

## BORDER CROSSINGS

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Theorizing mobility begins with people's stories and histories of migration. In Xavier Koller's 1990 film, *Journey of Hope*, a poor peasant family sells its meager farm assets in rural Turkey, banking on swift passage to the utopian Switzerland which it has seen on a postcard. Of their many children, the parents take only one—their youngest son—bearer of the family's name and agent of its future fortunes. Their journey is arranged by a contact whose trade and trafficking in illegal migrants is a lucrative business. In the company of a sympathetic German truck driver, the family fails in its first attempt to gain entry and is turned back to Italy where the trio find another agent who assures them he can help if they can pay. The business of trafficking in migrants is depicted as increasingly unsavory as the Turkish family approaches the mountainous Swiss-Italian border. The family, now part of a larger group of migrating "clients," is transported to the frontier in the back of a van and instructed to pose as political refugees as soon as they cross the border. Unprepared for a snowstorm and struggle over the Alps before them, some members of the group are discovered by Swiss border patrols, many near death, when they finally arrive at the border. The "journey of hope," embodied by the young boy whose language dexterity enables cultural boundaries to be crossed and whose winning spirit with strangers renders new lands less daunting, culminates in his death, the imprisonment of his father and the grief of his mother. At the same time, many along the way have been enriched by the failed journey. Borders breed loss and conflict, but they also breed profit.

In this paper, I employ the notion of a "geopolitics of mobility" to argue that international borders are more porous to capital than to displaced bodies. The mobility of international humanitarian aid is juxtaposed with the relative immobility of migrants, specifically refugees, generating two distinct but related geographies. The significantly large global economy in refugee relief activities and humanitarian interventions operates in a local-

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ized manner, usually in close proximity to sources of human displacement and crisis. This economy is historically constituted by colonial practices, Cold War interests, and cultural politics that operate at several geographical scales.

This paper draws attention to the organizations whose money makes the status of “refugee” possible. I trace selected locations and destinations of funds provided by powerful humanitarian organizations and argue that the tensions that humanitarian assistance aims to ease are historically and spatially specific. The regime of international humanitarian assistance—the “refugee industry”—concentrates power at specific sites, but operates across political borders and between groups of unequal positioning. In presenting a critical examination of the power relations which structure global humanitarian flows, I contend that core-periphery and center-margin binaries are inadequate tools for theorizing mobility. The dynamics of forced migration combined with voluntary donations produce nuanced, contradictory positionings that defy overarching narratives of humanism, development, and unitary subjects. The “transnational politics of mobility” introduced in this paper attempts to move beyond the binary geopolitical divisions of North and South, West and East, as well as the problematic categories of First, Second, and Third Worlds. It aims to theorize unequal power relations in a context that pays attention to identities formed within, beyond, and in spite of nation-states, that is to say, in a transnational context. Transnational flows of refugees and donor funds are juxtaposed to accentuate their culturally marked, unequal positionings, as well as their differential mobility across sites of humanitarian activity.

Abu-Lughod (1991) makes the case for “studying up,” for analyzing networks and brokers of power rather than the powerless (see also Pred & Watts, 1992). She argues that local conditions are, in part, expressions of global relations of power. To ignore the organizations which embody this power is to mistake the object of inquiry. While critics have argued that any “object” of inquiry is an invention in itself (Haraway, 1995), this paper focuses on one humanitarian organization that manages the effects of human displacement—the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—and its operations in two locations, Switzerland and the Horn of Africa. The analysis draws on the political histories and cultural politics of each location to illustrate how connections between them have been unevenly constructed and why money is more mobile than displaced peoples.

In the following section, I argue that selected postmodern theories of mobility and identity do not pay attention to issues of access, particularly differential access based on economic resources. While theories of migrant subjectivity and cultural politics are important, they are not necessarily sufficient to account for the trade in money for bodies. Poststructuralist approaches which are attentive to the hypermobility of capital in relation to the markedly restricted movement of members from the displaced diaspora pose a stark challenge to the often compelling analyses of some

"traveling theorists." The mobility of financiers of refugee relief is compared with and connected to that of forced migrants who rarely share the same location as their patrons. In the remainder of the paper, I present a short vignette of humanitarian flows in and out of Switzerland, and then introduce a historical and contemporary case study from the Horn of Africa. In so doing, I illustrate two kinds of spatially coded border crossings: one financial and predominantly European; the other corporeal and African.

### **Border Crossings and the Politics of Mobility**

Although segregation can be temporarily imposed as a sociopolitical arrangement, it can never be absolute, especially on the level of culture. All utterances inescapably take place against the background of the possible responses of other social and ethnic points of view (Shohat & Stam, 1994: 48).

We can redraw borders; we recognize that different types of boundaries operate at different scales (G. Pratt, 1992: 241).

How human displacement is defined and managed depends on historically specific configurations of geopolitics, as well as cultural and economic relations of power. The "politics of mobility" is a useful tool for analyzing migration, specifically because it recognizes the variable movement of refugees and other disenfranchised groups. With reference to the relations of power and resources which bear on people's movement, Massey (1993:61) has raised the idea of a "politics of mobility and access," arguing that different groups of people have distinct relationships to mobility:

some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.

While Massey's "power geometry" notes differential mobility among distinct groups of people, she does not delve far enough into the economies of power which regulate and facilitate their movement. In the case of refugees and other displaced persons, the "geopolitics of money" (Corbridge & Thrift, 1994) is as important as the geopolitics of the crisis which precipitates forced migration. Without international funding, few refugee camps would exist, expensive international interventions in Somalia and the Former Yugoslavia would not take place, nor would refugee-receiving countries host as many asylum seekers as they currently do. Even the Turkish family in the *Journey of Hope* could not embark on its migrant journey without liquidating its land to pay for passage. I maintain that a transnational geopolitics of mobility attentive to "money, power and space" (Corbridge, Martin, Thrift, 1994) which incorporates elements of cultural criticism

provides a more effective tool for analyzing migration and the historical sites of struggle it involves. Just as "feminists need detailed, historicized maps of the circuits of power" (Kaplan, 1994: 148), geographers require better analytical tools to examine critically the connections between migrant subjects, the geopolitics of money, and the borders—political and cultural—they cross.

"As free-trade zones proliferate and tariffs are dismantled, mobility, flexibility, and speed have become the watchwords of both the traders and the theorists in metropolitan cultures" (Kaplan, 1995: 45). In the case of refugees and other displaced peoples, however, movement is shaped not only by global geopolitics of money, but also by displacement caused by violent conflict and social conditions of wealth and opportunity. Only a small minority of refugees—predominantly young, male, and mobile—either find protection in states adjoining their own, or are able to escape at all (Hathaway, 1991). Forced migration today constitutes a significant force as part of transnational movements. In 1995, over 27 million refugees and other "persons of concern" were counted by the Office of UNHCR (UNHCR, 1995). Diasporic distributions are not, however, based on an equality of mobility and access among all groups. Opportunities to cross borders and move within a country, whether voluntary or involuntary, depend on economic resources, gendered access to jobs, and other key positionings.

Approaching the "geopolitics of mobility" as a network of unequal and uneven links between displaced bodies within the global economy of humanitarian assistance risks undermining more conventional political struggles between "us" and "them." Nonetheless, such a transnational analysis can contest accepted readings of border meanings and, in this paper, border crossings. At one level, the "geopolitics of mobility" is a tool for contesting master narratives of humanism and humanitarianism. At another, it serves as a materialist corrective to the unimpeded "traveling cultures" and diasporic populations heralded by some theorists (Clifford, 1986, 1992; Appadurai, 1991).

Appadurai (1991:192) introduces the idea of "ethnoscape" as a "landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live." These include tourists, business executives, exiles, immigrants, guest workers, refugees and other mobile groups. He argues that any analysis of "ethno" without a spatial referent, or "scape," is aspatial. While "ethnoscape" may ground analysis of the mobility of particular ethnic groups, the concept does not account for the differential power and resources of distinctive migrant groups—particularly women—nor does it examine politics of location and ethno-nationalism for people who do not move. Economies of money, space, and power shape mobility unevenly within and across migrant groups.

In his more recent work, Appadurai (1996:48–49) has written about the slippage and change in the relationship between state and territory which were generally assumed to be synonymous. He notes that "global compe-

tion for allegiances now involves all sorts of nonstate actors and organizations and various forms of diasporic or multilocal allegiance." This observation is an important one in that it recognizes new and multiple forms of subjectivity linked across axes of political, economic, cultural, and social power. Appadurai develops the term *translocalities* to describe places largely divorced from their national contexts, characterized by cultural heterogeneity, and often straddling formal political borders. To the extent that this idea encourages us to think "outside the box" of the nation-state, in a transnational context, it is useful, both as a theoretical and a political tool. As with ethnoscaping, however, the author lumps free trade zones, existing political borders (such as the U.S.–Mexican frontier), tourist areas, world cities, ghettos, refugee camps, concentration camps, and reservations under the rubric of *translocalities*. As such, the term loses its strength as a political tool which might otherwise examine links between these historically distinct and unequal sites of transnationalism.

In calling for reflexive ethnographic practices in Third World locations, James Clifford maintains that "(t)here is no longer any place of overview (mountaintop) from which to map human ways of life, no Archimedean point from which to represent the world" (1986: 22). Rather, "(h)uman ways of life increasingly influence, dominate, parody, translate, and subvert one another." While the omniscient universal subject or narrator has no doubt given way to partial truths and more limited ways of seeing, and at the same time, interconnections among cultures have multiplied, the relations of *domination* hinted at by Clifford remain undeveloped. "Traveling culture" might better be described as a relationship of power which is inherently political because it is predicated upon a hierarchy of cultures which articulate unequal positions of authority and mobility. By textualizing the ethnographic experience, Clifford constructively problematizes "culture," but the cultural encounter nonetheless occurs in a vacuum void of the geopolitics of money and funding which enables "traveling culture" to occur.

Theories of traveling culture and postmodern ethnography are critical of central epistemological locations, prevailing political rationalities, and the structures which propagate them, but in the cases noted above material relations of power have not kept pace with theoretical innovations, nor will they necessarily (Dhareshwar, 1990). As Michael Watts (1996) has argued, "frictionless mobility and a relentless annihilation of space" need to be challenged. Humanist sensibilities and humanitarian agencies have been and continue to be formative in the organization and reorganization of power among sedentary and migrant groups, especially in formerly colonized locations: ". . . what now becomes important is not a 'decentering' of Europe as such, but in fact a critical interrogation of the practices, modalities, and projects through which *the varied forms of Europe's insertion* into the lives of the colonized were constructed and organized" (Scott, 1995: 193; emphasis in original). Analyzing Europe's insertion into the post-independence, or post-colonial, lives of the presently displaced and formerly colonized is an important step toward developing a transnational geopolitics of mobility.

The appeal of “traveling theories” lies in the seductive and constructive postmodern celebration of culture and hypermobility. What many of these theorists do not fully register is that the accelerated movement of people across the globe parallels that of money: those with it can take advantage of “postmodern” time-space compression (Mitchell, 1993); those who are uprooted from their homes and forced to flee their country with few resources experience migration in a very different way.

The feminist and arguably postcolonial criticism of Trinh Minh-ha engages with the politics of mobility, albeit in a different register. She focuses on subjectivity in the context of inequitable power relations and traces movement as a basis of identity formation. Her writing, like her films, at once subverts linear (Western) representations of spaces and ideas and engages in a politicized critique of their material effects. Nonetheless, she retains a unitary, if non-Western, self which belies an arguably humanist, anti-colonial sensibility rather than a postcolonial one. An excerpt from her recent work illustrates this well.

To travel can consist in operating a profoundly unsettling inversion of one’s identity: I become me via an other. . . . Travelling allows one to see things differently from what they are, differently from how one has seen them, and differently from what one is. These three supplementary identities gained via alterity are in fact still (undeveloped or unrealized) gestures of the ‘self’ — the energy system that defines (albeit in a shifting and contingent mode) what and who each seer is. The voyage out of the (known) self and back into the (unknown) self sometimes takes the wanderer far away to a motley place where everything safe and sound seems to waver while the essence of language is placed in doubt and profoundly destabilized. Travelling can thus turn out to be a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries — a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference (Trinh, 1994: 23)

Trinh displaces the Western gaze, the universal subject, and the pretense of order in the world by theorizing the unsettling experience of travel constitutive of migrant subjectivity. Trinh (1994:12) qualifies her comments about traveling theory: “(d)ispossessed not only of their material belongings but also of the social heritage, refugees lead a provisional life, drifting from camp to camp, disturbing local people’s habits, and destabilizing the latter’s lifestyle.... On the one hand, migrant settlements can turn out to be ‘centres of hopelessness’ which soon become ‘centres of discontent.’” While Trinh contributes a feminist critique to investigations of human mobility, she maintains a center-margin dichotomy and does not account for the systems of power which govern the movement of international capital earmarked for refugees. At the expense of financial and geopolitical considerations, she focuses on the cultural and political expressions of mobility. If

"(t)he war of borders is a war waged by the West on a global scale to preserve its values" as she contends (1990: 333), any theoretical and political framework which aims to address these relations of power must incorporate the Western funders of this war which operates between and across "First" and "Third" worlds, across borders, cultures, and historical contexts.

Trinh's work underscores the problem that Western imperialism and other projects of modernity have different and sometimes violent meanings across locations of nation, gender, and culture. In addition to these cultural and political readings of migration, a transnational geopolitics of mobility calls for integrated analyses of political networks—in particular, the international refugee regime—and the nodes of financial power within the global economy which both direct and fund the geopolitical decisions taken (Strange, 1994). My focus moves now to Europe and then to the Horn of Africa, a region in which Europe invested heavily during colonial rule and in which Soviet and American superpowers exerted control through alliances for strategic purposes during the Cold War. The section which follows outlines a geography of finance for humanitarian crises, located in Switzerland: Geneva to be precise. This is linked to the geography of human displacement in Africa.

Of the 27.4 million refugees and other persons of concern in 1995, 11.8 million lived in Africa alone (UNHCR, 1995). The number of refugees and displaced persons who are allowed to leave countries in sub-Saharan Africa is dwarfed by the huge flow of humanitarian capital into the region in the form of peacekeeping and refugee relief. This is not to say that refugees should leave and be resettled. I highlight the relationship of colonizer to colony as this was superimposed upon nationalist claims for an ethnic state during the period of independence, followed by flows of money and arms from superpowers to countries in the Horn during the Cold War. An analysis of these relationships on a finer scale provides a context for one humanitarian crisis that besets this region today and the "refugee industry" that has grown up around it. The formal resettlement routes out of Africa prove to be few, and together with refugee confinement to camps located in marginal border areas, there is a strong correlation between money and movement.

Civil conflict and human displacement today characterize the current geopolitical landscape and the politics of mobility in this region. The intersections among colonial histories, Cold War geopolitics, ethnic nationalisms, and their respective financing in the Horn of Africa point to relations of power that have divided the Somali nation through the drawing and maintenance of particular borders. Violence in and adjacent to refugee camps in Kenya's Northeast Province today remains a chronic problem related to this history of nation-building and border contests.

The borders which produce refugees and circumscribe their movement in the Horn of Africa today are, I contend, predicated on colonial and Cold War political geographies, cultural politics, and economic alliances. The

formation of borders during colonial partition was reinscribed by infusions of arms and other investments during the period of superpower rivalry. Today these borders continue to be reinforced by the large, and no less political, flows of humanitarian assistance. The flow of resources to the Horn continues today, albeit from different locations and to serve ostensibly humanitarian rather than colonial or superpower interests. The relative immobility of refugees in the region is contrasted with the hypermobility of capital to the region, both of which have historical antecedents.

*Geneva: Node of Humanitarian Flows*

Switzerland hosts a large number of international banks and humanitarian organizations. Geneva, in particular, is both an international banking capital and a seat of power for the United Nations and other international agencies whose mandates include humanitarian and development assistance. An entire neighborhood of these organizations exists northwest of the commercial city center in which the United Nations *Palais des Nations* forms a kind of humanitarian city center (see Fig. 1). The concentration of international organizations forms a kind of “global locale” which serves as the financial district and administrative center of humanitarian assistance. Various countries have permanent missions to the Office of the United Nations, most of which vie for a space close to the *Palais*. The World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, the World Trade Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—among others—share the neighborhood with bilateral missions from individual governments and a range of international non-governmental organizations. The proximity and connectedness of these organizations in relation to one another, and especially to the Office of the UN, is critical to the politics of humanitarian funding which take place in Geneva (Thrift, 1994). As an international financial center for private and public capital, the city has both symbolic and practical value. It is the place of emerging news, expert views, and key meetings which determine the direction of financial decisions.

Among the humanitarian organizations in Geneva is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), perhaps the most reputable non-political organization, which has deliberately chosen Switzerland as its headquarters. Until recently, only Swiss citizens could work for this humanitarian organization, visiting political prisoners and entering into discussions with governments holding such prisoners in efforts to secure their release. Since 1815, Switzerland has remained a politically neutral state. It does not belong to the European Union or NATO, nor has it signed many of the human rights instruments and international legal conventions which would oblige it to act according to external international standards. It is no accident that the Geneva Conventions of 1949, outlining minimum standards for the treatment of civilians in countries at war, were written in Switzerland.

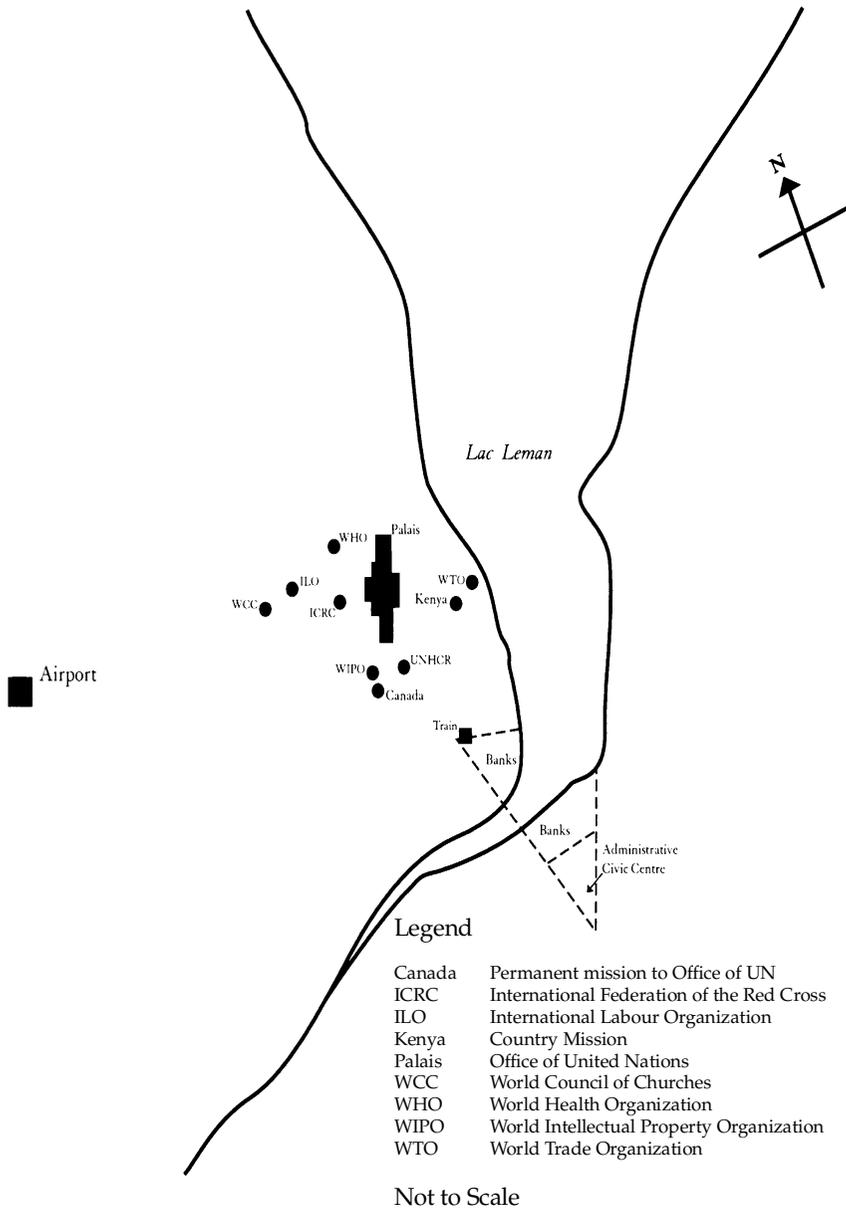


Figure 1 Geneva's Humanitarian City Centre

Banking in Switzerland is also predicated on this reputation of neutrality. Geneva has a locational advantage over Luxembourg—where banking space is cheaper and within the European Union—because of Swiss neutrality. Bankers in Geneva are “discreet.” They carry two business cards: one with the standard name of the employee and bank, full telephone number, and address; the other with only the banker’s name and a local phone number without any country or area codes. The first is for people who aren’t crossing borders or have no need to be concerned about such crossings; the second is for investors and people who want to bring money into Switzerland without being “marked.” A French citizen, for example, can bring only 50,000 French francs (approximately US \$10,000) into Switzerland after which s/he will be taxed. There is no information on the second card through which to trace the location of the person named. Bankers answer the phone at their offices with a familiar salutation, but no identifying information. Most banks offer named accounts and numbered accounts which, like the business cards, are used for different reasons, but both can be coded for increased privacy and can be “declared” or “undeclared” for tax purposes. All accounts are protected by the banking secrecy act, *la loi Fédéral sur les Banques et les Caisses d’Epargne*. Bank business cards and accounts disguise locations and identities in order to render the Swiss border fluid and friendly to incoming capital.

The situation for bodies wanting to locate in Switzerland is considerably more restricted. While Switzerland is one of only ten UN member states to announce annual resettlement quotas for refugees—quotas which are shrinking in the major resettlement countries—asylum-seekers who arrive at the airport in Geneva are required to stay in an “international zone” where they are not considered to have entered the country until officials assess the validity of their claims and accept or deport them accordingly. While Switzerland accepts comparatively few refugees for permanent resettlement, it offers temporary protection to some and provisional status to others in refugee-like circumstances through “special action programs.” In 1994, a bill was passed which gives the Swiss Federal Office for Refugees (FOR) the right to detain, for up to twelve months, any asylum seeker over the age of fifteen who does not have proof of identity or legal residence, regardless of whether she or he has committed a crime (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1995). A complex hierarchy of designations and entitlements exists, and these are available to some non-Swiss residents, though work permits and permission for long-term stays are difficult to obtain. *Journey of Hope* demonstrates rather starkly how unlikely it is that many of the outsiders who arrive at the border will be allowed entry into the orderly Swiss state.

Two of Switzerland’s specialties—banking and humanitarianism—have recently come face to face, creating somewhat of a crisis in both sectors. The reputation of Switzerland as a place of refuge and humanitarian assistance has been tarnished by fresh evidence that, prior to and during the Holocaust, Jewish money was welcomed but Jewish refugees

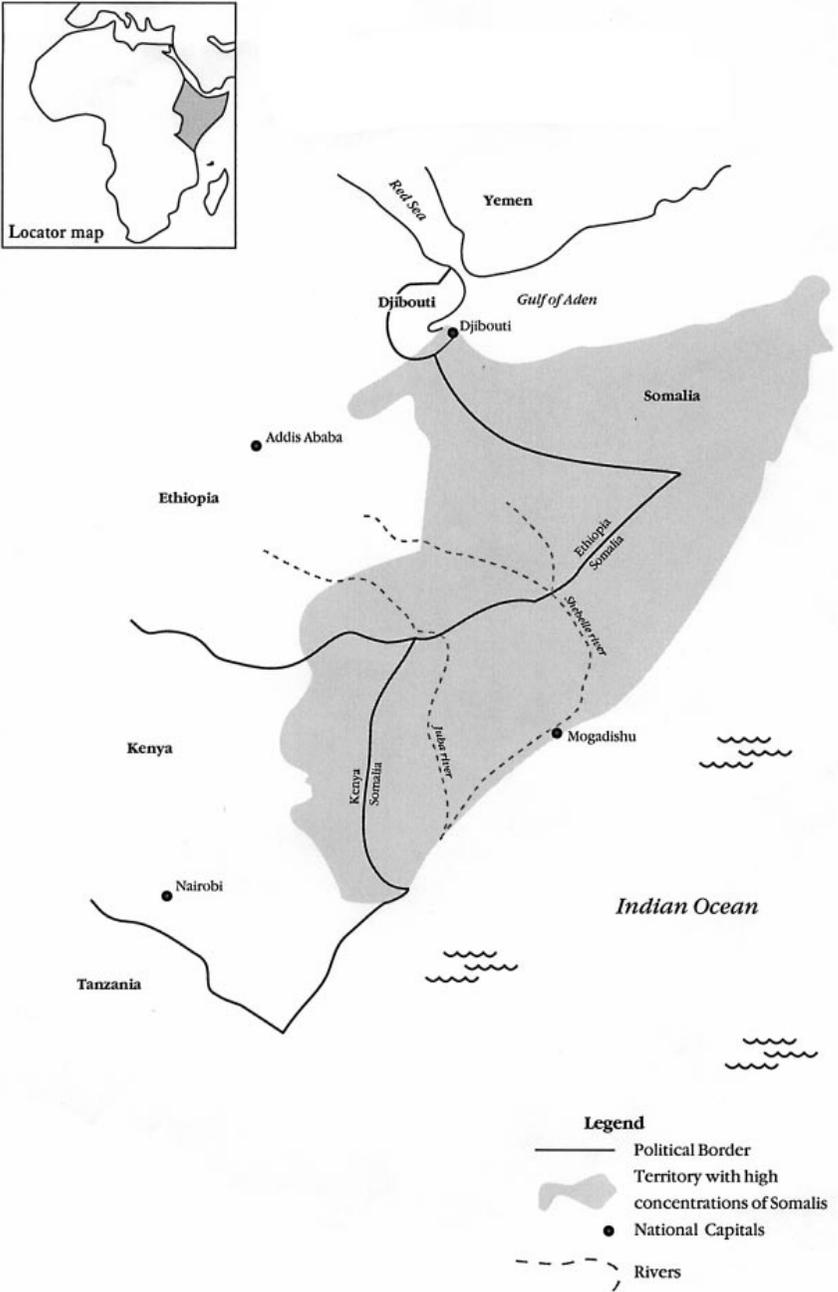
were not. Heirs of the Holocaust are demanding access to Swiss bank accounts set up by their ancestors, some of whom were refused entry into Switzerland and unable to escape the Nazi executions. "Swiss banks had insisted heirs produce account numbers and death certificates, which were never issued by the Nazis" (Sarick, 1995). The Swiss Bankers Association responded to pressure from Holocaust survivors and the World Jewish Congress by agreeing to set up a central registry to track dormant accounts. Overtures of compensation for the Holocaust heirs to these accounts have recently been made, but the initial inquiry into the issue reported early in 1997 that the funds identified amounted to a much smaller sum than that cited by the World Jewish Congress. Archives in Eastern Europe, which were inaccessible during the Cold War, have come under recent scrutiny and point to transfers of money prior to World War II, including gold looted by the Nazis. Recent findings suggest that at least 10,000 Jewish refugees were turned away from the Swiss border; records of their exclusion were destroyed by the Swiss government just after the war. Fifty years later, the Swiss government has formally apologized for destroying the record of refugee applications.

Switzerland hosts international centers for banks and humanitarian organizations. While Geneva champions itself as a "city of refuge," the Swiss Government is, in fact, extremely careful as to *who* it lets in. For investors, borders are blurred by discreet business practices and Swiss laws which protect privacy: capital is welcome.

### **Somalia and Its Region: Reinscribing Borders**

My analysis principally concerns Somali peoples in the Horn of Africa and their displacement across and within borders which were drawn during colonialism and reinscribed at the time of independence. In particular, the imagined pan-Somali nation has never corresponded to the colonial nor postcolonial borders of the country (Anderson, 1983; see Fig. 2). The difference between the imagined Somali nation and the Somalian nation-state has been the basis of a nationalist project and a major source of geopolitical conflict in the region throughout colonial, Cold War, and contemporary periods. Each period is marked by global influences of a political and economic nature, as well as regional tensions, which have together shaped Somali displacement. While not all Somali people in the postcolonial context are Somalian nationals, Somalis on all sides of political borders in the Horn of Africa have participated in economies of corporeal displacement and transnational capital.

In underscoring the mobility of capital versus the relative immobility of Somali people over three historical periods, I argue that a former colonialism of derision along this border has been reinscribed in the current context as a colonialism of compassion.



Source: National Geographic Atlas of the World, 1981; John Barthelomew & Sons Ltd., 1986. Approximate scale: 1 to 10,000,000

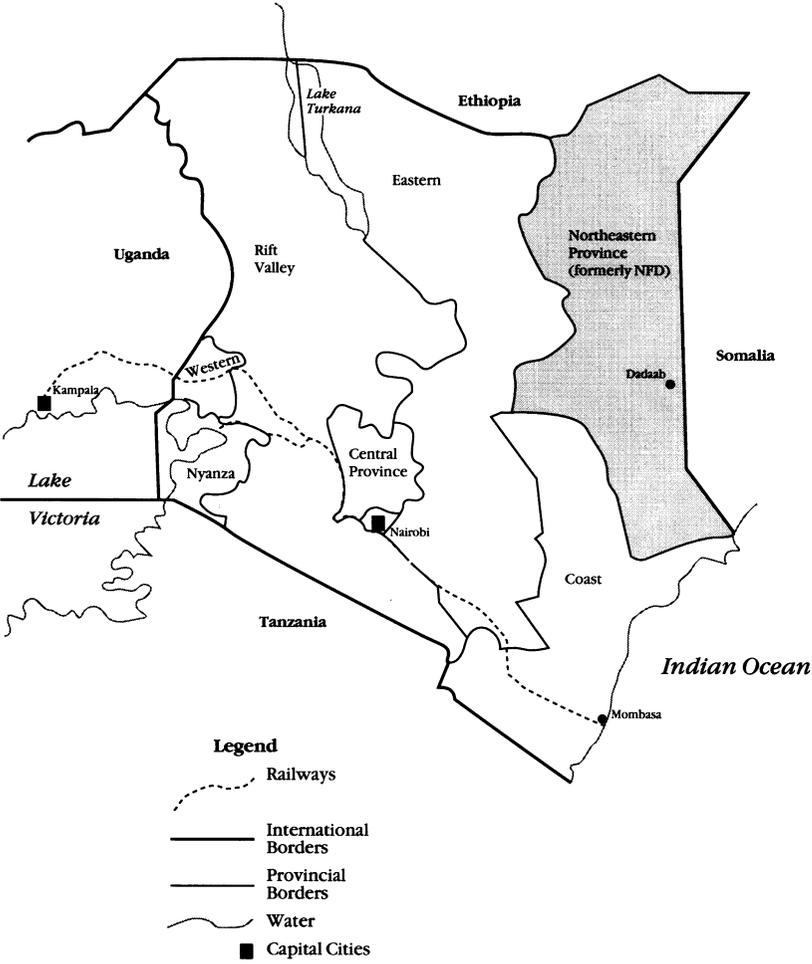
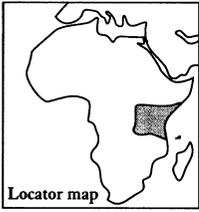
Figure 2 Territory of ethnic Somali concentration.

*Drawing the Line, Dividing the Nation: Kenya and Somalia*

The Government of Kenya has not hidden its disdain for Somali refugees living in Kenya, nor for its own Kenyan nationals of Somali ethnicity. Racism and discrimination against Somalis are practiced today just as they were during the colonial period in which Britain ruled Kenya and Northern Somalia, France controlled Djibouti, and Italy occupied Southern Somalia. While the first colonial powers in the Horn exercised only a maritime presence, the "scramble for empire" among European nations in the late nineteenth century accelerated the process of colonial partition. Unsurprisingly, many borders in Africa were drawn with European interests rather than indigenous settlement patterns, class relations, or pre-colonial politics in mind.<sup>1</sup> Conflict over the Kenya-Somalia border, in particular, can be traced back to colonial occupation at the turn of the century when Britain extended control over the semi-arid region now known as the Northeast Province of Kenya. The British colonial administration wanted to establish a "buffer zone" between its borders with Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland (now Somalia) on one side and its railway and white settler population on the other (Ogenga, 1992; see Fig. 3). Accordingly, administrative boundaries were drawn within Kenya, creating the Northern Frontier District (NFD). The "frontier" in the district's name was elucidated in 1909 when Somalis living in Kenya were prohibited from crossing the Somali-Galla line which divided the NFD from the rest of Kenya. This early effort to contain Somalis in Northeast Kenya led to strategies by subsequent governments to curtail the mobility of Somali Kenyans in relation to other Kenyan nationals.

The 1909 policy generated significant resistance to colonial rule on the part of Somalis. In response, the British administration—by means of legal ordinance—declared the NFD a closed district in 1926, a move which afforded it broad powers to sweep, in its terms, the "Somali problem" behind the line, as it were, using whatever force was necessary. In the face of sustained political organization among Somalis, a subsequent legal ordinance designated the NFD a "Special District" which required its Somali inhabitants to carry passes or seek approval from authorities to enter other districts. Predictably, the colonial administration made little attempt to promote social or economic activities in the district or to integrate it politically with the rest of Kenya. This geographical and socio-economic segregation was a practice continued after Kenya achieved independence. Even today, this "Special District" remains distinctly poorer and less politically powerful than the rest of Kenya.

In 1960 British Somaliland, located in the northern part of the emerging country, united with Italian Somaliland in the South to form the independent Somali Republic. Despite the formation of this new state, many Somalis who imagined themselves part of the pan-Somali nation remained outside its borders in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. The independence of the Somali republic



Approximate Scale 1:5,000,000

Figure 3 Provinces of Kenya.

renewed the quest for unification with Somalis in Kenya and Ethiopia. The struggle for self-determination among Somalis in the NFD of Kenya intensified and their persistent political efforts succeeded in pushing the British Colonial Secretary to call for a commission that would determine the public opinion of Somalis in the District. A United Nations Commission was appointed to consult residents of the area and to make recommendations accordingly (African Rights, 1993). The Commission found that ethnic Somalis in Kenya overwhelmingly preferred unification with the Somalia Republic to their political status as part of Kenya. The British colonial administration was, however, also in the process of negotiating Kenyan independence at the time with president-to-be Jomo Kenyatta. During these talks, Kenyatta made it clear that he refused to cede Kenyan Somaliland to its neighboring republic. The British administration did an about face and decided to placate Kenyatta by quickly inventing its own "Report of the Regional Boundaries Commission" which recommended its preferred course of action, and reneged on its promise to follow through with the UN Commission's recommendations.

When this decision was announced, the government of the Somalian Republic severed its diplomatic ties with Britain and mounted an insurrection in Northeast Kenya which became known as the "Shifita War" (Makinda, 1982). Shifitas were, and still are, defined as bandits. Bandit activity is related to the systematic economic marginalization of ethnic Somalis living in this region of Kenya, the Northeast Province of Kenya being one of the poorest regions in the country (African Rights, 1993). By relegating resistance in the area to mere regional "banditry," the British administration tried to undermine the political legitimacy of Somali actions. In efforts to counter resistance, the colonial administration of the day declared a "state of emergency" in the district in March 1963. Immediately after independence in December 1963, the new Kenyan Government also declared a state of emergency in the Northeastern Province and held the Somalian government responsible for rebel activity in the region (IRBD, 1990). Surveillance of Somalis continued despite the change in government. Once again, mobility was curtailed and due legal process suspended. In the case of the Somalia-Kenya border, the colonial partitioning late in the nineteenth century was reinscribed at the moment of Kenyan independence with the help of the British administration.

After Kenyan independence, the political struggle for the unification of a Somali nation continued at regional and continental levels. The Somalian government looked for support from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded in 1963, but found none. While the OAU admitted that the borders of post-independence African states were artificial, it was committed to territorial integrity and the survival of these borders as a practical compromise to achieve peace among African states. Between 1964 and 1967, reports suggest that some 2,000 Somalis were killed by Kenyan security forces (Ogenga, 1992). The pressure for unification continued, however, and at the OAU Summit in Mogadishu in 1974, a memorandum was circulated

to delegates demanding the return of the disputed territory to Somalia. The attorney general of Kenya who was attending the summit declared that “Kenya could never agree to surrender part of her territory. Kenyans, be they Borans or Somalis, who did not support Kenya “should pack their camels and go to Somalia” (Njonjo cited in Ogenga, 1992). The position of the Government of Kenya, which vowed not to cede any ground to Somalia, had very material implications for Kenyan Somalis. In the struggle to gain independence from colonialism, the new Kenyan Government was complicit and reinscribed the colonization of the Northern Frontier District. Soon after, expelling inhabitants of the area became a means of addressing Somali resistance and rectifying the “Somali problem.” Although the Republic of Somalia formally renounced its claim on the Northeast Province in 1967, the state of emergency policy remained in effect in the region until 1991, and the surveillance and expulsion of Somalis—Kenyan or Somali—by the Kenyan Government remains current practice.

### *Cold War Proxies and Refugees*

During the Cold War, Somalia’s strategic location near the oil-rich Middle East was perceived to be of great value by U.S. and Soviet superpowers. The border tensions generated by the pan-Somali project shifted in the late 1970s because of Cold War rivalries in which Somalia and Ethiopia both became proxies in the periphery. Ethiopia had benefitted from huge amounts of U.S. military assistance since the 1950s, and the U.S. had a well-established base in what is present-day Eritrea. When Somalia signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1974, the tension between superpowers in the region intensified and the Somali Government used this alliance as leverage for obtaining substantial economic and military assistance. By 1976, the U.S.S.R. had almost four thousand military and civilian advisors in Somalia (Ogenga, 1992). Superpower influence, however, could not be separated from regional tensions in the Horn, particularly between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Ethiopian Ogaden territory in which people of Somali ethnicity resided. While Ethiopia struggled with internal crises, Somali forces prepared to attack the country against Moscow’s advice. In 1977 they invaded the Ogaden region of Ethiopia in a move to annex it. In a complicated changing of client states during the same year, the U.S. withdrew from Ethiopia; Ethiopia then invited Soviet assistance which it received. The Somalia government, angered by the Soviet betrayal, forced the U.S.S.R. to leave its military base at Berbera in Northern Somalia; the base was taken over by the U.S. which was still keen to retain an influence in the region. Where colonial interests had shaped geopolitics in the Horn of Africa only a decade earlier, superpower rivalries in these strategic postcolonial proxy states became the major external influence both politically and economically in the region by the late 1970s.

The Somali government lost its bid to take over the Ogaden from Ethiopia. With one of the largest armament airlifts in African history, the

Soviet Union and Cuba enabled Ethiopia to defeat the Somalian military in 1978.

After the Ogaden war ended that year, the avowedly anti-communist President Moi of Kenya sided with ardent Marxist Ethiopian President Mengistu against the perceived threat that Somalia posed. Cold War ideological bases of opposition were subsumed by regional geopolitics and a common enemy, testimony to the tenacity of the pan-Somali project of unification despite colonial and superpower influence. While Ethiopian and Kenyan governments gladly accepted investments of “aid” from opposing First World superpowers, they exercised direct control where possible over the ambitions of the Somalian state and Somalis outside its borders. Both global and regional in terms of political scope, “(t)his long history of conflict and tension has created a distorted and hostile image of the Somalis as ‘enemies’ of the Kenyan state” (Ogenga: 23).

The legacies of Cold War rivalry in the Horn were basically twofold: large quantities of armaments were transferred to the region, on the one hand, and a significant number of refugees were generated along the Somalia-Ethiopia border, on the other. In 1976, Somalia had one of the largest and best-equipped armed forces in sub-Saharan Africa. Then President Siad Barre sought arms to increase control on the domestic front and “in pursuit of expansionist goals, with a view to annexing part of Ethiopia and Kenya” (Makinda, 1993: 57). The presence of internationally recognized refugees inside Somalia also proved profitable. The UNHCR—in conjunction with other international aid organizations—supplied large quantities of food to Somalia throughout the 1980s, though not all of it went to feed the hundreds of thousands of refugees. In 1988, UNHCR officials were denied access to refugee camps in Northern Somalia by Somalian Government officials; one census revealed that the population in a given camp was 39,000—less than half the Somalian claim of 82,000 (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1991). The presence of large numbers of refugees in Somalia nonetheless precipitated infusions of First World capital to support the anti-communist cause. While Cold War strategies treated Somalia as little more than surface for superpower influence, the economic and military gains from such alliances provided ammunition for pan-Somali nationalism and Somalia’s regional ambitions.

*After the Cold War: Global Disinterest and Kenyan “Crack-downs”*

Postcolonial, or post-independence,<sup>2</sup> geopolitics along the Kenya-Somalia border are historically contingent expressions of colonial and Cold War investments combined with regional ambitions of a pan-Somali state. The Mau Mau Rebellion and other anti-colonial pressures led to Kenyan independence in 1963 under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta. Kenyatta was a member of Kenya’s largest ethnic group, the Gikuyu; his positioning within the ruling party introduced a different dynamic in the cultural politics of the country.<sup>3</sup> Kenyatta was replaced by President Daniel Arap Moi, a Kalenjin, and by the

1980s border confrontations and general insecurity had provoked severe military repression and many civilian deaths in the former Northern Frontier District. Arguing that Somalians were infiltrating the country, the government began screening all ethnic Somalis in Kenya in 1989. At the same time, it forcibly removed some 3,000 Somalis to Somalia (Associated Press, 1989). Some Kenyan nationals were among the five hundred Somalis sent across the border to Somalia in December 1989 (Washington Post, 1989). Kenyan Somalis who had never been to Somalia were “returned” to Mogadishu if they did not have proper identification when stopped by police. The politics of mobility for Kenyan Somali citizens remains precarious. One test used by Kenyan authorities to distinguish “authentic” Kenyan Somalis from Somalians relates to language skills: if a Somali can speak English and Kiswahili, Kenya’s two national languages—one being a legacy of colonialism—s/he is more likely to be Kenyan, despite the fact that Somali is spoken on both sides of the official political border.

The program of the Kenyan Government in the late 1980s made life grim for Somalis from either side of the border. State-of-emergency laws in the area allowed for up to 56 days detention without trial, and harassment, beatings, and torture of Somalis were reported (Africa Watch, 1989:10–11).

The Kenyan authorities are also using the influx of Somalis seeking sanctuary to impose a discriminatory and repressive screening process on its own ethnic Somalis community, which has suffered a history of persecution. . . . The arrival of the refugees is being used as an opportunity to impose compulsory screening on all Kenyan-Somalis, in order to identify ‘illegal aliens’ (Netherlands Development Corp.: 10–11).

Otunnu Ogenga (1992) adds that the screening process, combined with the strategy of keeping Somalians in camps and involuntary repatriation, forms an unstated policy of “refugee deterrence.” On June 16, 1991, hundreds of Somalis were rounded up by Kenyan authorities for screening; a subsequent report noted that

On the weekend of August 15/16, the police burst into the temporary homes of 2,000 Somali and Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi and Mombasa, rounded them up, forced them to board lorries at gun point after which they were driven to refugee camps. Families were separated and many small children left abandoned. The police were apparently in search of any ‘Somali-looking person’ in areas with large groups, such as Eastleigh (a Nairobi suburb), South C and Koma Rock (Africa Events, 1992:8).

It is ironic, given this situation, that the word “asylum”—which comes from the Greek *asylon*—means “something not subject to seizure” or “freedom

from seizure" (Rogers & Copeland, 1993). Many Somali asylum seekers did not find sanctuary in Kenya; instead they were the targets of racist raids and random removal to a country to which some had never been. Again in August 1992 and in August 1993, Kenyan authorities rounded up refugees living in urban areas and purposefully transferred them to remote camps and border sites located in the Northeastern Province (Netherlands Development Corporation, 1994). The Government refused to allow UNHCR to house any refugees in Central Kenya, protecting this area—as the British administration before it had—from a Somali "invasion."

Despite deterrence measures and government "round-ups," several hundred thousand refugees from Somalia began pouring over the border into Kenya as civil conflict in Southern Somalia mounted early in 1992. Widespread famine and the collapse of the Somalian state exacerbated this situation in which an estimated 500,000 Somali citizens died. Well over a million Somalians were internally displaced and some 600,000 fled the country, most of them seeking asylum in nearby Kenya. While they were not warmly welcomed, the Kenyan Government was obliged to tolerate them, partly because of its commitment in international law to the UN Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the OAU Convention, and partly because it needed the continued support through foreign aid of donor countries—many of which had suspended funds to Kenya at that time. While donor countries awaited a satisfactory outcome of the country's first multi-party elections before reconsidering their aid commitment to Kenya, President Daniel Arap Moi grudgingly allowed Somali refugees into Kenya on the condition that they reside in the border camps. Continued capital flows of development aid from Europe and North America to Kenya were conditional upon a proven commitment to democratic process and the country's acceptance of Somalis in need of humanitarian assistance, some of which would no doubt benefit Kenya. In 1992 and 1993, UNHCR spent US\$40 million to establish refugee camps and border sites in Kenya.

Less than a week after President Moi won the Kenyan election in December 1992, he announced that refugees would be sent back to Somalia immediately. Having expressed this sentiment earlier, in August 1992, he now had the diplomatic and political power to withdraw his support for Somali refugees in the country. Meanwhile, on the request of the UN Secretary-General, UNHCR initiated the Cross Border Operation (CBO) inside Somalia in order to stem the flow of refugees from Somalia to Kenya and to entice those refugees already in Kenya to come home. Without President Moi's support, UNHCR could not operate on the same scale within Kenya and so sustained efforts to fund CBO ensued. The idea was to invest in community rehabilitation in Southern Somalia to encourage refugee repatriation to Somalia and thus resolve the problem. The headquarters of UNHCR in Geneva established the Special Emergency Fund for the Horn of Africa (SEFHA) and began fundraising among donor countries to finance the Cross Border initiative. To cover the anticipated costs of repatriation on the Kenyan side of the border,

US\$5.5 million was requested; UNHCR appealed for another US\$13 million in Somalia for CBO.

UNHCR established four outposts in Southern Somalia as part of the Cross Border Operation. The distance between the Kenya-Somalia border and the outposts located a few hundred kilometers inland along the Juba River circumscribed the "preventive zone," an area strategically planned to stem potential refugee flows. The buffer zones of the colonial and post-independence periods were effectively transposed to the Somalian side of the border where prevention, rather than containment in Kenya's Northeastern Province, was thought to be an effective means of managing the mobility of Somalis. Considerable sums of money were required to orchestrate the preventive zone. More than twenty NGOs were hired by UNHCR as partners in the CBO initiative, which included "quick impact projects" (QIPs) to regenerate local towns and villages. These projects, which aimed to help communities resume a normal life after the devastation of war, normally had a funding ceiling of US\$50,000 per project. In 1993, the total number of QIPs recorded as part of Cross Border Operations was three hundred and twenty (Netherlands Development Corporation, 1994).

By June 1993 some 30,000 Somali refugees had returned home—12,000 of these with the help of UNHCR (UNHCR, 1993). Unfortunately, the material incentives to return to Somalia were sufficiently lucrative—usually a three month food supply for each person—to encourage some refugees to return more than once. A Dutch evaluation of aid to Somalia reported that some refugees returned as many as eight times with the help of international humanitarian assistance provided through CBO. The 285,000 refugees remaining in the camps at that time were considered potential returnees until peacekeeping operations in Somalia, also in the name of humanitarian assistance, went seriously awry.

As civil war continued to ravage large parts of Somalia in 1992, observers outside the country watched the politically-induced famine take its toll on much of the civilian population and declared Somalia a country in anarchy, unable to rule its own affairs. This thinking gave rise to UN Security Council resolution 794 which authorized a Unified Task Force (UNITAF) of thousands of peacekeeping troops to Somalia to ensure the delivery of relief supplies. "Operation Restore Hope," as the mission was called, was the first peacekeeping operation which intervened in a sovereign member state when that state did not present a military threat to its neighbors (Makinda, 1993). Reports that more journalists than soldiers took part in the amphibious landing of U.S. Marines just before Christmas in 1992 speak to the popularity of the Somalian cause and international awareness of the humanitarian tragedy it represented. Operation Restore Hope was an experiment in post-Cold War humanitarian intervention on a global scale. "It (the West) denounces Somalia as unfit to govern itself, but says nothing of superpower rivalries in nourishing armed conflict there" (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 16), nor does "it" like to account for the legacies of its own colonial occupations.

The U.S. Marines were replaced by a UN peacekeeping force—UNOSOM II—in May of 1993. The UNOSOM II operation cost sponsoring governments US\$1.5 billion during its first year of operation. On the non-military side of humanitarian intervention, UN agencies proposed a ten month budget for relief and rehabilitation in 1993 to the tune of US\$166 million. More than fifty international NGOs funded principally by the UN operated in Somalia during that year. However, in June 1993 the popularity of Somalia as the destination for millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance began to decline. The ambush and murder of fourteen Pakistani UN peacekeepers was considered retaliation by faction leader, Mohammed Farah Aideed for a UNOSOM II weapons sweep in the Mogadishu neighborhood he controlled. A UNOSOM II air attack in Mogadishu was launched to bring Aideed to justice; unfortunately it also targeted a number of Somali civilians who were killed, an event which severely damaged UNOSOM II's reputation in Somalia as a humanitarian peacekeeping force. The death of eighteen American soldiers later in 1993 adversely affected the popularity of the Somali cause abroad. *Time* magazine ran a photograph of one dead American soldier being paraded around the streets of Mogadishu by anti-UN Somalian protesters. Before long, funding for humanitarian projects in Somalia began to drop dramatically, and in March 1995 UNOSOM II withdrew from Somalia.

Civil conflict in Somalia continues, fueled in part by the huge transfer of arms provided to Somalia when it was being courted by both superpowers during the Cold War. In 1995, continued support to Somali refugees across the border in camps remained fairly constant given the perceived and real problems within Somalia which preclude refugee repatriation in several areas. Approximately 160,000 Somali refugees were living in Kenyan refugee camps in 1995—100,000 in three camps located in the Northeastern Province. While some refugees accept confinement in the camps, another 20,000 to 100,000 are estimated to reside illicitly in the country's two major cities, Nairobi and Mombasa.

In the Northeastern Province, economic and social underdevelopment are abated only by the relative economic boom provided by refugee relief operations in the area. Foodstuffs are distributed every fifteen days in the camps, and international NGOs provide social, health, and other community services. After the Ogaden War, the large number of Ethiopian Somali refugees remaining in Somalia provided an important source of foreign capital to the economy; President Barre used them to obtain external aid easily. Now the Kenyan Government profits from its tolerance of refugees. Not only does it receive financial "incentives" from UNHCR and other international organizations, but in a back-handed and perhaps ironic way, the refugee situation in Kenya's Northeastern Province has stimulated economic and social development—in the form of jobs, commodities, primary education, and medical services offered in the camps—to this systematically deprived area.

*Refugee Resettlement "Out of Africa"*

Next to the unfettered flows of humanitarian assistance flowing into the Horn of Africa, refugee movement in the opposite direction is unremarkable. Refugee resettlement abroad is one permanent solution for refugees living in temporary camps, but access to resettlement opportunities is becoming increasingly difficult as the number of government-sponsored refugees in some of the major host countries declines. At the same time as general resettlement targets are decreasing, the allotment of refugee places for Africa remains a small proportion of the declining total. In 1992–93, Canada and the U.S. had overall targets of 13,000 and 142,000 government-sponsored refugees respectively; this number dropped in the 1994–95 fiscal year to 7,300 in Canada and 110,000 in the U.S. (see Table 1) (U.S. Dept. of State et al., 1994). African refugees comprise 36 percent of the world refugee population, yet no country receiving refugees sets aside such a proportion of its places for refugees from Africa. Canada offers 1520 spots of its 7,300 total (a little over 20 percent) for African refugees; the U.S. ceiling for Africa is 7000 of its 110,000 (less than 7 percent), and Australia offered 800 of 13,000 (about 6 percent) places.

**Table 1** Annual Resettlement Ceilings for Government-Sponsored Refugees

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
• U.S.A.	142,000	121,000	110,000	90,000
• Canada	13,000	11,000	7,300	7,300*

Sources: Internal document provided by UNHCR Regional Resettlement workshop in Dakar, Senegal, December 1994. The USA ceiling for 1994/95 comes from the September 1994 Report to the Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 1995 by the Dept. of State, the Dept. of Justice, and the Dept. of Health and Human Services. See same Report to Congress, July 1995. Canadian totals announced November 1995 by Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canadian and confirmed by Immigrant Services Society of B.C.

\*Canada's refugee numbers have actually fallen in comparison to 1994/95 targets. In 1994/95 special programs for '3–9' refugees from the Former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan were counted separately from the 'CR-1' government-sponsored refugees listed here. In 1995/96 these groups have been reclassified as CR-1 refugees and included in the 7,300 total. While this decrease is invisible in official statistics, the total number of refugees *other than* members of these particular groups has dropped.

While opportunities for resettlement "out of Africa" are increasingly slim, UNHCR in Geneva pays for more NGO partnerships to deliver humanitarian assistance in Africa than in any other continental region. In 1992, 125 NGOs were hired by UNHCR to work in Africa; this represents 35 percent of the NGO total. In the same year, UNHCR spent 27 percent (US\$298 million) of its total budget on refugee relief operations in African countries, down from 34 percent in 1991 (UNHCR, 1993).

Screening activities for refugee resettlement in Africa are also geographically concentrated. Most of this activity was and is based in Nairobi where

the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has its only office in sub-Saharan Africa. Other governments that actively process refugee resettlement applications *in situ*, namely the Australians and Canadians, also have their largest offices here. In addition to these immigration services, UNHCR maintains a high profile and large international staff for both Kenyan and regional operations in Nairobi. This concentration of resettlement services is somewhat surprising, given that refugees are officially required to remain in the rural camps. The United States' INS set up its Nairobi office in 1987, initially to deal with refugees coming out of Ethiopia and the Sudan (Officer in Charge, INS, Nairobi, 1995; personal communication). It contracts a U.S. church-based organization, the Joint Voluntary Agency (J.V.A.), to travel to refugee locations where staff assess refugee eligibility for resettlement. This approach is unique among resettlement countries screening applicants in Kenya, and Africa generally. Only the U.S. has its own screening agency, and in Kenya J.V.A. staff work in the camps where refugees are required to stay. Nonetheless, resettlement places remain few; in March 1995, J.V.A. stopped screening Somali refugees for resettlement to the U.S. Just as organizations, like UNHCR, make the status of "refugee" possible, individual host governments determine the flow, or rather the trickle, of refugee resettlement.

The relative containment and immobility of Somali refugees could not provide a more vivid contrast to the hypermobility of humanitarian dollars from donor countries abroad. Responsibility for refugees is expressed in two geographically distinct ways: on a minor scale as an issue of resettlement among a few individual states; and on a major scale as an issue of funding relief activities in countries which both create and receive refugees. On the one hand, refugees are a concern of international politics; on the other, they are the basis of a huge global economy in humanitarian relief. In 1994, more than 95 percent of UNHCR's donations for humanitarian assistance came from fourteen governments of industrialized countries and the European Commission (UNHCR, 1995). Despite the huge flow of humanitarian dollars to African countries at present, one senior staff member at J.V.A. contends that

the donors are willing to pay them (UN agencies) off. . . . Africa is a 'sinkhole'. 'You (UN agencies) take care of it; here's the money' will eventually turn to 'you (UN agencies) take care of it; we're not paying anymore.' Now we are in a grazing period where there is big money to be made (working in the aid industry) [JVA Senior Staff, 1995; personal communication]

Whether a financial crisis is looming in the global economy which funds humanitarian crises remains to be seen. What is clear is that the availability and mobility of money corresponds inversely to the relative poverty and confinement of refugees in Kenya. Those without money, in fact, become less mobile as humanitarian aid is able to cross borders more quickly. The

geopolitics of mobility points to the importance of the international humanitarian machinery which has the power to mobilize vast amount of money on a global scale. The effects of these power relations are felt by refugees and other displaced persons whose own mobility is shaped by this economy of assistance.

*Towards a Transnational Geopolitics of Mobility*

During the colonial period, Somalis were divided by borders demarcating Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Somalian territories. In what became Kenya's Northeast Province, the will of the majority of Somali people to join the Somalian Republic was disregarded by the ruling British colonial administration, and the existing border was reinscribed by the nascent Kenyan government. Somalia mounted the Shifta War to take over the Northeast Province from Kenya, but succeeded only in reinforcing the marginal economic and social location of Somalis within Kenya. During the period of superpower influence and investment in the Horn, Somalia attempted to extend control over Somalis living in the Ogaden region of Eastern Ethiopia. Again, the effort was unsuccessful, though indirectly Somalia profited by harboring large numbers of refugees. This, in turn, provided funds from the coffers of First World international humanitarian assistance to this Third World proxy and ally; Somalia became one of the most highly armed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite ambiguous Cold War posturing, superpower interests were often used as leverage to finance regional geopolitical strategies.

The *coup d'état* in Somalia in 1991 and the ensuing famine generated human displacement on a massive scale; this forced migration combined with severe malnutrition precipitated the arrival of hundreds of millions of dollars which flowed freely into Somalia and Kenya to fund rehabilitation and refugee relief activities. These two distinct geographies of mobility point to the variable porosity of borders at regional and international scales. They testify to the fact that humanitarian capital crosses borders much more easily than refugees can traverse the same frontiers. By legally requiring that all Somali refugees in Kenya live in one of three camps located in the Northeast Province, the contemporary geopolitics of mobility for Somalis has been linked to the same politics in earlier periods, especially to strategies of containment practiced by the British colonial administration and the Kenyan Government which maintained the province's designated "state-of-emergency" status until 1991. The geopolitics of mobility points to the imbrication of humanitarian funds and refugee status. Without donor funding and support, *ad hoc* recognition of and support for Somali refugees in Kenya would not have been possible.

The treatment of Somalis during each of these periods is distinctive and indicative of a particular geopolitics of mobility underscored by a First World-Third World geography of "managing" Somali people. In the first instance, colonial partition divided the Somali nation, an act which was

reinscribed at Kenyan independence. Somalis were not allowed to leave the newly forming Kenyan state, though they remained marginal along the Kenya-Somalia border. Later, many were literally "sent home" to Somalia, a country to which some had never been. Finally, Somalians fleeing internal strife crossed the border into Kenya where, due to international obligations and the need for international aid on the part of the Kenyan Government, they were accepted with reticence. The transnational politics analyzed here point to historically contingent sites of contest, geopolitics, and related international investments in the Horn of Africa. The geopolitics of mobility is a tool for analyzing the economic and corporeal power invested in managing migration.

Given the failure of the international intervention in Somalia, the implementation of humanitarian programs in war zones is perhaps a "predicament of culture." The refugees who flee such violence, however, are not part of a traveling culture but of a relatively immobile institutionalized culture of containment in camps. Responses to forced migration are governed by the geopolitics of international relations and financed by the brokers of humanitarian assistance. Geneva remains the main international financial and administrative site where the geopolitics of money are negotiated and humanitarian dollars are solicited. The managers and funders of the international refugee regime—in Switzerland and elsewhere—have their own priorities. Increasingly, opportunities for refugee resettlement in industrialized countries are declining. The decline in political will to accept large numbers of refugees is, arguably, an expression of neoconservative politics in many European and North American countries combined with the absence of Cold War rivalries (Mouffe, 1994 & 1995).

I have argued for a transnational geopolitics of mobility that is attentive to material and historical locations of struggle. Borders are more porous to humanitarian aid flowing from Europe to Africa than to the displaced people for whom such aid is intended. The Horn of Africa is the site of several geographies of mobility marked by historical layers of overlapping tension, conflict, and investment. While Somalia and Kenya remain nominally postcolonial states, the geopolitics of mobility for Somali refugees today is informed largely by a colonialism of compassion.

There is no single project of human development nor of emancipation from oppressions brought on by poverty, displacement, colonialism, or conflict. Rather, the fighting and forced migration these unequal power relations generate are historically and geographically contingent. "The global and the universal are not pre-existing empirical qualities; they are deeply fraught, dangerous, and inescapable inventions" (Haraway, 1995: xix). While arguably inescapable, the global and the universal are negotiable, just as the dichotomies of North-South, modern-traditional can be contested by forging transnational connections, and even affinities, across borders. Transnational practices which attend to the mobility of bodies, of money, of power as well as the colors, flags, and performances that mark them provide tools for challenging existing "inventions." Such a transna-

tional politics of mobility generates potentially strategic constellations of power to unsettle the existing operations of humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa.

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## Notes

1. Abdi Samatar (1989) provides an overview of pre-colonial (pre-capitalist) Somali society, its pastoral economy, and the significance of geography in its social organization. Clan elders mediated conflicts within and between clans, organized work among clan members for subsistence production, and mitigated adversity within the clan. Samatar points out that the clan forum was exclusively male.
2. Dirlik (1994) interrogates the notion of "postcolonial" by asking, "when exactly . . . does the 'post-colonial' begin?" He argues that "postcolonial" has replaced "Third World," abolishing the spatial distinctions of core and periphery. This change also removes the locational markers of the Third World designation, rendering "postcolonial" discursive and not structural. This cultural emphasis of postcolonial, he contends, obfuscates the material relations of global capitalism. Like Dirlik, Shohat and Stam (1994) argue against the use of the term "postcolonial" and for the concept of "post-independence." Their criticism of postcolonial is based upon the claim that it depoliticizes the contemporary project of decolonization in post-independence states through deterritorialization, the absence of a politics of location, and the implication that colonial relationships have been extinguished: "While 'colonialism' and 'neocolonialism' imply both oppression and the possibility of resistance, 'postcolonial' posits no clear domination and calls for no clear opposition" (p. 39). While I agree that the politics of decolonization are ongoing, I part company with the authors' dismissal of postcolonial theory and criticism as a "fragile instrument for critiquing the unequal distribution of global power and resources" in using such tools in this essay. Rather than arguing either/or, a transnational geopolitics of mobility that incorporates postcolonial theory and its bearing on material, historical relations of power across space enhances their analysis.
3. Colonialism in Kenya transformed patterns of land ownership, particularly in the Rift Valley. Precolonial land tenure in the area was dominated mainly by Masai and Kalenjin peoples who were subsequently dispossessed of their land when British "settlers" took to homesteading in the colony. In this region, the British hired mostly Gikuyu people as workers, excluding the previous inhabitants from jobs as well as land. When colonialism formally ended, most of the settlers sold to Gikuyus. While this thumbnail sketch is hardly an

analysis of land ownership, it is intended to point to some of the simmering cultural politics and conflict among the Gikuyu, Kalenjin, and Masai groups today.

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