

Muuse Yuusuf. *The Genesis of the Civil War in Somalia: The Impact of Foreign Military Intervention on the Conflict*. Chennai, India: Bloomsbury Publishing. 2021. 272 pp.

The Genesis of the Civil War in Somalia: The Impact of Foreign Military Intervention on the Conflict is a study of the Somali civil war through a new lens. The seven chapters of which the book is composed draw a new map of the roots of the civil war and the downfall of the Somali state into chaos.

Muuse Yuusuf centers his discussion of the civil war on an earlier war that was fought between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Ogaden region, a Somali-majority inhabited region in eastern Ethiopia. Throughout the book, the author justifies the breakdown of the Somali nation by the failure of an irredentist movement that garnered much public support at the beginning—as Somalia was winning the war—and, later, resulted in the weakening of this support—as Ethiopia, assisted by the USSR, turned the tide. The Ogaden war, thus, became the turning point, when, to counter the military failure, the regime opted for more repressive strategies that would eventually breed even more dissatisfaction and result in the emergence of armed militias aimed at further destabilizing the regime and mapping a new political reality, one that would shape the next thirty years.

One of the key themes of the book is “the missed opportunities” (p. 134) that were offered to but never seized by either Barre’s regime or the warring factions. These missed opportunities could have been used as a blueprint for the restructuring of Somali politics and the advancement of peaceful and democratic initiatives that would have saved tens of thousands of Somalis and spared the country the incalculable destruction of an already battered economy.

Furthermore, the book puts into question internationally-sponsored and top-down nation-building and elucidates the benefits of bottom-up strategies in any reconciliation and rebuilding efforts in Somalia. The author showcases Somaliland and Puntland as examples of the success of localized and community-driven initiatives. Also, he highlights how the civil war was a blessing in disguise, enabling the emergence of “new socio-political” (p. 105) endeavors.

In dealing with the civil war and its aftermath, the author foregrounds the change in the nature of the conflict from a clannish to a religious one, especially with the rise of Jihadi factions. Moreover, this shift coincided with the war on terrorism, which complicated any potential political resolution and worsened the humanitarian situation caused by war, drought, and famine.

The author equates the political situation in Somalia during and after 1978 to the situation in Yugoslavia in the early and mid-nineties. This assertion fails to grasp the stark difference between Somalia as an ethnically homogenous nation, albeit one divided along clan fault lines, and Yugoslavia as a federation of various ethnoreligious-centered states that re-emerged after the collapse of the USSR. The only similarity between the two is the autocratic political system under which they were governed.

Muuse Yuusuf fails to make use of some seminal works, which would have enhanced his discussions about the civil war and the related subjects of clans and regions, including Abdurahman Abdullahi Baadiyow's two seminal works, *The Islamic Movement in Somalia: A Study of the Islah Movement, 1950-2000* (2015) and *Recovering the Somali State: Islam, Islamism and Transitional Justice* (2016), alongside Mohamed Haji Ingiriis' *The Suicidal State in Somalia: The Rise and Fall of the Siad Barre Regime 1969-1991* (2016).

Also, the author neglects to mention Taiwan's recognition of Somaliland and to acknowledge the rise in the number of countries that are politically, economically, and militarily invested in the region, such as the UAE DPWorld and Ethiopia-Berbera corridor, which has created tensions between Ethiopia and the government in Mogadishu.

One of the most questionable statements in the book is found on page 111, in which the author partially quotes Ioan Lewis: "General Siyad Barre, although accused of dictatorship and tribalism, was, nonetheless, a leader elected by his people. Indeed, despite being a one-party state and accusation of vote-rigging, in the 1986 national election, 99.9 percent of the electorate had voted for him". On the one hand, how much validity can one ascribe to elections orchestrated by a one-party regime? Lewis was merely referencing the results as they were declared by the government, not validating them. On the other hand, the author chooses to ignore what immediately follows the previously quoted material where Lewis writes: "The President responded to the Marehan clamor by consolidating their position in the armed forces with a crop of-accelerated promotions- to the position of General and other senior ranks". In addition, Lewis argues that Barre was establishing a "family dynasty" (p. 257). If anything, Barre's regime was marred by tribal policies, even as it was publicly denouncing all tribal allegiances.

Some items in the glossary should be removed as they are repetitive and even use the same definition word-for-word as in the main text of the book.

All in all, despite its pitfalls, *The Genesis of the Civil War in Somalia: The Impact of Foreign Military Intervention on the Conflict* is a good addition to the literature on the Somali civil war.

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