(2004: forthcoming, *Geography Research Forum*)

Pastoralism in a Stateless Environment: The Case of the Southern Somalia Borderlands[1]

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"Many of Somalia's productive sectors, already weak before the civil war, have been damaged in the course of the country's ten years of armed conflict and state collapse. . . . The livestock sector, historically the most productive part of the Somali economy, has survived reasonably well, due in part to its relative autonomy from government services (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 1998: 3)."

Introduction

Since the collapse of the late Siad Barre's regime in 1991, Somali herders and traders have been forced to endure a stateless and volatile environment.[2] Like most people in rural Somalia, they are attempting to 'get on with their lives' under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Beyond the images of chaos and warfare that still shape outside perceptions of Somalia, hundreds of thousands of herders and traders effectively produce and trade Somalia's most valuable commodity, livestock. The Somalia based on arms and urban warlords is markedly

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[1] This article draws on ideas and materials contained in Chapters 1, 6, and 7 of my recent book on Somalia (Little 2003). The research reported here was supported generously by a Research and Writing Grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and by the Global Livestock-Collaborative Research Support Program administered by the University of California-Davis. I appreciate the assistance that Dr. Hussein Mahmoud, former PhD student in anthropology at the University of Kentucky, provided in gathering data for the livestock marketing work reported here. However, it goes 'without saying' that the institutions and individuals mentioned above are not responsible for the contents of this article.

[2] In 1996 I initiated a study on the effects of the Somali war on livestock traders and cross-border trade between Somalia and Kenya—the most important and dynamic commerce in the region. It was follow-up research to an earlier study on livestock trade and traders in southern Somalia that I conducted during 1986 to 1988. The different periods of field research allow a comparison between the time before and after the Somali state collapsed. In 1996 I based myself out of Garissa, Kenya, the main market for trade with southern Somalia, and began a series of interviews with Somali traders and herders. I followed up this work up with shorter stints of research in the Garissa and Nairobi markets during the summers of 1998 and 2001.

different than the Somalia based on livestock and skilled herders and traders. The gap could hardly be wider. As an activity, livestock-based commerce is at the heart of Somali livelihoods and social relationships. It has the potential to unite as well as divide, and provides a convenient lens into the causes of conflict and the ways that the majority of the population has survived since 1991.

This article examines the strategies that Somali herders and traders of the southern Somalia borderlands, particularly the Lower Jubba Region, have pursued in the absence of a central government. It will be shown that the lack of a state does not equate to political anarchy and, indeed, for some areas a form of local and regional administration has emerged. Some herders also have been able to benefit from increased access to formerly state-controlled irrigation zones and to the growing informal cattle trade with neighboring Kenya. The article is divided into six parts, including the introduction. The next two sections (2 and 3) discuss the study region in southern Somalia and the emergence of pastoral resistance to the exploitive policies of the former state. In the fourth and fifth parts I treat the topics of herder mobility and livestock trade in a stateless environment, respectively, and show that pastoral mobility has been the key survival mechanism while incomes from increased livestock trade have allowed some communities to stabilize their livelihoods. In the conclusion I discuss the comparative lessons from the Somali findings and how Somalia is a unique case but has relevance to other areas of the world where pastoralism is marginalized by political regimes that underestimate its economic contributions, as well as its resilience and power.

The Lower Jubba Region

The core of the southern Somali borderlands is the Lower Jubba Region, a former administrative unit that straddles the Kenya border and is bounded on the east by the Jubba River and on the south by the Indian Ocean where the area's key city (Kismayo) is located along its coast (see Figure 1). The Lower Jubba comprises 35,114 square kilometers of relatively flat land, more than 90 percent of it classified as rangeland (Resource Management and Research 1984:40).

Prior to the government's collapse in 1991 the Lower Jubba was headed by a regional governor based in Kismayo town and comprised four districts--Afmadow, Badhaade, Jamaame, and Kismayo—each headed by a District Commissioner. Since the collapse of a central state, a fifth district (Hagar) was established in 1994 from the northern half of Afmadow District, bringing the total to five. The addition of a new district, a joint effort of local elders and the occupying United Nations (U.N.) forces at the time, illustrates just how much local politics are alive and well in southern Somalia even in the absence of a state.

INSERT FIGURE 1.

The area is a classic example of a "patchy environment (see Scoones 1989)." Key natural resources, like grazing and water, are concentrated in patches around seasonal flood plains, swamps, and depressions. Access to them often determines whether or not herders survive harsh years without massive livestock losses. Particularly important 'patches' are wetlands around the Jubba River Valley and in the Lag Dera catchment in Afmadow District. The wetlands of the Jubba River Valley are more likely than other areas to have good stands of perennial grass during dry seasons. As a result, the concentration of cattle in the floodplains is the highest of any region in the country and among the highest anywhere in eastern Africa (see Watson 1987). Parts of this critical resource support cattle densities of more than 150 per square kilometer during the long dry season (*jilaal*) (ibid). At that time of the year herders of Afmadow and Kismayo Districts migrate to the riparian pastures, a pattern that continues and has persisted since at least the end of the nineteenth century (Chevenix-Trench 1907).

The Lag Dera basin, comprised of a series of meandering seasonal rivers, is associated with excellent grasslands and defines a superb resource for the area's massive cattle herds. It covers several hundred square kilometers and is fed by seasonal rivers and streams that at times originate in nearby Kenya. Its annual flood often empties into the Descheeg Waamo, a flooded depression of rich wetlands in the Jubba Valley. The Lag Dera is relatively free of tsetse fly, but does not sustain the high stocking levels found in parts of the Jubba Valley. Conflicts between different clans and ethnic groups often involve these key environmental resources. Prior to the changes of 1991 the Siad Barre regime awarded certain client groups preferential access to arable land and water, an ill-advised practice that will be discussed later in the article. Indeed, the Somalia case is a good example of ethnic (and clan) favoritism where private land grabbing in the Jubba Valley favored the late president's clan, the Marehan, while alienating other groups (Menkhaus and Craven 1996; Besteman 1999). It also heightened already existing social tensions between pastoralists and settled farmers who both depended on the valley.

The two most important clan groups in the border region are the Ogadeen and the Harti (especially its Majerteyn clan).[3] Their significance is reflected in demographic, economic, and political terms. The Ogadeen, especially its Mohammed Zubeyr sub-clan but also including the Aulihan and Abdwak, are the majority group and greatly outnumber the Harti in the region.[4] They have been in the area since at least the mid-nineteenth century (see Little 2003). The Harti, in turn, moved to the area in the late nineteenth century from their homelands of northeastern Somalia, in order to take advantage of expanding commercial activities around Kismayo. The Harti are experienced traders but also pursue both cattle and camel pastoralism and they reside mainly in Kismayo District. Until recently many Harti were deeply engaged in livestock trade and controlled a number of the businesses in Kismayo town. By contrast, the Ogadeen Mohamed Zubeyr, who inhabit much of rural Afmadow District and a territory extending more than 100 kilometers inside northeastern Kenya, are closely associated with cattle pastoralism and rural life.

[3] There, of course, are many other smaller groups in the area, including former Bantu and Oromo communities, as well other Somali clans (for example, Bimaal). None of these are as demographically important in the region as the Ogadeen and Harti clans. Since the collapse of the state, many Harti familes have left the area for safety reasons and moved to northeastem Somalia (Puntland) where there is a very large Harti community.

[4] This is a very simplistic treatment of clan structures in Somalia and is limited to clans of the border region, particularly the Ogadeen and Harti. There are many good sources on Somali clan structures, including Lewis (1961; 1994) and Mansur (Mansur 1995). Ambiguity over clan identity and political allegiance is increasingly the norm, rather than the exception in contemporary Somalia. Militia heads ('warlords') have aggravated clan tensions in the region by manipulating clan and sub-clan loyalties through often brutal tactics (see Little 2003).

They are the primary reason why the region enjoys such large cattle herds. Their commercial activities are limited to small retail trade and, more recently, the cross-border livestock trade with Kenya. In short, the Ogadeen of the region are associated with cattle production and oriented toward Kenyan markets and towns, while the Harti are involved with cattle and camel trade and focused on Kismayo town.

The Emergence of Political Resistance

It is difficult to state with any conviction that local herders or rural populations generally benefited much when Somalia had a government.[5] They acquired little of the actual value of the livestock and other commodities they produced and only received minuscule investments in infrastructure, schools, and health clinics. One estimate is that the pastoral sub-sector, which accounted for more than 80 percent of annual exports, 'received only about 6 percent of public expenditure, corresponding to 1.2 % of GDP annually during 1974-1988 (Mubarak 1997: 2029).' When the state actually intervened in the pastoral areas, it often was with punitive force as in the late 1980s (discussed below), or with half-hearted interventions that heightened ambiguities and risks rather than reduced them. In terms of providing basic human services and support, the state had failed miserably in the rural regions of southern Somalia.

By 1988 the bankrupt Somali state was effectively comatose in providing services to the livestock sector of the Lower Jubba Region. For example, the massive region was allocated only US $120 per year for fuel and maintenance of the veterinary department's vehicles. Prior to the war the Water Development Agency (WDA) of Somalia, another government-owned and operated enterprise, was suppose to manage and maintain boreholes and dams but rarely did so. In 1998 communities themselves organized maintenance and operation activities and users were

[5] It is important to distinguish the early period of the Barre regime (1969-1977) from its latter years (particularly 1980-1990) when the state did very little for rural populations. In the early years of Siad Barre's rule, 1969-1977, there were noticeable investments in rural services, such as education and health, that benefited the general population. Following the economically and politically costly Ogadeen war with Ethiopia (1977-1978), the Barre regime became increasingly repressive, corrupted, and poorly administered until it eventually was overthrown in 1991.

charged the cost of fuel, maintenance, and a fee toward the salary of the operator. Thus, for most Somali herders, services and infrastructure were minimal and support for the established leadership was almost non-existent. In southern Somalia, such resources never reached the rural areas, nor did herders ever assume the state was a reliable partner for mediating conflicts or administering justice. The state was an entity that extracted some local resources and was punitive at times, but could not be counted on to provide basic services and govern daily affairs.

The Somali regime of Siad Barre, who was President from 1969 until his violent overthrow in 1991, was decidedly exploitive in its later years and, in some cases, brutally forceful like other authoritarian regimes in Africa. But outside of Kismayo and other key towns, its presence in the Lower Jubba Region was minimal until the late 1970s when it began to take notice of the region's valuable resources. At that time the state indirectly intervened in the area's pastoral sector by encouraging exports and constructing export routes, water points, and quarantine grounds for overseas livestock trade (see Little 2003). However, even in these areas its interventions were inconsistent and the government never returned a fraction of earned revenues to the region. Roads were never constructed, health clinics never built, and schools never established in the pastoral areas. Instead, they were concentrated in the urban areas and in a few of the agricultural areas near Mogadishu.

The ill-fated Trans-Juba Livestock Project (TJLP), which started in the mid-1970s and was initially financed by the World Bank, was the government's major investment in the area. It was designed to construct market infrastructure, water points, and trekking routes to encourage overseas livestock exports from Kismayo port. Following the World Bank's decision to pull out of the activity in 1983 after a series of extremely negative evaluations, local Somali officials aggressively leased out the equipment to herders and private traders, so they could construct their own water points and the employees could earn a handsome return. The TJLP charged wealthy traders and herders a modest fee of about US $800 to construct a pond of approximately 30 x 30 meters. It was a classic example of the 'privatization' of a public good that resulted in considerable local resentment, as well as serious environmental problems. The ‘private’ water development, ironically financed initially by a development project to benefit local herders, provoked enough local and regional dissent that action was taken. As early as 1984, Ogadeen herders protested about the number of water points in the area, which was inviting excessive immigration by outside herders and overgrazing. They were disturbed by the influx of neighboring herders, the uncontrolled construction of water points by outside traders, and the deterioration in range conditions. By the mid-1980s there were more than 1,000 small water ponds in Afmadow District alone, of which many were constructed using the equipment of the TJLP. Local herders and leaders even took their case to the regional governor of the Lower Jubba to demand that the "lease program" of the TJLP be halted. They eventually succeeded and it was closed in 1987, but not before hundreds of ponds had been dug.

These new water resources, as well as the pull of being closer to Kismayo town, attracted herders from the Upper Jubba area (Gedo Region), particularly camel herders from President Barre's Marehan clan. The discontent among herders in the Lower Jubba Region took on new dimensions when confronted with aggressive encroachments on their water and pasture resources from the Marehan. Many Marehan camel herders from the Gedo Region of the upper Jubba Valley migrated to take advantage of (1) the improved water availability financed under the TJLP and (2) pastures seasonally vacated by cattle herders. When the Ogadeen cattle pastoralists abandoned their seasonal grazing areas each year, camel herders would move in and occupy them. After a period of about four years some Marehan herders decided to remain in the area for most of the year, in effect becoming permanent residents.

The process accelerated in late 1988 when Marehan herders began to spontaneously "privatize" water points and surrounding pastures by demarcating them with thorn fences. As was noted earlier, this pattern of encroachment was facilitated by the expansion of water points built under the TJLP venture. Aided by the confidence that any disputes with other groups of herders would be resolved in their favor, the Marehan took advantage of the situation. After all, they were members of President Barre's clan and could invoke strong political support if needed. Cattle owners of Afmadow also claimed that the large presence of camels was turning their excellent grasslands into shrub land. Because camels mainly consume browse and bush species, they were said to promulgate bush encroachment by passing seeds of woody species through their manure, thereby turning cattle pastures into unproductive land.

The increased presence of camel herders resulted in several conflicts between Marehan and Ogadeen herders, especially those of the Mohamed Zubeyr sub-clan. By the summer of 1988 it was common to hear of armed skirmishes between Marahen and local Ogadeen herders at water points in the region. When Colonel Omar Jess, a member of the Mohamed Zubeyr sub-clan of the Ogadeen but not from the Lower Jubba Region, helped to mobilize the area's armed resistance to the Barre regime in the late 1980s, these tensions erupted in large-scale fighting, and the Somali army was called in to punish the "rebels" and to protect the Marehan migrants. One rebel leader's account of the clashes in 1989 points to the conflicts caused by the movement of outside herders into the area:

> "We of the Lower Juba Province particularly protested against the increased infiltration by people from the neighbouring Gedo region, who were in turn crossing into Kenya to partake in poaching activities in the Kenya national parks and highway banditry," Major Barre [no relation to President Barre] explained. . . . But the Absame [Ogadeen] tribesmen who predominantly inhabit the Lower Juba Province were soon accused of oppressively flushing out Siad Barre's own Marehan community and that was the beginning of the whole in-fighting episode (*Kenya Standard*, August 16, 1989, p. 10).

The Kenyan newspaper account goes on to discuss how Siad Barre's Somali army unleashed a battalion of armored vehicles and tanks, under the command of Major-General Hussein Abdullahi, a Marehan, to brutalize civilians and destroy towns in the area, including Afmadow. This was the beginning of large-scale conflict in the region. It did not slow down until the government was toppled in 1991. The local armed resistance movement in the area, called the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), was under way by 1989, bent on revenge against the Barre regime and against those groups, like the Marehan, who reaped benefits from their alliance with the state. The SPM, initially comprised of Ogadeen clansmen (especially those of the Mohamed Zubeyr and Aulihan sections), did not receive the kind of publicity accorded other Somali resistance movements operating at the time, but for all practical purposes many parts of the Lower Jubba never again came under state control.

The Importance of Herder Mobility in a Stateless Context

When the land and water rights of herders conflicted with the previous state's agricultural interests in the Jubba Valley, the pastoralists usually lost ground. The state's policies on irrigation affected resource use by cutting off herder access to certain water and grazing points near the river. The total area of the three largest irrigation projects in the Jubba Valley was 16,327 hectares and included "some of the best land in the region (Menkhaus 1996: 147)." Local herders had a strong negative attitude toward these schemes. With the exception of a few of the banana farms that were taken over by local faction leaders, the large state irrigation schemes were destroyed during the war of 1991-92, including most irrigation and flood control devices. The obliteration of these schemes seems to have done little to ameliorate the plight of the settled farmers, but it has clearly opened up productive pastures for regional herders.[6] It was noted that after the destruction of one state scheme, Fanoole, 'the abandoned project serves as an excellent pasture for local herds (Menkhaus 1991:12)." While a wasteful and destructive means of doing so, these expensive projects did little for the local population until the war destroyed them and reopened them for grazing.

Despite conditions of political instability and conflict, herders of the borderlands still must make tough choices about where and when to move their animals, and they have done so very effectively. Rainfall and drought, both factors affecting pastoral decisions, are not affected

[6] While the grazing rights of herders were seriously impacted, it was actually the small groups of minority (Gosha) farmers along the river who were most negatively affected by the state schemes.

by the presence of armaments, such as kalashnikovs ("AK-47s"). In terms of location (the 'where'), pastoralists know well the areas of endemic livestock disease and insecurity, but under stress conditions they often have little choice but to use them. Common options to overcome these constraints entail mobility and maintaining favorable access to grazing and water. Without these alternatives, a herder is extremely limited in responding to drought and other potential catastrophes. Indeed, a case can be made that just the single factor of ***mobility*** explains why certain herding groups fare relatively well during climatic and other disasters, while others do not. Mobility not only affects local responses to drought, but it influences herd productivity and ecology as well (see Cossins 1985; Western and Finch, 1986).

To comprehend herding in the borderlands, it is necessary to revisit the area's unique geography and ecology discussed earlier. Generally herd movements in the region are strongly influenced by several environmental features: (1) the Jubba Valley, (2) the Lag Dera (and Jira) complex, (3) the coastal zone, and (4) the tse-tse fly belt. Seasonal migrations are heavily shaped by these different ecological features, which together define distinct dry and wet season grazing zones. The lengthiest herd migrations occur during the long dry and wet seasons and require movements between the coast and the Jubba Valley or between Lag Dera/Jira and the Jubba Valley. Even when armed conflict erupts in the Jubba Valley, herders know which locations to avoid, or they graze their animals in the northern part of Descheeg Waamo away from the river. In the rainy seasons (April-June and October-December), herders move their cattle to pastures located away from the coast and the Jubba River, where tse-tse flies are abundant during these times. The Lag Dera complex, located approximately 50 kilometers northwest of Afmadow town, is home to hundreds of herder families and their livestock during these humid months. In dry periods seasonal pastures in Descheeg Wamo and along the Jubba Valley become very important. When the long rains fail, as happened in 1987-1988, 1996, and 1999-2000, cattle may utilize seasonal pastures for only a few months before being moved to drought refuge areas in the Jubba Valley or outside the region.

When families are on the move between a prime dry and wet season grazing area, a distance of about 80 km in most of the Somalia border area, they can move camp every 2 to 3 days. Harti herders of Kismayo District are considerably more sedentary and less dependent on livestock than those of Afmadow District, a pattern that was attenuated during the 1990s. Kismayo District remains generally insecure and as a result population movements are heavily constrained. The differences in mobility between Afmadow and Kismayo pastoralists are especially apparent by the length of seasonal movements. For example, herders of Afmadow migrate their herds and flocks on average about 2.5 times further than Kismayo pastoralists. Afmadow families and their herds move an average of 52 km per season or about 208 km annually, while the corresponding distances for Kismayo homesteads are about 20 km and 80 km, respectively. These distances generally exceed the length of seasonal movements on the other side of the border in Kenya, where mobility and access to grazing is increasingly restricted (see discussion below).

The grazing boundaries for different clans and sub-clans were generally fluid prior to 1991, although even then few Harti herders ventured very far into Ogadeen areas without prior permission. Because of the actions of regional militias--some of whom have loose ties to particular clans--these restrictions have become rigid around Kismayo town and the circumscription of grazing patterns there has only worsened since 1991. There is now a no-man's land (buffer) of about 15 km at the interface between Harti and Ogadeen-controlled areas, where human settlements and livestock rearing face high security risks. The exact location of this buffer area fluctuates according to the fortunes and maneuvers of different regional factions. For example, in 1992 and 1993 the Harti were able to graze their herds up to about 75 km south of Kismayo town, because of the presence and protection of a Harti-based militia faction in the area. Other political changes in southern Somalia, usually short term in duration, have affected the movement of buffer zones.

The increased risks of grazing in insecure areas are not purely random, nor have they affected herd movements as much as expected. In discussions with herders and traders in 1996 and 1998, it was clear that insecure areas were well known. Pastoralists had access to sufficient information to decide when security had improved and what grazing conditions were like even in conflictive areas. The flexibility to migrate to distant pastures is a key reason why Somali herders have been relatively successful during droughts. For example, when a localized drought was experienced in 1996 in the upper and western parts of the borderlands and there was considerable localized fighting, Ogadeen herders were able to move their herds to areas where there was pasture and water. At the time the early rains (April-May) were good in the coastal areas of southern Somalia, as well as in the southern portion of Garissa District, Kenya. Despite considerable risks, several Ogadeen herders moved their cattle near the Kismayo coast of southern Somalia, with some covering a distance of about 225 km. Rainfall there had been good but armed conflict also was widespread. It is a disputed zone between the region's two major clan-based factions but herders moved their animals there nonetheless. The strategy was pursued only after a verbal agreement was reached with local Harti elders stipulating that the migrant herders could not carry armaments with them. The move took place without incident and is indicative both of the flexibility of grazing strategies and the willingness of competing pastoral groups to recognize drought-induced problems even during times of hostility. Reciprocal grazing rights are a way that herders, even those in areas of conflict, adjust to climatic volatility. It also helps to explain why pastoralists have been able to avoid many of the war atrocities that Somalia's settled farmers and agropastoralists have confronted (Little 2003). They simply move when danger strikes. Unlike northern Kenya, there are no large-scale commercial ranches or national parks and wildlife reserves to compromise pastoral movements and, as mentioned earlier, most large-scale irrigation projects in Somalia have been in disuse since 1991.

Post-1991 reports and surveys of the area--as well as my own interviews with livestock traders and herders–indicate that herds of the Lower Jubba Region remain relatively robust (Lohr

1995; Stefano Tempia, personal communication). Even the civil strife of the early 1990s apparently did not have a major impact on the region's livestock population, at least in areas away from the main towns (see Lohr 1995; Stockton and Chema 1995). A 1994 source notes that in southern Somalia "some interpretations of satellite scanning hold that there is not much difference in current animal populations nor in their spread and range resources as compared with the situation in the late Eighties (FAO 1994: 4)." A more recent (2000) estimate based on aerial surveys and ground observations estimates that livestock herds are about 1 million cattle, at or even a little higher than in the pre-war period of (see FEWS-Net 2001).

Household-level data also confirm the rich livestock resources of the region. Families keep cattle herds that are considerably higher than most other East African pastoralists. Although herd ownership varies substantially, the average cattle herd per household in Afmadow was approximately 75 or 8.33 per capita (author's field data).[7] This figure places them at a wealth level above other cattle-rich pastoralists of East Africa, such as the Borana of Ethiopia (Coppock 1994) and the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania (Zaal 1998; Little et al. 2001). Thus, when one gazes beyond the popular images of Somali 'anarchy' and 'chaos' so prevalent in popular media accounts and, instead, fixes on the realities of economic life, the situation is not as depicted. In fact, the pastoral economy is operating relatively well, even when compared to herding systems of its 'peaceful' neighbors, Kenya and Ethiopia.

The Booming Cross-Border Trade

Prior to 1991 the cattle trade in the Lower Jubba Region was essentially focused on four markets, which accounted for about 90 percent of the region's sales. First was the regional domestic trade that was concentrated in southern Somali towns like Kismayo, Jamaame, and Jilib. This commerce was oriented to local consumption and accounted for an estimated 40 percent of

[7]. It should be noted that ownership of both camels and cattle in the region is highly skewed (see Chapter 3, Little 2003).

cattle sales in the area prior to the conflict.[8] The second market was the national domestic one located in Mogadishu, the former state capital and Somalia's largest city, which required cattle treks from the region in excess of 300 km. The Mogadishu market, along with the city's population, was growing rapidly in the late 1980s and cattle prices there tended to be about 20 to 25 percent higher than in the Lower Jubba. In 1987-1988 the Mogadishu market was the final destination for approximately 16 percent of cattle sold in the region. The third and fourth market channels in the Lower Jubba involved international exports: one to Kenya and the other to the Middle East. In the case of the Kenya trade, animals were sold and moved "unofficially" across the border to Kenyan markets, particularly to Garissa. This trade accounted for about 25 percent of cattle sales, but up to 45 percent in certain parts of the border region. The other export market, the overseas trade from Kismayo port to the Middle East, was very different from the other three channels, in that large-scale traders and companies were involved. In 1988 it accounted for fewer than 5 percent of regional cattle sold, although earlier in the decade its contribution was as high as 15 percent.

Prior to the state's collapse, the majority of overseas export traders, most of whom were Harti or Marehan, were based in Mogadishu rather than Kismayo and, thus, approximately three-quarters of their net income left the region. What trader profits remained in the area were concentrated in Kismayo city itself, with virtually none of these revenues accruing to traders in smaller centers, like Afmadow. Thus, the overseas commerce essentially benefited urban-based merchants and large cities, both of whom eventually became targets of armed conflict in the region. As recent as January 1999, a group of about 30 Harti residents from Kismayo were killed by an armed faction in the region (*Daily Nation*, 7 January 1999) and other such incidences

[8] The percentages noted here and for other markets discussed in this section are derived from interviews with traders and from a sample of more than 800 cattle sales at four major markets--Afmadow, Kismayo, Bilas Qooqani, and Liboi--during February 1987 to February 1988. For each transaction, the buyer was asked to identify the market destination of the animal. While I conducted the analysis of these data, much of the information at the market centers was gathered by the Livestock Marketing and Health Project, Mogadishu.

occurred in the 1990s. In contrast to the overseas trade, a large percentage of traders involved in the cross-border trade to Kenya reside in the region or across the border in Kenya, and most of the revenues from this commerce remain in the region. On the Kenya side, the vast majority is Ogadeen and is based in Garissa, where they comprise about 84 percent of the population (Kenya 1994: 6-24). While little of the net revenues from the overseas trade accrued to traders in smaller market centers, the distribution was very different for the cross-border trade. Fifty percent of trader profits from the Kenya trade remained in the Lower Jubba Region, with about 35 percent accruing to traders based in small Ogadeen towns.

The war in southern Somalia had major impacts on the area's livestock markets. Of the four market channels discussed above, only the cross-border trade with Kenya escaped large-scale devastation. In fact, it has grown considerably as a result of the conflict in Somalia. The regional domestic market in the Lower Jubba still exists, but herders increasingly avoid the Kismayo market because of conflict. It is not a reliable market today, unlike the past when it was treated by merchants as a 'fallback' market. To quote a recent journalist's account: "Kismayo has proved a dangerous place for aid workers in the past. Bitter battles frequently have erupted between the Majerteen [Harti] and Marehan clans during the past few years, killing hundreds of civilians and rendering the port unusable because of poor security (Green 1998: 1)."

There has been a spectacular surge in cross-border livestock trade with Kenya, which is reflected in market statistics and the findings of trader interviews. The aggregate value of cattle sales in Garissa alone grew by an astounding 400 percent between 1991 and 1998 and 600 percent between 1989 and 1998. In terms of volume, annual sales grew from 24,395 in 1989 to more than 100,000 cattle in 1998 and an estimated 110,000 in 2002 (see Table 1 and Figure 2). Herders and traders acknowledge that this dramatic increase results from the spectacular growth in cross-border imports from Somalia, which in recent years has accounted for about 65 percent of cattle sold in Garissa.[9]

INSERT TABLE 1 AND FIGURE 2

The activities of Ahmed and Yusuf[10] during June 1996 provide some flavor to how the cross-border livestock trade operates (based on Little 2003:92-94).

> Ahmed and Yusuf are approximately 35 years old and both come from Afmadow, Somalia. They have been involved in the cross-border trade for about 4 years and hire trekkers to move animals from southern Somalia to the Garissa market up to five times per year. Both are Mohamed Zubeyr Ogadeen and during this particular week in June 1996 they have hired three trekkers and one armed security person to bring about 105 cattle to Kenya from Afmadow and nearby Bilis Qooqani. Yusuf and Ahmed arrive in Garissa three days before the weekly market day on Wednesday to scope out prices and to talk with butchers and market brokers. They stay in one of the many small hotels in town and pay about $3 per night for accommodation. Yusuf, in particular, is concerned about what kind of market they will find on Wednesday. Only 16 days earlier when they finalized plans to make the 14-day cattle trek from Afmadow to Garissa, prices seemed good, an opportune time to trek animals. By Tuesday morning their animals finally arrive at a watering area about 5 km from the Garissa market, where the cattle will stay until the morning of the sales. They have arranged with their broker to find a buyer(s) and they need to sell at least 90 of the cattle on market day because the high costs of fodder and water for the herd will steeply cut into profits. When the buying begins on

[9] This figure assumes that about 32 percent or 32,600 cattle marketed in Garissa in 1998 are Kenyan animals, either from Garissa (about 30,000 cattle), Mandera (600), or Wajir (2000) Districts. Of course, it is very difficult to estimate exact numbers of cattle sales and their geographic origins. The figures for Mandera and Wajir sales are based on unpublished data on marketing and animal movements from the districts' livestock departments, while the estimate for Garissa assumes an annual off-take rate of 7 percent or about 30,000 of the district's cattle population of 422,400 in 1998 (Hendy and Morton 1999: 58).

[10] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of individuals.

> Wednesday, Yusuf and Ahmed are confronted with the bad news that prices will be about 10 percent less than their least optimistic scenario, which means that after their transport and purchase costs they will barely break even. They expect to earn a return after costs of less than 2 percent. The good news is that their broker has been able to sell all 105 cattle: approximately 70 to Nairobi and Mombasa traders; 25 to local traders who will trek the cattle to Garsen near the Kenyan coast or to nearby Kitui District; and 10 to local butchery owners and herders who will fatten the animals near Garissa, slaughter them, and then sell the meat in town. When I saw Yusuf and Ahmed back at their hotel that evening, they were pleased to have sold their animals and would be heading to Nairobi the next day to convert some of their earnings to dollars, and buy clothes and other goods.

Yusuf and Ahmed perceive of Garissa as a dynamic town of widespread opportunity, where fortunes can be made as well as lost. Yet, what does it mean for economic agents, like Yusuf and Ahmed, to work in a context of collapsed economic and political institutions? Based on the Somali example, the impacts are not as significant as one might envision. For the economic agent port fees to import and transport goods safely must still be paid, but instead of going to representatives of a central state the revenue is going to warlords, clan militias, or local administrations. It varies by region and town. The entrepreneur still has little access to formal financial institutions, as was the case when a government existed. However, small traders now can utilize one of the numerous informal facilities that recently have opened and, therefore, their access to banking services actually may have improved during the past decade. For example, the electronic wire transfers initiated in the mid-1990s have proven to be an efficient means of facilitating trade and moving large sums of money securely between distant locations. Moreover, merchants, such as Yusuf and Ahmed, are probably no less likely to see visible benefits of current fees and tax payments, than in the pre-war years when most services were absent outside a few large cities (see Little 2003). In short, from the trader and herder's perspectives, the differences between the earlier era of central government and the present are not as major as popular accounts would imply. With formal economic institutions and financial systems exceedingly fragile in the 1980s, their subsequent collapse in Somalia meant little for most of the population.

Concluding Remarks

This article has addressed a very complex and politically-charged topic, the effects of stateless Somalia on pastoralism. Its complexity makes it extremely difficult to summarize in a relatively short article. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here shows that rather than in steep decline, the pastoral sector of southern Somalia has done surprisingly well in a stateless environment. With the collapse of the state, some traders have been able to redirect business to the growing cross-border commerce with Kenya while others suffered. For the region's herders it is the ability to be mobile that has helped them withstand incredible hardships and avoid some of the political domination and atrocities that other segments of Somali society have experienced.

In a comparative sense the capacity to be mobile, traverse long distances across harsh terrain, and avoid interactions with political authorities have always made mobile pastoralists, like the Somalis of the Lower Jubba, threatening to sedentary populations and states. Whether in the historical period of the Moghul empire or in contemporary Africa and Central Asia, pastoral populations often have been able to avoid political domination, as well as disrupt trade patterns and other economic activities when provoked (see Wolf 1982). Terms like militaristic, anarchic, brutal, and untrustworthy frequently are used to describe mobile pastoralists and these negative labels have been around for several centuries (see Palmer 1977:297). To quote from the fourteenth century Islamic scholar, Ibn Khaldun, “civilization always collapsed in places where the Arabs [nomads] took over and conquered (1967:304).”

The contemporary examples of the Tuareg of Mali, Oromo of Ethiopia, Berber of Algeria, and Baluch of Pakistan and Iran demonstrate that confrontations between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary states still define important politics in many regions of the world. Their persistence also shows how control of informal trade networks and inhospitable frontier areas (borderlands) can be effective defenses against political and economic domination, as the Somali case has shown. Thus, when formal states collapse, such as occurred in Somalia, herders who relied little on government services often survive better than other populations.

While the absence of a state has not had a particularly devastating effect on certain segments of the Somali population or economy, this does not mean that statelessness is good for Somalia's future, including that of the country's pastoralists. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. There are many reasons why a formal government is needed. First, a state is needed to protect the country's external boundaries. On more than one occasion during the past decade Somalia's old nemesis, Ethiopia, has penetrated its borders with military forces. Second, a state is needed to protect the country's limited natural resources. Both of Somalia's two main rivers, the Jubba and Shebelle, flow from the Ethiopian highlands and bi-lateral agreements are needed to help insure that a dam(s) or other impediments are not constructed in their catchments. Another important topic related to Somalia's natural resources is the current lack of control on forest products. Since the collapse of the government, there has been a massive increase in deforestation fueled by a rapid growth in the demand for Somali-produced charcoal in the Middle East (Farah 2000: 25). In northeastern Somalia alone, it is estimated that charcoal production and trade results in deforestation rates as high as 35,000 ha/year, which seriously affects pastoral livelihoods (IUCN 1997). Charcoal is commonly referred to as Somalia's 'black gold' and much of it is exported to Saudi Arabia, where it fetches $5 per bag or about 300 percent more than local prices. Conflicts between charcoal makers and camel herders who need trees for their herds, and between the former and militia factions who control the trade have resulted in several armed skirmishes.

A third critical reason for why a state must be reconstituted is to protect the country's livestock industry from bans imposed by importing countries and from devastating animal disease epidemics. A government also is needed to help the livestock sector to find alternative export markets. Somalia is very vulnerable to import bans imposed by Middle Eastern countries, which have been aggravated by Somalia's lack of animal health facilities and quarantine regulations. The recent ban imposed by Saudi Arabia due to an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever disease in the late 1990s is one devastating example of this (see Little 2003). Without a unified public campaign to confront trade and animal health barriers, Somalia's spectacular growth in animal trade may come to a screeching halt.

Finally, public health and education institutions are badly required in Somalia. Without a government Somalia, including the Lower Jubba Region, has faced its share of public health problems during the past decade. At least three times during the 1990s cholera epidemics killed hundreds of Somalis in the border region, and the El Nino storms of 1997-1998 created a massive malaria and Rift Valley Fever outbreak that went uncontrolled for more than one month. Public health institutions to confront such hazards are absent. With regard to education, a similar justification for a government can be made. The collapse of the public education system has been particularly damaging for both primary and secondary school age children. Indeed, the term, 'lost generation (s),' accurately captures the current predicament of students in Somalia, since even the most optimistic statistics indicate 'only 20% of school-age children (ages 5-14) are enrolled in school, and are heavily concentrated in the early grades (UN 1998: 6).' The participation rates are even lower in rural areas, especially in the pastoral zones. While certain segments of traders and pastoralists of the Lower Jubba Region have weathered statelessness better than other segments of the population, the time horizon for their relative 'success' is very limited. Without access to education their ability to diversify into higher return activities, as some of their pastoral neighbors (e.g., Maasai of Kenya) have done to supplement mobile pastoralism, will be limited. A future Somalia must create a state that builds public trust, institutions, and economic opportunities, but does not threaten one of the foundations of the countryside, mobile pastoralism.

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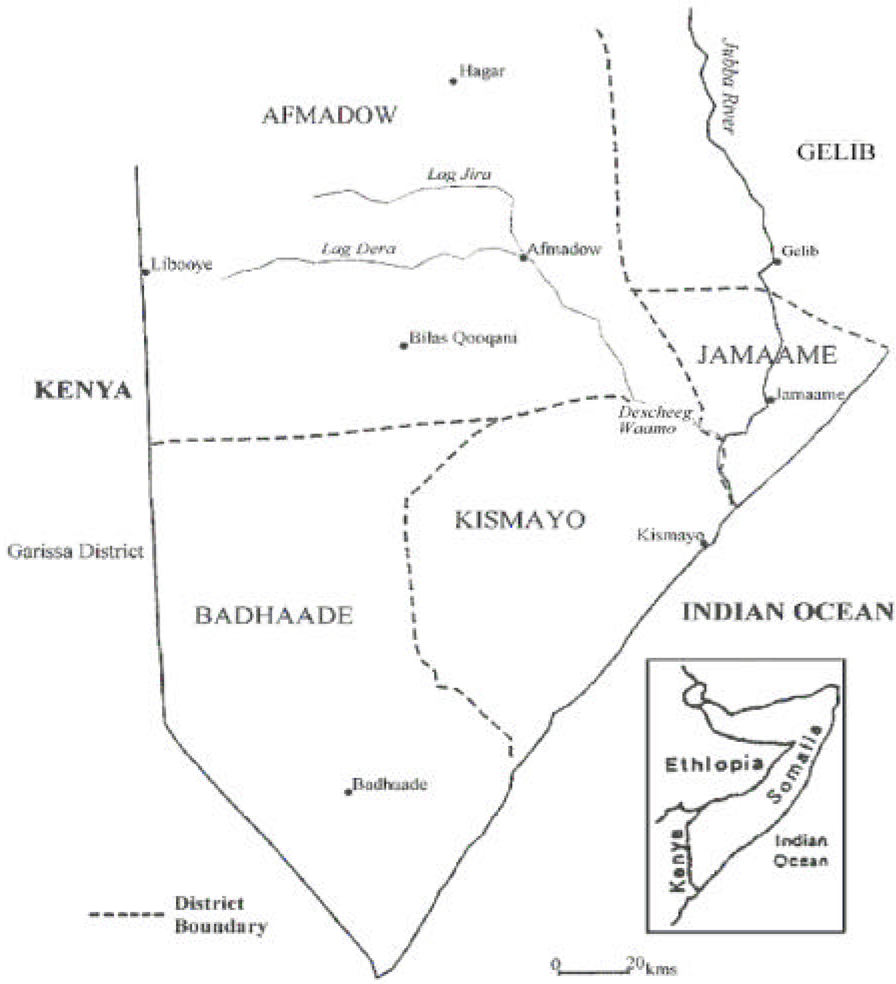
Figure 1. Lower Jubba Region: Southern Somali Borderlands



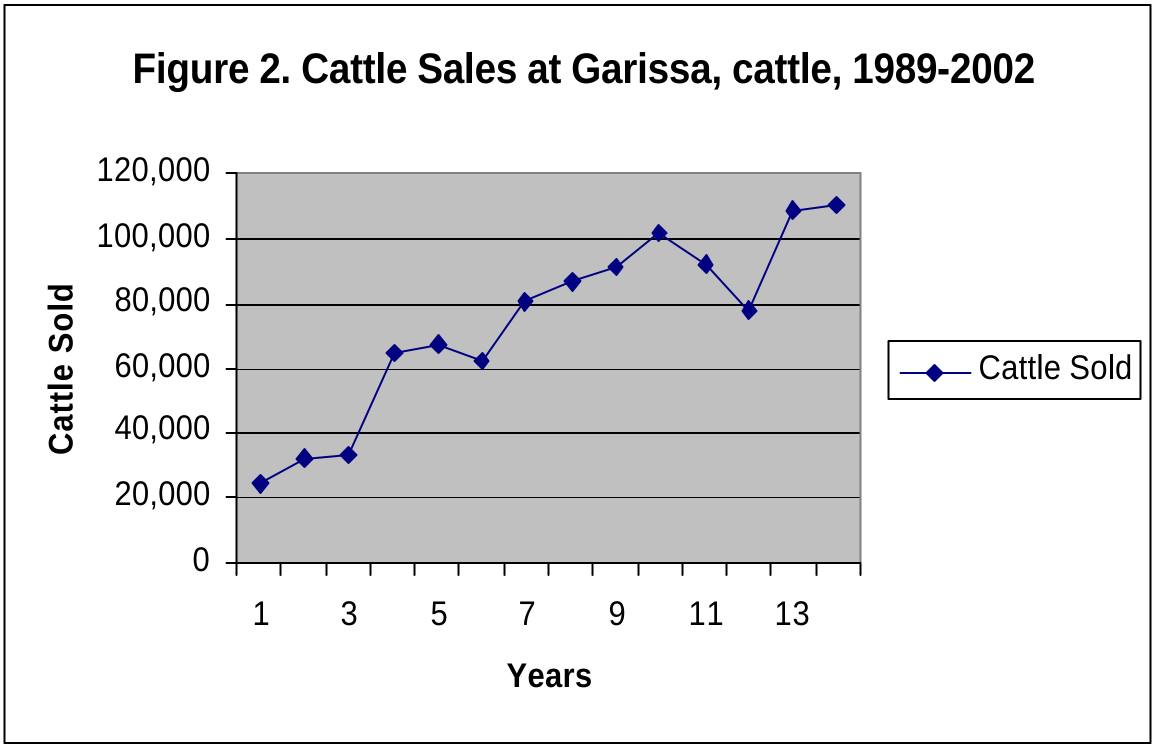


Figure 2. Cattle Sales at Garissa, cattle, 1989-2002
Cattle Sold
120,000
100,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000
0
1
3
5
7
9
11
13
Years
Cattle Sold

Table 1: Cattle Sales in Garissa, Kenya: 1989-2003[1]

Year	Number	Value (Ksh)	Value (US$)[2]
1989	24,395	51,717,400	2,510,533
1990	32,664	84,273,120	3,677,640
1991	33,449	99,510,775	3,618,573
(**Somalia State Collapses)**			
1992	65,127	162,229,648	5,038,188
1993	67,076	387,162,670	6,675,218
1994	62,351	436,457,000	7,793,875
1995	80,795	565,565,000	11,003,210
1996	86,400	ND	ND
1997	90,701	659,880,503	11,783,580
1998	101,590	599,693,700	10,272,307
1999	91,700	ND	ND
2000[3]	77,633	580,990,875	8,802,892
2001[4]	108,210	ND	ND
2002[4]	est. 110,000	ND	ND
2003[5]	64,469	ND	ND

Notes:

1 Except where indicated, these data are based on annual reports (1989-2000) from the Livestock Marketing Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Garissa.

2 Exchange rates for each year were obtained from International Monetary Fund (1999: 560-561). The decline of values in US dollar terms partly reflects annual devaluations in the value of the Kenya Shilling.

3 Based on Umar 2000: 15. Annual sales were affected by a devastating drought and an official closure of the border with Somalia.

4 Based on FSAU (2003:2).

5 Based on FSAU (2003:2). Sales are through September 2003.