launched a campaign to demobilize clan militias in an effort to reduce their capacity to pursue their narrow goals by force of arms. Egal encountered numerous setbacks, and his behavior produced several troubling trends, including an unfocused development program, the illicit use of private money for political purposes, and a centralization of power in the office of the president. Still, his efforts demonstrate how savvy political leaders can build powerful coalitions for peace in the most inauspicious post-conflict environments.

## THE CHALLENGE

In late 1981, a group of northern Somali

exiles established the SNM at a meeting in London. Shortly after that, the group launched military operations against the Barre regime from bases in neighboring Ethiopia. While the vast majority of the SNM's founders hailed from the Isaaq, Somaliland's largest clan family, it was a motley crowd. Bobe Yusuf, a former SNM political secretary, remembered the SNM as a "front where everybody comes in. ... You have everybody who hates Siad Barre and wants to take up a gun and fight against him. You have the clerics, you have the military officers, you have the intellectuals, you have the socialist-oriented people, you have the capitalist-oriented people, you have every Dick and Harry united against Siad Barre. You had to accommodate them." Because the SNM comprised Islamists and secularists, politicians and experienced military commanders, and various Isaaq sub-clans, the organization's internal cohesion was never certain.

In 1988, with its hand forced by a withdrawal of Ethiopian support, the result of an Ethiopian peace agreement with Barre, the SNM abandoned its cross-border sanctuaries in a bid to win the war, seizing Somaliland's major urban centers, Hargeisa and Berbera. Barre's response to the SNM victories was harsh. Bombing Somaliland's cities to the ground, Barre prompted a costly SNM retreat and created massive human flight into refugee camps in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's withdrawal of direct support and the SNM's failed gamble had complex and paradoxical effects. While in the short term the SNM suffered significant military losses, the movement of the Isaaq population into Ethiopian refugee camps greatly increased the organization's ability to recruit members. Yet as the SNM was poised to grow significantly in size, fundamental questions emerged about how the organization should be structured. With Ethiopian support gone, how could such a large force be sustained in the field? How could

resources be mobilized for what planners hoped to be the decisive stage of the war?

These questions proved to be intractable, splitting the SNM politburo down the middle and prompting several members to leave a testy leadership meeting in anger. Over this opposition, and with some reluctance, the leadership decided that the only way to proceed was to restructure the SNM along clan lines by creating a *Guurti*, or body of clan elders who would raise resources and make key recommendations to the SNM leadership.

Although the empowerment of traditional clan structures within the SNM was thought to be the most efficient way for the organization to stay afloat in hard times, the decision effectively tribalized the SNM. After the withdrawal of Ethiopian support, the clan structure came to define the composition of the militias, according to Hassan Issa Jama, then vice chairman of the SNM and later the country's first vice president. "From then on, we relied completely on our grassroots, our clans," he said. "Every clan preferred to supply their own kin. That is when our units became clan-based." According to Jama, this move "was not a welcome development," and it was to have far-reaching consequences in the immediate post-conflict period.

In January 1991, Barre fled Mogadishu, ousted by a coalition of rebel groups that included the SNM. In Somaliland, the SNM took the major towns and the lion's share of the rural areas, becoming the most powerful force in the territory. Although the SNM had never seriously entertained the idea of independence, the refusal of the movement's southern allies to work together on the composition of the new government, combined with popular pressure, forced the issue. On the Guurti's recommendation, SNM Chairman Tuur yielded to nationalist pressures, declaring an independent republic that the SNM central committee would lead for a two-year transitional

period, after which power would pass to a civilian government. Adan Yusuf Abakor, who later became the country representative for the British non-governmental organization Progressio, described how the situation unfolded: “The SNM was not prepared to rule. ... Suddenly they found themselves [transitioning] from a liberation movement into a government, into an administration which was supposed to rule a country and people. ... The chairman [of the SNM] became the president and the central committee became a parliament. Then suddenly there was a lot of mess going on. It was more of a people’s movement rather than an organization.” Organizing and corralling internal factions became a primary challenge for SNM leaders who sought to unify the country.

Between Barre’s fall in January 1991 and a landmark Burao conference in May, the SNM took several crucial steps that averted a continuation of civil war in Somaliland. Recognizing that their organization was (correctly) perceived as Isaaq-dominated, SNM leaders sought to reassure non-Isaaq clans that had been allied with the former government that they would not be persecuted in the new political order. Toward this end, the SNM initiated a series of local clan peace conferences, using SNM members from non-Isaaq clans as key representatives during negotiations.

Significantly, the SNM made the pragmatic decision that all individuals and clans would be absolved of crimes committed during the civil war, while demonstrating restraint in deploying SNM troops to regions populated by non-Isaaq clans. “Magnanimity in victory. ... We said, ‘Look, the war is finished. You are going to enjoy equal rights with us. Let’s rebuild the country,’” Jama said. “We gave our forces orders, ‘You are not going to take revenge, you are not going to fire on civilians.’... That was a surprise to the people who were fighting us. We wanted something more than revenge, and that was to give our country and our people a chance

to rebuild.” An important yet unintended consequence of this calculated magnanimity in victory was that hundreds of talented former government officials returned to Somaliland, providing crucial human capital to a poorly resourced government trying to get on its feet.

The SNM’s successes with external relations were soon undone by internal fighting, as violence erupted between SNM units in February and March 1992. With the common enemy gone, rivalries emerged within the SNM and, more importantly, within the Isaaq clan. In a land where most were impoverished, these conflicts were largely driven by economic scarcity and a demand for the spoils of war, as young, well-armed but poorly disciplined men were easily mobilized along clan lines by SNM leaders who competed for power. Fadal, who had returned from Canada in 1992 after being abroad during the war, described the situation that he confronted when he arrived in Hargeisa: “1992 was a very difficult time for Somaliland. In fact the whole place was teeming with militia, guns. In the night you would be hearing people firing...mortars and big guns, and fire all over the place,” he said. While the SNM had succeeded in capturing the major towns in the latter stages of the war against Barre, the organization quickly devolved into feuding clan militias. The port of Berbera was a significant flashpoint, as the government sought to reassert control of the city and its port revenues in the face of opposition from clan commanders who sought to prevent a government monopoly. By September, the government’s efforts to assert control of Berbera had failed, key ministers had resigned, and renegade commanders were threatening to march on the seat of government in Hargeisa.

While the SNM’s clan-based structure helped create these ruptures, other factors were involved. Chief among these was the issue of presidential succession, as the mandate of President Tuur, a member of the Habar Yunis

sub-clan, was due to expire in May 1993. Other Isaaq sub-clans within the SNM, particularly the Habar Awal and Habar-Ja'lo, felt that with the expiration of Tuur's original mandate, a member of their clan should lead the new civilian government. However, Tuur had other ideas, and as he sought to expand the writ of the new government across the country, other major Isaaq sub-clans became deeply concerned. Tuur's firing of several Habar-Ja'lo government ministers exacerbated the tensions.

Furthermore, while Tuur had been chairman of the SNM for a relatively brief period, he took credit for winning the war against Barre; in less than three years, he had guided the SNM from near-defeat to a victory that few anticipated. Jama, Tuur's second in command, said political opponents, many of whom were former SNM leaders, attacked Tuur's reputation in an effort to derail his efforts as president. "They refused to give us a chance," Jama said, "because they thought if they gave us a chance they wouldn't be able to compete with us for public support because of our record of liberation. So they had to disrupt everything. Unsportsmanship, honestly; there's no other way to put it—complete and total unsportsmanship. Instead of congratulating us, they decided to spoil everything." Personal animosities among the leadership and questions of individual honor, status and reputation reinforced age-old clan dynamics.

Mediation by the clan elders resolved disputes over the Berbera port and an earlier dispute in Burao, but these solutions constituted short-term fixes rather than a long-term settlement that all SNM clan factions could buy into. The May 1993 power transition loomed as a tipping point. What would Somaliland's post-transition government look like? More importantly, how would Somaliland's leaders ensure that the transition did not break down? Although all hoped for the best, many expected the worst.

## FRAMING A RESPONSE

In keeping with the process of consensus building that had emerged in the previous two years, SNM leaders and clan elders convened a clan conference in Borama from January to May 1993. While the conference was supposed to manage the transition to a new administration, its initial agenda was ill-defined and would likely involve more than the simple selection of a new leader. In a surprising turn of events, a beleaguered Tuur ceded nearly all decision-making authority for the transition to traditional clan authorities. Unable to obtain the quorum necessary to hold an SNM congress and resolve the organization's internal leadership struggles, Tuur hoped that clan elders would endorse his candidacy for president at the conference.

Tuur's unilateral move set the stage for a seismic shift in Somaliland's political terrain. The decision sparked the ire of several SNM stalwarts who recognized that the action effectively gutted the SNM of its authority and reduced any leverage it would have at the clan conference. Tuur's vice president, Jama, said he was stunned by the "complete and total lack of consultation." Many had believed that the new administration would be a reaffirmation of SNM rule in one form or another, because the SNM was the only effective national force in Somaliland and had been responsible for liberation of the country from Barre's rule.

With 150 voting delegates who roughly represented the clan composition of Somaliland, the Borama conference made several significant decisions. Beginning with the issue of security, the conference decided that while clans would be responsible for the provision of a basic level of order within their geographical areas, they would be required to demobilize large militias and integrate them into the national army. On the issue of the structure of government, the conference decided to set up a bicameral, non-elected legislature in which a national Guurti served as the upper house. More importantly,

the delegates decided to empower a strong executive with a council of ministers. While deliberations around these issues were fraught with tension, the use of local resources in financing the conference provided a significant amount of community pressure on delegates to move quickly to a settlement. Indeed, the clan that hosted the Borama conference, the Gadabursi, played a substantial role in breaking several impasses over the nature of executive power in the new administration.

The highest drama was reserved for the selection of the new president. In addition to Tuur, several candidates emerged, but it was the most unlikely and the least willing of these that proved to be his most serious opponent. Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, the last elected prime minister of a united Somalia before being ousted by Barre in a military coup in 1969, had been in exile in the Middle East for several years and was not expected to attend Borama, much less run for the presidency. Egal was a member of the Habar Awal sub-clan of the Isaaq, and many at the conference assumed his clan would nominate another candidate from within the SNM leadership. Egal's arrival changed the direction of the Borama conference, as he strongly defended Tuur's actions as president and attacked Tuur's opposition, many of whom were Egal's own supporters. "He really played that tune, which pacified Tuur's clan and supporters. ... That is his skill," Fadal said of Egal, who received 99 of 150 delegates in the final presidential tally.

For many long-time SNM cadres, Egal's election was anathema. The SNM had shed blood in liberating Somaliland, and now a non-member, who had never been on the battlefield, would govern the country. How could this have happened? Beyond Tuur's decision to resolve internal SNM conflicts by ceding unprecedented authority over the political transition to clan elders, several factors were important. First, by 1993 the SNM was a discredited organization.

Although the group had been popular immediately after liberation, bitter internecine conflict had eroded confidence in the SNM's ability to govern the country. Second, as a historical matter, Somalilanders perceived the SNM as a vehicle of Isaaq hegemony, and thus key minority clans like the Warsengeli, Dhulbahante, Gadabursi, and Dir were unwilling to endorse SNM candidates at the conference.

Egal had a storied career in politics dating back to his tenure as Somaliland's first president prior to the union with Somalia, and he personally knew many of the major clan leaders. Edna Adan, a former foreign minister of Somaliland and Egal's ex-wife, referred to him as a "political heavyweight" with few peers in Somaliland's political arena. With the country still struggling to gain international recognition, many believed that Egal had the stature and savvy to make the new government work. What was more, Egal had built significant credibility with Somalilanders for having endured a decade in Barre's jails after the 1969 coup.

Underpinning Egal's election was a sentiment, widely held among the clans (with the exception of Tuur's Habar Yunis), that it was time for the presidency to revert to the Habar Awal sub-clan of the Isaaq. To give balance to the new administration, Abdirahaman Aw Ali Farah of the minority Gadabursi clan was elected as vice president.

Though personally well equipped to be president, Egal faced daunting challenges. Divisions within the SNM were far from healed, as the losers of the elections, only temporarily placated, would threaten war. While trying to manage these potential spoilers and ensure that they did not fight one another or attack his government, Egal had to find a way to disarm and demobilize them. This was no easy task, but three interrelated themes framed his approach to keeping the peace. First, Egal was willing to use his own substantial financial

resources and those of his clan to build a broad-based political coalition that turned potential enemies into friends. Egal's father had been a wealthy real estate developer, and many of Egal's clansmen were wealthy traders in Djibouti. Such financial resources were especially important because Somaliland's government lacked the capacity to generate substantial revenue. Second, in employing his personal resources, Egal was able to concentrate on building an immediate political consensus based on an extensive network of patronage, even though that meant shelving long-term development objectives. Third, the lack of a written constitution or functioning body of law provided institutional ambiguity in the early years of his administration, allowing Egal use of money for political purposes in ways that would be considered dubious in other contexts but that Egal believed were crucial to maintaining the peace.

### GETTING DOWN TO WORK

Beyond ensuring that his administration broadly represented all of Somaliland's major clans, Egal recognized that he would have to placate the SNM clan factions that had undone the Tuur administration—a group collectively known as the “Red Flags.” The question was: How? Although the political leaders of these restive and well-armed groups were glad Tuur was gone, they were equally suspicious of Egal and his motives. In a bold move, Egal incorporated several of these SNM commanders into his administration, while offering cash and jobs to these individuals and the constituencies they represented. Egal was well aware of the potential danger that these recalcitrant SNM commanders posed to his government. Having brought them into his coalition, he pressed them to demobilize their clan militias as a signal of their new allegiance. Feeling secure as members of the new government, the SNM commanders obliged, and with their militia's heavy weapons

safely in government hands, Egal turned the tables. Vested by the Borama conference with full legal power to replace ministers, Egal fired those who collectively had opposed Tuur. But instead of ousting them all at once, a mistake Tuur had made in 1992, Egal removed his ministers one by one at intervals of several months. The goal was to isolate each minister, create the impression that the reasons for his removal were unique, and obtain the political support of other ministers who would be reassured of their status but who later would meet the same fate. What Egal lost in time he gained in effectiveness, as lines of communication and coordination in the bellicose anti-Tuur faction broke down. By the end of Egal's second year as president, these political high rollers were on the outside looking in, much as they had been during the Tuur years but no longer possessing the means to create significant problems for the government.

### *Demobilizing militias*

The marginalization of this faction of SNM political leaders furthered another goal, the broader and more systematic effort at demobilization. After a decade of civil war, Somaliland was awash with arms. In addition to light weapons, the tool of choice for clan militias were “technicals”—Toyota pick-up trucks equipped with machine guns—that were devastatingly effective in the country's open and relatively flat terrain. Some clans even had acquired tanks and armored personnel carriers from Barre's retreating forces. The situation was unsustainable.

Egal recognized that Somaliland's clans faced a classic security dilemma: the willingness of individual clans to demobilize depended in large part on what their neighbors did. Giving up their guns today could mean they could suffer tomorrow in a dispute with a rival clan. Egal needed an early victory to alter perceptions of clan threats and to create momentum for

demobilization.

Egal decided to do what he did best: He traded on his personal connections. He asked Sultan Umar of the Arab sub-clan of the Isaaq, a revered SNM commander whom he had known well for decades, to be the first major clan leader to demobilize his militia. Egal was shrewd in his choice of Umar. Not only did the two men have a personal relationship but, equally important, Umar's group had few longstanding tensions with other major clans. Egal was pragmatic in other ways, saying Umar's followers could keep their handguns and rifles as a kind of insurance policy, a practice he maintained in dealing with other clans.

Sultan Umar agreed, and his high-profile demobilization reverberated around the country. Egal was eager to capitalize. In keeping with the Borama agreement, Egal committed himself to enticing clan militias into the national army. Based on the amount of weapons and equipment it surrendered, each clan would receive a share of resources in the national army and financial incentives, in the form of cash and jobs for instance, from the Egal administration. Importantly, every clan militia member was welcome in the new armed services, a feature of the program made possible by Egal's significant financial capacity. Former clan militia members were integrated into the national army through military training and education at a base in Mandera that was supported by the French government.

Egal paid careful attention to the imagery and theater of the demobilization process, turning the demobilization of clan militias and the surrendering of arms into public spectacles. Demobilization events took place at the national stadium, and were widely attended and also screened on national television. As these events became increasingly popular, clan militias recognized that they could gain prestige and credibility by surrendering greater quantities and types of weapons. Almost inadvertently, Egal's

efforts created a competitive dynamic that accelerated the demobilization of the clans.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

While Egal's strategy yielded immediate political dividends, the gains came at a high price. Egal's government was polarizing from the beginning. One of his core problems was that the vote for his selection at the Borama conference was split rather than unanimous, unlike most decisions taken by conferences of clan elders. The split reflected the frustrations that the Habar Yunis group felt over Tuur's ouster from the new political dispensation, as well the sentiment that Tuur received a raw deal during his presidency. Compounding this issue was that Egal himself was a member of the Habar Awal, the Berbera-based clan of the recalcitrant SNM commanders who had created such significant problems for Tuur. Though Egal attempted to placate Tuur after winning the presidency at Borama, the move was effective only in the immediate short term.

Thus Habar Yunis leaders left Borama with chips on their shoulders. With their candidate spurned and marginalized, they were in no mood to cooperate with the new government. Tuur and his colleagues openly denounced the Borama conference and threatened war. In this context, Egal's decision to incorporate en masse members of the SNM faction that had undermined Tuur was particularly problematic, and served to reinforce the perception that the new administration would be a bulwark for Habar Awal dominance in Somaliland. "Egal is a clever man," said Fadal. "He adopted [the commanders] because he wanted to have them inside his cabinet. But that angered Tuur's side. They saw it as a betrayal, saw it as a slap in their face." When Egal sought to reassert government control over revenues from Hargeisa's airport, which was in an area populated by the Habar Yunis, Tuur's clan openly opposed the government's efforts, much

as the Habar Awal had done in Berbera when Tuur was president. By early 1994, the situation had escalated into all-out war, with Tuur rejecting the idea of an independent Somaliland.

While initially pressing on with the fighting, Egal left open the possibility of peaceful negotiations. In particular, Egal encouraged an effort by Hussein Bulhan, a professor at Boston University and later president of Hargeisa University, to organize a group of diaspora Somalilanders to mediate the dispute. Bulhan's first step was to ask the two sides to come up with lists of acceptable mediators. "I felt that if I were to rally a group of Somaliland intellectuals abroad, who were not involved in the conflict but were members of the different clans, who feel the pain [of conflict], as I did, and do not have allegiance to petty clan issues, I felt as though something could come of it," Bulhan said of his initial motivations. He scheduled the gathering in Addis Ababa.

While the initial mediation efforts went well, the discussions were so sensitive that disputes arose from innocuous issues. For example, the Tuur faction, which viewed Egal as illegitimate, went into frenzy when one of Bulhan's colleagues referred to the Egal faction as the "government" in an interview with the BBC. Egal eventually soured on the negotiations as well. But while Bulhan's efforts broke down, they paved the way for another comprehensive clan conference in October 1996 (the Hargeisa Peace and Reconciliation Conference) at which all parties negotiated the parameters of a final agreement.

Re-confirmed as president, Egal was the big winner of the 1996 Hargeisa conference. The election of a new vice president, Dahir Riyale Kahin from the minority Dhubahante clan, reflected the hard bargaining and concessions that this political reconciliation required. While Bulhan's mediation and the traditional consensus-building efforts during the clan conference were important to Egal's final

consolidation of power, the balance of forces had shifted against those who opposed Egal.

Egal's successful demobilization and integration of several clan militias into the national army had greatly increased the military capabilities of the government, allowing him to exert substantial pressure on the Tuur faction. Furthermore, Tuur's rejection of an independent Somaliland was an unpopular move that in the long term weakened his support in his own clan. In any case, by this time Tuur had relocated to Mogadishu in the south, and was unable to effectively mobilize his constituents from hundreds of kilometers away.

## ASSESSING RESULTS

After the tumult of the Tuur years and the shaky transition of power to civilian government in 1993, Egal's political acumen was sorely needed. A gifted and well-heeled politician, he wisely built a coalition that neutralized potential opponents while crafting a demobilization process that greatly reduced the potential for a resumption of fighting. In attempting to build a stable peace and consolidate his government, Egal leaned heavily on his personal resources in order to build an extensive network of patronage that brought his enemies to his side. Despite the rancor of the early years of Egal's administration, diaspora and clan mediation, in addition to the military prowess of the government, allowed him to weather the storm. By 1997, Egal's government was entrenched and by 2000 had written and ratified a new constitution. Egal died in 2002, and because of the process he set in motion, Somaliland's first democratic elections were held later that year, setting the country on a path to stability. Although some violence and clan tensions persisted, levels were low compared with those at the time that Egal came into office.

The shortcomings of Egal's reform efforts were clear. His use of personal resources for political patronage, though not illicit in the

context of the limited legal framework in Somaliland at the time, left underlying clan tensions untouched while perpetuating corruption and undermining public confidence in government institutions. Moreover, Egal's focus on developing a political consensus through patronage to political elites largely ignored basic issues of public services like education, health and infrastructure. Viewed broadly, the Egal years were bereft of any significant national development campaign or strategy. As a result, the peace he established paid limited socio-economic dividends.

Finally, Egal's significant personal resources, and his willingness to abuse those resources, so firmly entrenched his authority that many worried that an imperial presidency would emerge. In fact, the 2000 constitution reflected Egal's desire (and Parliament's acquiescence) to have a strong executive with wide-ranging powers. Egal came to office as a weak president but died a powerful one. Although many felt in 1993 that Somaliland needed a strong government and president, the pendulum may have swung too far in the other direction by 2000. Egal did not die a wealthy man, having exhausted his personal wealth in the name of political bargaining and peacemaking, but the peace that he established formed a solid, if somewhat problematic, foundation for future administrations. Indeed, Egal's strategy highlighted a trade-off that leaders often face between the need to build immediate post-conflict consensus and the more long-term imperative of establishing good, ethical governance.

## REFLECTIONS

Many factors contributed to the successful transition of Somaliland government from total control by the Somali National Movement to a civilian-led democracy. For one thing, it was homegrown. Former Foreign Minister Edna Adan said that while there was "no magic wand,

no silver bullet," the entire process "was people-powered, people-centered and people-funded." The Somaliland story stands out for the limited role that the international community played in brokering peace.

Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, of the Social Research and Development Institute in Hargeisa, credited the successful transition to the SNM government's innate weakness. "A weak SNM government was a blessing in disguise," Yusuf said. "If it was very strong, we do not know what would have happened. ... They were weak, they did not have resources, they were not well organized, and that deficiency and weakness and lack of resources helped them not become warlords." Without the capacity to become dictatorial, the SNM was forced to relinquish power to civilians.

The SNM's weaknesses, a product of internal clan wrangling over scarce resources, at the same time worked against the transition process. Somaliland's largest political entity, the SNM, was the only one that could provide the public order required for a lawful change of government. Yet SNM leader Abdulrahman Ahmed Ali Tuur seemed unable to control the situation while he was president.

Although the 1993 Borama conference formally marked the end of a tumultuous transition process and paved the way for the emergence of a civilian government under the reins of President Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, the challenges in many ways were just beginning. Somaliland teemed with well-armed clan militias, many of which threatened to upend the new political dispensation. Egal had to placate and disarm potential troublemakers. With a mix of persuasion, patronage and political maneuvering, Egal did so. By the time he died in 2002, large-scale conflict was a thing of the past, as the political agreements he had forged paved the way for Somaliland's first democratic elections.

Given the significant moral trade-offs

inherent in Egal's program of action, Somaliland's experience during the decade beginning in 1991 likely represents an interesting point of departure for discussions of post-conflict peace-building rather than a script that can be employed in other post-conflict settings.

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