

# NEW DALKA

Your Somali current affairs and culture monthly

## Contents

**The *Dalka Diarist*—  
a brief round-up of  
Somali politics in  
the last month...4**

**Between the Politics  
of the Belly and  
Pastoral  
Democracy?: The  
State of Politics in  
Somaliland by  
Mohamed Haji  
Ingiriis...5**

**Dispatch from  
Mogadishu by  
M.D....10**

**The history of the  
Somali trade unions  
(Pt.2) by Abdulkadir  
Ali Bollay...14**

**Clannism: The  
conundrum of  
Somali politics? by  
Liban Ahmad...17**

**Clarification:** *We will always try to be as accurate as possible and where we err, to correct ourselves. In the last issue, we wrote that a former Somali president sardonically used to refer to the BBC as "Been Been Sheeg"; a number of friends corrected us, recalling they knew the phrase as "Been Been Sii".*

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## Letter from the Editor

Anyone with even the faintest knowledge of Somali music will be familiar with its alluring love songs. But looks, as the besotted will tell you, can be deceiving. Almost without fail, before the song's end, some interesting quirk turns what was once a promising tale to its tragic end. Somali lyricists—composing what are now the “classics” in the late-twentieth century—typically chose their ‘endings’ from a set of possibilities, though by no means exhaustive list. Often, the love would be unrequited, recoiling on its initiator. In other instances, one of the parties would set off on a long journey, bringing the courting to a interludial hiatus. But these tunes had meaning for more than just the lovelorn. Musicians, trying to subvert some of the constraints of censorship, used their bittersweet tunes as subtle commentaries on the social, political and moral realities of life in late-twentieth century Somalia. “Ah,” this Editor has often heard from others, listening to any song from those halcyon days, “I wonder what political event prompted this ballad?” “Yes!” another might interject. “I know exactly who *that* estranged lover was meant to represent!” Sometimes, no love was lost between the devotees: it was a diatribe against a certain person or group of people all along.

The last month has been particularly busy in the world of Somali current affairs. A number of events in close succession—first, Bariire and then the arrest and extradition of Qalbi Dhagax—have detained the Somali imagination. Like the besotted, Somali websites and social media groups were talking of little else.

But, much of the online discourse—on all sides—was characterised by flights of fancy, bouts of high intensity, but ultimately unsustainable, passion. Discussants often waded in with their contributions, often based on snap judgements rather than careful

deliberation. Like much of social media, they seemed to make a virtue of rage and aggression.

Reflecting on this state of affairs, in conversation with one thoughtful Somali, the present Editor was left asking whether excitability gave away a lack of intellectual commitment to a cause. No sooner had people started talking about Bariire than when it was forgotten, buried by another issue. Why is it that our attention spans are as long as headlines, only to be snatched away or diverted by yet another breaking newflash?

Bringing about something worthwhile—whether that be change, tangible results, accomplishments or answers to pressing questions—takes time and without a doubt, commitment. Rome, after all, was not built in a day. As a monthly, *New Dalka* enjoys a pronounced advantage over other titles and outlets. Going to press once a month means, unlike others, we are not in the business of providing round-the-clock news, which tends towards sensationalism and in fact “news-making” on the part of journalists eager to make a splash.

But that does not mean we are not in a race against time. Producing one issue a month, of high-quality, insightful journalism, with a modest editorial team poses its own challenges. If as the phrase (of obscure origins) goes, ‘A week is a long time in politics’, then it can be reasonably assumed that working against a monthly cycle allows us to defy the stereotypes and dig deep, much deeper in fact, than the headlines and the attendant histrionics.

We believe that standing above the fray will endow our magazine with vision, which will hopefully be noticeable in the publication, in both form and content. To describe something or someone as a visionary carries with it connotations of creativity, insight, ► *Continued on p2*

prescience. It is often associated with the Somali phrase *aragti-fog*, which can be literally translated as 'long-sightedness' or foresight.

The sense conveyed in all these cases is breadth of vision; in other words, not being taken in by the minutiae and the finer details but being able to 'see the bigger picture'.

Rather naturally, opting for breadth imposes limitations of another kind. It means, for instance, particularly given the constraints imposed by time and a modest editorial team that we cannot expect—or be expected—to cover everything and anything. Where appropriate, however, each article will, amidst tackling an elected topic, issue or development, make reference to relevant matters beyond its immediate scope. This synthesis is best on show in the *Dalka Diarist* segment, which appears for the first time in this, the third issue. A digest of some of the major political events over the last month, it makes the connections which others have missed, hopefully stimulating further discussion.

Articles, it is worth pointing out, are not the last word on any given matter. Given the variety between them, some—such as features on a certain aspect or event in history—may be more conclusive than others, say, an Opinion piece. For instance, one Letter to the Editor, written in response to an article in the last issue, is reproduced here, querying as it does the interpretation proffered by the writer of that particular piece. It is then followed by a response from the Editor.

This issue also gladly carries an article by one of our loyal readers, who had originally written a Letter to the Editor too, which was included in the second issue. We hope that more of our readers will consider sending in their much valued contributions. To date—and indicative of the standards of transparency to which we adhere—we have published every article submitted to us. The efforts of the editorial team are thereby supplemented by contributors from farther afield. In this way, our publication, by way of suggestions, contributions and correspondence

retains a unique vitality. There will, naturally, be those who will try to 'read between the lines', trying to find (with no success, we can assure you) of slant, prejudice or bias within our pages and in our coverage. As long as submissions are factually correct, reasonable and proper—that is, they are not libellous or slanderous—they will get published. Although articles are the sole responsibility of their writers and do not reflect the opinions of *New Dalka*, the editorial team tries to be as even-handed and fair as possible. In the *Dalka Diarist*, for instance, we sympathise with some of the recent criticism of the Federal Government, while calling those same detractors to their senses, cautioning that they should have waited to establish the facts before launching off into diatribes. Indeed, if, in the heat of the moment, we prove ourselves inclined more to fieriness than to facts, one may lay themselves open to the charge of being personally-driven by point scoring rather than a commitment to the reality. Equally, while we give air to an article which looks unfavourably upon the legacy of the outgoing administration in Hargeisa, we also find space for a piece which acknowledges, somewhat in passing, some of its more enduring successes.

Thus, since all articles are a reflection of their writers' opinions and since most articles' authors are named, readers are encouraged to interrogate these pieces for themselves. The editorial team, for instance, hold their own reservations with regard to the odd statement here or there. Hosting a plethora of views—however conflicting and varied they may be between themselves—allows us to see things from different perspectives, avoiding the trap of the the modern world, with its soundbites and the risk of living in echo chambers. Was, for example, one writer right to write in a fairly critical tone about a certain category of veteran politicians for the role they played in the Siad Barre regime, before eventually opposing it? Equally, is another writer justified in speaking in congratulatory tones about the way the peace was kept in the self-declared self-declared republic through local reconciliation conferences, thereby

allowing them to overcome the conundrum which afflicted the rest of Somalia, namely clannism. Does this argument fail to note, for instance, that other factors could have been at play which led to different outcomes in Mogadishu and Hargeisa; demography, particularly in a discussion about the phenomenon of clannism, being an important variable between the two contexts? Could said writer have done more to mention and interrogate instances of clannism in the self-declared republic of Somaliland, particularly against the marginalised communities, as well as other clan communities, cases of which have been recently well-advertised through Somali cable television and social media? Why does, the author could have asked, clannism—acting alongside other factors, no doubt—inhibit the brokering of peace in Mogadishu and why is relative peace flourishing in Hargeisa in spite of the same factor? Is it, as suggested earlier, to do with the demography question?

These questions and many others require that all of us think long and hard. Soundbites and social media raging will, unfortunately, not suffice.

Last month saw the tenth annual book fair take place in Hargeisa; this month, the second annual Mogadishu Book Fair and July, the second annual Garowe Book Fair. At both these literary festivals, among the books of poetry, biographies and histories were a great number of novels, written in Somali. This literary form—if one is to excuse the pun—is somewhat of a novelty in Somali literature, not forgetting of course Faarax M. J. Cawl's *Aqoondarro waa u nacab jacayl* published in 1974. As those novels find their way to bookshelves and land into the hands of eager readers, one can hope they can literally and figuratively rewrite the political discourse, from being like love songs, characterised by momentary sallies of passion, but the calm, considered pen of the novelist and the complex narrative it produces, stretching across many pages, chapters, traversing innumerable scenes and scenarios.

# Letters to the Editor

**Dear Editor,**

Congratulations again in the quick development of *New Dalka* Magazine's second edition. *New Dalka* took its shape and grew to a more in-depth magazine. May I suggest you add a section listing books on Somali territories, new and old. Keep up the good work.

**M. D., Mogadishu**

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

**Dear Editor,**

Congratulations on the second issue. It is informative but perhaps a bit too academic in content and a little light on new ideas. I am certain that will improve with time. One small correction: in the article about the name of Somalia, the author refers to the European powers dividing the land of the Somalis into five parts. It is very important to be historically accurate in this regard and remember that Ethiopia participated in this great European land grab and obtained the Ogaden and perhaps part of the Haud. Ethiopia was as much a colonial power vis-a-vis the Somalis as Britain, France and Italy. One humorous point, while a digression, should be mentioned. Experts in tectonic plates predict that in approximately 25 million years the Horn of Africa will split off from the African continent along the Rift Valley and move into the Indian Ocean. If Somalis have been unable to unite by then, they will have their own massive island with all of the disparate Somali groups somewhere surrounded by water and free from interference by neighboring countries. All of Somalia should begin building up their navies now in preparation.

I would like to read articles by Somalis in the diaspora and the reasons why they returned, want to return or do not want to return, what activities (government or private business) they are engaged in and their impressions of Somalia. Conversely, I would like to read about the attitudes of Somalis who have stayed in the country toward the diaspora Somalis who have returned.

I would also like to read articles about entities that are truly pan-Somali regardless of where they are located, whether in Somalia or

Somaliland. For example, it is my understanding that the Fistula Hospital in Borama accepts Somalis from all over (and not just Somaliland) and will provide medical service free of charge if the patient is unable to pay. A story about such generosity and treatment of all Somalis would be helpful in beginning to create a unifying spirit among Somalis.

I would also like to read articles about ideas from Somalis about how to begin to restore a sense of all Somalis being one people rather than the tribal fiefdoms, districts and regions that are prevalent today. I look forward to the next issue of *New Dalka*.

**Martin Ganzglass, Washington D.C.,  
USA**

## **The Editor responds:**

Thank you for your insightful email. Your discussion of the tectonic plates is most interesting and could well warrant a feature of its own in future issues.

As for Ethiopia's role, yes, you are right. The whole issue hinges, in this Editor's eyes at least, on a nuance. While Ethiopia was involved in the attempts to grab land inhabited by Somalis and was ultimately a beneficiary of the decisions taken at the Berlin Conference, it did not have representatives at the Conference itself. It would seem, then, that it was not literally involved in deciding how things were divided up. Certainly, the idea that Ethiopia was an imperial—indeed, imperialist—power vis-à-vis the Somali people has enjoyed wide currency, even in the academic literature for quite some time. Moving forward, however, could it be more worthwhile to frame Ethio-Somali interactions and contestations over at least the last couple of centuries—in as far as those identities have any salience, of course—within the context of two neighbouring peoples? History, of course, is replete with many examples of neighbours, who share long-standing rivalries. Would the iconic and decisive Battle of Waterloo, for instance, have taken place without the build-up of tension during the earlier and then the Second Hundred Years' War, particularly between the United Kingdom and France?

From such a close-up perspective, can the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopian exercise in grabbing Somali-inhabited land then also be seen as part of a much longer-running historical narrative of at least a couple of centuries, which became entangled—propitiously in Ethiopian eyes, regrettably in Somali ones—in the “Scramble for Africa” and part of that, the division of Somali territories?



Over the last month or so, the 'Qalbi Dhagax' saga—the arrest and extradition to Ethiopia of a Somali citizen, who is understood to have served in the Somali National Army in the Seventies and Eighties—has consumed the attention of Somalis around the world. There have been those who have spoken adamantly against the Government, especially the President and Prime Minister; others, for different reasons, have withheld their criticism, claiming they needed more information to make a judgement or that to topple the sitting administration would be a step backwards for the country's progress.

What has been lacking, however, has been a centrist position, which assessed the situation on account of the known facts. Without a doubt, to cast judgement—either in support of someone or in opposition to them—without any appropriate understanding or consideration of the facts is not to be encouraged. What readers can perhaps agree on, wherever they stand on the issue, is that the Government's position was not helped by its prolonged silence on the matter. Such deafening silence leaves the airwaves vacant for others to speak out and 'make the news', fashioning a chain of events to suit their own interests.

Do we yet know the facts of the case? To this writer, there are a number of unknowns which are prerequisites for any action to be taken. In the absence of a trial, what were the grounds for the extradition? Many have noted that the concerned citizen—whose sobriquet one gentleman recasted as 'Qalbi Saliim', cautioning that we do not know whether the nickname in wide circulation is welcomed by its bearer and certainly does not ease the task of those doing his bidding!—was not involved in any activities for at least a number of years which could have made him wanted by

any country. Another important unknown has been the chain of command responsible for giving the orders in the whole process. Did some detractors err in placing the blame at the feet of the President and the Prime Minister? Are they complicit simply by their position of authority in the country? Indeed, these commentators believed that the Government's leaders had erred either way: either they had been complicit in the whole process or, more worryingly they claimed, the Government did not command sufficient control in the country, if an event of such a scale could take place under its nose without its knowledge.

One only need look at any contemporary map of Somalia to discover the Federal Government's

authority deficit, as it fights for control of the country not only against Shabab but also the devolved administrations, which many believe—as an increasing number of them which are speaking out in support of the Saudi-UAE alliance against Qatar—overstep the mark.

As it tries to recover and rebuild after two decades without a functioning state with thoroughgoing governmental apparatus, Somalia's people—in as far as one can take the online discussions across a number of fora as indicative, in a general way, of national consciousness—are increasingly speaking in a legalised language. The extradition (or at the very least, the process followed), some argued, was illegal—in direct violation of the standards of international law. While a move towards doing things by *laws* is to be encouraged, particularly after such the long period of lawlessness, certain trends stand in the way of this encouraging development. After the Bariire incident, many

were up in arms, seeking to call those responsible to account. But this process was cut short. According to a well-placed source, The Powers That Be paid bloodmoney to the families of the victims of the assault. This may seem a return to the nineteenth-century, where *diya* payments were common practice among warring factions and clans, competing over scarce resources such as waterholes and grazing land. If the Big Powers are being forced to solve disputes under a tree, whither the future—and can one hope that such things will soon enough be solved at a table, preferably on the floor of the nation's courtrooms and Parliament?

An interesting dimension in the criticism of the Government has been between

# Dalka Diarist

those who live in Somalia and those who live abroad, in the diaspora. There was certainly a sense on social media that the bulk of criticism came from those in the diaspora. What explains this phenomenon? One commentator felt that the *dayuusbaro* are given to hyperbole because they are so removed from the reality on the ground.

On social media, one well-known journalist, who lives in London, was openly reprimanded by those in Somalia, advised to withhold his criticism, being told something to the effect “you have two countries; we only have one”.

Does living abroad compromise one's commitment to the truth? The import of this message was that any challenges on the ground—be that the downfall of the current administration because of these sagas—would affect those within the country's borders and to a lesser extent, if at all, those further afield. Is this a reasonable supposition? Are those in the diaspora to withhold their criticisms unlike they take the plunge and resettle back at home?

# Between the Politics of the Belly and Pastoral Democracy?: The State of Politics in Somaliland

*With Somaliland's elections*

*scheduled for November fast*

*approaching, Mohamed Haji*

*Ingiriis discusses the state of affairs*

*in the self-declared republic and*

*examines the legacy the elected will*

*inherit*

There is little questioning that at present, Somaliland is swimming under dangerous waters, which are full of sharks. Ahmed Egal, the son of the great Somaliland leader Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, recently penned a brief paper about contemporary Somaliland, arguing that it is between a rock and a hard place **(1, Endnotes, p.9)**. In this briefing paper, I will argue that the dot connecting the rock and the hard place is the interplay between clannism and cronyism. Aside from the scathing criticism that Ahmed Egal levelled at the outgoing president, the ageing and ailing, Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud 'Ahmed Siilaanyo' rather than the state system over which he so painfully presides, Egal constructs a provoking critique, which measures the performance of the current administration against previous ones **(2)**. Local civil society groups maintain that the most pressing political problem currently facing Somaliland is the absence of any real desire on the part of competing political players to serve the people **(3)**. The direction Somaliland has taken under Siilaanyo's leadership has caused disillusionment both among the public and those pundits who have for long advocated for

Somaliland's secession to the international community by commending its hybrid state system, which combines both modern and traditional political structures **(4)**. In essence, as things stand, the experiment of the Somaliland state formation seems a strange application of the power detailed in Ioan Lewis's classic *A Pastoral Democracy* **(5)**.

The romanticisation of the hybrid state system long popularised in the literature lost its lustre as the modern component of the state, most notably the executive branch led by Siilaanyo from behind the shadow of his family, not only overwhelmed the judiciary and legislature, but also rather ironically the House of Elders, the *Guurti* too, by politicising and thereby delegitimising it **(6)**. Some lobbyists in Somaliland argue that lack of tact on the part of the *Guurti* allows for it to be bought off with little difficulty **(7)**. Equally, there are some others who believe that 'the inclusion of traditional authority in Somaliland's government is a reason for [the] lack of recognition' **(8)**.

For although the *Guurti* has played a critical role in negotiating inter-clan disputes and helping to keep the peace since the early-1990s—in fact, being an indispensable agent in helping the self-declared republic to avoid lapsing into the civil war which beset Somalia—its very nature as a body of traditional elders makes the polity seem at odds with modern democracy. The calls for the *Guurti* to become an elected legislative body are gaining ground.

The constant contestation between the *Guurti* (upper house) and the Parliament (the lower house) also reinforces such calls for a change in the system **(9)**.

In the past, far from being a nuisance, the *Guurti* under the authority of the former leader Sheikh Ibrahim Sheikh Yusuf Sheikh Madar made President Egal accountable for his political activities in the 1990s and even the early 2000s. In order to impress upon President Egal their ability to hold him accountable, the *Guurti* generated political tension, which forced Egal to submit his resignation papers to them, before they summarily refused to accept it, instead extending his term until such a time that Somaliland was ready for presidential elections. In so doing, the *Guurti* prevented Somaliland from plunging into state collapse as was then the case in southern Somalia but all the while, inadvertently, setting a precedent for the personalised presidential system rather than the institutionalised state system, a trend which has only been continued in subsequent years.

The success of the Siilaanyo family in dominating the *Guurti* can best be analysed both through a political economy and cultural lens, given the importance of both these dimensions in Somali politics. Firstly, the commercialisation of the state system has made it the main income-generating machine, which can be used to provide

opportunities for lucrative contracts, at both the local and international levels without any real contest, to those who do a favour for the President and his inner circle. This patron-client network, whereby those at the very heart of power enrich themselves and then distribute wealth and power to their subordinates, seems to have enticed many, if not most, of those currently in the *Guurti* as well as in the Parliament.

Added to that, the close clan genealogy of Siilaanyo and the current Head of the *Guurti* Saleebaan Mohamoud Aden 'Saleebaan Gaal'—who despite their history of clashes, both hail from the same sub-clan—contributes to how the *Guurti* has become an extension, perhaps, even a reflection, of the different political factions within the presidency, the so-called *musdambeedka* (the backseat drivers) (10). Even if Saleebaan Gaal had his eyes fixed on the presidential seat at the same time as when Siilaanyo was in the long torturous marathon, the better organised political players from the sub-clan in the inner circle of Siilaanyo, like the minister of the presidency Mohamoud Haashi, the most powerful of all Somaliland ministers, could definitely speak to Saleebaan Gaal in a vernacular localised language to which he would unhesitatingly conform—that's to say, that the protection and preservation of the sub-clan's interests are *muqaddas* (sacred) and *lama-taabtaan* (uncontested) (11).

Many internal opposition groups of the President's sub-clan were gradually convinced by him to support or even join his government, thereby allowing them to obtain more clout. The charismatic female politician Faduma Said described the current situation rather bluntly, saying:

*"Today we are not talking to a government, because there is no genuine government [in Somaliland]. For this is a government whose destruction and illegitimacy is clear to see.*

*[Applause]. Those who are in power today are a small group. They are a bandit group. No one knows who they are and they themselves do not know how to feel sympathy with the people. They do not have any sense of propriety. They do not feel empathy and they do not sympathise with the people, the women, the children, the flag, the state, and the SNM [Somali National Movement]. In short, they do not sympathise with anyone!" (12).*

Certainly, political power and material resources are prized assets and there is fierce competition for them all over Somalia, a contest no less evident in Somaliland. But what is unique in Somaliland is how it has managed to institutionalise the commercialisation of the state without violence. Whilst Somaliland has achieved relative stability out of the ruins of the collapsed Somali state, as the rest of the polity slid into disintegration, this does not necessarily mean that it possesses better governance structures than the latter. Rather, it is all about how politics is skilfully managed and ultimately, which state system is adopted. The Somaliland authorities managed to forestall the eruption of violent competition for power, which befell most of Somalia, and impose a monopoly on violence.

But peace in Somaliland as is the case with its neighbour Puntland means the absence of war. Here, as in the foregoing analysis, in order to appreciate the situation on the ground, an awareness of cultural factors is important. The relative peace in Puntland is, in no small part, facilitated by the region's demography, with the entity largely serving as a political platform for the political players drawn from the main clan resident there. The absence of diversity in the region's population limits the jostling for power and resources more common in other parts of the country. This however is not equitable

arrangement; besides the increasing incidence of intra-clan friction, power and resources are not satisfactorily shared with other clans (13, 34a).

Similarly, in Somaliland the local politics is heavily dominated by the Habar Awal political players, particularly the Sa'ad Muuse sub-clan, most of whom are economically invested in the continued stability of Somaliland. Indeed, the predominance of this sub-clan is easily apprehended when one notes that without the backing of the Sa'ad Musse economic actors in Hargeysa, no president can easily hold onto the Presidential Palace. This has led to a serious suspicion that the recognition of Somaliland would most likely enrich certain (sub)clans, creating anxiety among other rival clans. This impression is granted credence by the fact most staunch unionists in Mogadishu, who hail from the clans and communities that constitute Somaliland, hail from the Garhajis (Habar Yoonis and Idagalle), who have traditionally felt 'deprived not only of political power but also of economic opportunities' in the breakaway republic (35a). In contrast, it is almost impossible for one single clan to dominate the others in Mogadishu. It is this crucial factor, which can in large part, be understood to be at the heart of the recurring conflicts in southern Somalia, as different groups either vie for dominance, resist (real or perceived) domination or a combination of the two.

## The Belly Politics

The transformation of the Somaliland state system—morphing from the hybrid system to a shallow system of patron-client relationship—is indeed worrisome. Even the sheikhs at mosques—largely out of the political equation in Somaliland in contrast with southern Somalia—began to publicly preach



a rejection of the practices of the inner circle at the heart of Siilaanyo's administration.

Sheikh Aden Siiro's condemnation of the culture of chronic corruption as well as his constant calls for finding pious leadership genuinely serving the society should not be taken lightly **(14)**. There are growing grievances from the public vociferously complaining about how power positions have become unaccounted for, morphing almost into an illicit, income-generating apparatus where every ambitious politician is intent on acquiring his slice of the state resources **(15)**.

It goes without saying that no one understands this better than the former Macalester College professor Ahmed Ismail Samatar who seems to have persuaded himself to join the race for resource accumulation by associating himself with those in power. Samatar himself seems to confirm this accusation by publicly attaching himself to those who have the means and the manpower to win and hold onto power **(16)**, known locally by an Arabic term for the ruling party: the *xisbul xaakinka*. Samatar reasons—and he may well be correct in coming to this conclusion—that, even if they lose the upcoming November elections, which at present does not look like it will happen, power and money lie on the side of the Habar Awal/Sa'ad Muuse, the behind-the-scene beneficiaries of the Somaliland state.

To enhance his chances for lion's share of the cake, Samatar, in a televised video clip, claimed that he belongs both to the Gadabiirsi and the Habar Awal sub-clans, using his mother's clan genealogy (the latter) as a tool to ease his way into the advantageous Habar Awal side.

One can surely ask how the Professor is going to counterbalance his newfound enthusiasm for the Somaliland cause against his past, famed anti-

Somaliland stances?

When the state becomes a tool for economic enrichment, it loses legitimacy and leads to defection among the political players.

Like elsewhere in Africa, failed, dysfunctional states **(17)**, the privatisation of the state has become something of a reality in Somaliland. Cashing in on their proximity to the centre of power, Siilaanyo's shrewd son-in-law, Baashe Awil Omar, known in Somaliland pejoratively as 'Morgan Yare', along with his associates has been able to firstly, personalise political power and then slowly privatise the state system under the authority of Siilaanyo. This has also been done with the acquiescence of Somaliland's First Lady Mama Amina Mohamed Jirdeh. This exercise in self-enrichment has become almost uncontrollable, with participants trying to gain wealth, wherever, however and at whatever the cost both to internal and external politics **(19)**. In addition to being the son-in-law of the President, Baashe Haji benefits from an official title as Somaliland's representative to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) **(20)**.

As the Abu Dhabi representative, he was involved in lucrative deals such as the recent one in which the administration of the strategic port at Berbera was handed over to the Dubai-based DP World as well as the unnecessary space authorisation for the construction of a military base at the coastal city by the United Arab Emirates.

The public contemptuously branding him with the infamous 'Morgan' trademark gives the impression that he is no less notorious, at least when it comes to milking the state, than General Mohamed Said Hersi 'Morgan', the former Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre's

son-in-law, whom Africa Watch branded the Butcher of Hargeysa **(21)**, as a result of the 1980s near-annihilation campaign on the Isaaq civilians **(22)**. The 'Morgan' label itself is a revelation, if not realisation, of the Siadisation of the Somaliland state system under Siilaanyo.

It is worthy of note, for instance, that Siilaanyo had been a minister in the Siad Barre regime for 13 consecutive years (from 1969 until 1982), at which point he defected to the Somali National Movement (SNM), fighting against the very regime which he not only helped set up but defended at the international forums. (A few months before his defection, he had been travelling with Siad Barre to Abu Dhabi). In an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* on 19 April 1988, Siad Barre accused Siilaanyo and his schoolmate Cali Khaliif Galayr of defecting from the regime when they had been relieved of their ministerial positions **(23)**. As ministers, in 1982, Siilaanyo and Galayr were demoted to advisory roles in the Ministry of National Planning, while still continuing to receive a minister's salary **(24)**. In the interview, Siad Barre affronted Galayr more than Siilaanyo, describing the former as a 'scoundrel' and 'rascal' **(25)**. The fact that Siilaanyo and Galayr are now negotiating over ways of sharing the state in Somaliland explains not only how patron-client relationships have become normalised but how it has become a vital part of Somaliland politics.

### The Siadisation of the state?

Siilaanyo alone cannot be used as a scapegoat for tracing the Siadising—the practice of imitating the Siad Barre regime—in the Somaliland state system. All the current leading politicians in Somaliland were once, in some cases until the very end, part and parcel of the Barre regime, which lasted from 1969 to early-1991. For instance, ►

the *Guurti* leader Saleebaan Gaal had been a vice minister under the Siad Barre regime for more than a decade, at one critical time serving as a vice minister for Abdikassim Salaad Hassan, one of the longest ministers in the military regime and who later became an interim president in southern Somalia (2000-2004) **(26)**; Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi 'Abdirahman Irro', the leader and presidential candidate for Wadani party, was a diplomat at the Somali embassy in Moscow in the then Soviet Union representing the Siad Barre regime; Eng. Faysal Ali Waraabe, the leader and presidential candidate for Ucid party and the most outspoken of all Somaliland opposition political players, was a salaried government employee very close to his business partner and friend Eng. Maslah Mohamed Siad, Siad Barre's principal and favourite son; and, last but not least, Major Muuse Biihi Abdi, the leader and presidential candidate for Kulmiye party, who out of all the aforementioned had the most tenuous link to the centre of Siad Barre regime, having contented himself as an air force officer in the Baydhabo and Ballidoogle airfield compounds.

By a strange quirk of fate, Muuse Biihi's commander was none other than a colonel named Nuur Elmi Addaawe, the half-brother of Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, the former president of Somalia. Needless to mention the prominent role former intelligence officers in the Barre regime, such as Daher Riyaale Kaahin, the former president of Somaliland; Abdullahi Ismail Ali 'Abdullahi Irro', a former interior minister; and Ali Mohamed Waran-Adde, a former interior minister, have played in the Siadisation of the Somaliland state system, surely the complete antithesis to what the SNM had envisaged for Somaliland. When Egaal died suddenly in South Africa in May of 2002, his deputy Daher Riyaale became president

and acted as a mediator among the rival Isaaq 'Habar' sub-clans. People in Somaliland still fondly remember '*waqtigii Riyaale*' (the Riyaale period) where they say security was much better than currently **(27)**. As a former intelligence officer, Daher Riyaale rather expectedly invested much more economic resources in the security sector than any other. His security officers went so far as to claim they had known the activities of their hostile forces in Somalia **(28)**.

When one considers all the above factors on the prism of contemporary political context, it is not illogical that "Mujaahid" Ali Gurey, a leading member of the SNM, should publicly declare what many in Hargeysa could not now dare to say—that is, he would prefer the reunion of Somalia and Somaliland than watching the slide of Somaliland into state collapse **(29)**. With his usual embattled tone and in order to reinforce his judgement, "Mujaahid" Ali Gurey stated that most of the the SNM "*mujaahidiin*" are now roaming penniless in the dusty streets of Hargeysa since the fruits of the SNM have become reserved food for the few.

Those few political power holders are busy with making themselves millionaires. Once appointed into a powerful position somewhere near the presidential palace in Hargeysa, itself once the house of the notorious General Morgan during the 1980s, the first thing for most officeholders is to get instant cash and accumulate as much material wealth as possible.

As a result, those in power live a very luxurious life in one of the most affluent neighbourhoods in Hargeysa, the Shacabka area, with newly-built spacious houses, complemented by brand new Land Cruisers and two or more young beautiful mistresses. One young female intellectual told me in Hargeysa that it was now regular practice for a minister,

when travelling outside the capital, to the rural areas to have one or two young pretty girls accompany him for the sole purpose of their comforts **(30)**. Most of these young girls, she said, come from very poor families who cannot afford to pay their daily bread. This painful reality of contemporary Somaliland resonates with a similar case in Kenya, where opposition leader JM Kariuki had long lamented during the presidency of *Mzee* Jomo Kenyatta shortly after the post-colonial period that Kenya had become a country of ten millionaires with ten million poor beggars **(31)**. This means the powerful in much of impoverished African states tend to become wealthy to steal from the powerless and the poor. In his most recent work, *In the Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power*, Alex de Waal uses all the countries of the Horn of Africa as a case study as to how parts of the state are commercialised, commodified and traded haphazardly by those seeking the thrills and frills of power and influence to benefit from the linkages of state power **(32)**. Yet, his lack of empirical data on Somaliland makes his analysis incomplete because de Waal does not seem to know of how Morgan Yare and Mama Amina rule from behind the scenes in the current administration **(33)**.

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- (31) Dann Okoth, 'High profile assassinations a stain on our political history', Fri, December 13th, 2013;
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- (33) Yet, you are told in Hargeisa that there is a government that takes care of its population, when the bulk of the economic resources go to the small number of competing political players. Many in Hargeysa rhetorically ask where were Siilaanyo's decisive leadership skills when needed most by the poor Isaaq civilians. In April 1988, Siilaanyo fled to London when the SNM would have to conduct the most massive and major assault to intercept the near-annihilation of the Isaaq people. When the French scholar Gerard Prunier was travelling with the SNM, eating and observing with them, despite mines were exploding on the way, Siilaanyo fled from Ethiopia to his comfort house in London. Since his replacement as the SNM chairman, he was either hunting for power or enjoying the fruits of power with those who were ruling like Egaal. Today, there is a disappointing feature of institutional instability in ministerial appointments. Siilaanyo's intermittent cabinet reshuffles resonate with the Siad Barre era;
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# Dispatch from...

## Mogadishu

Sunset over Makkah Al  
Mukarramah Road,  
Mogadishu

Source: Twitter/Abdul Warfa (@ArchWarfa)

### *One of our readers recounts some memorable encounters from a recent trip to the Somali capital*

A journey of a thousand miles, goes the Chinese proverb, begins with a single step. After a long absence, I boarded a plane and made a trip to Mogadishu.

Immediately, one is met by a city of contrasts: one seeped in its history, maintaining a link with its distant past, but one also transformed, changed and in some parts still scarred by recent decades.

When I was last there—where I had once seen a dilapidated city, its bullet-ridden buildings a close resemblance of *baghrir*, Algerian 'thousand-hole pancakes' so-called because of their appearance—I now saw a lively city, vibrant, dynamic.. New housing developments are rising in different parts of the capital, like a pimple outbreak, privately-funded ventures

for those looking to capitalise on the stable but still fragile peace that now inhabits the city's streets. Businesses are springing up too, operating in a marketplace which is still largely unregulated, beyond the state's purview. Older parts of the city look worse for wear, the result of a confluence of factors: rather naturally, age has taken its toll on them, exacerbated by the fact they were built many decades, or in some cases centuries, ago. The signs of war are evident on them too. The bruising effects of humidity have played their part; since Mogadishu is in the coastal Banadir region,

perched on the Indian Ocean, it experiences higher levels of humidity than inland, which typically runs at seventy percent even during the dry seasons.

Public transport is very much in operation. Well-serviced minibuses are complemented on the city's streets by the increasingly ubiquitous "*tuk tuk*", the auto trishaw, both in word and concept a loan from southeast Asia. These serve the public at low cost.

Movement within the city is good except at crossroads. There, due to the lack of traffic controls,

motorists struggle to navigate the clogged streets, which, at peak hours, are filled beyond their capacity. The main streets are bustle with people and their energetic chatter. Many—like one of the capital's busiest roads, Makkah Al-Mukarramah Road—were rebuilt by the Turkish Government and the Mogadishu Municipality and are lighted by solar street lights at night. The latest pickups and 4WD car models are common. Many are armoured, which is a new phenomenon. Guns are largely only carried by the state security personnel and security companies. The public does not carry guns, at least not openly; it's probable, that some may have hidden pistols on them, a reflection perhaps ►



of the hushed murmur of insecurity which lies below the surface. I can still vividly recall the image and time when most—if not all—vehicles had armed guards almost as a prerequisite to navigating the city's streets.

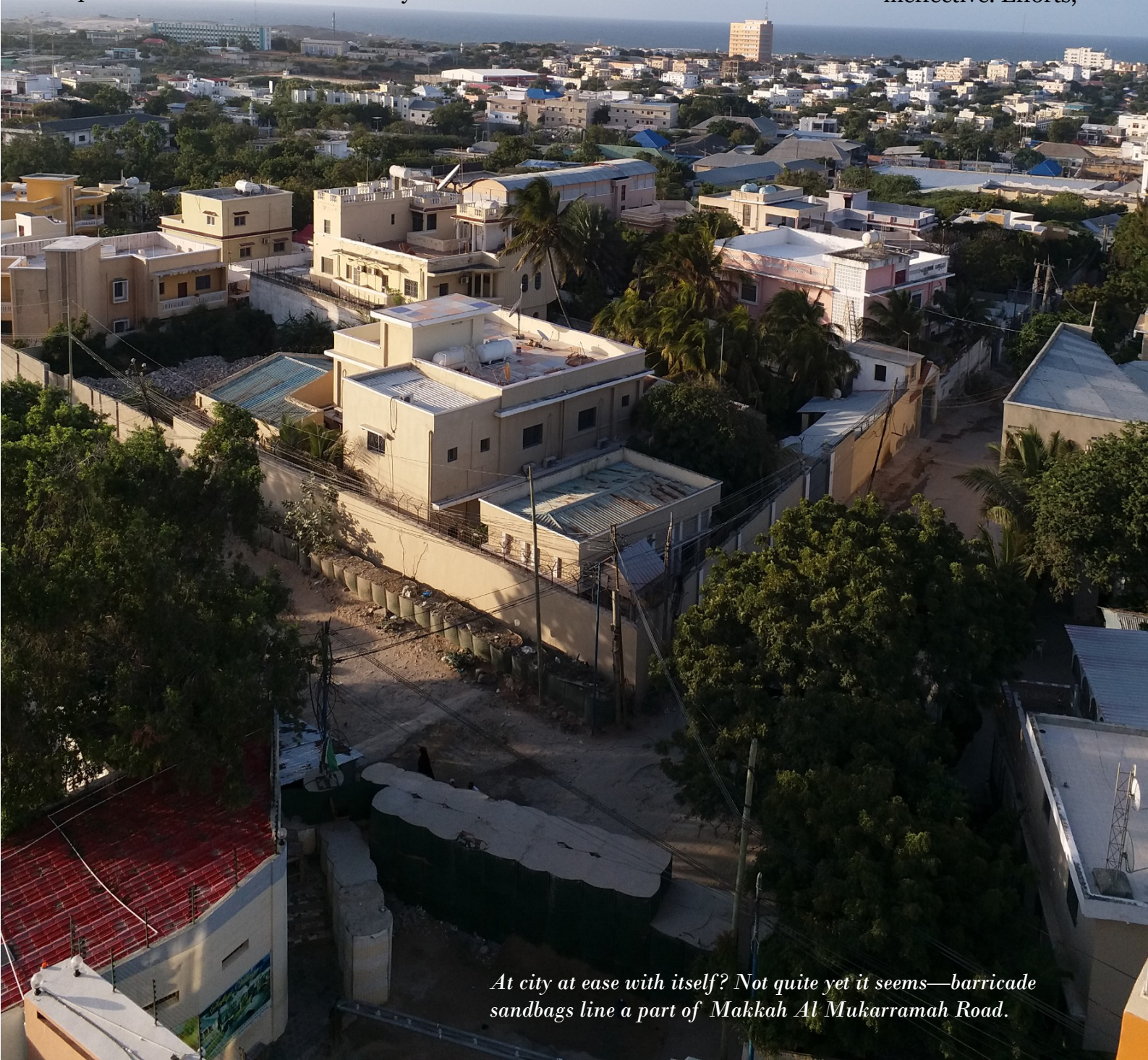
For a metropolis, the cost of living is not very high, even though the main currency American dollars creates higher prices. But the cost of living is not universally easy to shoulder. Like much of the developing world, unemployment in a city like Mogadishu is markedly high, no doubt a consequence of its

pull factors, attracting in their droves, people from the rural areas who pin high hopes and expectations of what a city can offer them and their families by way of a new life. Somalis may say, '*Rajo ayaa lagu nool yahay*' [We live on hope!] but many of these new residents rarely find their hopes met, finding themselves locked out of the competition in an already challenging environ. Those among them, and others too, who wish to transport agricultural produce to the city soon find

themselves taxed by militias and Shabab; whether these levies are prohibitive naturally depends on how broad one's shoulders are.

Security is bearable, apart from the occasional suicide vehicles which devastate their targets and their surrounding areas. There are largely targeted assassinations and overall security has and continues to improve. The landscape in the countryside is different as Shabab controls large chunks

of the South and South Central. But the security organs like the police, intelligence and paramilitary are established and fully functioning. Government departments are established and functioning; although an encouraging development—I remember when these were either non-existent or were merely a figment of the hopeful imagination—to the locals, government can often seem distant, inaccessible and ineffective. Efforts,



*At city at ease with itself? Not quite yet it seems—barricade sandbags line a part of Makkah Al Mukarramah Road.*



however, are being made to broaden its scope, to which regulation between different areas will be vital.

Quality of life has improved greatly. Many restaurants serve a fusion of Italian and Somali cuisine. Many good apartment buildings have also been built. This is new and must be the influence of the diaspora returnees. Those who were accustomed to and grew up on Somali-grown produce are bound to be in for a surprise. The excellent quality local fruits are no longer; even the simplest of necessities are imported. Papayas, traditionally served as a dessert, are hardly seen! Bananas are poor cousins to the delicious types that, in earlier days, were freely available.

Nowadays, lemons seem to be the crop of the day, grown for export as dried lemon to the Gulf, no doubt being used for skin “fairness” treatment. When one considers the blight the cultivation of lemons is having on Somali people—satiating the appetite of other nations’ cosmetic needs while the locals’ basic dietary needs are not tended to—the phrase “skin fairness” treatment then seems an oxymoron. It is, surely, anything but fair.

But still due to the bigger agricultural base, Mogadishu and environs have the best and cheapest local produce, such as sesame seeds and oil, corn and beans which are all used for daily dishes.

The number of medical centres and pharmacies are many, with varying standards. There is an urgent need for government control on the administration and indeed quality of drugs. Now drugs are traded like any other product and majority of drugs’ potency are subsequently suspect.

Education has expanded but here too, there are no control of standards. Many who spent time and meagre resources are short-served by a substandard “education”. They are mostly businesses for profit. Thus a whole generation who are not qualified are released to the economy with all kinds of certification. This is true at all parts of the Somali peninsula, which helps explain why so many graduates are unemployed.

***“Papayas are  
hardly seen!  
Lemons seem to be  
the crop of the  
day”***

Electricity is supplied by two companies, who consolidated the smaller companies. Even though prices went down, it is still expensive, hindering industrial development.

The city’s settlements are polarised on a clan basis. This city, which was once highly cosmopolitan, has been fractured into separate suburbs. Movement within the city is normal enough, but due to the sense of insecurity, people tend to coalesce to where their sub-clans live. In the long term this is not good for a city which has a long, vibrant history. If the city is to regain its old splendour, it will have to embark on a long journey. But every journey surely does begin with a single step.

***“The city,  
once highly  
cosmopolitan, has  
been fractured  
into separate  
suburbs”***

This month, all the hujjaj [pilgrims] return to their homes from Arabia, having completed the rites of Hajj. In the not so distant past, until perhaps the early twentieth century, before the advent of affordable long-distance travel, from Somalia, the journey to and from Makkah could have taken a year, if not more.

Indeed, now, we need not look much further than the city of Mogadishu itself to be reminded of how arduous and long any worthwhile journey can be. Mogadishu’s Makkah Al-Mukarramah Road—named after the holy city of Makkah—has traditionally been seen as a vital road, connecting as it does the north and south of the capital. Funds for it to be built as a four-lane road came from the Saudi monarch, King Faisal; as a recompense, the Somali government wanted to name it after him but his wish that it be named after the Hijazi city ultimately prevailed.

Symbolically, the road has been through thick and thin. During the civil war, it was cut off; in the 1990s, one of the adjoining side-streets to it became known as “Bermuda” after the Bermuda Triangle, on account of it being a hotspot for thieves and kidnappers. Last year, Makkah Al-Mukarramah was one of the first roads rebuilt by Turkey and the Mogadishu Municipality. With a fresh layer of tarmac and illuminated by solar streetlights, it seems a far cry of the devastation it previously knew.

But its fate is by no means sealed. Just this summer, in July, a car bomb blast along the busy road near the Waberi police station left five dead and at least 13 others wounded. Such occurrence was not an anomaly; on other occasions, several cars, abandoned along its length, have or were intended to wreck havoc, through similar blasts, just in the last two months.

But this road, like this city and its people, has known resilience. ►

There is no doubt that its journey to recover has already begun. But it will certainly be a marathon, not a sprint, before it can reclaim its reputation as 'the White Pearl of the Indian Ocean'. Like the hajj journey of the past, that journey will be beset by many challenges. As the Somali hujjaj return, one can hope that they can bring with them the blessings, prayers and curiosity, so desperately needed in this time, which once led a certain Ibn Battuta to its shores, almost seven centuries ago. Having initially set out from his home to complete the hajj, it was while journeying that the young jurist discovered a love for travel. Covering 75,000 miles, it would be three decades from when he first left home before he would return to his home town of Tangier. This year marks 26 years from when civil strife broke out in the Somali peninsula. Like Ibn Battuta, one can hope Mogadishu's people will soon see the city they knew, with all its vibrancy, dynamism and peace.

***This dispatch was written by one of our readers, M. D., reporting from Mogadishu.***

Have you recently visited a Somali city, town or village? Write to us with your experiences and thoughts. Send in your dispatches to the Editor for consideration.

# NEW DALKA

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# “Workers of Somaliweyn: Unite! Unite! Unite!” (Part 2)

By AbdulKadir Ali Bollay

Immediately after our return from the International Labour Conference, in July 1957, the heads of the Somali trade unions set up a summit known as Dopolavoro, which was held at the Theatre, which was opposite the Guglielmo Marconi primary and middle schools (later renamed Yassin Osman). Representatives of local trade unions, subsidiaries of the Somali Workers' Trade Union [Sindicato Lavoratore della Somalia] gathered.

Each subsidiary represented workers in different fields. They consisted of: the health workers' union, that of agricultural workers, manufacturing workers, teachers, veterinarians, those who work in hospitality (hotels, coffee shops and the like) and finally, dockworkers employed at the ports in Mogadishu, Merca and Kismayo.

When the general meeting began, it was first addressed by Ahmed Gure Maamun (Axmed Guure Maamuun) who spoke about the considerable and wide-ranging work which the Trade Unions had done. He then gave the floor to me, AbdulKadir Ali Bollay, where I spoke about my experience at the recent International Labour Conference in Geneva. I also spoke about some of the



*Bollay, in 1956, giving an interview about the Somali trade unions*

successes enjoyed by the Somali trade unions, successes which had been so highlighted and celebrated at the International Labour Conference. I noted how, at the Conference, the Somali trade unions had been praised and congratulated on having brought out the adoption of the Labour Code.

That year had been of particular note for the trade unions in Somalia, particularly those of the factory workers, at the sugar factory in Jowhar, the cotton mill workers in Mogadishu and the agricultural workers who worked in Shalanbood and its surroundings, since they enjoyed great advances in terms of their pay, a development which became the basis for the implementation of the other pointers in the Labour Code.

In May 1958, as Secretary-

General of the Somali Trade Unions, I led a delegation—one member of the delegation being Hassan Abdi Amalow (Xassan Cabdi Camalow), who was a member of the Central Committee of the unions—to a regional trade union conference for African trade unions, which was held in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Organised by the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), the conference was attended by delegates from east, central and southern Africa, namely, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and Rhodesia. There, it was decided to strength the cooperation between the unions and that they should keep in close communication with each other.

The following month, I set off for Geneva, Switzerland, to ►



take part in yet another annual International Labour Conference. In terms of African labour affairs, it was agreed at the Conference that the trade unions of the continent should be further developed and more effort be devoted to the implementation of the Labour Codes. At the Conference's conclusion, I received an invitation from the Secretary-General of the CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori), Bruno Storti, who invited me to his organisation's headquarters in Rome. Then, I proceeded to the Italian capital, where I duly met him and we discussed how his organisation could help in the training and education of the Somali workers. Agreeing to this request, his organisation soon rolled out educational opportunities for our members.

As part of its support to the Somali trade unions, the CISL sent one of its experts to Somalia so that he could support the trade unions there. Similarly, the CISL gave our organisation a vehicle, one Land Rover, so that the leaders of the Somali trade unions could more easily travel throughout the country to undertake their work. The expert who was sent to Somalia was Onofrio Spitaleri, who worked with our trade unions for one year.

In July 1958, we organised a general meeting of all Somali trade unions. Since they had now increased in number, it was important to organise such an event to strengthen the unity between the different subdivisions. The result of this cooperation was that a coalition

of all such national trade unions should be created, known as *Ururka Guud Shaqaalaha Soomaaliyeed* [The Confederation of Somali Trade Unions]. The member trade unions were: that of government employees; teachers; health workers; farmers; dockworkers; factory workers and public sector workers.

Once the umbrella organisation was established, representatives were elected from each. They were:

- (1) Ahmed Abdi Yusuf as Chairman of the Somali Trade Unions;
- (2) Abdulkadir Ali Bollay, Secretary-General, Somali Trade Unions;
- (3) Qassim Abdirahman, Deputy Secretary-General, Somali Trade Unions;
- (4) Abdisalan Ahmed, Secretary of the district and regional unions;
- (5) Saeed Ali Boos, Treasurer of the Somali Trade Unions;
- (6) Abdulkadir Sheikh, Coordinator of the Somali Trade Unions;
- (7) Ali Raage Khayro, Organisation Officer, Somali Trade Unions.

In November 1958, the Confederation of Somali Trade Unions invited a delegation from its Italian opposite

number, the CISL. We discussed with them how we could cooperate, especially in how our trade union in Somalia could benefit from their support, in training our own trade union leadership. The CISL then offered to provide training in trade union affairs for two people at a specialist college in Italian city of Florence. Hassan Abdi Amalow and Ahmed Sheikh Ali took this opportunity.

In that month, the Somali Labour Code was adopted; within the same month, the agricultural workers got an opportunity to enter an agreement with their employers, in line with the Labour Code. At the time, agricultural workers were paid in direct correlation to how much they worked, not allowing for any illness or absence. So, when the deal was sealed, it was agreed that agricultural workers in Somalia should receive their wages in a regular fashion, with the promise that if the workers were to be affected by illness, they should still get their wages in full.

All in all, the Somali trade unions played a crucial role in the protection of workers' rights and also in the training and education of workers, both in the late- and post-colonial period, especially in the former when there were few safeguards or opportunities to secure workers' rights. When the military regime took power in 1969, a new organisation was established called *Xiriirka Guud ee* ►

*Shaqaalaha Soomaaliyeed* (XGSS, still translated as the Federation of the Somali Trade Unions).

When the October Revolution took place, this then became the new name of the Somali trade unions. The military regime enhanced the power of the Somali workers, which itself became a step in the right direction in the development of Somali society and the increased productivity of the country.

The XGSS had a chairman, a central committee and an executive committee as well as a sub-division tasked with craftsmanship and the workers' pages in the national newspaper *Xiddigta Oktoobar* called *Shaqaalaha Adduunkow Midoowa* [Workers of the World, Unite!]. It was published every Tuesday and carried all news and messages concerning the workers in the different regions of the country. The crafts sub-division played a considerable role in designing and documenting (through photos and reports) the major events in the year, such as 21 October, International Mothers' Day and International Workers' Day (1 May).

Every Friday evening, members of the Federation would meet to discuss matters relating to the workers as well as the recent decisions which had been reached by the Central Committee of the Federation. The outcome of these discussions would then be published in *Xiddigta Oktoobar*.

The civil strife in Somalia certainly affected the Federation. But I would advise, as the nation recovers, that the Federation,

which exists in the country now, should become a driving force, playing a pivotal role in the revitalisation of Somali society and the pacification process.

I call upon the current government to devote the necessary attention to employment and workers' affairs, which will help the country to improve productivity and economic output. I hope that the current administration will also rebuild the headquarters of the Somali trade unions, to generate job opportunities for the younger generations, particularly in the primary and secondary sectors and to improve the standards of education among Somali workers.

At this crucial time in the country's history, they can undoubtedly play an important role, as the earlier trade unions, particularly in the late-colonial period, had done. I conclude with the timeless motto of the Somali trade unions: '*Shaqaalaha adduunkow middowa!*' [Workers of the World, unite!]. [END.]

*Born in Mogadishu, Abdulkadir Ali Bollay went to Italy in 1952 to study for a degree in social affairs and journalism. From 1956 to 1959, he was Somalia's representative to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva. In 1961, he joined the Ministry of Information where he edited the official government papers and later its successor, the Somali-language Xiddigta Oktoobar between 1969 and 1979. His autobiography, written in Somali, was published in London, where he now lives.*

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Today's recollections will become tomorrow's history.

# Clannism: The conundrum of Somali politics?

One of the oft-repeated clichés about Somalia is the role of the clan [*qabiil/qolo*] in the Somali conflict. The clan-based identity was not as pronounced in precolonial Somali settings as it is in the postcolonial Somali polity. Somalis use *qabiil* and *qabyaalad* [clannism] interchangeably. The noun *qabiil* is linked with the verb *haybso* (to ask someone his/her clan's identity). Despite its salience and presence in the Somali collective consciousness, clannism remains an ill-defined scourge. Professor David Easton defined politics as “authoritative allocation of values for the whole society”.

Why has clannism permeated the Somali body politic? To answer this question I will propose a definition of clannism: It is an illegal and amoral process to use political power to help close or distant relatives to gain an unwarranted economic benefit, evade justice or marginalise a segment of the citizenry.

Somalia's founding fathers were alive to the perils of failing to dissuade members of the new political community from attachment to pre-colonial group identities once independence had

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been achieved. They knew that nepotism and marginalisation are not values on which the post-colonial state could rest. This political awareness was a part and parcel of the independence movement. The Somali Youth League, which became the longest reigning political party in Somalia between 1960 and 1969, spearheaded an anti-clannism campaign from the mid-1940s.

The late doyen of Somali Studies, I M Lewis, argued “the collapse of the post-colonial state represents *“technically a triumph for the segmentary lineage system and the political power of kinship”*. It is the political class who have reneged on their promise to replace colonialism with parliamentary democracy. Without shedding the modern political identity of Somalia proffered by the nation-state, Somali politicians found it expedient to rely on and try to privilege their clans in the struggle over meagre public resources. This is what makes clannism in Somalia a modern phenomenon at variance with modernity.

Some analysts and leaders have faulted nomadism for being the source of destructive politics. Nomads have been the most exploited and neglected group of the Somali society. Nomads' socio-economic base boosts Somalia's economy through livestock exports in addition to supplying meat and milk urbanites consume. There is no link between clannism and Somalis' precolonial group identities. Clan consciousness is less a product of

belonging to a clan than the result of a response to inequalities inflicted on some social groups.

Political violence was largely confined to electioneering during the Somalia's nine-year experiment with parliamentary democracy. Proliferation of political parties to challenge the ruling SYL was a missed opportunity to check the deteriorating health of Somalia's nascent public and political institutions. The failure to become aware of the danger lurking in attitudes of politicians, who took citizens for granted, had resulted in the military coup in October 1969. The main justification offered by the coup leaders was to prevent Somalia from imploding.

The military leaders usurped the coercive power of state then based respect for the rule of law. The military leaders demonised a democratically elected predecessor government to be able to use state power unaccountably. The military regime burned effigies personifying clannism early 1970s. Threat of punishment was a key factor in ensuring compliance with the new government policy. Anti-clannism measures gradually came to a halt after military leaders targeted members of some clans not because of their opposition to the regime but because of the government's perception about clans regarded as counter-revolutionaries. It was the beginning of state power misuse that forced victims to form clan-based opposition groups based abroad.

As a tool for instrumentalising clan identities, clannism has further complicated the Somali political imbroglio. Before 1991 the state was the ▶



major perpetrator of political violence. Now non-state actors claiming to have clan-based political legitimacy commit almost all forms of political violence. It was easier for Somalia's founding fathers to persuade their constituencies to have more confidence in the ability of the country's political institutions. Upon the birth of the republic Somalis did not associate the state with nepotism and marginalisation. The current crop of Somali political class does not have a similar advantage.

From 1991 clannism has acquired peculiar features. The state collapse initially divided Somali clans into two groups: a group of clans with clan militias, and a group of clans with no militias to bank on. The first group's claim to political prominence lay within their role in toppling the military dictatorship. This role, they reasoned, entitled them to participation in reconciliation conferences held in 1991 and 1993 in Djibouti and Ethiopia respectively. The second group of clans' political rights were subsumed under the first group of clans' political representation by dint of geography. Participants of the Djibouti-sponsored reconciliation conference phased out this trend in 2000.

The 4.5 power-sharing system unveiled in Djibouti divided Somalis into four major clan and a group of minority clans lumped into the 0.50 appellation (aka *others*). This political identity categorisation designated Somali minorities as having fewer political rights than other four "major" clans. Their minority status did not make less conspicuous the centuries-old discrimination of clans who have been victims of ostracism based on oral traditions.

Clans that pride themselves on numerical superiority attach importance to clannism. In the current power-sharing structure many Somali clans have been

reduced to status of second-class citizens. Since major clans parcelled out regions into federal member states, minority clans lack genuine representation privileges at the local level. This mismatch between political progress made so far and political marginalisation of some clans had had severe impact on life chances of people from minority clans.

Not all Somali politicians use clannism to advance personal or political interests. How politicians used clannism in post-colonial Somalia indicates obliviousness to nepotism, rent-seeking and other anomie-inducing habits eroding public and political institutions.

Clannism has served interests of warlords who, through dispossession, uprooted thousands of families even in some areas under the control of the federal government. What spared Somaliland the prolonged civil war that had befallen southern Somalia is a locally conceived reconciliation conference, and respect for the life and property of citizens as a cardinal pillar in reconciliation efforts organised by the second president of Somaliland, the late Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal.

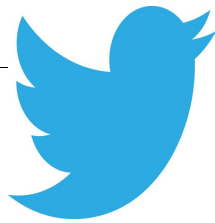
Where a semblance of order has prevailed over the vacuum created by state collapse, clannism remains the means politicians use to misappropriate public funds. Although clannism facilitates the acquisition of ill-gotten gains for the political class, Somalis have not been able to form a united front against politicians exploiting politics of identity. The educated class, whose role in postcolonial Somali politics has been reduced to that of passive spectators, have yet to establish a civil society. A remarkable exception to this trend is Professor Ahmed Samatar who, in *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality*, argued against the futility of putting too much confidence in clan-based opposition groups and that the ouster of the military regime would usher Somalia in a

The perception that clannism will not pose threat to political institutions once clans' political representatives agree on power-sharing has hardly become a reality. The discernible political progress made so far reflects the commitment of the International Community to address what the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, described in London as a threat to global security.

Clannism is a form of political extremism. It is more destructive than religious extremism in Somalia. It is devoid of moral precepts that emphasise equality and impartiality. Mobilising people for independence or against dictatorship was easier for the first generation of Somalia's postcolonial political class. The current crop of Somali political leaders does not have a similar advantage to devise policies with which all Somalis can identify. To make clannism into an abhorrent political practice, admissions of politicians' role in poisoning inter- and intra-clan relations is long overdue. This attitude could help politicians and their constituencies to lay foundation stone for a polity based on clearly defined governance modalities to make the Somali citizen less susceptible to the whims of politicians.

The most important lesson to learn from Somalia's fifty-seven years of independence is that Somalis lived through parliamentary democracy, military dictatorship and are now living under political arrangements of differing qualities. The least discussed fact among Somalis is that clannism undermines political obligation and upends politics. It is time Somalis had a national conversation on the predatory brand of politics politicians practise to keep the nation in perpetual limbo.

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# As seen on Twitter...

In this era of instantaneous communications, ever faster snap decision-making and short-termism seem to be rife. Naturally, the traces of haste are easily deciphered in one's pronouncements, resulting in often strange, overly-dramatic words.

At the start of this month, one of our contributors caught sight of a tweet from a Somali user. Written, no doubt, in response to the unpopularity of the current Cabinet in light of the Qalbi Dhagax case, the Tweeter called upon the head of the government, namely the Prime Minister, to take his leave. This user was evidently voicing a legitimate grievance against an action which the administration had, at best, not sought to make amends in bringing those responsible to book, at worst either known about, permitted or even been complicit in. That all sounds reasonable so far.

When our contributor scrolled down this Tweeter's timeline, however, they happened upon another tweet which provided a quirky context for the one about the Somali government.

In the second tweet, written just days prior, the Tweeter revealed himself to be a Gooner, a supporter of the English football team, Arsenal FC. That was not the end of it, of course.

The Tweeter proceeded to prove himself a loyalist of Arsène Wenger, who will have been the club's manager for the last 21 years, this October.

Our contributor's mind could not help but reflect on comparing the current Somali administration and Arsène's legacy at Arsenal. Known as "Le Professeur" to fans for his studious demeanour, Wenger has been described as revolutionising English football, introducing trend-setting changes in the diet and training of players as well as being among the first managers in English

football to scout for talent abroad.

Twenty-one years, of course, is a long time. Wenger's career (and fate!) has certainly had its highs and lows; his reputation, and the absence of a Premier League title since 2004, seems to have been ameliorated by the three FA Cup trophies his team has scooped up in recent years.

The current administration in Mogadishu has been in office for just over six months—half the life expectancy typically enjoyed by most cabinets in the country. Time will tell whether it can, like Wenger, redeem itself and recover from the uproar that has resulted from the events in recent months. Will

readers, and the Somali people, give the administration a second chance? Time will tell.

The irony, in this Tweeter's words, was of course not lost on us.

Arsenal Football Club of course started life in 1886 as a football team of munition workers from Woolwich, south east London. On second Thoughts then, does this Tweeter consider his words a misfire?

For the time being, it seems

the jury is out. On social media, the "mainstream" Somali media, in cafes, in the streets, people have read the recent events—no less, the Qalbi Dhagax case—in different ways: some advocating for the current administration to be unseated, while others have decided to err on the side of caution. Perhaps, like Arsenal fans—followers of the team originally founded for munition workers—Somalis around the world have decided to "hold fire"?

We can only wait and see.

*Politics and the Glorious Game—an unseemly analogy?*

*Arsène Wenger, the long-serving manager of English football team, Arsenal.*

*Source: Gordon Flood*

