

## SOMALI UNITY AND MILITARY RULE IN SOMALIA

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Concepts such as nation, nationhood, and nationalism represent different explanations and definitions to different audiences.

These terminologies become even more problematic when they are applied to African societies or for that matter to Third World societies in general.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, colonizing Europeans saw these concepts as political judgements associated with civilization, literacy, progress and developement ; and therefore should be reserved for the European societies alone. In contrast, Tribe, tribalism or ethnicity, as Anthropologists like to call it, should be applied to mainly non-European societies as these concepts have negative connotations — such as primitiveness, backwardness, and parochialism.

Since the begining of the twentieth century there have been many books and articles written, mostly by Third World writers and European liberals to encounter and refute this judgement.

Bearing in mind the above two differing viewpoints, I would like to pose a question as to whether there was somali nationalism before the colonial encounter, and how we could describe somali society in that state.

In the anthropological theoretical framework, particularly following Dr. Bath, the Norwegian anthropologist's general description, I would like to describe Somali Society as follows : 1) A biologically self-perpetuating population. 2) A society sharing cultural value systems, with its own... a) legal code (heer), b) language, c) pastoral mode of production, d) literature and arts, e) oral tradition, myth and rituals, religion, shrines and tombs. These can be summarised as "collective representations" to borrow Emil Durkheim's terminology. 3) A group that can identify itself and be identified by others as constituting a distinct social group.

## THE COLONIAL ENCOUNTER

As we all know, the European powers who partitioned Africa (1848 Berlin conference, or as it is otherwise known. The scramble for Africa), gave no proper attention to the ETHNIC or geographical frontiers of the populations they conquered.

Somali society was fragmented into five separate parts. One under the Italian rule (Somalia) and two parts under British rule (British Somaliland and the Northern Frontier District NFD), another in Djibouti (under the French rule) and finally Western Somaliland or Ogaden under the Ethiopian rule.

Somali Nationalism as a political movement hinges on the unification of this fragmented nation. Before I go any further into the analysis of Somali nationalism, let me put forward some of the theoretical arguments and definitions of nationalism.

## THEORY OF NATIONALISM

The theory of nationalism is mainly seen to be associated with modernization, industrialization and capitalism. As an ideological movement, it first arose in Western European countries such as France, England and Germany around the year 1800 spreading to central Europe and Slavic societies then to the rest of the world. This kind of analysis has a marked tendency to judge and explain non-western nationalism by references to this western criterion, — whether it displays the same features as its European counterparts or not — an argument taken up specifically by Argyle.

Professors Kohn and Kedourie are amongst other notable historians who adopted a broadly diffusionist outlook, holding that the original 'Western' or 'Central European' version of nationalism provides the criteria for subsequent types of nationalism.

Another theory, advanced by Plamenatz, distinguishes between the type of nationalism that counted on a high level of technological skills and cultural facilities, as in the 19th century France, Germany and Italy, and those who could not — such as the Slavic, African and Asian countries during the 20th century.

Professor Anthony D. Smith of the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, has written much on the Subject of nations and nationalism, and has drawn our attention to the potential danger of emphasizing the importance of the modernizing aspect of nationalism and overlooking its ancient historic roots.

Lets us now look at African nationalism within this wider frame. Thomas Todkin in his book "African Nationalism", explores the term nationalism to describe any organization or group that explicitly asserts the rights, claims or aspirations of a given African society in opposition to European authority, — whatever its institutional forms and objectives might be. Professor Jacob Ajayi, a Nigerian Historian from the University of Ibadan, argues that in the wider historical perspectives of African History, the few decades of European rule were but a brief interlude. Here Professor Ajayi has rejected that Africa was previously bankrupt of nations or nationalism.

Tom Nairn, another distinguished writer, on the subject of African nationalism, views it as a force, a mass mobilization from a position of relative helplessness or underdevelopment, which is in itself a product of capitalism. In both Nairn and Todkin's arguments, there is a tendency to describe African Nationalism and the ideas associated with it as purely a rejection of colonial rule and capitalism. Theoretically, though this might have some merits, it fails to grasp at the historical roots and the subsequent struggle to retain and assert independent expression.

## NOW LET ME TURN TO SOMALI NATIONALISM

The rise of Somali modern nationalism is very much associated with the rise of Sayid Mohamed Abdullah Hassan and his Dervish movement. Somali nationalism can be described as cultural nationalism before the rise of Siyad Mohamed. By cultural nationalism, I mean a society without a central administration, but bound up in cultural facets. Durkheim refers to this as mechanical solidarity. Siyad Mohamed injected political nationalism into the existing cultural nationalism. This was as a direct result of the invasion. Liberating the country from foreign rule and unifying the Somali territories was his main objective, as was clearly expressed through the media of his poetry. For, in the North, the British were consolidating their power, opening Churches along the coastal towns, converting Somali nomads to Christianity; in the South, the Italians were aggressively expanding their rule, not only wanting to conquer Southern Somalia, but also to make it the springboard for their grand designs to create an Italian empire on the Horn of Africa.

The French had already carved out a part of Somali, Djibouti, for themselves.

Meanwhile, in the pastoral hinterlands, reports of Ethiopian soldiers raiding the Somali nomads ~Rears~, seizing their livestock, and the destruction of holy places, angered the Sayid.

The Ethiopian expansion Southwards was the most painful and predatory of the foreign incursions, it was a constant source of disruption and psychic trauma to the nomadic population. This has been well documented by Professor Said Samatar and Dr. Omar Osman Rabi.

Scholars on Somali nationalism and political history are as yet unresolved as to whether Sayid Mohamed and his Dervish movement can be described as religious or nationalistic — or both. For example in his book "Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism". Professor Sayid Samatar seems to get carried away with the poetic and literary dimensions of the Sayid and seems not to sufficiently demonstrate the nationalistic and the anti-colonial character of the movement. Dr. Ahmed Ismail Samatar in his book, "Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and reality", gives more emphasis to the movement's anti-colonial and nationalistic aspects, and gives small importance to the strong Islamic character of the movement. Sheikh Jama Omar Essa, who has thoroughly researched and documented the history of the dervish movement, provides a more balanced analysis of the movement incorporating also the poetic and the philosophical temperament of the Sayid.

These various aspects have made a good contribution to the study and understanding of Somali nationalism, however, they have not sufficiently provided a comprehensive picture of its integral relationship with the wider anti-colonial and religious movements of the African continent.

In my view, Sayid Mohamed's Dervish movement was the foundation of the Somali political Nationalism, and still needs more exploration and analysis to comprehend the consequential political awakening of the national consciousness. Before that, Somali nationalism could be described as "cultural nationalism".

After the death of the Sayid, Somali nationalism temporarily submerged into the tribal consciousness of society, re-appearing again with the foundation of the Somali Youth Lige (SYL) in 1943. At this point, the concept of Pan-Somalism became as equally important as Somali nationalism, as it was enshrined in the constitution of the SYL. The two concepts were manifest not only in the cultural levels, but interwoven in the political levels.

The goal of the SYL was to provide a secular structure and a modern political ideology to the existing "cultural nationalism". The thinking of the S. Y. L., on these lines, was helped indirectly, though contrasted, by two other factors: 1) The attempted creation of the Italian East African Empire by Mussolini and 2) The subsequent efforts by Britain to form a greater Somalia in 1948.

The formation of the SYL and its spread throughout the Somali territories (British Somaliland, Northern Frontier District — NFD, Djibouti, and Western Somaliland —Ogaden) during the 40s and 50s, heightened and re-inforced nationalist and pan-Somali feelings.

1950-1960 were years of political upheavals and sharpening of political sentiment both in Somalia and in the African continent. After the Egyptian revolution in 1952, led by the Egyptian President Gamal Abdi Nassir, Cairo became the nerve and the center of African and Arab Nationalism. The Cairo—centred political awakening had a strong influence on the later development of Somali nationalism and the pan-Somali ideals. At this time, many Somali students were given scholarships in the Egyptian educational institutions and so experienced the Egyptian revolution as it unfolded. Exiled politicians such as the two prominent, nationalist and pan-somalists, Mohamoud Harbi and Haji Mohamed Hussein, were well received by the Egyptian government. President Nasser also allowed the inclusion of Somali language broadcasts on the Radio Cairo "The voice of Africa" programmes. The radio became an important medium for the dissemination of pan-Somali ideals.

Kwame Nkruma, a Pan African leader who had also been inspired and encouraged by President Nassir emerged, bringing Ghana to Independence in the year 1957, and hosted the first Pan-African conference in Accra in 1958 where a resolution endorsing the Somali Unity was passed.

The resistance to the colonial rule of each Somali territory has not yet been well researched, but Professor John Markakis has made a valuable contribution in this area, in his book, "National and class conflict in the Horn of Africa" (1973).

#### THE BIRTH OF THE NEW MODERN STATE

The people of British Somaliland were shocked into action, when, in 1954, Britain gave away the final part of Western Somaliland to Ethiopia!

Demomonstrations were held in Hargeisa and many other Northern towns protesting against this decision. A delegation of prominent politicians and Sultans, including Mr. Michael Maryanio, Dubi Ali Yare, Sultan Abdillahi, Sultan Dirie, Sultan Behih Foley were sent to London and New York to lobby the U.N.O. and the British Parliament. It is worth mentioning here that the money for the trip was collected from the public. It came chiefly from the nomads, whom this decision had affected more than any other social group.

The ensuing struggle well into the 60's, sharpened nationalistic and pan-Somalistic feelings. This was fertile ground for the return of a group of young Somali political activists who had been living in Aden, watching that particular countries own struggle with the British. They returned to their homes in Somali and did their best to add fuel and strength to the nationalistic and pan-somali sentiments of the national parties. These determined young men played a major role in the struggle for the unification of the SNL\USP, the North and South, and the future radical politics of the country.

When, on June the 26th 1960, the Northern parliament was formed, its people demanded immediate unification with the South, who was not in fact due to receive its official independence from Italy until July the 1st 1960. In fact, these Northern people were more committed to unification than the parliament.

Italy had been forced to give up its African possessions as a result of Mussolini's defeat in the second world war. The country had been put under U. N. mandate, and Italy was instructed to prepare for the indepenence of Southern Somali to take place on July 1st 1960.

Whilst Southern Somali was under the mandate, it was thought fit that she should hold her own elections moddled on the European system. The first municipal elections were held in 1954, followed by parliamentary elections in 1956.

The Italian colonial administration wishing to halt the nationalistic pan-Somali wagon, actively encouraged political division on a clan basis. Since they could not reverse the independence date fixed by the UNO, they prepared the ground for the birth of a neo-colonial state which they hoped to influence in the future. Surprisingly, this Machiavellian policy brought about a mother-child dependence, regardless of whatever governement exists in Somalia. The future direction of the country, including the question of the missing territories and their unification later split the SYL. A

radical group headed by Socialist—oriented and Nasserite Haji Mohamed Hussein, a president of the SYL, form 1948—1952, formed a separate party called the Greater Somali League (GSL).

Just before the set independance date, the national consciousness which had been inspired by the liberation struggle began to weaken. This was as a result of the Italian policy which encouraged clan divisions by manipulative and subtle methods, including encouragement to compete for economic and political power. Just a few days before the independence of the South, a parliamentary delegation from the North, headed by Mr. Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal (who was actually only Prime Minister for four days) arrived in Mogadicio to sign the act of union agreement. This was the first concrete step towards greater Somalian unity. Minutes of unification talks indicate that the Northern delegation was more committed to the unification issue than the Southern delegation.

For example The Southern delegation insisted on three important points :

- 1) The five star flag to be the emblem for all of Somalia.
- 2) The capital to be Mogadiscio.
- 3) The current President of the National assembly. Mr. Aden Abdullah Osman to be the firts President of the Republic.

The Northern delegation, being responsive to the demands of the people of the North, accepted all the demands of the Southern delegation in order to facilitate a quick unification. During the sixties there followed a decade of integrating the bureaucracy of the two systems. The integration of the people was quite a simple matter, however the matter of coping with the two inherited colonial systems, (the British in the North and the Italian in the South) was not quite so straight forward.

#### THE SUCCESSIVE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR ENDEAVOUR TO REGAIN THE THREE OTHER "MISSING" TERRITORIES.

The unification of the missing territories, was enshzined and embodied in the constitution of the Republic. Though the constitution stated that the search for the missing territories should be carried out by peaceful means, a war broke out between Somalia and Ethiopia on the question of Western Somaliland (Ogaden). Somalia broke its diplomatic links with Britain in 1964 when Britain failed to honour the N.F.D. plebiscite, voting to join Somalia as opposed to

Kenya. Relations between France and Somalia deteriorated to the verge of diplomatic breakdown in 1967 when the French authorities in Djibouti expelled many Somalis from Djibouti after they demanded independence from France.

The short period of time between 1960-68, was a time of intensive upheaval. The rising consciousness of the Somali people and their newly founded power, led to incessant demands for the unification of the three "missing" territories, that is to say Djibouti, N.F.D. and Western Somaliland (The Ogaden) who were, incidentally, longing to join their voices to those of their brothers in the independent North\South Somali.

When the military came into power in 1969 seizing the machine of the state, Nationalistic sentiments were on the wane. The re-emergence of clan interests and clan politics reached a peak in the 1969, coinciding with the general elections. One hundred and twenty-six "clanistic" political groups competed, each one hoping to gain more power for itself. One wonders just how much genuine interest there was for the welfare of the nation at that time.

Undoubtedly there were also some high calibre patriotic leaders in the midst of this throng.

One of the casualties of the election was the President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, who was gunned down in a remote town, Las-aanood, by his body guard. The motives of the assassination are not yet fully known.

The 1969 military coup overthrew and imprisoned the members of the civilian government which had recently been headed by Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Egal. He had started negotiations with Kenya and France, and had intended to negotiate with Ethiopia. He was going on the advice of the Western countries, particularly that of the United States and Britain. He hoped to create an atmosphere of peace. Somalia and Kenya met in Arusha, Tanzania, under the mediation of the President, Julius Nyeere. The agenda of this meeting was supposed to cover the NFD issue of succession, and the Somali\Kenya relationships. The meeting is better known as "Egal's minor and major issues meeting". He was accused by people of a mainly left political persuasion, of being a Western stooge and of selling out the N.F.D. interests in favour of Kenya and the West, who appeared to be worried by the upsurge of the Somali nationalism in the Horn of Africa — which could further disrupt the Western influence already shaken by the Suez Crisis of 1956.

We cannot, as yet, fairly evaluate the Egalistic approach, but sincerely hope to gain a better understanding of those times as Mr. Egal was released from captivity in 1988 and now resides in Mogadicio. Perhaps he could shed light on this period.

Mr Abdi-Razak Haji Hussein, who was in office prior to Mr. Egal, working under the cautious, pragmatic, and legalistic President, Mr. Aden Abdulla Osman, seemed to have had a different approach to the question of the missing territories, appearing to be more emotive on the subject of the Unification. Once again we need more comment to be able to substantiate the events of this period which is as yet not well documented.

That we do however know, is that none of the civilian governments were able to create strong national institutions beyond the basic bureaucratic ones or to form "civil" society able to advance the national consciousness.

#### NATIONALISM/PAN SOMALISM/AND THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1969

The methods and the techniques used by Siyad Barre to seize the machine of the state (1969) have been related by many, including those in the SRC and the cabinet. To my view, Mr. Ali K. Galaydh's article, may be an accurate and revealing account (See Ali K. Galaydh, notes of the state of the Somali state, Horn of Africa journal). Captain Khaawis role in recruiting junior army officers and in creating a nucleus on behalf of Siyad Barre. Equally important are the accounts that Siyad Barre had earlier placed some members of his family who could be used at any time, if the need arose, outside of the military structure. On at least two occasions, when the general faced a danger, civilian members of his family were seen wearing military uniforms and immediately became part of a private army. One occasion in 1988, when the President had had a terrible accident and was flown to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. It was reported from Mogadscio, that one of his close family members, Mr. Hoosh, who was also believed to be a business associate of the President, now appeared wearing a military uniform. This uniform was emblazoned with military ranks. During the President's absence, there was a time of uncertainty and various power struggles developed within the "ruling clique".

From the outset of his seizure of power, it was apparent that Siyad Barre and his collaborators, did not have a ready political

programme or ideology on hand. For the first few weeks, they were searching for a direction. To consider the West and their system of democracy was unthinkable since the overthrown government had already had a close relationship with the West. Looking to Islam was not seriously thought about, since few of the 25 members of the SRC (Supreme Revolutionary Council) were devoted Muslims. Finally, marxism-leninism as a last resort won the day. Very few of the SRC knew its components, or how to make use of it, let alone believe in its theoretical and philosophical tenets. Siyad Barre and his colleagues approached the leftist elements whom they thought would be of help to them. At this point, we must remember that the Somali army force had a close relationship with the Soviet Union who supplied them with most of their arms and trained most of their higher ranking officers.

With the aid of some leftist intellectuals and some members of the socialist-oriented parties, the SRC put forward an overloaded socialist programme, which of course overshadowed the pan-Somali thesis. The external objectives of this programme reads as follows :

- 1) Support for, and international solidarity with national liberation movements.
- 2) To oppose and fight all forms of colonialism and neo-colonialism.
- 3) To struggle to maintain Somali National security.
- 4) To observe the principle of peaceful co-existence between all peoples.
- 5) To continue and preserve the policy of positive neutrality.
- 6) To respect and recognize all legal international commitments undertaken by the Somali Republic.

On the first anniversary of the coup, the second Charter of the regime was introduced and it declared Somalia to be a socialist state, more precisely, "Scientific socialism" was to be the ideology, economic base, political and social agenda of the regime.

We know that in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, society is analysed with references to class polarisation, capitalism, bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, workers, peasants etc. and it belittles the power and the influence of nationalism. Marxists conceive Nationalism as a false consciousness. Contrary to the official line which described the country as embarking on "A socialist revolution", I would like to argue that the Somalian situation from 1970-1975 can be described fairly as a nomadic and semi-nomadic population, with an

urbanised populace of 40 %. Military coercion and marxist rhetoric were used as instruments of mass mobilisation and social engineering.

On July the 1st 1976, the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party was established and became the only legal party in the country, replacing the SRC. Siyad Barre became the General Secretary and the head of its polit bureau which consisted of five members of the SRC. He was already President of the Republic, Commander in Chief of the army forces, head of the state security court and the judiciary, with the power to appoint and dismiss high ranking officials — both military and civilian. He had an absolute power, and although he enjoyed a limited measure of popularity in the initial years, the effects of his consolidated power shocked the nation, eventually paralysing all aspects of the life and aspirations of the Somalis.

Mr. Abdulgadir Shire Farah in his book "Death on the coast", Xeebtii Geerida, published July 1990, provided an inside analysis both of the psychology and the character of President Siyad Barre (calling him the double faced personality whose invisible dangerous part destroyed most of the ideals the Somali people stood for).

#### THE YEARS OF DESPAIR AND CONFUSION

The regime's undemocratic rule killed any public discussion related to national issues, either foreign or domestic. The entire mass media revolved around the President and his personality cult. During the first years, the regime launched an ambitious economic development which was generously supported by the EEC, the Arab countries, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern block of its satellites and China ; one of their more useful innovation was the acceptance of the Somali written script, which had already been pioneered by Somali scholars including Musa Haji Ismaili Galaal, Osman Y. Kenadeed, and the longtime devoted scholar on the Somali language and/culture Professor B.W. Andrzejewski.

Between 1970 and 1972 the regime nationalised the main economic infrastructure which consisted of banking, insurance, and foreign trade. The nationalisation policies brought about an economic shambles and an unprecedented inflation, the nationalization and the bureaucratic structures imposed on society from above destroyed the traditional small businesses particularly the farming communities. The military regime deliberately put the country unnecessarily on war footing since came to power, taking into the

military the able young men and women whom would have been otherwise involved in productive activities.

#### SECURITY, LAW AND ORDER

After the regime came into power, all other political parties, organizations, Trade Unions, Youth and womens movements were banned. Breaking law N° 54, which had been specifically designed to eliminate any potential opposition was an offence punishable by death or life imprisonment. Human rights organisations such as Ammnesty International and African Watch have closely observed and published facts and figures recording the high level of transgressions against basic human rights which have resulted in torture, the death penalty, and life imprisonment, mostly carried out under the guise of Law 54.

January 23, 1975 ten Sheikh were executed by a firing squad after they confronted Siyad Barre on his interpretations of one verse of the Quran as regards to the Islamic Law of inheritance. There are innumerable stories that could be related, quite disturbing in their content, such as the account of an incident which took place sometime between 1978-81 when the military force burned, machine-gunned and bulldozed entire "rears" and villages in the Mudug and Hiran regions, merely because some members of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) shared blood ties with the local population.

War broke out on May 27-31 1988, when the rebel forces of the SNM (Somali National Movement) attacked two major towns in North, Hargeisa and Burao. The government used excessive force to dislodge them. Planes were sent to bombard them, resulting in about 50,000 fatalities. (Amnesty International and Africa Watch estimate).

On the 14th of July 1989, 47 people were massacred on a beach outside of Mogadiscio following some demonstrations. They mostly belonged to the Isaac clan.

#### POLITICAL CONSPIRACY

Bribery and corruption were the order of the day from the very start of this regime. Barre was declared as the sole candidate for a presidential election, and then announced that he had been re-elected by 99 % of the votes.

The domestic, economic, social and political plunder by the military regime, has given rise to a poor foreign policy. The president's brother, Abdiraman Jama Barre was nominated as foreign Minister in the earlier days of the 1977/1978 Ogaden war, which was, according to Galaydh's article on the Horn Africa journal, a grave mistake (notes on the state of the Somali state). Mr. Abdirahman Jamma Barre's failure to put the WSLF, and the Somali case before the OAU Mediation Committee, was compared with the inept Joseph Bonaparte whose foibles led to the loss of Spain.

#### CONCLUSION

I would like to question :

Firstly, — What has been the Impact of the military rule on the growth and sustainment of the national consciouness-nationalism ?

Secondly, — What has been done about the missing territories - which, as I mentioned in the beginning as the pillar of the Somali foreign policy since the formation of the SYL. The subject of this paper was to examine these two concepts within the span of Somali modern state.

After twenty one years of military rule and dictatorial repressiveness most observers agree that the country is on the verge of collapse. There is no comprehensive policy in store, and possibly not even any documentation on the question of the missing territories.

Today there are several opposition groups some of whom are engaged in armed struggle against Siyad Barre. They are the SNM (Somali National Movement), USC (United Somali Congress) and the SPM (Somali Patriotic Movement).

On May the 19th 1990, a peaceful manifesto signed by one hundred and ten Somalis, old statesmen, intellectuals, businessmen and clan chiefs joined voice demanding that Siyad Barre to step down in favour of a professional government. Quite predictably, Siyad Barre has remained impervious to these demands and is still hanging on to power.

The history of the Somali people and their long struggle has been reviewed here with the intention of throwing light onto their present dilemma. This has naturally cast a shadow and hopes for Somali to survive as a united nation seem remote at present. The sufferings of this testing time are experienced by the whole of the

Somali nation. When accounts of sufferings reach the various ears throughout the land, then the dream of pan-Somalism lives in their hearts.

Naturally I live in hope, that like the two Germanies who were recently united Somali people may one day live and prosper under one democratic state and flag.

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