

# There and Back Again in Somalia

Sunday 18 February 2007, by [MENKHAUS Ken](#) (Date first published: 11 February 2007).

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When 2006 dawned in Somalia, the war-torn Horn of Africa nation had been without a functioning central government for 15 years. The main claimant to the title, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) formed in 2004, was unable to extend its authority beyond a small portion of the countryside. An uneasy coalition of Islamists and clan-based militia leaders — the “Mogadishu group” — held sway in the capital and opposed the TFG. To the north, the unrecognized, secessionist state of Somaliland and the autonomous state of Puntland remained the only portions of the country to enjoy more or less uninterrupted political stability and rule of law.

A growing rift within the Mogadishu Group exploded into armed conflict in February 2006, when a CIA-backed collection of militia and business leaders announced the formation of the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. The Alliance's principal aims were to collaborate to monitor and capture any foreign al-Qaeda suspects using Mogadishu as a safe haven, and to counter the growing clout of the Union of Islamic Courts. The Islamists reacted with preemptive attacks, and fierce urban warfare culminated in a decisive victory by the Courts in June, which took over Mogadishu and quickly expanded their authority over most of south-central Somalia. Ethiopia was alarmed at the prospect of its tottering client, the TFG, collapsing in the face of the Courts' expansion, and even more distressed by the increasingly hostile rhetoric from Mogadishu. Hardliners in the Islamist movement began issuing threats of jihad against Ethiopia, forged close security links to Ethiopia's regional rival Eritrea, called for Ethiopians to rise up against their government and embraced irredentist claims on Somali-inhabited regions of Ethiopia. Ethiopia increased its troop presence in and around the TFG provisional capital of Baidoa and other regions, despite vehement objections from the Courts.

These spiraling tensions and other acts of brinksmanship ultimately led to the full-scale Ethiopian offensive on December 24, launched with what the press has called “tacit support” from Washington. The Courts suffered heavy losses in the initial battles, and then unexpectedly dissolved in Mogadishu amidst deep internal divisions. In the final days of 2006, Ethiopian and TFG forces entered Mogadishu and occupied key installations, while remnants of the Courts, including small numbers of foreign fighters, fled south toward the Kenyan border. It was an outcome virtually no one foresaw.

Ironically, the end result of these dramatic events is an environment comparable to that of late 2005, in which a weak TFG backed by Ethiopia faces opposition from a loose grouping of Mogadishu-based clans, Islamists and business interests. Somalia has not exactly returned to the status quo ante bellum. Unpopular Ethiopian forces remain in the country; the Islamist movement has suffered a significant setback; and the threat of armed insurgency is considerably higher. But the basic

parameters of the political divisions in south-central Somalia remain largely unchanged from 2005. In the course of 12 months, Somalia has gone “there and back again.”

Meanwhile, calls by top al-Qaeda figures for jihad against Ethiopia, and two January 2007 US airstrikes aimed at three foreign al-Qaeda operatives believed to have orchestrated the 1998 Nairobi embassy bombings, serve as reminders that the Somali crisis is part of a much wider global confrontation and will continue to be understood by most outside actors through the prism of the war on terror.

## **THE COURTS IN CHARGE**

Before the Union of Islamic Courts took control, Mogadishu had not been under a single authority since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. By the late 1990s, the capital had fallen under the tenuous control of a mosaic of warlord fiefdoms, neighborhood watch groups, private business security forces and local clan-based Islamic law (sharia) courts. The sharia courts were initially financed by local businessmen, overseen by clan elders and operated by traditional Sufi clerics. The courts improved public security in their neighborhoods and proved very popular, but were limited in their jurisdiction to their own lineages. A broader umbrella group, the Sharia Implementation Council, was formed in 2000 to facilitate cooperation between the courts on matters such as prisoner exchanges. The Sharia Implementation Council became an important political platform for its secretary-general, Hassan Dahir Aweys, a radical Islamist considered by Ethiopia and the US to be a terror suspect. Following political setbacks in 2001-2003, the sharia courts reemerged in 2004, under a new umbrella movement, the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts. The Council was a loose and broad coalition led by a traditional Sufi figure, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, but with hardliner Aweys still playing a dominant role. Most of the 11 clan-based courts in Mogadishu remained moderate and under the control of clan elders, but two courts were linked to militancy and possessed radical militias that undertook a dirty war of assassinations in Mogadishu.

The Supreme Council gained legitimacy in Mogadishu thanks to improved public security in select neighborhoods. It accrued power by creating a militia of 400 committed and well-trained fighters, and by expanding its network and financial support in the business community. The Courts’ public support within the most powerful Hawiye clans in Mogadishu was given a major boost by the election in October 2004 of Abdullahi Yusuf as president of the newly declared Somali Transitional Federal Government. Yusuf’s close association with neighboring Ethiopia, his long-standing animosity toward all manifestations of political Islam and his lineage identity (the Darood clan-family) all helped to galvanize previously divided Mogadishu constituencies. The Islamists, especially Aweys, emerged as the principal opposition to Yusuf and the TFG.

The Courts’ dramatic military victory over the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism in the first half of 2006 demonstrated that the Courts possessed a much better trained, equipped and motivated militia than that possessed by the Alliance, which relied mainly on unpaid teenage gunmen. The clan-based militia leaders in the Alliance were weakened further by the loss of support from their own clansmen, most of whom blamed the “warlords” for continued lawlessness in much of the capital. The Courts’ decisive victory in Mogadishu, and subsequent expansion of their authority across most of south-central Somalia, demoralized opponents and created a sense that a complete Islamist takeover of the country was inevitable. Even Somaliland experienced a crisis of confidence.

Under the Courts’ administration, public security improved dramatically throughout the capital. The Islamists disarmed clan militias, rid the city of warlords and criminal gangs, reopened the seaport

and airport, and made the streets safe. Not surprisingly, they earned widespread respect and support among locals and in the diaspora. That respect began to fray, however, once hardline elements in the Courts promoted strict interpretations of sharia, restricted the rights of women, the media and civil society, and began mobilizing for irredentist jihad against Ethiopia. Somalis were torn between their desire to support a movement that brought calm to the capital for the first time in 15 years, and fear that the same movement was beginning to replicate many of the same authoritarian tendencies at home and ill-considered clashes with Ethiopia that had proved so disastrous under the Siad Barre regime.

Talks intended to promote dialogue between the TFG and the Courts repeatedly failed in the summer and fall of 2006. The TFG, the Courts and Ethiopia all share in the blame. TFG leaders feared that any negotiations with the dominant Courts would result in cabinet reshuffles that would cost them their jobs. Ethiopia feared that the Islamists would dominate a government of national unity resulting from peace talks, allowing them to use the TFG as a Trojan horse at Ethiopia's expense. As for the Islamists, most of the leadership saw little benefit in dialogue with a weak transitional government that was on the verge of collapse. The widespread conviction inside and outside the movement was that the rest of Somalia would soon fall into the hands of the Islamists. Hardliners in the movement went further, using the call for jihad against Ethiopia to mobilize their base and outflank moderates and critics. By conflating their Islamist ideology with pan-Somali nationalism and anti-Ethiopian sentiment, the hardliners effectively torpedoed moderate efforts to dialogue with the TFG.

As the situation deteriorated in the summer and fall of 2006, both sides girded for war. A UN report released in November documented an alarming flow of weapons into the country, with as many as ten states implicated in violating the arms embargo that was imposed in 1991.

## **THE COURTS' COLLAPSE**

The Union of Islamic Courts' rapid and unexpected collapse in December 2006 has been partially misunderstood in the media. The Courts' militia was not in fact defeated outright by Ethiopian forces, though it did sustain heavy casualties in south-central Somalia, where it unwisely chose to fight a superior Ethiopian military in open terrain. But even after those initial setbacks, the Islamists could have fallen back to Mogadishu, with their forces largely intact, to engage in a second round of fighting on their terms — namely, an asymmetrical war waged in a dense urban setting. It is not clear that Ethiopia would have risked inserting its forces into Mogadishu under those circumstances, in which case the Courts could have remained in control of the capital, ensuring an inconclusive standoff.

The sudden dissolution of the Courts was the result of deep, unresolved divisions within the Islamist alliance in Mogadishu. The battlefield losses to Ethiopia took the lid off simmering tensions within the movement. Hardline leaders faced recriminations from clan elders, businesspeople and even fellow Islamists, who accused them of dragging the movement into a costly and reckless war with Ethiopia. The Courts were compelled to return most weapons and fighters to clan authorities and businesspeople. The most significant turn of events was the insistence of Mogadishu constituencies that the Courts not attempt to launch an urban insurgency in the capital, forcing the residual militia and leadership of the Courts to flee southward to the port city of Kismayo.

While there is only fragmentary information about these internal divisions, it appears that the Courts' hardliners had taken both their policies and their rhetoric too far. Business leaders were unwilling to permit the Courts to engage in an urban insurgency that risked heavy damage to

property; clan leaders feared the loss of lives and power within their lineages in a long war with Ethiopia; and moderate Islamists refused to back what they saw as an irresponsible policy of confrontation with a powerful neighbor. The popular backing that the Courts enjoyed for having brought law and order to Mogadishu turned out to be broad but not deep. Lurking beneath the genuine support for the Courts was a bundle of anxieties, mistrust, latent rivalries, clan divisions and alliances of expediency, which quickly resurfaced the moment the Courts began to lose ground to the Ethiopians.

Though the Union of Islamic Courts is now defunct as an organization, political Islam will remain a powerful factor in any future political dispensation in Somalia. Islamist groups retain a strong infrastructure of schools, charities and mosques. It is as yet unclear if more moderate Islamist groups and leaders will be able to take control of the Islamist agenda in Somalia, or if a new, post-Courts organization or party will emerge to represent Islamist views in the political arena. The last time Somali Islamists suffered heavy battle losses against Ethiopia, in 1996, they opted to disperse and meld with local communities.

The regime change in Mogadishu is not the end of hostilities in Somalia. Armed resistance targeting the TFG and Ethiopian forces has already arisen from several distinct but overlapping sources: clan-based resistance to the TFG and Ethiopia, mainly from some Hawiye clans; attacks and mischief by recently returned warlords seeking to disrupt any effort to impose law and order in the city; regrouping jihadi cells from the remnants of the Courts' militia; and criminal gangs. These disparate sources of armed violence could coalesce into more organized resistance, although Ethiopia's pledged withdrawal reduces the odds of a true insurgency. Ethiopia has already commenced the withdrawal of some of its forces from Mogadishu, but could keep troops and advisors in border regions and Baidoa for some time to come.

## **FRAGMENTATION**

The demise of the Courts, which had controlled most of south-central Somalia from the south Mudug region to the Kenyan border, has created a power vacuum that the TFG is not at present in a position to fill. In most places, de facto political authority has fallen to clan leaders. Revived clan militias — often comprised of the same gunmen who had served under the Courts — are now the primary source of power. This localized pattern of authority is not new to rural communities, but the abrupt shift of power from the Courts to clan leaders is more destabilizing in tense urban settings such as Mogadishu and Kismayo. The TFG cannot maintain a presence in Mogadishu without Ethiopian protection, and cannot begin to administer the city without active support and partnership from powerful local constituencies and clans. External pressure has been placed on both the Mogadishu-based opposition and the TFG to engage in talks toward a more inclusive transitional government, but prospects for success are increasingly poor. Most Mogadishu-based clans and political factions either reject the TFG's legitimacy outright, or are offering it tepid and opportunistic support.

Power in general has been fragmented in the country, with virtually no leader, clan or movement emerging in a stronger position. The Islamists have seen a severe reversal of fortunes; the TFG's sole source of strength is the temporary presence of Ethiopian forces; Puntland's administration nearly caved in to local Islamists in December; the regional "administrations" run by powerful militia leaders in the Lower Shabelle and Kismayo were brought down with ease by the Courts; and public confidence in Somaliland was shaken to the core in the face of the Courts' ascent. Virtually all of Somalia's political class has been exposed over the past 12 months as weak and, to some degree, untrustworthy.

Clan dynamics remain critical to the broader political crisis, especially now that many of the Courts' fighters have returned to clan militias. Though many Somali supporters of the Courts argued that they transcended clan loyalty, the Islamist movement's internal debates clearly demonstrate that it was both acutely sensitive to clan dynamics and deeply divided over whether to work within the parameters of clan politics or seek to overcome it. Despite the Courts' broad appeal across clan lines, the core source of support and top leadership in the movement was heavily concentrated within the Hawiye clan, especially the Haber Gedir Ayr sub-clan. When some of the Courts' leaders sought to diversify the movement, they encountered resistance from Haber Gedir Ayr supporters who felt they had shouldered the costs of the Courts' expansion and were entitled to the lion's share of power.

The crumbling of the Courts, combined with the failure of the TFG to provide even a token administrative presence, has produced ideal conditions for the revival of armed criminality. Renewed sub-clan clashes in Mogadishu and south-central Somalia are increasingly likely as well. An uptick in assassinations in Mogadishu in recent weeks suggests a possible return of the "dirty war" tactics of 2004-2006.

## **UNENDING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

Amidst the political crisis, Somalia is also still recovering from some of its worst flooding in 50 years. Heavy and unseasonably late rains from August through November 2006 rendered most roads impassable in southern Somalia, while both the Shabelle and Jubba Rivers breached their banks because of comparable rainfall in Ethiopia. River valley floods displaced 440,000 people in southern Somalia. These internally displaced persons have been difficult for humanitarian agencies to reach, prompting an official from the International Committee of the Red Cross to declare Somalia's one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. The floods have even forced tens of thousands of Somali refugees at the three Dadaab camps in northern Kenya to relocate. UN agencies were temporarily forced to use helicopter air drops to provide emergency assistance to those displaced refugees. UN airlifts of food were suspended during the December 24-30 fighting but have since been resumed, and are expected to be replaced by overland food delivery as roads dry. The number of Somalis considered in a state of acute food and livelihood crisis has dropped from 1.8 million to one million in recent months. That "only" a million of the country's estimated 8-9 million people are still in such a state speaks volumes about the depths of chronic rural immiseration in Somalia today.

Floodwaters are gradually subsiding, but flood victims from riverine areas face months of cleanup and challenges of reclaiming damaged farmland in time for the main growing season, which begins in late March. Predictably, the floodwaters have produced outbreaks of diseases such as cholera along the Shabelle River. Worse still, Rift Valley fever has recently resurfaced in southern Somalia and Kenya, a turn of events which could have devastating impact on livelihoods for the next several years.

Refugee flows out of Somalia were temporarily slowed somewhat by the floodwaters, but appear to be on the increase again, as Somali families flee a combination of war, criminal violence, political insecurity and natural disasters. In 2006, a primary destination for refugees was Kenya, where an estimated 30,000 Somalis crossed the border at Liboi/Dadaab camps, raising the total of Somali refugees in Kenya to 160,000. Many thousands more are currently stranded in Somali border towns due to a controversial decision by the Kenyan government to close its border to refugees for security reasons. That policy has met with strong protests from humanitarian organizations. To the north, an estimated 26,000 Somali refugees have crossed the Red Sea by boat to Yemen since the beginning of 2006, and many thousands more have collected in the seaport of Bosaso in hopes of making the

dangerous crossing, which has claimed the lives of 660 Somalis in the past year. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees recently reported a major increase in the number of Somali refugees fleeing into eastern Ethiopia — as many as 50,000 since December. If past trends hold, most of these Somali refugees will not want to return home, but will seek third-country resettlement, legally or otherwise. Somalia's transformation into a diasporic nation, heavily dependent on the estimated \$1 billion in annual remittances from its one million or more citizens living overseas, creates a powerful incentive for Somali households to place a family member abroad.

Humanitarian access to south-central Somalia has been steadily worsening over the past ten years. Most access problems for international aid agencies have been tied to chronic local insecurity; threats against aid agencies fueled by grievances over hiring, contracting, rentals or aid distribution; kidnapping of national and international staff for ransom; wholesale looting of aid warehouses or convoys; and chronic security problems at airstrips, periodically resulting in the firing of weapons at aircraft. These disputes have multiplied since 1995, in part because aid agencies are one of the few local sources of jobs and revenue, and in part because the longer aid agencies operate in an area, the more grievances accumulate.

With the expansion of the Courts' authority in 2006, aid agencies had far fewer problems with extortion and kidnapping. But since 1999 a new type of security threat has arisen — targeted jihadi attacks on UN agencies and western NGOs. The first such killing appears to have been the shooting of an American aid worker, Deena Umbarger, on the Kenyan-Somali border in 1999. Subsequently, a series of assassinations of international and national aid workers, journalists and UN security personnel in both Somalia and Somaliland has heightened fears that these killings reflect a belief within the small but lethal jihadi cells in Mogadishu that all Westerners and UN aid workers constitute legitimate targets.

Recent postings on websites known to reflect hardline Somali Islamist views conflate all UN agencies with the West and the US, and consider them legitimate targets; accuse UN security personnel of pursuing anti-Islamist policies; and claim that UN humanitarian aircraft were being used for aerial reconnaissance for the Ethiopian military. Somali Islamist perceptions that the UN is in league with the US and Ethiopia were reinforced in December 2006 with the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1725 authorizing an African protection force for the TFG and permitting a partial lifting of the arms embargo to that end, two policies the Courts deeply opposed. Targeted assassinations of foreign aid workers remain a risk that UN agencies and NGOs will have to weigh.

## **WASHINGTON'S "TACIT SUPPORT"**

Following the ill-starred UN-US peacekeeping intervention of 1992-1995, Somalia was largely forgotten in Washington. But after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the country was rediscovered as a possible front in the war on terror. Officials and pundits began expressing concerns that Somalia — the classic "failed state" — would become a refuge for al-Qaeda figures as Afghanistan had been. In the absence of a functional government through which to work on counter-terrorism measures, the US forged ties to a collection of non-state actors — principally militia leaders and some businesspeople — in hopes that they could serve as local partners for monitoring foreign al-Qaeda activities in the country and, when possible, apprehending suspected terrorists for rendition. That policy was frustrated by the fact that many of the US local partners were rivals, and frequently devoted more time to clashing with one another than collaborating in the war on terror. The ill-advised creation of the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism may have been an attempt to put a halt to those rivalries. The complete defeat of the Alliance in June 2006 left the US with no effective eyes and ears in Mogadishu. This debacle also produced complex inter- and intra-

agency bloodletting inside the US government over who was responsible for a policy that produced the exact opposite result of what was intended. The State Department and Pentagon emerged from the crisis as the lead agencies on Somalia policy. "Somalia policy will now be under adult supervision," one satisfied government official told this writer.

The initial response of the State Department to the Courts' rise to power in Mogadishu was constructive and pragmatic. It voiced support for "a process of positive and peaceful dialogue" built upon acknowledgement of "the reality" of both the TFG and the Courts. This policy appears to have shifted over the course of the fall of 2006, in response to repeated impasses in talks and growing fears that radicals within the Courts had hijacked the movement and were propelling the movement toward a war with Ethiopia. The US began to telegraph its "tacit support" for an Ethiopian offensive against the Courts, shifting emphasis away from calls for dialogue toward the legitimate security concerns of Ethiopia. In December, the Bush administration's point person for the Horn of Africa, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Jendayi Frazer, claimed that the Courts were "now controlled by...East Africa al-Qaeda cell individuals." Though Frazer subsequently argued that this comment was taken out of context, most observers interpreted it at the time as a green light for an Ethiopian intervention and a delegitimization of the Courts.

The extent of US involvement in the offensive against the Courts is unclear. On Christmas Day, there were reports of US aircraft conducting reconnaissance above Somali battlefields. A US military spokeswoman answered that, while there were US soldiers in Ethiopia training Ethiopians, "Officially, we haven't put anybody in Somalia. The Americans don't go forward with the Ethiopians." Yet other defense officials have hinted in the media that small numbers of US Special Forces have had their boots on the ground in Somalia. The only publicly acknowledged US involvement in the military offensive were two AC-130 airstrikes in the Somali-Kenyan border area, aimed at convoys that were believed to include three "high-value targets" (the foreign al-Qaeda operatives accused of involvement in the 1998 embassy bombings in east Africa). These strikes were almost certainly opportunistic, as no one expected the Courts and foreign friends to flee Mogadishu toward the Kenyan border. The State Department has since issued statements that it has no evidence those high-value targets were killed in the attacks, but that eight Somali jihadists were killed. One of the top Somali commanders in the radical shabaab militia, Aden Hashi 'Ayro, is rumored have been injured but not killed in one of the airstrikes. The airstrikes were deeply unpopular in Somalia and reinforced the popular Somali belief that the US was directly behind the Ethiopian offensive.

In the Pentagon, some see the offensive as a preferred template for the war on terror. A January 12 New York Times article notes that "[m]ilitary operations in Somalia by American commandos, and the use of the Ethiopian Army as a surrogate force to root out operatives for al-Qaeda in the country, are a blueprint that Pentagon strategists say they hope to use more frequently in counter-terrorism missions around the globe." If this report is accurate, it would indicate a partial misreading of both the nature of the Courts and Ethiopian motives in the Pentagon. Though there was a dangerous cell of hardliners in the Courts, the movement as a whole was far from an al-Qaeda front. Only three foreign al-Qaeda operatives were said by the US to be in hiding in Mogadishu, a number far lower than those suspected of residing in neighboring Kenya. And Ethiopia was prompted to risk a military offensive inside Somalia more for geopolitical than ideological reasons, fearing the rise of an anti-Ethiopian, irredentist, nationalist Somali movement colluding with Eritrea and armed insurgencies inside Ethiopia. Even had there been no hint of Courts linkage to al-Qaeda, Ethiopia may well have concluded that the Courts were an unacceptable threat, and might have acted with or without US approval.

## **PROGNOSIS**

With the Union of Islamic Courts deposed, the State Department and other external states are vigorously pursuing a three-pronged policy in Somalia: promotion of political dialogue toward a more inclusive transitional government; deployment of an African Union peacekeeping force (AMISOM) to replace departing Ethiopian forces; and strengthening of the TFG's capacity to govern. The plan is ambitious, and the odds of success are increasingly remote. The critical bottleneck is lack of progress in political dialogue. Both the TFG and the Mogadishu-based opposition are to blame. The TFG leadership has taken a series of unhelpful steps — imposing martial law, calling for forcible disarmament of Mogadishu, removing the speaker of Parliament and refusing to talk with moderate elements of the defunct Islamist movement — seemingly designed to antagonize the opposition. The TFG shows every indication of wanting to impose a victor's peace. For their part, opponents of the TFG appear intent on rendering Mogadishu ungovernable as a means of blocking the TFG. Spoilers in this instance need not defeat the TFG outright, only play for a draw, allowing the clock to run out on the TFG's remaining two-and-a-half-year mandate.

Without progress toward a government of national unity, the other two pillars — deployment of AMISOM forces and state-building assistance — are likely to accelerate political violence rather than stabilize Somalia. Simply put, the many opponents of the TFG will view foreign peacekeepers as non-neutral and will seek to drive them out. For those with short memories, Somalia has already been the site of a failed peacekeeping operation, one that was derailed because some Mogadishu-based clans and factions saw the mission as harming their interests. And state-building assistance to Somalia will be wasted if the TFG is forced to withdraw from Mogadishu and reverts to a paper state in the provisional capital of Baidoa.

The most likely outcome in Somalia is an Ethiopian withdrawal from Mogadishu, followed by a gradual TFG retreat from the capital. Somalia will, in that event, return to a condition of de facto state collapse. With luck, Mogadishu communities might be able to afford the capital a "soft landing" by reviving at least some fragments of the governing structures that had evolved in the city in the past eight years. Renewed state collapse is an outcome that virtually no one in Somalia prefers, but that many have learned to live with.

Somalia's short-term prospects are bleak. But in the longer term, the recent series of crises in Somalia offers a glimmer of hope. The most important indicator was the decision in late December 2006 by Mogadishu residents to turn against hardliners in the Courts, and their insistence that the movement not attempt to base an urban insurgency in the city. This may signal that a critical mass of people in Mogadishu are now stakeholders in peace, not insurgency and war, and are willing to make political compromises to protect lives and business assets from renewed fighting. It is worth recalling that, in the spring and summer of 2005, a broad coalition of civic groups, clans, Islamists, women's groups and businesspeople in Mogadishu briefly succeeded in eliminating militia roadblocks in the city, in what was described locally as a "people power" initiative to bring public safety to the capital. Likewise, in the first half of 2006 Mogadishu-based clans broke with their "warlords" and supported the Islamists out of frustration with the criminality and lawlessness those militia leaders fomented. This suggests an intriguing pattern — namely, that leaders of whatever stripe whose policies produce insecurity for their constituencies are now quickly losing the support of the community. Business and real estate investments in Mogadishu have grown considerably in the past decade, and may be producing a strong preference on the part of investors to avoid instability and war.

In sum, the Mogadishu of 2007 is not the Mogadishu of 1993. If this evolution of interests "from warlord to landlord" continues to occur within Somalia's commercial, political and traditional elite,

and if potential external spoilers can be convinced to allow real political dialogue to proceed, Somalia may yet emerge from its long nightmare.

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**P.S.**

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\*\*Originally published by Middle East Report Online (MERIP)