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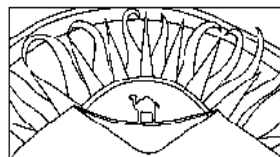
WE LOST A FRIEND, A HERO

A tribute to a true patriot



Dr. Abdishakur A Jowhar, [Borama, 1952 – Tulli (Borama), 2012]

Jama Musse Jama



PONTE INVISIBILE

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*May 13th shall, in my mind, now also be associated with the death of a man,
my friend, whose integrity and intellectual maturity was very rare indeed.
So long my friend, Alle ha kuu naxariisto*

Your humble compatriot.

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1838

*Over the last decades, being so used to deaths, destruction
and devastation of high magnitudes at a national scale,
I have never thought that I would ever be so moved again
until Abdishakur's sudden death was relayed to me.
I know yours too is unfathomable, indeed.*

Saeed Jama

*His love for humanity and knowledge leaves behind a legacy which is worthy of emulating.
May Allah rest your soul.*

Rashiid Sheekh Abdillaahi “Gadhwayne”

We lost a friend, a Hero

Jama Musse Jama

A tribute to a true patriot

Abdishakur passed away on May 13, 2012 in a car accident at Tulli village, between Dila and Borama in Western Somaliland. *Alla how naxariisto*. Amina Abdi Jama, his wife, was with him in the car but her injury is not serious. *Alla ha u sahlo. Aamiin*.

A year ago Abdishakur wrote: “Somalilanders are in a reflective mood as they prepare for the 20th Anniversary of the birth of their nation. These days there is a sense of contemplation, thoughtfulness and reevaluation in Somaliland circles.” He could have been describing his own style of mature reflection and incisive analysis of contemporary issues in Somaliland and Somalia. He was a true patriot, a man of great human quality, a statesman and deep connoisseur of his own people, whom he believed in and wanted to contribute to their well-being. In his selfless way he wanted to see his own people as winners in every aspect of their social and political life. True to his convictions, he wrote on the occasion of the last presidential election: “The people of Somaliland won: for they proved themselves to be masters of their own destiny, for they won the dignity of the citizen and shed the ugly stigma of tribal hatred.”

Dr. Abdishakur Sheikh Ali Jowhar (in Somali Cabdishakuur Sheekh Cali-Jawhar) was born in Borama, Somaliland; son of the late Sheikh Ali Jowhar, one of the most respected and loved Somali religious scholars. Dr Abdishakur was a remarkable man in his own right, he was a well-respected psychiatrist based at Grey Bruce Health Services in Ontario, Canada, and recently established a private clinic to treat his fellow citizens in Somaliland. He divided his time between Canada and Somaliland to treat his patients in both countries.

We lost a friend on May 13.

Incidentally on the same day, seven years ago (May 13, 2005), Abdishakur submitted a manuscript to me for publication by Redsea-online. The first part of his essays was titled *A Study Of The Psychology Of A Nomadic Society And Its Implications For Somaliland*. In it Abdishakur wrote “May 13, 2005 is such a day in the history of all Somalis in general and in that of Somaliland in particular” in reference to the demonstration of Somalilanders in Hargeysa against the death of Khadar Adan Osman, who was shot and killed by a police officer. He added “in Hargeysa, Somaliland, on May 13, 2005, the Gabooye and the Midgaan spoke their name aloud and shattered the silence and ignorance of a vicious cultural tyranny. The demonstrators forced Somaliland society to look into the mirror and behold the ugly face of injustice. And to their credit Somaliland society is listening and is intent on ushering the era of the emancipation of all citizens of Somaliland from the old archaic and moribund belief system and a decaying way of life.”

May 13th shall, in my mind, now also be associated with the death of a man, my friend, whose integrity and intellectual maturity was very rare indeed.

I was lucky to have worked with Abdishakur in many sub-committees of the Somaliland Forum and had long phone and email sessions with him about Somaliland issues. I had the privilege to serve as his deputy at *Article 32: Somaliland Freedom of Expression Fund*, of which he was a founding member, like me, and the first Chairperson. Abdishakur was a firm believer of freedom of expression. In one of our weekly meetings when we were looking to define the main purpose of Article 32 Fund, he stated that “our purpose could only be met if we are able to influence the people of Somaliland and the institutions of Somaliland to place the highest priority on the freedom of expression. This could only be done if the people are able to hear the message again and again. Article 32 must have not only events but an effective mechanism for relaying information about these events to the Somaliland public and its institutions.” He used to say that, at Article 32 fund, we see our struggle as cultural, not political. Our purpose is to win over the masses of our nation to a culture of freedom. In Article 32, we wanted to foster a nation of prosperous free citizens, equal under the law and free to point out the errors of their leaders without fear of sanction, now and in the future. He used to say that we want a nation where the government is eager to please the citizens not a nation where the citizens fear their government and flee their land. In Article 32, we wanted a nation of free people who are masters of their destiny not a nation of serfs who are slaves to whomever gains power over them. He used to say that we want a nation whose citizens walk tall, straight and dignified; we do not want a nation of stooped people who crawl around in servitude. He used to say: we stand here for the prevention of the rebirth of a culture of dictatorship, corruption, fear and imprisonment.

If we are successful in saving the freedom of speech in Somaliland, he used to say, we can rest assured that the nation will be safe. For it is all too clear the nation could only be killed after it is silenced, only after freedom of speech is dead and cold.

He also had clear views on issues such as tribalism. He wrote, “I am not a tribalist. I will not accept to be forced into that pigeonhole. Long time ago I decided to take an active part in formulating my own identity. And I decided to exclude the tribe from any definition of myself. It helped that I lived most of my adult life in Diaspora where I gained new identities that were unimaginable to me when I was growing up. I am a black man. I am an African in North America. I am colored. I am Moslem. I am a Canadian. I am a healer. I am a Somali of Somaliland.”

He was deeply aware of the tentacles of tribalism. In a personal communication to me he wrote, “Somaliland is as deeply tribal as any other Somali society. The single most potent enemy that could tear it apart into civil strife and extinction is the tribe. Success or failure will depend upon who takes the upper hand, the Somaliland tribes or the Somaliland state. If anything defeats Somaliland it will be this internal tribal enemy. The tribal structure of Somaliland demands to be taken into consideration and for its energy to be directed to productive ways (like competition for building universities or at least naming them). But that is not enough. Somalilanders have to find a way to direct the tribal sentiment into useful pursuits. Maybe they should go build themselves tribal universities in place of spilling tribal blood.”

As a true patriotic, Abdishakur knew what he wanted for his own country. In a Message to KULMIYE 2nd Convention in Hargeysa, Somaliland he stated, “I am not a member of your party, but like all Somalilanders I am praying for your success. And I pray for our nation to be blessed with strong leaders and stronger political parties that can keep us free from the darkness of one party state and ugliness and primitiveness of a Personality Cult.”

Dr. Jowhar, for me, was not just a colleague but was indeed a friend. I owe him so much. He set an inspiring role model, a colleague to consult when it came to national issues. Someone I could count on, every time, when I needed his assistance. I once asked him to read, and eventually write an introduction to my book *“Gobannimo bilaash maaha”* in 2007, and his eloquent note began with, “The nation of Somaliland stands at the cross roads of history and we have no other choice but to succeed in building this democratic and free nation-state. The alternative to citizenship is the tribe. It is the default status for the Somali people. And we don’t have to look far to know what that default status entails- see Mogadishu when the tribe became supreme in 1991 and again in 2007. We will have to end up victorious in this honorable endeavor of nation building because the alternative is the unimaginable horror of perishing in a savage tribal bloodletting that will see to our extermination. So when I say this nation has no choice but to succeed, I mean it literally. We, the citizens of this new nation, have to remember we live in a Darwinian world; vultures are not far and hungry wolves follow us just biding their time and waiting. They will wait in vain. And we will be victorious no matter what.”

Dr. Jowhar believed in the need for a transformation of our nation to a stable democratic humane nation-state which “was born in battles against a dictatorship that leveled our major cities to the ground and murdered our young and our old in their thousands; a dictatorship that has attempted to set us against one another to stimulate the final act of our collective demise.” The struggle united us, he always reminded us of that. “The struggle brought us together as a nation and delivered us from the clutches of dictatorship into the gentle and refreshing hands of freedom.” In a presentation of *“Gobannimo bilaash maaha”* in Hargeysa International Book Fair in 2008, Dr. Jowhar reminded the audience that “This freedom has become the essence of our existence and nationhood. Without this new identity of Free Citizens of Somaliland we are nothing but a collection of warring, self-destructing, primitive tribes verging on extinction.”

The centrality of the notion of freedom to Somaliland’s existence makes it, according to Dr. Jowhar, “necessary for us to nourish it, protect it and nurture it.” He used to say that we have to learn about this entity- freedom- because it is so vital to our survival.

As I was writing this note, I watched a video of Dr Abdishakur in Hargeysa in 2008 telling us that “When we examine the freedom carefully it becomes very clear that there can be no freedom without freedom of expression; free radio stations not controlled by the government, free journals, free TV stations and free citizens who express their thoughts in these public media without fear of sanction. We learn that that freedom is indivisible; if any one of our citizens loses his freedom we will all lose it. It does not matter the tribe, it does not matter the region. And we learn that ugly dictatorships, genocide, mass murder, and slavery start with the state claiming monopoly on the word.” Dr. Jowhar believed that as we learn about freedom, we have to become pioneers in the methods of incorporating freedom of expression into our nomadic cultural norms, in a manner that is consistent and that in no way conflicts with the primary guide of our lives-our religion, Islam.

Sadly, we lose another eminent Somalilander to a frequent cause of death in Somaliland, our appalling roads. In a memory of one such fallen compatriot, Dr. Jowhar wrote, “On August 6, 2009 Ali (Marshall) Gulaid died in a car accident on his way to Berbera. Ali Marshall was an economist, journalist, and leading opposition politician, in short a renaissance man who moved from USA back to his country of origin (Somaliland) to help bring about democracy, freedom, peace and stability to his people.” He

concluded by saying, “His [Ali Marshal] untimely death will teach the nation about sacrifice, decisiveness, discipline and commitment to the people’s cause of justice, transparency and honesty.”

Dr. Jowhar was a well-respected psychiatrist both in the diaspora and in Somaliland. He was an active member of the Somaliland Diaspora community, a contributor to Somaliland affairs in many ways. He and his wife, Amina Abdi Jama “Isteeg,” were activist members in many Somaliland Diaspora organizations. Above all, Dr. Jowhar was a visionary, a giant among the intellectuals. He was a man who contributed his sharp mind to provide us with guidance. He was a generous man who always gave from his heart. He left the comfort of the diaspora and a well-paid job in the West to give his soul, his mind, and eventually his life to his people. In the sweet memory of his sacrifices and for the sake of our young nation, we should all strive to be more like Dr. Jowhar. We shall remember him. We shall honor him. We shall never forget him. But we will miss him deeply.

This issue of Dhaxalreeb is dedicated to Dr. Abdishakur Jowhar, and it contains selected publications by him that appeared on redsea-online.com during the past 10 years. Today, we salute our friend, our hero with his own words. Indeed “His [Abdishakur] untimely death will teach the nation about sacrifice, decisiveness, discipline and commitment to the people’s cause of justice, transparency and honesty.”

The selections of Dr. Jowhar's essays included in this issue are:

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It also contains a poem in Somali, composed by Bashir Goth, a friend of the late Dr. Jowhar, with the title “*Geesi Loo Hanweynaa*” (A Greatly Sought After Hero).

A Spiritual Journey in Burco with Saraar, Geesi and Faadumo¹

Abdishakur Jowhar

There is a physical journey and there is a spiritual journey. The two may coincide in time but they are as different as day and night. I learned the difference between these two on November 25, 2004 when my journey to Burco morphed to a spiritual one. And I share them with you here.

9:00 Burco Plaza Hotel

We checked out of the Burco Plaza Hotel. It was the third day of our short visit to Burco. My wife and I were impressed by the modern amenities and excellent service of the hotel. The hotel's architecture is contemporary, fresh and unique. We met the architect who lives and works in Burco having returned home from Diaspora and planting his roots and his craft firmly in the red earth of his homeland.

Just last night we had the privilege of seeing the great Poet and humanist Hadrawi sipping Somali tea in a joyous company of adoring apostles right in the Café of the hotel's restaurant. We imagined that he was yarning wisdom and that his apostles were recording it all for posterity. We maneuvered for introductions and we were ecstatic to achieve it.

We had 5 hours of drive ahead of us back to Hargaysa. We packed; loaded our belongings and we were on the road.

9:30 Divine intervention

Providence had other plans. We were running these last minute errands that always manage to wait for the last minute before travel, when we saw a poster by the roadside. It read "Burco Psycho-Social Rehabilitation; Saraar." It had an arrow pointing to a house close by. We heard about the Saraar organization the night before as one of the services for the mentally ill in Burco. We decided to investigate.

9:50 Of Saraar and Rehabilitation.

We knocked and we were invited to a relatively small house with a fairly big yard. Few men were sitting under the shade of an Acacia tree, their attire and demeanor spelling mental illness. Their presence here filled the context of the poster outside the house. The staff invited us to join them.

I decided to pay my respects to the clients before I met the staff. I greeted them with the traditional Somali greeting "Is there peace?" I expected the traditional response "There is peace and there is milk." I

1 This article appeared on redsea-online.com on 25 December 2004 and 4 January 2005 in two parts.

heard none. They paid no attention with the exception of one man. He was slightly overweight. He looked up; there was warmth about him. He had thick features, widely spaced eyes, a protruding tongue, a depressed nasal bridge, up slanting eyes and just a good-natured visual gaze. I recognized Trisomy 21 (AKA Down Syndrome or Mongolism), he had the universal appearance of those who had the misfortune of inheriting 3 copies of chromosome 21. I have seen many patients with this illness in other parts of the world. The syndrome is highly prevalent but this was the first time I have seen one in Somalia. We exchanged smiles.

Of Faadumo Duale Ali and Geesi (Geesi is a pseudonym that circumstances dictated)

I turned back to the staff and I met Her, Faadumo. A middle aged women, dressed in a traditional Somali garb. She announced her presence by repeating a unique and personal prayer “ Hagaajiyaa Hagaajin (The Fixer will fix it)”. She had a deep powerful voice. She told me that she heard about my arrival in Burco and she was trying to reach me the last couple of days. She prayed for my visit in the early hours of this morning “And here you come knocking on my door”. She added with a meaningful look. There sure was something mystical about her. Faadumo proceeded to tell me about the story of Saraar.

10:00 Of Saraar

It all started in the very last days of the civil war in Burco, towards the end of the 2nd millennium. The city of Burco lay desolate and wasted. It has been strangled by the deadly clutches of a ruthless tribal warfare. Death, murder and mayham visited every doorstep. Birds of vulture ruled the skies and terror haunted the hearts of men and women. As peace settled down Burco citizens prayed on their knees to Allah (SWT) whose merciful hands guided the good spirits that brokered the peace. People trickled back into the streets and began to salvage what could be salvaged of the roofless homes and the pock marked bullet-ridden walls.

In the debris of the civil war lay not only dead and broken bodies and homes but also broken minds. The violence and the horror that ended took its toll among the vulnerable. The massive traumatic experience multiplied the ranks of the mentally ill. Those who were afflicted roamed around the rubble of the streets of Burco, unfed, unkempt and uncared for. Many more of them, perhaps the vast majority, were kept in the homes of family members chained to cold cement floors, kept under lock and key to save them from the harsh and unforgiving streets. They were the most forgotten in a forgotten city. Their remarkable inflation in their numbers was a living testimony to the terror that have visited this city that has almost caused the loss of its soul, spirit and reason for existence.

ALLAH (SWT) tests us all the time. I mean this suffering and pain that surrounds us is not but a challenge for men and women to stand up and prove their mettle. And always some of us find the strength, forbearance, kindness, gentleness and inner steel that allows mankind to stand up to the test. Such brave souls face and conquer seemingly insurmountable obstacles and in the process leave a legacy that renders the lives of the rest of us meaningful and agreeable to ALLAH (SWT). Burco met the challenge through the actions of two of its ordinary citizens, Faadumo and Geesi.

Faadumo related that she could not stand watching the suffering and starvation of the mentally ill that she saw every morning without doing something about it. The thought haunted her days and nights. She could sleep not and eat not. She was barely surviving herself. She has nothing to give. She was as powerless as

those who roamed the streets. Yet she found herself driven to do something, anything for those who needed her help.

As providence would have it, her path crossed that of a young man who stood head and shoulders above his peers in his love and sympathy for others. He surely was an enigma in this land that values and glorifies the tribal killer/warrior. And he stood out even more in these troubled times when the merchants of death and destruction had almost complete supremacy. The Almighty brought together a man and women of two different generations who both chose life over death, love over hate and valuing the sanctity of human life over spilling blood to earn the respect of the clan. Faadumo is that woman and will call him Geesi; a pseudonym for reason that will soon become clear.

The two quickly identified the source of the starvation that decimated the ranks of the mentally ill. They intuitively realized that the mind of these men and women has lost the capacity to organize itself sufficiently and is incapable of leading them to act in a manner that would allow them to engage in the intense activity that is necessary for acquiring food in their unforgiving environment. They could eat only what they could scavenge for. But theirs is an environment marked primarily by the scarcity of food and there is really nothing eatable to scavenge for. A hungry and homeless man with an intact mind would beg to be fed in the streets of the city. At the end of the day he would retire with a full tummy. And there were many in Burco who survived in this manner and in Burco mental illness was fatal because it robbed its victims this survival capacity.

And that is precisely what Faadumo and Geesi decided to do for Burco's least fortunate. They will go house to house and ask for food on behalf of those who can no longer ask for it. They will knock on every door. They will proudly be substitute beggars. They will lend their bodies and minds, to become substitute survival agents for the mentally ill. Sure they were poor themselves but they could offer of their mind and their body. And every day they will save lives doing this.

Faadumo and Geesi having received their enlightenment from Allah (SWT), commenced upon it with gusto and enthusiasm. They knocked on doors and stood on street corners with extended hands. They collected food items and sorted it out into eatable packages and they started to feed the mentally ill in the streets, under trees and among the rubble. . In the beginning they have to search them out but very soon the feeding trees they established became the hub of this most needy of a needy society. The people of Burco opened their hearts and pockets to them and extraordinary things started to happen all over the struggling city. Kindness and compassion started to grow among the populace. The begging transformed itself into giving and the giving opened not only the doors and pockets but also the hearts of men and women. Faadumo and Geesi fed the physical body of the mentally ill but they also quenched the spiritual thirst of Burco citizens. Humanity was unstoppable in its march in the city to a higher glory. The revival was back on.

And so Allah (SWT) working through his servants (Faadumo and Geesi) allowed life that has returned to the city to percolate down to those who were almost dead. Flesh covered the bare bones. The dry, sunken and vacant look of Burco's mentally ill may have remained just as vacant but it was now moist and warm and less sunken.

I listened with rapt attention as Faadumo related her story. Every now and then she invoked her mantra “Hagaajiyaa Hagaagin: The great Fixer will fix it”, probably to remain in touch with the spirit that guided

her. I myself started to have an out of body experience. I was transported back in space and time. I could survey the mayhem that was then. At the same time I could see the rebirth of a people unfold. I could see in my minds eye the cycles of life and death through endless turns.

In the meantime Faadumo was growing up in size right next to me. She was now a towering giant, a Servant of Allah. Her voice was booming as if she had megaphone to my ear. There was a halo around her. Through her I could see all the great humanists of times past and present. glimpses of the prophets; I Tonnelli of Borama and Mahatma of India presented through her. I could see just as one would see images of a movie on a screen.

Geesi's spirit roamed around us, I wondered about this hero. And his story broke my heart as Faadumo related it to me.

Geesi

Fatumo described her colleague in details. He was kind and gentle. She has seen him take off his shirt and cover a naked man. He was tireless and driven in his care for others. He woke up earlier than anybody and slept latter than most engaged almost all the time in altruistic pursuit. He had the capacity to connect with the other. The most ill of all men felt comfortable with Geesi. She has witnessed him develop very close bonds with those who were non-verbal, irritable and aggressive.

I noted the past tense use. I thought I saw Faadumo gaze inwards. I thought I saw a glimpse of an inner torment. There was some trembling in her voice as she spoke about Geesi. So I asked. What happened to him? Where is he now? She started her response by repeating her mantra "The fixer will fix it." She appeared to be seeking strength and guidance from Him. And finally she let it go with a sigh. "Geesi is among those fed by Saraar now. He has fallen a victim to mental illness himself. He is tied in chains in his brother's home".

I glanced around at my wife and saw tears welling up in her eyes. I could feel wetness in my face. There was a silent consensus. We will go, see this man, no matter what!

We filed after one another...Fatumo and one of her helpers joined us. We piled into the small car, sitting on top of one another.. We began searching for Geesi.

11: 00 a.m. A Hero in Distress

We drove across the city and came to the brother's house where Geesi was in home prison only to find that he has been moved to his sister's house just the other day. Women in this part of the world (and in all other parts of the world) are the primary caregivers of relatives in need. Men may finance the care of a loved one but they somehow manage to dodge the actual care. This avoidance of duty is not about biology. It is about an environment where men learned to get away with it for far too long.

We drove on and finally arrived at the sister's house. We walked into one big room. There were not much of worldly possessions around. The little that was there however were tastefully placed and kept immaculately clean. It was a display of efficiency. There elegance and simplicity here. A curtain was stretched across the room isolating one half of it.

11:35 a.m. Behind the Curtain

And there he was behind the curtain. He was lying on a mattress. One foot bound by a heavy chain to the cement floor. He was lying on one side facing me. He noted my entry raising his head to investigate as I walked in, another curtain of sorrow and a troublesome shadow of sadness stood between us. His jaws were clenched tight and his forehead was thrown into a thousand little folds each screaming in agony beyond pain. He acknowledged my presence but it was clearly an effort.

Here is the hero in chains. Here is the man who rejected cruelty, ignorance and prejudice now the subject of them. Here is the man who showed his people how love heals that which hate and civil war destroys. Here he is today at this very moment of time being tested in the ways of Allah, his insides ripped apart into a million small pieces. He is here having fallen a victim to the monster that haunts the deep recesses of the human mind, a monster he fought against so courageously, so stubbornly and with so much skill, love and hope. Here is the hero suffering for all of us, like Cissa did before him at the cross. I kneeled down next to him and felt like a disciple witnessing the crucifixion.

A shiver ran down my spine. Oh thou day of horror! I took a deep breath and pronounced with reverence and awe. "I am the healer. I came to heal". We engaged in a silent dual of mutual examination, balancing trust and distrust, examining each other's core, seeking places of comfort and safety. We clicked and audibly relaxed in unison. He looked down and told me his story. He started by informing that he would have loved to sit up as we talked but he can't. His leg was injured the other day when he was transported to his sister's house against his will. "I was already there, ready to die, to move on with it and she came to salvage me. I resisted, I was ready for the other world not this one. I did not want to be salvage project for any one; I did not want to be a burden, to take food out of her children's mouth. I wanted to go peacefully. I am finished, you know, finished". He was beyond tears. Around him the gloom was thick and palpable. Death wish dominated his existence. And it has been this way almost every day since his illness started. He related to me how he threw himself in front of cars and trucks. "They would not kill me!" he cried out in anguish. And these persistent suicide acts were indeed the reason for the chains.

And then his voice dropped and the follow of his speech dwindled to a trickle. I had to pull each word out from within him. I had to wait for prolonged moments coaxing the follow of information. He spoke of melancholy, of lost of hope... "I knew it was all over for me for a long time now. And then I heard about the coming of AIDS to Somalia. It was the last straw for me... I have seen the killings of a brother by a brother, death have lurked around me all my life. I mean life has no use any more... And I heard about the coming of AIDS on top of it. I knew it was the end for me too... I am losing it, am I? going crazy? I don't want to go there. It is not worth living anymore... And even worse The Devil started to whisper in my ears urging me to finish it all..." He stared off into space and fell into prolonged silence. I can see his lips moving. The dialogue was continuing only I was not privy to it any more.

The gist of it all was clear to me all. I knew there was vastly slowed information processing in the brain of this man that has become almost bereft of the monoamines that were previously thought to be neurotransmitters but that could more appropriately be described as neuromodulators. Yes the biology of it all was easy to grasp the human dimensions of it was much more complex. I spent the next half an hour doing the rituals of a healers all over the world, define the syndrome, determine the course and cause and engage in a process of rule ins and rule outs and above all formulate an effective response

12:35 Of Sisterhood

As we stood around outside the house discussing the mechanics of management a woman appeared from around the corner a little ways down the street. Her pace fastened; the change of speed attracting our attention. She abruptly stopped. Her hand flew to hold the pit of her tummy. Her mouth opened and regrouped itself into an O. there was obviously a scream, silent scream, the beginning of fright. We all knew instantly. It must be the sister, the neat and caring sister. She saw the crowd around her house, the strange men and women, the unexpected car. She assumed something bad happened to the brother she left at home bound and tied down to the floor. The inner scare exploded beyond the confines of her physical being, affecting us in the distance. She stopped and started again getting closer. In a sudden move she removed the scarf covering her head and tied it around her stomach. This was no time for modesty. Her jaw was tightening. A lioness was emerging right there, preparing herself to defend her loved ones with all the love God has created in our woman folk. A picture emerged in front of our eyes of the suffering and pain of the human condition but also a picture of its determination, hope and gallantry. There was the physiology of fight or flight but also that of the deeper human essence of love and hope, fear and courage... We were there all bound together in moment of time in which we all existed together in nether space, sharing and feeling each other freely, unencumbered by space or time. Next to my ear I heard the pulse of my wife quicken as emotional waves hit her, I felt them transform into a scream next to me. "It is OK, it is OK, just a doctor, just a doctor". The tone of her voice was soothing, her body was gesturing relaxation to lend courage and comfort to fellow mother, a fellow sister, to temporarily carry with her the fright that is all too often the fate of mothers and sisters. I could also hear the slight shaking and the tears in my wife's voice. We all shuddered in the shared moment. The women reached us, the blood that has drained from her skin partially returning, the jaw half way between trust and distrust, nostrils flaring at decelerating rate, eyes set so wide by the machinery of human stress beginning to come down to a position of guarded relaxation. I murmured comforting sounds mixed in with subtle greetings.

I completed writing the prescription explaining to the benefactor what needs to be done, what side effects to be expected etc and the ton of routine instructions that go with treatment. She kept nodding her head in understanding, occasionally repeating my instructions for emphasis and interspersing with the now familiar mantra "the fixer will sure fix it. The fixer will sure fix it." We exchanged goodbye "Peace be upon you" she responded "peace and milk be with you". Together we echoed "peace and milk" shaking hands all around.

13:15 On the Way Again

We piled into the car and drove away. Each of us lost in inner world. There was no small talk. I held on to my wife's hand. At that moment I felt so vulnerable, so weak, so connected, so human. I felt therefore I existed. In my mind the mantra started to repeat itself "hagaajiyaa hagaagin"

A Study Of The Psychology Of A Nomadic Society And Its Implications For Somaliland²

Abdishakur Jowhar

Part 1: The New Midgaan

There are days that come to define the life of a nation. Some instantly mark out their nature in glory or infamy. Others are days of trial and tribulation that manifest their decisive nature only with the passage of time, in retrospect. May 13, 2005 is such a day in the history of all Somalis in general and in that of Somaliland in particular.

On that day in the year 2005 hundreds of Gabooye demonstrators stood up to be counted, in a most peaceful demonstration, in Hargaysa, the Capital of Somaliland. The Midgaan and Gabooye are members of minority Somali tribes, indistinguishable in any way from the rest of society, who have been subjected to discrimination, humiliation and dehumanization at the hands of their fellow Somali brethren simply because they belong to a particular tribal subgroup of Somali society.

It was the first time such a massive revolt against the disgusting tyranny of senseless discrimination has occurred anywhere in Somali experience. And Somaliland should stand proud and tall for it is becoming the birthplace of new sense of equality and citizenship. The peace, stability, social reconstruction and the adoption of the principles of democracy and freedom has extended to the Gabooye and Midgaan citizens of Somaliland as well and for the first time in the modern history of Somali society anywhere (Somalis live in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Somaliland and Kenya). Somalis everywhere should take note the liberation of the Midgaan has started; the great city of Hargaysa is its birthplace.

Already the names Midgaan, Gabooye, Madhibaan and Somali-Six has been re-appropriated and reclaimed as words of honor and as battle cry of emancipation. The literature of the struggle is finding its way through books and websites with remarkable titles and impressive content; Midgaan.com, Somali-Six.com, "The Yibir of Las Burgavo by Gaidon." Young, educated, impatient, empowered and angry generation is introducing new imperatives and vocabulary to the Somali discourse.

In Hargaysa, Somaliland, on May 13, 2005 the Gabooye and the Midgaan spoke their name aloud and shattered the silence and ignorance of a vicious cultural tyranny. The demonstrators forced Somaliland society to look into the mirror and behold the ugly face of injustice. And to their credit Somaliland society is listening and is intent on ushering the era of the emancipation of all citizens of Somaliland from the old archaic and moribund belief system and a decaying way of life.

The Hargaysa demonstrations were accompanied by sporadic and relatively tame confrontations with the security forces of the incipient nation-state. The protestors kept their eyes on the goal; Justice, Dignity

2 This paper was presented to: The Somaliland Policy and Reconstruction Institute (SOPRI): The Somaliland Convention June 24-26/2005. LAX Hilton. Los Angeles USA and was appeared in 5 parts on redsea-online.com

and Freedom. Many of them ended up in nasty overcrowded prisons that night. In an interview with BBC Somali Service, Somaliland's "articulate" Minister of Interior denied and also admitted that there was a demonstration. And he denied and also admitted that people were imprisoned as a result.

The spark that set this fire was the fatal shooting of Khadar Aden Osman Dhabar in the early hours of May 12, 2005 by a Somaliland police officer and his death on May 13, 2005 of his injuries.

The circumstances surrounding Khadar's death are as controversial as they come. Word on the street has it that the man was killed because he was an uppity Midgaan who dared to talk back to a cop. The Minister of the Police talked about alcohol and a drunken youth attacking the police, though no one was drunk and no alcohol was found. This was a restatement of Steve Biko hitting his head against the wall.

Because of the discrepancy I quote Amnesty International. "On 13 May, Khadar Osman Dhabar died in Hargeysa hospital of numerous bullet wounds after being shot on the night of 11 May in the street by a police officer. Details of the incident are still unclear but it seems that the shooting incident occurred when two police officers approached Khadar Osman Dhabar and his two friends in the Hawl Wadag area of Hargaysa. One of the police shot him, knowing the three were members of the discriminated Gabooye minority, against whom human rights abuses are frequently perpetrated with impunity."

Khadar Aden Osman Dhabar was a 28-year-old Somali, a native of Hargaysa who was raised mostly in Kuwait and who worked in that country for all of his adult life. Like many of us Diaspora Somalis, he left his wife and his three children in Kuwait and he went back for a short visit to his hometown Hargaysa. He went there to quench his thirst for the familiar scenes, sights and smells of his childhood. He has planned and saved for the trip. He prepared himself for the joy and rapture that accompanies reconnection with one's own roots. But that was not to be. Instead hatred and a killer's bullet awaited him in the streets of his own city, streets that were safe for everyone else but not for him. Khadar was born on that soil and he was murdered on it, his blood quenching its perpetual thirst for human sacrifice. The police version however is more confused and it seems deliberately so.

This much is obvious. Khadar died because his path crossed that of an evil man, who doubled as a rotten apple within the Somaliland Police force. He died in the hands of discrimination, bigotry and socially sanctioned injustice. He was murdered by the same evil that lynched innocent men here in the United States and that gassed millions in Germany in WWII, the same evil that massacred thousands in Hargaysa in the late 80ies and hundreds of thousands in Rwanda in the 90ies. Khadar fell a victim to Hatred. Hatred that Somaliland is poised to defeat today with the help of Allah and the determination of all of its citizens.

May 13, 2005 is the day we, Somalilanders, found our own Rosa Parks. Amazing it is the simple steps that matter the most in changing the course of nations. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat and unleashed the civil rights movement here in the US. In Hargeysa Khadar Osman refused to give up a cigarette and became a martyr of a nation and a hero for all those who suffer injustice everywhere in the world. Brothers and sisters of Somaliland as we struggle to achieve justice and equality for our entire nation, we must learn to remember those who paid the ultimate price in the struggle. It is incumbent upon us who survive to make this a day of Justice that is blind to tribal affiliation, justice for every one of every tribe. Let this day mark the moral rebirth of our nation.

Khadar is dead. I say he should not die in vain. I say his death and our silence will speak volumes to generations to come. I say we have a chance to come clean, to redeem ourselves, to take a stand.

I say we repeat Khadar's name, lest we forget. Khadar Aden Osman Dhabar. A native of Hargaysa. He is Khadar of the Idoo clan of the Talaabe Cade people, of the Haruun people of the Muuse Dhariyo tribe. He is Khadar Osman Dhabar. Our hero. Our martyr.

Part II: An Introspective Self Examination

Unequivocal Rejection

I am not a tribalist. I will not accept to be forced into that pigeonhole. Long time ago I decided to take an active part in formulating my own identity. And I decided to exclude the tribe from any definition of myself. It helped that I lived most of my adult life in Diaspora where I gained new identities that were unimaginable to me when I was growing up. I am a black man. I am an African in North America. I am colored. I am Moslem. I am a Canadian. I am a healer. I am a Somali of Somaliland. These are all different aspects of my identity. Every identity I have taken comes with a price tag in emotional currency and sometimes with a benefit or two. I have learned to live with all of them. Tribal identity? No. I could not live with it. I chose not to. A great many of my generation has similar discomfort with the tribal role. I suspect my Somali readers do share these same thoughts

Early Encounters

I encountered the absurdity of tribal reasoning early on in my life. In my first year of high school in what was then Amoud Secondary School. I was asked to vote for members of my tribe for the school committee. The organizer appealed to my tribal pride right from the beginning. He informed me that the school was in "our town" and belongs to "us" and therefore "we" should be its governing body. I did not bite for I knew otherwise; the government owned the school and not my tribe.

And the clever organizer appealed to my greed and self-interest. I was informed that committee members will give me favors but only if they are of my tribe. For example they will place more food on my plate when we line up for lunch at the school cafeteria. Now this was tempting, all of us students were always hungry and food was in short supply. But I knew that many times I was at the end of the line. If many members of my tribe got extra food those of us who come late will inevitably lose out regardless of tribe affiliation. That was not very reassuring. Food was a serious business in Amoud and I made my misgivings clear to the agitator.

He was not happy but not daunted. He wanted to bring me onboard, into the universal folds of tribal consensus. And he came up with another reason. I would be allowed (like other members of my tribe) to barrow books in the school library's reference section. This made even less sense to me. Books are in the reference section because there are only few of them in the school. Now if members of my tribe take the reference books home all students will lose in the process. Even if I take one book home I will lose access to the 50 other books "barrowed" by other members of my tribe.

I pointed out to the tribal leader the inherent internal inconsistency of his reasoning. He was very unhappy. He branded me a troublemaker and an internal enemy of the tribe and a painful ostracism followed. But then I learned a valuable lesson: tribes in modern day Somali social life are more about corruption, favoritism and irrationality and getting unearned extra portions of food and other goods and services. . To this day I have yet to see any tribal reasoning that is not as shallow and nonsensical as those of the tribal agitator of my childhood days.

This early incident in my life has led me to question the tribe as an integral part of myself definition and to reject it as an agent of destruction in society. I organized my first anti tribal rally in the second year of my high school. I was an anti-tribal activist in my university days. I have placed my faith in Somali nationalism until the late nineties when it died on me. I felt orphaned and lost with the death of the Somali nation and its maternal ancestral concept of Great Somalia. I eventually found refuge and an adoptive home in the emerging identity of Somaliland nationalism.

There is nothing really unique in my experience. These are the shared trials of my generation. Some remained lost in intellectual wasteland pandering to murdering tribal kingpins, others are holding on firmly to the yesterday of Great Somalia even as they hold its ashes in their hands today. And still others have found refuge in a multitude of "isms" that span the width of human thought.

Objective Self Examination

I consider myself a student of the sciences. In this fluid world of chaos and confusion I must stick with the scientific method as a means of salvation. I must not allow appearances to govern my thoughts. Where did I go wrong? Where did everybody go wrong? Have I really defeated the tribe at least in the battlefield of my own conscience? Even though I think I freed myself of the tribal influence, I will subject my identity to an honest and objective self-examination.

I will call my readers who are part of my generation, in broad terms, to engage with me in this exercise for many of you will have personal experiences that parallel my own. We may be on a journey to nowhere, but at least we are not alone in it.

As I engage in introspection I am amazed at what I find in my mood, behavior and mind. Do me a favor dear reader and consider your own reaction as you interpret my meditation in the light of your personal experience.

In the secrecy of my heart I count myself in my father's tribe and not my mother's even though I am much closer emotionally to my mother. It would have been the reverse had I been born in Ghana and practicing tribalism the Ghana style with a matriarchal lineage. Such self-identification will denote devotion to the Somali tribal system, not a rebellion against it.

1. I preferentially attend to information from my tribal region.
2. I am more likely to be emotionally upset when my tribe's honor and dignity is attacked i.e. I take it personally.
3. I disapprove of attacks against the dignity of other Somali tribes but then I base my disapproval on cognitive terms and not on emotional terms, in other words I don't take it personally.

4. I have given more thought to Amoud University and not to Burcoa or Hargaysa University.
5. I have written more letters of protest against injustices that I thought were committed against my tribe than I wrote against injustices that befell all other Somali tribes put together. This by no means denotes a shortage of atrocities that befell other tribes or an excess of them that found their way into my tribal territory. Neither is true. I must have a warped tribally laced sense of detecting atrocities.

Painful Confessions

Regardless of my anguish at its bitterness, I must come to the obvious conclusion and I must admit that I act, think and function as a tribalist. The data must lead. The scientific method allows for no exceptions. And what a horrible conclusion to reach! I am a tribalist? Woe betides! Have I worked so hard, for so long, for naught?

As I grew up my brain must have self-organized itself to allow for structural (read physical) representation of the tribe. Social identity could follow color lines, language lines, religious lines or geographic lines. And social identity could be every bit as powerful as any internalized psychological construct. I should have known this all along. But self-deception is insidious and stealthy.

I should now admit that an aspect of the tribe has remained ingrained in me all along. And I thought, in my arrogance and ignorance, that I have beaten it long, oh so long ago. I like my fellow Somalis have to learn to live with this with this handicap.

The Émigré Somali

Like me the Diaspora Somali has immigrated with an implanted self-identity of the tribe that he has no hope of beating and no hope of ever washing off. The émigré has however encountered other cultures where tribes and tribal societies are considered backward and way too primitive. So he has learned to disguise the tribal language and adopt a new lingo that says much the same thing. In Somaliland the new euphuisms for different tribal self-identity include SNM, Awdal, Sool, Sanaag and Cayn. Similar euphuisms abound in Somalia proper.

Soon after settlement the Somali émigré started the construction of tribal cyber ghettos that live in isolated Internet websites buried deep in the enmeshed global village and the omnipresent cyber space.

A physical distance separates the Diaspora Somali from his fellow tribesmen. The distance would be expected to decrease tribal nexus. But alas it had a paradoxical effect. A tribal member inside Somalia has to be careful in matters of war with other tribes for he or his immediate family members may find themselves paying the ultimate price in that war. The emigrant Somali finds himself shielded by distance from the direct and personal cost of taking extreme tribal positions. And therefore in the cyber ghettos the tribal nomad practices a pure kind of cost free tribalism. There is mounting evidence that Somali Diaspora drives and finances not only the economy of the country of origin but also its wars and conflicts.

To end this part here I stand dear reader, frightened by the implications of my meditation and convinced that you should be just as scared. For as you will see in the next part of this series the unseen hand of evolutionary extinction is at work and we are the unsuspecting victims.

Part III: Evolutionary Stress on Tribal Society

Behold this. There is a looming extinction of Somali Tribes. Evolution works not only at the level of species but also at the level of societies. Social organizations that are not fit to survive become extinct and Tribal Society (all over the world) has repeatedly proved itself to be unfit for survival. I mean this literally. I will come to the psychological mechanics of how tribes fail to survive in a subsequent session of this presentation. At this point I want to take the position that if what has happened in the rest of the world holds true my generation may be the last Somalis alive before the gradual pre-extinction decline takes full hold. Somali tribes have killed the Somali state and will fight its rise again to the bitter end. Somali tribes themselves are the best current candidates for evolutionary failure.

In reading through this article please keep in mind that I have established in Part II of this series that my generation of Somalis all over the world shares with me an inner unchangeable tribal identity. Somalis are what they are; tribal people and (this is the scary part) they will perish because of it. Literacy, education and individual choice cannot change this tribal identity.

A bird's eye view of recent world history clearly reveals that tribal societies have already become extinct or are at the verge of extinction in North America, Australia and in many Latin American countries. It is sobering to note that in California where we stand today Indians outnumbered whites by 10 to 1 in 1848 less than a mere couple of centuries ago. Today in California Non-Indians outnumber Indians by 120: 1 a reversal of the ratio 12 times over. In Australia the number of aborigines is declining precipitously becoming extinct in many parts. The last Aborigine in the Tasmania State of Australia died in May 8, 1876. In India tribal societies have been transformed to what came to be known as scheduled tribes that are among the most desperate in that hierarchy obsessed nation. Many of them have become extinct and many others are on the endangered list. Wars and epidemics of newly introduced diseases fuelled the demise of these people.

She was born about 1812 of the Bruny Island people, daughter of Mangerner, Chief of the Becherche Bay people. Married to Woorady who died when she was 20. Before she was eighteen, seal hunters had murdered her mother. Her first fiancé died while saving her from abduction. Her two sisters were abducted and sold as slaves. They were later lynched. Turganini did not get away even with death her body was exhumed by scientists curious to examine the last Aborigine. Most of her remains were displayed in the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart.

You might think that Africa survived the colonial period with an intact population and that the decline and decay is a postcolonial phenomenon. Think again. Remember that Africa has barely survived the colonial onslaught. Millions of its people were carried off to slavery and the continent was at one point bereft of the young and the productive. The slave trade that nearly emptied the continent of its population was facilitated by the tribal nature of African society that rendered the continent susceptible to the divide and rule tactics of the colonizer. The recent population growth of Africa has more to do with partial introduction of modern health care and other current population trends sweeping the globe.

Africa however continues to be the epicenter of international catastrophes, manmade or otherwise. And it is all about tribes marching inexorably to survival failure and extinction. Down south the Tutsi and Hutu have created Africa's first Genocide. Up in the North there are fears that the Arab Janjaweed may repeat the Rwanda catastrophe in the Darfur region of Sudan with the world just watching as it did before. Ivory

Coast that was once the most prosperous nation South of the Sahara is in the throes of a collective self-annihilation driven by the ethnocentric and deadly tribal concept of Ivorianess. Ivory Coast is following in the footsteps of other tribally driven human suffering with unimaginable scale and frightening consequences: Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. Superimpose on this, the epidemics of AIDS, Malaria and TB that are flaming across the continent in hot competition with the colossal bloodletting for finishing off the African. Behold once again it is war and epidemics of disease. Humanists of all kinds, international philanthropists, musicians with heart, the young ones that care and politician with personal agendas all bemoan and shed tears for a continent that is on the verge of Armageddon. It is in competition with time.

In a PBS interview in the early nineties Lee Kuan Yu the father of the Singapore miracle asked why Africa was being forgotten altogether in discussions related to the emerging patterns of world power and world trade. He responded to his own question with a simple yet insightful answer. Lee Kuan Yu said that Africa would take its rightful place among nations when it transforms itself from tribes to nations. These were prophetic words.

Inexorable Yoke of Evolutionary Extinction

In the whole of the continent there is no place closer to total dinosaur-like collapse than Somalia. Here is where evolution is doing its dirty work most openly. It seems that Somali tribes do not have much choice in the matter, as forces of time and history sweep them out. Tribe members both at home and in Diaspora find themselves blindly and irrationally following the most unsavory, psychopathic and undesirable elements in society to their eminent detriment. In Somalia today it is the day of cutthroats, petty dictators and tribal liberator-embezzlers adored for no other reason except that they belong to the tribe and that they make killing and maiming their business.

In Somalia proper the city of Gaalkacyo is a fulcrum of sorts. Its green line is the ultimate transition. To its South the flames of tribal wars cover every town, and every hamlet with ever multiplying Warlords plucking on the juicy remnants of a nation. To its north the state of Puntland of Somalia, built on the shaky foundations of tribal order is desperately teetering on the edge of survival. Here tribal chaos has developed hooves and horns in a structure of deceptive permanence, as the “beloved” bloody colonel prepares the people of Puntland as a fodder for upcoming imminent tribal wars.

The land mass will remain. The people will vanish. The very same forces that caused the extinction of the North American Indian, the Aborigines of Australia and the tribes of Andaman and Nicobar islands of India will decimate the inhabitants.

First Wars: Wars of small tribal groups, wars of larger tribal groups, permanent wars driven primarily by the nature of the tribal beast, by ever present personal greed and by lethal regional interests and water wars (See my previous article Scenarios of Coming Wars).

This map shows the massive extent of the problem.

Toxic Waste: It was Measles carried in blankets used as a weapon and wrapped as a gift that decimated the North American Indian population. Somali tribes will meet similar fate with the help of Toxic Waste brought home with the complements of greedy tribal politicians. Epidemics of infectious agents previously unknown to the immune system of local inhabitants will rack up the mortality rates. This is not

speculation it has already started to happen in the coastal towns and villages as the Tsunami exposed the barely hidden waste. A Nuclear Waste will lead to soaring cancer rates and decreased fertility rates. Every Somali who can read must find the time to read and digest the excellent expose on this topic written by the researcher and public scientist Bashir Sh. Mohamed PhD. The valuable report is written in Somali and published in its entirety in Somalitalk.

Natural epidemics will wreak havoc as the chaos and social and economic collapse prepares fertile infection-friendly environment. Expect AIDS to take hold in proportions that will make the alarming statistics of the rest of Africa look tame. The AIDS epidemic will take hold not because foreign warriors will import it in, as Muse Sude Yellahow insinuates. It is already here. It is prospering and maturing under the surface, hidden by ignorance and denial. Hidden by the taboo and secretive nature of sex in a society whose official motto seems to be: Make War, Not Love.

Armageddon is yet to come. The sound of its drums is clearly audible for those who would listen. In the end large junkies of the real estate of the land will be sold off to the highest bidder by ruthless and mentally challenged petty dictators. This too has already started as witnessed by the 99 year lease of Hafun and its region (a landmass the size of Switzerland) to an Australian adventurer and con artist. Evolution is impersonal. Inexorable. It takes its own good time. It develops its own schedule. We only provide the commentary.

In Somaliland a ray of hope is flickering. I say flickering because it is under the onslaught of the same boundary-defying forces of evolutionary stress: tribe, toxic waste and visa exempt bugs of all kinds. But there sure is something interesting developing there, a singular experience, something different altogether. There is peace around the water wells, in the grazing areas, in the villages and in the towns. There are plenty of guns. Plenty technicals. Plenty Klashnikovs. But no one is firing them. The tribes are not massacring each other. Instead a primordial state and its primordial institutions are gradually appearing. We need to know what is happening in Somaliland? Is this what evolutionary adaptation looks like? Is survival feasible after all? Should we not study this natural experiment with a magnifying glass, I mean instead of being scared by it or vilifying it or pulling magic numbers (like 4.5) out of tainted Diaspora hats?

Part VI: Somaliland : Rebirth At The Edge of Chaos

“In Somaliland a ray of hope is flickering. I say flickering because it is under the onslaught of the same forces of evolutionary stress: tribe, toxic waste and visa exempt bugs of all kinds. But there sure is something interesting developing there, a singular experience, and something different altogether. There is peace around the water wells, in the grazing areas, in the villages and in the towns. There are plenty of guns. Plenty technicals. Plenty Klashnikovs. But no one is firing them. The tribes are not massacring each other. Instead a primordial state and its primordial institutions are gradually appearing. We need to know what is happening in Somaliland ? Is this what evolutionary adaptation looks like? Is survival feasible after all? Should we not study this natural experiment with a magnifying glass, I mean instead of being scared by it or vilifying it or pulling magic numbers (like 4.5) out of tainted Diaspora hats? Stay tuned for Part 4 where I will be exploring this topic, its evolutionary ramification and the promise it may hold for all Somalis.” (see part Part III “The Extinction of Tribal Society.”).

Part V: Essentials of Tribal psychology

I know very well, just as you do, that the number 4 precedes 5 in counting. Yet here you have part five of my series and you are still waiting for the fourth part. I intend to ask for your indulgence and lenience. What I will say now in Part V, you will find, is indeed a necessary prelude to Part IV. The central question of why tribal organization of society places it at such a precarious evolutionary stress demands an answer. And it has to be answered before possible solutions and emergent conditions are considered. There is some quasi-technical language here. So sit back. Have a cup of sweet Somali tea on me and enjoy!

The tribe exists inside our mind. It is the internal psychological representation of the plural pronoun “us”. It is always defined in terms of its counterpart “them”. Tribe is a social construct. We make the tribe together and it shapes and organizes our worldview. It is inherited but not through genes. It is inherited through stories, myth, and coalition building. Tribal ancestral lineage rings true only because of the power of repetition. In reality it is nothing more than mere folklore. The development of a tribal identity resembles the acquisition of language. It happens early under the influence of the social environment and outside the conscious awareness of the individual.

The great Swiss Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung may have known nothing of Somali tribes. Still of all the psychological theories his constructs comes closest in capturing the nature of tribal psychology (collective unconscious, archetypes, persona and shadow). The tribe lives in the collective unconscious of group members.

In the following pages we will explore the psychological nature of the Somali tribe leaning heavily but not exclusively on Jungian theories. Such a study of the Somali tribe is essential and necessary as a basis for understanding the Somali Crisis.

Grandiose Tribal Self Image

Tribal identity infuses members with positive self-image. This is essential for the psychological prosperity of the tribe. Each tribe describes itself in the most exalted terms. The members are taught that their tribe has the smartest, the strongest, the most honest and even the most handsome of men and the most beautiful of women etc. The tribe builds its identity and that of its members on this diet of positive images of the collective self. Carl Jung calls this collectively enhanced, touched up, highly exaggerated self-image the “exalted self”. We will call it the Grandiose Tribal Self. This is the tribal counterpart of the Jungian construct of the Persona (the public person, the mask a person wears when presenting himself to the world, only the best of the best of his traits are allowed to be visible on this mask)

The émigré Somali found the grandiose tribal self a rather useful tool particularly when he has to fight out of the new-immigrant dungeon. The tribal Somali comes in with absolute conviction of his superiority and if the rest of the community does not know it, well he will just have to teach them. Such a strong self-image is half the battle in any competitive environment. This is one circumstance in which the Grandiose Tribal Self Image comes in very handy.

The Tribal Shadow

Unfortunately individuals and tribes have many less savory qualities that are known to be an essential part of the human experience. For sure there is deviousness, jealousy, dishonesty, greed, immorality, weakness, cowardice in all human groups and tribes and nations and societies. Yet no self respecting Somali tribe will be caught dead accepting these negative qualities.

As a group tribe members insist on actively projecting the negative descriptors onto other tribes known to them. It is so common to hear a Somali tribal maintaining, “They are cowards, they are immoral, they are devious, they are dishonest, they are corrupt, and they know nothing of justice. My tribe... we are honorable people”. Projection is a term used in psychology when a person attributes one’s own unacceptable traits to others. Projection is a subconscious process meaning the person doing the projection is not consciously aware about it. So when a Somali tribal utters these words he is not even aware that he is actually describing a part of himself and his own tribe.

The more a tribe takes on the mantle of superiority, the more likely it is to project its less savory characteristics on to other tribes. This may seem illogical and it is. However it is the way tribal psychological drama works. I will lean again on Carol Gustav Jung described these negative qualities as our own shadow that we cast upon others, the evil that is ingrained in us as human beings and that we see only in the “other”.

A Beautiful Example

As I read through Somali web pages assessing their reflection of tribal identity I came across an article that provides a beautiful illustration of the concepts of the grandiose tribal self and its shadow. I thought I would share with you an extensive quote from that article. The article was published on the Internet on April 25, 2005. I have removed the name of the tribe, and the name of the writer to prevent stigmatizing any person or any tribe. I am confident that you have come across similar content many times in Somali discourse. You can insert any Somali tribe’s name and the quote will remain as valid.

“Let me clearly state here that the noble (the name of the writer’s tribe) people are mainly a proud, good cultured, and good natured people who share whatever little they have with others. They are also a cooperative, visionary, and progressive people; positive attributions in which our enemies fail to emulate from us time and immemorial”

“ In addition, I would like to state here that the enemies of the (the name of the writer’s tribe) have six things in common as indicated below:

1. Tremendous greed, selfishness, and a blinding envy.
2. Intoxicating power hungriness.
3. Lack of the know-how to govern a nation.
4. Culture of unchecked oppression, injustice, and tyranny.
5. Quest to one day defeat and rule the (the name of the writer’s tribe) people by hook or crook.
6. To one day ethnically cleanse all the (the name of the writer’s tribe) people and to grub their huge territories, and

7. Their futile attempts to destroy the cause and existence of (our country)”

This is not an exception in tribal psychology. It is the norm. The grandiose tribal self and the shadow is one of the factors that are driving the impending extinction of Somali tribes.

Group Polarization

The tribe in war is an altogether vicious animal. Tribal identity gains dominance over that of an individual's self-identity in situations of tribal conflict and competition. Tribal identity almost takes over during times of war. Tribe members at such times drive themselves into an extreme an irrational frenzy. Normal language is replaced by unintelligible animal noises. “Tolaayeey, tolaayeey, Waar Hayaaye”

In war dehumanization is a tribal weapon of choice. Tribes refer to their enemies as “cockroaches”, "our game", “mad dogs”, “rats”, “savages”, “slaves” “traitors” etc. The dehumanization allows the tribal killers to circumvent the built-in human aversion to killing members of its own species. This is what would allow the tribal warrior to attack and kill all the men and women of a family, killing even the children and aborting those still unborn. The warrior avoids guilt because the enemy is not human, only vermin, dogs and traitors. “So what if I kill one more dog, the less of them the better this world is,” he will insist justified in his moral superiority. He can sleep peacefully at night. The more atrocities the warrior commits the more he can claim a hero status among the members of his tribe. Dehumanization is part of all tribal and group atrocities. It has been christened Group Polarization. It is a term initially introduced to describe the psychological state that drove groups of white people, who could even be decent folk in their normal lives, go about lynching Black Americans in their spare time. It also explains the inhuman atrocities that are the hallmark of Somalia's tribal wars.

Group Think

Tribes think alike. More. Tribes share political leanings. The political support of a tribe is not based on any principle. It is ephemeral and shifting like the desert sand. The tribe is locked in a perpetual dance of instantaneous changes and twists of political allegiance. And strangely enough the vast majority of each tribe ends up in the same political camp with each new dance.

It is really amazing to observe this phenomenon in action. Members of the tribe develop consensus on national issues so swiftly that one would wonder whether the tribal collective awareness transcends time and space. This is the concept of groupthink at work. Members of a tribe do not need discussion papers and consensus generating conferences held to synchronize opinion. They share basic assumption that allows them to develop similar view spontaneously, instantaneously.

Tribes place a very high premium on cohesiveness, consensus and unity above anything else. This is ingrained and nurtured in the mind of every tribe member from the early days of his life. The tribe stifles dissent particularly when it comes to issues related to other tribes, but dissent and innovation of any kind is extremely repressed in a tribal society. There is no social structure that is more conservative than a tribal society. It is this suppression of dissent that is at the root of the longevity of the tribe and the explanation for its fossilized values. The result is Groupthink

Tribal Selective Information Filter

This is perhaps the most pervasive and most devastating aspect of tribal psychopathology. The Selective Information Filter is a mental mechanism that is firmly established in the minds of tribe members.

The tribe filters information about the world through a sieve of self-interest; whatever happens to the “other” matters only in so far as it benefits or hurts the tribe. Members actively and selectively filter out information related to other tribal groups. Members of a tribal group remain ignorant of the triumphs and misfortunes of others; they suffer a colossal poverty of information. This is the reason Somalis who speak the same language don’t really understand one another and remain forever unable to engage in the reconciliation necessary for nation building.

Somalis are information junkies. They know what is happening everywhere in the world. They know nothing of what is happening in their own backyard. They embraced the Internet with gusto, as a source of information but it has not helped Somalis break the tribal information filter. They have just gone ahead and created hundreds of tribal cyberspace reservations that provide predominantly tribe laced and often dangerously cooked information. In essence they are dying of poverty of information in the midst of plenty.

To this very day Non Isaaq Somalis have exceedingly limited information of the massive destruction of Hargaysa and its population by the fascist regime of Siyaad Barre in the late eighties. Non Majeerteen Somalis know very little about the genocide in Mudug and Majeertenia in the early eighties. Those who do not belong to the Digil/Mirifle tribe remained predominantly unaware about the humanitarian disaster and torment in the “City of Death”. And today Non Hawiye Somalis remain woefully ignorant of the massive human cost of Warlordism. Somalis see only tribes; they see not suffering human individuals of men, women and children with names and families and the capacity to feel pain.

In the mind of the tribalist all other tribes “deserve the devastation that befell them, if indeed there was any such devastation to begin with”. Only his tribe has a legitimate cause for grievance. All others are making it up. Somalis everywhere are blind to the agony of other Somalis. This ignorance leads to moral relativism where genocide is considered with the deserved anger and disgust in some circumstances and awful silence in others.

The Tribal Boundary

I read somewhere (and I don’t remember exactly where) that the Chinese definition of a tribe is “a nation without borders”. Tribes are defined by ancestral lineage and myth and not by geography. Somali tribes, true to the definition, have no boundaries. The boundary of the tribe constantly expands or contracts as a function of the last battle. Tribes understand clearly that they take that which they can, animals, land, water or women. Tribal territory is an ephemeral phenomenon that is eternally under construction. The contradictions between the sovereignty of the state, communal tribal claims of land ownership and today’s accelerating private land grab will have significant political, economic and social consequences. The boundary issue will derail any peace initiative based on tribes. It will lead to enduring wars between and within tribes into the foreseeable future. It is one of the reasons that bring about the evolutionary ramifications.

The boundary-less-ness of tribal society will unleash the next wave of pre-extinction Somali civil wars. Hold onto my prophetic words: The Boundary Wars are just around the corner.

Finally: The Nature of Tribal War

Unlike war between states and contrary to Carl von Clausewitz's dictum, tribal war is not about politics and it is not a continuation of politics by more lethal means. Anthropological research reveals that the most common cause of tribal warfare is revenge. Tribes don't fight for principles. They fight to get even. A tribal force is devoted to the defense of the honor and sanctity of life of its own and to the spilling of the enemy's. Tribal war is personal. It is immediate. It is emotional. And it is ugly.

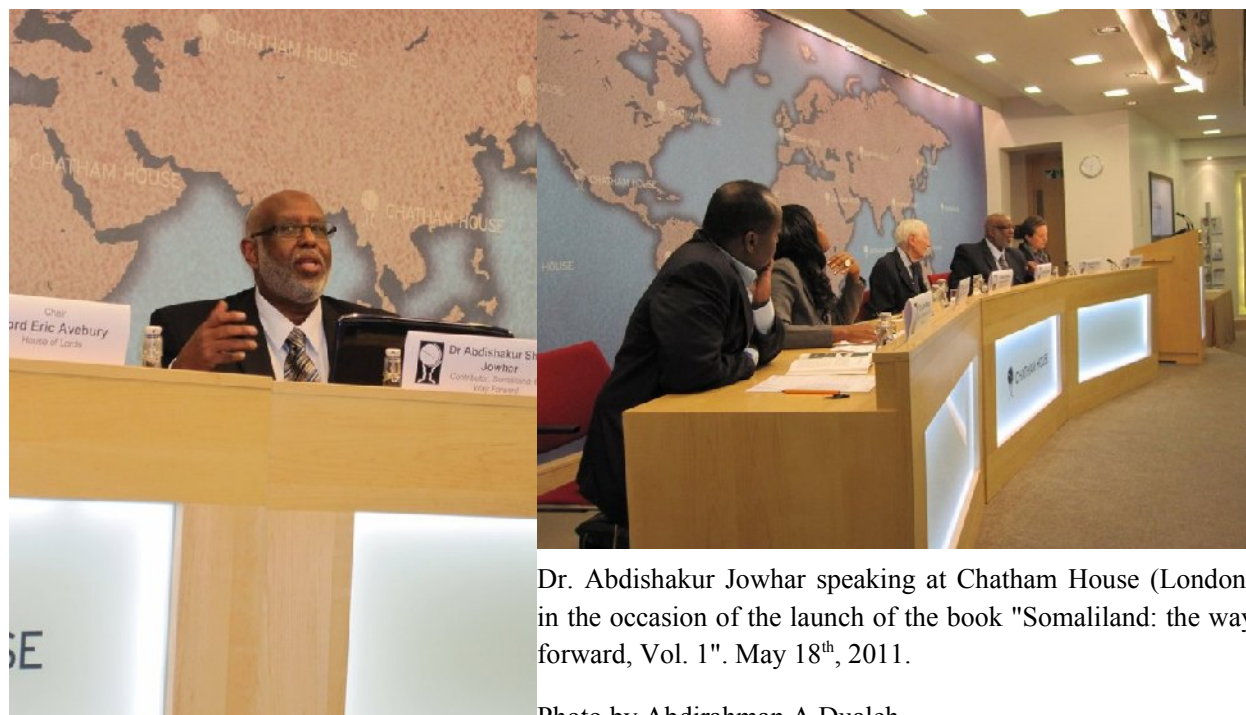
Revenge is a problematic emotionally charged motive. It has long-term memory. And even more seriously revenge demands more than mere justice, more than mere punishment. The victim of the revenge has to be taught a lesson. He must come to know in no uncertain terms how wrong, how terribly wrong he was to take on this tribe. "Do you even know who we are? They don't even know!" The revenge seekers will exclaim.

The manner of tribal killing itself becomes this "teaching" opportunity. Tribal wars are therefore particularly and intentionally full of atrocities. Victims of tribal wars may be skinned or burned alive. Their dead bodies maybe mutilated and displayed. The aim of tribal revenge is not to achieve balance, but to attain vindication and total submission or extermination of the other. A tribe that fails the bloody test of revenge takes the risk of finding its resources, land and homes plundered, women carried off and men bullied.

There is another crucial characteristic of tribal wars that should not be missed. Tribes do not have a standing army. This is a central feature of tribal war. Warrior groups are organized on an "as needed" basis. In tribal war the decision to go to war is made by those who fight the war. The male members form a kind of a citizen militia. Once a specific engagement is over the force disbands. Its members go home to their families. Tribal wars are financed by voluntary donations of group members. The logistics of a tribal war is limited to a single engagement or at the most to brief series of engagements always separated by extended periods of time. The time is needed to replenish resources and bury the dead. Tribal war is one of retail and not wholesale. It is not an industrial war. It is a subsistence war. Its economic viability is always under threat. This makes tribal war one of opportunity, stealth and improvisations with a short, explosive and brutal course, a war designed for limited clashes with maximum impact.

A standing army requires a stable and efficient economy that could produce sufficient goods and resources for the troops. Tribes live predominantly in a subsistence economy with no surplus that could be spared. In those circumstances when an originally tribal force becomes organized on a more permanent basis with sufficient resources for multiple engagements, the tribe losses control over it and it ceases to be a tribal force. Instead it becomes the nucleus of a state, a feudal lord, kingdom, warlord, a criminal gang or some other coercive social organization.

In Part IV I will explore emergent conditions and the new story of Somaliland. This will be the last part of this series. I want to express deep appreciation for all the responders. Your writings have shaped my thoughts to a large extent. Stayed tuned for Part IV. In the meantime, like they say in American and in Somali... Peace! Nabad!



Dr. Abdishakur Jowhar speaking at Chatham House (London) in the occasion of the launch of the book "Somaliland: the way forward, Vol. 1". May 18th, 2011.

Photo by Abdirahman A Dualeh.

Midnight Forever ³

Abdishakur Jowhar

Introduction: On July 11, 2009 four prominent Somaliland citizens were kidnapped from a public highway and later on massacred in a tribal ritual. On August 6, 2009 Ali (Marshall) Gulaid died in a car accident on his way to Berbera. Ali Marshall was an economist, journalist, and leading opposition politician, in short a renaissance man who moved from USA back to his country of origin (Somaliland) to help bring about democracy, freedom, peace and stability to his people. This ugly massacre and this untimely death have brought the nation of Somaliland to its knees.

This article explores the reasons behind the massacre of 7/11. It articulates the hopes, dreams and also the nightmares of the people of Somaliland. Neither Ali Marshall nor Somaliland's 7/11 victims will die in vain. Their blood will feed the tree of liberty and democracy. Freedom will win in spite of the forces of the extreme right of dictatorship, darkness and extremism.

I dedicate this article to the loving memory of the 4 victims of the Somaliland's 7/11 whose murder will unite a nation to defeat lawlessness.

Cali Maxamuud Nuur AKA Cali Bagaashle (Businessman) Daaud Xaashi Jaamac (Engineer) Mawliid Xasan Omar (Businessman) Cali Aw Omar Barre(Educator)

and in loving Memory of Ali Gulaid (Marshal)

His untimely sacrifice will teach the nation about sacrifice, decisiveness, discipline and commitment to the people's cause of justice, transparency and honesty.

Midnight Forever Part I: Grief

July 12, of 2007: The words are blurry. I focus. The letters move on their own. I feel wetness on my face and on my shirt. Arrows of sorrow and pain pierce through my heart. My breathing misses a step then another. Things around me look different. Darkness closes in.

Ali Aw Omar. I remember his last words to me at the Ambassador Hotel in Hargaysa, Somaliland. "This book, my present to you, delivered me from a state of utter ignorance. I pray it does the same for you. Look here for example, read this aloud if you have not forgotten your Arabic". He challenged in the way only an old friend can. I noticed he was talking a bit louder. I made a mental note to check his hearing later. I accepted the book with the gravity it was offered. It is a book of Hadith (oral traditions relating to the words and deeds of the prophet Mohammed, upon him be peace and blessings). Playfully I declared: It is an old book, old man. And it was. Yellow with age, over-used, lovingly kept. I read the passage in Arabic taking up his challenge.

3 This article appeared on redsea-online.com on Aug 20-29 2009 in three parts.

Narrated Anas: Allah's Apostle said, "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one. People asked, "O Allah's Apostle! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?" The Prophet said, "By preventing him from oppressing others."

July 12, 2009. Sheikh Abdullahi Sh. Ali Jowhar walked into the make shift morgue in Borama. The body parts of four men viciously murdered the day before were laid out for identification. This was no ordinary serial murder. The brutalized bodies spoke aloud of a dark tribal ritual murder ceremony only one step removed from frank cannibalism. The dead bore silent witness to the brutality of man to his brother.

There was something familiar about the head among reassembled body parts. The nose broken and twisted around before death looked both grotesque and familiar. The mouth was frozen in horror. The high forehead was serene as ever; shining dark spot in the middle; the sign of prostration and submission to Allah (SWT) in Salaat (prayers). The marks on the torso left behind by a blunt knife stabbed and twisted around in the innards of the still living victim left no doubt about a tribal ritual signature intended for the living. The Sheikh moved on to the next body. But there was a foreboding sense, a subconscious alarm. The Sheikh looked back again. A face; a name, a pattern recognized! Ali Aw Omer. He is Ali Aw Omar; the Sheikh confirmed "Ina Lilahi wa inaa elayhi Rajucun" (Verily, unto God do we belong and, unto Him we shall return Quran "The Lion 2:156)

2:155 (Asad) And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labour's] fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity 2:156 who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return." Quran "the Lion"

7/11, 2009 was a day like any other. Ali woke up fresh and immediately made a decision that will cost him his life that very night. He decided to delay his trip to Borama and to go shopping for that particular dress his daughter wanted now that he has few dollars to spare. That is all it took. But then again no one who knew Ali will be surprised that this was his last decision in this world.

I still can see in my mind's eye Ali Aw Omar, a single father at the time, riding by me on his motorcycle with his daughter holding onto his back in the streets of Djibouti. She was the jewel of his eyes. In a world where childcare is traditionally left to women Ali will be remembered as the prototype of the emerging role of the new caring father; definitely a welcome evolution in this ultra conservative patriarchal society. He remarried and became the doting father of 7 more children. He ensured that all of his children (sons and daughters) attended school and excelled in it in spite of the modesty of his means. His oldest daughter has just joined nursing school. He inherited this deep capacity to nurture from his mother Mumina (of the Bahgobo tribe of the Jibri-Abokor people of the Isaak tribe). And he inherited the hands on attitude to parenting from his father Aw Omer Barre (of Bahabar Abdalle of the Makaahil people of the Samoroon tribe.) This was Ali Aw Omar and it is important to remember his tribal lineage because the end of his life is so intractably tied up with this prehistoric curiosity.

The delay in travel timing from Hargaysa to Borama to the evening of July 11, 2009; meant Ali Aw Omar entered the vortex of a chain of events that will lead him to the devil's den and that will end in his torture and death that shook his nation and that may lead to its death as well.

On the road that Ali traveled later that day and unbeknownst to him, Tribal Murder Warriors gathered under dying trees surrounding by dying animals, having come from homes where the monsters of hunger and starvation hunted the weak, the young and the old. It is a particularly dry season in this semi desert but among the warriors gathered on this particular road on this particular day there was thirst only for one thing; human blood.

“Shaitiin” (Demons) set loose from their chains in fires of hell stirred the bitterness of collective tribal memory in the cold hearts of these men, as they schemed the murder of any one from the “other group” who travelled that route on that fateful day. Yes, yes there was some dispute over a parcel of land between few neighboring families. But that was nothing more than a pretext, and a flimsy one at that. It sure was not the cause of the horror that was to unfold. It could have been anything; a dispute between a student and a teacher over grades in school, an ordinary traffic violation, a mundane crime, anything at all. The real cause is that injustice and corruption has so weakened the newly born state of Somaliland and a budding dictator has chosen solidifying his hold on power on the basis of tribal allegiances, and at the expense of law and order and good governance. In these dire circumstances the tribal monster is rearing its ugly head and getting ready to consume the nation in a frenzy of primitive tribal blood orgies of mutual self-annihilation.

The Murder

“Face Mecca and profess Islam, before I kill you”

The murderers conspiring on this desolate road carried within them the virus of Africa’s most potent evil; the Tribal Murderer. They were indeed the physical embodiment of this ugliest, most base and most inhumane manifestation of a tribal society. It is essential to elucidate here the role of tribal murderer.

The Tribal Murderer kills on behalf of his tribe. His action is both sanctioned and despised by the tribe. The contradiction inherent in this role gives it a massive destructive potency. It is essential to differentiate the role of the tribal murderer from that of the tribal warrior for there is hope in this distinction. The tribal warrior travels in the day time; he fights his wars in the battle field. He gains stature by his gallantry, his strict observation of the rules of war, his temperance and even his kindness towards non-combatants. He is revered in public and loved in private by the members of his tribe. On the other hand the tribal murderer is by definition a psychopath and a vulture. He is the embodiment of cowardice. He never confronts an armed enemy. He sneaks behind the unarmed, the traveler, and the one peacefully tilling his land. Death and dismemberment is a trade he perfects and prefers. He is revered in secret, feared in secret and denounced in public by the members of his tribe. He and his progeny often become outcasts of society for which they played this dirty role as the tribal murderer succeeds in disgusting his own tribe’s men and everyone else. This is because there is something intrinsically offensive about the murder of innocent men in all human societies and the tribe even though a most primitive social organization shares in this disgust. And there is even more revulsion about torturing a human being or any sentient being to death. Yet these are the trademarks and the essential tools of the tribal murderer.

For the warriors who sat under the shade-less trees the names, the nature, the history, the personality, the holiness or lack of it of those who were to be murdered did not matter in the least. There were only few essential criteria that the victims-to-be had to satisfy 1) they should be warm blooded male homo sapiens

2) they should belong to the neighboring tribe “the other”3) They should be unarmed, unaware and vulnerable. The tribal murder warrior does not discriminate. He would accept any unarmed victim.

The act of tribal murder has to be specific, in stark contrast to the randomness of how its victim is selected. The method and mechanism of death of these random victims were meticulously and carefully planned by the tribal murderer. The death of the victim must be slow and gruesome. The body must show publicly demonstrable evidence of pain and dehumanization to teach the living “other” a lesson that “you must not mess with us”- the lions in this jungle. This explains why the body of Ali Aw Omar’s body was found in such a state of gruesome mutilation. The killing process has to showcase the “manliness” of the warrior’s tribe. In the strange world of the tribal feuds this dictum dictates the harvesting of the testicles of the victim. It is reported to me that Ali’s testicles were “taken” as he watched.

The tribal murder is the most primitive version of psych-ops. It could aptly be described as a form of psychological terrorism in a backward tribal setting. The death of “the other” in this most gruesome manner unleashes the vilest of the hidden demons in the psyche of the collective and it triggers a catastrophic chain of events that leads to genocide of a group against the other. In the dirty tribal wars that ensue there are no winners. From the times of posterity tribal wars has always been a lose-lose proposition. That is why tribal society everywhere is in decline, or has become extinct or is about to become extinct.

One must understand clearly and with no ambiguity that this whole shocking process is not personal at all. The warriors, who hunted, captured and tortured Ali Aw Omar to death had nothing against him in person. Their roads never crossed. Strangely enough the warrior appeared willing to help Ali achieve Janna (heaven) in the next world; One of the murderers is reported to have asked Ali “Face Mecca and profess Islam, before I kill you”. In the irrational and schizophrenic mind of the tribal warrior, there is no contradiction between torturing Ali Aw Omar, murdering him and “taking away his testicles” and the warrior’s firm belief that he has nothing against Ali Aw Omar the person.

This is how genocide starts and works. The human, the person, is taken out of the equation and replaced with a mental image of the horribly caricatured “other”. Later on the virus of violence spreads with hyper-inflated waves of hatred with the power of many tsunamis. Killing and torturing the dehumanized “other” become as easy as walking and talking. This is how Auschwitz and Rwanda came about. This is the explanation of the mass graves (the legacy of Siyaad Barre) that keep cropping up in Hargaysa every now and then.

And so on that fateful shocking and ugly day Ali Aw Omar and 3 of his fellow citizens were caught up in the dragnet of the tribal vengeful murdering warriors. We remember. We will not forget. They are:

Cali Maxamuud Nuur AKA Cali bagaashle (Businessman) Daauud Xaashi Jaamac (Engineer) Mawliid Xasan cumar (Businessman) Cali Aw Cuamar Barre(Educator)

They died a painful, horrifying death. I will spare you the details of their horrible death but one small fact needs to be mentioned. One man escaped the mayhem and reported on the manner of their death. In an interview with the BBC Somali services he reported of one particular exchange that he overheard and that could summarize the horror of that day. The man who escaped reported that he heard one of the victims

beg for mercy “Men of Islam, my religion; kill me but shoot me with a bullet; are we not Moslems all?” The heartless leader responded with “cut out that tongue that dares to speak” and the tongue was cut off.

And there he was; butchered by evil. The light of death shining from his black eyes, a stone’s throw from Kalabaydh the small town where he grew up working in his brother tea shop. I mourn for Ali Aw Omar and I mourn for my people.

“tribal war is not about politics..... tribal warfare is about revenge. Tribes don’t fight for principles. They fight to get even.” “Tribal wars are therefore particularly and intentionally full of atrocities. Victims of tribal wars may be skinned or burned alive. Their dead bodies maybe mutilated and displayed. The aim of tribal revenge is not to achieve balance, but to attain vindication and total submission or extermination of the other. A tribe that fails the bloody test of revenge takes the risk of finding its resources, land and homes plundered, women carried off and men bullied.” July 2005 Abdishakur Jowhar’s “Essentials of Tribal Psychology.

I wrote these words four year ago. I did not know then that I will witness them so vividly, so personally.

Ali Aw Omar: Memories of my Generation

July 12, 2009. I hold on to the book of Hadith. I opened the same passage again that I read with Ali Aw Omar two years before. This time my head hung low in grief, I read the passage again with eyes unseeing flooded with the gravity of the loss.

Narrated Anas: Allah’s Apostle said, “Help your brother...

I knew immediately why Ali selected the particular Hadith for my attention. Lifelong bonds of friendship ensured shared experiences and shared memories. Now that he has gone, in these memories, shared no more, I exist. I must remember to pass them on, to those who will come, for to bear witness is a responsibility.

Ali and I have been together in the social justice movement in Somalia since the early seventies when we both joined forces with other members of our generation to confront the military dictator of our time Mohamed Siyad Barre. We were on the side of the progressive left of the political spectrum. Che Guevara of Cuba, Franz Fanon of Algeria, Amílcar Lopes Cabral of Guinea Bissau and Joe Slovo of South Africa were our heroes. We were the post-independence generation of Africa. We were fed up with tin pot military dictators and military coup d’états that devastated the continent of Africa like pestilence and plague.

That was the turbulent seventies for my generation. We came to maturity in that decade and were immediately confronted with a nation in a crisis. We met head on a military dictatorship that was systematically destroying a nation. Ours was a political revolt, student movement, popular campaigns. We were determined to stand up to be counted. But we were crushed by the regime. To be brutally honest we failed miserably in the task we set up for ourselves. Our defeat and the victory of the short sighted selfish right set the stage for Somalia to become the prototypal land of statelessness , starving masses, well fed pirates, warlords and of course their social counterpart marauding ferocious machete wielding tribes.

Many of us ended as refugees in the four corners of the world. Few of the more dedicated, hardy, heroic types remained in the country and refused to go. Ali Aw Omar was one of the latter. He stayed with the people. He shared their lot, their wars, their peace, their hunger, their pain and their prosperity. I envied him then for his bravery. I think he knew of my envy, it was never mentioned. He was just too refined.

I sought refuge in the west and quickly got lost in its decadent capitalistic ways. I conformed to the locally prevalent creed of democracy, equality and free fair elections as the gentlest means of human progress. Ali Aw Omar having stayed home was caught up in the wave of Islamism that has swept over the new generations in Somalia. He also conformed to the locally prevailing political mood of a resurgent Islamic exuberance. He found safety in the Quran and sustenance in Hadith and Sunnah.

Ali and I witnessed the death of the ideology that dominated our childhood days as well as the death of the nation in whose bosom we grew. Like orphans in a ruthless world we had to evolve, adapt and improvise with all haste to survive. Like a football on the playground of fate, we were kicked around, cast, molded and ripened by the force of circumstances and times. At the end of it all here we were Ali, a Sheikh, and a pious man in Somaliland preaching to save my soul for the next world, I a Psychiatrist from Canada trying to understand my old friend in this present world.

By sharing with me this particular Hadith, with its beautifully written message of justice and our role in bringing it about, Ali Aw Omar peeled away the residue of time and space to reveal that we both remained true to our commitment to the timeless cause of human equality, fraternity and peace despite the differences in languages and terminologies we acquired over our lifetimes.

It is important that we draw the right conclusions from this national tragedy. What we are witnessing is not merely the murder of Ali Aw Omar, it is much broader and much deeper; it is nothing less than the last gasp of the Somaliland state which will surely collapse and die unless its heroic masses comes to its aid.

The central pillar of any society is law and order. The state has the obligation of protecting its citizens. The current administration failed the people of Somaliland. What has killed Ali Aw Omar is lawlessness, injustice, corruption, weakened judiciary and the mother of them all the muzzling of the free press. These have, unfortunately, all become the official trademark of those in power in Somaliland today.

Even worse it is clear that those who committed this most heinous act remain free and at large because the current administration of Rayaale has reached a cynical calculation that allowing the murderers to remain free is in the regime's best political and electoral interest. What the leadership has not yet grasped is this: every single day these criminals remain free, rubbing their dirty nose on the face of the national psyche, bears witness to the moral bankruptcy and practical impotence of the regime. Every single day the murderers so openly challenge the state and get away with it constitutes one more nail in the coffin of Rayaale's administration. It is time to change course, time to dismantle the politics of divide and rule, time to come together and find justice for Ali Aw Omar and for Somaliland.

But there is urgency in the matter, in these most dreadful of times. And I must now address those in my tribe who has become possessed by the demons of vengeance, who dream of basking in its blooded glory, I say to you give me few moments of your precious time, for I too belong to the tribe and I too feel the pain.

Revenge for the murder

Ugly Revenge is the nomad's mantra. For him an eye for an eye is insufficient, too little, too late. He wants two, three, four eyes for the one his kin lost. He wants it today before the dead is cold. He wants it done in much more excruciating pain, in much more disgustingly inhumane manner as those eyes "taken" from his own. This is what I call the hyperinflation of hate that turns the hearts of men and women dark, hard and cold. This is the raw emotional material that hate groups of all societies mold into genocide and mass murder. It is explosively volcanic with the added potential of viral spread. It is here that the process of dehumanization of the "other" finds a fertile soil and grows to its nightmarish potential. The vector that carries this raw material is the ugly tribal revenge seeker.

It is with this background in mind that I first address this most extreme fringes of my people who has become possessed by the demons of vengeance and who dream of basking in its blooded glory. I speak directly to those who murdered Ali Aw Omar and those who plan to murder other Ali's in the never ending cycle of tribal revenge and counter revenge.

To these hate mongering tribal fringe I say: if your heart is already taken, and your soul is a prisoner to the master of darkness (Shaitan), if he has already locked up your ears and my words feel remote, inaudible, naïve, simpleminded and cowardly, in this case pray with me the two Rak'at of Salaat al Al-Istakhara (the prayers and supplication for guidance and counsel). Allah (SWT) is the most strong, the most wise and the most powerful, He will deliver you from the clutches of the demon. He will open your ears to me and soften your heart to my words.

And now that you have purified your soul think with me:

When you murder a traveler who is an innocent non-combatant, when you orphan the children of a farmer tilling the dry parched land for few grains to sustain his family, when your spear of vengeance pierces the heart of a man who has never done anything wrong to you or to any human or to any of God's creatures..... When you engage in such a dastardly act knowingly, willing and deliberately do you still remain a Muslim? Read with me these ayaat (Quranic verses) before you answer:

"4:93 (Asad) But whoever deliberately slays another believer, his requital shall be hell, therein to abide; and God will condemn him, and will reject him, and will prepare for him awesome suffering." Sadaqa Allahu Al Cadiim.

And I ask: When you torture a man, when the screams of pain of those who has fallen prey to your tribal frenzy pleases your heart, in that most awful of times are you really human or an animal in the shape of a human?

When you seek out and ambush the old, the weak and the unarmed in your despicable frenzy of tribal sacrifice do you feel brave like a lion? or are you merely a despicable scavenger?

To the scribes of tribal vengeance, to those who whisper death in the silence of the night, to those who preach and incite hate, to those who organize gangs of psychopaths to spread murder and mayhem upon the earth, to those high priests of the Gods of Vengeance I say: Do you think distance will absolve you from the crimes that you conceive, encourage and perpetuate? Do you realize that your tribal ancestors

are Mengele, Hitler, Pol Pot and most emphatically not Sh Issa, Sh Samaroon, Sh. Isaaq, or Sh Darood. Do you realize that you are a stain on the good name of all human kind?

Psychopathy is a disease that exists in all human societies. And everywhere the murdering psychopath is hunted down and brought to justice. Except in our own society where we turn a blind eye to them. We give them shelter. We feed them. We incite and encourage them to “kill the other”. We secretly celebrate “their manhood” and on we openly support them by denying that these crimes even took place; just like holocaust and genocide deniers everywhere. We give these murderers and psychopaths the power of life and death in our society. Consequently we condemn ourselves to eternal misery in this world, and eternal hell on the other. And then we wonder why are we so far behind the rest of mankind in all areas of man’s endeavors. Think about this the next you hear in Gabilay “Walee waa nin rag ah” (that is a man’s man).

The matter is simple. A crime has been committed. A most terrible crime. The perpetrators of this crime are known. They must be brought to justice now. This is how you tame wild tribes and force them to make peace not war. We must disown these murderers. We must ensure that they don’t literally get away with murder.

And on the other hand those who hear whispers in the dark about future attacks of terror should denounce them and warn the nation about it. This is how we gain back our humanity and our pride in ourselves. This is how we become good Muslims. This how we could build a nation. And this is how we can defend ourselves collectively from the criminal fringes of our nation.

A psychological Fracture

The murder of Ali Aw Omar and his colleagues pose an existential question for all of us who like him travel that vital road to be part of the nation that we are helping to build. Can we be safe in our own country? Should we be resorting to traveling in armed conveyances in our own backyard? Should we be looking for alternative ways of survival? These are surely rational questions that demand honest answers. This murder has caused a psychological and physical fracture in this young nation of Somaliland. It would be no exaggeration to conclude that the impact of this murder and the impact of the response to it by the current administration and those that follow it will determine to a great degree the fate of Somaliland as a viable state.

But at this point in time the people of Awdal find themselves in the unenviable position of finding a rational answer to an irrational proposition. A Somali proverb maintains “nin aan waran kaagu gelin, weedhaadu ma gashu” (those who have not felt the pain of your spear, cannot grasp the wisdom of your words). It is a proverb like many other Somali proverbs that has a tribal cutting edge to it. It defines the “us” and “them” and in the raw terms of violence and volatility. And so the default course of action of a tribal group in defending its members has always been to resort either to tribal murder revenge or to build up tribal militia and prepare for tribal wars. The times are different though. And by now we should all realize that there are no tribal solutions to the issue of the security and safety of the citizens of a state, none whatsoever.

We have already considered and debunked tribal revenge murder as a rational option for achieving the safety of a tribe. Indeed just the opposite is always true. We have shown, to those who have been blinded by the emotions of the moment, the immoral nature of this most horrible of all options. Let this be clear to

all and sundry. *Anyone who participates in tribal murder in any shape or form has forfeited his faith, and his humanity in the service of the ancestral god-the tribe. He is not one of us. He is the enemy of all of us.*

Raising tribal militia and waging tribal war “to save the tribe” has been the more commonly accepted and often preferred option of a nomadic society in defending its own. Once again we must understand that it is an illusory option; a non-starter in today’s world.

Tribal wars are financed by the feeble mechanism of donations, not by robust taxes. It is fought by amateurish militia who left their farms, sheep and camel to wage war for a day or two not by a standing army. These logistical and ideological constraints make tribal wars short, nasty and brutal.

Tribal wars have only a time limited tactical goal of killing many of the “other” and looting their property. The purpose is primarily to gain an ephemeral psychological boost to the self-esteem of the aggressor tribe. This lasts only long enough until the “other tribe” regroups itself for a day or two of a vengeful blood bath and recaptures its own injured self-image. Tribal war uses the tactics of a guerilla warfare of hit and run. But unlike guerilla wars it has no strategic objective of holding land, creating a state or taking power over an existing state. The end result of tribal militia wars is therefore one of constant, circular, short, nasty, battles that go on and on intermittently for generations in a devastating manner that keeps the whole region in perpetual poverty as trade, farming and animal husbandry come to a stop and as the resources of the tribes involved are depleted by a mini arms race.

Now if a thousand years of Somali history has not convinced you that tribal militia and tribal wars cannot serve the safety and security of any one, if 30 years of war in Somalia that has succeeded only in wiping out the Somali people has not convinced you of the futility and ridiculousness of this option then there is something seriously wrong with your mind and your thinking process. You need to seek remedy for your intellectual blindness. And if you are happy with your blindness you must ensure to take all necessary precautions to prevent it from infecting others around you for it could be lethal to those you love.

Our old deadly ways

With this knowledge in mind it is disheartening and unfortunately expected even if strange that both sides of the Kalabaydh divide have decided precisely that a tribal solution is the only option available to them. The demonization process is in full swing. Objective analysts on both sides of the divide are feeling the heat of being marginalized. Tribal scribes are busy yarning new conspiracy theories, new psychic injuries, new lists of grievances and injustices. Old symbols are being resurrected and recruited for the tribal cause. In Gabilay the SNM flag has surpassed in status and affection the Somaliland flag. It is everywhere. On the Awdal side the blue flag of Somalia appeared out of nowhere after two decades of absence. The naïve may consider these newly dusted symbols as a manifestation of Somali Nationalism and Somaliland Nationalism battling it out in the plains of Kalabaydh. Nothing could be further from the truth. The symbols may be different but they are meant to say the same things: “I am of this tribe and I am seeking out allies that can help me best you and exterminate you in the battles that are to come.” Both symbols are a dagger pointed at the newly minted Somaliland identity for they take the nation backward a thousand years into the filthy swamps of tribal immorality and death.

There are three ideologically related solutions to the problems of insecurity created by tribal warriors, all involve the building of a state that can claim sole monopoly on violence like all states do: A reinvigorated

Somaliland State, a reborn Somalia State or a de novo Moslem State of Somalia are the only three options on the table. Choose your pick. Any one from Somaliland has the democratic right to choose any of these options. It is clearly immoral, and manifestly dangerous, to advocate for tribal solutions at this point in the history of the nation and that of mankind.

The people of Somaliland has rejected religious fundamentalism outright. And in 1993 the vast majority opted for a Somaliland State. Most unfortunately the Somaliland state has been weakened by inept administration. The legitimacy of the state has been undermined when the government of the day failed to uphold the laws of the land, as it was sworn to do, when they embarked on naked corruption and open pilfering of the public purse, when they decided that to simply ignore the national consensus and the national constitution, to outlaw the free press, to delay or cancel the electoral process unless they could be assured victory beforehand.

The result of this decay of the Somaliland state is the strengthening of tribal identity and tribal wars with all their gore and blood. This is the problem that lead to the death of Ali Aw Omar and his colleagues. This is the problem that needs a solution that is non-tribal and non-religious- a political solution.

Making Sense of the Senseless

We need to stop here and make one critical observation. The last time that there was this level of violence in Kalabaydh was in the dark days of 1988-1991. Then, as is the case now, a president was trying to hold on to power illegally by all means necessary. Then, as is the case now, those who were in power thought it was in their best interest to create a deadly vacuum of tribal rivalry and tribal allegiances to find for themselves a space to maneuver. Then, as is the case now, the survival of the nation did not matter in the least to those in power.

It is because of these considerations that I came to believe that the most imminent risk to the life of any Gadabuursi today is the current administration of Somaliland and its pursuit of absolute power. Just as this administration is the most imminent danger to the life of every Somalilander. The massive extent of injustice, corruption and hatred this regime has created is sufficient to lead to the implosion of the state and the death and destruction of the people who live in. The hope of the Gadabuursi and that of rest of Somaliland today rests on the victory of Saylici or the victory of Mohamed Rashid.

A Call to Action

And so my fellow Somalilanders, men and women of all political persuasions, in this darkest moment, when murderers are on the brawl, when the regime failed to provide even the most basic law and order, when available meager resources are being diverted to arm tribal militia just as the drought stricken and hungry dye in isolated huts and in street corners, in this darkest moment when all seems lost, there is one more battle to be waged.

One more stand against tyranny, against the slaughter of innocence. Let the streets of our cities and villages swell with thousands of peaceful marches and calls for change. Let seven days of every week be the Glorious Thursdays of revolt. Let us break the death grip of Rayaale, Cawil and Cabdillahi around our necks before they reduce us all to a crumbling dirt of primitive tribes massacring each other. Let there be a glorious people's revolution. We will die anyways as we must. Let us choose to fall fighting this good war, for this just cause. Let this be our revenge for Ali Aw Omar.

The Gadabuursi Manifesto⁴

Abdishakur Jowhar

Prelude

2006 has been a particularly difficult year for Somaliland. The nation barely held together against the onslaught of the religious right only to face a fresh challenge from the petty dictatorships that plaques the African continent. The punches keep coming. The year ended with freedom in chains and with the Editor and the Publisher of Haatuf (the central defenders of the nation) behind bars. But the nation keeps standing, swaying gracefully with each strike. In these dire circumstances the Gadabuursi comes to the aid of the nation and offers guidance to its president.

Let the obvious be stated. The election of President Dahir Riyaale Kahin was a magnanimous act of national healing and a symbol of national maturity. And for the Gadabuursi it was also a joyous moment of coming in from the cold fringes of political wilderness to its very center. President Riyaale became the very first member of the tribe to carry such a lofty title, at least in the modern history of the Somali people. We bristled with pride. We were ecstatic with his delivery of three elections in rapid succession for the benefit of the nation; elections that were judged free and fair by impartial observers. This surely was a feat that has eluded many of the brightest minds of Africa's political elite and here was one humble Gadabuursi who could deliver it for his nation. We sang his praises and pointed out for all who had eyes to see; look for the grace of God; there goes a righteous Gadabuursi.

These were the golden days, many moons ago, before the tide turned, before corruption found a home in the palace, way before freedom found itself behind bars. At this critical moment the Gadabuursi tribe comes to terms with the moral responsibility of taking an ethical stand when its own son falters, when the line between right and wrong blurs. Silence in this circumstance will be tantamount to a criminal act. In this Manifesto the tribe speaks so that the nation can live out its ideals of peace, modernity and democracy.

4 Author's note: NB The Gadabuursi Manifesto is penned by Dr. Jowhar. It is however the product of collective tribal enterprise. The document represents the silent majority of Gadabuursi opinion both inside the country and in Diaspora. It is an attempt to recruit tribal culture for sustaining life and liberty of all and preventing it from continuing to remain a hiding place for the evil, the corrupt, the opportunist, the hate monger and the murderer. The manifesto is meant to be a blue print for all Somali tribes. Dr. Jowhar and the silent partners he consulted in preparing the Manifesto belong to the Gadabuursi tribe. The decision is to speak truth to power; truth to President Riyaale who also belongs to the same tribe.

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The Manifesto

On the Myth of the Tribal President

The Gadabuursi tribe is fully aware its fortunes will rise and fall with those of all the people in this nation. The tribe will prosper if the nation finds prosperity. The tribe will have peace if there is peace in the nation. The tribe will have justice if justice prevails in the nation's courts. And the tribe will suffer injustice, starvation, pestilence, war and death if the nation falls apart. It is that simple and the tribe understands it.

A president serves a state, a nation not a tribe or a clan. The very term tribal president is an oxymoron. It is a myth that has sucked the life out of all Somali societies; it is a monster that we must slay if Somalis are to survive as people. For the Gadabuursi and for the nation the 20-mile heartbreak road between Dila and Borama should serve as a living testimony for the impotence of the concept of a tribal presidency that lives only in the sickness of the tribal mind.

The Gadabuursi tribe enters into a covenant with the nation that it will not allow this President (the son of the tribe) to appeal overtly or covertly to the primitive irrational tribal instinct to hijack national justice, to cover up corrupt practices or to curb the freedom of the citizens of the nation. The tribe will not allow this president to do to it what Siyad Barre did to the Mareexaan, to the Somali nation and ultimately to his own family. The Gadabuursi have no desire for national suicide; no appetite for the rule of a despot and the death of a nation.

Let there be peace for every citizen, justice for every citizen, prosperity for every citizen.

(II) On Reform, Revolution and the Problem President

We live in a formative era. Our nation, the nation of Somaliland, and its social order of democratic dispensation, are under constant threat. We barely survived a voracious revolutionary movement just to be faced by the nightmare in the making that has replaced it. Both threats were born out of the frustration of millions of our brothers in South Somalia and both have shaken Somaliland to the core. Because, and this is important, because the Somaliland system of governance as it evolved under the leadership of president Riyaale in the past few years has weakened the nation like a pillar consumed by termites (sidii UDUB Xar Galay), because the weakened body politic has become too susceptible to adverse encounters of any type.

The mis-government of the nation has turned it into seething pool of explosive conflict, and a breeding ground for revolutionary zest. For those who don't know already a revolution is not the same as a raid from Somalia or Ethiopia. This may happen but it will be an invasion not a revolution. Somaliland united (any nation united) can stand up to any invasion however mighty. A revolution is a different story altogether. By its very definition it is a radical and violent social experiment. Blood is its normal currency, the blood of those who rule first and that of the ruled later when the violence is institutionalized. A revolution is an internal construct, a homemade product; it cannot be imported or exported. It originates, grows and explodes within the body of a nation. The system in Somaliland is pregnant with revolution and dangerously close to eruption. The drumbeat of the impending revolt is deafening. And the president is deaf. To speak plainly the president is oblivious. To speak plainly the president has become the problem of the nation.

So the tribe warns its wayward son. This is no exaggerated prophecy of doom. Power imposes a peculiar blindness on those who come to possess it. Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena met their end in surprise in the hands of bloodthirsty revolutionaries. Mussolini and his wife met a similar fate in Piazzale Loretto in Milan. They never saw it coming. Siyad Barre had to be smuggled out of Villa Somalia in the middle of a dark night to end his days in the misery of exile. Be forewarned son of the tribe. Be thus advised.

And the tribe also bears good news for its son: Reform. Serious reform will heal the president, and the presidency. It will rescue the nation from the edge of the precipice. Serious reform is the effective antidote to the revolution. And this here, this manifesto is guide to reform. Burying the presidential head in sand like an ostrich would not do the job, futile attempts of placing truth in prison will not do the trick and would surely end up being counterproductive. The unjust and vengeful incarceration of Gaboobe, the Nelson Mandela of Somaliland and his colleagues will be nothing but the last straw that will break the back of this presidency. The tribe counsels its son to get the courage of confronting his blunders.

The tribe is wise to this: What has been said so far is not what the President is hearing from the court jesters and carpet beggars that surround him. The main job of these parasitic hangers-on is to soothe the presidential ego, stoke his grandiosity and gloss over the errors of his ways. They do that because that is how they feed. They have to keep the tap running. They are not friends of the President. They are friends of the president's pocket. They are the curse on the African Presidency. And they always manage to disappear on a president the day after.

And the tribe tells its son: Fear not Aweys. Fear not the Aweys inspired. Fear not Yusuf and the memories of the Las. Fear only the intransigence of the human soul that prevents critical self-examination. Fear your court jesters and your carpet beggars. Fear your ego, your grandiosity and your inflating sense of entitlement. Fear the enemy within!

III) On Corruption

Africa is a continent with the highest rate of corruption and worst health and quality of life indices in the world. Africa loses \$150bn to corruption each year. That is 6 times more than the sum total of all the developmental assistance it receives. There are international network of criminal lawyers, Mafiosi, front companies and family members who “assist” Africa’s Robber Presidents to devastate the economy and hope of the continent. Somaliland is no different from the rest of Africa. Indeed here corruption has a semiofficial status with Government ministers openly justifying it as a necessary evil. Every Somalilander has experienced horror stories of corruption at a personal level. Indeed corruption at the local, regional and national levels has reached a level that is no longer compatible with a functioning state apparatus.

Corruption kills. Every \$100 misappropriated steals the life of 10 children who would prematurely die of diarrhea that could have been effectively treated with less than \$10 per child. Corruption is more about indirect murder than it is about theft. Every \$100 stolen condemns 10 children to a life time of illiteracy and darkness. Corruption glorifies theft and makes mockery of decency and hard work. It destroys the dignity, honor and moral fiber of the nation.

Corruption lives in secrecy and thrives in darkness of the night. Public exposure is the most effective tool a nation can deploy against the corrupt. Oppression, intimidation and even assassination of those who

expose the looting are integral to the process of robbing the national purse of a population already half starving to death.

The Gadabuursi tribe takes the stand that corruption is equal to theft; equal to murder of the soul of a nation; corruption is equal to shame and disgrace. The tribe calls the nation to banish this evil from its midst.

The tribe speaks truth to its son: Mr. President you have reached the proverbial fork in the road. The times are forcing upon you choices that you cannot avoid. We believe that you are being ill advised by your carpet beggars of every tribe whose feeding tubes are illicitly bleeding the national purse to bankruptcy. So we, the moral majority of the tribe, give you realistic alternative options out of love, kinship and respect. The choice of course is yours and so are the consequences.

Choose to be accountable and transparent. Open your private books for public scrutiny. Show the nation what you earned and how you earned it. Expect such a level of transparency and accountability from your ministers and other appointed high officials. Practice the politics of honesty and dignity and you will win over the public. Keep in mind this is the code of ethics that prevails among all democratic societies in the world. This is the Gadabuursi way of leadership, the way of Ali Hussein. We want to hear again the beautiful verse “Daacadi Ninkeedi Dishay ...Daawo Gadabuursi”

Un-choose the worn out road of incarcerating those who dare to speak. Such a route leads to nowhere. It is a counterproductive route for it says to the nation at large “look I am hiding something sinister”. It serves as an admission of guilt in the public eye. It is the preferred route for tin pot dictators. It is a direct encouragement to the really corrupt to go wild on the public purse with impunity. It is a Un-Gadabuursi route. Abandon this route of the corrupt lest you be tainted by it. The tribe prays for you to be blessed with the courage of owning up to your faults and the wisdom of self-correction.

No one is above the law. Neither press nor president. That is the beauty of the concept of equality under the law. And so for redress of your personal grievances against members of the media follow the laws of the land. Seek justice as clearly detailed in the press law. Trample not on the laws that you swore to uphold in search of personal or familial vindication.

IV) On Freedom of the Press

The central crisis we face today is not about corruption. It is about the constitution. The Somaliland state has clearly refused to abide by the laws of the nation. It has summarily and unceremoniously set aside the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and free press. It has arbitrarily arrested journalists. By its actions it has nullified central aspects of the constitution at its whim. We are threatened with a situation, once again, where the nation is at risk of falling under the whim of one man. There is no way to sugar coat these facts.

The constitutional crisis is of such a central importance to the existence of the nation that it is no longer President Riyaale’s lone responsibility to resolve. The house and Guurti must take it on to the exclusion of everything else. The three political parties must do nothing else, work on nothing else and think of nothing else until the law of the land is upheld, until the journalists of the nation can work freely without fear of arbitrary arrest and incarceration.

Let it be known to all and sundry. We have to exist as a nation of free people before we can fight corruption or poverty or ignorance or intolerance. It is our freedom that is under immediate threat. All of us are prisoners-in-waiting. We might not be behind bars as yet, but we are not free as long as the three heroes of the nation Gaboobe, Dini and Mohamed Omer Sheikh remain in the dungeons of the state.

The Gadabuursi urges the nation to engage itself in the defense of its constitution, its freedom and its heroic journalists. Freedom is indivisible. Freedom is non-tribal; it is an urgent national cause. We appeal to nation to defend its freedom for without it nationhood becomes devoid of soul and substance.

V. On Freedom of the Airwaves

The tribe reminds the nation that free radio stations are prohibited in Somaliland. In a society with an illiteracy rate of 80% the abolition of Radio services, the only means of communication that does not require reading, is equivalent to the abolition of free speech. This offensive misappropriation of the national will was implemented with a ministerial edict in 2002 in the early days of Riyaale's administration. It slipped below the radar of public awareness and it started the nation on the slippery slope of one man monologues and one man rule. We should have fought back then, for it is the reason why we find ourselves today fighting a battle for our freedom to speak, once again. It is not too late yet, it is never too late. We have won over more formidable foes. We will prevail this time too.

In an August 2006 interview with BBC Somali service President Riyaale openly defended his refusal to allow free radio stations in Somaliland. The president cited the horrific role the private radio station Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) played in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. The president used this as justification for his decision to prohibit free Radio stations in Somaliland. It appears that the great and kind president is determined to prevent Somaliland tribes from massacring each other like the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda.

True RTLM was a private radio station. It systematically laid the ground work for mass murder of close to a million men, women and children of the Tutsi and moderate Hutu of Rwanda. The radio was a symbol of evil and no radio like it should ever be allowed into the airwaves of any nation.

Here is what the president did not tell the public: Radio Mille Collines (RTLM) was launched in 1993, backed by family members of the Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana. It was "privately" owned by members close to the government. It broadcasted its hate message using government owned equipment of Radio Rwanda. It broadcasted nothing but government propaganda. The government of Rwanda used this radio station to prepare the ground for the genocide of the Tutsi. In all but name the RTLM was, like radio Hargaysa, the property of the government of the day and its propaganda mouthpiece. President Riyaale's justification for the prohibition of free speech in the airwaves of Somaliland is therefore only half true. Half-truths are worse and much more deceptive than outright lies.

The tribe calls to the nation's attention that genocide is a totalitarian byproduct, managed, orchestrated and achieved through a monopoly on the word. The prohibition on the freedom of the airwaves represents the biggest threat to the security, peace and safety of the nation. We assume the kind president who is intent upon preventing tribal massacres knows this too. The deception must therefore serve some other purpose; the purpose that has defeated the African state, the purpose of holding on to power at any cost.

Let us keep our eyes on the prize. The historic challenge facing us today is to ensure freedom of speech in all its forms for ourselves and for our progeny. Let us push back against the forces of oppression and opportunism. Let us snatch victory from the darkness of the moment. Rest not until the evil monopoly of the state on the airwaves is defeated. To paraphrase the American motto; Let us live free or die trying!

Tribal Homelands- lessons from the SSC Wars⁵

Abdishakur Jowhar

SSC- Objectively Defined: A well-armed and fierce political-military organization. Acronym: SSC; Sool, Sanaag and Cayn, two regions and one district considered alternatively within Somaliland/Somalia/Puntland state borders; but also tribal homeland for the members of SSC. Objectives: Liberation of the land of Dhulbante people from occupation by Isaak tribes by force; overcoming the neglect of Puntland State by creating an exclusively tribal homeland defended by an armed force independent from all other interests except that of the tribe. Founded: in Nairobi, Kenya in Oct 2009 by a predominantly Diaspora based Somali intellectuals. Leadership of the organization: known as “Hogaanka Badbaadada iyo Midaynta - SSC.” Acronym: HBM-SSC; roughly translated as the council for unity and salvation. Funded and armed primarily by Diaspora based Somalis who believe in its cause and by those who have a vested interest in seeing the fall and dismemberment of Somaliland. Leader: Saleebaan Ciise Ahmed (Xaglatoosiye) A Somali-American. Deputy leader and Military Commander: Colonel Ali Hassan Sabarey a Somali Canadian.

Hadith: On the authority of Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: Two young men were fighting, one from the Muhajirun [people of Mecca] and one from the Ansar [people of Medina]. The Muhajir called out, “Oh Muhajirun!” and the Ansari called out, “Oh Ansar!” The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, came out and said, “What is this call of the people of ignorance?” They said, “Oh Messenger of Allah! It is only two young men who were fighting; one hit the other from behind.” So the Prophet said: “It does not matter. Let a man help his brother whether he is wrong or being wronged. If he is wrong, let him be stopped, for indeed that is supporting him. If he is being wronged, then help him.”

Purpose of this writing: To define the concept of Tribal Homeland and its relationship to the chaos in Somalia and provide an honest evaluation of the ideological basis of SSC within the context of Somalia and Somaliland. To speak as a self-defined Somali, Somalilander and as humanist who wants to add his very humble thoughts to a peaceful dialogue among all Somalis that can help along the birth of a better future for all Somalis who are currently in the clutches of 30 years of wars, rivalry, drought, death and drowning in the high seas.

A confused reading of Somali history

It is bewildering how Somalis are blind to their own history. Or is it that Somalis has no single common history but multitudes of competing and conflicting histories that leaves the Somali stuck in prehistoric tribal struggles, in endless repetition of old follies, and in a state of perpetual disorientation and confusion. SSDF, SNM, USC etc (Somali Salvation Democratic Front, Somali National Movement and United Somali Congress respectively), these tribe based movements of the eighties have indeed defeated the dictatorship of Siyaad Barre in 1990 but their narrow tribal base prevented them from forging a national consensus and in the end they continued on to dismantle the Somali state one brick at a time

5 This article appeared on redsea-online March 03, 2011

exposing the populace to the misery and ruthlessness of chaos, disorder and lawlessness for this last twenty some years.

Why would my brothers in Sool and Sanaag and the rest of the world create a carbon copy of these same failed and deadly organizations 30 years later? Why breathe life into a modus operandi that killed so many of us already. Why SSC? Especially now, when we already know the ugly legacy of those parent S-word titled organizations, that all claimed allegiance to the nation and that really stood for nothing other than narrow personal and divisive and primitive tribal interest.

I clearly foresee that SSC could not and would not be any different in its destructive potential from any of these historical “Somali nationalist” organizations, and movements of the eighties. It is clear in my mind that the destructive power of SSC will be unleashed primarily on Sool, Sanaag and Cayn and on all the tribes who share borders in those regions. I have no doubt that the brothers who created SSC had a genuine interest in peace and dignity for themselves and for all Somalis yet when I consider all possible scenarios facing this nascent organization I see nothing but permanent tribal wars, hate, death and destruction. And I see no hope or salvation from such a miserable fate for people who live in that parcel of disputed territory except if SSC displays the greatness and courage that will lead to its complete, voluntary and unilateral disarmament and its dedication itself to the single cause of the peaceful resolution of the Somali crisis. Nothing less will do! Brothers and sisters of SSC have I not promised to shock? And now let me explain why I come to this bitter conclusion.

The Poisonous and Seductive Sweetness of Tribal Homeland

This war of “liberation” that is being waged by the SSC against Somaliland is based on a single deadly idea that has been introduced into the Somali political thinking in its current lethal form by the armed political movements of eighties that have been instrumental in the destruction of the Somali state. The idea is as potent as it is prehistoric and primitive. It simply states that the members of a tribe, any Somali tribe, collectively own a defined territory, a tribal homeland, which belongs to that tribe and that tribe only to the exclusion of all others. The idea is different from the culturally based tribal land use in which nomads intermittently fought over watering holes and grazing land. It is closer to being a replacement of the state; a kind of tribal sovereignty over territory.

The reality of a modern statehood is quite different. Every citizen equally owns the whole territory of the State. The State owns and has full sovereignty over all the national territory on behalf of all the citizens of the State. Just as the state has the exclusive right to the use of force in imposing this rule on all of its citizens. This is how things exists in the world we live in today. Collective tribal ownership of the land represents a complete and total negation of statehood. The tribal homeland idea cannot co-exist with a modern state. It has to be one or the other. An exception to this rule is when a state with superior power and institutions creates tribal reservations and homelands with the intention of managing, dividing and controlling an indigenous colonized population as is the case in US, Canada and as was the case in South Africa during the apartheid era. Puntland State of Somalia is the most advanced application of this principle on the ground where a Somali tribe (Harti) claims ownership and of vast portions of Somalia. The destruction of Mogadishu in which the USC (United Somali Congress) cleansed the city of other Somali tribes on the basis that it belonged to the Hawiye tribe of Somali was its initial and most violent application. But the idea exists in different forms among all Somali tribes.

It is important for us to understand that it is this simple poisonous tribal homeland idea that is behind the destruction of Mogadishu, the division of Gaalkacayo by a green line, the tribal war in Galgala, in Kalshaale, in Ceelbardale and much more. The disappearance of the Somali Republic and the difficulty Somalis had in reconstituting a Somali state in the last twenty years are both direct results of this potent poison that has all but destroyed South Somalia. SSC represents the first armed and organized spread to Somaliland of the tribal homeland principle but there are increasing signs of the viral spread of this poison to all other tribes of Somaliland and conflict and confrontation are brewing in many flashpoints across the region. If Somaliland were to cease to exist, if it were to follow the route of South Somalia, this potent and lethal idea of tribal homeland will be the underlying cause and the only reason necessary.

Like I have said the idea of a collective tribal ownership of land negates the existence of a state. For a tribe to have its own territory it has to take two essential steps both of which destroy the foundations of statehood. First the tribe has to establish its own tribal force that can impose its desire by violent means if necessary. SSC has already accomplished this goal to the dismay of both Somaliland and Puntland. And second a tribe has to imagine a tribal border for its homeland (for no such borders exist between any two tribes in real life) and force the acceptance of that imagined border on all neighboring tribes. And every tribe has a strange habit of creating its own imagined map in its mind of where their camel drank last season, where the graves of its ancestors are located, where its sons were born and where they heard, from trusted tribal elders, their caravans settled at the time of British colonization or the Turkish invasion ad infinitum. SSC had mandated a tribal collectively owned homeland, it has imagined the necessary borders of that homeland, it has created the necessary tribally based military force to impose that border on neighboring tribes and now it has started to impose that border by peace if possible and by war if necessary.

One has to understand that the SSC wages war on Somaliland, its real story however is that it completes the breakdown of Puntland into three separate states each of which possesses its own armed forces and its own claim of sovereignty over certain territory of Somalia: Maakhir State of Somalia which has declared war on Puntland under the leadership of its Salafi Mullah Shiekh Atom, SSC which has declared war on Somaliland under its secular leaders Mr. Xaglatoosiye and Mr. Sabrey and the remainder of Puntland State under the leadership of Mr. Faroole. Each of three sub states of Harti tribal homeland has a produced a territorial map of its own that will be the basis of conflict and war over the next few decades if the idea of tribal homeland becomes fully established in the region. SSC has started the war on Somaliland but this is just one war, on two fronts. It will have to repeat the same process of territorial demarcation in the north against the Warsangale and in the East against the Majeerteen. This is a long order. Indeed it is nothing less than a call for a permanent conflict in the region for every tribe will have to defend its own territorial map that is quite different from the one drawn by SSC.

Let us suppose that SSC pulls off this mighty endeavor by a combination of good politics and peaceful negotiations all backed by the threat of credible use of the powerful technicals and killer bullets (for what is politics except the continuation of war by more peaceful means). SSC will have then to determine what part of the tribal homeland belongs to Sub-clans A, B, C and D. It has to draw and impose new sub-clan borders and maps. In this process of the ever dividing tribal system SSC will face an irresistible and primitive force that will throw it asunder along sub-clan lines to SSC-A, SSC-B etc. The fact that SSC forces are already organized funded and lead on a sub-clan basis will make this process that much easier.

Do any of these remind you of what happened to Mogadishu in the mid-nineties once the city was liberated as a tribal homeland? Do any of these remind you of the divisions within SNM that devastated Burco, Hargaysa and Berbera in the early nineteen nineties? The tribal organization with its tribal homeland principle is the mechanism by which the best intentions of the advocates of tribal solutions for the Somali problem is translated to the worst outcomes and permanent wars for all concerned.

SSC must read this history and learn from it for it is also its history; that of all of the Somali people and in this regard SSC must think again about the strategic route it has taken that is likely to lead it only to outcomes that Somalis have seen again and again in the last two decades.

A War Fought in the Wrong place

By establishing tribal army in the “tribal homeland” SSC has succeeded to transform this region of Somaliland into a war zone. The Somali tribes-men who have hitherto lived in peace and harmony in this region will now become victims of continuous wars and the central staging ground for raids and counter raids. Many will die in the SSC-Somaliland wars; many more will be killed in wars of tribal revenge and counter revenge and still many more will die as a result of displacement, economic dislocation and the disruption of the nomadic cycle. The primary victims of this war will be nomads who are cousins and nephews. For tribal wars are, by definition wars of proximity in which neighbors kill neighbors. The situation will only get worse if this war is escalated to bigger and bigger tribal groupings for the area of confrontation, the border line between these groups will remain to be the volatile region of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn. And in this process the organization, SSC that was created specifically for the salvation of the people will become morph into the single most lethal harvester of lives. This surely is a war that is being fought in the wrong place. Is this not then a good reason of why The SSC must voluntarily disarm now and not the day after when it is already too late for many of our people?

Fought in the wrong times

Somali tribes reserve the rainy seasons for all of their adventures in tribal bloodletting. They are too busy fighting off the natural enemies of starvation and thirst in times of drought. But the leaders of SSC drink bottled water paid for by Diaspora Somalis who have forgotten what it is like to be thirsty, hungry and desperate for a drop of water to wet parched lips. This war of SSC liberation is launched at the wrong time because its drivers are foreign to the demands of drought and the scarcity of water as it is being led by water-rich naturalized Americans and Canadians who has forgotten the meaning of living in tune with the desert. They are saviors of the tribe who risk becoming its slayers. There are seasons for war and seasons for peace. We need peace now to quench the thirst of our children. We should count how many litres of water we deliver and how many lives we save, not how many lives we sniff out prematurely. The traditional leaders of the tribe know this. SSC must learn this lesson quickly, quickly please.

And seriously I call the SSC to declare a cease fire and to cooperate with all Somalis of all tribes in the process of serving our people in this time of need, of water scarcity, of threatened mass death. I call them to take this step for it is what our people needs. We might indeed disagree on the politics and tactics of the moment but I am confident that the lives of our people are of immense value to all of us. Let SSC take this step today. Cease fire. Cease fire today. And in the meantime let peaceful dialogue take hold and let SSC start the process of transformation into a live giving entity from its current predisposition of being its reaper.

A War Fought with powerful Propaganda

One of the challenges of a good propaganda campaign is that the creators of the propaganda come to believe in its veracity and truth. In the lives of peoples and nations mistaking the unreal for the real is a costly proposition and often a fatal error. The central SSC propaganda is that the organization stands as the first line of defense against the division of Somalia. And the organization has come to believe this literally. Yet just to the contrary SSC is an organization that is dedicated to “protecting” the interests of one Somali tribe. It is engaged in an ordinary, routine and killing tribal war with a lethal twist of a search for tribal homeland that is in essence incompatible with the emergence of a Somali state. Like any other tribal organization it is essentially anti-national, anti-state and pro-chaos. The SSC war is definitely not a war for Somalia. If SSC had indeed the national interest at heart it would have worked hard to attract members from all those who believe in the same ideals of Somali nationalism and there are many in Somaliland of all tribal backgrounds (and this includes a sizable population among the Isaacs). It would have worked hard to create love and harmony among Somalis tribes not hate and tribal rivalry. And SSC would not have created its warlike reputation on the bones and dead bodies of nomads in Sool, Sanaag and Cayn of all tribal backgrounds. There is nothing nationalistic about violent death of nomads who are already dying of thirst.

War on Somaliland

War has been declared on Somaliland by the SSC. This much is clear. There is no ambiguity here. The Somali tribe of Dhulbahante has not declared war on Somaliland. There can be no ambiguity here either. SSC may draw its membership from the tribe but it is based on an idea of Tribal Homelands that is foreign to the tribe and that represents an immense danger to all Somalis of every tribe and every region of the old republic.

Somaliland must not confuse the SSC with the great people of Dhulbahante. The tribe has broader shoulders, deeper intellect and clearer thinkers than the SSC. There is the sizable community in Somaliland who belong to the tribe they should be at the driver’s seat in formulating strategy and tactics of dealing with SSC. Safeguarding the lives of the people of all tribes who live in this region must be the first job of any Somaliland officer of state and of any security officer, soldier or agent. And Somaliland must open a dialogue with no conditions attached with all members of SSC who are interested in such a dialogue, for how can people begin to understand each other without talking and how can one engage in war were thousands can potentially die without exploring if there are more rational and more peaceful alternatives.

Somaliland however cannot afford to accept the concept of tribal homelands. President Silaanyo can only accept tribal homeland solution to challenges that arise in Somaliland if he is prepared to become not only the fourth president of Somaliland but also its last and if he is willing to take the people of Somaliland to the same tragedy that has befallen their brothers in Somalia at large. The acceptance of Tribal Homeland will cause collapse of the state that will consume the east (SSC), the west (Awdal) and the center as every tribe scrambles to take and horde and kill and maim those who stand up to it and its imaginary lines of demarcation on the sand. It will be chaos all over again. It will be death to every member of every tribe all over again.

The colonial border has saved all of Africa from the scourge of useless and ruthless tribal wars. Somaliland is no exception. It has reclaimed its independence on the solid basis of the Colonial Borders of June 26, 1960; the day of its independence. There can be no compromise on this. It is the material basis of the existence of Somaliland and of all countries in Africa. It is what saved Somaliland in the last twenty years from permanent wars that destroyed Somalia. The colonial border represents a call to sanity in Somalia's Mad Max world. It is the alternative to the Tribal Homeland idea with its demand for permanent war in every village. It is an affirmation of the wisdom of the AU principle of keeping the colonial borders intact.

Somaliland must realize that SSC is committed to the idea of a tribal homeland and that it will continue to fight until it has achieved this goal or until it has been defeated. The organization will use every mishap it can get to wage war. If two youngsters throw bunches at one other SSC will scream tribal revenge and wage war, if someone is hurt in a motor vehicle accident by a person of another tribe- war will be waged on Somaliland, and if cousin and nephew disagree on anything SSC will mount an attack on Somaliland to save the pride of the tribe. The purpose of SSC in all of this is to recruit the tribe to join its ranks and embrace the "liberations" of the tribal homeland. The organization will never run out of pretexts.

The antidote to the concept of tribal homeland is a strong state where all the citizens are equal under the law and all the national territory is owned by all the citizens of the state. Building a strong state means building a disciplined war machine that can impose the law of the land on all the individuals and all the tribes in the state, it means building a power structure that is responsive to the public needs. Somaliland must remember the adage of: walk softly and carry a big stick. The lesson Somaliland must learn from the SSC challenge is that the phenomenon represent just the first waves of the many such challenges to the state that will come to arise in all regions of the country. To face the coming danger the state will need a stronger army; a more disciplined, better armed, better prepared and much stronger army than has been necessary hitherto for coming challenges of Tribal Homeland idea will mean that the state must impose its will over all its unruly tribes until the tribes are weakened and citizens of the state are better protected

Appeal to HBM-SSC and to all of my brothers and sisters of the tribe in Sool, Sanaag, Cayn, London, Toronto, New York, Nairobi and everywhere else in the world to listen not only to those who agree with you and who believe in the rightness of THE cause, for that is really easy, but to listen to those dissenting voices from within and without the tribe who read the social and political landscape of the Somali people quite differently. It is all too common in the lives of Somalis to meet and listen to "our" group and not "the other" who are seen at best as foreign and different or treacherous and poisonous enemy within and more frequently as simply "the other, the enemy". But you are our leaders; you have had an instinct and a natural inclination towards the good and the high principles of nationalism and peace from the fateful times of the Darwish revolt to the days of Erigabo, Burco and Borama peace conferences.

I thank you for lending me your ears brothers and sisters for I believe I have been both ruthlessly honest and painfully true in my criticism of the ideas on which the SSC is based. In your hands you hold the lives of many people and you owe it to them to listen and consider all possibilities, to re-examine all strategic and political calculations continuously and tirelessly for the lives in your hands are expensive beyond imagination. We need to heal together and we should do this by forging common ideals and thoughts through peaceful, even if bitter dialogue for we are people whose real battlefields must be the life draining confrontation with drought, starvation, disease, ignorance and the all too common premature death and suffering of all of our people. The battles that we choose to fight must be for water, food,

health, knowledge and human dignity. We do not need bullets and killer knives, we have plenty of death in our hands already, and we need not create any more.



Dr. Abdishakur Jowhar at Hargeysa International Book Fair, 2008. Photo redsea-online.com

Somaliland Recognition- a Rational Solution to the Somali Crisis⁶

Abdishakur A Jowhar

A reflective mood

.... and Somalilanders are in a reflective mood as they prepare for the 20th Anniversary of the birth of their nation. These days there is a sense of contemplation, thoughtfulness and reevaluation in Somaliland circles.

It is in this context that Somaliland premier publisher and intellectual powerhouse Jama Musse Jama has initiated a process of contemplation that can transform this reflection into solid form. He invited a group of Somalilanders, as well as non Somalilander, to put down their thoughts in a book in a manner that Somalilanders, and not only Somalilanders, could share. I have contributed a chapter to the second volume of that book. The first volume of the book will be published on May 18, 2011 to coincide with the celebration for Somaliland independence, and in this short article, I bring to you some of the highlights of my thoughts in this matter.

In this 20th anniversary of its independence Somaliland has no choice but to contend with some poignant geopolitical realities. The commonest descriptor that follows its name remains to be the “Self-declared Republic”; the nation has gained no open endorsement and no international reward for 20 years of independent, peaceful existence in a thriving and stable democracy in a corner of the world with high prevalence of strong men, misery and misgovernment. The nation’s democratic and secular dispensation remains to be the ultimate target of an Al Shabaab movement that is perpetually gaining strength despite the constant predictions of its imminent defeat and demise. And Somaliland finds itself battling Somali pirates in its shores, unruly tribesmen in its hinterland and vengeful scheming Diaspora based tribal aficionados in the virtual world of web pages and blogospheres (read here the nonsensical Awdal Virtual State of Somalia).

Meanwhile the Somali problem has become the epitome of a new version of Murphy’s Law. “In the Case of Somalia whenever you think it cannot get any worse, it invariably will”. And to sour the mood further Somaliland is increasingly becoming the unintended victim of the fatal side effects that arise from the regional and international efforts of managing and containing the Somali problem. The nation may be running out of time, it is likely to become the victim of the good intentions of its neighbours gone badly or it may find its demise in the hands of the benign neglect of its friends elsewhere. Surviving

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containment is in the books for Somaliland but the nation has to start thinking in new and innovative ways to overcome the challenges of the radically different and emerging problem of Containment.

Containment: the practice

Containment has become the emergent international response to the chaos in Somalia. It is based on the logical conclusion that the world is neither willing nor capable of solving the Somali problem and that the Somali people have run out of ideas and steam in finding a solution to the crisis that has decimated their population. Yet the twin problems of Somali Piracy and Somali Al Shabaab movement have become too big to be ignored by the international community for they pose significant risk to the life, liberty and pursuit of free commerce in the region and internationally. And so things have just fallen into place and containment has become the accepted practice, the default position so as to limit the bitter fruits of Somali chaos to Somalis only. It seems as if the same conclusion has been reached in many different capitals of the world simultaneously. When all is said and done the idea of “containment of the Somali problem” provides the best explanatory fit of all or almost all of the recent developments in Somali political, religious and military circumstances. It has successfully dwarfed all attempts at reaching a rational solution or even managing the Somali Crisis. As the Somali proverb says “*Biyo Meel Godan Bay isku tagaan*” (water collects at the lowest point.) Containment became the trough where water collects.

Containment includes many national, regional and international initiatives that have been gradually gathering pace over the last few years. Many of these steps are mundane and preventative steps like the intense attention and search every Somali triggers at every international port of entry and departure.

In Somalia itself containment crystallized into a subdivision of labour among the active participants in the Somali crisis. The containment of Al Shabaab is subcontracted to regional organizations, and local powers (AU, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, Rwanda and Djibouti). They are the countries that have been willing to put boots on the ground and lives on the line. The containment of Somali Piracy in the high seas and on the ground has become the domain of those with floating flotillas of muscle and manpower, those with experience in the world of espionage, subterfuge and cloak and dagger, and finally those with deep pockets and vested interest that impels them to provide the funding necessary for the introduction of Private Military Companies (PMC) into the action. PMCs for those who don't know is the gentler name for what has been previously called the dogs of war and mercenary forces. Saracen International (which may or may not have ended its involvement in Somali problems) is but just one example among those.

Containment of Al Shabaab

The war in South Somalia today is best explained as the regional attempt of preventing the Al-Qaida affiliated Al Shabaab movement of Somalia from breaking out into a formidable regional force that can threaten its neighbours and the world beyond.

AMISOM with its insufficient numbers and anaemic funding was never really in any position to defeat Al Shabaab or to dislodge the group's hold on Somalia although, this was always and continues to remain its public mask. Never the less AMISOM has succeeded in its real task of denying Al Shabaab the glory and psychological boost of taking over the Somali capital while effectively maintaining the fiction of the existence of a Somali Government.

Ethiopia and more recently Kenya has taken on the role of containing Al Shabaab from the periphery with varying degrees of Success. These neighbouring countries, who were at one time victims of the Somali wars in search of Great Somalia and who may still find themselves in a similar situation in the future have taken on with gusto and dedication to the task of containing Al Shabaab to the regions it now holds in South Somalia.

Ethiopia and to lesser extent Kenya employ Somali tribal militia that they train, arm, pay and fully control for this purpose. They surround Al Shabaab with these tribal militias from the north, west and south and the Indian Ocean completes the circle on the east. Tribal militias are volunteer gangsters whose first loyalty is to the ancestral God of vengeance and honour. The Containment militia however are beholden to a secondary master (Ethiopia or Kenya) for their survival. It is in the nature of tribal militia to fight anyone, Al Shabaab or any other “enemy”, provided that they are given a hand against their real enemies that happens to be the neighbouring Somali tribe. That is the nature of the tribal beast. Ethiopia and Kenya understand it well and they have succeeded to put these basal instincts of the Somali tribe to their own good use.

These tribal militias carry different names in various parts of the country. They started life as the militia of Warlords. Sometimes they “elect a president” (usually a Diaspora Somali) and take on the identity of an “xxx state of Somalia”. The xxx stands for whatever name the tribe or sub tribe chooses as an acceptable alternate to its name (Galmug State of Somalia, Maakhir State of Somalia Azania State of Somalia, etc.). At other times they throw on religious garments and become god’s warriors of “Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma”. In the lofty conferences in Nairobi and other high places these tribal militias undergo an ideological abstraction and bureaucratic nomenclature, ending up being referred to as “building blocks”, “4.5”, “Federal Constitution”. It is exceedingly important to deconstruct this terminology for it adds to the confusion of the Somali problem. *Here is the essential description of a tribal militia: Its members all belong to the same tribe. Its leader is from the same tribe. It works out of the traditional tribal homeland. Its internal reason for existence is to defend itself from the neighbouring Somali tribe. It can take any name and fight for any “cause” determined by any sponsor that is willing to arm it and assist it in its primary mission.*

With these innovations and initiatives AMISOM, Ethiopia and Kenya has so far succeeded to contain Somalia’s Al Shabaab Movement to regions it occupies in South Somalia.

Containment: the collateral Damage

Containment is neither as passive nor as peaceful as it sounds. It is an active process of war. It is a low grade chronic warfare that exacts a nagging ever present pain. Containment is a war in which the side that is on the offensive deliberately avoids killer blows and inflicts only small wounds that maim the victim. The intention is to force the victim to die of slow bleeding, starvation and shock. Containment is how the mighty soviet empire was made to collapse under its own weight. To see the modern effect of a war of containment on the body of a nation look no further than Mogadishu, no further than the hundreds of villages that witness the process of containment on a daily basis all over south Somalia. Where are the people of these ghost cities and towns? Why are the morgues full all the time when the streets are so empty, so deserted and so destroyed? The death of Somalis through constant daily bombardment,

shelling, displacement and outright murder of large numbers in the active phases of containment in this unfortunate society has become the norm, a common factor that is simply driven out of the equation.

The invisible wounds exacted by Containment run deeper and further into the culture and psyche of the Somali people. The tribal militias of containment (Tribal Homelands, AKA Federal Constitution. AKA Ahlusuna Wal Jama, AKA 4.5, AKA XXX State of Somalia) create a Somali society that is permanently at war with itself. Tribal forces are incapable of living within a state, any state. Wherever you find an armed organized tribal militia you will also find a complete or near complete absence of the state. The two are mutually exclusive. The invisible wound of containment will be the permanent death of a Somali State. In other words under containment Somalia can exist only in the form of a large number of heavily armed tribes, each at war with all of its neighbours and each dependent on Ethiopia or Kenya for its continued existence. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Somaliland has become the unintended victim of containment as well. The creation of so many tribal militias, the ready availability of funding from TFG and from international and regional sources interested more in the defeat of Al Shabaab and much less in supporting the independence and stability and democracy of Somaliland has created a tribal storm in the heart of Somaliland. The dangling of a Federal Constitution, *which essentially promises each Somali tribe its own state if it is able to establish its credentials by arming itself and fighting against the neighbouring tribe*, has created most immediate and toxic environment for Somaliland. Already tribal wars about demarcation of tribal territories have started in eastern part of Somaliland and already tribal hot heads in the Diaspora has started to agitate for war in Awdal State of Somalia in western regions of Somaliland. Furthermore the arrival of mercenaries (Sercen International) in the Puntland State for the dual purposes of strengthening defences against Al Shabaab and going after the pirate lairs on land has destabilized the delicate balance of guns and bullets in the region and has been an essential element for fanning the flames of tribal wars in Somaliland.

Containment has been effective in minimizing the risk from Al Shabaab towards regional and international participants in the Somali conflict. It has become the death knoll for Somali society and imminent risk to the existence and prosperity of Somaliland.

The Rabi Prophecy

Containment and TFG hoax has allowed neighbouring countries with dubious aims to impose their own designs on Somalia. This tribal sentiment which happens to be the natural inclination of the Somali is fed, armed and inflamed under the direct supervision of Ethiopia and Kenya, two nations that have a vested interest in Somali affairs that may not coincide with that of the Somali people to put it politely.

Ethiopia and Kenya can breathe better now with the concept of Great Somalia dead and its religious reincarnation in the form of Al Shabaab successfully contained. Kenya can now impark in building a democratic society that includes Kenyans of Somali ethnic background. Ethiopia can concentrate on building its infrastructure of roads and dams and electricity as it blissfully waits for its own Tahriir Square moment again with Ethiopians of ethnic Somali origin fully on board. Somaliland agrees with these developments. It wishes for a peaceful co-existence with all of its neighbours. With its own reclamation of its independence on May 18, 1991 Somaliland repudiated completely the concept of Great Somalia. It removed the symbol of Great Somalia, the five pointed star, from its flag and from its other logos. Somaliland realizes that the concept of Great Somalia with its ethnocentric and fascistic flavour has

caused immeasurable misery for all Somalis and for all of its neighbours. The central justification of Somaliland's existence is based on the sanctity of the colonial border on the day of its independence in June 26, 1960.

The role Kenya and Ethiopia are currently playing in Somali affairs however goes way beyond the re-affirmation of the colonial border with Somalia. It appears that the hyena has been selected to guard the sheep. And the hyena is being true to its nature. Meles Zenawi now enjoys the honorary status of Grand Reconciliator of Somalia's warring tribes who have developed an intensity of hate for one another that is many times more passionate than their hate for Ethiopia's "occupation of Somali territory of Ogaden, Hawd and Reserve area." Meles may even be in the blessed state of entertaining the now more realistic thought of ending the land locked status of his nation once and for all.

The more a Somali tribe comes to regard the neighbouring tribes with hostility and fear, the more it sees Ethiopia as its trusted friend and protector and the more the tribe finds irresistible the concept of access to a market of 80 million of Ethiopian customers who may be even ready to help them build a seaport in their part of Somalia and a tarmac road for the tribe that connects them to the heart of the beast. These proposed radial Somali-Ethiopian roads could be expected to have the secondary effect of disconnecting each Somali tribe from those on either side of it, as the tribe's social and economic life integrates more organically with that of Ethiopia.

Somaliland which harbours suspicions against Puntland is ready to share the port of Barbara with Meles. Puntland who is engaged in a dispute with Somaliland on one side and who is suspicious of the motives of the Hawiye to the south is ready to share the port of Bosaso and any other ports that can be developed in the region with Meles Zenawi. Galmudug State of Somalia who has similar mutual tribal hostility to the Somali tribes north and south to it plans to build a seaport in Hobyo and then to build a 172 km tarmac road that will connect that port to Meles Zenawi. And this strange affliction of building seaports and radial roads that end up in Ethiopia is going on at the present time in all the shores of Somalia and Somaliland. Meles is adapting, learning and evolving faster than his predecessor on the Ethiopian crown. Why invade Somalia when Somali tribes are begging to belong and to be protected.

In the late nineteen seventies, just before the wars against Siyad Barre started, the great scholar and pan Somali nationalist Dr. Omer Osman Rabi of Djibouti predicted that Ethiopia will gradually absorb Somali territory and thus achieve its dream of finding access to the sea. Dr. Rabi reached this conclusion by studying the geographical and territorial history of Ethiopia over the last few hundred years. The conclusions of a scholarly analysis that seemed, just twenty years ago, so totally absurd and out of touch with reality appears to be on the verge of becoming real all too soon.

Surviving Containment and Saving the Somali people

There is no doubt that Somaliland has shown an inner resilience, guts and muscle that allowed it to weather many a fatal storm in the past 20 years. It has not only survived but it has prospered and has become a beacon of hope of possibilities that are compatible with life to all Somali people in the horn of Africa. There is no doubt that it will survive this one too aided primarily by its own inner steel and not by any support from any external force.

But Somaliland can and must do more than merely survive this ideological, military and tribal invasion. Somaliland has the promise of bringing something more to the region and to the world at large. It can show the way to an alternative future for Somalis in the horn of Africa and for Ethiopians, Kenyans, and to Djiboutians. A Future that is based on peace not war, on citizens not tribes, on well-established colonial borders not the shifting sands of border disputes, primitive tribes with revenge and murder on their minds; future that can allow Ethiopians, Djiboutians, Kenyans and Somalis to prosper together under the stability offered by the sanctity of colonial borders; a future that precludes invasions of neighbouring countries and the building a future of injustice, cruelty, hostility, oppression and subsequent liberations for future generations.

In this regard it is important to realize that what is unique about Somaliland is not that it lacks the destructive power of primitive tribal urges and tribal bloodletting. It has plenty of these. What is unique about Somaliland is that it has stumbled upon a democratic model of governance that can give space to the rise of the concept of a Somaliland citizenship and that opens up for the Somalilander a wider horizon of moral, economic and political action that goes way beyond the narrow confines of tribal identity, tribal wars and tribal revenge. This model of equal citizenship, of one man one vote has given the republican nomad a means of co-existing with other tribes without resorting to the spear and the club as the only arbiter. Somaliland has guarded this uniqueness of its modern existence with all that is at its disposal. Its first line of defence has been to refuse to participate in all Somali reconciliation conferences precisely because every one of these invitations were delivered on the one condition that Somaliland abandon that which is unique about it and that is central to its peace and prosperity (the concept of democratic dispensation, statehood, citizenship, acceptance of colonial borders and the unequivocal and open rejection of Great Somalia.) The open invitations, the behind the scene conspiracies and the secret offers all demanded that Somaliland join its brothers in Somalia on the basis of its tribal subdivision (as Dhulbahante, Gadabuursi, Isaak Issa, Muse Dhariyo, Warsangale and other tribes of Somaliland) and not as a unitary state. Somalilanders knew that the invitation was the Somali tribal offer of “ninkii rooni reerka ha u hadho” (let us fight it out and let the strongest remain standing) and Somaliland rightfully and appropriately rejected every one of these invitations.

And now the time is ripe for a counter offer. Listed below are the necessary elements for the reconstruction of Somali society. Somaliland can succeed in these tasks even though they appear to impossible at first examination. Somaliland must show the willingness to dedicate itself to this course of action until success is achieved. But there is one caveat. Somaliland can only carry such a heavy responsibility if regional and international forces help it achieve these goals and recognize Somaliland as a separate and independent state. In all other circumstance Somaliland should continue to insist on its statehood and independence however long its international recognition takes and however hard the road becomes for the alternative of melting into the Somali problem poses a much more ruthless future for its population.

The Five Essentials of Reconstruction of Somali Society

1. The military defeat and disarming of all tribal forces, an armed tribe is not compatible with statehood and peace. There can be no compromises here.
2. The military defeat and disarming of all religious groups in a manner that allows space for Salafi, sophism and other versions of Islam to co-exist in peace in a democratic environment.

3. The defeat of piracy at its lairs on land

4. The Resurrection of Somalia in which governance is based on citizenship, not tribal affiliation and land ownership is legally mandated not tribally determined.

5. Open and unequivocal rejection of the concept of Great Somalia and acceptance of the sanctity of colonial borders.

Bringing about such changes to the Somali problem will require both the club and the carrot. It will require many, many dedicated boots on the ground and many more lives on the line. It will require Somalis negotiating with Somalis about the future of Somalis in their own country. Somaliland must start to canvas these thoughts with other Somalis, build the necessary coalitions that could bring it about, avoid the simplistic hair brained “solutions, constitutions, projects, conspiracies and scholarly theses” that are divorced completely from the reality on the ground and the hard work necessary for building a society from the ground up in the field and not in a fancy conference rooms in other countries. Somaliland must allow the means and methodology necessary to complete the task to arise from Somali minds on Somali soil uncontaminated by money, corruption and adverse regional interests. Such consideration must prove themselves real in the harsh hot light of the day in Somalia and on its hard dry grounds where Somalis live, sweat, kill each other and die.

No other nation could be more appropriate, could have deeper commitment, and could be better equipped to deal with the Somali Crisis than Somaliland. No other nation could have a better understanding of the Somali Crisis. No other nation has more profound and fateful vested interest to see the success and rebirth of Somalia. In this initiative Somaliland will be driven by kinship, by self-interest and by economic and military necessity.

... and finally can the world listen to the pleas of Somaliland finally.

Somaliland: “The Presidential Election Race is Over and Everyone is a Winner”⁷

Abdishakur Jowhar

The title is from Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland* a novel populated by fascinating wisdom and improbable events. The story of Somaliland does look like a dream. Here is an unrecognized state, developing its own brand of an undoubtedly thriving democracy in the midst of an environment most hostile to representative governance (Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Yemen, Eritrea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and the list goes for thousands of miles to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south). One has to pinch himself every now and then to realize that Somaliland really exists and this free and fair election is really no dream.

According to the independent and highly revered Somaliland National Electoral Commission’s (NEC) declaration: the results of the presidential election held on June 26, 2010 indicate that Mr. Ahmed Silanyo of the Kulmiye party has won the election by a whopping margin of 16 % above his closest competitor; the incumbent, President Dahir Rayaale Kahin of the UDUB party. The third actor in this electoral drama Mr. Faisal Ali Waraabe of UCID trailed way behind both. This was just the high lights the election itself tells a different story.

President Rayaale won by losing the election: He was defeated resoundingly some would say humiliatingly. Even with the roundly condemned and illegal use of the public purse for his own campaign more than 67% of the voters rejected him. Nevertheless Rayaale is a winner today, perhaps the biggest winner of all for he has done that which few of his African counterparts ever did; he bowed to the will of the people and unequivocally accepted of the results of an election that kicked him out of office. In this one action he has cleared himself of all the misgivings the nation held against him. Rayaale who was the accidental president of the nation has now become its unexpected hero. We will remember that he gave us 4 elections; all internationally certified as free and fair. We will remember the 5 years of peace, legitimacy and democracy of his first term of office 2003-2008. And we will forget the last two years of his rule, time he has stolen from the nation through underhanded means. Rayaale, our president, our hero.

Faisal Ali Waraabe won on the principle: For it is his idea of multi-party system, his unwavering insistence on voter registration and his steadfast support for the concept of one man one vote to replace the machinery of chaos and tribal horse trading that has served the nation so well. That a meager 17% of the voters thought he was ready for office is called the wisdom of the masses. And I, a staunch supporter of the man, bow to the verdict of the people. He came up with innovative ideas and he is willing to pay the price for daring to dream at the polling booth. Faisal our leader, our visionary.

Silaanyo won the Election: He weaved together a winning coalition of opposing ideas, interests, views and tribes. He organized an efficient and lean electoral machine. He raised the highest funds, worked the

⁷ This article was published in July 4, 2010

hardest to win over those who doubted his leadership. He was not afraid of surrounding himself with strong personalities with their own agendas and their own followers. He danced circles around the competition; “floating like a butterfly, stinging like a bee” like Mohamed Ali Clay. He won by a knockout punch and when the dust settled his opponents could only hold their heads in wonder. Long live the president.

And Saylici won the Election: Silaanyo’s vice presidential candidate is the youngest among all those who were running in this election. An unknown quality at the time, he elbowed out the more experienced and highly regarded politician/liberator Abdirahman Aw Ali for a chance to run as the VP of Kulmiye. And he delivered. He challenged Rayaale in his own home turf. He broke the barrier of fear imposed on the people by Rayaale’s secret police. He liberated the mind of the people and showed Rayaale for what he really is a paper tiger. He allowed his party Kulmiye to present itself to this liberated mind of the public and facilitated it to be seen as the savior of the nation and of peace. In so doing Saylici performed the miracle of healing the spirit of the nation. Long live the Vice President

The people of Somaliland won: For they proved themselves to be masters of their own destiny, for they won the dignity of the citizen and shed the ugly stigma of tribal hatred. And to top it all they had 21 days of the best party and fiesta seen in Somaliland. In this land of political junkies the pure entertainment value of the election campaign matched the power of a world cup in Soccer only it was played in every hamlet, town and village of Somaliland and everyone was a player; endless hours of debate, enthusiastic campaigning and massive peaceful turn out cleansed souls and minds of the populace. This peaceful show of people’s power, this extravaganza of democratic process delighted the nation and buried the deadly tribal thirst for blood and gore. The battle continues but the nation will live!

And the people of Somalia won; For this peaceful election, this smooth transfer of power, this miracle next door achieved by fellow Somalis who speak like them, look like them, walk like them and believe like them establishes once and for all a very basic fact: the problem in South Somalia is not the people but the poverty of thought of its political elite and the bankruptcy of the concept of Greater Somalia. There will be life after the Somali Republic.

GEESI LOO HANWEYNAA

(A tribute to my hero Dr. Abdishakur Jowhar)

Bashir Goth

Hearing of the death of Dr. Abdishakur Sh. Ali Jowhar struck me as a thunderbolt out of the blue. At no time can one be prepared for death but at times like this it is simply unbearable. The following eulogy poem is therefore a tribute to my friend, eminent scholar, unique thinker and philosopher, medical doctor and above all my irreplaceable intellectual soul mate and hero who was snatched by an untimely death in a tragic and unforgivable car accident on one of Somaliland's deathtrap roads, between Dilla and Borama, on 13th May 2012.

Dr. Jowhar was a man blessed with the gift of gab and it was our mutual love for words and ideas that brought us together. It is therefore imperative that I remember him in the way he knew and respected me best, as a poet. In time, I will write an obituary about him to share his life as I knew him with his fans and the general public but now let me try to touch on his character, his intellectuality, his passion, his bravery, his kindness, his wisdom, his patriotism, his rebellious thought and his modesty as well as his humor, his sarcasm and his flare with language in the following poem: Geesi Loo Hanweynaa (A Greatly Sought After Hero).

Geeriyeeey gableeyaay

Gudcur iyo habaareey

Iyadoon lagu gogol

Oon gu'ba lagu tirin

Waxad soo guclaysood

Kolba guri mug weynaa

Goloftood ku heestaba

Miyaad goor xun socodeey

Maantana gab soo tidhi

Ood gabi hadhweyniyo

Geed lagu nagaa iyo

Gumbur lagu dahsoonaa

Geesi loo hanweynaa

Gab intaad ku soo tidhi

Gaar nooga qaaddoo

Goonyaha dhulkaygiyo
Gayigii u ooyoo
Shakuur lagu gunaanaday...

Maxaan gabay idhaahdaa
Miyuu ii guntamayaa
Godka uu baneeyiyo
Gabalaaxsigiisii
Gololuhuu fadhiyi jirey
Gereerka erayadu
Qiimihiisi gaarkii
Miyuu gudi karaayaa...

Qalinkaygu gaydhada
Miyuu guulihisii
Goohiyo dayaankii
Geesaaska sheekada
Siduu yahay gammaan faras
Qoraalkuu galbini jirey
Gibladiyo ciyaartiyo
Gurxanka iyo loolkiyo
Wilwilaha ku goyn jirey
Weedhuu gorfeeyaba
Guuxuu ka tegi jiray
Goolkuu ku dhalin jirey
Miyuu gaadhi karayaa...

Geesi baan abiidkii
Geeridu ka raagine
Goortii la joogaba
Guubaabadiisii
Gurmad caymadkiisii
Gaadh ilaaladiisii
Guryo oodistiisii
Gacal ururintiisii
Miyaa galalawgiisii
Durba loo go'doomoo
Gar allee la tebayaa

Goobtuu dhex joogsado

Gole oogistisii
Hadal godolintiisii
Gar wanaajintiisii
Talo loo gudboonyahay
Gorfo buuxintiisii
Garaad xoorintisii
Miyaa garashadiisii
Durba loo go'doomoo
Gar Allee la tebayaa

Jowharow waxaad guddo
Gogoshaad ahaydiyo
Beel gardaadintaadii
Dareen garashadaadii
Cilmigaagii gaankii
Waa loo goblamayoo
Goobtaad banaysaa
Jiilaal ka soo galay

Geeridu xaq weeyee
Somaliland gaar
Iyo guriga Soomaal
Gaban yar iyo waayeel
Geed kastoo la joogaba
Gacmahaa la hoorshoo
Gurayo hoyashadaadii
Guus iyo quraan iyo
Ducaa lagugu geebaray

Guudkeeda dunidani
Intaad joogtay gacallow
Waajibkaagii gudatee
Guryaheeda aakhiro
Galihii firdowsaad
Gama' oo ku waar nabad.

Bashir Goth, 13th May 2012.