

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND AN ORAL CULTURE:
THE DYNAMICS OF SOMALI WEBSITES
AND MAILING LISTS**

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TO MY WIFE HAWO, MY CHILDREN MOHAMED-NASIR, MOHAMUD, ALI, HAFSA-YALAH,
HAMDA, SHARMARKE AND YUSUF-HANAD

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ABSTRACT

The disappearance from the international scene of the Somali state in 1991 is seen as a unique phenomenon in this nation-state era. This experience was expected to leave Somalia out of the “loop of new global technologies, market, politics and cultures”. Contrary to this expectation, Somalis have not been so excluded. This was caused by the impact of globalisation. In fact, during the close of the 1990s, the World Wide Web presented an opportunity for the Somali Diaspora to communicate, group, share views, help their groups at home and organise activities (e.g. development projects). The broad objective of this research is to show how the Somali Diaspora uses CMC technology.

Since the late 1990s the Somali civil war has entered a new stage: the stage of media war. The appearance of the Somali community/political web group is a new phenomenon on the web. Though the name is open to debate, there is no doubt, however, that it is a kind of new genre which needs to be considered. The website became a means to promote group political identity or group self-presentation. Similar to the personal web pages, these websites are constructed for group-self presentation. When a society begins to disintegrate during periods of social or economic turmoil, it experiences an identity crisis. In such a situation, people endeavour to reconstitute their identities and social meaning by articulating and identifying with alternative discourses. The effect of the rollback of the state ‘virus’ is that every community attempts to rediscover itself. The web page offers such a group a means to create group self-representation.

In Somalia only a very few people have the means to access the Internet, but amongst Diaspora members the reverse is the case. However, the information published on Somali websites – particularly community/political type websites – reflects the local political dynamics. There are a few factors which lead to this outcome: (i) many of the political elite who have been the main protagonists of Somali politics are taking advantage of this new communication medium; (ii) educated Somalis have the chance to learn and use the Internet medium; (iii) the civil strife has coincided with the boom in Internet technology. Somalis are good in adapting technologies to their situational needs.

This thesis categorises Somali websites and analyses their content. In a sense, this is constant time in the “field”, investigating how the Somali website activities reflect local political dynamics. This task is to identify the concept or belief which makes this development possible. Studying people in their natural settings can help to understand the meaning that is used in that world. Actual fieldwork was conducted during visits to Somalia itself and to Diaspora communities in the United States and elsewhere.

The study focuses on the Diaspora and its use of the CMC technology. The intention here is to know what users choose, their preference and the reason for their choice. By looking at the samples of the answers received to the surveys of webmasters and mailing list users, users demonstrate what they think might be true (their belief) and why they actually do (their behaviour). Building trust between the interviewer and the respondent is also a very important incentive to get responses if the researcher wishes to get good reliable data. Knowing many of the interviewees personally through the mailing list discussions has been very essential for the researcher. This has helped to build trusting relations with most of the interviewees. Some of the members even encouraged others to reply to the survey.

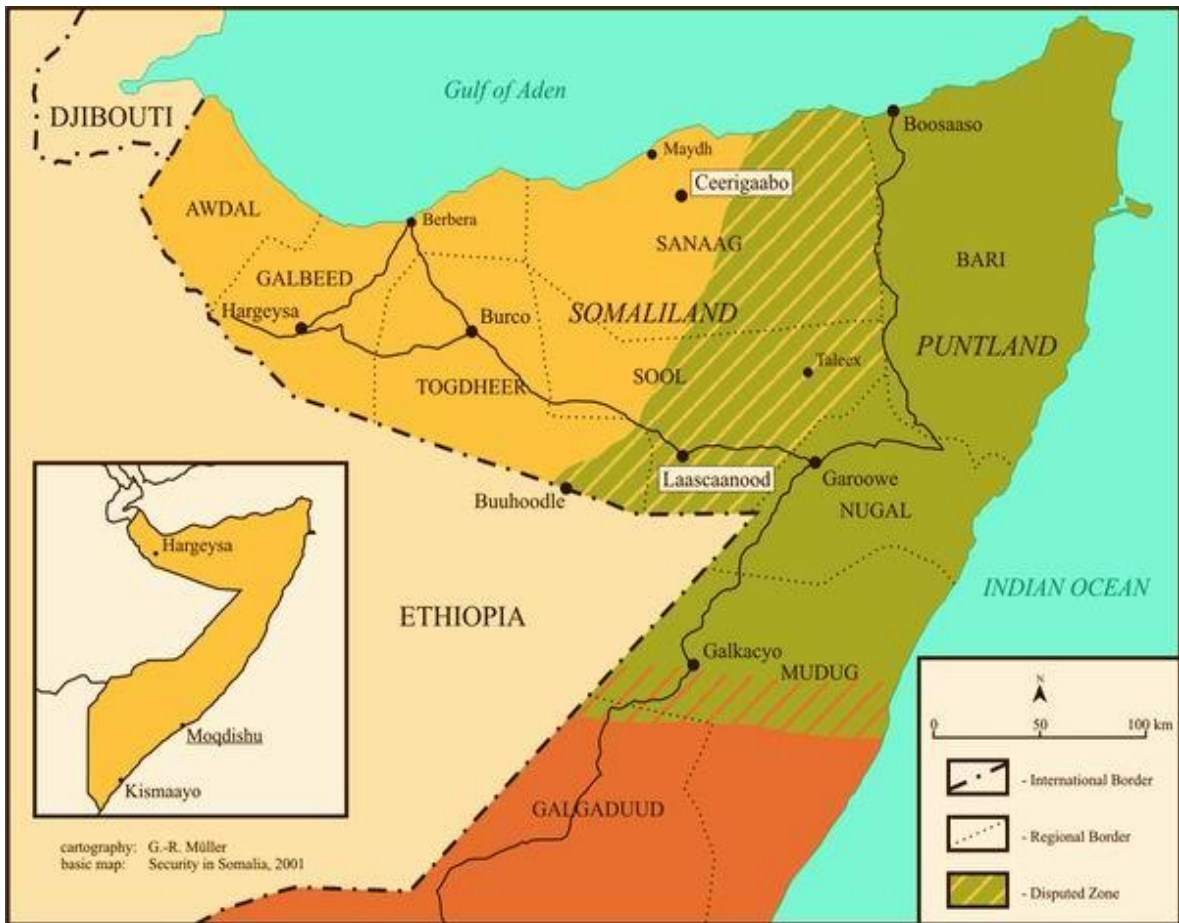
Somali websites depict a deeply divided society, traumatised by the civil strife, which broke out in early 1991 and left Somalis without any national government. Their features reflect the integration and fragmentation of Somali society.

MAP 1: SOMALIA BEFORE 1991



Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/somalia.jpg>

MAP 3: SOMALILAND, PUNTLAND AND THE DISPUTED REGIONS



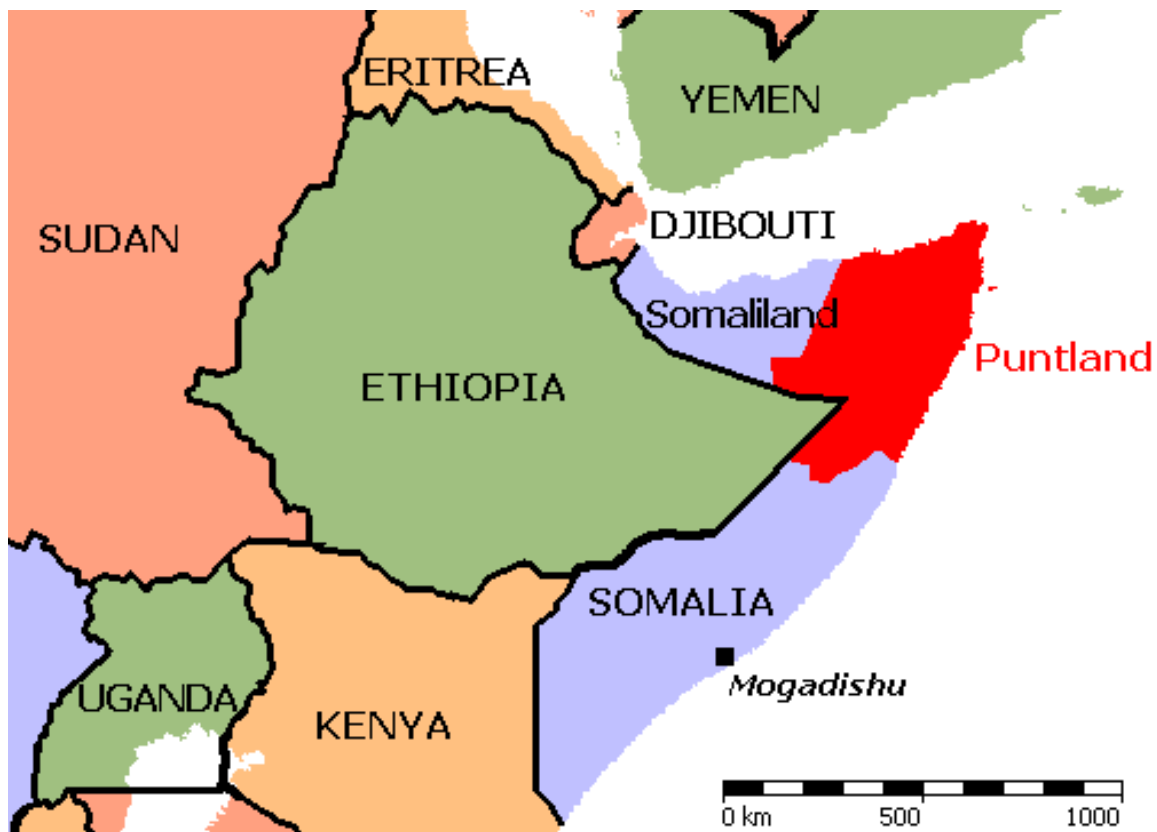
Source: <http://www.eth.mpg.de/people/mhoehne/images/mhoehne-02.jpg>

MAP 4 :THE DISPUTED REGION OF OGADEN



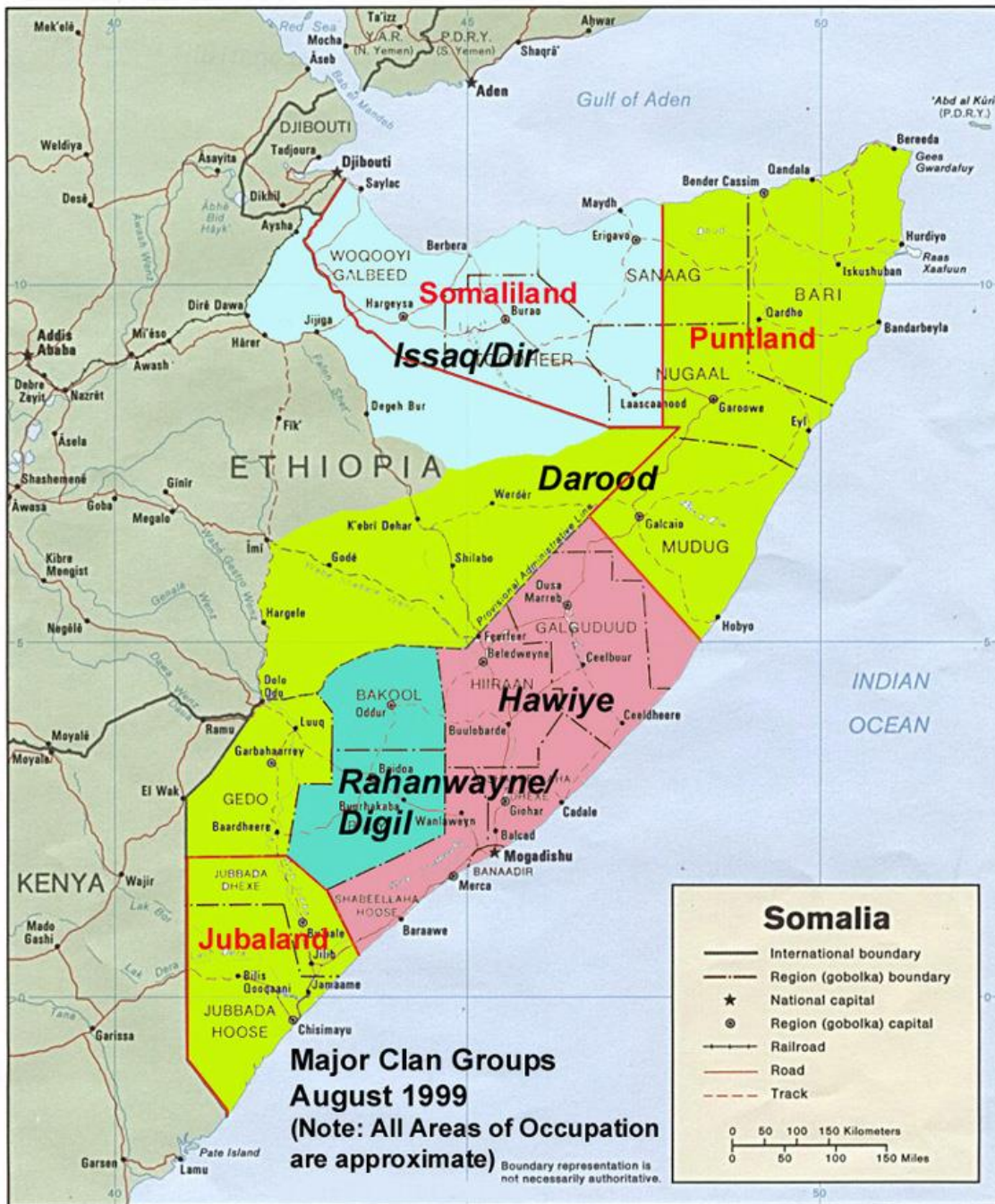
Source: <http://www.humanrightshouse.org/assets/1000Ogaden%20map%201.jpg>

MAP 5: SOMALILAND AND PUNTLLAND



Source: http://www.allmudug.com/map_puntland%5B1%5D.jpg

MAP 6: SOMALI CLAN AREA FOLLOWING THE 1990 CONFLICT



Source: <http://www.stratfor.com/images/maps/somaliacfan4.JPG>

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

In January 1991, the state of Somalia collapsed and President Mohamed Siyad Barre was overthrown, only to be replaced by a loose anti-government coalition which quickly fell apart and turned against each other letting the country descend into a “full-fledged civil war and has remained without an effective central government for more than a decade” (Menkhaus, 2003).

A man-made famine was thus in the making as the fighting among the warlords was causing a fragile situation to deteriorate. This worsened the famine triggered by the social crisis and consequently destroyed every aspect of government and organisation in Somalia. By this time any hope of resuscitation of the state was remote.

It was only when Baydhaba, a town in southern Somalia, hit the international media as the "City of Death" that the world realised the severity of the situation. For thousands of people this was too late. The looming situation in Somalia prompted a short-lived US-led military peacekeeping operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). Under Chapter VII of the United Nations, UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia) was to become the de facto government of Somalia from December 1992 to the end of March 1995. But it was to leave without achieving any progress on the humanitarian, political, security and economic fronts, and it “... failed in its mandate to make peace, to effect political reconciliation among the Somalis and restore national socio-economic institutions.” (Mahamed Abshir "Waldo", 25 February 1995).

The violent overthrow of General Mohamed Siyad Barre of Somalia sent Somalia spinning out of control. The subsequent crisis resulted in the disintegration of the Somali state and civil strife which claimed more than three hundred thousand dead and wounded, with roughly four-fifths of the population displaced. Nearly one fifth of the population fled to take refuge in neighbouring countries and other parts of the world (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 11). The ensuing political upheavals have had an effect on Somali traditional methods of communication.

The crisis has created an international Somali Diaspora. One-fifth of the Somali population is now outside Somalia including the majority of the educated and professionals. It is commonly known that with the deterioration of national communities combined with recent developments in the field of communications and transportation enables Diaspora communities to remain deeply involved in the political affairs of their homelands.

Although this group may be reluctant culturally to assimilate the culture of their host nations, their adaptation to new environments is noticeable, especially to their communication patterns. They use the Internet, telephone (including mobile phones) and fax to communicate (Olden, 1999:212). Somalis are culturally an orally oriented society.

The advent of the Somali crisis coincided with the booming of global communication, especially with the introduction of the Internet. The new technology has added a new dimension to the pattern of communication of Somali Diaspora and how they perceive themselves and the world.

Somali users use the Internet mainly for two purposes: seeking information and for interpersonal communication.¹ Although their social interaction might not be the same as their traditional social interaction and relationship, this medium has cut the geographical space between parties, and has given them an opportunity to organise, group, and keep in touch. Diaspora websites and publications emphasise the symbols of the nation state – maps, flags, symbolic geographic features or local plants. The central importance of conflict continues to shape identities among Diaspora groups in their new home country of residence and serves as a focal point for community mobilisation and networks.

At one stage, the frequent contact (through electronic mails) creates strong ties between groups. Unlike face-to-face interaction, the Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) offers opportunities for social interaction that do not depend on the distance between parties. Face-to-face interaction accompanies some important particularity, such as facial expression,

¹ The younger generation use the Internet mainly for chatting rather than news as is the case of the older and middle aged generation.

vocal cues, body language, posture, gestures and non-verbal mannerism in general together with style of dress and hairstyle (Chandler, 1997).

There is no doubt that Internet technology is having an effect on society. However, it is not always clear what these changes are and whether they are for better or worse. Some researchers argue that the Internet is causing people to become socially isolated and cut off from genuine social relationships. Others argue that the Internet leads to more and better social relationships by freeing people from the constraints of geography and isolation. According to this view, the Internet allows people to join groups on the basis of common interests rather than convenience (Rheingold, 1993: 34). The Somali case favours the latter view.

The Internet has provided the Somali Diaspora with a new social environment in which to communicate and organise themselves as groups based on their traditional social groups. In a preliminary analysis on the Somali websites, the researcher observed that the majority of Somali websites attempt to promote their own social and political groups. They also feature similar publications of oral arts and political information concerning their country. These activities are making Somali websites vibrant with news and political views. The ordinary observer or web user may find it hard to note the difference. They may even question the basis of the Somali conflict. Somali website publications depict a much deeper one than mere political differences. They reflect a deeply divided society, traumatised by the civil strife, which broke out in early 1991, and left Somalis without national government. These features show what integrates and fragments Somali society.

What makes Somali websites vibrant? More specifically, what new dimension has the web technology added to the unity or division of the Somali Diaspora? What makes it possible for the activities of these websites to reflect the dynamics of Somali politics and how do these reflect Somali conflict? For which purpose do they use mailing lists?

1.1 DIASPORA AND CONFLICT

Globalisation has increased cross-border migration and decreased communication and travel costs, thereby making it easier for migrants to build and sustain links between the original homeland and current place of residence (Lyons, 2004). Those forced across borders by war commonly, like Somalis, have a specific set of traumatic memories and create specific types of “conflict-generated Diasporas” that sustain and sometimes amplify their strong sense of symbolic attachment to the homeland. They build new identities that stress their links to the homeland (ibid.).

Conflict-generated Diaspora groups are driven across borders as a result of violent civil war rather than by economic need or opportunity. This trauma is vivid in the minds of the first generation and is often kept alive in subsequent generations through carefully maintained commemorations and symbols (ibid.). In fact one of the functions of Diaspora networks and institutions is to ensure that the original cause of their displacement is remembered and the grievance passed on to the next generation (Volkan, 1997: 98).

A number of recent studies have focused on the question of Diaspora funding of homeland insurgencies. According to Lyons, two other authors (Collier and Hoeffler) conclude that by far the strongest effect of war on the risk of subsequent war works through Diasporas. The Tamil Diaspora provides critical funding to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the links between Diaspora fundraising and conflict has been noted with regard to the Kurdish Workers Party, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and Croatian political and military movements (Lyons, 2004). Diasporas sometimes lobby host governments for increased support for states engaged in conflict, as demonstrated by the Armenian and Croatian Diasporas’ efforts. Beyond the provision of financial resources, Diasporas play important roles in setting the terms of debate around issues of conflict and identity. The concept of homeland is inherent in the Diaspora identity and therefore serves as a focal point of Diaspora political action and debate. Frykman notes “The homeland they do not live in any more is very likely to remain a crucial place of emotional attachment and decisively defines their strategies of identification (Frykman, 2001: 56).

Developing out of the initial motivation for migration, Diaspora communities have distinctive attitudes towards the homeland. In many cases homeland takes the form of a highly valuable symbolic attachment. As the intrinsic value of territory diminishes, as day-to-day activities focus on the new place of residence, the homeland's symbolic importance and salience to identity may grow (Newman, 1999: 13).

Homeland conflict is often the touchstone of identity and Diaspora social organisations often mobilise around providing support for actors engaged in the Somali conflict back home. Diaspora organisations thereby often become a factor that complicates processes of conflict resolution and may make homeland conflicts more protracted.

Conflict-generated Diasporas often play critical roles with regard to homeland conflicts. As many scholars have noted, Diaspora remittances are key resources to conflict. Diaspora groups created by conflict and sustained by memories of the trauma tend to be less willing to compromise and therefore reinforce and exacerbate the protractedness of conflicts. They may be more confrontational and less willing to compromise than those in the homeland because members of the Diaspora are less likely to pay the costs for continued fighting while they may benefit from their sense of commitment to the cause (ibid. 79).

1.2 SOMALI DIASPORA AND THE SOCIAL WEB ENVIRONMENT

In this period of social crisis, the Somali Diaspora is dependent on the media for information. Theoretically, a society in a state of crisis is prone to be dependent on media (McQuail, 1994: 73). One such medium is Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) as it has added a new dimension to the pattern of communication of Somali Diaspora and how they perceive themselves and the world.

McLuhan (1964) describes communication media as an extension of the senses, and argues that it is the "sensory balance" of the people in that culture alters their consciousness. Meyrowitz stresses that media creates a "new social environment" in the sense that it creates a new social situation that are no longer shaped by the physical location and physical presence. For example, telephone and other communication medium usage have altered the

functional significance and effects of earlier media such as oral messages, letter writing or tape-transmissions in Somalia.

Despite focusing on the Diaspora, the material published on the Internet may often originate from Somalia. At the same time, it is published on local newspapers as well. Many local newspapers have their own websites or have access to it where they publish their news. Some of these are Jamhuriya in Somaliland, Kaaha Bari in Puntland, and Qaran in Mogadishu.

Some website are funded by local leaders, however, the majority of them are managed from outside of the country. One of the reasons is financial as the fee to pay for web hosting (domain to host the files) and Internet Service Providers (ISP) must be paid in foreign currency.

Following the civil strife in Somalia, a large portion of the Somali population was forced to flee their country. Yearning for communication became a priority for these people. The CMC expansion coincides with this period and it seems that it had filled the needs of the Somalis who fled home. However, this led them to organise in communication terms what Cassanelli calls, “the factionalism of Diaspora” (Cassanelli, 2002).

Somali Diaspora in Europe and North America suggests some of the ways that Diaspora groups are linked to and shape the dynamics of conflicts. The overall Somali community in North America and Europe is estimated at nearly a million with a large concentration in the United States, Canada and United Kingdom (Cultural Orientation Net, 02/08/04).

These migrants are characterised by the source of their displacement (violent, forced separation rather than relatively voluntary pursuit of economic incentives) and by the consequent nature of their ties to the homeland. The same migration has come in waves, with the first wave in early 1970s following the suppression of the military regime in the north-eastern regions first, followed by the northern regions of Somalia. Following the civil war and state collapse in the early 1990s, the wave increased to a disproportionate level. At least one third of Somali population is believed to have either fled the country or been internally displaced.

The involvement of migrants and exiles in the political affairs of their homelands is not new and has taken many forms over the centuries. As the pace and scale of globalisation has increased in recent years, the locations where key political, economic, and social developments take place are often outside the sovereign territory of a given state (Foner, 2000: 234). This is distinct from the pattern of many economically driven migrations where only subsets of a community such as the young men or young women migrate (Lyons, 2004).

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The character of Somali community/political web group is a new phenomenon on the web as it is a kind of new genre which needs to be considered. Despite that there has been a considerable research on the social aspects of electronic communication, they did not go further to cover the kind of new genre such as how Somalis use the web page technology. Although many focused on the potentiality which this technology offers to self-presentation, they fell short of looking at its more powerful features, such as how they operate in group-presentation and group promotion. As the essence of marketing is to attract customers to a business, website making by Somali groups has to do with enhancing the clan or the group stature.

Goffman observed that there are messages we give and messages we give off. Messages we give refer to direct verbal symbols or their substitutes whose content is designed to convey information (Shapiro et al, 1997: 89). Similarly, when one designs a web page, there can be messages given and given off. One of these messages is the web name which tells a lot about its identity. A web page is likely furnishing a home because its creators, through selectivity, highlight some aspects of self while omitting others (ibid. 89).

As personal web pages are defined as web pages whose primary function is intended to be presenting personal information and interest, Somali community/political websites are projected as presentations of groups.

1.3.1. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In mid 2004, there were over 400 Somali websites (see Appendix A), and it seemed that every month there are new websites. Between July 2005 and July 2006, there was an increase of 19% the majority of which belong to Com/pol web category. The reasons for the proliferation of Somali websites appear to be two: (1) the loss of national identity following the collapse of the state institutions, and (2) the Internet's exhibition of many characteristics of oral culture.

The crisis which followed the breakdown of the state forced the Somalis to go back to their roots. This shaped a social crisis where social norms became void and the individual Somali was left in total disarray, and mental and moral confusion. The proliferation of Somali websites are one to this situation where the process of making web pages reflects the (re)construction of identities.

As creating web pages tends to make an opportunity for self-presentation in relation to any aspect of social and personal identity to which ones chooses to allude, this study is looking at the use of the Computer Mediated-Communication by the Somali Diaspora. As Somali society has been at war for over a decade with itself, this technology became a means for subversion as well as for social cohesion.

The analysis of this will be in relation to the goal of understanding how the Somali Diaspora has used the CMC media technology for their situational need, in other words, the role of the Internet in social disintegration and social cohesion situations. The following questions will be addressed:

1. How do members of the Somali Diaspora communicate with each other?
2. What is the role of CMCs in enabling members of the Somali Diaspora to assist with reconstruction at home?
3. How has the communication pattern changed since members of the Diaspora left their homeland?
4. What causes the proliferation of Somali websites?

5. What are the behaviour, structure and characteristics of Somali websites?
6. What characteristics of Somali community/political web (and in some cases culture/literary) types make the genre unique?
7. For which audience are the Somali community/political and cultural/literary web types designed?
8. What makes possible the activities of Somali community/political and cultural/literary web types to reflect the dynamics of Somali politics and how do these reflect Somali conflict?
9. What role do Somali mailing lists take in the process of group communication?

1.3.2. METHODOLOGY

To carry out an investigation such as the one drawn above requires an approach which combines a multi disciplinary model of social science (sociology, communication, information management and politics) and technology. Reviewing relevant literature will set the investigation in the wider context.

There is a strong argument for the view that to describe a world one must be a competent and confident participant of that world. The skills of information technology and information systems lecturer for many years, gave the researcher the background knowledge to relate to the Internet in general.

1.3.2.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Much time has been spent observing Somali web activities as part of the research. In a sense, this is constant time in the “field”, investigating how the Somali website activities reflect local political dynamics. This task was to identify the concept or belief which makes this development possible. The selected methodology and methods was to allow gaining a view of which of these events makes it possible, and how these events made sense to the real experiences of Somali web users. Seeking to find a finite answer to list of questions is not part of the research. It is rather seeking to investigate and develop a theory about what makes this social interaction possible.

The actual method used to obtain the data can be quite varied. McCall and Simmons offer the following suggestion,

“... some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subject... some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of information interviewing, some collection of documents and artefacts and an openness in the direction of the study” (McCall and Simmons, 1969: 1).

Studying people in their natural settings can help to understand the meaning that is used in that world (Fielding, 1993: 156). Being a member of mailing lists and member of the management team of three websites made the researcher an integral part of the researched world.

Content analysis is used in a large number of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies to literature and rhetoric. Although content analysis was regularly performed in the 1940s, it became a more credible and frequently used research method in the mid-1950's.

Content analysis allows the researcher to filter through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion. It is possible to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention. In addition, it is possible to make inferences which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection. Krippendorff (1980) notes that "... much content analysis research is motivated by the search for techniques to infer from symbolic data what would be either too costly, no longer possible, or too obtrusive by the use of other techniques".

Holsti (1969) presents a broad definition of content analysis as "...any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages". Under Holsti's definition, the technique of content analysis is not restricted to the domain of textual analysis, but may be applied to other areas.

According to Krippendorff (1980), six questions must be addressed in every content analysis (quoted in Stemler, 2001: 143):

- 1) Which data are analysed?
- 2) How are they defined?
- 3) What is the population from which they are drawn?
- 4) What is the context relative to which the data are analysed?
- 5) What are the boundaries of the analysis?
- 6) What is the target of the inferences?

1.3.2.2 SURVEYS

The study focuses on the Diaspora and its use of the CMC technology. An email survey is appropriate for a topic such as this. This is because, firstly, Somalis are geographically dispersed and to reach them individually is expensive. Secondly, an email survey is less time consuming than other methods. Thirdly, users could reply at their own convenience and have time to review the questions. One additional benefit of using email is that duplicate responses can be eliminated. Duplicate responses are possible where there is website based-survey.

The intention here is to know what users choose. In other words, their preference and the reason for their preference. By looking at the samples of the answers received, users demonstrate what they think might be true (their belief) and why they actually do (their behaviour). Polland states that,

“The survey is an appropriate means of gathering information under three conditions: when the goals of the research call for quantitative and qualitative data, when the information sought are specific and familiar to the respondents and the researcher has prior knowledge of the responses likely to emerge”.

The success of survey research rests on how closely the answers that people give to survey questions matches reality, that is, how people really think and act. According to Polland, there are three things that must be done to increase the response to a survey: minimise the

cost for responding, maximise the rewards for doing so and establish trust that those rewards will be delivered (Polland, 1998: 90).

Building trust between the interviewer and the respondent is also a very important incentive to get responses if the researcher wishes to get good reliable data. Knowing many of the interviewees personally through the mailing list discussions is very useful for the researcher. This helps build trusting relations with most of the interviewees. Some of the members even encourage others to reply to the survey.

Addressing personally the webmasters responses is also good despite only knowing very few of them. This is a positive method as it is also possible to send them reminders. However, out of 200 questionnaires, only 12.5% replied to the first attempt. To solicit more replies, shortened questionnaires were sent which resulted in 43% replies. Some webmasters also offered to answer any further questionnaires. One of them, Somali Talk (somalitalk.com) website master, Mohamed Ali, even proposed the use of his site for a web survey.

Between 15 and 20 December 2003, a short email survey was sent to some selected individuals whom the researcher believed to be or have been part of the Puntland/Jubbaland mailing list. Some of these individuals left the list following the political conflict which erupted in Puntland in mid 2001.

The questionnaire centred on:

- The reason for founding the mailing list
- The contribution (political and financial) of the list towards Puntland
- How the political conflict which followed the 2000 Djibouti Peace initiative affected the collaboration within the list members.

By late January 2004 only five replies were received. Statistically this means only 16%. The questionnaire was redesigned and sent again to those who did not reply as well as to fifty others. By the end of March thirty replies were received.

On 24 to 25 June 2003, the researcher took part at the Somali-speaking Writers PEN Club of the International PEN held in Djibouti. The conference was held in conjunction with Somali Creative Community Week. The occasion was used as fieldwork by interviewing ten well known Somali literary people as well as fifteen young website reporters. It was a very constructive experience as the occasion was attended by some forty delegates from as many places as the Republic of Djibouti, Mogadishu (the capital city of Somalia), Somaliland regions, Puntland regions, Ethiopia, Kenya; as well as from UK, Sweden and South Africa.

1.3.2.3 QUESTION MODE

The majority of the questions were made for open responses. This was to give a wide choice to the user in responding. The intention here was to allow users to express themselves freely. However, they did sometimes have some drawbacks as they tended to be very time consuming for people to complete and for researchers to interpret. Usually, the data from open response questions may also not lend itself to analysis for statistical purposes (ibid. 91).

Two sets of questionnaires were distributed via email and by hand in year 2000 (see Appendix B). Both were structured into four sections: personal details, CMC usage and reason for using, mailing list membership and general. One set was addressed to CMC users, while the other one was directed to webmasters.

The user questionnaires were focussed on user's CMC use, reason for use, and web viewing preferences.. They were designed in the following form:

- Personal detail: In this section the intention was to collect personal details such as age group, gender, level of education/schooling, profession and user computer skills.
- Frequency of Internet use and reason for using: Here it was being looked at the average times users log on the Internet per day and user preference.
- Mailing list membership: This section focused on the use of an electronic mailing list and where user is member of other electronic mailing lists.
- General Information: This section inquired about experience, for example sense of belonging and communication type preference.

One difficulty in the research was to get female participants in the survey. Ebyan Salah, a fellow researcher, was instrumental in persuading some of her female colleagues to participate in the survey. Following the intervention of Ebyan, 26 female replies were received out of 30 questionnaires sent.

Questionnaires focused on age group and gender. The intention was to get a balanced view of the usage of CMC by the Diaspora Somali. The age group was based on the following three age groups:

- (a) 18-24.
- (b) 25-44.
- (c) 45 and above.

Another survey focused on webmasters. Webmasters' questionnaires centred on information about the website, date founded, information about the management and aims. One general aim that webmasters shared was "... to make easy the life of our Somali community to surf the World Wide Web in their own language where ever they are" (email message, 2002).

Another says this, "to promote the virtues of Democracy and Human Rights in the New Somalia" (email message, 2002).

The original questionnaires were modified after a pilot survey

- Modification followed the preliminary questionnaires after the pilot stage.
- Types of communications the user prefers or feels more comfortable with. These are: face-to-face or mediated communication (e.g. email).
- User may write or discuss with someone whom he/she may have never seen. The goal here was whether the user has experienced the need to know more about the background, age group or social group of the person he/she is communicating with via this mediated communication. The reason to focus on this point was that traditionally, when Somalis communicate, they would like to know the person with whom they are

conversing. In addition to this, the user was asked whether he/she could recognise this person from his/her writing, ideas or views.

- Seeking user's opinion about the effect of this medium on the traditional oral Somali communication pattern.

1.3.2.4 FIELDWORK

As mentioned above, one of the methods applied in this research was to observe Somali website activity in their world. In a sense, this involved spending time in the "field". Nonetheless, this was supplemented with three fieldwork visits to the Horn of Africa in 2000 and 2003, and United States of America in 2004.

The importance of fieldwork is stressed as it encompasses different scenarios or situations that may range from recorded conversation, a formal interview, the telling of a story, the singing of a song, or doing a dance for the fieldworker alone or for an audience of several thousand cheering strangers (Sims, 2005). Most fieldwork today involves recorded interviews with informants, using available technology. Fieldwork focuses on interaction between fieldworker and the people they meet in the field. It also captures a text that is performed during the fieldworker's presence (ibid.).

In early 2000, field research was carried out in Djibouti and Puntland region of Somalia. In both countries interviews have been conducted. In Puntland Somalia, the researcher did a preliminary survey of telecommunications and mass media use. Focus of the survey was on Bosaso port city (in Bari region, Puntland): (1) Daily use of telecommunications medium, (2) Monthly use of other communication means, (3) Daily listing of radio broadcastings (local and international broadcasting) and (4) Weekly reading of newspapers.

One way to help us investigate and understand how the Internet becomes socially meaningful is to use virtual ethnography. With virtual ethnography the key question is asked "how can ethnography be pursued in technologically mediated setting?" (Hine, 2000). The use of virtual ethnography is to enable us investigate and understand the way in which use of the Internet becomes socially meaningful.

Virtual ethnography is a contemporary development in the area of anthropology, technology studies, and Internet research (Beaulieu, 2004; Hine, 2000; Howard, 2002). It extends the notions of field and ethnographic observation from the exclusive study of co-present and face to face interactions, to a focus on mediated and distributed ones (Hine, 2000).

Virtual ethnography merge two related nevertheless distinct ideas: (i) In the first place virtual ethnography attempts to create virtual counterparts of the basic ethnographic concepts and it asks whether they can be applied to mediated interaction; (ii) Then it intends to change the notion of the field site from a localised space into a network of interlinked mediated settings. In this, it is related to the ethnography of networks (Newman, 1998).

Virtual ethnography maintains a number of values of traditional ethnographic work. It aims to sustain practices of “thick description” (Geertz, 1983, cited in Hine 2000), and to achieve this by paying attention to the perspective of the actors themselves. This makes virtual ethnography distinct from Website content analysis or Webometric studies, although it may make use of the same qualitative and quantitative techniques to locate networks and Websites (Scharnhorst, 2003), or to understand media forms.

According to Wolf (1992), fieldwork is essential to researchers, and without it, the researcher would not encounter-the-smell, sound, sights, emotional tension, feel-of-culture” (Wolf 1992: 128). Hine counters this with her claim that “Ethnographers in cyberspace can, of course, lurk in a way that face-to-face ethnographers cannot readily achieve” (Hine 2000:48).

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF MAIN METHODS

1) Content analysis of Somali websites and mailing lists:
a) Comparison and contrasts of Somali Internet sites
b) Qualitative and historical analysis
i) Aims and objectives
ii) Target audience
iii) Political/social interests
iv) Naming conventions
c) Quantitative analysis
i) Classification of Somali websites
ii) Primary and secondary focus
iii) Web structure, feature and style
2) Survey
a) Interviews
b) Distributing questionnaires to web users and mailing lists members
3) Fieldwork

1.3.3 DIFFICULTY OF THE RESEARCH SOURCES

Some of the Internet references or websites used in this writing could have already been changed by this time or do not exist any more. There is plenty of material available on the Internet, and the researcher’s job was not simply to find information, but to make judgements about its merits. Evaluating for accuracy and importance of the resource has been an exhausting activity throughout the research.

With Internet sources, according to Harris, unlike most traditional information media such as books, magazines, no one has to approve the content before it is made public. Information is everywhere on the Internet, existing in large quantities and continuously being created and revised. This information exists in a large variety of kinds and is created for many purposes. For each of these various kinds and purposes, information exists on many levels of quality or reliability. It ranges from very good to very bad and includes every shade in between (Harris, 1997: 112).

1.4 HOW THIS WRITING IS STRUCTURED

This research covers six case studies which are dealt with in Part One and Part Two — which is also the bulk of the writing. Each part has three case studies. Part One is preceded by four

chapters, Chapter One which is also the Introduction, Chapter Two (literary background) which introduces the technical terms used in this study and the Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) social environment. Chapter Three introduces the categorisation and case background of Somali websites. Chapter Four presents a background of Somali society and politics from the pre-colonial period to the present.

Chapter Five (which begins Part One) analyses how Community/Political websites dynamics reflect Somali local political conditions. Emphasis is placed on how the web technology is exploited as a means to enhance and reconstruct group identity. Analysing Cultural/literary web types' activities, Chapter Six concentrates on the literary aspect of Somali websites. These two aspects (Community/political and Cultural/literary) are the two most likely web types to represent events in Somalia. While the first symbolise politically or community terms, the latter web types reflect the cultural and literary aspect of Somali society. Chapter Seven instead investigates the news media aspect of the Community/political web types. The three case study chapters' activities and behaviour reflect the political dynamics in the former Somali Republic regions and in the Somali Diaspora.

Part Two is based on three case studies of Somali mailing lists and these are Puntland/Jubbaland mailing lists which is dealt with in Chapter Eight, while Somali Forum (SomaliForum) and Pan-Somali Council for Peace and Democracy (Israaca) will be examined in Chapter Nine. The first mailing list group is a lineage-based group while the latter two are national level group lists. Chapter Ten, which is also the conclusion, wraps up the research study.

CHAPTER TWO

2. CMC AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Computer-mediated communication has introduced a new social environment which helps create online links in ways that have never been possible through traditional media. From an individual perspective, the webs can be seen as the ultimate in individualism, a medium with the capability to empower the individual in terms of both the information which he seeks and the information he creates (Noblia, 1998: 11).

One of the benefits of the web is that, through it, people can break the bond of geography; they can 'meet' and 'talk' electronically, if not 'face-to-face', with people of similar interests all over the world. Unlike printed and broadcast media, web pages are not only published (on a grand scale) but also easily revisable (Chandler et al, 1998). Web pages include not only text, but also graphics (still and moving, photograph, cartoon, and artwork) and sound (voices, music and sound effects) (ibid.). Unlike print and broadcast media, web pages are more dynamic, and they are easily revisable (ibid.).

Modes of communication can be generally categorised according to two key aspects: whether they constitute interpersonal communication or mass communication. And whether they are synchronous, operating in "real-time" with the potential for virtually immediate response (as with conversation), or asynchronous (as with letters sent by post) (ibid.).

Mass communication as a mode prior to the web has been a tool of the privileged few. While the Internet as a whole offers all of these, web pages themselves offer the potential for asynchronous mass communication in a medium which, despite far from universal access, is incalculably more widely accessible for self-presentation than the traditional mass media (ibid.). With the changes of volatile Somali political relations, the web content demonstrate their dynamics as an extension of the group-self.

Without the process of the construction of a social reality, digital technology in itself is no more than an information source or at best a non-social object. It is how humans utilise this information in the construction of their social reality that truly determines the impact of

digital technology. Berger and Luckman (1967) argue that individuals construct their own social reality. Each person perceives, interprets and defines information, physical objects and other information into their own version of reality. This “definition of the situation” that individuals construct delineates the tangible world and dictates the actions that they take.

2.1 SOCIAL ASPECT AND WEB ENVIRONMENT

The existence of computer-linked communities was predicted some twenty years ago by J. C. R. Lickhder and Robert Taylor who as research directors of the Department of Defence, set in motion the research that resulted in the creation of first such community, the ARPANet (ibid.). They explain,

“What will on-line interactivity communities like be? ... in most fields they will consist of geographically separated members, grouped in small clusters and sometimes working individually. They will be communities not of common location, but of common interest...” (quoted in Rheingold, 1992).

It is an information network of astonishing proportions, whose characteristic of communal information is not meant to stand as an isolated element in this space, but shared and communicated (Chandler, 1997). Cyberspace is the conceptual space where people using CMC technology manifest words and human relationships. Virtual community is a cultural aggregation that emerges when people communicate with each other. As they exist today, virtual communities are groups of people who may or may not meet one another face-to-face, who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bullet boards and networks (ibid.). This aspect of communication is perhaps the most important feature of this new “space”. Social relations invariably take on a geographical expression and within those expressions can be found the shared meanings which tend to construct the empirical world. As Jones (1995) points out,

“... space for most of us, hovers between ordinary, physical existence and something other. Where we find it hovering is ... in socially produced space,

where spatially can be distinguished from the physical space of material nature and the mental space of cognition and representation...” (ibid).

As mentioned before, Computer-mediated communication has added a new dimension to the pattern of communication of Somali Diaspora. In another setting, this CMC creates individuals to share online identities through the aggregate networks of relationships and commitments that make any community possible. Rheingold states that,

“The physical world, known variously as “IRL (In Real Life) or “offline”, is a place where the ‘identity’ and position of the people you communicate with are well known, fixed, and highly visual. In cyberspace, we can only exchange words with each other ... on top of the technology-inspired constraints, we, who populate cyberspace, deliberately experiment with fracturing traditional notion of identity by living as multiple simultaneously personae in different virtual neighbourhoods... We reduce and encode our identities as words on a screen, decode and unpack the identities of others (Ibid.).

In a web environment there is a distinction between network communities and community network. Network communities exist only in the web, whereas community networks are real life communities that have happened to make themselves a website (Kyröläinen, 2001).

Generally, the shared identity born from the virtual community is temporal. However, a group of Somalis using the CMC creates a virtual community which also has another relationship, that of group identity which many identify themselves with. This in turn is backed by the real world (or offline relation).

There has been considerable research on the social aspects of electronic communication. Most of this research has focussed on interactive communication such as newsgroups, chat rooms, Multiple User Dimension (MUDs) and Multiple User Dimension Object Oriented (MMUD) (Turkle, 1995: 198). Structurally, MUDs are made up primarily of descriptions of real and imagined areas where users can navigate through and examine these settings, and can communicate with other users within the context and confines of the particular setting of

the MUD (VUW, 2003). Socially, MUDs provide users with a grounded situation in which to interact with others at near real time speed (ibid.).

Self-presentation research has been decisively influenced by the sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) and his metaphor of dramatic performance in everyday life. Döring (2002) contends that being represented on the web with an appealing way with information may enhance the impression one makes on people who are not yet familiar personally. Personal home pages can be implemented to convey an impression of one's own person and personal identity to certain audiences and addressees, and to improve contact opportunities and networking (Erickson, 1996). But they can also be public relations work intended for a certain collective identity or marginalised social group to which one belongs and whose public image one would like to influence (Hervern, 2000). Thomas Erickson (1996) comments:

“While personal portrayal is a new type of usage of the web, it is very ordinary behaviour in the real world. People go to considerable effort and expense to manage their appearance. Portrayal management ranges from the ways in which people act in public, to the clothes they wear and the goods they possess and consume. The World Wide web is one of the first venues where individuals can construct portrayals of themselves using information rather than consumer goods as their palette” (Erickson, 1996).

The web technology is a medium that represents a radical departure from previous modes for the ‘presentation of self in everyday life,’ (Chandler, 1997). Personal home pages can be seen as reflecting the construction of their makers' identities. Creating web pages tend to make an opportunity for self-presentation in relation to any aspect of social and personal identity to which ones chooses to allude (Döring, 2002).

Chandler (1997) and (Miller, 1995) have considered the implications of self-presentation on the Internet. Daniel Chandler (1997) in “Writing Oneself in Cyberspace” argues the new technology of the web present a unique opportunity to 'write themselves' on a global stage. Previously, little attention where given to 'personal home pages'. Emphasis instead has been given to transformations of identity similar systems such as chat systems and email.

The writing medium creates an opportunity to record and publish. However, with the introduction of the web pages, what is published on the Internet is automatically published on a global stage (Chandler, 1997) Such a virtual environment offers a unique context in which one may experiment with shaping one's own public identity (ibid.). Communication can be categorised, on one hand, whether it constitutes interpersonal communication or mass communication. On the other hand, whether it constitutes synchronous communication (operating in 'real-time') or asynchronous (as with letters sent by post) (Chandler, 1997). Thus making the personal home page as a self-publishing medium in both senses of the term: “being able to produce web pages is like owning your own printing press, and what some might call 'self-advertisement' seems to be a key function”.

Döring (2002) in “Personal Home Pages on the Web: A Review of Research” looking at what motivates personal home pages, he concludes that a number of authors consider the need of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication to be what determines the construction of a personal home page. Killoran (1999) characterises personal home pages both as personal projects (i.e. motives of self-construction, freedom from outside definition and social projects i.e. motives of sense of belonging), while Hevern (2000) argues that in home page construction drive relating to positive “self-construction as they are expressed just as much as motivation involving making contact with others”. Befring (1997) emphasises the need to express oneself (expressionist) and to get to know others (communicationist) as fundamental postulation.

John Seabrook (1995) comments that “a home in the real world is, among other things, a way of keeping the world out... An on-line home, on the other hand, is a little hole you drill in the wall of your real home to let the world in” (quoted in Chandler, 1997). For Seabrook (1995) setting up a home page is also an exercise in self-promotion, like writing a personal ad. In the "All About Me" sections of some home pages, “people describe themselves in the way to sell themselves” (ibid.). Seabrook reiterates that,

“... putting up a home page is also an act of joining the community of the web, by sharing what you hope is some useful information with others in the

group. The point at which the self-promoting ends and the public-spiritedness begin is very hard to place.” (quoted in Chandler, 1997).

Sherry Turkle comments that in a web page, one's identity surfaces from whom one knows one's associations and connections (Turkle 1996a: 258; quoted in Chandler, 1997). More boldly, another commentator declares: 'Show me what your links are, and I'll tell you what kind of person you are' (quoted in Miller 1995).

Some critics have argued that web pages may lead people to manipulate their public identities more than has been possible with traditional media. For example, Howard Rheingold has argued that 'the authenticity of relationships is always in question in cyberspace, because of the masking and distancing of the medium, in a way that it is not in question in real life' (quoted in Chandler). Hugh Miller, on her part, remarks that in personal home pages 'information about the self is explicitly stated and can be managed by the person making the communication' (Miller, 1995). Michael Jaffe (et al) add that,

“... a person ‘manages identity’ by deliberately exhibiting and withholding pieces of social information, for the purpose of influencing the perceptions of others towards that person... This is an easier task when cues are limited to verbal text... than when they include graphics and vocal information, as in face-to-face communication” (Jaffe et al. 1995).

The social ties in general entrenched in personal home pages would be likely to make assumed identities hard to sustain. Personal home pages are thus not the favoured medium of those who wish to adopt identities which would be completely unrecognisable to those who know them in Real Life (Chandler, 1997). Chandler remarks that,

“We can be more in control of the image we present on a personal home page than in day-to-day life. But, like a printed book, a home page cannot adapt itself to changing audiences and contexts. Some critics persist in making the unfavourable comparison with face-to-face interaction.” (ibid.)

Hugh Miller acknowledges that there may be some advantages in the 'limitations' of personal home pages. However, she further notes, that

“... on the web you can put yourself up for interaction without being aware of a rebuff, and others can try you out without risking being involved further than they would wish” (Miller, 1995).

2.2 COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION (CMC) AND ORAL CULTURE

Perhaps, one of the most important characteristic of the Internet is the mass bi-directionality of the communication vectors. While radio and television have one-way information flow, the Internet has the ability to allow immediate interactions.

Displaying the characteristics of a primary oral culture, CMC generate a world based on text and these technologies transform thought and culture by creating communities in which the participants can take part in emotional, expressive and involving communication (December, 1993). CMC characteristics produce a forum in which literacy can blend with orality. It is these characteristic of oral means of communication which are more appealing to Somalis.

Hiltz and Turoff (1978) found participants in the bulletin board system were inclined to participate in synchronous discussions as they tended to offer opinion (quoted in December, 1993). Contrasting face-to-face group and CMC communication group, Sproull and Keisler (1991) found that in CMC group more ideas were proposed and it took longer to make a decision. There was also more equal participation and more emotions took place.

Tannen argues that there is a continuum between orality and literacy. Based on how much the communicator focuses on involvement or message content, oral method grows out of emphasis on interpersonal involvement between speaker/writer and audience (Tannen, 1982: 230).

2.2.1 ORAL QUALITIES AND THE INTERNET

Writing has never been a significant communication medium in Somali society and the reason can be explained in what McLuhan called the loss of “aural space”. McLuhan's notion was that primary orality's world of participation, involvement and expression was eradicated by print culture. Instead of a world of sound and involvement, the print world was to be based on linear thought, abstraction, and the separation of the knower from the known (December, 1993). Perhaps the need to preserve their “aural space” let Somalis to develop a very rich oral culture.

John December (1993) argues that there is an emergent 'discourse culture' on the Internet which show distinctly oral qualities while remaining at the same time in textual form. His hypothesis exploits Walter Ong's descriptive traits of groups experiencing a ‘primary orality’. Ong suggested that there are some elements of orality that are expected to be seen again in an electronic culture despite that there will be some differences.

December's description of orality is based on an extension of Tannen's theory that oral strategies grow out of emphasis on interpersonal involvement between speaker/writer and audience and this relies on social context and shared interpersonal context for meaning (December, 1994). Applying Tanner's theory, December identifying Ongean oral characteristics in the textual responses of the Internet users which are known to have a familiar style and personal tone in the messages. He suggests that Ong's eight characteristics of ‘primary’ oral communication and thought can be successfully 'applied to' or 'seen within' the types of net.text interaction commonly experienced on the Internet.

Some of the characteristics of ‘primary’ oral communication and thought can also be seen on Somali web based forum and the writings on websites. An Internet forum is functionally similar to Newsgroups and it is a facility on the World Wide Web for holding discussions, or the web application software used to provide the facility. A sense of virtual community often develops around forums that have regular users.

Using as case samples of some extract of Somali forum below will be considered the oral characteristics of the Internet. Some of these tendencies are additive/aggregative, redundant or 'copious' and conservative/traditionalist.

2.2.2 ORAL TENDENCIES

One of CMC's oral characteristics is additive/aggregative tendency. This tendency is to simply use additive principal clauses rather than subordinative clauses. Additive oral speech patterns tend to use parataxis to indicate relationships among clauses (Ong, 1982). Clauses connected with "*and*" illustrate this additive quality.



In *Textbox 1*, Fu'aad Ali (name changed for confidentiality) begins a forum discussion entitled "Somalia waxay u bahantahay dawladaha aduunka ugu awooda badan"². Fu'aad used seven additive word *iyoo* (and) (underlined). Author 1 is in favour of the Transitional Federal Government headed by Abdullahi Yusuf and pleads with the international community for support so the government can function and the warlords be eliminated. In reply, Author 2 rejects the idea of strongman without vision and patriotism by alluding that the current Transitional Federal Government (and particularly Abdullahi Yusuf) is a friend of Ethiopia, the arch-enemy of the Somali nation.

² Somalia needs [the help] of the big nations.


TEXTBOX 1: SOMALI FORUM ITEM



somali's Forum³
Welcome to our forum. Feel free to post a message.

[Return to Website](#)

 [Reply](#)  [Forum](#)

Subject: Somalia waxay u bahantahay dawladaha aduunka ugu awooda badan
Name: Fu'aad Ali (Name changed)
Date Posted: Mar 29, 05 - 5:31 AM
Email: (email removed)
Message:⁴ Waxaanu ka codsanaynaa dawladaha aduunka sida dawladda Maraykanka iy Dawladaha Europeanka ah in ay Dawladda noo dhalatay ee Abdullahi Yusuf Madaweynaha ka yahay ay Dhaqaale iy Cidan ugu Deqaan waa ninka keliya ee somalia maanta wax ka qaban kara, oo ay somali u bahantahay, waxaanu jecelnahay qabqablayasha ka horyimaada sida Osman hassan Ali Aato iy Muse sudi Yalahow, iy Qanyare in Maxkamadda Aduunka la soo Hor istaajiyo 14 sano ayaa Somaliya ka degi ladhay *shirkastana* waa Burburi`yaan, Abdiqasim oo Al itixaad dhinaca dhaqaalaha ugu qaabilsan iy sheikh dahir aweys iy i indhacade waa in laga qabtaa somalia oo waxay ku qaraabtaan Diinta islaamka mana aha niman ku dhaqmaaya diinta islaamka oo waa argagaxiso la shaqaysta Alqacida.

Replies:
 Re: Somalia waxay u bahantahay dawladaha aduunka ugu awooda badan by hasan · May 24, 05 - 2:32 PM

 [Reply](#)  [Forum](#)

Subject: Re: Somalia waxay u bahantahay dawladaha aduunka ugu awooda badan
Name: Farah Moahmed (name changed)
Date Posted: May 24, 05 - 2:32 PM
Email: (email removed)
Message:⁵ waar sidaa maaha ee kadaa,soomaalia waxay ubaahantay rag xoog iy maskax ku maa mula qasabna ku mideeyee,dalkiisana jecel kuna faana, kana difaaaca cadawga sokeeye iy ka shiisheeye, iy kuwa caqliga laga xaday iy kuwa gaalada daba nash leeyaba, qolo kasta hanoqdeene. soomalia waxay ahayd dawlad kamida kuwaa aduunka ugu awooda badan markay kuqabsatay ethiopia sedex bilood oo keliyaa isla markana ay etheopia cabaaday.

TEXTBOX 2: SOMALITALK.COM FORUM ITEM

SomaliTalk
> [kis maayo](#)
> Kismayo miyaa la isku haystaa ama muran gali karta

³ Source: Somalia's Forum, <http://pub24.bravenet.com/forum/2054465639/fetch/429879>, [02/02/2006].

⁴ Summary: We need the international community, like the United States and European countries to support the government headed by Abdullahi Yusuf.

⁵ Summary: Do not say that. Somalia needs courageous men with principle and patriotism. No need of men who support Somalia's enemies.

Author	Comment
1. mohamed03 ⁶ Unregistered User (9/20/03 11:57 am) Reply	Kismayo miyaa la isku haystaa ama muran gali karta
	Kismayo miyaa la isku haystaa waxaan idin leeyahay soomaaliyeey waxba hadalka ha iska dhamaynina <u>hana</u> isku xiiqina qofna ma dhihi karo anaa leh dhul uusan lahayn <u>mana</u> haysan karo waxaan waa wax cad kismaayo waxaa iska leh lahaandoonana lahaan jirayna reer Puntland dadka lagu magacaabo <u>amaba</u> Harti sida aad u taqaan markaa nacnacda iska daayoa saaxiibayaan
2. xilkas Unregistered User ⁷ (11/26/03 9:24 am) Reply	kismayo murin ma geli karto
	Wlaal Kismayo miyaa la isku haystaa waa la yaqaan dadka u dhashay kismayo ee reer puntland dhoof bay ku yimideen oo hadana way tegi doonaan ee taariiqda ayaa kaa qaldanee dib isu sax warmooogooooooooooooow
3. wiilwaamo ⁸ Unregistered User (12/17/03 1:55 pm) Reply	waa run walaal waa laga tagey waqtigii la murmi jirey
	runti waxaa lagu jiraa wactigii dunida lala socon lahaa mana haboona in aad wactigaaga ku lumisid deegaan dad leyahay ama rer/qabiil kismaayo rerbaa leh oo aan marnaba dhaafeyn dhulkoo dhana waa layimi lakiin waa lagu soo kala horeeyay waxaana leh harti. waxaana la wadaaga magaalada gudaheeda bajun oo kaliya lakiin deegaanka u dhow dhow waxaa ku xiga shiiqaal-looboge <u>markaas ka dib</u> galjecel <u>iy</u> ogaaden dadka kale oo dhan shaqo ku ma laha lakiin waa magaalo oo cidwalba wey daganaanjirtey <u>ama</u> dagi karaan lakiin rer guri ma'ahan ee waa galti.hadii adigu aad ka soo carartey dhul aan qudrad oolin ama gaajo ka jirto waad joogi kartaa oo cid alaale cidii aad somali ka tahay hadii aad ii sheegtid waxaan ku sheegayaa adeerka ama ini-adeerka oo horta baahi kentay waa caadi lakiin hade galti umbaad tahtaa
4. siman ⁹ Unregistered User (12/17/03 9:33 pm) Reply	Doofaarkii aad ka dharagteen waan arkaah
	Marka hore ilaah baa mahada leh koonkaa abuuray idinkana idin geeyay meel nabad leh oo aad cunto intaad ka dharagteen aad ku leedihiin gobolkaas yaa leh <u>iy</u> gobolkaas it is time aan wado jir ahaan lahayn aas islaam and soomaalinimo, inaan u wada hadalno sidii cawaan ma ahan ok, we have to be real muslim and real somalian, so wasalaama caykum waraxmatu laah wabara kaatuh.

⁶ Summary in English: No one can claim Kismayo by force. Kismayo belongs to Puntland people [Harti Daarood].

⁷ Summary in English: Kismayo is a disputed place. Puntlanders came as outsiders and now they have to leave [Kismayo].

⁸ Summary: It is not time for argument. Everybody should by now know the reality of how Kismayo is populated.

⁹ Summary in English: First let us thank God who created this world and land to live and food to eat. Live in peace. Be real Muslim and real Somali.

In another example, in *Textbox 2*, Author 1 (Mohamed03) posts and initiates a discussion entitled “*Kismayo miyaa la isku haystaa ama muran gali karta*”.¹⁰ It demonstrates that the author ignores all punctuation by typing directly as the spoken word. Even in speech the author might have stopped breathing. All four authors seem to follow a similar pattern.

Author 1 uses the word *hana* (do not), *mana* (meaning “its not”) and *amaba* (meaning “or”) as the additive word of “and”. Author 3 is using instead the word *laakiin* (but) (underlined) as additive five times to link his thoughts.

Another quality found in the discussion forum is aggregative quality. All three respondents are replying to a previous author. This comes as quoting the text of the author to whom one is responding. Ong argues that “oral expression carries a load of epithets and other formulary baggage which high literacy rejects as cumbersome and tiresomely redundant because of its aggregative weight” (Ong 1982).

In both textboxes authors reply to previous messages. In *Textbox 5*, the first reply to Mohamed03’s message which is posted after 22 days (25/11/03 9:24 a.m.). This means that no argument (or case) is allowed to be ignored, particularly, when the issue is about a contentious issue case as Kismayo.¹¹ The third reply message is posted after two months (17/12/03 1:55 pm) followed by the fourth message posted on the same day (17/12/03 9:33 pm).

¹⁰ SomaliTalk, <http://www.somalitalk.com/forum/> [02/02/2006]

¹¹ Kismayo is a port city situated in the southern part of Somalia. Since the breakdown of the state, Kismayo has been a place of contention between local Somali clans and sometimes it resulted in death and starvation for many innocent civilians. Discussion about Kismayo can also be found on HobyNet.com, SomaliNet.com, SomaliUK.com, and many other Com/pol websites forums.

Madaxwaynaha Jabuuti oo ku dhawaaqay soo dhawaynta Firxadkii Isbahaysiga la dagaalanka Argagaxisada

Posted to the MOL June 8, 2006, 7:59 am

Source: <http://www.mudugonline.com/viewArticle.php?articleid=1055>

Madaxweynaha Dalka Jabuuti Ismaaciil Cumar Geelle ayaa shaaca ka qaaday inuu gacmo furan kusoo dhawayn doono firxadkii Isbahaysiga la dagaalanka Argagaxisada ee lagaga adkaaday maalmihii lasoo dhaafay Magaalada Muqdisho oo ahayd meeshii ay ka talinjireen intii ka danbaysay burburkii dawladii uu Madaxwaynaha ka ahaa Maxamed Siyaad Barre soo dhawaynta Madaxwaynaha Jabuuti uu soo dhawaynayo firxadka ka haray Isbahaysiga ayaa kusoo aadantay wakhti ay Hogaamiya kooxeedyadu ku mashquulsanaayeen meeshii ay u bixi lahaayeen maadaama ay kasoo bara keceen degaamaday ka talin jireen isla markaana ay dawlada kenya oo ay qorshaynayeen inay wadankeeda tagaana ay soo saartay digniin ku wajahan inaysan u ogolaanayn dalkeeda waxa ay ugu yeereen Dagaal oogayaasha sidoo kalana ay wadankeeda ka tarxiishay C/rashiid Shire Il-Qayte oo looga itaal roonaaday dagaal uu la galay Maxaakiimta dagaalka oo ay uga qabsadeen saldhigiisa oo ahaa hotel suxufi oo uu isagu ka talin jiray Waxaa walaac aad u wayn ka muujiyay soo dhawaynta Madaxwaynaha Jabuuti uu soo dhawaynayo Isbahaysigii ku midoobay la dagaalanka Argagaxisa Aqoonyahano soomaaliyeed oo ku sugan dalka dibadiisa kuwaas oo ku tilmaamay inuu Madaxwaynaha Jabuuti uu u horseedayo dalkiisa dhibaato uga timaada Maxaakiimta islaamiga ah oo iyagu haatan dagaal kadhan ah kula jira Qabqablayaasha dagaalka oo ay sheegeen inay yihiin kuwa dalka soomaaliya hormarka u diidan una adeegaya dawlado shisheeye oo dano gaara ka leh Dalka Soomaaliya isla markaasna doonaya inay colaadu sii socoto si aysan u dhalan Dawlad hor istaagta Mawqifkooda ku wajahan waxa ay ugu yeereen Bililiqaysiga khayraadka Dalka soomaaliya Midoowga Maxaakiimta Islaamiga ah ayaa wali ku hawlan ka fikirka sidii ay Muqdisho ugu dhisi lahaayeen Maamul Islaami ah iyadoo ay jirto in Culays badan uga imanayo dhanka Dawlada Fadaraalka ah oo ugu baaqaysa inaysan wax maamula ku dhawaaqin ee ay wada hadal la sameeyaan dawlada ayna hoos yimaadaan Dawlada fadaraalka Waxaa dad aad u fara badan oo ku nool dalka Dibadiisa ay aad ugu mashquulsanyihiin sababta keentay inuu Gudoomiyaha Maxaakiimtu saxaafada u sheego inuu is casilayo iyo sababta uu ku door biday inuu is casilo, dadka qaar ayaa waxay ku tilmaamayaan is casilaaankiisa inay sababtay kadib markii xaalada Muqdisho kusii wajahantahay is badal Qabiili ah oo Hogaamiyaashii laga itaalka roonaaday qaarkood ay qabiil salka la galeen ayna soo gashadeen shaar qabiil iyagoo majara habaabinaya dadka aan wax garadka ahayn kana dhaadhicinaya inay arintu tahay dhulbalaarsi qabiil ee aysan jirin wax la yiraahdo Maxaakiim diineed.

Mukhtar Abshir Deria
London, England
Mudugonline.com

TEXTBOX 4: COMMENT ON MUDULOOD.COM

Waa baa baryey, bilicsan, arooryo baxsan maalin boqran (maxaakiinta)

By: Bashir Dirie bdirie@hotmail.com

Source: <http://mudulood.com/>

June 28-2006

B I S M I L A A H I R A X M A A N I R A X I I M .

Ilaah baa awood leh, nabegeenii csw muxamed nabadgalyo iyo naxariisi korkiisa ha ahooto.

Waxaan awalan salaamayaa saaxiibada inoogu hawlan webkaan, marka xigana inteena kale oo goobahaan ku kulma, qof walba garashadiisa iyo xog-ogaalnimadiisa ayuu koleey soo qoraa kaliya waxaan codsan lahaa in qoraalku yahay mid aan ka harin geediga dheereynaya, una hiiliya dhinaca la mahadinayo, waana doqonimo weyn in shaqsi is yiraahdo hawlaha socda tolkaa macne badan kuma dhax laha, markaana qalinkisu noqdo sidii qori inta rasaas laga buuxiyey layska furay, waxaan uga jeedaa saaxiibkayga siyaasi cidna kaama yeelayso in hawlaha ka socdaa gobolkaa banaadir ee hadda u farabaxsaday inta badan koofurta soomalida in la heli karo reer uga influence badan tolweynahaa mudulood, cudud milatery, dhaqaale iyo hogaaminta kacdoonkii looga takhalusayo warloryadii aanu isla naqiin. Runtii mr siyaasi qoraalkaagu maahayn mid diidan kacdoonkaa guulahiisa, waadna ogtahay xaqiiqada fundamentelkaa ee gobolkaa banaadir in ay ahaayeen warloryadii laga talin waayey, hadii tiro la yiraahna ay u badnaayeen dhinacaaga, marka walaale cadaalad maaha in hadana aan furno qoraalo si aada uga hooseeya waaqica jira, oo aan anigu aaminsanahay in aan ku jirno xiligii aan ugu rajada fiicnayn 16 sano kadib, waxaa muuqata guulaha ay soo hooyeen in aysan cayaar ku imaan, waxaa muuqata in ay dhaxdooda kalsooni buuxda isku qabaan ,waxeey ku walaaloobeen ilaaheey oo ay talada saarteen, hadeey markii hore ahaayeen kacdoonkii gobolka banaadir, hadda waxeey u guureen golaha maxaakiinta shuurada soomaliyeed Mr siyaasi saaxiib kacdoonkaa muqdisho ka dhashay maahayn mid iska yimid, waa mid ku yimid markii la noolaan waayey, laysku ceeboobay, dadkii soomliyeed nala yaabeen, xaruuntii muqdisho noqotay goob aan mar danbe dib loo haweeyan, waxaa intaa u dheer mashruuc la doonayey in culumadeena iyo aqoonyahankeena macnaha leh lagu iib gaysto, lasoo baayacdo, lagu jahawareeriyo aduunka in aan khatar ku nahay xasiloonaada aduunka iyo midda regionka, hadii ay culumadeenu ayagoo kaashanaya shacabkooda dhibtooday iyo tujaartooda calfan waayey xoolahooda ay maanta xoriyad kharka u saaranyihiin dagaal dheer ka dib maan garan waxa aad ku jamatay inaad dib ugu celiso colaadii waa hore aan ka guurnay.?

Mr siyaasi sheikh shariif sheikh ahmed waa hogaamiye buuxa, dhisan, kasooni buuxda ilaah siiyey kuligeen nasoo jiiyay, golaha hadda la dhisayna waa ninka ugu awoodda badan ee golaha fulinta dhamaan hawlaha maaxakiinta, sheikh xasan daahir aweys maaha shaqsi mudan inaad ku mathashid sida cabdulaahi yuusuf, sheikh xasan dahir waxuu madax ka yahay golaha shuurada oo aan filayo in ay u dhisantahay sida baarlamaanka, waxaa wanaagsan inaan sugno inta aan fasiraad dhamaystiran ka helayno golahaan shuurada soomaliyed iyo waajibaadkooda.

Mr siyaasi saaxiib meeye ragii is mahadin jiray xageey ku danbeeyaan, mr qanyare, mr suudi, cabdi qaybdiid, bashir raage, cabdi waal, cabdi shukri iyo xaraan ku naax, runtii waxeey xamar xoriyad haweeysatay markii ay weysay shaqsiyaadkaa mana aan filayo in ay ahaayeen kuwa iska tegay ee waxeey ahaayeen kuwa ceeb ku baxay ama xamar la jooga fool-xumo.

Qoraalkayga gaaban waxaan ku soo xiganayey, uga jawaabayey qoraalkii "maxaakiintii muqdisho oo arimo xisbi faraha la gashay" waxaa qoray ninkaa lagu magacabo cabdulaahi moalim(abdulaahi siyaasi) oo uu kaga hadlayey aragtiisa xamar iyo siyasadaha ay la 'iman karto, runtiina waan ku ixtiraamayaa ra'yigiisaa lakiin waxaan rabaa in lagu soo wada biiro.

Aan ku xiro cinwaankaygii maqaalka oo aan rabay aniga iyo cabdulaahiba inaan wada niraah "waa baa baryey bilicsan, arooryo baxsan maalin boqran" wabilaahi tawfiikh

Textbox 3 and *Textbox 4* are written without considering proper punctuation. Particularly, *Textbox 3* where it has been squashed to one paragraph. *Textbox 4*, instead, is made of a large paragraph and four small ones. Both textboxes are written as spoken word.

As oral discourse relies on memory it is often redundant and copious according to Ong. This can be seen as the tendency to quote the previous author's statements in order to respond to them, often point-by-point, building up lengthy messages containing the text(s) of many authors (December 1994). Like in the speech, the speaker must repeat the speech in order the listener has heard (Ong 1982). Similarly, in electronic message, it is essential to quote previous articles.

In *Textbox 2*, the first two respondents quote the first message which the subject as *Kismayo miyaa la isku haystaa* (in italic). Here the authors try to quote by emphasising their reply.

Generally, the subject of the forum is usually the title of the discussion. As in electronic mails, the subject is always at the beginning of the text, followed by the date, sender's name. Repliers are required to answer without changing the title of the discussion.

Textbox 2 participants do not follow the 'rule' of the discussions as they allow themselves to modify the subject. In the case of *Textbox 5* the subject of the forum "Re: can jowher be somali's washington?" remained the same throughout the discussion.

The topic "Re: can Jowher be Somali's Washington?" received 20 replies plus the initiator of the topic discussion. The first was posted on July 14, 2005 at 02:09:31 a.m. and the last reply to date (number 20)¹² was posted on February 17, 2006 at 02:36:03 a.m. It is still an open discussion and it may still receive more replies.


¹² Only 3 messages have been taken for this analysis. Replies 1 and 2 have been removed as they were not relevant to this analysis.

TEXTBOX 5: DISCUSSION

SomaliUk Discussion Forum | General | Politics (Moderators: Venom, Hassan, Nasir, Dalmar1) | < previous next >
Topic: [can jowher be somali's washington?](#)

Pages: [1] 2

Print 

 Author Topic: [can jowher be somali's washington?](#) (Read 1080 times)

[kaahow](#)¹³

Newbie



Posts: 45



[somali's washington?](#)

[can jowher be](#)

« on: July 14, 2005, 02:09:31 AM »

this oasis has grabed world attention recently but the city is old and attractively rich in hisrory. it is charming small town and everything is whith in reach. it can never be mogadisho but it 's a town worth respecting because it has it's own style and beauty. jowhar can realy be the somalian's washington how ever brea of a time that may be. while mogadisho can act the big metropolis like los angeles or newyork.

 Logged

[mussaid](#)

Full Member



Gender: 

Posts: 150



Mesega Cadeey inteen ku shubba




[somali's washington?](#)

[Re: can jowher be](#)

« Reply #3 on: September 04, 2005, 09:43:26 AM »

Jowhar can never be Somali's Washington, and do not dream to much my Friend.

Mogadisho is Somali's Washington but Jowhar is Washington for ABGAL do you agree, that is the fact.

Salaaam to all ... 

 Logged

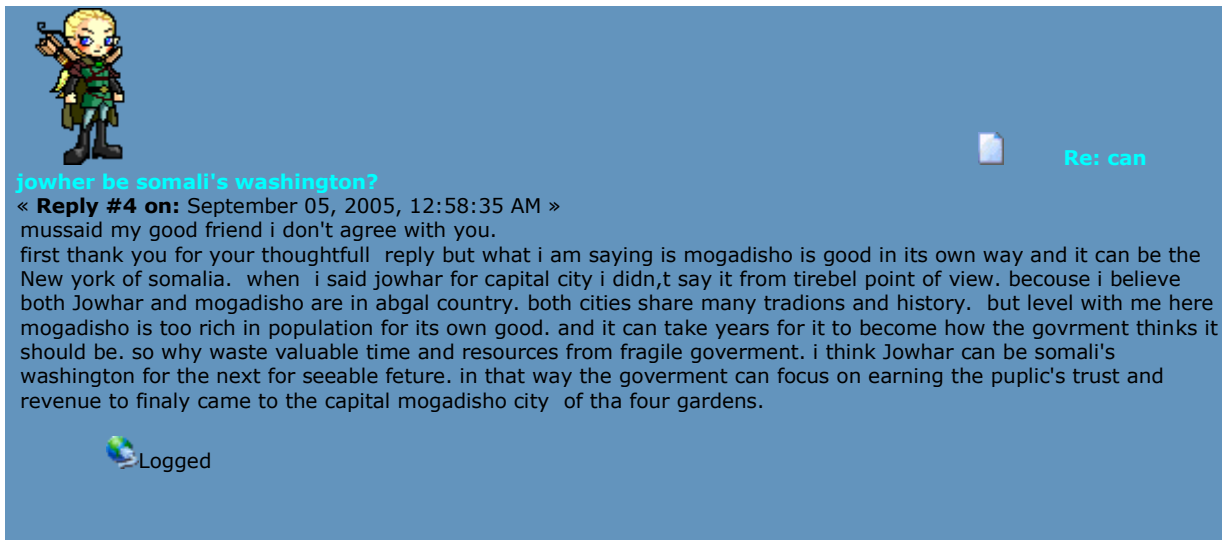
[kaahow](#)

Newbie



Posts: 45

¹³ Summary in English: Jowhar [the temporary seat of the Somali Transitional Federal Government] is an oasis which attracts the world attention because of its beauty and peace.



Another important feature in the *Textbox 5* is the Logged feature (which represents a world map image with a cable plugged in). This means that all participants are registered users of the SomaliUK website. They might also be members of the website. In *Textbox 2* not all participants are members of the forum as it shows the word “Unregistered User” in the left corner below the participant’s name.

2.3 EXPLAINING WEB AND MAILING TECHNOLOGY

In this section will be explained the technologies of website and mailing list.

2.3.1 WEB TECHNOLOGY

The Internet is a global network of computers that communicate using a common language. When one connects to the international network of computers through an Internet Service Provider (ISP), the user is connected to the Internet. Short for Internet Service Provider, ISP is a company that provides access to the Internet. The World Wide Web (the web or WWW), on the other hand, gives the user a graphical, easy-to-navigate interface for looking at documents on the Internet. The www is a 'venue' where individuals or groups can construct a huge amount of information about themselves or their group. It is a location where each site contains a home page, which is the first document users see when they enter the site. The site

might also contain additional documents and files. These documents, as well as the links between them, comprise a 'web' of information.

The web lets users jump or 'hyperlink' from one web page to other pages on the web. Hyperlinks are underlined or bordered words and graphics that have web addresses (also known as a URL Universal Resource Locator) embedded in them. The link is a connection from one page to another destination such as another page or a different location on the same page. The destination is frequently another web page. When a site visitor clicks the hyperlink, the destination is displayed in a web browser. Browsers are application tool for navigating and accessing information on the web.

As mentioned above, a group of documents accessed from the same base web address is known as a website. In a way, a website is a kind of home where users feel they have affinity.

Maintaining a website is a very expensive and time-consuming matter as it involves both money and time. There are several steps to start with web setting: the first involves registering a domain name (web name). The second step entails finding web hosting. The term web hosting refers to the housing of a website. Usually, a web-hosting provider serves this on Internet. Domain name is used to identify the location of a website on the Internet.

A domain name consists of two or more words separated by a period. The last word (the far right) is called a "top-level domain", for example (.com). To the left of the top-level domain is what is called the "second-level domain", for example SahanOnline. In the case of SahanOnline its domain name should be presented in this way, SahanOnline.com. Majority of Somali websites use this type of service.

Beside the fee-based web hosting service, there are also some Internet Service Providers (ISP) which provide free hosting service. The difference with this kind of service is that the website member is treated as being part of the provider rather than having their own domain name. This is similar to an organisational structure where the web member's name is right under the provider's domain name. This group of web comes into two types:

- 1) Member's name comes after provider name and a forward dash (/) between them (provider/member): e.g. geocities.com/benaadir.
- 2) Member's name comes before provider's name followed by a dot (.) (member.provider): e.g. HalAbuurJournal.click2site.com.

This type of service is overwhelmingly used by the personal home page.

There are other expenses which are incurred with running a website. Beside the know-how and skills of web designing, it is necessary to get the basic technology which involves running such business. These are, for instance, a personal computer with Internet accessibility (i.e. modem), telephone line and Internet Service Provider.

Some websites charge for advertising on their websites. For example SomalilandNet.com says that "all advertising on Somaliland Net is based on banner exposures, or impressions, this is the method most often used on the web, and is comparable to paying for a magazine or newspaper ad on the basis of subscription numbers (SomalilandNet.com, 2004). It advises banners to be 60 pixels high and 468 pixels wide in either a particular image format (for example gif or jpeg format). They also offer to help designing the banners at a rate of US \$50 per hour. Payment must be made in full for all advertisements in advance by cheque or major credit card or by money transfer.

2.3.2 MAILING LIST TECHNOLOGY

Somali mailing lists have been created mainly by Somali Diaspora for different purposes. There are different types of Somali mailing list groups some of which are: (a) national level where groups of national interest meet virtually, (b) professional types where professional people communicate and (c) lists where groups meet below the national level.

Email may be the most important, unique method for communicating and developing relationships since the telephone. People also find it familiar and safe because it is similar in many respects to writing letters (Suler, 1998: 132). Of all the methods for developing relationships on the internet, it is the most common - and perhaps the most powerful.

Email is not just electronic mail sent via the internet, but it creates a psychological space in which pairs of people - or groups of people - interact. It creates a context and boundary in which human relationships can unfold (ibid, 134).

People have always wanted to communicate with each other in the fastest way possible, short of normal conversation. Email is the most prevalent application of this in computer networking. It allows people to write back and forth without having to spend much time worrying about how the message actually gets delivered. As technology grows closer and closer to being a common part of daily life, the need to understand the many ways it can be utilised and how it works, at least to some level, is vital (Kehoe, 2000: 111).

E-media are acoustic/oral and therefore almost a form of speaking. Oral culture is holistic, subjective and dynamic, while visual culture is objective and static (ibid.). In visual culture you are a removed and detached observer. And in oral culture you are involved as a direct participant while the book and the written word are visual.

The Somali Diaspora has been more enduring than the Somali state (ibid. 7). This was because of Somalis living and working beyond the frontiers of the Somali peninsula long before the partition of Africa. The many clan Diaspora — grown much larger and more diverse over the course of the 20th century — became the primary vehicle for the expression of Somali ethnic and cultural identity. It is well known that the Somali Diaspora helped foster national and pan-Somali sentiments in the 1940s before the formation of the Somali state. Since the collapse of the central government in 1991 their role has been more ambiguous (Cassanelli, 2002).

Several of these Diaspora both predated and outlived the Somali state. Since the collapse of the central government, Somali Diaspora has formed a variety of new political groupings and identities. The internal conflict has reinforced the clan-consciousness of the Diaspora. This in turn consolidates the already existing factionalism of Diaspora politics. Every faction Diaspora group has its own mailing list and it may also include a website in its possession.

Websites present their case differently. Basically, their views depend on their intended political perspectives as well as their tribal background. For example, all web constituents hold a different view on the origin of the Somali crisis as well as its solutions. This ongoing debate is their engine as their activities have made the cyberspace another front to 'fight'.

Since late 1990s the Somali civil war has entered a new stage: the stage of information media. This also coincides with the booming of global communication, especially with the introduction of the Internet, which gave the conflict a new dimension. Some theorists believe that information is one of the most effective types of power that is available to people.

Subscribing to mailing list (also referred to as mailing listvers), is one of the most common uses of the Internet today. There are thousands of these electronic forums catering to an abundance of special interest groups, information services, electronic journals and research projects (Kannel, 1996: 51). The attraction is that Somali mailing lists provide relatively simple routes to interactive communication via electronic mail, allowing Internet users around the world access to each others ideas, publications, and information.

A variety of software is able to manage electronic mailing lists. Some of these are Majordomo, Mailserv, lisproc and listserv (ibid.). Regardless of name, the main purpose of a mailing list is to distribute email messages to a particular list from one address to all of the other addresses or subscribers linked to that list. Listserv technology supports electronic mailing lists automatically: some of these are maintaining subscriber information, generating message archives, preparing digests of messages, and interpreting and processing keyword commands (ibid.).

Lists can be public or private, open versus closed, moderated or unmoderated (ibid.). There can be one central list owner, or the responsibilities can be shared amongst several people, each having equal or varied levels of access.

Topics are carried out into two ways: non-regulated (or causal) and regulated. Any member can start both types. The subject of the mail is usually the title of the discussion. The subject is always at the beginning of the email text, followed by the date, sender's name and email

address. Repliers are required to answer without changing the title of the discussion. Usually these non-regulated discussions begin casually and are conducted informally. There are many topics open at a time. Members can reply and add their opinion by choosing any topics. At any given time, a member can participate in as many discussions as he/she may wish.

All three mailings lists are regulated mailing lists. Regulated topics are those discussions which are regulated and have moderators to guide. These kinds of discussions are related to matters which require a joint action to be agreed by the members. Generally, these types of discussions have moderators. The result of the discussions is combined and sent to the members to agree a joint action.

As mentioned above, most Somali Diaspora groups have formed their own mailing list for different purposes. These purposes may be a national interest group, a professional interest, or a group which meets below the national level.

2.4 AUDIENCE, USER OR VISITOR?

In cyberspace term a person who is a frequent or habitual user of the Internet is known as a netizen. A netizen — also known as a cybercitizen — is a portmanteau of Internet and citizen. A netizen is a person who is actively involved in online communities as he/she uses the Internet to engage in activities of the extended social groups of the internet works (i.e., giving and receiving viewpoints, furnishing information, fostering the Internet as an intellectual and a social resource, and making choices for the self-assembled communities).

Netizens utilise the networks from their home, workplace, or school (among other places). They try to be conducive to the Internet's use and growth. The term was formed by Michael Hauben (circa 1992) from the description of the Net.news user. The term has been used most frequently recently where there are vigorous netizens movements.

In telecommunication, the term user is considered as a person, organisation or other entity (including a computer or computer system), that employs the services provided by a

telecommunication system or by an information processing system, for transfer of information.

In computer terminology computer user is one who uses computers for work, entertainment, communication or business. Literally, a user is a person who makes use of a thing; someone who uses or employs something. The word visitor is sometimes used for such a person.

A Somali web visitor is considered as the user 'audience' for whom the web was created. An audience member, therefore, is an active person rather than a passive person thus bringing to the media a variety of different needs and uses that influence the media.

In this text, user (and sometimes interchangeably audience) will be applied instead of netizen. Despite that a netizen is a person who is actively involved in online communities, Somali user utilises the Internet at media application level.

CHAPTER THREE

3. CATEGORISATION, BACKGROUND AND CASE EXAMPLES

Traditionally, information was vital for the Somali. For example, to survive in a demanding environment, the traditional Somali needed constant information about his surroundings. This habit made the Somalis keen information seekers. Avoiding information in an oral society is to avoid the society. Professor Said Samatar remarks that,

The English greeting: “how are you?” has at least eight equivalent in Somali and where in English the greeting phrase means is intended to inquire a person’s state of well-being, the Somali equivalent seek to elicit information (Samatar, 1996:2)

In the context of modern technology, CMC became of particularly significance to Somalis whose culture is oral. Above all, these impacts turned out to be crucial during the civil upheaval in early 1991, which left the country’s infrastructure disintegrated leaving the people without basic services. This included communication technology, where its impact has intensified the displaced people’s trauma.

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia, except for telecommunications, virtually all other development projects in Somalia have been neglected. The telecommunication business (including mobile phones and fax machines) has expanded in all regions of the Somali territory. This business trend is growing day-by-day in Somalia in complete contrast with other forms of business. The Somalis’ longing for information and communication drives this business boom. For instance, the huge demand for communication technology encouraged many Somali business people to venture into the international telephone trade. In Europe and North America, Somalis own telephone booth shops where they sell cheap international phone calls, phone cards, cheap Internet access, mobile phones and other related items.

3.1 SOMALI WEBSITE CLASSIFICATION AND DEFINITION

In mid 2004, there were over 400 Somali websites (see Appendix A), and it seemed that every month there were going to be some new websites. Many have noted this trend. One of them is Ismail A. Hassan, a Somali Internet student, who says,

“... waxaana maalinba maalinta ka dambeysa sii badanaya shabakadaha Soomaalida” (Ismail A. Hassan, 2004)

(... day by day the numbers of Somali websites are increasing ...).

The reasons for the proliferation of Somali websites appear to be two: (1) the loss of national identity following the collapse of the state institutions, and (2) the oral characteristics of the Internet which are participatory, involvement and expressive. December (1993) in “Characteristics of Oral Culture in Discourse on the Net” posits that the emerging discourse culture based on computer-mediated communication (CMC) exhibits many characteristics of an oral culture.

The collapse of the state encouraged the individual Somali to go back to his/her roots. The subsequent social crisis created a situation where social norms became void and the individual Somali was left in total disarray, and mental and moral confusion. The sub-national force of society was to fill this vacuum. The proliferation of Somali websites reflects an answer to this new situation where sub-national groups are attempting to recreate themselves. The process of making web pages reflects the construction of identities.

Beside the Somali conflict, the proliferation of Somali websites and the extensive use of the Somali Diaspora have something to do with Somali oral culture. Although an oral culture is normally not thought of as relying on print, researchers have found orality exhibited in literate forms. Research in the field of CMC points towards CMC's emotive, expressive, and participatory nature (Fowler, July 1994). The fact that CMC is based not only on print but also on learned technical skills makes the oral qualities that it exhibits all the more surprising (Chandler, 1997).

Loss of the national identity left many of the Somali Diaspora divided into factions trying to present their clans on the Internet. Ismail A. Hassan has this to say about Somali websites:

“Shabakadahan badankooda ayaa u muuqda sida goofaf ay qabiilooyinku kala degeen oo qofkastaa uu og yahay ... [meesha] uu ku xeroonayo...” (Ismail A. Hassan, 2004).

(the majority of Somali websites seems to be like clan-home where one knows where to go...).

Other drives behind the proliferation of Somali websites could be attributed to: (i) the political elite, who have been the main protagonists of Somali politics, taking advantage of this new communication medium; (ii) the educated Somali who had the chance to learn and use the CMC medium; and (iii) the influence which the Diaspora has always had on local Somali politics since the beginning of Somali nationalism in 1940s. Somalis are good in adapting technologies to their situational needs.

CMC technology has provided the Somali Diaspora with a new social environment in which to communicate and organise themselves as groups based on their traditional social groups. The majority of Somali websites attempt to promote their own social and political groups as they also feature similar publications of oral arts and political information concerning their country. These activities are making these sites vibrant also with news and political views.

Websites are employed for: (a) propaganda (as media war), (b) community information, (c) preservation and revival of Somali culture and literature, or (d) religious teaching.

3.2 COMMON SOMALI WEBSITE FEATURE

According to their structure, form, activity and content, Somali websites can be classified into seven categories:

1. Professional/business (Pro/bus) This web type is devoted mainly to professional or other specific activities such as business.
2. Online News (on-news) This web type is structured in the form of an online newspaper where they publish news in the form of text or audio. They may be outlets for an existing news organisation, thus producing their own news item. The majority of their productions are based on written material.
3. Religious (rel) This group is dedicated entirely to Islamic teaching and information.
4. Personal (per) This web type has the most striking similarity with the political/community web type (see below) as personal web pages are known to present material in self-presentation form.
5. Radio/TV (rad/tv) The Radio/TV web type group has some similarities with the online news web group. Except that their production are based mainly on audio format.
6. Community/political (Com/pol) By focussing on the community views, concerns and interest, the community/political web type behaves as a community, political front, or both.
7. Cultural/literary (Cul/lit) This web type devotes its activity to Somali culture and literature. Lit/cul features are found not only on Cul/lit websites. There are those websites which are entirely dedicated to Cul/lit features. There are also those websites, particularly Com/pol websites where there are sections dedicated to Cul/lit features. The first are considered as Dedicated Cul/lit sub-groups while the latter are considered as Section Cul/lit web sub-groups.

All seven categories run different services. Although some may overlap, distinctive features mark each as a category in its own right. Below is the list of common features that can be found on Somali websites (see Fig. 5):

- Online news: Styled as online newspaper, this feature is a comment feature in News Online, Com/pol and Personal web group.
- Culture, literary and art sections: While cultural/literary features can be found in many websites, there is also a unique web feature which carries this name.
- Audio facilities: this feature facilitates all sound effects including voices and music,
- Political analysis/opinion: this is often in mainly in written format /opinion where users publish their opinion.
- Public forum: It is similar to newsgroups. A sense of virtual community often develops around forums that have regular users.
- Chat room: It is a real-time communication between two users via computer.
- Religious materials and teaching: Material based on Islamic teaching and information.
- Guest books (visitor's comments): Section where visitors are invited to give comment on the website.
- Personal information: information which personal features. This is mainly used by personal websites
- Community information: a mixture of community/local information/country information. Some sections have dedicated section for their specific local information.
- Adverts/business information: Features carrying advert information. The majority of websites use advert income for the running of the website itself.
- Links: hyperlink with other websites.
- Mailing/lists facilities: A facility where groups of people can communicate as groups.

One common feature that can be found in almost all categories is the literary and Islamic sections. These two features demonstrate the importance which Somalis give to their most endured heritage: literature and Islam. Next to this feature comes the audio facility that is used by many categories. The audio uses an analogue of oral media. Whether this new technology will shift the balance of the print to audio is not yet clear. Nevertheless, because

of Somali oral tradition, it will have a major impact. In fact, during this research, there has been a major development where many websites added audio feature in their service. For example, Radio Dayniile and Dayniile.com have separate existence, but because of the web facility, they joined their service.

Running service similar to that of radio, some websites utilise the audio feature for interviews and Islamic teachings. There are some websites which formed their own online radio service. In some cases, some radio stations exist independently.

One important section is the political comment/analysis/opinion section where users' opinion is published. This genre is becoming very popular by creating an opportunity for young writers to air and publish their opinion and ideas. This medium has the potentiality to encourage people to read and comment.

The opinion of many Com/pol websites attracts many Somalis throughout the Diaspora where they can publish their views and opinions. Here are found writings about the contemporary political issues. And contemporary political issues are always 'hot' which many try to reply or comment. Some of these replies are published next to the article they are trying to respond. The characteristics of replying are another oral quality of CMC (see above).

The languages that websites use are overwhelming Somali and English. With every article published, the website gives notice that the opinions contained in the article are solely those of the writer, and in no way, form or shape represent the editorial opinions of the website. Despite this statement, the hidden feeling is that the website may support the view and opinion of the writer; otherwise it would never have been published.

TABLE 2: SOMALI WEBSITE CATEGORY IN SEPTEMBER 2006

Web category	Number
Community/political (Com/pol)	296
Radio/TV (Radio/TV)	39
Cultural/literary (Cul/lit)	17
Religion (Religion)	31
Professional /business (Pro/bus)	96
Personal (Per)	166
Online News (On-News)	26
Total	671

Forum features on the one hand, are where users can post their comments so other users can read or comment. Some of these comments may form part of an important debate where people with different views write their opinions about some ‘hot’ issues. Alternately, the chat service is a Real-time communication between two users via computer. Once a chat has been initiated, either user can enter text by typing on the keyboard and the entered text will appear on the other user's monitor. Most networks and online services offer chat features.

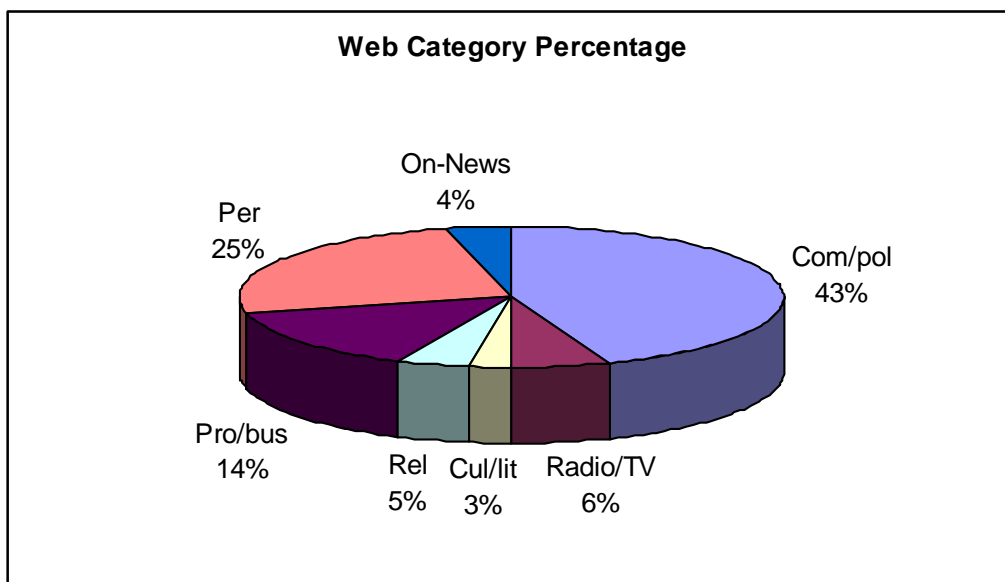


FIG. 1: SOMALI WEB CATEGORY PERCENTAGES

3.2.1 NAMING CONVENTIONS

Web naming is one of the major aspects which can define Somali websites. There are a number of naming conventions associated with Somali websites depending usually with the web group. It seems that naming is influenced by the internal political mood. For example, in the aftermath of the collapse of the state followed a time of social disintegration and the roll back of the state which led to the identity crisis. Identifying with the clan or region has become a common characteristic of Somali society. It is this kind of circumstance which is the major forces which leads the naming conventions of Somali websites.

In traditional Somali view, the individual is seen through his/her clan. It seems that the Somalis remained encompassed by the kinship system for centuries, even at the advent of the formation of the modern Somali state in 1960. The same manifestation has been seen in ancient societies where they were deeply antagonistic to any strong inclination of individualism. Any one who behaves independently as an individual they call "one who stands alone" (*goonni u goosi*). One thing seems clear, the Somali stays Somali by pressing the drive towards individualisation (Issa-Salwe, 29 June 2004).

Generally, web-naming conventions can be classified as the following:

1. **Organisational, geographical, regional, or clan naming:** this kind of web naming usually correspond to a website's political or regional affiliation. The majority of the Com/pol web type are named after territorial or geographical area where they could be identified either to a group of lineages or sub-lineages. They may also depict geographical areas such as region, town or village identifiable to a group. Such groups are, for example, SomalilandForum, Arlaadinet, Puntland Intelligentsia Network or Dayniile. Under this naming group there are also those which demonstrate community or professional websites, e.g. Somaliland Women's Association. The collapse of state institutions and the subsequent civil strife forced the people to take refuge in their ancestral regions. In the process a clan enclave was formed where today people identify themselves with.

2. **Professional naming:** usually used by professional websites such as business or institutes, for example Amoud University or Dahabshiil. Names which are also given to Radio/TV groups come under this category. There are also some websites whose activities fall between community and professional categories.

3. **General naming:** these carry general names which do not describe a particular group. Such groups are, for example, SomaliNet.com, SomaliTalk.com or SomaliaOnline.com. While naming conventions such as this may describe general names, there are, however, some websites which disguise their political or regional affiliation. In the first half of year 2000 there were an increasing number of web names which describe such things as patriotism or nationalism. Two of these sites are Midnimo and Wadani. This new phenomenon demonstrates a number of changes in the naming convention since Somali websites are usually named on organisational or group affiliation.

4. **Literary/cultural naming:** this kind of web naming describes literary or cultural indications, e.g. MandeqNet.com or HoygaSuugaanta.com. This type of naming is commonly made in the honour of culture, literature or well known literary person, e.g. Muuse Galaal or Mohamed Ibrahim Warsame “Hadraawi”, the well-known Somali composer and poet.

5. **Religious naming:** This type of naming usually describes Islamic place or historic events. It also describes naming which emphasise religious sermons such as Wacdi (sermon).

6. **Personal naming:** this kind of naming indicates personal meaning. This naming type has a particular sense or humour. Such names are “if you have one minute” or “check out, i guess u will enjoy it, uuhahu”.

The Com/pol web types mainly use names that identify geographical areas or explicit clan (i.e. Mudulood.com). Some of these areas are identifiable with particular group or lineages, principally when they are exclusively inhabited areas (see Table 3). Such naming is not only intended to be identified with a particular group or region, but is also to share its value within

the group which the web identifies itself with. In a sense it is to show certain commonality with the group. In another word, the name symbolises the group.

Table 3 identifies the shared and non-shared regions based on the 18 regions of Somali Republic before 1991. Shared and non-shared is explained in relation to Somali clan families (see map). For example, there are two websites with Mudug region's name: Mudug Online with hostname www.mudugonline.com and Mudug with hostname www.mudug.com. Despite the similarity with the name, the first is run by a Diaspora group related with Puntland while the latter is under a group from the southern Mudug.

TABLE 3: THE 18 REGIONS OF SOMALI REPUBLIC BEFORE 1991	
Specific geographical area	Shared/non-share
Benadir	Shared
Bay/Bakool ¹⁴	Shared
Galguduud	Not shared
Gedo	Shared
Hiiraan	Not shared
Lower Jubba	Shared
Lower Shabeele	Shared
Middle Jubba	Shared
Mudug ¹⁵	Shared
Puntland (Bari, Nugaal, East Sanaag, Sool, and Buuhodle district) ¹⁶	Not shared
Somaliland (Awdal, Toghdheer, North West, Sanaag) ¹⁷	Not shared
Upper Shabeele	Shared

¹⁴ Bay is also known as Upper Jubba region

¹⁵ Mudug is one the regions which is shared. Eastern Mudug is part of Puntland.

¹⁶ Despite being Mudug part of Puntland, it is a region that is shared. East Sanag, Sool, and Buuhodle District are claimed by Somaliland.

¹⁷ Here Sanag region is divided into East Sanag claimed by Puntland and Sanag as a whole claimed by Somaliland.

3.3. WEB CATEGORIES

The rest of the chapter will consider the different types of Somali web category. However, this research study will focus mainly on the community/political (Com/pol) and cultural/literature (Cult/lit) web types, as they are the two most likely to represent events in Somalia. While the community/political symbolise political or communal affiliations, the cultural/literature web types reflect the cultural and literary aspect of Somali society. Beside the two web types mentioned above, Online News (on-news) web types will be looked at in relation to how Com/pol use the news feature.

3.3.1 PROFESSIONAL/BUSINESS

Main feature: Professional/business activities

The Professional/business category comprises those sites which are devoted entirely to professional activities related to business or professional. They are usually web fronts of existing business or professional bodies, e.g. Somali Medical Association or Dahabshiil. Their activities are mainly to promote their business and attract customers.

This web group does not venture into the political arena. They are updated as a consequence of their business or related matters.

There are not many of these web groups, as Somalis do not have international business companies. The only kind of such business concerns money transfer (i.e. Dahabshiil, Tawakal, etc.).

3.3.2 ONLINE NEWS (ON-NEWS)

Main features: News (text, audio or both formats)

The online news website category is structured in the form of an online newspaper where they publish news in the form of text or audio. Contrary to the Com/pol group, this web type

usually publishes its own news material and occasionally links news to other publication agencies sites.

The majority of this web group form the web front of existing newspapers which exist inside or outside Somalia. Therefore, their web activity is mainly an extension of their activities. Beside those with hard copies, there are also those online newspaper categories which are solely online. Some of these types are Dhambaal and Somali Online Journal. As newsworthy articles are transient, this group has the most up-to-date websites for news interest. In early 2000, only one website of this group, Qaran, was found to operate subscription methods. It is not clear how Qaran benefits from the subscription system, as normally news is not the main commodity which newspapers sell. Their main income comes from the advertisements they carry. Similar to Western newspapers, all Somali newspapers have political inclinations or sympathies as well as enemies.

In many cases, the Com/pol and on-news overlap. The majority of online news web types are not commercial as normally newspapers should be. For instance, HornAfrik and STN are entirely commercial. Nevertheless, they have their own political attitudes when it comes to the many Somali political faces.

3.3.3 RADIO/TV

Main feature: News (audio or motion video)

The Radio/TV web group has some similarities with the online news web group. However, while the online newspapers publish mainly in text format, the radio/TV category deals in the form of audio and where necessary they publish the textual script of the audio content. They are usually the web front of radio stations either in Somalia or outside Somalia.

Since late 2000 many radio stations have been formed where large Somali communities can be found. Some of these are found in Gutenberg in Sweden, Toronto in Canada, Minnesota in the United States, Copenhagen in Denmark, in the Netherlands and in Australia. These radio

facilities are usually called ‘community voice’. It is no coincidence that one of this type is named after ‘Codka Beesha Soomaalida’ (Community Voice) (see Fig. 2).

In the period of this research, the visual technology, e.g. TV, is not used because of its high cost.¹⁸ However, the trend of the development of this technology will make possible for it to be used in the future.

FIG. 2: CODKA BESHASOOMAALIDA

Page 1 of 1

Community voice Radio program

Codka Beesha Soomaalida Toronto

Radio Codka Beesha Soomaalida

CBS Sunday Night LIVE
09:30 PM - 10:30 PM

Radio Codka Beesha Soomaalida 101.3FM iyo 1540AM 09:30PM-10:3

FM: 101.3 iyo AM: 1540 Toronto
09:30 PM - 10:30 PM Axad walba.

Mohamed Haji (Ingiriis)
Reporter/Mogadisho
Tel: 416-614-0331

Waa Radio ku baxa Afka Soomaaliga, waana kii ugu horreeyey noociisa ilaa kiburkii Soomaaliya.

Codka Beesha Soomaalida, waxaa la'aasaasay taariikhdu markay ahayd FEB. 10, 1993. Ujeedooyinka loo asaasay waxaa ka mid ah: Ilaalinta iyo horumarinta dhaqanka, hiddaha, iyo luqadda Soomaalida.

Codka Beesha Soomaalida, wuxuu illaa iyo hadda ku guulaystay inuu Soomaalida qurbaha ku nool gaarsiyo barnaamijyo isugu jira wararka gudaha Soomaaliya, waxbarasho, wararka dibedaha kuwaa ugu waawayn.iyo murti & maaweelooyin kala duwan.

Codka Beesha Soomaalida waxay wakiillo ku leedahay magaalooyinka hoos ku qoran:

Geeska Afrika	
Mohamed Haji (Ingiris)	Muqdisho
Dahir Mohamud Haddi	Boorama
Osman Abdinur Hashi	Laascaanood
Ahmed Farah Sayruuq	Galkacyo
Abdullahi Cumar Aadan "Wayab"	Hargaysa
Dhaqane Cilmi Towaad	Baladweyne
Abdiladiif Sh. Mohamed	Baydhabo

Caalamka kale	
Abdullahi M. Ismail (Shufeer)	Atlanta
Tahliin Xirsi Warsame	Atlanta
Husseen Garabyare	Mannesota
Ali Xaaji Mahamed Ciise	Columbus,Ohio
Idiris Caydiid Xirsi	India
Mohamed Ahmed (Gurey)	Ottawa
Ikraan Ali-Kaar	Sweden
Ahmed Dawlad Farah	Seattle WA

Tusmada Barnaamijka

- + October-08-2000
- + December-03-2000
- + December-10-2000
- + December-17-2000
- + December-24-2000
- + December-30-2000
- + January-07-2001
- + January-14-2001
- + January-21-2001
- + January-28-2001
- + February-04-2001
- + February-11-2001
- + February-18-2001
- + February-25-2001
- + March-04-2001
- + March-11-2001
- + March-18-2001
- + March-25-2001
- + April-08-2001
- + April-29-2001
- + May-06-2001
- + May-13-2001
- + May-20-2001

Inkastoo ay bogani hawli ku socoto, haddana waxaad ka dhagaysan kartaan barnaamijyada CBS oo maqal ah.

<http://www.codkabeesha.com/>

7/19/01

The audio website is the latest venture in the Internet environment. The introduction of this advanced technology has created the possibility for the Somali broadcasting board to reach a global audience, although this system has some limitations (for example, it is not printable like the text form). Because of its oral output, it has a potentiality to stretch the Somali orality to a new height. The trend and facility of the audio technology leads the possibility to merge the Online News web category with the Com/pol web group. In fact, currently the number of websites having a radio section is increasing.

In the late 1990s, the BBC Somali Section set up an audio service where Internet users can hear the daily BBC Somali bulletin. The technology allows users to operate like tape recorders, thus, permitting users to access BBC Somali service at their own time. This technological facility has changed the concept of radio listening which previously required people listen to programmes at the time of the broadcast. The system is similar to tape recorders where the users can control the output as they choose.

The Radio/TV web group publishes all sorts of material depending on which outlet they represent. Similarly, audio facilities are used also by almost all other web categories. For example, they are used for religious sermons, literary reading or songs and interviews. With these facilities websites are able to reach an international audience.

3.3.4 PERSONAL

Main feature: Personal information

The personal web group is the most controversial of all seven categories. Although the general impression of this web group is having private publications such as personal, family or favourite pursuit, only a very few engage in personal or family matters. This may explain the Somali use of this technology as beyond personal interest.

¹⁸ Beside the cost, using a computer screen as TV output requires both high speed connection and high quality

The number of personal websites stands at 25% of Somali websites (see Fig. 1). The majority of these are created by amateurs. Sometimes, to improve their web designing skills, some students create personal home pages and fill them with specific personal information. During this research there have been many new personal web pages as well as many disappearing.

Generally, the overwhelming majority of Somali personal web pages have no domain of their own. They are hosted under free domains. Badly designed with heavily added graphical images, they are also the least updated of all categories.

A personal web page is a miniature of Com/pol web type when it comes to self-presentation. It offers an individual an opportunity to “write themselves” on a global stage. (Chandler, 1998). According to Miller, personal web pages are a new kind of personal presentation in a new medium (Miller, 2003). The subtle potentiality of the “personal home page” on the World Wide Web can be defined as addressing the question of “who am I?” (Chandler, 1998).

Nevertheless, many personal web pages engage in activities which go beyond personal activity by publishing material which has political or community traits. For example, Afgoi.com is established as personal site, however, its message and objective express Afgoye community’s concern. Afgoye is situated on the river Shabeelle and it is the home of Geledi lineage, one of the greatest Somali sultanates which flourished in the pre-colonial period.

3.3.5 RELIGIOUS

Main feature: Islamic religion material mainly for learning and teaching.

Being dedicated to education, the religious web groups have been increasing on the net since early 2000. Named after Islamic places or historic events, this group is dedicated to Islamic teaching and information.

The religious web category has similar features to that of cultural/literary sites except that they differ in their mode of appeal and style of approach. While the cultural/literary appeals to the shared and common heritage of Somali cultural and language, the religious sites concentrate on Islam, the other heritage of the Somalis. By providing some Islamic teaching material and information, they appeal on the individual and community's moral grounds. While the religious sites use "Godly" appeals, the cultural sites use a mixture of amiability and sense of belonging.

The religious sites try to fill the gap where the culture has failed. In their teaching, they attribute the Somali crisis as a direct consequence of deserting Islamic values for the pursuit of a tradition that advocates violence and sectional glories as they sustain that this is what led Somali to 'stray' from the road of Allah. As a consequence of this, Allah is more severe on Somalis. They believe that punishment is more severe to believers than to non-believers. The non-believers are punished only in the other world, while the stray Muslim will suffer both in this world and in the other world. Contrary to this view, the cultural sites place the problem with the introduction of alien cultures in Somali society.

3.3.6 COM/POL CATEGORY

Main features: Almost all features: Online news (including community information), Culture, literary and art sections, Political analysis/opinion, Chat room, Religious materials and teaching, Guest books Adverts/business information, Mailing/lists facilities

The Com/pol category embraces those websites whose characteristics are designed as community sites and styled and structured in a politically motivated model. Another important characteristic about this web group is that they use almost all web features, the most important of which is the online news. The rest is given to services such as community/local information, or business adverts. The Internet audio is used sometimes for interviews, the "song of the day" and for religious teaching materials.

Many of the Somali websites are created as personal venture only to be extended and changed later to community or political website.

Many websites carry web adverts, although their intention is not primarily commercial. The web's advertising venture is more to create income to keep the web alive than really commercial. The style and structure of web pages may sometimes say as much about their authors as does the content. For example, SomalilandForum, which comes under Com/pol category, is designed to promote Somaliland's interest and campaign for the recognition of Somaliland as an independent republic.¹⁹

Motivated by two diverse interests, Somali Com/pol web type can be classified into two sub-groups: the first sub-group's drive is sub-national purpose while the second group's activity transcends tribalism (or supra-regional ambitions). The first sub-group can be identified and/or, in some cases, as a front of either one of the five political units created following the breakdown of what used to be the Somali Republic. These new political units or constituents are: (1) Somaliland Republic situated in the north-west, dominated by the Isaaq clan-family (2) Puntland, which is situated in the north-east part of Somalia, dominated by the Daarood clan-family. (3) Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) which draws its support from the Bay and Bakool²⁰ communities; this area is dominated by the Digil and Mirifle clan-family, and (4) Benadir and central Somalia which is dominated by the Hawiye clan-family under various groups: Between 1991 to early 2006, this area was controlled by various warlords and their militias. From 2006 the control went to a group of Hawiye groups organising themselves under the banner of the Islamic Courts Union;²¹ and (5) the minority (or movements) constituency. Although the minorities are scattered, their common experience led them to voice their feeling on a common ground.

Beside the five political units there also are those whose political ambition symbolises something of the defunct Somali national identity.

The characteristic of Somali Com/pol web group is a new phenomenon on the web. As mentioned above, there is no doubt that it is a kind of new genre which needs to be

¹⁹ Chapter Five will analyse how Somaliland websites differ from other Somali groups in their quest for the new political identity making.

²⁰ In some cases, Bay and Bakool is considered as Digil and Mirifle family-clan area. Nevertheless, in Bay and Bakool there are many minorities who share similar concerns as that of the Digil and Mirifle.

²¹ Between 2000 to 2003 Mogadishu was the seat of the Transitional National Government (TNG).

considered. This web type has similar characteristics as that of the personal web pages. In the process of group self-presentation, the website became a means to promote group political identity.

Following the civil strife of 1991, for the individual Somali, there was a reaffirmation of lineage identity and territoriality over national concern. This marked an unprecedented turning point for the Somali state, with people returning to their clan "areas". In such a situation, people make an effort to reconstitute their identities and social meaning by articulating and identifying with alternative discourses (Laclau et al, 1985: 104). The web has provided a means to express and set a way for self-presentation and self-promotion.

The web is a medium which represses a radical departure from previous modes for the 'presentation of the self in everyday life' (Goffman, 1996). The process of making Com/pol web pages reflects the re-construction of identities and it does reflect the construction of their makers' identities. Creating such pages offers an unrivalled opportunity for group-presentation (or self-presentation) in relation to any dimension of social and personal identity to which one chooses to allude (quoted in Chandler, 2001). Thomas Erickson (1996) comments,

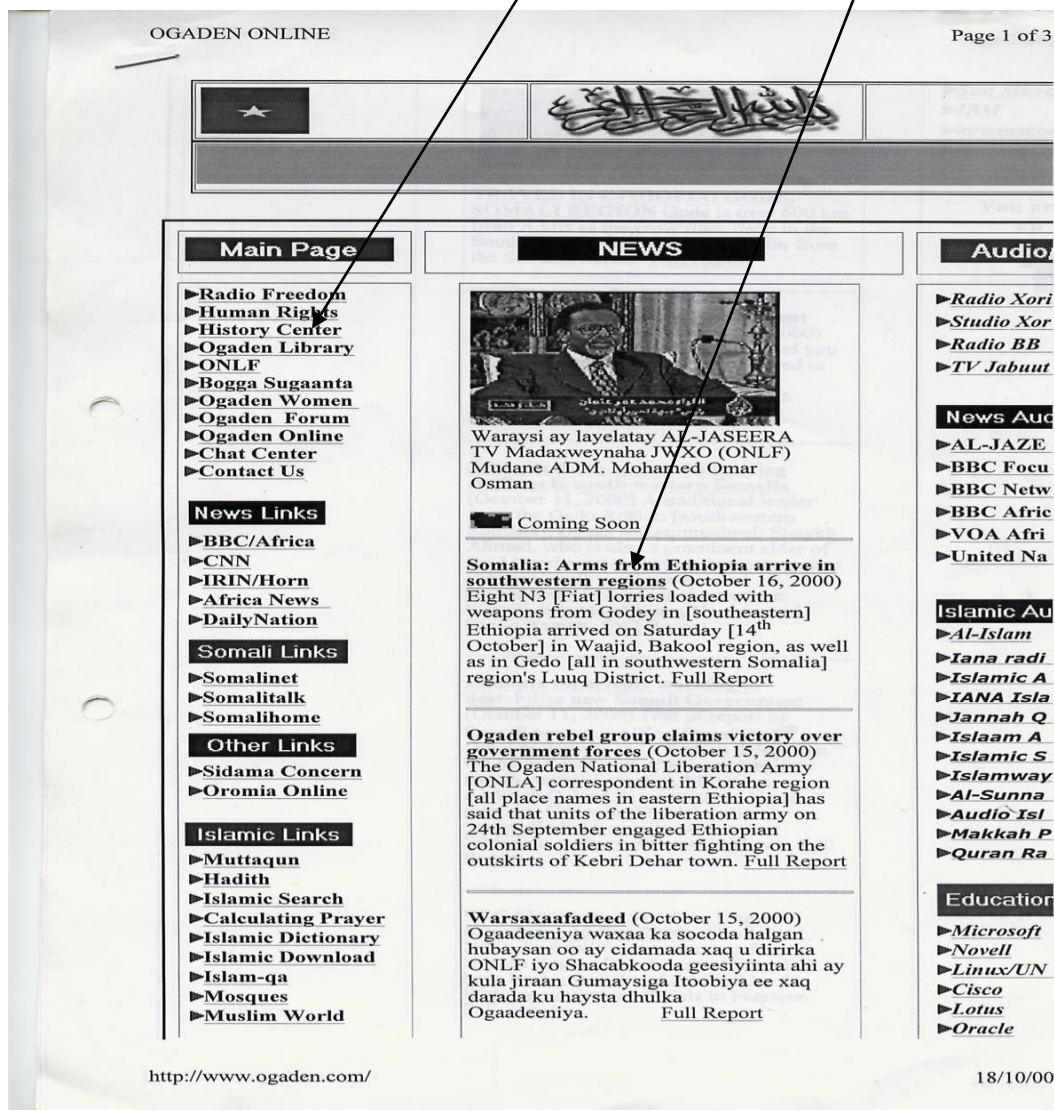
“...while a personal portrayal is a new type of usage of the web, it is very ordinary behaviour in the real world (Erickson, 1996).

Sociologist Whyte (1956) has described the ways in which people identify themselves with the kind of work they do and the organisation where they work. His portrayal of the "organisation man" shows that the workplace strongly influences our identities and self-presentations. Similarly, Fischer (1992) reminds us that CMC has been a resource for identity construction and self-presentation since the early diffusion of telephone technology. Identity is both avowed and ascribed (Lamb et al, 2002: 16). When we present ourselves in a particular way that is our avowed identity, it may differ from the identity which others interpret from our self-presentation, and which they then ascribe to us. Goffman differentiates between these types of identity as expressions of the self that are intentionally "given" and those that are unintentionally "given off" (quoted in Lamb et al, 2002: 18).

As a personal page is a graphically constituted portrayal of a person, so the Com/pol web types are an attempt to re-create group identity. The features of the Com/pol tell a lot about the characteristics of the group it portrays and in a sense, they embody the characteristics and identity of the group it represents. The web name represents an important feature as it identifies the group.

Some Com/pol web groups are run either under a banner of community affairs by a committee or as an individual's effort. Some of these sites tend to use the web as a means for expressing their community concerns which sometimes are shown as a political stance or movement (e.g. Ogaden.com, Fig. 3) or their specific group identity (e.g. SANU, Brava-Net).

FIG. 3: OGADEN.COM Movement information section News/information



Defining their objective as community work, however, makes some more community oriented. The border between political and community service can hardly be seen in this group. When the service is devoted entirely to community it can be viewed as a community web group. In such category comes the Brava-Net site which is set as a network for the Bravani people as well as reference point of information about Brava. The Bravani are a minority people who live in the coastal town of Brava in the southern part of Somalia. Together with other minorities in southern Somalia, these people have suffered many of the atrocities in the civil war.

Some websites in this class define their objective as purely community development. One such website is Calmadow.com which explains its objective in this way:

“Calmadow is a non-profit relief organisation with clear objective to help the community. The primary objective of Calmadow is to unite the community and make changes to the condition of the community. ...Calmadow will work with any one who is willing to help the community.” (Calmadow, 2001)

Calmadow.com makes it clear that it will avoid political publications or related material. This is again the case of Calmadow.com where its bylaws read like this:

“Any member found guilty of participating in negative discussions (clannism) within and outside Calmadow will be suspended or have his/her membership cancelled” (Calmadow, 2001).

The Com/pol web group uses two methods for political ends: (1) the news online feature used for media hostility and for information for their folks, and (2) the cultural/literary features which some websites use for political ends.

There are some websites whose objective transcends tribalism. This group avoids explicitly political overtures in their activity and warns member of doing so. Nevertheless, again there is no clear definition of themselves whether political or community.

FIG. 4: HIIRAAN.COM



To emphasise their political identity, the Com/pol web types are the most active web types as they are scheduled to be updated regularly. When it comes to online news publications, this category can be classified as: (a) those who do not produce news of their own and instead create headline links (or hyperlink) to news published by other online news agencies; the headlines are often the title of the hyperlink. Fig. 4 shows Hiiraan Online which is one of the most visited Somali websites. The image has 11 news items where only two items are produced by the website. However, in each of the two page links contain other news items dated between 28 and 29 January 2006; and (b) those websites who behave as an Online News web group by investing their main activity on news publications (e.g. Dayniile.com, PuntlandPost.com or Ruunkinet.com). In some cases, this group also use hyperlinks to other news publishers where necessary.

The table below contain a sample of twelve websites and from each site has been taken ten news items ranged between 24 and 22 March 2006 (and some between 24 and 25 March 2006). Only Arlaadinet.com items are dated between 6 and 8 March 2006 which means that this website is late in updating news.

A total of 120 news items (20 percent) are hyperlinked to other news organisations. The majority of these hyperlinks are in English. Arlaadi.com, Arlaadnet.com, AllPuntland.com, Horseednet.com and HornAfrik items are in Somali and none is hyperlinked which means they are produced locally. Nevertheless, they refer their source from other media source. In fact, 32 percent of the total news items considered do references. Reference here means that the source is referenced from other media sources as separated from hyperlinks.

TABLE 4: HYPERLINK WEBSITE SAMPLE

N	Website	Date range	News item	Language	Hyperlink	Comment
1	Hiiraan.com	25 Mar 06 to 24 Mar 06	10	5 Somali 5 English	5	4 references
3	Arlaadinet.com	8 Mar 06 to 6 Mar 06	10	10 Somali	0	3 references
4	Arlaadi.com	26 Feb 06 to 24 Sept 05	10	10 Somali	0	4 references
5	MarkaCadeey.com	25 Mar 06 to 20 Mar 06	10	5 Somali 5 English	5	2 references
6	AwdalNews.com	25 Mar 06 to 23 Mar 06	10	10 English	7	3 references
7	Goobjoog.net.com	25 Mar 06 to 22 Mar 06	10	10 Somali	2	3 references
8	PuntlanPost.com	25 Mar 06 to 25 Mar 06	10	10 Somali	0	3 references
9	AllPuntland.com	25 Mar 06 to 22 Mar 06	10	10 Somali	0	5 references
10	Horseednet.com	25 Mar 06 to 23 Mar 06	10	10 Somali	2	2 references
11	Jamhuriya.com	25 Mar 06 to 22 Mar 06	10	9 Somali 1 English	1	1 references
12	Horn Afrik.com	25 Mar 06 to 24 Mar 06	10	10 Somali	0	2 references
Total item			120	Total hyperlinks	22 (18%)	32 references (26%)

3.3.6.1 COMMUNITY/POLITICAL WEB CHARACTERISTICS

As mentioned earlier, the Com/pol category is designed as community sites and styled and structured in a politically motivated model. The style and structure of web pages may sometimes say as much about their authors as does the content. Generally, Com/pol websites have their root in ethnicity which, in the Somali context, can be defined as kinship, regional or minority groups such as Brava-Net, which endeavour to help their members scattered around the world.

By focussing on the community views, concerns and interest, the Com/pol web type behaves as a community front. Traditionally, Somalis express their case through their culture such as poetry. In pastoral society poetry is considered to be “the core form of cultural expression and is the basis upon which some other forms have been developed” (Orwin, 2001).

Another important characteristic of the Com/pol web group is their features which can be found on almost all types of Somali websites. The only characteristic which is not used by this category is personal information. Many of these web types tend to publish in the form of ‘online news’. Almost one-third of the screen layout is dedicated to this service. The rest is given to services such as community/local information, special features or business adverts. The Internet audio is used sometimes for interviews and religious teaching materials.

As Somalis are a patrilineal society so Somali web operations and activities function as men’s world. There are very few Somali websites which make women’s advancement an issue. One such website is the Queen Araweelo Palace²². Another website is 4 Somali Women which is more moderate than Araweelo.

Queen Araweelo is a Somali folktale queen who ruled most of what is now Somalia. Araweelo became queen following the men’s failure and poor leadership, which led to war

²² The name of the queen is spelled here in Araweelo, nevertheless, the right spelling is Arraweelo.

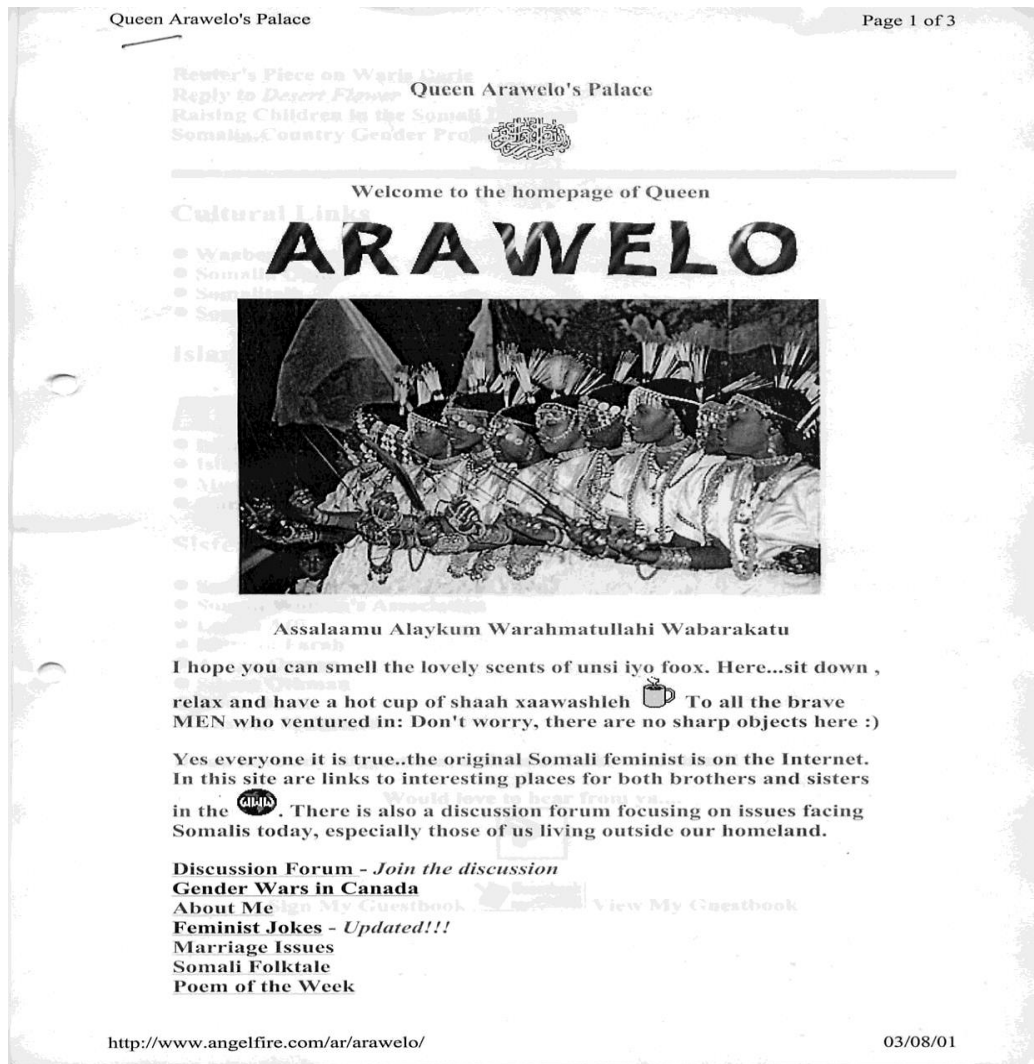
and misery in society. Queen Araweelo website emphasizes the role of women in areas of armed conflict, as well as the role of women in Somali society (Ladan Affi, 1997).

The Queen Araweelo website glorifies Somali women's role in peace making capacity and skills.

Queen Araweelo was well known for having castrated men during her reign and to this day, men throw rocks at her grave while women lay flowers. Welcoming to the home page, Queen Araweelo 'calms down' the men who visit the site. This is what it says:

"I hope you can smell the lovely scents of *unsi iyo foom*. Here...sit down, relax and have a hot cup of *shaah xaawashleh*. To all the brave MEN who ventured in: Don't worry, there are no sharp objects here" (Araweelo, 2000).

FIG. 5: QUEEN ARAWELO'S PALACE



The website has also some feminist humour listed below:

- Women are like tea bags, you never know how strong they are until they are in HOT water.
- Don't imagine you can change a man - unless he is in diapers.
- What do you do if your boyfriend walks out? You shut the door.
- If they can send a man to the moon - why can't they send them all?
- Never let your man's mind wander - it's too little to be out alone.
- Go for younger men. You might as well - they never mature anyway.

Arawelo explains itself as a feminist advocate by adding that “the original Somali feminist is on the Internet” (see Fig.5). Feminism in this sense is a belief to secure rights and opportunities for women equal to those of men. It adds that Somali women have always been the backbone of Somali society.

Women have suffered more than the other members of society in conflict areas. Since the civil war, Somali women have come to assume even greater responsibility for both the management of household and generation of household income through productive and commercial activity.

Somali women by marrying into one clan while belonging to another have exercised a powerful pull towards horizontal integration. Male allegiance runs vertically in society, with mutually antagonistic lineage units or hierarchies, thereby tending to divide it, while female allegiance cuts across clan lines and hence creates horizontal blood ties, thereby serving to unify society (Samatar, 1996: 66).

Women who have shown interests in participating in the political decision making process have traditionally been ostracised and treated as if they were abnormal. This feeling is in the opinion section of Arawelo website where Somali male users post comments. Many praise women’s role and contribution to society while at the same time some do not hide their “male chauvinism” by posting some irritating opinion.

3.3.7 THE CULTURAL/LITERARY

Although the cultural/literary websites constitute part of one of the web categories, its features are part of almost all other web types. Where they stand alone as a web type (e.g. Golkhatumo.com, Aftahan.com) their uniqueness is that they are entirely devoted to the Somali culture and literature as both make part of material base of culture. Compared to the other web types, this group is less numerous.

Despite that many web categories have literary and cultural features, there are some website which are solely dedicated to these features. This web group will be called the *Dedicated Cul/lit* group and will be analysed in Chapter Six. The same chapter will also examine the cultural and literary aspects of the Com/pol web type which will be called the *Section Cul/lit* group. The *Dedicated Cul/lit* sub-group is further divided into *Dedicated Cul/lit Classic* sub-group and *Dedicated Cul/lit Modern* sub-group.

The Dedicated Cul/lit form only 3% of the Somali websites investigated (see Fig. 1). Nevertheless, 98% of community/political are found to possess a section dedicated to cultural and literary features.

Publishing both classical as well as modern format, in Cult/lit classic sections can be found material such as folklore, children's literature, prose and poetry. Some of them have sections where they also archive some scholarly papers and other related material, some of which has been previously published by Somali and non-Somali scholars. However, some of this category also run some kind of business by selling their material in the form of books, audio or visual material. Because of the kind of the material they publish, they are not updated regularly.

3.3.7.1 CULTURAL UNITY AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

The cultural/literary web group is used in two ways: the first is to preserve the Somali literature and culture following the collapse of the Somali state. With the breakdown of the state institutions, the preservation of Somali literary and cultural material became an important priority for many Somalis including some Com/pol groups. The second method is used as a political means to express a separate identity. Mainly the riverine society web pages, such as the Riverineland.com, Arlaadinet.com and Arlaadi.com, take this course.

One important characteristic of the first group is that their publications are entirely from pastoral backgrounds. The groups running these websites mainly have come from the pastoral

society. Pastoral society has more interest in classic literature than their brethren in sedentary society, which can be identified with the second method.

A significant aspect of the Dedicated Cul/lit websites is their consciousness of not mixing politics with the cultural argument, especially those divisive issues which are characteristic of Somali segmentary society. Nevertheless, cultural issues have never been excluded from spilling into political controversies to further the cause of Somali nationalists. In the Somali context, cultural issues are always prone to be incorporated into political interpretation, particularly since the onset of the conflict in 1990s. This comes when 'cultural unity' is transformed into 'political unity'. Two examples are the riverine websites (particularly the Arlaadinet.com, Arlaadi.com and Riverineland.com) case and that of Somaliland websites. The first has been endeavouring to have 'political hegemony' (freeing itself from what they call 'pastoralist domination') while the second is to have a 'cultural independence'.

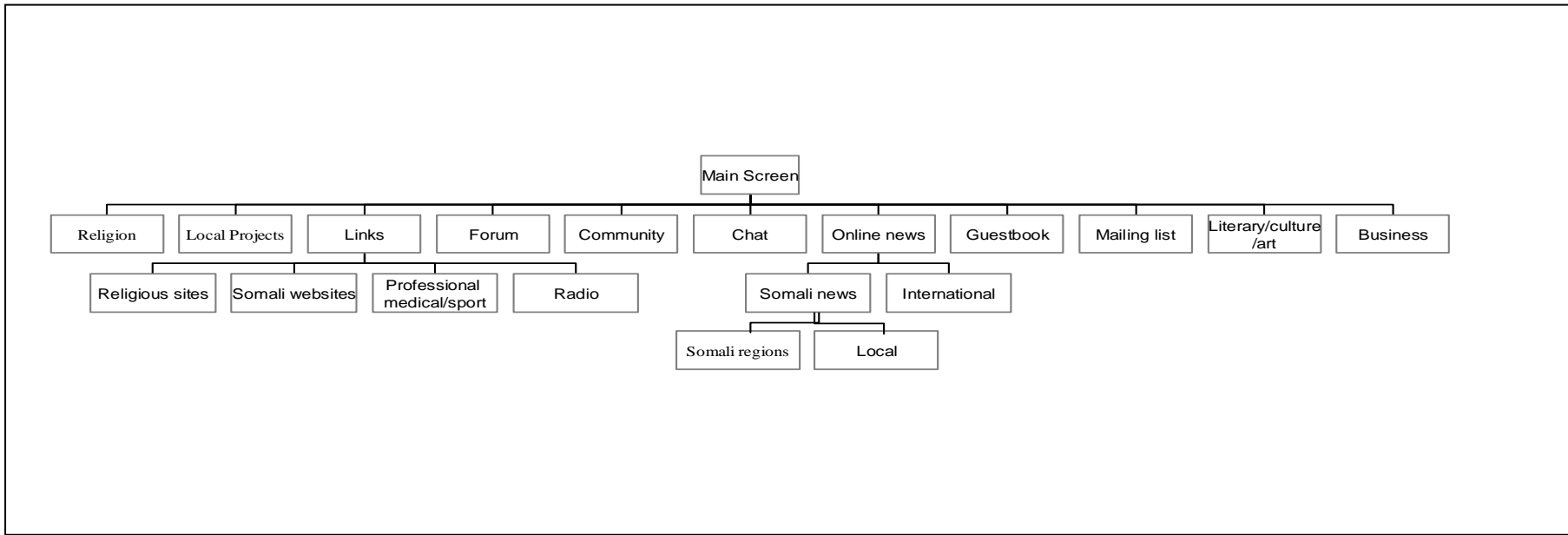


FIG. 6: FEATURES CONTAINED IN THE COMMUNITY/POLITICAL WEBSITE CATEGORY

CHAPTER FOUR

4. SOMALIA: SOCIETY AND POLITICS FROM THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE PRESENT

The Somali Republic is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the east, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea to the north, by Ethiopia to the west and northwest, by Kenya to the southwest, and by the Republic of Djibouti to the northwest corner. Along its northern coastline, which stretches for 2000 miles — the longest on the African continent — there is an extremely hot and arid coastal plain varying in width from some 70 miles on the west to a few feet on the east. This plain gives way to partly wooded mountains rising in the east to over 6000 feet. Beyond them is a vast tree-dotted savannah of varying desiccation and fertility sloping gently down to the south.

4.1 THE PEOPLE AND THEIR TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Scattered over a territory covering nearly 600,000 square kilometres in the north-eastern corner of the African continent, the Somali-speaking people form one of the largest single ethnic groups in Africa. With a population of nearly eight million, the Somali people are distributed from the Awash Valley in the northwest, round the periphery of the Ethiopian highlands and along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean coast to the Tana River in Kenya (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 23).

Somali mythology links the genesis of the people of the area to an ancient communion between people from the Arabian Peninsula, and the Bantu or Oromo people of the hinterland. But the linguistic and ethno-historical advances of the last two decades, with the help of Africa's oral historians, have allowed a more in depth exploration of the Somali past and have established that ethnically and culturally Somalis belong to the Eastern Cushitic ethnic group (Hersi, 1977). This group also encompasses the Afar (Danakil or Oday Ali), divided between northern Ethiopia and the Republic of Djibouti, the Oromo which forms the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and which resides partly in northern Kenya, the Saho of northern Ethiopia, the Aweera (Boni or Wa-Boni) of the Lamu coast of Kenya, and the Rendille of northern Kenya.

4.1.1 CLAN STRUCTURE AND GENEALOGY

The received wisdom on the traditional structure of Somali society traces it through an elaborate genealogy to two brothers, Soomaal, also known as Samaale, and Sab.²³ The followers of Soomaal for the most part led a pastoral-nomadic economic life whilst the followers of Sab exercised an agro-nomadic lifestyle. The Dir, Daarood, Isaaq and Hawiye clan-families²⁴ are the descendants of Soomaal. Rahanweyn and Digil are descendants of Sab. The majority of the Somali population is constituted from these six groups. Besides these six Somali clan groupings, there are some other smaller communities: (1) the Wa-Gosha who live in the Lower Jubba river region; (2) the Reer Shabeelle who live along the river Shabeelle around Ferfeer, in the Hararghe province of Ethiopia and extending into Somalia; (3) the Shiidle who live mainly in the Upper Shabeelle region; and (4) the Goobwayn who live in the Jubba river area near Luuq. These four ethnic groups are of Bantu origin.²⁵ There are also the Reer Hamar who live mainly in Mogadishu and Marka. This group is from a mixture of Soomaal and Asian origin and they are divided into Gibil-ad and Gibil-madow. The Wa-mbalazi or Wa-miini, also called Reer Barawe, live mainly in Barva, but also in Marka and Mogadishu. This group speaks a distinct language known as Chi-mblazi or Chi-miini.

Besides the urban communities, in the southern corner of Somalia are the Bajuur who make their living from fishing, as they live exclusively on the tiny islands of Jula and Jawaya, off the Somali coast near the Kenyan border. This group is of Bantu origin, and they speak the Swahili language. Marginalized groups are also to be found in the pastoralist society. These are the Tumaal, Midgaan and Yibir. Talented and hardworking, these groups are best known for their skills as craftsmen, though because of this are scorned by the pastoralists.

The largest minority in Somalia is believed to be the Bantu community. The Bantu appearance sets them apart from other Somalis, as their origins lie in east and central Africa.

²³ Here Sab does not mean the marginalised group.

²⁴ One of the classifications used by I M Lewis in *A Pastoral Democracy*, 1961, pp.15-34

A smaller and very poor group of minorities, dispersed throughout Somali territories, are the artisan or occupational "caste" groups performing services to nomadic families involving leather and metal materials, haircutting and certain ritual functions. Such groups are the Midgaan.com (also known as Gaboye or Madhibaan), Tumaal and Yibro. Beside their crafts skills, the Midgaan and Tumaal men are well known for their bravery and wit, and the pastoral society rarely go to war without accompanying members from this society.

The Somali people have a strong sense of cultural and linguistic unity. Before independence in 1960, the ecological and economic conditions compelled most Somalis to lead a pastoral life; therefore, they were widely dispersed and lacked the necessary organisation to form a single political unit. This is perhaps one of the main factors that led to the partition of the country into five parts by the European colonial powers.

Because kinship engenders, in a psychological sense, a feeling of closeness to certain people by virtue of being related to them, for the Somalis the clan is the most important political unit in the traditional system. Clan membership is traced through the male line to a common male ancestor from whom the group takes its clan name. Political alliance is therefore determined by agnatic descent and political segmentation resulted from agnatic origin. Descent units are united by a bond of corporate commitments, the major one of these being that loyalties are to be offered, first and foremost, to one's descent group unit. However, the basic unit of the Rahanweyn and Digil tend to be the mixed-village rather than the descent group.

Traditional political loyalties are reinforced by an informal political-legal contract or *xeer*, by which Somali society settles its disputes. The *xeer* is also the principle defining the extent of the political community. In the words of Lewis, 'Somali contract might be regarded as a form of the social contract of the political philosophers.' (Lewis, 1961:15-34). Nonetheless, as a way to sanction the defined *xeer*, some form of coercion is applied such as compensatory payment, called *xaal*, for an offence.

²⁵ With these ethnic groups are also found the Mahawey, Wazigua and Shanta Alemod who live in the riverine area.

4.1.2 TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE SHIR (ASSEMBLY)

As in all kinship systems, Somali political authority was spread through the community as a whole. There was no centre for political control. This reflected the extreme independence and individualism of the Somali.

Clan leaders dealt with people politically on a face-to-face basis. This traditional authority might also extend over people with whom they did not come into contact, but only if kinship existed between the leaders and the others. Clan leaders claimed no rights as rulers over their people, in spite of being responsible for all affairs concerning the clan and its relations with other clans. They presided but did not rule over people to whom they were responsible. Lewis reiterates this point in *A Pastoral Democracy*:

“...even the office of clan-head is generally little more than a nominal title corresponding to the degree of social and territorial exclusiveness which the clan, more than other orders of grouping, possess”. (ibid.)

Although the clan-leaders (Suldaan, Garaad, Ugaas, Malaaq, Imaam, Islaan, Beeldaaje, etc.) presided over the assembly of elders (*shir*), they had little executive power as they did not make decisions (Ugaaska wuu guddoonshaaye ma gooyo).

Egalitarianism is a fundamental social concept in which every man (though not woman) has the right to have a say in communal matters. The issue is discussed in the institutionalised *shir* which Lewis defines as:

“the fundamental of government, which has no formal constitution, except that of membership of the lineage concerned, no regular place or time of meeting, and there are no official positions on it”.(ibid.).

All adult males are elders, and have the right to take part in the *shir*. The *shir* is an ad-hoc meeting which takes in the form of an open-air meeting held under the shade of a large tree where Somali elders meet to discuss all important issues affecting the society. The *shir* is

organised as the need arises in order to attend to current affairs affecting the groups concerned. A decision in the *shir* is reached by consensus, after a lengthy discussion and analysis of the matter concerned. The traditional *shir* incorporated three essential elements (a) full and open discussion of matters of common concern to the clan (b) the right of all adult clansmen to participate equally in the proceedings of the *shir*, and (c) a consensus decision to be reached. This is known as pastoral democracy, though it is a democracy which is patriarchal. The elders are empowered by contractual treaty to direct the policies of their lineage.

The Somali pastoral-nomads have no hierarchical system, unlike their brothers, the agromomads. When the clan-head dies, an assembly or *shir* is held to elect another leader.

4.1.3 THE SOMALIS TRADITIONAL FEUD BEHAVIOUR

Feud is a regular occurrence in pastoral society. Though conflict is a universal phenomenon, the Somali inter-clan conflict is centred on feuds as it aims to injure or eliminate the hostile clan, to seek revenge, to reverse wrongs, and to protect its rights over resources. Because of nomadic continuous movement, a clan may migrate into the territory of a neighbouring clan. Sometimes more than one clan migrate over a given territory, and lineages mix with each other in pastures. These movements which are influenced by the change of seasons from wet to dry and vice versa, create a periodic change in settlement patterns.

During the dry seasons — *jiilaal* (December-March) and *xagaa* (July-September) — which are hard seasons for the pastoralists and their herds, the migrating groups are concentrated at permanent watering places. The rigours of the climate contribute to a state of affairs whereby the greater the competition for scarce resources, the greater the hostility among various clan groups becomes. Ecological tension motivates the pattern of relations between the people even when hostility does not spring immediately from rivalry over common resources.

In the case of conflict within the clan or outside it, elders of a third party or sometimes from the feuding factions meet in the traditional assembly (*shir*) to defuse antagonism. If a member of one clan kills or injures a member of another, the case may (most simply) be settled by the

collective paying of the blood-guilt fine (*diyō*) or healing fine (*shafshafo*) to the bereaved or injured lineage.

Traditionally the lineage is answerable for all the external actions of its members, and at the same time it is held liable for their settlement. The tradition of feuds has acquired norms of retaliation. Once adapted these norms exert a certain degree of control over behaviour related to self-esteem. In the case of balancing reciprocal blood payments, it may be that a next of kin of the deceased will take (immediate) action, and tradition encourages this; the brothers, the cousins or the next kin will take revenge into their own hands. Unsettled disputes cause rancour which may be increased by ecological competition (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 34).

Every male person in the lineage is identified through his father — *ini hebel* (the son of so-and-so) — and is thereby linked to the line of descent. Through the practice of memorising and reciting the names of one's forefathers, when a man dies he remains in the conscious of the lineage members because his place in the descent line is fixed. If the cause of the death was a feud killing, this too will live on in the memory of his clan.

The resort to force is the standard procedure expected to be used in case of a feud killing. It is normal to retaliate in these circumstances. The bereaved kin will feel offended and lacking in respect and dignity, so to restore status the relatives have to retaliate. The sooner a reckoning takes place the stronger and more confident the wronged family feels. Sometimes a poet of the lineage might compose a poem which incites his lineage to retaliate for the killed kin and thus regain its status. The victim may become immortalised through the words of the poet. In the case of external threat, however, (e.g. from another clan) feuding lineages of the same clan will set aside internal antagonism and may unite in common defence.

Many social scientists believe that much of conflict arises out of fear of imagined threats, and that the stuff of social conflict is misunderstanding. A situation may develop into what social scientists call autistic hostility that is when people, lacking information about others, fail to understand the reasoning behind the others' actions. The rival groups thus commit atrocities and justify their actions based on wrong premises. Worse, both rival sides come to see themselves as well-intentioned and in the right and their enemy as mistaken and threatening.

This may help to explain the horror which followed in the wake of the fall of Siyad Barre in January 1991 and the subsequent failure and collapse of the Somali state.

4.2 COLONIAL INTRUSION AND SOMALI PARTITION

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 created a geopolitical situation which increased the competition for control of the coast along the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean among the European colonial powers (ibid. 98). The ambition to control the coast as well the interior was not only that of the British, other colonial powers namely France, Italy, Germany, and Abyssinia (former name of present Ethiopia) had the same objectives.

Developing outside the main stream of African thinking, Somali nationalism is based on an ethnic cultural nationhood embracing all Somalis — those living in the Somali Republic as well as those in Kenya, Ethiopia, and the French Somaliland. As a state, the Somali Republic has acted as a pole of attraction to the Somalis living outside its boundaries. It has actively pursued irredentist policies and encouraged separatism among the Somalis of Kenya and Ethiopia (and Djibouti).

While most African leaders were engaged in a policy of developing a set of values and ideas that all citizens of the new state would share, Somali leaders were faced with a reverse problem to their African counterparts. Their nationalism, in the opinion of Lewis, "was tailor-made", and their problem was not that of nation building within the inherited borders, but of extending statehood outside the frontiers of the Somali Republic to embrace the remaining portions of the nation.

European colonial intrusion disrupted the harmony of a homogeneous group of people and eventually led to the partition of their territory into five different political entities. The Somali reaction to alien domination was always aggressive and served to emphasise a Somali common identity. Inspired by this cause the Dervish movement led by Sayid Mahamed Abdulle Hassan fought for two decades up to 1920 against Britain, Italy and Ethiopia's intrusion in Somaliland. Modern Somali nationalism was inspired by the Dervish movement.

The Somali claim contains all the ingredients of "classical" irredentism, including ethnic fragments across the borders and organised nationalist movements struggling to achieve unification with the "mother country". They perceive the Somali nation in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti as one "organic" whole. Underlying the demand for a Greater Somalia is the strong feeling that all Somalis are one nation. This is expressed by Somalia's five pointed white star which is set in a field of azure blue. The star is the proud symbol of irredentist nationalism. Its five points represent the five territories which Somalis are endeavouring to integrate into a Greater Somalia.

The territory that Somalia claimed in Ethiopia is sizeable, amounting to one fifth of Ethiopia's whole. It also claimed the Northern Frontier District (NFD), at present North Eastern Province of Kenya. The dispute of Somalia against its neighbours is regarded as involving "core values" concerning the definition of the "national self".

Kenya and Ethiopia considered the problem of ethnic Somalis in their respective countries not as a question of the right to self determination, but rather as one of the territorial integrity of the post colonial state. Any idea contrary to that, they believed, could create a centrifugal force which could threaten their statehood. In a memorandum presented by the Kenyan delegation at the inaugural Organisation of African Unity (OAU) conference in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Kenya reiterated that principle of self determination was applicable only to where foreign domination continued.

The newly independent African states felt unequal to tackling the disorder of land and people that the colonialists had left behind. For the Somalis, however, it represented the legitimisation of an African state colonising another. From the outset the OAU faced the problem of artificial colonial imposed boundaries. The issue was particularly acute where, as in Somalia, these boundaries divided people belonging to the same ethnic group. However, the OAU member states shelved the sensitive border problems in 1963. Before the end of that year fighting broke out between Somalia and its neighbouring states, Ethiopia and Kenya.

At its second summit held in Cairo in July 1964, the OAU complicated the whole issue by accepting that all borders should remain as they were when the colonial powers left Africa.

Somalia stood out in rejecting the OAU position that approved colonial borders. President Adan Abdulle Osman of Somalia had presented his case at the May 1963 meeting:

Briefly the Somali problem is this: unlike any other border problem in Africa, the entire length of the existing boundaries, as imposed by the colonialists, cut across the traditional pastures of our nomadic population. The problem becomes unique when it is realised that no other nation in Africa finds itself totally divided along the whole length of its borders from its own people (Issa-Salwe, 2000: 98).

4.2.1 SOMALIA'S DISPUTE WITH ETHIOPIA

The Ogaden (known also as Western Somaliland)²⁶ dispute was a rivalry involving the aspirations and claims of two very different types of nationalism. Both Somalia and Ethiopia had a strong sense of nationalism which predated the colonial era. While Somalia's nationalism was largely ethnic and culture based on the homogeneity of the Somali people, Ethiopia's nationalism was "fundamentally political, based on the legacy of the Ethiopian Empire as the oldest independent country in Africa" (Issa-Salwe, 2000: 174). Ethiopia strengthened its claims on the basis that its emperors held suzerainty over the Ogaden as a result of boundary agreement signed with the Italians and the British.

In spite of the fact that there are similarities between the Western Somaliland and Northern Frontier District (NFD) disputes, the border between Ethiopia and Somalia has never been delineated clearly. Instead, the border between Somalia and Kenya was created as a result of unilateral act of one government, in this case by Britain.

²⁶ While Ethiopia calls the region Ogaden, Somalia recognises it as Western Somaliland. The former, however, does not reflect the whole territory which Somalia claims. To separate the region from Somali identity, Ethiopia named the region Ogaden, a name which indicated simple one of the Ethiopian Somali ethnic peoples. Ogaden clan is one of the major Somali clans who live in the region (it can also be found among all the main Somali clan groups). Administratively, the Ogaden makes part of the Hararghe Province and stretches from Jigjiga, the region's capital, to the Somali border, a territory exclusively inhabited by ethnic Somalis. In this sense the Ogaden makes roughly two thirds of the territory which Somalia recognises as Western Somaliland. For Somalia, however, Western Somaliland stretches from Awash Valley in the north west (just 150 miles from Addis Ababa) round the periphery of the Ethiopian highlands to the east until the Somali border and Moyale in

In 1960 when Somalia gained independence, its frontier with Ethiopia was still, in international law, a "provisional" border (see map). Somalia felt that it had better chances to get boundary revision than in its dispute with Kenya. While successive Somali governments never ceased to campaign for all its missing territories, they have spent more resources and energy on the liberation of the Ogaden than on the other missing territories.

4.3 SOMALI GOVERNMENTS

The preamble of the Constitution of the Somali Republic promulgated in June 1961 stressed that Somalia becomes a unitary republic with a representative democratic form of government. The legislature was uni-cameral and composed of deputies elected by universal direct and secret suffrage for a term of five years and representing the whole people. The first meeting of the National Assembly elected Adan Abdulle Osman, who had been for one year the provisional President. President Adan Abdulle Osman called Dr Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke to form a government.

The newly formed state's first task was to break the colonial legacy and influence under which British and Italian Somalilands had developed during the colonial time. The foremost difficulty was administrative and the matter was somewhat aggravated by linguistic barriers, as there was no official Somali script to facilitate communication within the government. In the south, the Italian language was the main means of administrative and legal communication, and in the north English was mainly used.

The legal system in the southern region was based on customary and Islamic laws. However, in the northern region there was a different system based on the English common and statutory law, upon the Indian Penal code and Somali custom. To solve the legal problem, a unified legal system was introduced. The Supreme Court was instructed to establish two separate sections to deal with cases from the two regions.

the West. Touching Kenya, Ethiopia and Somali borders, the Somali Ethiopian border stretches to the north until

The new classes of political leaders gallantly tried to set up democratic practices, but they were incapable of mustering their energy to generate economic and social change. Soon, Somalia was experiencing all kinds of democracy's ailments, and the deepening of corruption and the incompetence of the civilian government were deflating any democratic benefit. Party politics had fallen short of what the Somali people were expecting from the exercise of democracy. The democratic parliamentary process that was 'expected' to go well with the traditional political institutions turned sour. As in many African countries, there was misuse of the European models of government. Emphasis was on party politics and personal power rather than on mobilization for national development. Corruption became rife and deputies traded their votes for personal gain. Sixty-four parties with 1000 candidates took part in the March 1969 election. The system facilitated anarchy, as the poet Nuur Cali Qonof warned in the following verse a few months prior to the military takeover in October 1969:

The much aspired to state has faltered
Charlatans and impostors have ravaged the essence of parliament
Lost are the guiding Constitution and sense of direction
Since the leading demons are devoid of care
Nor will there be a new moon or a saviour,
Incoherent are the objectives and aspirations of the Leego²⁷
The continued lying in wait of a coup d'état will be seen

(Habbis baa ku dhacay dowladdii lagu hanweynaaye
How-howlayaal soo geliyo heeran baa dilaye
Dastuur lagu hagaagiyo la waa hilin la qaadaaye.
Kolna haddaan dujaalada hurriyo hoosta dhuganayne
Ama aan hilaal noo dhashiyo haadi imanaynin
Kala maqan hawada Leegadiyo himiladoodiye
Inqilaab hurdada uu ku jiro la hubsandoonee) (Nuur Cali Qonof)

it meets with Djibouti borders.

²⁷ Leego is the Somali Youth League, the nationalistic party of Somalia.

Before a solution to the languishing democracy could be found, the situation took a new turn when, on Wednesday 15 October 1969 during a tour, the President was assassinated in Las Anod by a member of his own police force. Although said to be personally and not politically motivated, the incident created a political vacuum and exacerbated the tense and unstable political atmosphere. The situation was taken advantage of by the army, which seized power on Tuesday 21 October at 03.00 a.m. in a 'bloodless coup'.

The takeover was widely welcomed and was seen as giving relief from the political and social tension built up by the party system. The perception that the army saved the country from plunging into chaos enhanced the prestige of the military force known as Xoogga Dalka (literally, the power of the country).

The military junta rounded up all civil government members including members of the previous civil administration, the former president Adan Abdulle Osman, the former prime ministers, Abdirisaaq Haji Husein and Mahamed Haji Ibrahim Igal, and the former Police Commander General Mahamed Abshir Muse. They were accused of corruption and embezzlement of government funds. Subsequently, they were to remain imprisoned for many years without trial.

The military junta suspended the Constitution and the Supreme Court, closed the National Assembly and barred all political parties (ibid. 134). It announced the establishment of a Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) on 1 November 1969, which consisted of 25 members, and General Mahamed Siyad Barre who was to be its chairman.

The SRC received wide popular support as it embarked on revitalizing the country's economy. It introduced the First Charter of the Revolution, which emphasised the principle of social justice, the stimulation of economic growth, the eradication of tribalism and the setting up of orthography for the Somali language.

The regime ruled by decree approved by the SRC, and controlled the executive, legislative and judicial organs. It introduced sweeping legal and administrative reforms, and carried out extensive social, political and economical programmes.

On the first anniversary of the revolution, 21 October 1970, the SRC Chairman, General Siyad Barre declared "Scientific Socialism" (Hantiwadaagga Cilmiga-ku-dhisan) to be the ideology of the regime and the basis of its social, economical and political programme. The declared SRC concept of a "modern socialist country" included the eradication of tribalism in favour of nationalism. Effigies of monsters symbolising tribalism were buried at huge rallies held in all regional capitals of the country in 1971. The traditional affiliation of the individual to his clan or lineage, which established a person's social identity and clan alliance, was banned. The word *jaalle* (comrade) was to replace the term *ina adeer* (cousin) which was the traditional way to address people.

The early liberal ideology of the modern Somali state, which later degenerated into tribal polity, had now been replaced by a socialist ideology. A Public Relations Office (PRO) was formed in 1974, to indoctrinate the masses with the new ideology. It would do this through a network of Orientation Centres (Golaha Hanuuninta) which were set up throughout the country. In government work places "orientation" classes were routine as promotion of government employees depended more on political correctness than competence. Government employees, traders, students, ordinary members of the public, as well as members of women's organizations were forced to attend their neighbourhood orientation centres. For the indoctrination of civil servants there was Halane, a military camp south of Mogadishu.

The development of the new ideology was reinforced by depicting General Siyad Barre as a national cult figure, a ploy used in many communist countries. General Siyad was symbolised as the saviour of the Somali nation. Names like Victorious Leader (Guulwade) and the Father of the Nation were attributed to the General.

Top priority was given to the establishment of a strong intelligence network. The National Security Service (NSS) dealt with whoever was suspected of nurturing anti-revolutionary feeling. The NSS had a network of informers in all public offices, schools and work places. In the following years more repressive laws and institutions were created. Among these were

the Hangash which was Military Intelligence, Dhabar Jebin, the Military Counter-Intelligence, and Baarista Xisbiga, the Party Investigators.

To reinforce the National Security Service, a National Security Court (NSC) was created in 1970. The Victorious Pioneers (Guulwadaayaal), a large para-military force established in 1972 and drawn from the nation's youth, acted as the regime's watchdog at neighbourhood level.

The regime also took drastic measures to curb the development of independent intellectual thought or artistic talent. However, in response to this oppression the leading Somali poets, Mahamed Warsame "Hadraawi" and Mahamed Haashi Dhamac Gaariye challenged the regime with their poetic talent when they began the famous poetic chain called "Deelley". Deelley expressed the people's feelings toward the regime's policy.

The jubilant welcome, which the coup *d'etat* initially received, gradually declined and changed to fear. Family members and neighbours were encouraged to spy on each other and report to the Victory Pioneers. The song *Harkaagaa lagu diray* (your shadow is watching) you was meant to intimidate people from drifting from the revolutionary path.

Despite emphasising the creation of an egalitarian society, the military government controlled every aspect of an individual's life. The political pattern of the regime - curbing the right of assembly, making attendance at orientation centres compulsory, the arbitrary powers of arrest, conflicted with the egalitarianism of traditional Somali culture (Lewis, 1980: 120). As a result of this policy thousands of educated men and women fled the country resulting in a brain drain.

The enormous powers conferred on the chairman of the SRC enabled General Barre to stifle any immediate threat to his authority. By eliminating any threat to his power, from July 1972, Barre covertly embarked upon building his power base on an alliance with two other clan groups. This was what was to become known as the MOD. The MOD alliance, which the General formulated to rule the country is the acronym for the Mareehaan (Barre's paternal relatives), the Ogaadeen (his mother's relatives) and Dhulbahante (his son-in-law's clan).

The MOD alliance became a political instrument whose effect was to build up resentment among other clan groupings. By firmly establishing his inner power structure, Barre started to deploy a two-tier system, one which rewarded some sub-clans for their loyalty to the *Kacaanka Barakaysan* (the Blessed Revolution), and the other to persecute and repress those sub-clans "for their recalcitrance or reluctance to be enthusiastic about the new order imposed upon them." (Siciid, 1993:17).

The government policy to alienate a section of the society (as collective punishment) was responsible for the decline of the government ability to enforce law and stability, and to mobilise support for its policy. When a group is threatened with coercion, the threat may bring the group together and they may respond with counter-coercion. This reaction may then produce an intensifying of this initial coercion. The result may be an endless upward spiral of aggressive tactics. In fact, these tactics generated and increased people's awareness of clan identity.

4.4 TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

In 1974 a new political horizon was looming for Ethiopia as Emperor Haile Selassie's feudal monarchy was crippled by waves of demonstrations organised by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), students, teachers and workers' groups. Haile Selassie sent his troops to quell the demonstrations. However, this caused more resentment. Soon the situation got out of hand. On 12 September 1974 the Ethiopian army took advantage of the deteriorating circumstances and deposed the Emperor, who had ruled Ethiopia for four decades.

The political turmoil in Ethiopia gave Somalia a chance to retake the missing territory. In July 1977, the Somali government decided to commit its army to the liberation of Western Somaliland and to help the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) which had increased its operations since the beginning of the 1970s. Backed by the Somali army, WSLF launched a massive offensive and liberated nearly all the Somali-inhabited Western Somaliland within a

short time by capturing main towns such as Jigjiga, Goday (Gode), Dhagahbuur, and, very briefly, Dire Dawa.

Menaced internally as well as externally, the military regime in Addis Ababa declared itself a Marxist-Leninist state, and appealed to the Soviet Union for military assistance. As a result, the Soviet Union shifted its alliance from Somalia to Ethiopia by moving its military advisers from Mogadishu and directly flew them to Addis Ababa in a back stabbing policy, which Lewis described as "one of the most breathtaking acts of treachery in history." (Lewis, 1992) And in reaction, General Barre turned to the West and to the moderate Arab countries for military and financial help. The Soviet Union had reinforced the Ethiopian army with 18,000 Cuban soldiers, along with Yemeni and East German technicians, allowing it to severely defeat the Somali army and in March 1978 Somalia ordered its remaining army in the war to retreat.

Economically, socially, politically and ecologically the war had profound consequences. Development project funds were diverted to the war. The wave of refugees, estimated to be more than a million, required financial assistance which the country could not afford at all. To cope with the new situation, Somalia had to rely on foreign aid. It was the beginning of the pauperisation policy of Somalia (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 110).

Many refugees from the contested Western Somaliland and adjacent areas now flowed into the Republic. These surges of refugees were accompanied by a flood of modern weapons from the war front in Ethiopia into the country: a wave that was to transform Somalia (Lewis, 1992).

On the other hand, thousands of pastoral Somalis fled from Western Somaliland with their animal stock into Somalia, creating over-grazing in many areas. The result was disastrous ecologically and produced conditions never experienced before in the country.

The Ethiopian-Somali War, also known as the Ogaadeen War, abruptly heightened the stature of the General within the country. However, the defeat generated dissatisfaction and despondency within the army. General Siyad's much feared nightmare appeared to have come

true when on 9 April, 1978 a coup, led by Colonel Mahamed Sheikh Osman "Irro", was attempted and rebel troops took control of the capital. Nevertheless, the coup proved to be ill-planned and abortive; by mid-morning troops loyal to General Siyad Barre had contained the situation and rounded up some of the ring-leaders in an operation which led to the death of 28 people. However, the mastermind of the coup, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, the South Front Commander, fled to Nairobi with six other associates.

4.5 SOMALI STATE IN TROUBLE

If the Ogaadeen War enhanced the prestige of the General within the country, its loss triggered the attempted coup on 9 April 1978, which the General cunningly portrayed as a clan's attempt to take over power. On the one hand, the failed coup attempt was exploited by the General to divert the country's misery from his failed policies and by using as a scapegoat the ring leader's kin (the Majeerteen). On the other hand, in order to avoid any future attempt on his regime, it provided Barre with a chance to reconstruct the military using his inner kinsmen, and thereby, estranging other groups.

Because of this retribution, the first armed opposition movement, the Somali Salvation Front (SSF) (a Majeerteen based opposition) was formed on 8 February 1979. In October 1981 the SSF merged with two leftist movements, the Somali Workers Party (SWP) and the Somali Democratic Liberation Front (SDLF) to form a larger national opposition movement, and changed its name to Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF).

The pattern of abuse directed at the SSDF supporters (mainly from the Majeerteen clan) was a calamitous omen of what was in store for the Somali clans, especially for the Isaaq people, whose plight caused the foundation (in London) in April, 1981 of the Isaaq-based Somali National Movement (SNM) by prominent Isaaq politicians. Suspecting every Isaaq of supporting the SNM, the regime unleashed a reign of terror on the Isaaq population.

Sensing the armed opposition's threats to his rule and the breaking-up of the MOD, the General ignited his old tribal ploy by inciting the Daaroods, with a campaign secretly known as Daaroodiya, which aimed to unite the Daarood clans against the menace of the Isaaq (and

later the Hawiye). In contrast, this provoked a corresponding affect with the Isaaqs and Hawiye joining in Irir solidarity.

Barre skilfully manipulated the old feuds to his advantage. As explained above, the Somali inter-clan conflict is centred on feuds, and it aims to injure or eliminate the hostile clan. The lost blood is generally added to the account of hereditary feuds, creating a perpetual conflict. Traditionally, the relationships between clans, lineages or other segments tended to be potentially hostile; one can therefore imagine what can happen when the state institutions are used to exploit this hostility.

Until 1989 the Hawiye, who occupy the area around Mogadishu and the central rangelands, indolently acquiesced with the regime (Samatar, 1991: 20). Barre avoided any confrontation with them by rewarding them for their passiveness. Since they were also subject to the changing situation, the dictator's relations with the Hawiye were thwarted by the formation in Rome of the United Somali Congress (USC) in 1989 by Hawiye politicians who had left the SNM and the SSDF.

Led by Ali Wardhigley, a former Information Minister of the civilian government, and Ali Hagarrey, the USC, which draws its support from the Hawiye clans of the Mogadishu suburbs and Central Somalia, remained a solely political organization until the end of 1989, when it was joined by General Mahamed Farah Garaad "Aideed", who changed the organization into a fighting force. With the help of the SNM, Aideed visited Ethiopia and gained support to organise and mobilise the Hawiye armed opposition. To strengthen his position in Somalia, General Aideed signed an agreement with the SNM and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) on 2 October, 1990 in Dire Dawa. Among other things, the agreement stipulated the joint effort of the three organizations, with the help of Ethiopia, to overthrow Siyad Barre and then form a government afterwards.

However, General Aideed's reorganisation clashed with the organisation's founders in Rome. On the other side of the conflict lay a traditional rivalry between the pastoral Habar Gidir clan (General Aideed's kinsmen), who live mainly in central Somalia, and the mostly sedentary Abgaal/Murursade clans, the founders of USC. The USC leadership struggle was one of the

main factors that generated the bitter war between the two groups in Mogadishu after General Siyad Barre's fall in January 1991, catapulting Somalia into the world headlines as a human disaster on a scale not previously seen.

Adding to the list of the four armed opposition groups, the SSDF, SNM, SPM and USC, two more clan-based opposition groups were formed at the close of 1989. The Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA) of northern Somalia was founded in November 1989, by the Gadabuursi clan (Dir clan family) against the Somali National Movement (Isaaq) militia. The Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) was established at the beginning of 1990 by the Rahanweyn clans of the Upper Jubba.

Unfortunately, the opposition movements were more clan affiliated than nationalistic, and the people became as much disappointed by these as by Barre's government. They were divided to such an extent that they were prolonging and perpetuating Barre's rule.

Although most opposition groups rallied round a clan identity, the Islamic Party was in opposition to the regime on religious grounds. It was established after ten *culumos* (religious men) were publicly executed on 23 January, 1975. The culumos resisted a government decree of January 1975 that amended the Islamic law (Sharia Law) of inheritance by giving men and women equal rights under the Family Law (*Xeerka Qoyska*). The culumos accused the regime of attempting to distort *sura Anisa* (Women, IV) — and all matters related to civil status restricted by the Qoran and the Sunna — after General Siyad Barre publicly asserted that certain verses of the Qoran were obsolete.

By 1990, the country was on the brink of disintegration. In May 1990, one hundred and fourteen prominent politicians, some of them respected citizens from former civilian governments, intellectuals and traditional leaders, tried at the last hour to save the country. They proposed a platform for dialogue and reconciliation and a means by which an interim government could be formed to lead the country to free elections (Horn of Africa, 1990: 109-144). This group, known as the Manifesto Group, made up from a cross-section of Somali society, confronted the General with a list of solutions to salvage the country from the abyss;

it suggested among other things that he resign and hand over power to a caretaker government.

Instead, General Siyad Barre stubbornly refused to give up and declared a state of emergency, putting the army on full alert, even though most of it had deserted. Most of the Manifesto Group were arrested and taken to court and on the day of their trial, in January, the whole population of Mogadishu came out in support of those prominent personalities. They surrounded the court, asking for the release of the detainees. The pressure forced Barre to release them.

Because of the brittleness of the security circumstances, the situation worsened when a group of armed men looted a store in the Wardhigley District of Mogadishu mainly inhabited by the Hawiye clans, the main supporters of the USC. The cries for help of the victims attracted many people, and they chased the ravagers. After a hot pursuit the culprits retreated into a camp which belonged to the Red Berets, bodyguards of the President.

This event prompted an uprising in Wardhigley. Ironically, the Red Berets were sent in to suppress the uprising. To crush the riot, the Red Berets indiscriminately shelled the Wardhigley quarter, killing and wounding several hundred civilians, including children and women. Nevertheless, they could no longer control the growing riot which, by this time, was organized by USC officers.

Unable to overwhelm the uprising, which by this time had expanded to other parts of Mogadishu, Barre tried desperately to hang on until when he was forced to flee to his home region, Garbaharrey, in the Gedo Region in the south. By fleeing, however, he left behind a power vacuum which soon became a source of quarrels between the opposition groups.

The USC, whose support lived in the area surrounding the capital, became predominant, and on 27 January, 1991 overran the Presidential Palace to take control of Mogadishu. Without consulting other opposition organizations, and without considering the political and social repercussions of not doing so, the USC leadership appointed Ali Mahdi Mahamed as interim

president on 29 January, 1991. The unilateral decision was immediately interpreted as a Hawiye bid for power.

The opposition campaigns, started by different Somali groups in the hope of toppling a dictatorial regime, had become distorted. Instead of the campaigns converging in a new nationalistic platform, faction leaders sought to use the support they had for their personal ambition, and at the cost of the people they claimed to represent. In the south the USC-Hawiye struggle against a regime became a struggle between Daarood — projected as being synonymous with the regime - and Hawiye.

Soon Mogadishu became divided between the different Hawiye groups. The condition deteriorated into anarchy where the rule of the gun became law. The high-powered weapons obtained by General Siyad Barre's regime, first from the General Siyad Barre's regime, first from the Soviet Union then from the US, and later from Libya, Germany, China and Italy fell into the hands of these groups.

Fighting between the opposing groups caused an already fragile situation to deteriorate. Consequently, famine worsened as a direct consequence of fighting and "every aspect of government and organisation in Somalia" was destroyed (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 128). By this time any hope of resuscitation of the state was remote.

4.5.1 THE CLASH OF THE OPPOSITION GROUPS

In the meantime, the USC fighters began to carry out their reprisal against General Siyad Barre's regime. But within a short time their operation degenerated into a witch-hunt against anybody whom they identified as Daarood.

To defend themselves, Daaroods who had fled from the capital regrouped in Kismayo and attempted to form a united front. However, the Daarood coalition under the banner of Somali National Front could not stand against the fierce counter attack of the better organised USC forces which drove them far out of Mogadishu and without much resistance pursued them to the port of Kismayo, capturing it on 23 April.

The confrontations were interpreted as Hawiye-Daarood clashes in the south (USC-SPM) and in the central regions (SSDF-USC), and for some time detracted from the factional clashes within the USC.

Because of the outbreak of the civil war and subsequent anarchy in Somalia, many minority groups were uprooted and forced to flee the country. Among them there were the Wa-mbalazi (Reer Barawe), the Reer Hamar (Gibil-ad), and the Bajun. Barawa became transformed into a battleground between the USC and SNF initially, and between the SNA and SPM later on. From February 1991 to May 1992 Barawa changed hands nine times between these groups as it fell victim both to the atrocities of the freelance bandits and those of the warring factions (Menkhaus, 1993). The anguish and suffering of this community is depicted in the words of Abubakar Dheere "Abuu Dheere" (Cassanelli *et al*, 1992):

If this group comes, the other group leaves.

They loot and take away everything.

I cannot distinguish among the ants, for the colour is the same.

4.5.2 SOMALILAND REPUBLIC

Using as a pretext the USC's unilateral decision to form a provisional government without consultation with the opposition, the SNM, which took control of the North-West and Togdheer regions, refused to attend a conference called by Ali Mahdi for a national consultation on 28 February in Magadishu. Accordingly, on 18 May, 1991, approximately four months after Siyad Barre's regime was ousted, the SNM declared the regions (what had constituted former British Somaliland), an independent Somaliland Republic. Their leaders took the stance that they had to concede to the pressure of their people. The SNM argued that its action was not secessionist but rather the reinstatement of the status which existed for four days, 26-30 June 1960, before British and Italian Somalilands were united into the Republic of Somalia.

During the struggle, the SNM was divided into guerrilla groups on a regional basis. During the final integration process, differences appeared between the Defence Minister, Colonel

Mohamed Kahin Ahmed (Habar Tol-Je'le, Isaaq), and the president, Abdirahman Ahmed Ali "Tuur" (Habar Yonis, Isaaq). The controversy induced the self-proclaimed Republic's President to replace his defence minister. In January 1992, fighting erupted between the Habar Tol-Je'le and the Habar Yoonis in Bur-o (Bura-o), 150 kilometres south-west of Berbera, killing many (AI-Index:AFR-52/01/92) and leading to a flow of refugees who fled the town.

Amid the instability, a conference, in session since 24 January, 1993, and held by the Somaliland community elders was concluded in Borame in May 1993. It reached two main resolutions: (1) the need for a country-wide security framework, and (2) the establishment of a national organisational structure. At the same meeting, the elders elected Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Igal, a former prime minister (1967-1969), as President of Somaliland, and Colonel Abdirahman Aw-Ali Farah as Vice-President.

4.5.3 PUNTLAND

The North-Eastern Region (NER) on the whole enjoyed relative peace and stability. This was with the exception of the Mudug area, where clashes between the USC — Aided faction — and the SSDF/SNDU (Somali National Democratic Union) (AI-Index:AFR-52/01/92) were centred.

On 21 December, 1991, the traditional religious leaders, intellectuals and politicians of the north-eastern regions - the Bari, Nugaal, part of the Mudug and part of the Galguduud - agreed to form a regional administration under the leadership of former Police Chief (1960-1969), General Mohamed Abshir Muse, with Boqor Abdullah Boqor Muse as General Coordinator.

The SSDF leadership that controlled the North-Eastern Region (NER), justified their move because of the collapse of the central government and the need to create self-reliance and self-defence. However, their stability was seriously threatened and nearly crumbled when a Muslim fundamentalist group calling itself Ittixaad Al-Islaami (Islam Unity) attempted to take control of the North-Eastern Region in the early morning of 19 June, 1992. The Ittixaad Al-Islaami's attempt to overpower the North-Eastern Region's control reflected a well-coordinated plan by fundamentalist groups whose objective was to fill in the power vacuum in Somalia. However, the SSDF military struck before the Islamic militants could secure the region. In the resulting

fighting between the well armed and better organised Ittixaad Al-Islaami force on one hand and the SSDF force on the other, more than two hundred people perished and many more were wounded.

4.6 THE UN INVOLVEMENT

Because of lack of security, food could not reach the needy as food convoys were looted and ships were being shelled to turn them away. Furthermore, relief workers were threatened by armed gangs. Without the slightest moral standards, mafia-like groups imposed exorbitant fees on the UN and relief agencies to make them pay for their security. The perpetual fighting in Somalia could not be ended without the involvement of the world community. However, UN officials anticipated that they could not deploy any peace-keeping force without the consent of the warring parties; to do so would constitute a "breach of sovereignty".

In the meantime, a US-led multinational forces from 30 countries (UNITAF) were given the task of assisting the humanitarian effort. On 3rd May 1993 there was a new mandate for the UN troops under a retired American Admiral, Jonathan Howe, designated UN representative, and the Turkish General Cevik Bir, the UN troop commander under the banner of UNOSOM (Security Council Resolution 814). The UN troops at this time had been given the role of peace enforcement under the "enforcement provisions" of Chapter VII of the UN Charter which called for "further use of force to maintain peace throughout this fractious country and the disarming and demobilization of all armed groups" (Bone, 5 March 1993). With the new mandate under Chapter VII, the UNOSOM's role changed from mediator to player and this in turn set the scene for confrontation.

Without political reconciliation the cycle of violence and death, from rape, starvation and destruction could not be brought to an end. Hoping to ease the situation, the UN organised a preparatory meeting in the Ethiopian capital on 4 January, 1993 which paved the way for a mid-March 1993 national reconciliation conference in the Africa Hall, Addis Ababa between the warring factions. After chaotic negotiations an accord was finally arranged to halt hostility, to build the foundations for peace, to reconstruct and to rehabilitate Somalia (Addis Ababa Agreement, 27th March 1993) agreement stipulated, among other things, (1) disarmament and

security, (2) rehabilitation and reconstruction, (3) the restoration of property and settlement of disputes, and (4) the creation of a transitional mechanism to become the political and legislative authority of Somalia for an interim period of two years.

When the time came to implement the Addis Ababa peace agreements, events suddenly took a drastic turn. On 5 June, Pakistani UN soldiers on a routine arms inspection near Radio Mogadishu (controlled by General Aideed's militia), were ambushed, and 24 of them were killed. In the retaliatory fighting, 75 Aideed supporters were killed and 350 wounded. In response to the attack on the Blue Helmets, the Security Council passed a resolution (No. 837) calling for the punishment of those responsible for the killing. On 3 October, U.S. Rangers launched an attempt to capture Aideed. In the ensuing battle, 18 American combatants were killed and dozens injured. The incident also resulted in hundreds of Somali casualties. Negative public opinion issuing from the clash led to plans being laid for an accelerated U.S. withdrawal.

4.7 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 2000, the Djibouti Conference, made up of local and regional leaders, established a Transitional National Government (TNG) and selected a 245-member Transitional National Assembly (TNA), which elected Abdiqassim Salad Hassan as Transitional President.

In October 2002, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) sponsored the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference (SNRC). Representatives of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland refused to participate in the proceeding. The SNRC concluded in October, following the August 29 selection of a 275-member clan-based Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA), which replaced the TNA, and the October 10 election of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as Transitional Federal President. In December, President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed appointed Ali Mohammed Ghedi as Prime Minister.

Before the government moves to Somalia, fighting broke out among members of the the Transitional Federal Parliament. The incident followed a motion to allow the participation of soldiers from Somalia's immediate neighbours.

In June 2005, the Transitional Federal Government returned to Somalia. While President Yusuf and Prime Minister Gedi, along with a number of members of parliament established themselves in Jowhar, the Parliament Speaker and other MPs chose Mogadishu. On January 5, 2006, Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan signed the Aden Declaration in which they pledged to end their conflict. The agreement led the interim government to make Baidoa in the south the temporary seat of government.

4.7.1 THE TAKEOVER OF MOGADISHU BY THE ISLAMISTS

During the conclusion of this writing, Mogadishu, the Somali capital, was taken by an Islamist group called the Islamic Courts Union from a group of Mogadishu warlords who controlled the city since the collapse of the state institutions. The ICU's conquest followed a bloody three months with the warlords who fashioned themselves warlords as an Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism whose aim was to get rid of Al-Qaida cells from Somalia. It is alleged that the warlords were funded by the United States (ICG, 2006) and Washington support for the warlord alliance has ended up boosting Islamic militias. In the ensuing violence more than three hundred people died and a similar number were wounded.

The raise of the Islamists provoked external as well as internal reactions. Externally, Washington and Addis Ababa, both of which share interests with the warlords, reacted worryingly to the lost of power of their allies. It also prompted the US administration to call a Somali Contact Group meeting in New Year in the same week. It was also claimed that the US asked Sudan to mediate between the US and the Islamists.

Internally, the event created a mixture of reaction among Somalis. Some worried about a renewal of the civil strife of 1990s while others see the banner of the group, Islam, as a solution to the ills of Somali people.

Basically, ICU is a loose association of clan-based courts which centres mainly in and around Mogadishu. On 15 June, in Beledwayne, a town in the central Somalia with its own administration, a demonstration in support of the courts was held. Nevertheless, after only 24

hours the authority opposed any attempt to form a new court by claiming that “the region has already a court”. It is not clear whether the current authority will be able to dwarf the Islamist threat. Just two days before, in Mogadishu, a large anti-courts demonstration took place. In the autonomous region of Puntland security forces and the police were put in full alert.

The basis of these anxieties lies in what is seen as clan antagonism by viewing the courts as merely a clan attempt to take over Somalia.

Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has called for talks with the Islamic court leaders, but analysts see this could prove difficult because President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed is perceived as having been using anti-Islamist rhetoric to gain assistance from Ethiopia and the United States.

The sudden change of power in Mogadishu heralded a new dawn in Somalia where many observers see the situation as likely to worsen in the near future.

PART ONE
CHAPTER FIVE

5. SOMALI WEBSITE CASE STUDY ONE: WEB ACTIVITY AS REFLECTIONS OF LOCAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS

In Chapter Three the categorisation, of Somali websites has been considered. According to the structure, make-up and content, Somali websites can be classified into seven categories. The Community/political (Com/pol) and Cultural/literary web types' activities and character are the two most likely web types to represent events in Somalia. While the first symbolises politics and community, the second reflects the cultural and literary aspect of Somali society.

This chapter will focus on how Com/pol web type's activities and behaviour reflect the political dynamics in the former Somali Republic regions and in the Somali Diaspora.

5.1 WEB MODELLING

Categorically, personal pages have the most striking similarity with the Com/pol web type, given that personal web pages present material in self-presentation form. Com/pol web type is estimated to amount to 43% of the Somali websites investigated (just 17% more than personal web pages). Nevertheless, Com/pol group is more persistent and determined than are personal web pages. This is because of the commitment on the part of web creators and what the website stands for as it stands for groups, clans or political organisations, while personal web page is merely personal adventure, many created by amateurs.

Notwithstanding, there are some personal websites which engage in activities that go beyond personal activity by publishing material which has political or community traits. For example, Afgoi.com is established as personal site, however, its message and objective express Afgoye community's concern (Afgoi)²⁸. In such cases, some of these types of websites can be considered as Com/pol instead.

²⁸ Afgoi is a town 30 kilometres south of Mogadishu, the Somali Republic capital.

As discussed above, Com/pol web type is divided into two sub-groups: one sub-group's drive is sub-national purpose while the second attempts to aim beyond tribalism. The first sub-group can be identified in some cases as a front for either one of the five political constituencies or units (discussed above) created following the breakdown of what used to be the Somali republic.

One of the features identifiable with the sub-national group is the overt web name they use (see above for web naming conventions). For example, SomalilandForum, which comes under this group, is designed to promote Somaliland identity and campaign for the recognition of Somaliland as an independent republic. Similar websites are AllPuntland.com and Dayniile.com.

Using the web medium as a means to express their community concerns (e.g. Midgaan, Bravani Network), the minority websites — which also part of the first group — use the Com/pol web entirely in a different way than the other groups. They are structured in a way that their publications and orientation is entirely directed on their present and past experience.

The supra-regional group political orientation seem to represent some kind of supra-regional or transcending tribal interest. Contrary to the first group, they generally use common names such as, for example, the Somali Council for Peace and Democracy (aka Israaca), Somalia.com or SomaliTalk.com. Nevertheless, in this group there are those which carry general naming yet demonstrate some political group or regional affiliation (e.g. SomaliaWatch.org, SomaliaWatch.com).

FIG.7: BRAVA-NET



The supra-regional web group are small in number compared to the other group as they identify themselves with broader issues such as the rehabilitation of the Somali state. Their attempt is more to do with the reconstruction of the national identity which collapsed following the

breakdown of the state in the early 1990s. Although news is also part of their activities, they, nevertheless, focus on all Somali regions.

This group views Somali unity as sacrosanct as their feeling focuses on the concept of Somalism. As an ideology that reflected national consciousness, Somalism has its roots in the oral tradition of Somali culture, the interiorising force of their oral word relate in a special way to “the ultimate concerns of existence” (Ong, 1982: 56). Thus for this group, the unity cannot be violated (*midnimada Soomaaliyeed waa muqaddas*).

One prominent organisation of the supra-regionalist is Israaca (the Somali Council for Peace and Democracy). Israaca is a political organisation with political and social aims. It is an association of volunteer members linked together by an interest in seeking lasting peace and good governance for the Somali people. It has both a mailing list and a website (Israaca is analysed below as one of the mailing list case studies).

There are two models of Com/pol website: the first model (*Model 1*) is organised as organisational or think-tank website. Other website which belong to this model are all minorities websites (Dulmane.com, BantuSomali.com, Gabooye.com), Israac.org, (the Somali Council for Peace and Democracy), Ogaden.com (an armed organisation opposed to the Ethiopian rule in the Western Somaliland). Example SomalilandForum.com, Puntin.org and Midgaan.com belong to this model (see *Model 1* (a, b and c)).

Expressing explicitly their position in the form of mission statement and press statements/releases (Table 5), they rarely have religious or culture and literary sections.

TABLE 5: WEBSITE MODELS

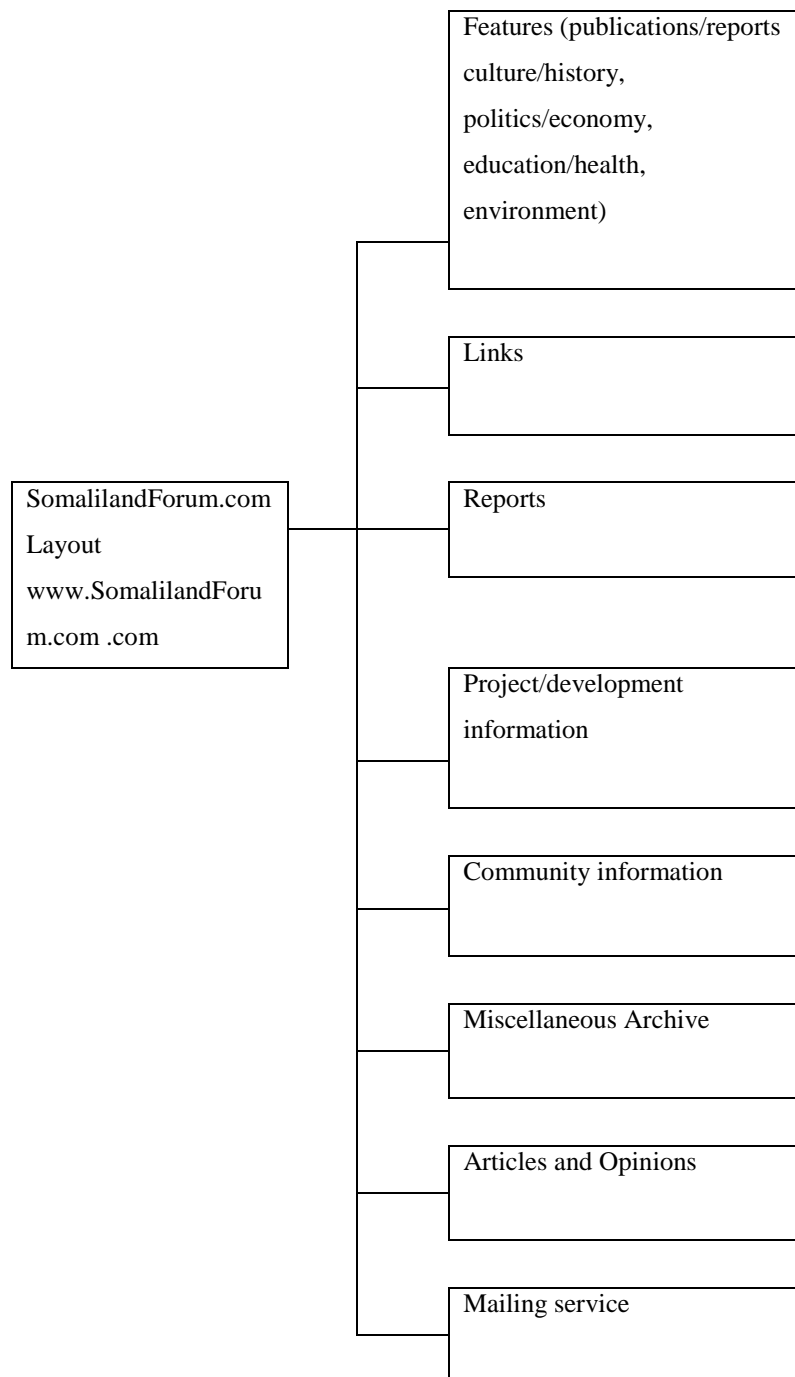
Web Model 1 (i.e. model 1 a, b, c)	Web Model 2 (i.e. model 2 a, b, c)
Mission statement	No mission statement
Rarely use news features (except in community information format)	Has news section
Rarely religion or cultural and literature sections	Religion and cultural and literature sections
Position/press statements	No explicit position/press statements
Exclusive mailing list	Non-exclusive mailing list
Exclusive links/no links	General links
Exclusive discussion forum/chat features	Non-exclusive discussion forum/chat features
Exclusive membership	No membership/open membership

The second model (*Model 2*) instead is structured as news online websites and a large portion of the home page is dedicated to news highlights. Hiiraan.com, Arlaadinet.com, and Hobyonet.com belong to this last model (see *Model 2 a, b, c*). As this model is run as news media organisations, they are updated daily. They have also sections dedicated to religion, cultural and literary features.

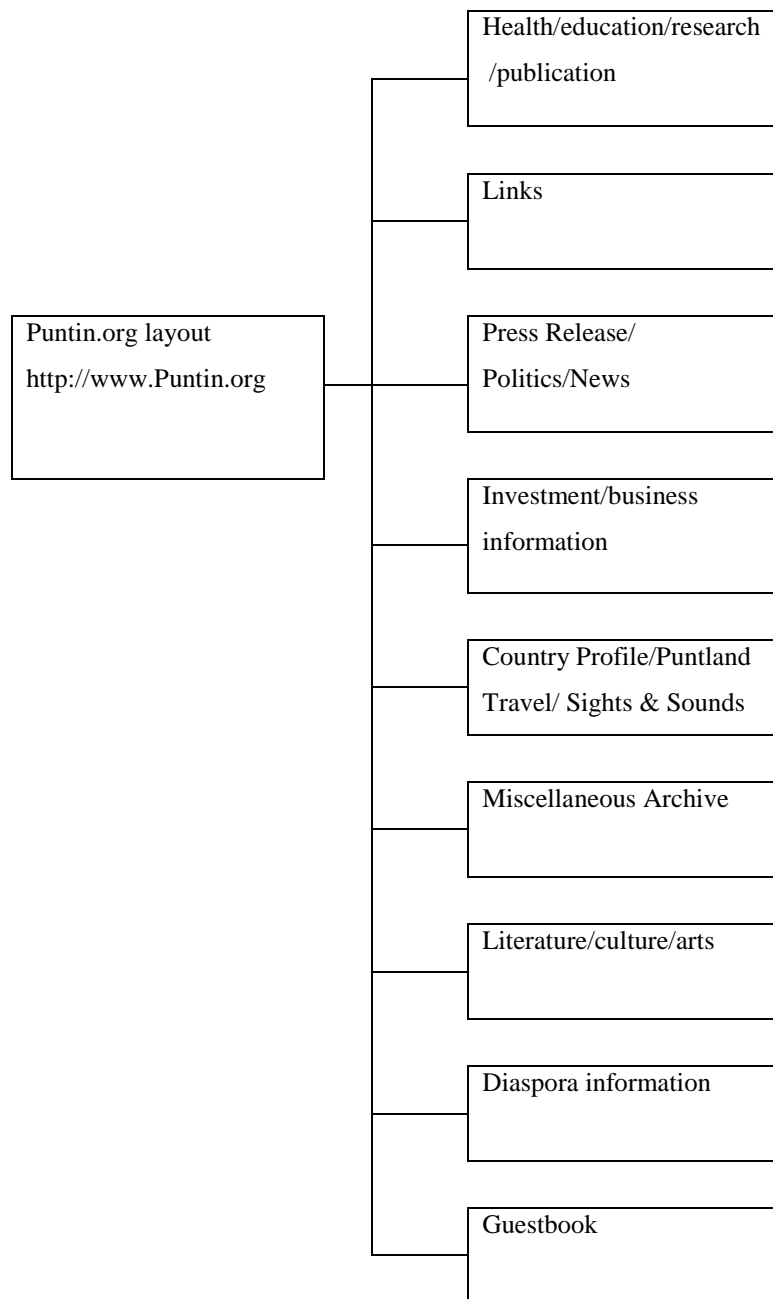
Many examples of *Model 1* have membership systems and exclusive mailing lists for their members. Membership is restricted to particular groups. This is added with exclusive forums and chat facilities for members. *Model 2* does not have a membership system and, although in some cases they have open membership. The latter model has non-exclusive forum or chat sections where every interested party is allowed to participate.

While the first model has some form of organisational structure where they are dedicated to particular belief or political aim, the second model, which is also the majority, has been created solely to have presence on the web.

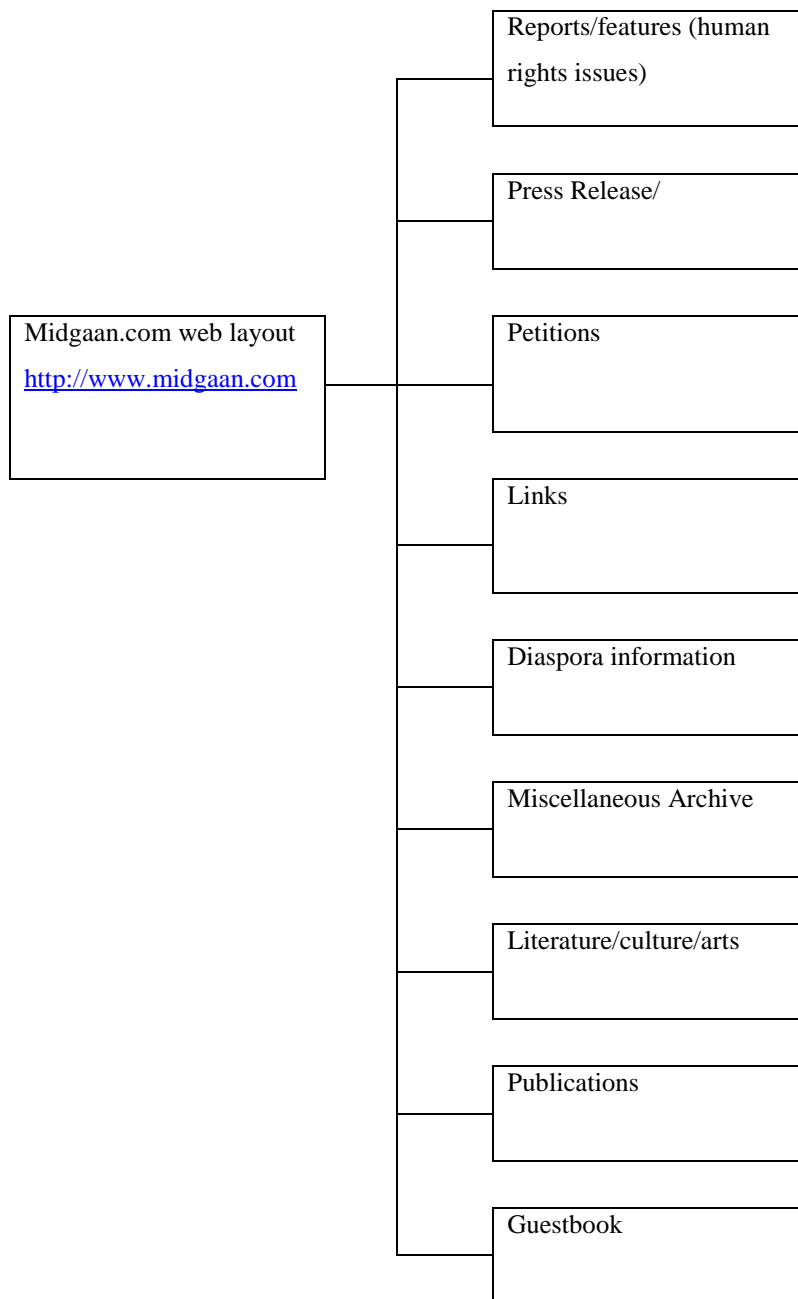
MODEL 1(A): SOMALILANDFORUM.COM LAYOUT



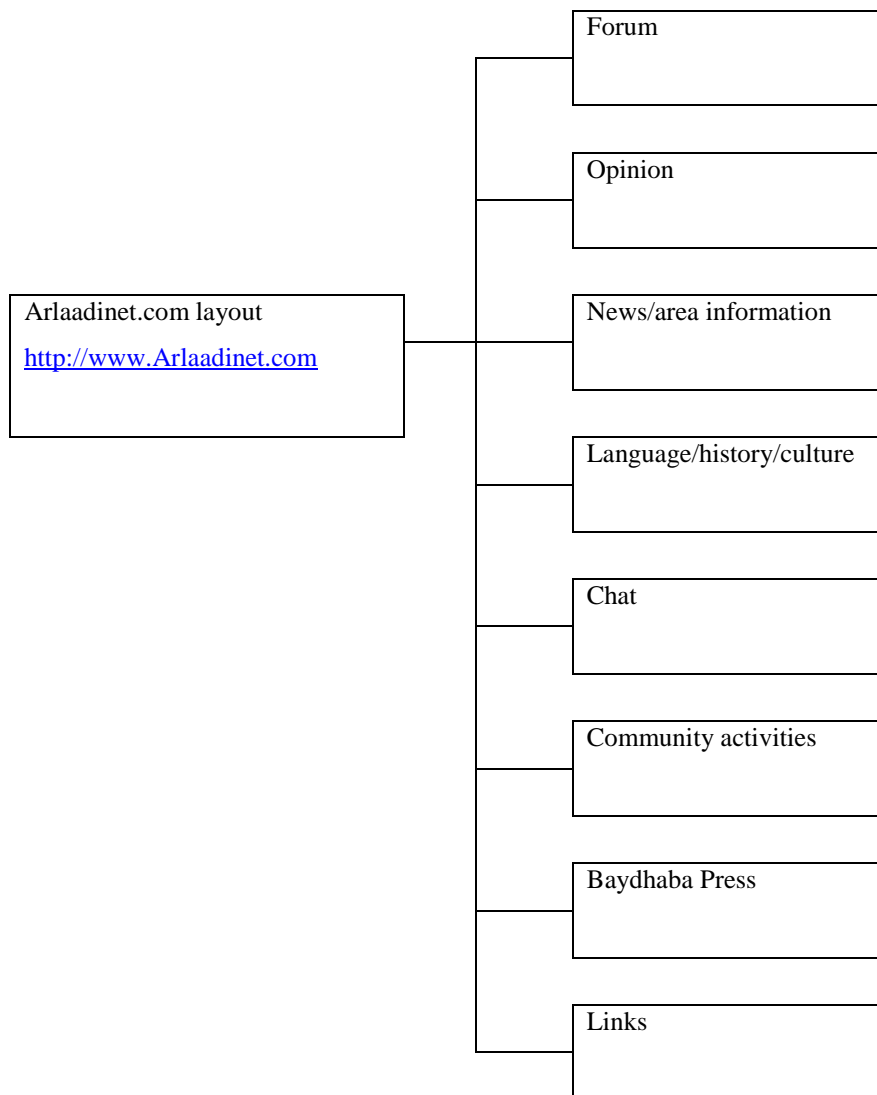
MODEL 1(B): PUNTLAND INTELLIGENTSIA NETWORK LAYOUT (PUNTIN.COM)



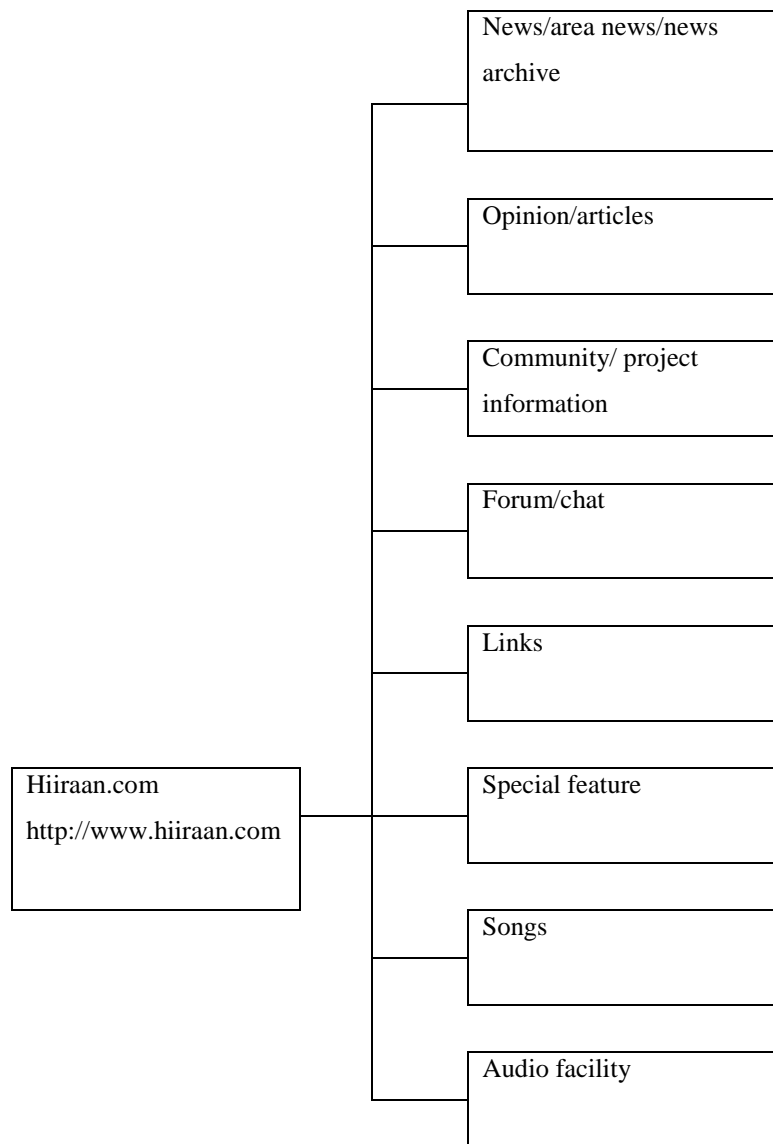
MODEL 1(C): MIDGAAN.COM



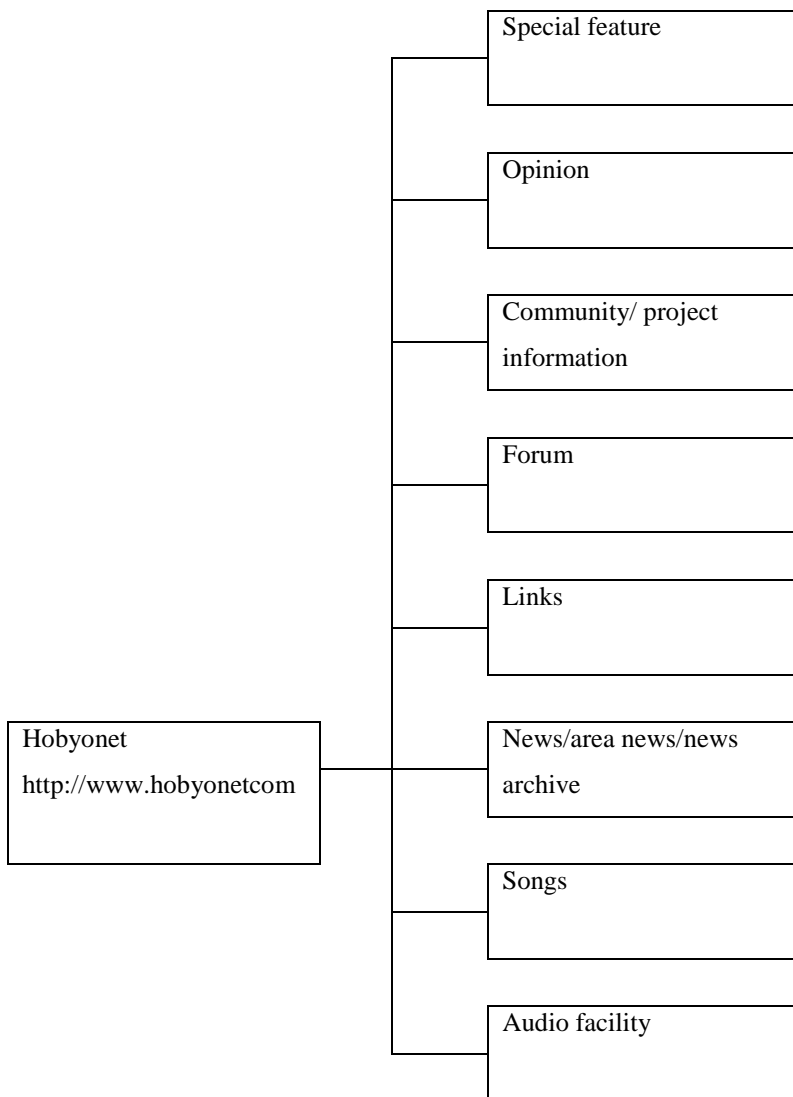
MODEL 2(A): ARLAADINET.COM LAYOUT



MODEL 2(B): HIIRAAN.COM LAYOUT



MODEL 2(C): HOBYONET LAYOUT



5.2 COM/POL WEB SAMPLES

From this section some models of Somali Com/pol websites will be considered. Beside the name, the structure and content say a lot about the website.

5.2.1 SOMALILANDFORUM

SomalilandForum.com is a political organisation which stands for Somaliland community around the world and for the independence and recognition of Somaliland, a new political entity which was born after the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. A committee runs the organisation.

Physically Somaliland is made up of the regions of North-western, Awdal, Togdheer, Sool and Sanaag regions of Somalia. In this part, the Isaaq clan-family constitutes the dominant group. In the Mission Statement (SomalilandForum) section it says:

- to stand for one Somaliland: independent, peaceful, united, democratic, just, and prosperous;
 - to encourage and participate in the implementation of sustainable development in our homeland: equitable, economically viable, and environmentally sound development;
 - to keep an eye on the dynamics of the regional politics; and,
- to formulate agenda for actions that best protect the interests of Somaliland and its people”.

FIG. 8: SOMALILANDFORUM.COM WEBSITE



Beside the political campaign, SomalilandForum, stands also “to work towards assisting and promoting social, educational and economic development programs” of Somaliland communities in Somaliland and abroad. The territory of Somaliland (with an area of 109,000 square kilometres) is located in the north-western part of former Somali republic (SomalilandForum, 2000).

To enable its members to communicate and work together, SomalilandForum.com provides a mailing service for its members. However, its membership is very exclusive. To initiate a member, the prospective member has to submit a request for membership to “any outstanding member of SomalilandForum.com who introduces him/her to SomalilandForum”.

5.2.2 PUNTLAND INTELLIGENTSIA NETWORK (PUNTIN.ORG)

Puntland Intelligentsia Network (Puntin.org) was founded on July 1st 1999 by a group of Puntland Diaspora members living in Europe and Northern America.²⁹ Puntin.org worked closely with SomaliaWatch.org, another website formed by the same Diaspora group. SomaliaWatch.org is structured in a mode to use features, analysis and editorial sections. While Puntin.org acts as the intellectual machine (Fig. 9), SomaliaWatch.org behaves as the media front of Puntin. SomaliaWatch.org mission says this “

“Somalia Watch is a Non Governmental Organisation created to help increase the understanding of the Somali issues. Somalia Watch shall focus on the Governance and Human Rights situation in Somalia” (SomaliaWatch, 2002).

Puntin.org stands for the people of Puntland, a mini-state formed by five regions in north-eastern Somali peninsula in August 1998. Ethnically, the inhabitants of these regions are mainly from the Daarood clan-family and the Meheri (generally known as Arab Mohamud Salah).

Puntland’s border encroaches with Somaliland. Both Somaliland and Puntland are situated in the northern part of Somalia and they follow a similar economic life in which the pastoral-nomadic economy is the backbone. While the people of the Sool region are overwhelmingly Daarood, in Sanaag the Daarood inhabit only the eastern part of the region. Sool and Sanaag fall geographically within the borders of pre-independence British Somaliland, but most of the clans there are associated with Puntland. These are the Warsangeli and the Dhulbahante, which, along with Majerteen form the Harti sub-group of the Daarood. Until early 2004, both Somaliland and Puntland avoided a confrontational stage over the border issue. Both had used the local people to exercise their authority.

However, things fell apart between Somaliland and Puntland when Dahir Riyale Kahin, vice-president of Somaliland came to visit Las Anod, the regional capital of Sool. The visit

²⁹ Puntland Intelligentsia Network (Puntin.org) ceased to exist in 2002.

precipitated a border clash between the two forces (BBC, September 23, 2004). There has not been however an escalation of violence in the border, it seemed that during the writing of this thesis, the truce over the border question has remained unstable.

FIG. 9: PUNTLAND INTELLIGENTSIA NETWORK (PUNTIN.ORG)

Click on the Topic Page 1 of 2

Click on the Topic	
NEW	Saliidda Soomaaliya: Waraysi la la yeeshey Dr Osman Salad Hir
NEW	Puntland spells out its post-Arta Reconciliation Plan
NEW	Puntland President Warns Puntlanders of Arta Conspiracy
NEW	Oil Prospects in Northern Somalia
NEW	Puntland: Magacaabid Wasiirro Cusub
NEW	A New Book on Puntland
NEW	Puntland in Perspective

Features

- ★ Puntland President Warns of Arta Conspiracy
- ★ Oil Prospects in Northern Somalia
- ★ Puntland: Magacaabid Wasiirro Cusub
- ★ A New Book on Puntland
- ★ Puntland In Perspective
- ★ In Somalia Devilry Pays off
- ★ Press Statement on Today's BBC Report on Hargeisa's Claim
- ★ Another half a decade of Chaos is on in Somalia
- ★ Puntland Maintains its Position on the Outcome of the Djibouti-sponsored Talks
- ★ Last-minute attempt to Save Arta Talks ends in Failure
- ★ An Averse She-camel would look for holes (excuse) on its own stuffed skin
- ★ Somalia: A Lame Duck Parliament
- ★ East Africa University is Set to Open in Puntland
- ★ Puntland President Visits Baydhabo
- ★ Somalia: Need for a Technocratic Government
- ★ Diaspora's Protest on Somali Talks in Arta
- ★ Puntland Celebrates its Second Anniversary
- ★ Dictatorship Exhumed
- ★ An Open Letter to President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti
- ★ Mawqifka Jaaliyadda Puntland ee London ay ka Qabto Shirka Carta
- ★ Jawaabta Puntland ee Baaqii Soomaalida Soomaalida ku shirsan Arta, Djibouti
- ★ Puntland Appeals to the International Community
- ★ Puntland Re-asserts its Position on Arta Conference
- ★ Puntland Council of Representatives Endorses Government's Decision to Pull out of Talks
- ★ Puntland Pulls out of Djibouti-sponsored Somali Talks irrevocably
- ★ A Press Release on Arta and Puntland's Position
- ★ Puntland Delegation to the Somali Peace Talks in Djibouti Returns to Garowe
- ★ Puntland Recalls its Delegation to the Somali Reconciliation in Arta, Somalia
- ★ Puntland waives taxes on International Organizations in Puntland
- ★ Puntland Issues a Set of Regulations on the Private Health Care
- ★ Puntland Accuses Egypt of Supporting Somali Dismemberment
- ★ Somali Community Leaders in the Peace Talks to nominate Deputies for the propos parliament

Publications

<http://www.puntin.org/homepage.htm> 03/10/00

5.2.3 ARLAADINET.COM AND OTHER RIVERINE WEBSITES

Arlaadinet, Arlaadi.com and Riverineland.com websites are another group of sub-national examples of the Com/pol web group. They have a similar structure to that of the majority of this group, using news feature as their main activities. However, they are engaged in think-tank fashion thus making them completely different from the other main sub-groups of this web category.

Geographically, riverine websites cover the people of Digil and Mirifle clans who live between Shabeelle and Jubba rivers, and the adjacent areas. Within these communities there are other minorities such as Bantu people whose main economic life is agriculture. The Digil and Mirifle have a tradition of allowing immigrants of other descendent clans to settle among them and adopt them as full members of the clan (Luling 2001: 169)

The Digil and Mirifle Somali clans are estimated to comprise around 30% of the Somali population and are two of the six major clan families. Their mode of production revolves around agro-pastoralism, a mixture of nomadism and dry-land farming.

FIG. 10: ARLAADINET.COM WEBSITE



5.2.4 CENTRAL SOMALIA AND BENADIR

Hiiraan.com, Dayniile.com, HobyNet.com and Mudulood.com are another sub-national web group of the Com/pol web type. According to their naming, these websites are identified with the people of Central Somalia and Benadir. While the first three are named after their respective geographical quarters, Mudulood.com represents the Mudulood lineage of the Hawiye clan-family.

Publishing in both Somali and English language, Hiiraan.com is the most moderate. It is also one of the most colourful Somali websites.³⁰ Hiiraan.com region is situated in central Somalia, and Hawiye mainly inhabits it. Concentrating on this region in central Somalia, Hiiraan.com also publishes news and information about all Somalia.

FIG. 11: HOBYONET WEBSITE

The screenshot shows the HobyoNet website interface. At the top, there is a banner for 'HobyoNET.com' with a Somali flag and the text 'Over 300 Songs, on 4 different pages; From Waaberi, Durdur, Iftin; From Every corner of Our Somalia. All the best and nothing less. We want you to enjoy 4 free.' Below this is a navigation bar with 'Classic Somali Music - HEESTA MAANTA' and a sidebar with 'BBC Somali' and 'Somali Sites'. The main content area includes news articles with images and headlines, such as 'Xuska 18 Guuradii ka soo wareegtay Geeridii Halgame' and 'Riwaayadii Mashaakilkii Jaceylka'. Annotations with arrows point to 'Reports' (BBC Somali), 'Links' (Somali Sites), 'News' (Xuska 18 Guuradii...), 'Community news' (Riwaayadii Mashaakilkii Jaceylka), and 'Opinion' (Your Voice - Fikrada Dadweynaha).

³⁰ Colourfulness has one drawback as it may contain background and images which slow the machine when downloading.

Nevertheless, Hiiraan.com does not represent all Hawiye clans. This is because of the current social situation of the Hawiye clan-family groups as they are the most divided groups of all Somali clans.

5.2.5. MINORITIES

Structured in an organisational think-tank, the minorities' websites fight for their rights. Midgaan.com, Gabooye.com and other marginalized websites struggle for the rectifying of the gross abuses suffered by the marginalized Somalis as they have been treated as “a second class citizen and because of inadequate access to equality, rights, power, and freedom of speech” (Midgaan.com, 2003).

Midgaan.com is one of the most vocal websites of the marginalized Somali people, publishing mainly about human rights abuses directed to the Somali minorities.

FIG. 12: MIDGAAN.COM WEBSITE

The screenshot shows the Midgaan Online website interface. At the top, a blue banner reads "Welcome To Midgaan Online" with navigation buttons for "Somali Music", "NEWS", "Guest book", and "QUR'AANKA". Below this, there are two main columns: "SOMALI LANGUAGE" and "ENGLISH LANGUAGE".

SOMALI LANGUAGE Column:

- Header: "Dhage so BBC" with a list of BBC radio programs (11:00-11:15, 14:00-15:00, 16:00-16:15, 18:00-18:30).
- Section: "Somali Radio" with a list of radio stations (Radio Banaadir, STN Radio, Saqal S. Radio, Radio Dalmar, Radio Golis (RG), Radio Sweden, Codka Somalida, Radio scerdo, Swiss Radio).
- Section: "Somali Links" with links to "madhibaan.org" and "Gabooye.com".
- News items:
 - "LOOMA OYYAAN, LOOMA AARAAN!!!!" with a link to "(Riix Halkan) July 03, 04".
 - "Codsi Ka Yimid Suldaan Nadiif, Suldaanka Beesha Gabooyaha" with a link to "(Riix Halkan) June 24, 04".
 - "OUURSIGA XALKIISU MA AHA HADAL EE WAA FICIL!!" with a link to "(Riix Halkan) June 20, 04".
 - "OUURSIGU QIIL MA LEEYAHAY U.S.A 2"

ENGLISH LANGUAGE Column:

- News items:
 - "GOLAHA SARE EE MADHIBAAN MADHIBAAN SU COUNCIL !!!" with a link to "(Riix Halkan) April 23, 04".
 - "Halima Abdi Adam in t Emkulu refugee camp, near Massawa MASSAWA, 17 Mar 2004" with a link to "(Riix Halkan) April 23, 04".
 - "THE FACE AND VOICE OF MIDGAANS" with a link to "(Riix Halkan)".

Annotations:

- "Reports" points to the header and the English news items.
- "Links" points to the left sidebar menu.

Another vocal Somali website is SomaliBantu.com which is run and managed by people of the Diaspora of Bantu origin.

5.3 THE DYNAMICS OF COM/POL WEBSITES

Since late 1990s the Somali civil war has entered a new stage: the stage of information and media war. This also coincides with the booming of global communication, especially with the introduction of the Internet.

Utilisation of news information is a significant feature of Com/pol websites and their activities demonstrate how they articulate their argument and make information more potent than arms.

As has been discussed previously, online news is a common feature in the Com/pol web group. The instrumentality of this feature is a side effect of this web type as it takes advantage of people's needs for information. During the period of increasing social fragmentation, people need to know or seek information which will affect their lives. These Somali websites featuring online news are intended to attract web browsers. By visiting websites, users might also be attracted by other features or information content.

The reason for the Com/pol group to make use of news is part of Somali tradition. It is a common event when Somalis meet on the road, in tea stalls or in a meeting, querying for information is always the first part of their interaction. They say "*Yaa warkii bi'in oo war haya*" (whoever could give us information, be blessed).

5.3.1. WEBSITE AND USER RELATIONSHIP

Usually, users are able to access a great deal of information thus making them empowered to make their own news judgement. They have a wealth of information to choose from by surfing the web or visiting different websites. The user is not at a stage where the webmaster does the picking or selection of information. They do it for themselves as they do the selection, and interpretation of information. However, there is one important factor which leads the user to 'digest' or 'accept' some information. Of particular interest is where users identify themselves

with some specific Com/pol websites. A Somali user is more inclined to trust and believe what their 'website' publishes. It is this feeling that leads Somali web designers to set up their group websites and 'furnish' what they are expected to supply.

One particular attraction is when the web carries a name which the user can identify with. In this way, the particular website might show certain commonality with the users. As the website symbolises the group, user may feel the 'desire' to access 'his/her' website. In a way, this feeling can be sensed as a sense of belonging towards the website as the user may also feel part of 'the family'. It also attracts as the web might provide local information important to the user. For example, Idamaale.com is named after a sign which depicts the property of sub-lineage of Harti clan animal sign.³¹ Idamaale is a sign of three 0s marked on the neck, belly and at the back. The word *idmaale* in Somali means zero (0) and the sign means zeros (plural zeros).

Names that identify geographical areas are particularly used by the Com/pol web types. Some of these areas are identifiable with particular group or lineages, principally when they are exclusively inhabited areas. Naming is not only intended to be identified with a particular group or region, but is also to share its value with the group which the web identifies itself with. The name which symbolises this process, in a sense, is meant to show certain commonality with the group.

A kind of 'identity making' process is identifiable here. Users who identify themselves with the website are attracted to the website, thus creating a sense of 'belonging' while at the same time it also creates a sense of 'otherness'. The first is delineated against the other. There are underlying reasons in the sense of belonging. Behaving as the 'spokesperson' of the group or the clan, the website might behave as a clan/region or political front.

The success of the website depends on how it responds to the needs of the group (or users) and this is done by focusing on the group's local area in the country by publishing local events and information.

There is an organisational form realised through the process of interaction between members and the website. Interaction is very important in this process and this comes as a form of email. Facilitating email interaction among its members, the interaction and communication maintains the group feeling as it consolidates the group identity and cooperation.

5.3.2 SOMALILAND WEBSITES

As stated earlier, Somaliland draws its independence claim from the fact that Italian and British Somalia were two separate colonies, and that Somaliland was independent before entering into a union with Italian Somalia in 1960.

In general, Somaliland websites behave differently than those that can be identified with southern Somalia. According to the naming convention, Somaliland Com/pol websites could be classified into two types: those which carry regional name, namely Somaliland (e.g. SomalilandNet.com, SomalilandForum.com, Somaliland.org), and those which bear group or local area (e.g. WidhWidh.com, Togdheer.com). The first group is the majority of Somaliland websites and, in principle, they support the vision of Somaliland independence. The second group (those which bear local conventional naming) could be divided into two types: (a) despite the local naming, the first group (e.g. Togdheer.com, AwdalNews.com) have similar view as those which support the independence of Somaliland, and (b) the second group (e.g. WidhWidh.com, Laasaanood.com) stand for the unity of Somalia which, in principle, is contrary to the other groups' view. This stems from being associated with the Harti Daarood of Puntland.

Commonly, Somaliland websites have two objectives: by driving a kind of a campaign of 'national awakening', the first is to create, promote and disseminate a kind of 'political nationalism' within its community inside and outside the country. This is the creation of the myth of a 'nation' and a 'sense of difference' from other Somali groups — particularly, what used to be the southern part of the country. They view the unification with what constituted

³¹ The camel is one of the most precious item for nomads, and the nomads considered them as important. To distinguish their own from other camels, nomads put lineage sign on their camels.

the Italian Trusteeship of Somalia as a “horrible mistake, ... and now that it was time to once again achieve independence” (SomalilandForum, 2000).

The undertaking of building a ‘political nationalism’ is based on the foundation of new ‘national identity’ where it is intended to express a feeling of belonging that has a relative value (Triandafyllidou, 2002). This feeling makes sense only to the extent that it is contrasted with the feelings that members of the ‘nation’ have towards outsiders. Fellow nationals are not simply very close or close enough to one another; they are closer to one another than they are to ‘outsiders’.

The view of the Sool and Sanaag East related websites (i.e. WidhWidh.com, Buuhoodle Online)³² spoil this campaign as they regard themselves as ‘outsiders’ in the nationalistic campaign.

The national identity making is to have a double-edge relationship effect. On one hand, it is intended to have an inward looking involving a certain degree of commonality, in this case, within the context of the former British Protectorate of Somaliland. At the same time, it is also outward-looking which implies differences. Its existence presupposes the existence of others, which in this sense depicts what used to be known as Italian Trusteeship of Somalia as the ‘failed’ partner.

In this way, the new founding nationalism is intended to become a living and active corporate will in which Somaliland websites and political activities expect mass support. This creation of a ‘national will’ involves the ability to inhibit, partially or wholly, any further thinking or criticism. It is the closing of the ‘national mind’, and the ability to freeze the setting of the goal, and even the course chosen towards it, once the decision has hardened (Gakavian, 2003). This, argues Deutsch (quoted in Gakavian, 2001), is made possible by:

- The gradual manipulation of the decision system of the community;

³² Geographically, both Widh Widh and Laasaanood fall within the borders of pre-independence British Somaliland, but most of the clans there are associated with Puntland. These are the Warsangeli and the Dhulbahante, which, along with Majerteen form the Harti sub-group of the Daarood clan-family.

- The tacit premises established by endlessly repeated statements, or, more effectively, by endlessly repeated indirect suggestion;
- The stereotyped images of other peoples or ideas; and
- The building up of whole systems of goals, fears, and beliefs, and finally of actions, beyond the point of no return.

The second objective is to use the Somaliland case to campaign for recognition for the region. The effort to create the new identity as a people in the context of a state, Somaliland faces the problem of defining the concept of the drive to independence. Some see the drive of ‘nationalism’ as an attempt of what they call a clan-based mini-state. Somaliland consists of five regions of which three are populated by non-Isaaq clans. Some of these clans see the drive as an attempt to create ‘clan hegemony’.

The Organisation of the African Unity’s (OAU) declaration of the inviolability of borders made it difficult for Somaliland to receive recognition. African states have been reluctant to recognise its status as independent. Challenges to territorial integrity have produced bitter memories. Many African states have been reticent to formerly recognise Somaliland out of fear that such recognition would open up a Pandora’s Box of conflicting claims affecting many states on the continent. In 1963, the first conference of OAU, African leaders' meeting in Addis Ababa questioned whether they should adopt the principle of endorsing the permanence of inherited colonial frontiers or ignore the question entirely (Issa-Salwe, 2000: 120). Nevertheless, it was the April 1964 OAU meeting in Cairo which clinched this issue, deciding to recognise the inviolability of the inherited colonial boundary (ibid. 121).

The rebirth of Eritrea in 1993 has become a stimulus to Somaliland websites and to the Somaliland administration which could now compare Somaliland’s case with that of Eritrea. On May 24, 1993, Eritrea conducted an internationally monitored referendum to determine its future status. The vote was overwhelmingly for independence. Eritrea was subsequently admitted to membership in the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity (UN, 5 Feb 1997).

Historically, Eritrea was an Italian colony until 1941, then the British controlled it until 1951. Following the British occupation, the United Nations made it a federated autonomous territory with Ethiopia, until Ethiopia decided to annex it as a province in 1962 (Issa-Salwe, 2000: 115). Eritrea suffered under the Ethiopian rule and this followed a bloody 30 years of struggle by Eritrean liberation fronts. In similarly fashion, Somaliland websites see Somali problem in the view of south and north and that they suffered under the southerners. According to them, Somaliland has a case to repeal the Act of Union of June 1960 (SomalilandForum, 2002).

To set for the legitimisation of secession and get the endorsement of the international community, Somaliland held a Constitutional Referendum on 31 May 2001. The vote for independence was combined with the vote for a new constitution. The first article of the new constitution asserted the independent status of Somaliland. As reported by SomalilandForum, the constitution was approved for with a majority of 97%.

Nevertheless, the Referendum was not held in the Sool, Sanaag East and Buuhoodle district which is populated by the Harti of the Daarood clan. Many members of this group reject the concept of Somaliland and secession from Somalia as they align themselves with the Puntland State of Somalia. Similarly, the local government and the presidential elections did not take place in these parts.

5.4 WEBSITE CONDUCT

Much of the time websites put themselves in the way of the argument either emotionally or because of self-interest. Using highly emotionally writing is common for many Com/pol websites as many of them intended to inflame their groups' feelings and create a sense of sharing. Such writings seem to pretend to possess objectivity, but they possess a hidden agenda of persuasion or a hidden bias.

Between 1998 and 2000, both SomalilandForum.com and Puntin.org publications depicted their respective achievements as for both these regions the peace and stability they achieved was hard to believe compared with the rest of southern Somalia where anarchy was reigning

during this period. The structure and layout of both Puntin.org and SomalilandForum.com are arranged in a mode to highlight their success in establishing the most stable regional administration in the country. Both Somaliland and Puntland are situated in the northern part of what constituted the Somali republic.

Arlaadinet.com and Hiiraan.com instead are structured in a way to give a major portion of their space to news and related publication items. Only a small space is given to other issues. In this way both Arlaadinet.com and Hiiraan.com are required to update their publication everyday, while SomalilandForum.com and Puntin's publication behave like archives: data files which can be stored and accessed at any time. In fact, both of the latter two websites have miscellaneous archive links which makes this service possible. In this way, both websites contain different types of publications which range from reports to press releases from their respective regions. They also include information about their regional maps and even business potentiality in their respective regions. For instance, Puntin.org has a section for Investment Opportunity where they link up with information about business prospect in Puntland in live animals, hides, skins, butter gee, frankincense, shark fins and other kinds of fish products (Puntin, 1999).

In its mission statement, SomalilandForum.com pronounce that this “website [SomalilandForum] has been created to promote and encourage a sustainable development in Somaliland” (SomalilandForum, 2001). This leads the website to be part of the “dynamics of the regional politics and to formulate agenda for actions that best protect the interests of Somaliland and its people” (Ibid.).

A significant proportion of SomalilandForum's pursuit goes to the campaign for international recognition of the Somaliland Republic. The formation of Somaliland Republic began on 18 May 1991 when SNM, took control of the North-western regions and declared the regions an independent Somaliland Republic. Principally, Somaliland endeavours to define itself as what had constituted the former British Somaliland (formerly North-western, Awdal and Togdheer regions), Sool and Sanaag.

Alongside the political campaigning, SomalilandForum.com has become a major focus for fund raising for local projects. Its activity support is organised under what they call SomalilandForum.com Programmes which focuses on specific projects such as that of University of Hargeysa Trust Fund, Donations to the Ministry of Education and Farah Omar Secondary School, Malaria Treatment and Prevention, Fighting Livestock Ban,³³ Rebuilding Burao Hospital, Rebuilding Hargeysa Psychiatric Hospital, Somaliland Education Programme and Somaliland Orphanage Assistance Project (SOAP) (ibid.).

5.4.1 WEBSITE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Another important aspect of many Com/pol websites is the stress given to human rights abuses in Somalia. SomalilandForum.com and Puntin.org stress the grassroots democracy born in their respective regions following the collapse of the Somali state. For them the human rights issue has two aspects, one of which is the victimisation of their people. The other is their commitment and pledge to endorse the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Similarly, both the Somaliland and Puntland administrations state to abide and implement the organisational and regional charters such as those of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), the Arab League, Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and IGAD (Puntin, 1999). The 1998 Puntland Charter affirmed Puntland's commitment to "all international treaties, agreements, and laws that previous Somali governments have lawfully entered into and signed in the interests of the People of Somalia" (Puntland Charter, 1998).

The issue of human rights and democracy is an important question in the whole of Africa as they are more to do with external consumption. The issue of democracy and respect for human rights is always a ticket for assistance from international donors. Except for a few

³³ 25 September, 2000, six Gulf states banned livestock imports from eight East African countries and Nigeria following an outbreak of Rift Valley fever. The authorities in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, imposed the ban to prevent the spread of the viral disease. Countries affected by the ban include Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Nigeria.

non-governmental organisations, both Puntland and Somaliland regions do not get external assistance (Puntin, 2000)..

5.4.2 PUNTIN.ORG AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Human rights issues are applied here in a different perspective by the Com/pol group. The period of the abuse depends on the group's view or the impact it had on them. For instance, the abuses by the Barre regime are universally felt among all Somalis, however, it is the definition and context of the case where they have different opinions.

SomalilandForum.com contends that a tribunal case should cover the atrocity committed by Siyad Barre's regime during the 1988 and 1990 massacre. Riverine websites view the case to be covered from the inception of the Somali state in 1960s as they see all previous civilian as well as the military regime as 'pastoralist' government.

Puntin.org instead maintains the period should begin from year 1969 up to the period which followed the ousting to Siyad Barre's regime (Puntin, 1999). The reason for Puntin.org having this view is that when in October 1969 Siyad Barre came to power following a military coup in which period, Puntland community suffered under Barre regime. Shortly after the United Somali Congress (USC) took control of Mogadishu following the ousting of Siyad Barre, the fighters began to carry out their reprisals against General Siyad Barre's regime. But within a short time their operation degenerated into a witch-hunt against anybody whom they identified as Daarood, including those who were opposed to Barre's regime (Amnesty International, AI-Index:AFR-52/01/92, August 1992; Samatar, 1994; Mohammed, 1992). In the following months, thousands of Daarood civilians were indiscriminately killed, their property looted, and Daarood women raped (ibid.).

As indication for such evidence, Puntin's sister website, SomaliaWatch.org, compiled and publishes some data and images which include a document dated 31 March 1991 and signed by General Mohamed Farah Aideed, the then chairman of USC, entitled "Galkayo Falls into the USC Hand". The USC Military Communiqué reported "the beginning of a large scale offensive against the Mudug and Magertenia — former name of the Bari and Nugaal regions (SomaliaWatch.org, 2001). In the following days Gen Aideed attacked Galkayo, the capital of the Mudug Region, killing and wounding 970 people. Although the authenticity of the communiqué cannot be verified, the killings in Galkayo have been confirmed by Amnesty

International (AI-Index:AFR-52/01/92, August 1992: 6) and some foreign observers who visited the area during this period (Bradbury *et al*, 1991: 56-8).

Puntin.org claims that the human rights cases should begin from the coming of military regime to power in 1969. When Siyad Barre's regime came to power in 1969, he soon started to deploy a two-tier system, one which rewarded some sub-clans for their loyalty and persecuting others their reluctance to follow him. The first group who fell under the guillotine of this campaign was the Majeerteen clan (Puntin, 2000). The government policy to alienate a section of the society (as collective punishment) was responsible for the decline of the government ability to enforce law and stability, and to mobilise support for its policy in late 1980s. When a group is threatened with coercion, the threat may bring the group together and they may respond with counter-coercion. This reaction may then produce an intensifying of this initial coercion. The result may be an endless upward spiral of aggressive tactics. In fact, these tactics generated and increased people's awareness of clan identity (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 96).

According to the international human rights organisation Amnesty International under Barre there has been a persistent pattern of political repression and gross human rights violations developed, which "...[included] routine torture of political prisoners, thousands of detentions without charge or trial, grossly unfair political trials, many of which resulted in executions, and extra judicial executions of thousands of civilians." (AI, 20 Nov 1995).

Siyad Barre's persecution intensified after a failed military coup on 9 April 1978, when a group led by army colonel, Mahamed Sheikh Osman "Irro", attempted to overthrow him. The military government used this to scapegoat the ringleader's kin (the Majeerteen) (Amnesty International Report, July 1985). Consequently, the first armed opposition, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF),³⁴ was formed by the repressed group.

To deprive SSDF of political and social support, the regime used a scorched-earth policy in the Mudug, Nugaal and Bari regions (Samatar, 1991: 19) and parts of the Jubba region. The

³⁴ The Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) was formed in February 1978 under the name of Somali Salvation Front (SSF). In October 1981 SSF fused with two leftist movements, the Somali Workers Party

persecution took place on every level. It purged the civil service: prominent politicians, traditional leaders, intellectuals and businessmen and women of the Majeerteen were sent to the infamous Labaatan Jirow prison in the Bay region and to Laanta Buur near Marka. Some of them died in detention. In what Said Samatar calls *maalmo inkaaran* (the accursed days) of May-June 1979, the Red Berets (Koofiyad Guduud) created carnage in the Mudug and Nugaal regions where more than 2000 people died as a result of thirst and sun exposure after their water reservoirs were destroyed and their livestock looted (Puntin, 2000).

5.4.3 SOMALILANDFORUM.COM AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

SomalilandForum.com campaign is the most organised of all web groups as it proposes an international tribunal for those people who committed mass-slaughter against the civilian population during the rule of Siyad Barre. In June 1999 Somaliland authority dug up a series of mass graves containing more than 2000 skulls in Somaliland. To document and preserve the evidence, the authority appointed a War Crimes Committee (SomalilandForum, 2001).

In 1992, Amnesty International reported the atrocity committed by the military regime of Mohamed Siyad Barre, to reach more than 10,000 dead and 30,000 wounded, causing more than 350,000 refugees to cross the border with Ethiopia and Djibouti (see AI, August 1992).

Using the ‘massacre’ as evidence, Somaliland administration and SomalilandForum.com appealed to the international community to create a war crime tribunal similar to that of Rwanda and former Yugoslavia (SomalilandForum, 2001). In February 22, 2000, the United Nations High Commissioner's on Human Rights sent a team led by Muna Rishmawi to investigate the mass grave in which are thought to be buried the bodies of up of hundreds of people believed killed by the forces of the late dictator Siyad Barre (ibid.). The team in collaboration with Physicians for Human Rights and War Crimes Committee (Somaliland) begun to unearth mass graves in Hargeysa, Burao and Berbera. 1997). In the “Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Somalia”, Ms Mona Rishmawi expresses in this way,

(SWP), and the Somali Democratic Liberation Front (SDLF), and changed its name to Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF).

“The story of the massacres has to be told because it is a horrible story. People have to understand that systematic killing of civilians, even in a situation of chaos and civil war, when hundreds of people are rounded up and massacred, is just not acceptable.” (Somaliland, 1999).

Except for token support from the UN, the case has not received the full backing of the international communities. Although generally Somalia is seen as a “failed UN operation”, the reason for the cool response gained by the appeal is that some observers believe that the authority of Somaliland want to exploit the war crimes issue for political ends — namely as a way to justifying Somaliland’s separation from the rest of Somalia. Rishmawi says that,

“... they [Somaliland authority] to assert that they were ... systematically killed, and this is why they can’t join [Somalia] (SomalilandForum, 2000).

Some observers believe that SNM contingents may have executed and shot not only government officials, but also many non-Isaaq unarmed civilians, mainly believed to belong to Daarood and Gadabuursi of Dir clan-family. They also attacked a number of refugee camps in which women and children were killed (An African Watch Report, 1990, p.10).

After a decade of standing as a separate entity, the international community has not recognised Somaliland’s self-proclaimed independence declaration. This is to do mainly with the impact which this policy may have outside Somalia. Somaliland’s venture not only has impact on the Somali nation, but also touches the very heart of the century old problem of the formation of African states and controversies about their boundaries (Puntin, 2000). In spite of this secessionism appearing to signal the end of the long road to pan-Somalism and offering a respite to some African countries, the issue of secessionism makes African leaders throughout the continent tremble (Tordoff, 1990: 241-2). If secession were granted to any group or region, they fear, it would stimulate secessionist demands from other groups or regions, thus threatening the integration of the African state. Many states advocate the territorial status quo and the sanctity of the boundaries imposed by the colonial powers. They are vulnerable to and suspicious of any challenge to the boundaries defined by the colonialists

for fear that the framework of political entities in the continent might also be swept away in anarchy of tribal and other conflicts (Touval, 1972: ix x.).

Puntin.org promoted what it has achieved as Puntland regional administrations which restored peace, law and order in the areas under their control. While Puntland explains its formation by trying to articulate itself within the framework of the Somali state, Somaliland has decided to form itself as a separate republic. To justify their position on what they call “regaining independence”, SomalilandForum.com argues fiercely in their publications that their decision is not secessionist “but rather the reinstatement of the status which existed for four days, 26-30 June 1960, before British and Italian Somalilands were united into the Republic of Somalia” on 1st July 1960 (SomalilandForum, 2002). Article 1 of Somaliland Constitution declares:

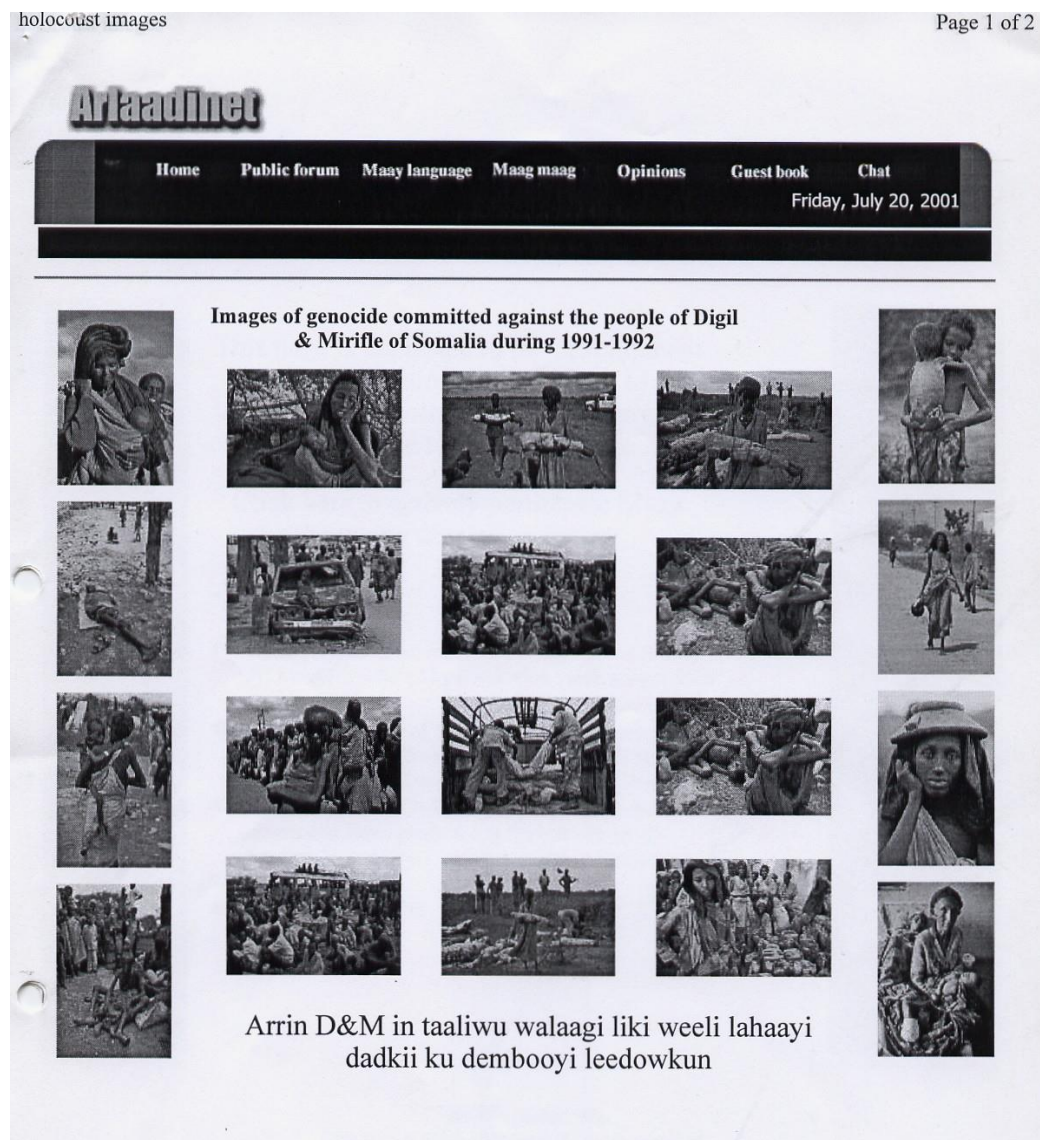
“The Country which gained its independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 26th June 1960 and was known as the Somaliland Protectorate and which joined Somalia on 1st July 1960 so as to form the Somali Republic and then gained its independence by the Declaration of the Conference of the Somaliland communities held in Burao between 27th April 1991 and 15th May 1991 shall hereby and in accordance with this Constitution become a sovereign and independent country known as “the Republic of Somaliland” (Somaliland Constitution).

SomalilandForum.com gives a graphical account of the problems which led to the decision to “reclaim independence” because of what they call “the unlawful merger” (Abdi Abdillahi Hassan, Sept 2000). It stresses that Somalilanders have been betrayed by their brethren of the South when they joined them to form the Somali Republic. This argument is also the basis of a document entitled “Somaliland and Somalia: The Unlawful Merger of Two States” (SomalilandNet, Sept 2000]. The text alleged this reason by arguing that the merger was not ‘legitimate’.

5.4.4. THE RIVERINE WEBSITES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

For the riverine websites, human rights are very important as they are used to express their feeling. Arlaadinet.com, Riverineland.com, Arlaadi.com and MaayMaay.com have section entitled “Images of genocide committed against the people of Digil & Mirifle of Somalia during 1991-1992” (Mohamed Adan, 2001) dedicated for the human rights violations in the riverine area during the civil war by comparing the destruction and death suffered by these people to the holocaust (see Fig. 13)..

FIG. 13: ARLAADINET.COM HOLOCAUST IMAGES



By portraying the problem as pastoral and agro-pastoral conflict, the riverine websites associate the problem with the inception of the Somali state in 1960 when the country was taken by the pastoralists. During the preparation for independence in the 1950s, Hisbia Dasturul Digil & Mirifle (HDMS), which represented the interest of the Digil, and Mirifle, advocated a federal system for the Somali nation. Contrary to HDMS's view, Somali Youth League (SYL) dominated by the northern society pushed centralisation. HDMS resisted SYL's attempts to put Somalism within the context of Somali patriotism. Basically, both positions reflect the two groups' social background.

5.5. DIFFERENT APPROACH TO THE SOMALI PROBLEMS

As mentioned above, the Somali websites activities and content portray the extent of the turbulence in which the Somali society is undergoing. Their difference in the approach towards the Somali problem is one of them. Websites hold opposing views on the issue of Somali problem, its solutions and how the Somali nation can be reintroduce in the nation-state community which during this research period did have a stable government.

SomalilandForum.com as well as other Somaliland websites interpret Somali crisis as north and south issue: the north being the former British Somaliland and the south the Italian Somaliland. Contrary to that view, the non-Somaliland websites, particularly, all those Com/pol websites that are identified with the southern Somalia — including those which could be identified with Sool and Sanaag — disagree with this interpretation. Puntin.org is the most vocal website as Puntland's border encroaches with Somaliland. It claims that the Somali problem should not be seen as south and north as this notion is based on colonial ideas of the division of the Somali people.

Interpreting as a consequence of injustice and massacre made to its people by the regime of Siyad Barre, Puntin.org argues that the new Somali state should be based on the new situation which has developed following the civil war (Puntin, 1999). In the online background information, Puntin.org emphasizes the development which ensued following the civil war, where people were forced to return to their clan "areas". Clan enclaves began forming which created a situation where the country became divided into four or five parts. One of these

parts is Puntland which consists of five out of the eighteen regions of Somalia: Bari, Nugaal, Mudug, East Sanaag and Sool. The people of these regions people are from the Harti Daarood lineage and its Daarood and Meheri alliance share a single socio-economic resource, and a common political and traditional leadership.

Puntin.org holds that Somali conflict is based on ethnic lines, therefore, the solutions must come on ethnic lines. In this way Puntin's approach demonstrates the view that the policy of alienating a section of the society (as collective punishment) by the former military regime of Siyad Barre was responsible for the collapse of the state (Puntin, 2000). To regain the public confidence and reconstruct the Somali state, the traditional identity must be used namely the clan. This view contradicts with that of Somaliland in two aspects: (a) the basis of the state should be based on the frontiers created during the colonial period (in which case as under the former British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland), and (b) that ethnically Somaliland represents various clans.

Arlaadinet.com and its sister websites share similar view as that of Puntin. Nevertheless, it differs with the historical background of the conflict. As mentioned elsewhere, Arlaadinet.com challenges the notion of cultural homogeneity of the Somalis as they argue that the distinction of the cultures of northern nomadic and southern agro-pastoral clans is evident with the wide difference of their culture, language and social structures (Arlaadinet, 2000). It blames the widely accepted view of Somali heterogeneity because of "the limited studies made in the southern clans" (Arlaadinet, 2000). In support of this stance, many of these texts by Arlaadinet.com articulate the view that the Somali history has been distorted due to dominance of Mahaatiri speaking Somalis who misled the early history writers (ibid.). In one of these texts entitled "The Reconstruction of the Somali History", Arlaadinet.com claims that the history of Somalia has been misguided, therefore, to get things on the right way, it is important to reconstruct the Somali history (ibid.). It concludes that this "routed up the Somali nation to a wrong path of social injustice and confusion as it lied down the rise of nomadic clans to political predominance" (ibid.). One of Arlaadinet.com writers, Professor Mohamed Haji Mukhtar reiterates the issue in this way,

“... the myth of Somali homogeneity played a major role in the rise of nomadic clans to political predominance, and the appropriation of resources from the less warlike and intensely religious agro-pastoral groups in and around the inter-riverine region” (Mukhtar, 2000).

Riverine websites give the importance of the language of Digil and Mirifle as the basis of their case. These people speak the May (also known as Maay Arti), a Somali dialect. They argue that May is not a dialect, but a language of its own and it is not mutually intelligible with Mahaatiri. They compare May to Mahaatiri as Spanish is to Portuguese. The Maay language “becomes as the Lingua Franca for all those people who live within Digil and Mirifle areas” (ibid.).

Arlaadinet.com challenges the concept of Somali homogeneity, reflecting the fragmentation of Somali society following the civil war. According to Hellander, before the civil strife, among the sedentary communities in southern Somalia, one’s residence was considered to be the most important identity which a person may hold. The clan identity was only a marginal one. The civil war has aroused the clan-consciousness within the social and political life of the Digil and Mirifle clans (Hellander, 1995).

Arlaadinet.com cites that most of the research into Somali culture was undertaken in the northern Somali clans, therefore, influencing and extrapolating these northern-based studies to other parts of the country. Despite not naming the scholar, it is the study of I M Lewis, the doyen of Somali studies that they are questioning. This line of argument is to reject the commonly known Somali social structure which, as stated earlier, considers the traditional structure of Somali society to trace through an elaborate genealogy to two brothers, Soomaal, also known as Samaale, and Sab. I M Lewis pioneered this study.

5.5.1 ARLAADINET.COM AND THE FEAR OF PASTORAL DOMINATION

In reference of the document “The Conference of Digil and Mirifle”, Arlaadinet.com tries to highlight how the Digil and Mirifle people see the Somalia solution (Arlaadinet, 2000). A conference was held between 26 February and 19 March 1995 by traditional leaders, elders,

intellectuals and women's organisations of Digil and Mirifle community when they met to answer the pressing needs for security and basic social services following the breakdown of the state. The conference passed a regional Charter which decided to form a regional administration which would be run by Council of Leaders.

The constitution emphasises that the supreme authority in the political affairs of the region is the Council of Leaders. The Council of Leaders should be composed of 33 permanent members (*ibid*). The conference further reiterated that the regional arrangement has the responsibility to enter into contract with other Somali regions to form a decentralised Somali state. The type of federal structure proposed by the Conference of Digil and Mirifle for the future Somali state is based on "four states" divided among the main Somali clans, the Hawiye, Daarood, Isaaq and Dir community (*ibid.*).

For the Digil and Mirifle communities, the notion of decentralisation goes beyond their resolution of 1995. During the independence struggle of 1940s and 1950s, the Independent Constitutional Party, known also as Hisbia Dasturul Digil & Mirifle (HDMS), advocated a federal system for the Somali nation. HDMS represented the southern region ethnic people, namely the Rahanweyn, Digil, Bantu and Arab communities (Lewis, 1980: 181). They put their proposal in January 1948 to the Commission of the Four Powers (Britain, USSR, US and France) who visited Mogadishu following the defeat of Italy in 1945. The commission was established to investigate the wishes of the people of the former Italian Somaliland, concerning their political future (*ibid.*). Similarly, HDMS's proposal reflected their fear of pastoral domination by the Daarood and Hawiye and Isaaq clans. The Digil, Mirifle and their allied communities' fears did not fade away with the Somali post-colonial state. They were always concerned by the pastoralists' migrations to their fertile area.

Migration is part of Somali tradition. For centuries Somali clans migrated, first from south-eastern Ethiopia, which is believed to be the cradle of their earliest ancestors (Hersi, 1997: 30; Lewis, 1980: 25), spreading north-eastward to populate the Horn. Centuries later, a new wave of migration began flowing in the opposite direction, to the south and west (Hersi, 1997: 22). The traditional migration patterns that can be discerned show that the Somali clans followed two main routes: the river Shabelle Valley and along the line of coastal wells on the

Indian Ocean littoral (Lewis, 1993: 23). By the close of the seventeenth century Somali clans had spread to the northern part of what is now Western Somaliland, and the southern part of the Jubba River up to the Tana River, presently Kenya (Ibid.; Hersi, 1997: 24).

In spite of the fact that Somali migration diminished for some time, it did not disappear completely. In fact, it gained a new impetus during the modern Somali state. Following the Sahalian drought of 1973-74, the Somali government began a policy of expropriating the fertile land along the Lower Shabelle and Middle Jubba river (Besteman, 1996: 80). And in the following year it enacted a mandatory land registration (the 1975 Land Law) which required farmers to “apply to the state for leasehold title” (Ibid.). Although this process is common in most of African countries, in Somalia it degenerated as the system became so centralised and easy to abuse and manipulate. Only those people who could afford to access the cumbersome administrative requirements could register. Because of this, many local people were displaced. The policy represented in the opinion of Menkhaus,

“... the first phase of an irreversible demographic shift in modern times, in which the pastoralist clans migrated to southern Somalia” (Menkhaus et al, 1996).

Whatever the Digil and Mirifle community did, however, could not last long as this did not protect them from General Mahamed Farah Garaad Aideed’s Somali National Alliance taking the region by force in late 1995 (Riverineland, 2000). General Aideed took advantage of the situation to take control of Bay and adjacent regions following a political dispute within the Somali Democratic Movement (the Digil and Mirifle armed movement which was established in October 1995). The general’s militia’ booty was the land stretching from Marka through Lower Shabelle and Jamaame to the Lower Jubba region. During the same period these regions became the battleground of Siyad Barre’s forces and General Aideed’s. This triggered a famine whose intensity the world came to realise only when Baydhaba hit the international media as the "City of Death" (Issa-Salwe, 1996).

In the end of 1999, with the help of Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) (to fight General Aideed’s forces), the Digil and Mirifle community regained control of their region. And on 8

December 1999 for the third time since the 1940s, they could establish their own "autonomous administration".

In spite of the fact that the Digil and Mirifle took control of the majority of their land, the issue of land ownership is still a concern within Arlaadinet. On 3 Jan 2001 it has published a document entitled "Land Ownership Key To Somalia Solution". The document stresses land ownership as one of the main obstacles to peace in Somalia. It states that,

“The control of economic resources is one of key factors caused Somalia political meltdown, specially the land ownership. [In] the quest for a peaceful Somalia, one must look into remaining occupied/disputed regions and their economic values in order to remedy insecurity and establish law and order. ... land ownership and control of harvest is the lifeline for many militias. The strategic importance of fertile Riverineland.com is manifested in the ongoing insecurity in the area. Overall Somalia is relatively peaceful except Mogadishu and occupied land in Lower Shabelle and Kismayo. While Mogadishu deals with private properties and economic gateways (airport & seaport), the insecurity in the remaining area[s] are directly related to the issue of land ownership (Arlaadinet, 3 Jan 2001).

Another purpose for this publication is to voice disappointment and indignation about the outcome of the Djibouti-sponsored peace process which installed new government in Somalia. They warn the international community to be extremely watchful before they approve any funding to the interim government or local NGOs operating in occupied land to ensure that the basic human rights for indigenous and local communities are protected.

The political dynamics of Somali websites and their activities have been examined. The Com/pol website publications portray the Somali political and social division. In other words, Somali websites are the epitome of a turbulent nation. Each site represents part of the total sum of this violent history: strengthening sense of community, sense of group belonging in a new dimension (virtual world), strengthening group identity, the effect of ethnocentrism. Traditional Somali social engineering is the basis of the main identity of these site groupings. Somalis are

related to each other through a patrilineal, agnatic genealogy system which enables every Somali to relate to all of his countrymen and defines his responsibilities and liberties within the traditional society. The clan is the most important political unit in the traditional system in Somali society. Clan membership is traced through the male line to a common male ancestor from whom the group takes its clan name (Lewis, 1961: 5).

The Internet's multifaceted means have provided Somalis Diaspora with a way of presenting their anguish and the prominence of oral patrimony. In spite of the Somali websites depicting their turbulent history, there still remain some elements published in these webs which depict the other side of Somali essence: the cherished cultural homogeneity and shared heritage of Islam. This issue will be analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

6. SOMALI WEBSITE CASE STUDY TWO: LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

In the previous chapter, Somali community/political³⁵ websites in relation to web activities and how they reflect the political dynamics of Somalia have been analysed. The overall activity of the websites may be said to represent the epitome of the turbulent Somali nation. Nevertheless, the analysis of Somali website activities and their pursuit could not be finished without looking at that part which reflects their shared culture and tradition. This characteristic is represented by the Cultural/Literary web category.

Although, the Cultural/Literary (Cul/Lit) features make an integral part of almost all other web categories, it is the Com/pol web category which uses the most. A similar feature which is overwhelming used by the various websites is the religion. These two features demonstrate the importance that Somalis give to their most cherished heritage: the oral literature and Islamic belief.

In the Somali culture, language and literature are so inextricably connected (Andrezejewski and Lewis: 1964: 29), by and large, the Cul/lit appeals on the shared and common heritage of culture and language and tend to depict the cherished cultural homogeneity. However, because of the social fragmentation following the collapse of the state institutions in 1990s, the shared heritage is also challenged. And there is no more telling evidence than that found in the Somali websites web type publications and activities.

Despite those Cul/lit features are part of almost all Somali web types there are some websites dedicated entirely to Somali culture and literature. This chapter will look at both groups. The first group is identified as Section Cul/lit (of the Com/pol web type), while the latter will be distinguished as Dedicated Cul/lit websites.

³⁵ For the categorisation of Somali websites see Chapter Three.

6.1. ASPECT OF CUL/LIT WEB TYPES

As said earlier, Cul/lit features are part of almost all Somali web types, nevertheless, there are those websites which are dedicated entirely to Somali culture and literature. However, they form only 3% of Somali websites analysed (see Table 2). Nevertheless, 98% of community/political (which form 43%) are found to possess section dedicated to cultural and literary features.

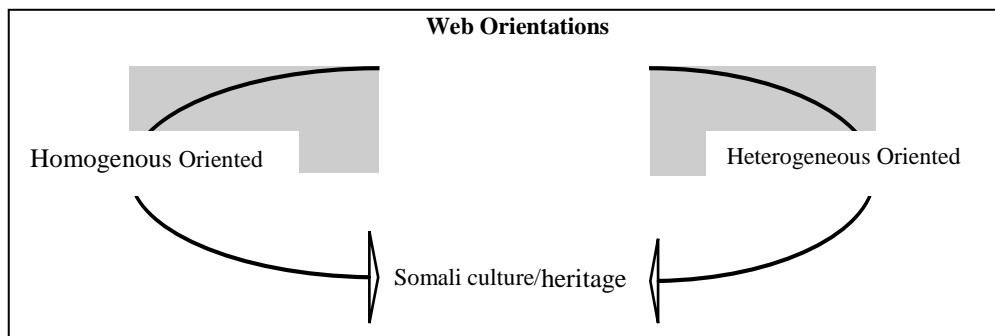
As the literary and cultural heritage cannot be separated from the people it belongs to, the distinctiveness of the Dedicated Cul/lit websites or Section Cul/lit (of the Com/pol websites) is that they are devoted exclusively to Somali culture, literature and art. Compared to the other web types, those Dedicated Cul/lit are less numerous. Culture refers primarily to the essential aspects of collective social life, especially to meaning and practices (social customs, institutional ways of doing things) (McQuail, 1994: 212).

The Dedicated Cul/lit websites have their own domain and are devoted entirely to Somali culture and literature and their broad centres around the dissemination and preservation of Somali culture and literature. However, Section Cul/lit (of the Com/pol websites) which are run under the community/political (Com/pol) web types have different approaches.

How they behave towards Somali culture or literature is defined by the web's political orientation. There are mainly two approaches: One group promotes Somali cultural and linguistical homogeneity, while another group supports and upholds a heterogeneous view of Somali culture and language. Depending on the orientation of the purpose and the environment of Somali politics, the Section Cul/lit can be classified into two divergent groups. Fig. 14 shows graphically the two approaches towards Somali culture and heritage.

- (1) Homogeneous Oriented, and
- (2) Heterogeneous Oriented.

FIG. 14: CULTURAL WEB ORIENTATION



The border of the Homogeneous Oriented and Heterogeneous Oriented is charged with political orientation as they are polarised on the issue of Somali heritage and culture. Where the orientation is directed to Somali “heritage and tradition” it can be viewed as ‘Homogeneous Oriented. And where the activity is inclined to use the cultural issue for ‘political ends’ it can be viewed as Heterogeneous Oriented.

The Homogenous Oriented group departs from the concept of cultural unity and language monotheism. Using the Somali language as the unifying vehicle, they aim for the preservation of the shared culture and literature. Contrary to this view, the Heterogeneous Oriented group depart from the concept of ‘heterogeneity’ of Somali culture. Com/pol web category has different approach on how they present and deal with culture and literature. In the remaining part of this chapter both the *Dedicated Cul/lit* and the *Section Cul/lit* will be deal with.

6.1.1 DEDICATED CUL/LIT ASPECT AND CONTENT

The *Dedicated Cul/lit* sub-group follows a homogenous approach to Somali culture and they have their own domain. Dedicating entirely to Somali culture and literature, they seek the dissemination and preservation of Somali culture and literature. According to the content, form and make-up, they can be classified into three types. The first type is classified as *Dedicated Cul/lit Classic* and they are characterised with content of classic literature material like poetry in text and audio format. Some of the leading websites are Golkhatumo.com, Doollo.com, Aftahan.com (formerly Sultan.com). This web group is mainly associated with the pastoral society.

FIG. 15: DEEYOO.COM

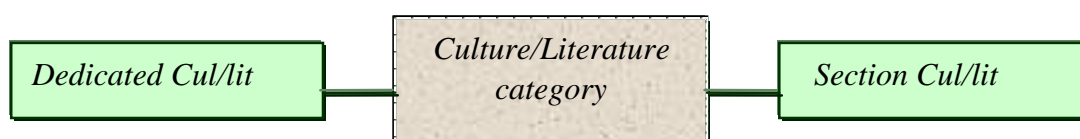


Golkhatumo, a classic poetry website, has its slogan “Where Somalia Has Glamour”. MandeqNet, another well known literary website³⁶, explains its service as “a forum for literary people” and its objective is to “keep the Somali tradition alive on the Internet” (MandeqNet, 2000). It is named after Maandeeq, the suckling she-camel which Somali artists use to symbolise the country, the sovereignty, or all valuable things, which the Somali society shares.

³⁶ In December 2000 MandeqNet (under the domain of <http://www.fortunecity.com/victorian/russell/348/>) ceased to exist, and another website, with the same name but slightly different spelling (Maandeeq.com) appeared in January 2002. The new Maandeeq website is a Com/pol web type and it has its own domain name.

The second type, the Dedicated Cul/lit Modern, is committed to collect and preserve modern Somali songs in audio form. They may also contain photo gallery and brief introduction of singers which go together with list of their songs. The majority are hosted by free Internet Service Providers. This latter type is simpler by comparison with the first group as they are maintained or designed by young amateur Somalis in the Diaspora. They also contain similar material suggesting that they might have been copied from each other.

FIG. 16: CULTURE/LITERATURE CATEGORY DIVISIONS



The Dedicated Cul/lit Modern types are mainly accessed by young Somalis and the classic ones by the older generations. It seems that younger generations prefer songs more than the older generations.

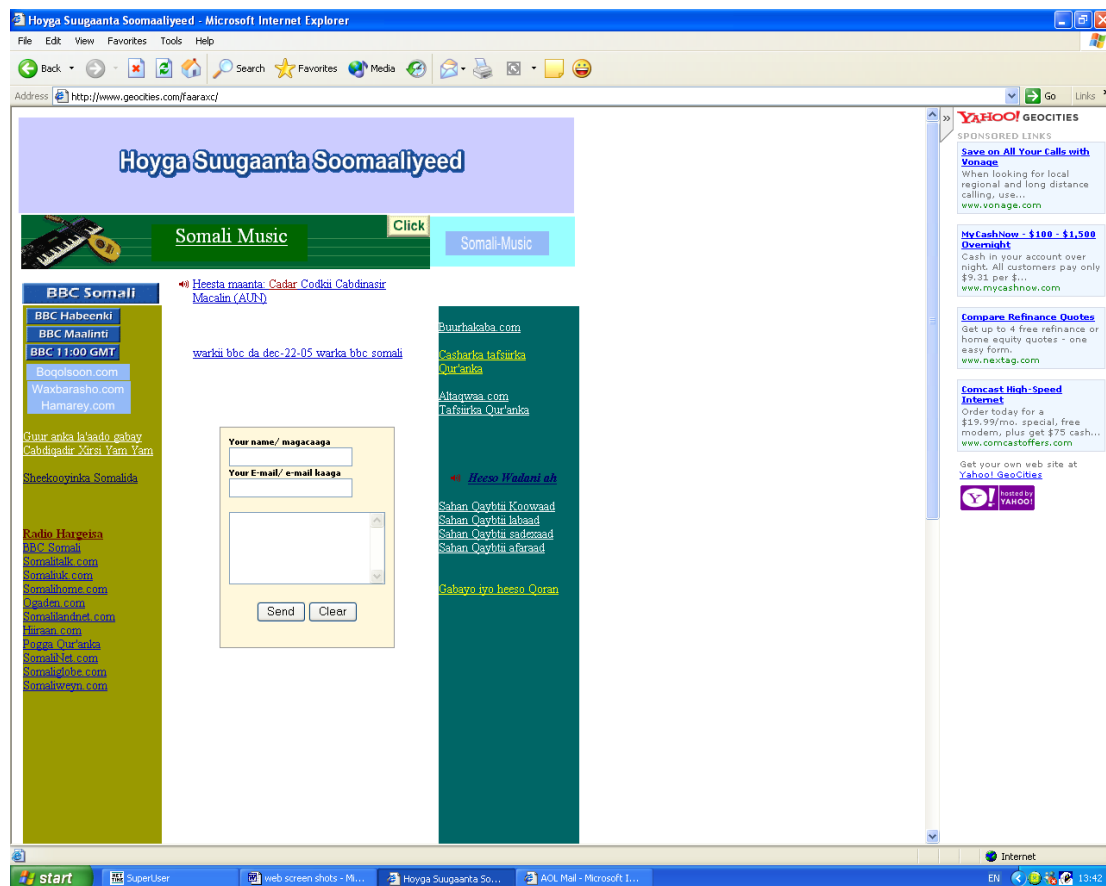
In a way, many of the Dedicated Modern Cul/lit is run like a personal site. For example Deeyoo.com has a large archive of songs and images of Somali artists. It is run as personal despite being dedicated to the ‘preservation’ of what remains Somalia (Deeyoo, 2004). Another example is Hoyga Suugaanta Music, which is hosted under the address of <http://www.geocities.com/faaraxc/songs2.html>.

The third group do not publish material as the other two types, but they are characterised as either running under income generation activity or they are dedicated as a means to help understand Somali culture in host nations, such in Europe or North America. One of the latter group is the Somali Cultural Association (under the host address <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~somalia/>) which promotes the Somali culture in Australia (Somali Cultural Association, 2000).

For instance, Somali Resource and Heritage Centre (under the host address of <http://www.angelfire.com/ma3/somheritage/>) is one of the first group. Run by

individual/group initiatives, it produces material such as video, books, video not only in Somali literature but also Islamic material. This material is also source of school text material, especially, for Somali children outside their homeland. Another example of the cultural oriented is Diriye's Homepage (formerly known as Somali Language Page). Run by Mohamed Diriye Abdullahi, a Somali linguistic expert, Diriye's Homepage offers professional help and advice about the Somali language. Diriye's Homepage is so far the most professional cultural oriented Somali website. Both groups produce also monographs on Somali history and culture. The bulk of their publications are in Somali. However, they also produce in other languages such as English.

FIG. 17: HOYGA SUUGAANTA SOOMAALIYEED



6.1.1.1. THE PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION TENDENCY

An oral culture is inclined to value the preservation of what has been said, and particularly their culture and traditions. This seems to be exactly the influence which guides both homogeneous oriented and heterogeneous oriented *Dedicated* and *Section Cul/lit* web types where each group tries to preserve what they feel as their heritage.

Since early 2006, Golkhatumo.com, a Cul/lit web type, started to promote and encourage their readers by asking them to record and collect whatever they can find in their archive. Golkhatumo has the largest Somali classic poetry both in audio and text. On their home page their publicise:

“Ogaysiis inta xiiseysa martida na soo booqata waxaan ku boorinaynaa in ay suugaanta aan soo bandhigno duubtaan ama urursadaan oo ay xasuustaan roobku in aanu markasta di'in”. *Maamuulka golkhatumo* (Golkhatumo.com, 2006)

(We encourage those who visit us to record or collect what we have published and remember that every day there does not rain³⁷). (The Management)

Aftahan.com is another cultural/literary website with a similar slogan which says, “the archive of the Somali culture, language and literature”. What Somalis find appealing is the characteristics of oral means of communication which is exhibited in computer-mediated communication.

6.1.1.2 WEB CONTENT DEDICATED CUL/LIT CLASSIC

Presenting their publications professionally, the Dedicated Cul/lit Classics deal with different types of literary material. Only a few of them have sections where they archive scholarly

³⁷ The word rain is used here to allude that everyday is not a day of prosperity.

papers and other related material, some of which have been previously published by Somali and non-Somali scholars.

In the bulk of their material content can be found different literary material. These literary genre includes:

- Poetry, classic and modern
- Songs
- Children's stories
- Maxims
- Folklore
- Articles, history and literary essays

This web category is dedicated to the dissemination and preservation of Somali culture and literature. Preservation aims at saving what remains of Somali literature and art. Generally, both the literature and art are part of the social practice as they make the cultural material base. Revival aims instead at using the culture as a healing device for Somali society.

Another important aspect of this group is to fight against the image created by the civil war which has painted Somali society as violent.

As mentioned above, Dedicated Cul/lit Classic websites are characterised with content of classic literature material like poetry in text and audio format. The majority of them use the poetry more than other material. The pastoral society material is mainly based on the pastoral nomadic imagery, while the sedentary websites use modern literary material instead, which is more related to their way of life and urban environment. This is meant to reject the dominance of the pastoral society's literary culture by asserting their own. For example, MarkaCadeey.com or Hamarey.com, which are managed by the people of the urbanised Banadiri, give priority to Banadiri and more modern songs which use also urban imagery.

Pastoral nomadism environment imagery is adopted by the older generation (nomadic society) or urbanised society who are still linked to the pastoral tradition. The modern song is

another aspect of the Somali poetry where the use of pastoral imagery seems also most irrelevant (Afrax, 2000).

The nomadic imagery is influenced by the rural nomadic experience. According to Afrax, even Somali modern poetry produced in urban setting draws much of its imagery from the rural environment. This is caused by the established practice inherited from traditional poetry (ibid.). During the colonial time, pastoralism was the predominant way for the majority of the Somali population. The verbal art represents vividly their everyday life experience. One of the leading Somali poets, Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac Gaariye, explains it in this way,

“The main reason why we use imagery is to facilitate the audience’s acquaintance with whatever the poet wishes to convey, by portraying it in a picture closely familiar to the recipient.” (quoted in Afrax 2000).

Traditionally, Somalis value oral verse as the "intimate workings of people's lives" (Samatar, 1982: 54). Somali scholars and those who have visited Somali country have noted these characteristics. Somalis are often described as a "nation of bards" (Burton, 1894: 68) as for them "language and culture take precedence over material [wealth]" (Samatar, 1982: 56). They use poetry and oral prose as means of mass communication and a mechanism to present their case persuasively. This is what Burton said about Somalis during his trip to the region,

“The country teems with ‘poets’ ... every man has his recognised position in literature as accurately defined as though he had been reviewed in a century of magazines – the fine ears of this people assign then to take the greatest pleasure in harmonious sounds and poetical expressions, whereas a false quality or prosaic phrase excites their violent indignation...” (Burton, 1894: 82).

Given the oral nature of Somali society, verbal art constitutes the backbone of Somali traditional culture. Oral poetry, oral narrative, proverbs and words of wisdom were an integral part of every aspect of the daily life of the Somalis (Afrax, 2000). Many social activities require poetry and no single activity of day-to-day life was performed without being

accompanied by and depicted by one or more of these forms of oral culture from herding and watering livestock, sewing mats, sailing boats, harvesting crops, to organising feuds and debating issues (ibid.) Therefore, verbal forms of Somali culture are not the only available comprehensive source of Somali history, but they also constitute the core of Somali cultural heritage.

The web pages have cut down the transmission of traditional and modern oral poetry. According to Johnson (1996) performance is seen as a major element which helped the classic poems to be preserved. This is what he says,

“If a poem in oral tradition was to survive, it has to be continuously performed. In this sense, performance is one major element which helps to preserve that poem”. (Johnson, 1996: 110)

6.1.1.3. LITERARY UNITY

As stated earlier, culturally Somalis are divided across pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies. Of the two groups, it is the pastoralist websites that mostly used these two features. This may also mean that groups that are enemies in politics share similar material content. One example is Somaliland websites where they have similar content to those of Puntland, their archenemies. However, there is a tendency for websites to prefer material from their particular regions.

One content material universally shared by both homogenous and heterogeneous oriented is Somali songs. Com/pol websites are formed to counter each other (or just to have a cyber presence), but the literary section have similar content. This tendency demonstrates a sense of “literary” sharing practiced by websites. Fig. 19a and Fig. 19b and Fig.20 shows Buurhakaba.com and Dooynet.com, two of the reverine websites carrying Somali songs. Dooynet goes further by listing classical Somali poetry similar to that of Dedicated Cul/lit websites. Dooynet groups Somali songs in three Somali dialects: Maay, Mahatiri and Banadiri.

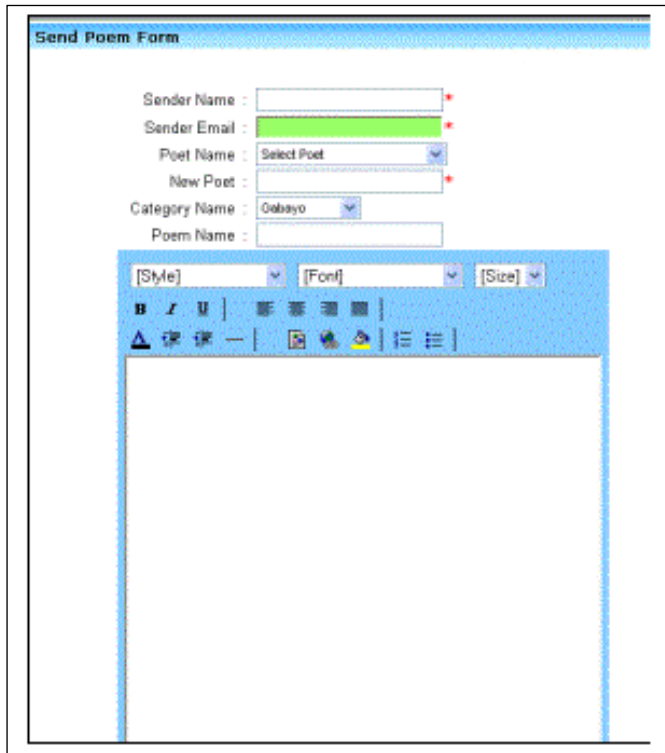
Conversely, there is a tendency where some prefer their own regional material. For example, Somaliland Com/pol websites appear to prefer material produced by Somaliland artists. Similarly, Doollo.com,³⁸ a Cul/lit web type, has a preferred list of those from Somali inhabited Eastern Ethiopia. The list includes some of the greatest heavyweights in literature: Sayid Maxamed (the great Somali nationalist), Raage Ugaas, Maxamed Cumar Dage, Qamaan Bulhan, Maxamuud Cabdullaahi Ciise Sangub (a contemporary playwright), and Cabdullahi Macallin Axmed (Dhoodaan) in particular. Despite that Doollo and Somaliland have lists of preferences, they however also have material from all other Somali poets.

Aftahan.com has the largest list which contains more than 424 Somali poets from all Somali territory including those living outside the former Somali Republic. Calling itself “the archive of the Somali culture, language and literature”, Aftahan appeals to Somali users to send “any material in their possession, which can contribute this collection” (Aftahan, 2006).

Aftahan supplies with a form where users can upload (or submit) not poetry but all oral cultural material (Fig. 18). In the form, the user is requested to provide his name, email and details of the poet, category of the material, for example whether it is Gabayo, Geeraar, Buraanbur, Jiifto/maanso and Maahmaahyo.

³⁸ Doollo is a semi-desert area in the Somali inhabited Eastern Ethiopia.

FIG. 18: AFTAHAN POETRY REQUEST FORM



The image shows a web form titled "Send Poem Form". It contains several input fields and a rich text editor. The fields are: "Sender Name" (text input), "Sender Email" (text input with a green background), "Poet Name" (dropdown menu with "Select Poet" selected), "New Poet" (text input), "Category Name" (dropdown menu with "Gobayo" selected), and "Poem Name" (text input). Below these fields is a rich text editor with a toolbar containing icons for bold, italic, underline, text color, background color, bulleted list, numbered list, link, unlink, and image. The editor area is currently empty.

The tendency of preference is not intended to exclude, but rather as an attempt to preserve local material and it is influenced by the social fragmentation. This process of “localised preservation” seems to be intended to engage constructively rather than negatively.

However, the difference cannot be found in the *Section Cul/lit modern*. For example Beerlula, Deeyoo.com and Hoyga Suugaanta Music Page have similar lists of content material.

FIG. 19A: BUURHAKABA.COM



Link to song page



FIG. 19B: HOYGA SUUGAANTA SOOMAALIYEED

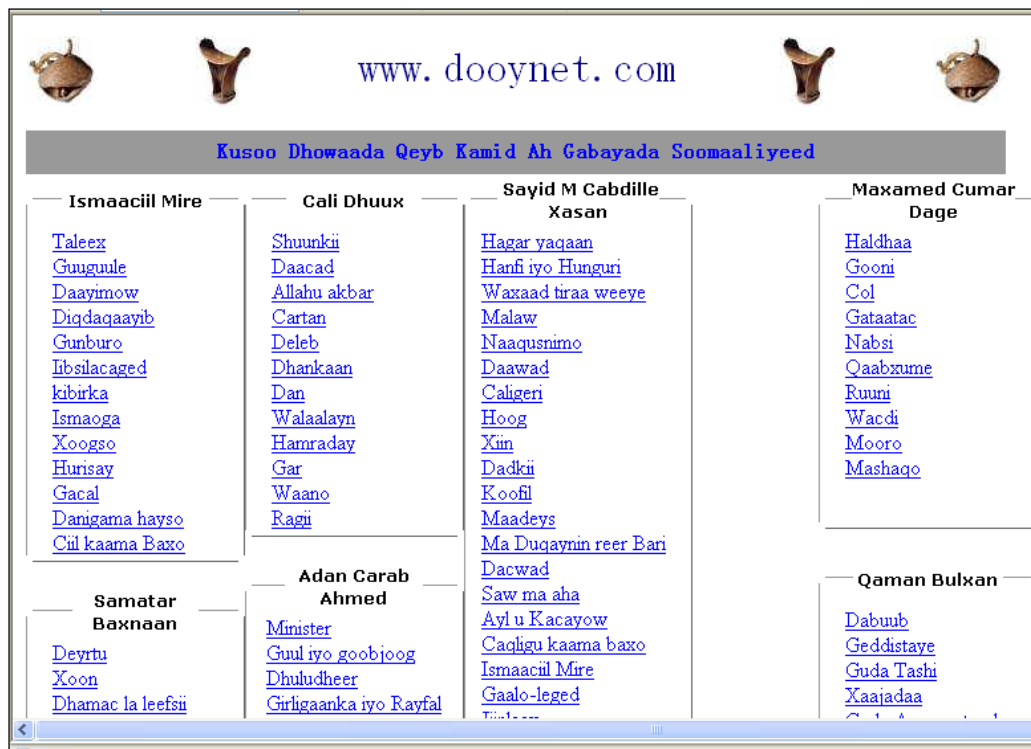
FIG. 20: DOOYNET.COM



FIG. 21: DOOYNET.COM LITERARY GROUPING



FIG. 22: LITERATURE SECTION OF DOOYNET.COM



As enemies share cultural unity one of the most surprising things is how the pastoralists avoid publishing inflammatory poetry on the Internet. There is no shortage of material as many are found on tape format. During the early years of the Somali civil war, there was produced a large amount of literary material, particularly poetry, by the warring groups. The majority of these material are poetry duels between Abgal and Habargidir (both of Hawiye clan-family) who fought for the control of Mogadishu. The well known participants are Abdullah Raage (comedian and poet) and Abshir Ba'adle³⁹ (another well-known poet). Other materials are those between the Harti Daarood and Ogaden Daarood during the fighting for control of Kismayo, a port city in the Southern Somalia, and between Hawiye and Daarood clans.

Why these materials did not end up on the Internet has been a difficult question to answer. Mohamed Farah, a seventy year old Somali, replied in this way,

³⁹ Abshir Ba'adle is also the poet who triggered the Samsam poetic duel.

“Soomaalida ma jecla in ceetooda la ogaado. Waxay jecel yihiin inay ceebtooda iyaga u gaar tahay” (interview, London 12 Feb 2005)
(Somalis do not like their shame to be revealed. They like to keep for themselves”)

He concludes that divulging their negative side in poetry means celebrating their ‘bad side’. What Mohamed means for ‘themselves’ may mean ‘local’ (keeping ones problems locally). However, it is difficult to explain the act of “keeping ones shame locally” in term of the piles of duels that are available in tape format.

A Somali university lecturer, Mohamed Hassan (Alto), has another explanation. As Cul/lit websites principal task is to preserve and disseminate Somali culture and literature, “it is obvious not to expect them to oppose their beliefs” (interview, 27 Feb 2006). These websites are aiming to uphold and safeguard what remains of Somalia following the collapse of Somalia. Mohamed adds preserving the ‘good’ side is one reason for these websites and this is done by rejecting the negative image created by the fratricidal war (ibid.).

6.2. COM/POL AND THE SOMALI CULTURE/LITERARY ASPECT

Almost all the Com/pol web types have sections dedicated to Somali culture, literary and art. Some have on the home page⁴⁰ *Song of the Day*, where one can download a particular selected song.

The Com/pol approach to Somali culture depends on where they stand on the Somali heritage and culture. Two cases are the riverine (particularly the D&M) case and that of Somaliland. The first has been endeavouring to have a ‘political hegemony’ while the second is to have a ‘cultural independence’.

⁴⁰ Home page is the first page which appears on the browser when accessing a website.

With the exception of the riverine websites, the majority of Section Cul/lit remains committed to the notion of homogeneity of Somali culture and language. The pastoralist society associated websites are overwhelmingly dedicated to this approach.

6.2.1 COM/POL HOMOGENEOUS ORIENTED

Except in a few cases, the Homogenous Oriented type of Section Cul/lit websites embark on similar undertakings as Dedicated Cul/lit. Despite that they are part of a website, some have their own webmasters as their service and management come under the hosted website. Some of these are Beerlula under Hiiraan.com (<http://www.hiiraan.com/beerlula.htm>), Muuse Galaal Page under Somaliland.com (<http://www.somaliland.com/suugaan/>). How they are managed is similar to the division of a magazine or journal where each column has its own editor, while at the same time they are under the management of one chief editor.

To encourage participation and interactivity, many Homogeneous Oriented group offer mailing list membership where users can partake and access their literary library archives and services. Members are also encouraged to contribute to the collection of the literary material.

With the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, the need for the preservation and collection of Somali cultural heritage became extremely important for this group. The whole decade of the civil war and anarchy in Somalia has resulted in the wreckage of the entire cultural infrastructure and the loss of the stores of Somali cultural heritage produced and preserved over the years. Almost all libraries, museums, theatres, preservation centres have been destroyed or looted. This led to the prospect that the Somali nation has lost much of its cultural heritage. It is from the perspective of reversing the trend of loss of Somali cultural material that the Homogeneous Oriented group depart.

6.2.1.1 HOMOGENEOUS ORIENTED GROUP CONTENT

In both Dedicated Cul/lit Classic and Dedicated Cul/lit Modern websites material content depend on the social and economic background. Currently, there are three main economic systems in Somalia, each of which has a separate influence upon the social structure of the

Somalis involved in them. The systems are: pastoral nomadic, agro-pastoral and town-dwellers (Johnson, 1996: 34), all these people share similar culture and they speak the same language and have a common religion – Islam.

Despite the shared heritage emphasised by the Homogenous oriented group, there is a tendency where both Dedicated Cul/lit Classic as well as Dedicated Cul/lit Modern to concentrate on their particular area when it come to content material. For example, many of Somaliland websites have more material of Somaliland authors. However, this kind of ‘favouritism’ is mainly isolated on the modern poetry than the classic poetry in both Dedicated Cul/lit Modern and Dedicated Cul/lit Classic.

6.2.1.2 COM/POL AND HETEROGENEOUS ORIENTED

The Heterogeneous oriented web group depart from the concept of ‘heterogeneity’ of Somali culture and language. Centring on the political interpretations of the Somali culture and language, this web group is associated with the agro-pastoralist society of the riverine and inter-riverine area of the Southern Somalia. Using their local dialect, Maay, as the main political vehicle, they endeavour to use the Maay language and ‘culture’ as a political drive and to assert their own identity.

Linguistics place the Somali language within the Afro-Asiatic family, a member of the Cushitic sub-family, or rather, the Eastern branch of Cushitic which includes among others Aweera (Boni), Rendille, Afar, Saho and Oromo (Husein, 1983: 31). The Somali language helps to give the Somalis a sense of identity and national consciousness that sets them apart from other related people of the Horn as well as from the Arab people of the Arabian Peninsula who have, through Islam, contributed much of the development of the Somali nation (ibid. 32). However, Husein reiterates that linguistic identity is secondary to other more profound differences – political, religious, and historical – in shaping group consciousness which language expresses. The linguistic factor is an important aspect of the process of national differentiation among the people of the Horn (Ibid.).

Somali language has played and continues to play a crucial role in the formulation of Somali identity in the struggle for Somali self-determination, independence and unification. Somali is spoken by all but a few small minorities living in the region. The various Somali dialects seem to cluster into five main groups (Mansur, 2002: 88). These are:

1. Mahaatiri dialect is spoken in the regions from Hiiraan.com (central Somalia) to the north. These people are predominantly a pastoralist society.
2. People who live mainly in the Banadir region speak Banadiri dialect. This group includes Reer Hamar and Xay Tiri dialects.
3. Peoples residing mainly in Mogadishu and Marka district area speak Asharaf dialect.
4. The Reewiin (or Rahanwayn) people in Bay and Bakool regions speak Maay dialect. There are many variations in this dialect.
5. Digil dialect has more variants than any other dialect in the Somali language. It is spoken in the south of Mogadishu. This dialect includes Jiido, Garre, Tunni and Dabarre.

Dialect changes in time and space. According to Somali language expert Professor Abdalla Mansur, a dialect is considered to develop as a separate language when it has less than 50% of the root language. Agro/sedentary society is not in constant motion as their brethren, the pastoralist society. Because of this continuous movement, the pastoralists mix in pasture, water, and exogamy practices. Therefore, alteration of vocabulary comes more from the pastoral society, than the sedentary society.

As in society elsewhere, the sedentary society preserves the original Somali language. The difference between Maay dialect and Mahaatiri is the retention of the original words of Somali language. Husein Adam, places Maay 'dialect' as "most differentiated traditional dialect" (Husein, 1983: 41). However, according to Mansur, Maay dialect shares roughly between seventy to eighty percent of its words with Somali Mahaatiri. This is what Mansur says about the matter,

"For example, the camel, which is the centre of Somali nomadic culture, in Maay its called gaal and in Mahaatiri *geel*? The original word is gaal and this has been preserved by the Maay dialect. This word [gaal] can be found in the

compound names, some which are used by in the Mahaatir: e.g. *sangaal* (parasite which lives in camel's nose), Gaal-jecel (Gaal-je'el clan), Abgaal (Abgaal clan), Gaalkayo (Mudug district capital)" (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, it is the Digil dialect that shares less than the Mahaatiri. This dialect has more variants than any other Somali dialect. Spoken in the south of Mogadishu, this dialect includes Jiido, Garre, Tunni and Dabarre.

6.3 LANGUAGE AS FOCUS OF DISCONTENT

Heterogeneous Oriented view distinguishes pastoralists from that of the agro-pastoral mode of production and their settled mode of life which produced a distinct culture and social organisation. Unlike the pastoralists, the settled communities of the inter- riverine regions have a well organised social and political structures based on hierarchical authority.

At the forefront of the Heterogeneous Oriented group there are the Riverineland, Arlaadi.com and Arlaadinet.com websites which concentrate on the promotion of the Digil and Mirifle 'language' and 'tradition'. Nevertheless, the written material is mainly in Mahaatiri and only a few in Maay. Some of the webmasters have even changed their names to be read and pronounced in Maay. For example, Mohamed is read as Mamad, or Adan as Eedin.

Promoting their identity as a separate entity, the riverine websites attempt an approach that can be viewed as to 'reinventing' Somalia. They accuse the pastoral nomadic society of misleading Somali history (Riverineland, 2000). Departing from the nomadic 'hegemonic' approach, they argue that the agro-pastoralists have imposed "an invented hegemony" portraying Somalia as a "homogeneous" country (Mukhtar, 2001).

The case of Maay language is not new in Somali society. Anita Adam in "*Haan - An Experiment in Publishing for an Oral Society in Dispersal*" reiterated that the debate was noted in 1967 by Suleiman M. Adam in his history of Somali broadcasting. Anita continues,

‘[In the early 1950s] a group under the leadership of Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden ‘Zoppo’ and Sheikh Abdullahi Mursal were demanding the introduction of a programme in Rahanweyn [or Reewiin] dialect. To some – the upholders of national unity in the face of divisive Italian efforts, and the advocates of a standard Somali – this smacked of ‘sectionalism’ and on this ground was rejected. In the circumstances this seems understandable, but it is a pity ...[as] whatever the intention of the people who supported it, adoption of the idea would have been a step forward. It would have given broadcasts in the dialect of a substantial element of society...and would have, more importantly, given the Rahanweyn culture a chance to contribute to the wider Somali culture.’
(ibid.)

Both Somali dialects of Mahaatiri and Maay served as official languages before the writing of the Somali alphabet in 1972. When the military regime of Siyad Barre committed Somali language to writing, the decision was seen by the riverine society to have shifted the balance and harmony of the Somali societies in which it “determined that af-Maxaatiri [Mahaatiri] would be the official written language in Somalia” (SomaliBantu, 2002). The decision was also seen to have “isolated and hindered southerners, including the Bantu, from participating in mainstream Somali politics, government services, and education” (ibid.). By promoting their culture and history, the riverine websites aim to use the language as a means to further their political and social ‘grievance’.

Generally, in the nationalist aspiration, the language features as the main ingredient that is used to stimulate this aspiration. This view is indicative of the elite perception similar to that of the Marxist theory of hegemony. Heterogeneous Oriented view and portray all previous Somali governments since independence as ‘Mahaatiri governments’ and the Mahaatiri ‘culture’ as the dominant culture. In this prospect, the pastoral society is perceived as the ‘ruling class’ and the media is perceived to support the ‘dominant class’. In another word, this processes is viewed as the ‘Mahaatirisation’ of the agro-pastoralist society.

Language, which is considered as ‘the pedigree of nations’ (quoted in Lewis 1983: 8), is deemed to be one of main components used in the development of nationalist aspirations.

This aspiration is strengthened when the Mahaatiri is portrayed as the “non-mother language”. Professor Mohamed Haji Mukhtar is one of the leading authors of this theory. In “The Plight of the Agro-pastoral Society of Somalia”, he argues that to bring up the true picture of Somali history things must be put straight and the history of Somalia reconstructed so that the new generation would not be misled like their predecessors (Mukhtar, 2001). He further reiterates in this way,

"In the process, many fallacies advocated by early writers of Somali history are refuted. For instance, there is no basis of classifying Somalia as Sab & Samaale. Now it became apparent (to the Somalis and to the international community) that Somalia is not a homogeneous country that speak one language, rather Somalia consists many people who are distinctive from each other in terms of their language, culture and history" (ibid.).

An attempt to develop Maay script started in mid-1990s (see Table 6). However, it only began to be seriously researched in 1994 when a group of Maay intellectuals met in Toronto. A follow up group was set to compile reference material related to Maay literature (Mohamed Adan, 1999). The introduction of the new Maay script is intended to create a platform for increased sentiment of linguistic self-confidence and pride.

TABLE 6: MAAY ALPHABET

CONSONANT				
B	P	T	J	JH
D	TH	R	S	SH
DH	G	GH	F	Q
K	L	M	N	NG
NY	W	H	Y	
VOWEL				
A	E	I	O	U
LONG VOWEL				
AA	EE	II	OO	UU

Source: Mohamed Adan Ibrahim (Farkeeti), Arlaadinet.com, 2004.

6.4. SOMALI WRITING AND THE INTERNET

The present day high technological culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio and other electronic devices that depend on their existing and functioning on writing and print is what Ong terms "secondary orality" (Ong, 1982: 11). As opposed to "primary orality," a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print (ibid.). Today primary oral culture in strict terms does not exist, since every culture knows of writing and has same experience of its effects. Yet, many cultures preserve much of the mindset of primary orality (ibid.).

Even though writing has never been a significant communication medium in Somali society, the use of Somali writing on the Internet seems to reflect what the great Somali novelist, Nuruddin Farah, terms as a leap from oral tradition to technology "without going through the middle stage of writing word" (Farah, 1987: 7). The Internet as an electronic medium for communication becomes a "melting" place of all other communication medium (writing, telephone, print, sound, and moving pictures). Much of the information and communication is made in writing.

The computer linked community is where the Somali written language is being developed, through online newspapers, commentary and essays; and people are thus becoming accustomed to accessing information in a written format, and whilst it is still only half way to becoming a society with books (Adam, 2004).

Despite the destruction of modern institutions, Somalis had not been left out of the new technology. This also led the expansion of Somali writing as the languages that websites publish in are overwhelmingly Somali and English. Despite Arabic being Somalia's official second language, it is mainly used by the religious web type where they publish Koranic verses and Hadith, the Prophet Mohamed's teachings.

Somali is one of those cultures in which writing never played a significant role as a medium of communication. In some terms, religious instructions and commercial intersections were the only main areas in Somali traditional life that relied on writing (Lewis: 1983: 182).

Why Somalis did not commit to their language in script lies in the oral nature of their culture (Johnson, 1996: 49; Ahmed, 1989: 10) Although Somalis have been exposed to writing through their religion since around the thirteenth-century, when Islam came to the Horn, they had not adopted writing for their own language (ibid.). However, everyone attending Koranic school learn at least some Arabic script.

Adopting a national orthography had been a thorny issue since the inception of the Somali Republic. Although the Osmania script had gained currency in some circles since the early forties, and the Somali Youth League had made it its official orthography, the civilian government was never able to approve it as the national orthography. The reasons were several: (i) accepting Osmania was seen by some politicians as accepting a clan dominance, as the script was associated with the tribe of its author, Osman Yusuf Kenadid, who was a Majeerteen; (ii) religious sentiments and the pressure for Arabisation was very strong, and it led some politicians to favour the Arabic orthography over the indigenous one; and (iii) some educationalists argued that Osmania would be expensive to develop, and they advocated use of the Latin characters.

What facility the Latin system could offer was an advantage to those who sought higher education outside the country (Library of Congress Country Studies, 2002). On the other hand modern printing equipment would also be more easily used which are reasonably available for Latin type. Somali grammars would provide some advantage in the preparation of teaching materials (ibid.). However, disagreement had been so intense among differing groups and successive governments continued to reiterate their intention to resolve the issue (ibid.).

In 1972, the military regime of Siyad Barre succeeded in adopting a new orthography where others had failed. It used Latin characters. In addition, on 8 March 1973, a literary campaign was launched with a much publicised motto "*Haddaad taqaan bar*" (if you are literate teach); "*Haddaadan aqoon baro*" (if you are illiterate learn) (Lewis, 1996: 98).

In 1973 educational material written in the standard orthography was introduced in elementary schools and by 1975 was also being used in secondary and higher education. Somalia's literacy rate was estimated at only 5 percent in 1972. After adopting the new script, the Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC) launched a "cultural revolution" aimed at making the entire population literate in two years. The first part of the massive literacy campaign was carried out in a series of three-month sessions in urban and rural sedentary areas and reportedly resulted in several hundred thousand people learning to read and write.

The campaign in settled areas was followed by preparations for a major effort among the nomads that got underway in August 1974. The programme in the countryside was carried out by more than 20,000 teachers, half of whom were secondary school students whose classes were suspended for the duration of the school year. The rural programme also compelled a privileged class of urban youth to share the hardships of the nomadic pastoralists. Although affected by the onset of a severe drought, the programme appeared to have achieved substantial results in the field in a short period of time (Puntin, 2000)

Many institutions such as the ministries of culture, information set up special committees for translation and documentation to provide the required material in Somali. Soon written Somali officially replaced English and Italian, which until then, had been the administrative language of the country. It has also reduced the former gap between the state and the public.

Adam argues that with the implementation of written Somali in various public circles gave greater content to the rudimentary notion of Somali consciousness, namely the simple feeling of solidarity, the awareness of identity, strengthening the "we" versus "them" attitude. The process of the modernisation of the language has facilitated the national integration in a sense what Adam terms as "organic" solidarity (Husein, 1983: 41). This also resulted in narrowing the gap between the Somali dialects by providing one main "standard dialect" in all mass communication (radio, press), in books and publications for schools and for literacy comparing (ibid. 40).

However, the riverine website on the contrary views the 'organic' of national integration to mean the complete domination and 'Mahaatirisation' of the agro-pastoralist society. They see

that the implications of choosing Mahaatiri dialect writing have had a consequence on the riverine people. Mohamed adds,

“Closely related to the problem of regional inequalities is the problem of rural development. Rural investment schemes often require effective and continuous communication between the government and the farmers or herdsmen. Information can be most easily transmitted to farmers and herdsmen in their languages; most of development projects carried out in the riverine are were headed by Maha speakers who were not able to communicate the indigenous language of the region. This led almost all projects to become ineffective”. (ibid.).

They further complain that Digil and Mirifle have been “systematically excluded from the necessary education in the process of Maha language acquisition” as the Mahatiri “speakers were in a better position to participate in the political arena than others” (Mohamed Adan, 2002). Somali Mahaatiri dialect is the predominant writing on Somali websites.

Although that Maay script was developed in November 1994 (Abdullahi Haji Hassan, 1994), it is rarely used even by the riverine website as they publish the standard Somali Mahaatiri alphabet. This is due to two reasons: (i) Despite using the Latin character, the script is not yet widely known. People need to learn it; and (ii) Websites still wants to use the most widely used Mahaatiri alphabet to pass the message to their groups as well as to the other Somalis.

6.5 THE INTERNET MEDIUM AND POETRY TRANSMISSION: THE POETRY DUELS OF DOODWANAAG AND SAMSAM

As the web has the potentiality to reach a global audience, the Internet has changed the way in which Somali poetry is transmission and distribution. One important event on both Dedicated Cul/lit and the homogeneity oriented Section Cul/lit websites is two new poetry duels known as Doodwanaag and Samsam. Both sets of poems can be considered as duels. According to the well-known Somali poet, Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac (Gaariye), some of the characteristics of duel poetry are: (a) participants to be more than one poet, (b) the poems to

centre on an issue, and (c) the poems to be structured in the same alliteration.⁴¹ Two well-established devices reflect Somali prosody: alliteration and meter. Based on the later, poetic types are classified into genres and each genre is often structured in metrical arrangements and rhythmic pattern which is known for its mnemonic qualities (Orwin, 2001). Orwin maintains that,

“All poetry in Somali, whether *maanso* or *hees*, is both metrical alliteration and alliterative, the metric in Somali is a fascinating quantitative system in which there are a large number of patterns, each type following a particular one” (Orwin, 2003).

All the above characteristics can be found in both Doodwanaag and Samsam. Both duels will now be examined in details.

6.5.1 THE DUEL OF DOODWANAAG

Started in November 2003, by a young Somali architect, Mohamed Ali Cibaar, Doodwanaag duel is a poetic debate in the form of a political thoughtfulness which inspires young talented Somalis to join forces in the form of literature.

According to Anwar Diiriye, one of the participants, the poetic duel was inspired by Hadraawi's Peace March. Launched by Somali artists in support of peace, the march was led by the renowned Somali composer and poet Mohamed Ibrahim Warsame "Hadraawi" who extended his rally to Somali regions and among the Somali Diaspora.

The itinerary of Mohamed Ibrahim Warsame included Denmark where on 29 November 2003, he met with members of the Somali Diaspora (Abdulkadir, 29/11/2003). Among them were the Somali legendry star and singer, Maryan Mursal Issa. Among the welcoming guests was Mohamed Cali Cibaar, the young Somali engineer and poet who instigated the duel. By the end of 2005, there were more than 30 respondent to Cibaar's call for the 'poetic guns'

⁴¹ Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac (Gaariye) interview, London, 30 December 2005.

To avoid identity fraud, participants are required to send a passport size photo. This is intended to ensure the originality of the poem as fraud is much easier on the Internet. Other constraints include the poet not to ‘stray’ from the objectives and his responsibility to the duel is basically to ‘enlighten’ society (see Table 7).

TABLE 7: THE RULE OF DOODWANAAG

<p>Any poetic contribution to Doodwanaag duel should follow this guidance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It should enlighten the society and warn them of the horrors of civil war.2. It should not insult anyone and should not demonstrate an inclination to regionalism or clanism3. It should follow the alliteration of the alphabet ‘d’4. It should not be composed before 10th November 2003, the date which the duel began5. The author should accept his/her poem to be published in writing or in audio format6. The author should send his poem to the Editorial Committee of Doodwanaag – the independent committee formed to examine whether the poem conforms to the rule of the duel. He/she should also accept the judgment of the committee7. The author should only send the final version as once published there will not any possibility to get it back
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Source: <http://www.somalitalk.com/maanso/index.html>

Since its inception, Doodwanaag (meaning graceful debate) was responded to by more than 50 poems as it was carried and published by nine Somali websites (see Table 8).

With a poem named Dawo (Medicine), Maxamed Cali Cibaar begins his poem by inciting the young generation to use what he calls the ‘power of poetry’ to fight the madness of war and to find peaceful solutions. He ‘provokes’ the young to a ‘creative expedition’ which guides the Somalis out from the quagmire of the civil war.

TABLE 8: POETIC DUEL OF DOODWANAAG

	Poem	Poet name
1	Dawo	Maxamed Cibaar
2	Dadnimo	Cumar Nabaddoon
3	Daryeel	Maxamuud Shiine
4	Dadaal	Maxamed Cibaar
5	Daacadnimo	Cumar Nabaddoon
6	Da'yartiyó	Maxamed Stanza
7	Deleb	Anwar Maxamed Diiriye
8	Daawad	Ibraahin Yuusuf Axmed
9	Dabaqabad	C/Qaadir Cabdi Xaraare
10	Deeq Eebbe	Anwar Maxamed Diiriye
11	Deegaan	Cali Maxamuud Xiirane
12	Dawlad	Cismaan Cabdi Bayid
13	Dahab	Umar Maxamuud Maxamed (Baarqab)
14	Digniin Culus	Cabdinuur Aadan Faarax
15	Duco	Mowliid Xasan Curjin
16	Dayn - Qaran	Yuusuf Aw-Xirsi Xuseen
17	Dan-Guud	Cabdi Khayr C/Qaadir (Kawtame)
18	Dul-ka-Xaadis!	Anwar Maxamed Diiriye
19	Dulmi-Diid	Cali Maxamuud Xiirane
20	Doontii Waxbarashada	Yuusuf Sh. Cumar
21	Dulqaad	Ing. Maxamed Cali Cibaar
22	Darajo	Cabdullahi Bootaan Xasan (Kurweyne)
23	Daljir	Cali Cabdi Xasan (Baarreey)
24	Duggaal	Cabdi-Weli Cilmi
25	Dabiib	Maxamed Bashiir Jaamac
26	Distuur	C/Salaam Cismaan X. Cige (Cige)
27	Deeqa	Daahir Dailaaf
28	Dalka	Xasan Bulxan Cali
29	Dareenka Bulshada	Siyaad Maxamuud Muuse
30	Dadkaygoow!	Cabdicasiis Maxamed Cabdullahi (Mataan)
31	Dan-ka-Hadal	Maxamed Dhagaafe Cilmi
32	Darwiish	Axmed Cabdi Geelle
33	Dawan	Axamed Dhagaafe Cilmi
34	Dimoqraadi waa Kuma?	Cumar Nabaddoon
35	Danyar	Xasan Bulxan Cali
36	Denbiloow	Daahir Dailaaf
40	Dib Allow u soo Celi	Inj. Axmed "Guulwade"
41	Miyaydaan ka Diirayn?	Siyaad Maxamuud Muuse
42	Da' Yar	Cali Sh. Cumar Cismaan (Cali-Khayr)
43	Diiwaan	Maxamed Dhagaafe Cilmi
44	Dayacdiid	Cali-Mataan Xasan Barre
45	Daliil	Axmed Cabdi Geelle
46	Boqollaal Dambiile	Cabdi-Nuur Maxamuud (Qurux)
47	Damiiryeesha	Cabdikhayr Sheekh Xasan Sheekh Soofe
48	Dacwo	Maxamuud Muuse Faarax
49	Daallin iyo Dulmane	Suldaan Nayruus X. Aadan
50	Kala Dooro	Cali Maxamuud Xiirane

Cibaar's approach has to use the poetic medium as culture of peace. In this sense what is needed is an honest collective decision-making and transparency which would spear-headed peace. This is how he says,

Heshiis soo dejiya iyo
Wax collaadda demiyaay
(Mohamed Cibaar, 2003)

(Bring peace and
What could extinguish the enmity?)

Cibaar fires the search of leadership as the failure of the state is blamed for the leadership failure, particularly, political leadership. It did not pass long when Cibaar's calls were answered. The first to reply was Cumar Cabdinuur Nuux (Nabaddoon) with Dadnimo (Humanity) and Maxamuud Axmed Cabdalla (Shiine) with Daryeel (Welfare). Maxamuud Axmed Cabdalla confirms the power of the poetry as the poem below demonstrates,

In abwaanku digi karo
Ergo daadahayn karo
Nabaddana dabbaqi karo
Damin karo colaadaha
Nabarkana daweyn karo
(Maxamuud Axmed Cabdalla (Shiine), 2003).

(That the poet can forewarn
Can lead peace committees
Can handle peace solutions
Can extinguish hostility
Can heal wounds)

TABLE 9: LIST OF WEBSITES PUBLISHING DOODWANAAG

SomaliTalk	http://www.somalitalk.com
MudugOnline	http://www.mudugonline.com
Somaliweyn	http://www.somaliweyn.com
Aayaha	http://www.aayaha.com
Aftahan	http://www.aftahan.com
Bakaaraha Online	http://www.bakaaraha online
Himilo	http://www.himilo.com
Somalivoices	http://www.somalivoices.com
Goobjoog	http://www.goobjoog.com

In the oral aspect of literature, poetry is the most prominent. The position allocated to the poet as the most esteemed public figure has already received extensive scholarly attention (Andrezejewski and Lewis 1964, Afrax 2000), as he has an unusually influential role in Somali society as he is esteemed to be an "opinion leader" *per excellence* (Samatar, 1982: 165).

Acting as the nation's moral guide and as the shaper of its collective consciousness, the poet performs this function in a way that suggests he is under constant moral pressure that the special position allocated to him entails very special demands (Afrax, 2000). In the pre-colonial times, the poet often acted as "the mouthpiece of the clan" urging its members to defend their honour, to help and to safeguard each other. In the nation frame, the Somali poet's role has been transformed by assuming a greater social and moral responsibility than anyone else in the community. Johnson views poetry as one of the most important mediums of artistic expression for Somalis and "... no wonder that it has become a term of reference for Somalis" (Johnson, 1996: 34).

Doodwanaag duel demonstrates the importance of poetry and how it is used as culture for peace as well as war. The poet wanting to be heard in places far away from his home craves a spatial extension. The Internet has expanded the ambitions of the poet by enabling him to reach a global audience.

6.5.2 SAMSAM DUEL POETRY

Named after Samsam Ahmed Duale, a 16-year old girls arrested by the Somaliland authority in August 2004, *silsiladda* Samsam is another poetic duel which is transmitted via the Internet. Samsam's arrest turned rapidly into a saga which caught the attention of Somalis, many respected local and international human rights organisation. Some of these organisations include Amnesty International and Africa Rights.

6.5.2.1 BRIEF BACKGROUND

On 15 August 2005, Samsam Ahmed Duale departed from Bosaso, her native city-port of Puntland, to visit her maternal relative, Mohamud Said Mohamed, a deputy Minister for Somaliland Ministry of Sports. When she reached Hargeysa on 17 August 2004, a cab driver named Omar Jama Warsame drove her to the vice-president of Somaliland, Ahmed Yusuf Yasin's resident (Somalitalk, 2004). It was alleged that the security guards at the vice-president's residence became suspicious of the girl who was wearing Islamic dress known as *hijab*. A guardsman stripped her headscarf and in reaction Samsam slapped him. Consequently, the guardsmen arrested her, accusing her of conspiracy to assassinate the vice-president. Afterwards, it was claimed that both Samsam and Omar Jama Warsame were subjected to torture and beaten by the police. It was added that Samsam was raped by police officers who detained and tried her as an adult person (Amnesty International, 2005).

On 24 November 2004, Samsam and Omar Jama Warsame were taken to the court and there the case was challenged by Samsam's defence lawyers. The judge without investigating the allegation dismissed the rape and torture claim and instead he accused the defence lawyers, Yusuf Ismail Ali, Mohamed Said Hersi, Fawsi Sheekh Yonis and Abdirahman Ibrahim Alim, of court contempt by sentencing them to three years imprisonment (Africa Rights, Nov 2004).

TABLE 10: SAMSAM POETIC DUEL

	Poet Name	Poem
1	Gob Cunsuri Ahoo Waxaa Tihiin Ficil Gumeed Yeeshay	Abshir Ba-Adle
2	Garasho Waayeel	Cabdillaahi Cawed Cige
3	Sow Gar Adag Maaha	Ahmed Abdi Mohamud Sugulle
4	Gef-Diid	Maxamuud Axmed Cabdalla (Shiine)
5	Dhegeysi	Cabdirisaaq Cilmi Xirsi (Fagare)
6	Galad Eebbe	Cali Maxamuud Xiirane
7	Galiilyo	Cabdikhayr Cabdiqaadir Maxamuud (Kawtame)
8	Gaashaandhig	Maxamed Cali Cibaar
9	Gacanqaad	Maxamed Cabdiqaadir Daaud
10	Gocasho	Abwaan Maxamed Ducaale Nuux (Qays)
11	Dardaaran Oday & Daryeel Haween	Cali Dhawaaq
12	Guduudane	Cumar Cabdinuur Nuux – Nabaddoon
13	Maansada Dib U Dood	Cabdinuur Aadan Faarax
14	Gabdha Siidaaya	Axmed Naasir
15	Gees Isugu Bayra	Daahir Cabdulle Maxamuud (D. Daylaaf)
16	Gardarada Hargeysaad	Cabdikhayr Cabdulqaadir Maxamuud (Kawtame)
17	Gorgor	Yacquub
18	Haddaad Guluf Abaabuli Lahayd	Maxamed Xirsi Guuleed
19	Garnaq	Maxamed Dhagaafe Cilmi
20	Yaa U Garnaqi Doona	Axmednaasir Cabdi Geele
21	Gobannimo	Cabdillaahi Cawed Cige
22	Lixdan Kii Ummad Gees Aheyd	Cumar Maxamuud Maxamed (Baarqab)
23	Ka Garnaqa Qabiil Ma Aan Rabo In Aan Qaladka Saaraaye	Abshir Salaad Ciise (Rooble)
24	Godlan	M. Cali
25	Gacan Saar	Maxamudud Maxamed Aw-Yuusuf
26	Jawaabta Abshir Ba-adle	Abshir Ba-adle
27	Gudoon	Mohamed Cali Cartan
28	Gun iyo baar	Mohamoud H Nugidoon
29	Guhaad	Cabdillahi Cawad Cige

6.5.2.2 WHY SAMSAM'S SAGA TRIGGERED A POETRY DUEL

Many Somali websites publicised Samsam's case. Hundreds of materials both in prose and verse were published. Somalitalk devoted an entire section for the story where it collected 120 entries — in writing or voice material. Another voluntary organisation called Justice for Samsam formed a website blog with up-to-date information.

What made Samsam's case to receive national attention? Or what is the case which led to a poetic duel? Viewing the case as one which “contravened Somalis cultural values”, Samsam's arrest and rape were seen as a contravention to Somali *heer* and tradition.

Emotional feelings moved many Somalis inside and outside the country. For example, Kaltuun Haji Daahir, the respected wife of the former President of Somaliland (and once Prime Minister of Somalia), voiced her concern about the condition of the young girl. Rakiya A. Omaar, the director of the international human rights organisation, African Rights, was one of the first person who aired the plight of the girl in an interview with the Voice of America radio.

There is a combination of factors which let Samsam's case to trigger a poetry duel. However, two are the most important: her young age and her gender. Many found the idea of accusing a 16 year old girl to plot to assassinate a high profile person in a region which she has never seen before to be repulsive (Rakiya Omaar,2005). Another factor is the political climate surrounding the case of Somaliland secession from the Somali Republic. In fact much of the poetic debate gathers around this theme. It was Abshir Ba-adle, a well known Somali poet, who fired the first bullet which triggered the duel as he considered Samsam's arrest as 'vengeance' and a 'feeling of jealousy' by Somaliland authority "who were exasperated by their failure to get international recognition" following its declaration to break away from Somalia. This is what he says,

“Samsamna kiis ma gelin ee maseyr guuxayaa xiraye” (Abshir Ba-adle, 2005)

(Samsam did not commit crime but what imprisoned her is jealousy)

Blaming the administration for instigating intentionally the scandal, Abshir Ba-adle extends the blame by accusing the people of Somaliland, particularly, the Isaaq clan, of culpability for their inaction and their support for the administration in this line,

Guddiga Habar-magaalood

Wanjalay gabar aan qaan-gaarin

Duqa Ilaahay gafiyay gabadha ii daaya

Go'aankooda higiskaa ma waan gobi ka shuureyn

.....

Beel yahay gadoodayoo go'dayoo gabar ku ciil beeshay

(Abshir Ba-adle, 2005)

(The committee of Habar-magaadle⁴²

Who blinded a young girl

The elder who missed to utter let the girl off

Didn't anyone advised against the crooked decision?

.....

You people who mutinied and seceded seeking vengeance on a little girl)

Abshir Ba-adle's poem caused a series of reaction both supportive and critical which appeared to open northern and southern Somalis debate: the north being the former British Somaliland and the south the former Italian Somaliland.

Questioning Abshir Ba-adle's involvement in the case, Somaliland Organisation (with a website known as Somaliland.Org) assumed the responsibility to fight against what they called the *Diin-takoora* (Banning religion) 'crusade' through which the southerners attempted to tarnish the 'respectable' image of Somaliland and its people (Somaliland.org, Dec. 2005). Alluding to the assault as 'hiding behind the smoke', this is expressed by Cabdillahi Cawed Cige,

Abshirow gantaalkaad riddiyo; guxi lagu toosye
Gun baa reer Isaaq yahay inuu; hadalka kaa gaadhay
Gaashaamo iyo Hawd warkii; geeswalbow socoye
Goonyaha Hargeysiyo Burcuu; galay akhbaarkiiye

Guhaad iyo xanuun laga bogsaday; godol ku nooleye
Sheekadu garqaad iyo ka badan; geliyay maankayga
In baroorty caro dhaafsan tahay; geliyay maankayga
(Cabdillahi Cawed Cige, Somalitalk, 2005)

⁴² Habar-magaadle is referred to be the maternal ancestor of the Isaaq clan-family.

(O Abshir, the mortar you blast has awaken everybody
You have said that Isaaq are outcast
They have reached Gaashaamo and Hawd
The news was delivered to the corners of Hargeysa and Burao

Not all people feel the same, my kins has been enraged
It has been has been re-ignited the wrath and anguish which went away
The allegory is beyond moan and the defence of a girl

In another example Mohamud H Nugidoon expresses Abshir Ba-adle involvement as hypocritical by saying these words:

Hadday garasho kaa daacad tahay ama gacalo hiil doon ah
Gondahaagay ka buuxaan kuwo dulinku gaarmuraye
Gurmashiyo iyagaa ku wacan in garabka la siiyaaye
(Mohamud H Nugidoon, 2005)

(If you are honest with your succours and gentle support
They are around you those who undergo an unrelenting pest
They are the ones who really need succours and assistance)

By attacking the wrong times ‘rescue’ attempt by Abshir Ba’adle, Nugidoon again expresses these words,

Gabadha hortaabaa loo gurmaday; adi la’aantaaye
(Mohamud H Nugidoon, 2005)

(The girl has been rescued without you)

Without denying the shame surrounding Samsam's case, Somaliland organisation see Abshir Ba-adle and his 'southerners' supporters assault as dishonestly as many people from Somaliland fought for Samsam. In one instance Abdullahi Cawad Cige says,

Gurrac iyo inuu khalad ku jiro; kuu garowsaniye
(Abdullahi Cawad Cige, 2005).

(I recognise that there is fault and wrongdoing)

Many local and international human rights organisations were involved in the case. Some were arrested and to silence all forms of local criticism, Somaliland police began arresting and intimidating anyone suspected on account of criticising the authorities.

However, Somaliland.org viewed the campaign as one which goes beyond Samsam, and it is meant to portray Somaliland and its people as infidels by quoting Maxamuud Axmed Cabdalle Shiine's poem,

Samsameey waxaa kugu gefey gaalo ehelkeede
(Maxamuud Axmed Cabdalle (Shiine), 2005)

(O Samsam, it is the kith of the infidels those who hurt you)

Somaliland organisation is also critical to Somalitalk website and those website which devoted to publish Samsam's case. Seeing the campaign as an attack to their people and government, it compares it to the diatribes of Sayid Mohamed Cabdulle Hassan, the man who led the Somali resistances in the early twentieth century. Sayid Mohammed was one of the greatest Somali poets of this century and during his struggle he fought against British, Ethiopian and Italian colonialism.

In one of his poems he accuses the Isaaq people as collaborators of the British colonialists. He says this,

Iidoor wagaashliyo kufriga; wacad allow yaalle
Waa niman walaala ah; tan iyo waaga aakhiro'e

(Sayid Mohamed)

(The lemming Iidoor⁴³ and the infidels have pact
They are brothers till the Day of Judgment)

6.5.2.3 THE MORAL CONTEXT

Beside the politicisation of Samsam case, many of the participants put the spotlight on the moral side of the issue. They focus on the most sensitive things such as the infantilism, adolescence, girlhood and the respect which Somali society has towards women. One such poem is “*Sow gar adag maaha*” (Isn't a hard judgment?) composed by Ahmed Abdi Mohamud Sugulle. By highlighting how the case upset the cherished tradition and culture, Sugulle says this,

Gartaad ina Riyaalow naqdeen adigiyo geeshkaagu
Irdhey gelisey dhaqankii bulshada gebi ahaantiise
Gaagixise libintii khalqigu geesi ku ahaaye
Dhabtii waxaa ah inaad gaasirteen guushi aadmiga e
Gondagoyse hiddihii dadkee gaamurke ahaa
(Ahmed Abdi Mohamud Sugulle, 2005)

The case you, Riyaale⁴⁴, and your soldiers judged
It has upset the traditional conventions
You wrecked the pillar of humanity
You flawed the human virtue
You lacerate the tradition which made humans heroes

⁴³ Iidoor is a derogatory name alluding to the Isaaq clan-family.

Women are believed to be the linchpin of Somali society. Emphasising this matter, Abshir Ba-adle expresses the compassion which a female was to be treated by Somalilanders in these lines,

Waxaan gacani qaban baa jiroo gobi ka sheexdaaye
Mar waa gabar, mar waa idiin gayaan, mana ay qaan-gaarin
Marna guri nin weyn bay gashoo waad u gudubteene
Hubna gacanta kumey sidane waad gubi lahaydeene
Gun miyaad tihiin ficil xun waa laga gadoodaaye
Saqiir magan il-galacle ah miyey idin ka geyn weyday?
Maxaa gabar qariibahoo marti loo argagaxiyay
(Abshir Ba'adle, 2005)

(There are things that the hand cannot reach and the nobles are ashamed of
Once she is a girl, a marriageable female [to you], and she is not of age
Once she entered in the property of an honourable person and you transgressed her
She did not have weapon in her hand [otherwise] you would have smashed her
Are you outcaste? Misconduct must be discarded
Couldn't you avoid raping a terrified infant
Why a guest girl has been scared?)

6.6 POETRY, TRANSMISSION AND LIMITATIONS

In the past there has been well known duel poetry such as Guba, Siinley, Deelley and Hurgumo. In accordance with the way which has been conveyed, Doodwanaag and Samsam can be considered as the first Somali poetry duel which has been transmitted via the Internet. The Internet media has opened to Somali poetry a new transmission mode which can be viewed as 3rd generation. The other transmission modes are by-mouth (1st generation) and by tape recorders furthered by the radio (2nd generation) (see Table 11).

⁴⁴ Rayaale Kaahin is the president of the breakaway republic of Somaliland.

TABLE 11: TRANSMISSION MODE GENERATION

Generation	Duel Poetry examples	Transmission mode	Period
1 st	Guba, Hala' Dheere	By word of mouth	+1920s-1940s
2 nd	Siinley, Deelleey, Hurgumo	Tape recorder, radio (electronic)	1960s-1980s
3 rd	Doodwanaag and Samsam	Internet (electronic)	2000s

Time and space is reduced in the third generation transmission mode. Where each poem of Guba poetry duel (1st generation) required weeks or months to reach parties, Doodwanaag and Samsam (3rd generation) are done in a flash of seconds reaching global participants and audiences.

Another aspect characterised with Doodwanaag is its transmission which is in writing. It is the first known poetry duel conveyed by writing. Given this new medium (the Internet), it is hard to foretell whether Doodwanaag duel heralds a shift from oral to written alone.

According to Orwin, Somali poetry is still primarily experienced through listening rather than reading. In the past “there has been some publication of collections of important poetry (mostly of poets from the past), but these are not widely distributed at all” (Orwin, 2001). As the Internet is revolutionising our way of life, it is obvious to also affect poetry transmission.

In spite of the Internet medium making the duels available to a global audience, it, however, limits their accessibility in another way. Indeed, some view the duels as ‘elitist’ as they are accessible only by those who own or have the facility to access the medium. One such person is Mahamed Haashi Dhamac Gaariye who considers a duel should be easily accessible by anyone. Contrary to Gaariye’s view, Anwar Diiriye — one of the young poets — considers Samsam and Doodwanaag as the beginning of a new generation born with the Internet medium (email message, 2005).

In transmission wise Doodwanaag is unique as it is transmitted by the writing medium. Samsam instead is conveyed in both oral and in writing. What influences the means — whether in writing or by audio — is the participation. In Doodwanaag the participants are all from the young generation of poets, while in Samsam they are both old and young.

Another important character which differentiates the two duels is the objectives of the participants. In Doodwanaag the participants are joined for a common cause, while Samsam is spontaneous and contributors have opposite and often contradicting views. This last characteristic is one of the virtues of duels, according to Gaariye. However, to 'smooth' the realisation of the aims makes Doodwanaag a 'controlled' duel where participants are required to follow certain rules listed in Table 7. According to Gaariye, even though Doodwanaag has all the most important characteristics of a duel, the 'creative mind' of the poet is being 'choked', thus obstructing the quintessence and the meaning of what a duel should stand for (ibid, 2005). Despite the limitations, Samsam has the entire prerequisite of a duel.

CHAPTER SIX

7. SOMALI WEBSITE CASE STUDY THREE: COMMUNITY/POLITICAL WEB TYPES AND NEWS MEDIA ASPECTS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Barre regime in 1991 was followed by a proliferation of independent media in all part of the former Somalia and in the Diaspora, one of which is Somali websites which are mainly managed by the Somali Diaspora.

A general and common feature shared by the community/political (Com/pol), online newspaper, personal and radio/TV web group is news publications. While Online News and radio/TV categories produce their own news material, the other two web types use a dual method: by producing their own news (usually in Somali) and creating headline hyperlinks to news published by news publishers (both Somali websites and the international news agencies). Table 4 lists twelve websites with news publication ranging three to seven days on 25 Mar 2006.

The Com/pol web type is a new kind of Internet genre.⁴⁵ As their characteristics and activities fall between communities, political and online media organisation, this hybrid of features makes this web type the most dynamic of all web type. Genres can be seen as involved in the construction of their readers. John Fiske sees genre as 'a means of constructing both the audience and the reading subject' (quoted in Chandler, 1998).

As online news is one of the major features of Com/pol, in this chapter the news media aspect of the Com/pol web types will be analysed.

⁴⁵ Web type here discussed is in relation to the web category discussed in Chapter Three.

7.2. MANAGING INFORMATION

Activity such as running news online requires managing information, which is an important element faced by Somali webmasters. Managing such things requires also other skills such as prioritising news, understanding news values or news selecting. An important observable fact which comes with this phenomenon is the development of new skills by the Somali webmasters. They have to behave like journalists while using this powerful skill as propaganda tools.

Since the beginning of the year 2000, the Somali Diaspora's main source of home news has become the Internet. For example, since the year 2000 the BBC began an Internet version of Somali news. Through the Internet users can load and hear the BBC at their own time.

Before the year 2000, much web content demonstrated poor quality material. The competition and the need to cope with the changing environment, not least the changing technology have made possible professional online journalism skills required to run such types of service. Somali webmasters face the tough task of presenting their readers with the best selection of news items. As news is selective, it is often argued that news has an "agenda setting" function as the themes in the news constitute an explicit political agenda. In this sense, "...news items are not simply selected but are actively constructed" (Chandler, 1997) .

Webmasters are expected also to develop the skills of attracting and convincing their audience (readers). Due to the effect of the civil war and because of mistrust, Somali audience is more inclined to trust and believe what is published on their 'own' groups' sites. One opinion says, "Although what other websites publish might be true, I don't have to trust them." (email survey, 04/04/2001).

At the same time, users are able to access much more information thus making them empowered to make their own news judgement. Despite that, the user is in not at a stage where the online journalist does the picking or selection of information.

Online journalism, as Internet-based communication, has to be shaped by a distinctive media logic, which can be expected to differ from the respective logic of print and broadcast media (Dahlgren, 1996). The field of online journalism is one area where the question of how this media logic is constructed. It is defined as gathering and distributing news content exclusively on the Internet and seen here conceptually as “a fourth kind of journalism next to print, radio and television journalism with its own specific journalistic characteristic” (Deuze, 2001).

7.3. COM/POL WEB TYPE AS MEDIA ORGANISATION

Com/pol web types are for community ‘needs’ than for benefit. In the west, most media are run as business but often with some ‘ideal’ goals, and some media are run primarily for ‘idealistic’ social and cultural purposes, without seeking profit. Websites are under pressure from other external ‘forces’. These can be competitors or the other websites, particularly those who are felt as ‘other websites’. Competing with the ‘other’ website might also present in a way a ‘media war’.

News is the backbone of the web activities as they are dominated by political content □ a choice determined by their users (or readership). This behaviour makes the Com/pol web type behave like media organisation. Nevertheless, Com/pol websites do not consider themselves as political groups or online news organisations. They prefer to be seen as serving Somali community, particularly the Diaspora.

Generally, news is the central ingredient of a traditional newspaper and it is also the core activity to which a large part of the journalistic occupation defines itself. McQuail has that,

“Media institutions would barely exist without news, and news could not exist without media institutions. Unlike almost all other forms of authorship or cultural creation, news-making cannot be done privately or even individually. The institution provides both the machinery for distribution and the grantee and authority.” (McQuail, 1994: 267).

The Internet could not be considered a main mass communication in Somalia as only few people have access to this medium. However, the news from the Internet is printed in the local newspaper. According to Abdishakur Mire Adan, a former Puntland deputy information minister, some news also ends up in the radio programs. One illustrative example involved the reported development of German forces in Somaliland against terrorism, in November 2001, when a freelance reporter based in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), produced an article for a German newspaper in which he cited an unidentified source 'close' to the Somaliland president who alleged that German and US forces would be based at the port of Berbera. The news, posted to various sites on the Internet, was picked up by the Hargeysa newspapers and spread like wildfire, creating significant political agitation and speculation. The veracity of rumour reached such a level that the German Chancellor felt obliged to intervene personally to quash it (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 42).

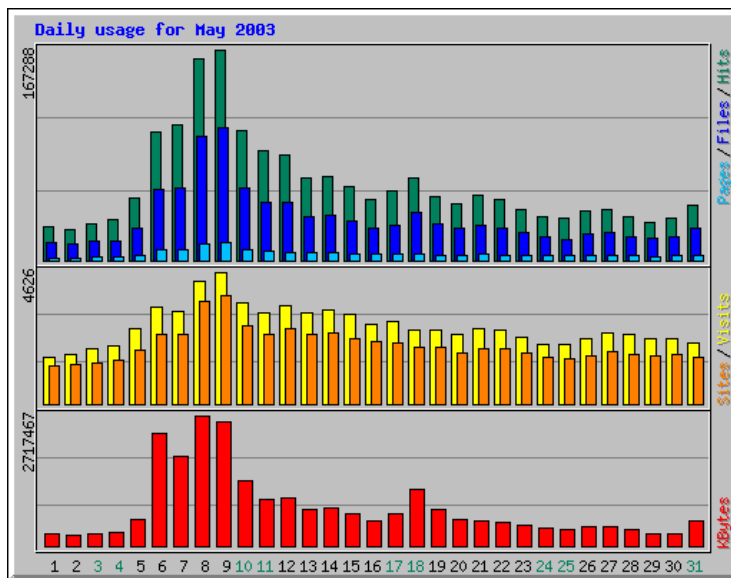
The need of the audience seems to be a leading factor which webmasters and online journalists consider most. This view leads them to produce material which can attract an audience.

7.3.1. NEWS AND THE WEB

Somalis are said to be traditionally a belligerent society. Since the collapse of the state, violent news is what is most likely to attract their attention. This might be one of the factors which influences news selection of Somali online journalists and their webmasters.

According to one opinion, "the most likely news which gets my attention is those which report 'hot' news. For me news is worthless if it does not contain things like fighting and killing" (email survey, 2001). Another has this opinion, "news is news only when it contains exciting things. For example, clan fighting, elimination of one group by another groups. I also like to follow news about Somali peace talks." (email survey, 15/06/2000)

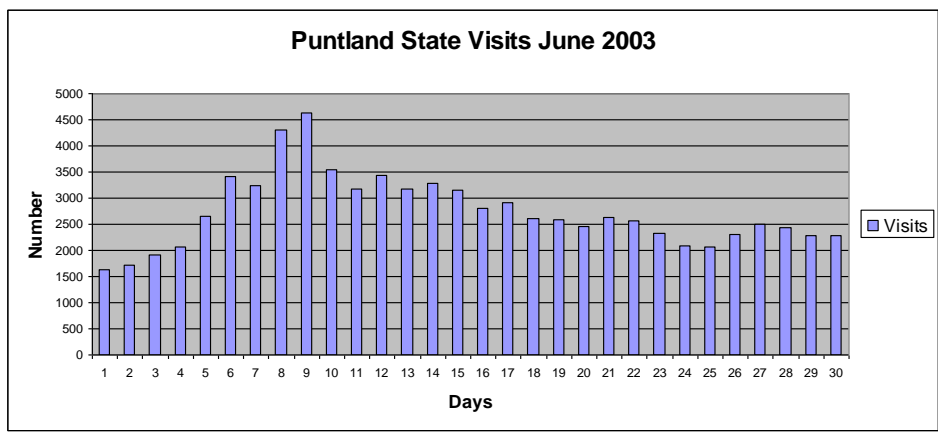
FIG. 23: DAILY USAGE STATISTICS



Source: Puntland State website, www.puntlandstate.com, 2003.

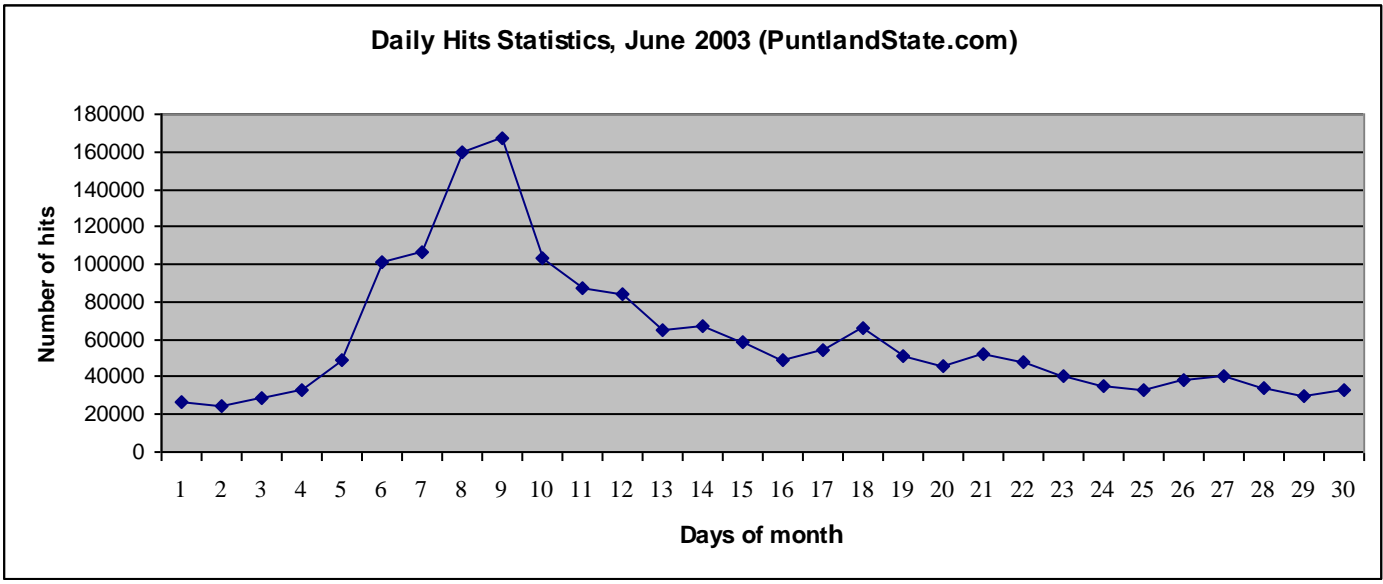
Websites visitors increase when there are major events taking place in the Somali regions. For example, between May and June 2003, PuntlandState.com received a flood of visitors (see Fig. 23 and Fig. 24) during the time of peace negotiation between Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and General Mahamoud Muse Hirsi (known as General Adde), Chairman of Puntland Salvation Council (PSC). The talks had been under way in Bosaso, the commercial capital, since 10 May, ending with the signing of a power-sharing agreement between the two sides (IRIN 19/05/2003). Beside the provisions for power sharing in the government, the peace agreement included also merging of the two armies and the holding of general elections (ibid.). The crisis started following the forced extension of Col Abdullahi Yusuf's tenure as the president of Puntland.

FIG. 24: PUNTLANDSTATE VISIT



Source: Puntland State website, www.puntlandstate.com, 2003

FIG. 25: DAILY HITS STATISTICS, PUNTLANDSTATE.COM



The news of Puntland peace negotiation was mainly followed by Puntland related websites as can be demonstrated in Table 12. The first six in the list, all related to Puntland region, covered 67% of the fifteen sample websites. Arlaadinet.com and Arlaadi.com, which comes right after SomaliTalk, covered a total 17 news items about the Puntland peace talks. One of the reason for Arlaadi to cover Puntland peace talks is influenced by the political alliance between Puntland

and Baidoa. The reverine websites were sympathetic to follow and publish the positive news about Puntland.

Hobyonet.com and Mudug.com which are at the bottom of the table did not cover the event in Puntland at all. There are two reasons for this decision by both websites. First, they are controlled by the Diaspora related to the Somalis who live in Central Somalia who happens to be also clan rivals of Puntland people. They might have covered Puntland event had it been of interest to their users. The second reason is related to news ‘ownership’ where websites try to claim ownership to ‘its events’. Depending on their naming convention, majority of Com/pol websites ‘brand’ news as a property where they claim ‘ownership’ on it. They feel that “if you don’t claim your ‘news property others will claim and use as they want’.

As the event was of great interest for Puntlanders, it was obvious the event to be ‘seized’ by those website which feel related to Puntland. This also explains why news is the main feature of the Community/political web group

TABLE 12: NEWS COVER SAMPLE

Number	Website name	Number of news item about Puntland peace talks
1	AllPuntland.com	17
2	PuntlandPost.com	16
3	PuntlandState.com	16
4	RealPuntlnader.com	15
5	PuntlandNews.com	14
6	MudugOnline.com	13
7	SomaliTalk.com	12
8	Arlaadinet.com	9
9	Arlaadi.com	8
10	Qaranimo.com	5
11	Hiiraan.com	4
12	Markacadeey.com	4
13	Dayniile.com	2
14	Hobyonet.com	0
15	Mudug.com	0
Total		135

News covered between 3 May 2003 and 20 June 2003

7.3.2 NEWS OWNERSHIP

One good example of news ownership is an incident happened in Garowe, the capital of autonomous Puntland region of Somalia. Early morning of 27 February 2006 the city's peace began to be shattered by the sound of gunshots. The shooting happened between a militia which took control of the parliament building and the Puntland security police. The police took over the parliament and consequently, two people died and one was seriously wounded. It was widely believed that the militia were supporters of the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Puntland, Mr. Abdirahman Mohamud "Faroole".

The incident was believed to be related to a rumour to plot against Mr. Abdirahman Mohamud "Faroole" following a re-nomination of his cabinet post by President Mohamud Hersi Muse Adde. Just the day before, Puntland parliament was in session to exercise vote of confidence to government ministers, where most of the incumbent ministers were left to their posts. It was speculated that. Abdirahman Mohamud "Faroole", fearing he would lose his post in a no-confidence vote, angrily left the parliament.⁴⁶

As information is considered to be an important aspect in human life, the traditional Somali life-style is a continuous quest for news, whether from near or far. Whether it was a question of war or peace, good pasture or drought, nomads in transhumance needed certain essential information. Vital news items are known either as *tigaad* or *khoof* meaning, respectively, about pasture, or the imminent outbreak of war. Indeed, the prevalence of war and peace among Somalis has often been attributed to the power of language.

⁴⁶ Mr. Abdirahman Mohamud "Faroole" denied all these allegations in an interview with radio SBS and Radio Garowe on the following day. He stated that the incident was a plot to discredit him.

In Somali tradition, greater importance is attached to the bearer of information than to the information itself. A reliable messenger could attain high social standing because of his authentic source of reference. The prestige assigned to a reputed messenger, known as *wargaleen* or *looga-qaateen* is captured in the following poetic verse:

Warka looga-qaateen sidaa, loo wanqali laaye.

(News brought by a trust-worthy messenger would be feasted upon).

(Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 30)

Generally, news media report stories in a manner believed correct, as if there is a consensus in the audience. In reporting events, the news media always focus on what is timely, covering the most recent period (Chandler, 1998).

According to Gerbner et al (1964) “there is no fundamentally non-ideological, non-partition news gathering and reporting system” (quoted in McQuail, 1994: 274). They add that there are three factors which users direct to news: (1) Message factors (or news content) which entails the issue of the news; (2) user motivation where user pays attention to a information that he/she is interested; and (3) the context of the item which is the contextual factor in the interpretation of news *ibid.*).

Despite that many Com/pol web types’ contents are tainted by sensationalism, in a way, sensationalism is built into the concept of news. Generally, events are seen as newsworthy because they deviate from the ordinary, and web reporting is seen to presenting events in an emotionally compelling way (*ibid.* 275).

As news is the central ingredient of newspapers, it is difficult to define unless it is seen in terms of the media (website) itself. Some define news as a reflection of social conditions, while other such as Walter Lippman (1992) define news “not as a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself” (*ibid.*). In this sense, attention is directed to what is noticeable and worthy of notice in a form suitable for planned and routine inclusion as news report (McQuail, 1994: 268). Another early commentator on news, Robert Park (1940), paid more attention to the essential properties of the news report. His starting point

was to compare it with other 'forms of knowledge', history, and places news on a continuum that ranges from 'acquaintance with' to 'knowledge about' (Park, 1940: 42). News is located somewhere in the middle of this continuum (ibid. 42). One of Park's findings from his comparison is that news events are characterised by other 'news values' which are always relative and involve subjective judgements about likely audience interest (ibid. 45).

One important element that influences Com/pol web type news selection seems to be a socio-cultural factor. In this perspective, news values tend to favour events which are about war and conflict. Websites tend to give importance to news events that they believe satisfy their audience as well to themselves.

Although judgements of news value are often relative and based on a journalistic 'feel for news' at the particular moment, there will usually be strong elements of subjectivity. The standards which are built into the news code are more likely to be expressed in the manner of handling and reporting events than in the selection, or the neutrality of presentation.

7.3.3 COUNTER NEWS

It is a common for websites to defend their group or alliance while vilifying the other side. On 17 May 2002, Ruunkinet.com, a pro-interim-government (the Transitional National Government) website reported an Ethiopian incursion in the Somali territory. They reported that Ethiopian "forces intended to move on to capture Baardheere soon, much further south in Gedo province" (Ruunkinet, May 2002). They quoted the information minister of the transitional government, Ahmad Hashi Mahmud as saying that this was a flagrant military aggression by Ethiopia... aimed at seizing Somali territory (Ruunkinet, 2002). They further added that about a battalion of Ethiopians had captured Bulo Hawo and "committed a massacre against the population, and burned and plundered the market area". The website accused the raid of being supported by an Ethiopian-backed organisation called Somali Reconciliation and Reconstruction Council (SRRC).

To counter the accusation, AllPuntland, and anti-Transitional National Government website, Colonel Yusuf Kaante of the SRRC told the website by telephone that "This development is

a big slap in the face for the Arta faction (interim government), which has been engaged in expansionism," he said. "We strongly deny the cheap lies of the Arta faction which claims that our neighbour, Ethiopia, is involved in the fighting in the region," he added.

Normally websites decline unpleasant news related to their groups while they accept news that is favourable to them. For example, on 24/05/06, four ministers of the Federal National Government based in Mogadishu resigned their post following long opposition to the Prime Minister Mohamed Ali Gedi whose government moved to Baidoa in February 2006. The four were the Minister for National Security, Mohamed Qanyare Afrah; the Minister of Commerce, Muse Sudi Yalahow; the Minister for Religion and Endowments, Omar Mohamed Mohamud; and the Minister for Disarmament and Militia Rehabilitation, Botan Issa Alin.

Quoting a Voice of America news report, Dayniile.com took the news as a "a severe blow to efforts to establish a functioning government in the Horn of Africa country of Somalia", while AllPuntland takes as a 'positive' step ministers to fire themselves as they had been obstacles to the progress of the TFG since its inception in 2004. The week before, the prime minister and the Transitional Federal Parliament asked the four ministers to come to Baidoa. The four ministers fashioned themselves into the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism, with the aim of rooting out elements of Al Qaeda in their midst. As consequence of the fighting, the deaths of more than 200 people, had been reported.

Another episode, on the same day, Dayniile.com reported the arrest of the director of Bosaso airport. No Puntland related website reported the event which means that the event was considered fabricated by Dayniile.com. In similar vein, in March 2006, there was a shootout between the police and some private security in Bosaso. Dayniile.com interpreted the event as a major conflict where Bosaso was divided into two warring parts. According to the Puntland related websites (AllPuntland.com, Horseednet.com, Idamaale.com and BiyoKulule.com) the event was as a routine incident.

7.3.4 THE REACTION TO NEWS PROPAGANDA

In October 2006 Horseednet.com and Puntlandpost.com carried an extensive campaign to discredit Dayniile.com website. They attacked what they called “Dayniile’s dreary style of reporting” which was intended to undermine Puntland’s stability and progress (Horseednet.com, 2006). They both carried an article by Cilmi Maxamed Aadan, who compiled a list of nine articles by Dayniile.com (see Table 13).

The articles covered a wide range of issues ranging from human rights violations to the deterioration of relationships within Puntland. Nine of the articles were exclusive to Dayniile.com (see below), while the other six were shared with other websites. The articles focus on three relationships:

1. Inter-regional relationship:

- a. The relationship of Puntland with the newly formed Galmudug State. Galmudug State was formed in September 2006 and has as its capital South Galkayo town. Galmudug State administration covers the southern Mudug region of central Somalia and the Habargidir Hawiye clan inhabits it. The articles also focus on the relationship between Puntland and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).

2. Inter-clan relationship:

- a. This deals with the relationship between Puntland clans and those of its neighbouring clans, particularly the Hawiye south of Puntland.

3. Intra-communal relationship:

- a. There are two levels of relationship here: (a) within Puntland community, and (b) Puntland administration with its own community.

Three of the nine articles will be used to illustrate these relationships here.

Article 1: Puntland forces withdraw from Bandiradley village of Galkacyo district (Ciidamada Puntland oo isaga baxay maanta tuulada Bandiradley ee degamada Galkacayo) (03 Oct 06).

Bandiradley is a village 60 kilometres south of Galkacyo, regional capital Mudug. Since August 2006, the militia of warlord Col Abdi Qaybdiid and the ICU contested the village. Col Qaybdiid, who is supported by Puntland and Ethiopia, is one of the warlords sent out from Mogadishu by the ICU in June 2006.

The news alleges that Bandiradley was actually occupied by Puntland forces, an allegation fiercely denied by Puntland administration.

Galkayo is divided⁴⁷ into two parts: North which is part of Puntland, and South, which is under the recently created Galmudug State. The village is inhabited by Sa'ad Habargidir of Hawiye lineage. As the Harti Daarood clan inhabits Puntland, the intended effect is to incite and revive animosity between the two clans who have been coexisting together in Mudug since mid 1990s. The issue was to revive the memories of the early years of the civil war when General Aideed's militia invaded Galkacyo killing more than 900 civilians.

Article 2: "I went to Galkacyo to bring together Galmudug State and the ICU" Mr. Cismaan Caato, MP; (Xildhibaan Cismaan Caato "Galkacyo waxaan u tagay sidii aan u mideyn lahaa maamulka Galmudug State iyo Maxaakimiinta Islaamiga") (03 Oct 06).

Mr. Cismaan Caato is a member of Somali Transitional Federal Parliament and he is also the Minister of Public Works of the Transitional Federal Government. He is one of the architects of the newly formed Galmudug State.

The formation of Galmudug was intended to dwarf an attempt by the ICU to create an Islamic court in the region. Puntland saw the hasty formation of the regional state as a direct challenge to its administration. However, with the ICU entry in the region, the two administrations joined in alliance to oppose their new enemy.

⁴⁷ The division followed an agreement between USC (Gen Aideed) and SSDF (Abdullahi Yusuf) in 1994.

The news is intended to create a rift between the new alliance.

Article 3: A declaration of support to the Union of Islamic Courts by Maxamed Cumar of Omar Maxamud who lives in Puntland Regions (Bayaan ka soo baxay Beesha Maxamed Cumar ee Cumar Maxamuud ee ku Nool Goballada Puntland oo lagu taageerayo Midowga Maxkamadaha Islaamiga) (29 September 2006).

This article focuses on the relationship within Puntland between the administration and its own community.

Maxamed Cumar sub-lineage is one of Cumar Maxamud Majeerten lineages and they live in Puntland. They dissent from President Abdullahi Yusuf, the interim Transitional Federal Government leader, who is also from Cumar Maxamud Majeerten clan. The declaration is a direct challenge or undermining of the president who many of Maxamed Cumar accuse of causing the death of their clan leader, the late Sultan Ahmed Mohamed Mohamud (known as Sultan Hurre).

The intention is to revitalize and give new breath to the anger and despair of this community to their fellow clan member who happens to be the president. The killer of Sultan Hurre has never been brought to justice as the personal bodyguards of President Abdullahi Yusuf killed him on 17 August 2002 in Puntland.

TABLE 13: DAYNILE.COM ARTICLES

- Article 1: Puntland forces withdraw from Bandiradley village of Galkacyo district (*Ciidamada Puntland oo isaga baxay maanta tuulada Bandiradley ee degamada Galkacayo*) (03 Oct 06).
- Article 2: “I went to Galkacyo to bring together Galmudug State and the ICU” Cismaan Caato, MP; (*Xildhibaan Cismaan Caato “Galkacyo waxaan u tagay sidii aan u mideyn lahaa maamulka Galmudug State iyo Maxaakimiinta Islaamiga”*) (03.10.2006).
- Article 3: Puntland Administration apologies to Galmudug administration for the refusal of Cismaan Caato to fly to Galkacyo (*Maamulka Puntland oo raali galin ka siiyay maamulka Galmudug is hortaaggii Cismaan Caato ay ugu diideen Gaalkacyo*) (03.10.2006)
- Article 4: Some well known Puntland politicians attempting to introduce the Islamic Courts Union in Puntland (*Siyaasiyiin Caan ah ee Puntland oo wada xiriir lagu soo gaarsiinayo Maxakiimta Islaamiga Deegaannada Puntland*) (02.10.2006).
- Article 5: The new popular movement felt in Puntland regions (What has moved the people of Puntland) (*Kacdoon ugub ah oo laga dareemayo gobolada Puntland (Maxaa Kiciyey shabcabka Puntland)*) (02.10.2006)
- Article 6: The relative of those killed in their houses attaching Boosaaso city centre (*Eheladii raggii lagu laayey guryahooda oo caawa weerar la beegsaday saldhigga bartamaha Boosaaso*) (01.10.2006)
- Article 7: Boosaaso police who shot dead two men from Garowe & plan by Puntland Muslim scholars who are trying to pronounce a Islamic court (report) (*Boliiska Boosaaso oo xalay toogasho ku dilay labo nin oo ka soo jeeda Garowe & qorshe maxkkamado Islaami ah lagaga dhawaaqayo deegaanno ka tirsan Puntland oo ay wadaan culumaa’udiiinka Puntland (warbixin)*) (01.10.2006)
- Article 8: Leaflet of opposition to the Puntland and the Minister of Finance scattered minister scattered on Boosaaso streets this morning (*Waddooyinka Boosaaso oo saaka lagu dadiyay waraaqado lagaga soo horejeedo madaxwaynaha & wasiirka maaliyada Puntland*) (01.10.2006)
- Article 9: A declaration of support to the Union of Islamic Courts by Maxamed Cumar of Omar Maxamud who live in Puntland Regions (*Bayaan ka soo baxay Beesha Maxamed Cumar ee Cumar Maxamuud ee ku Nool Goballada Puntland oo lagu taageerayo Midowga Maxkamadaha Islaamiga*) (29.09.2006).

As mentioned before, web propaganda has been common for many years. Not only Puntland related websites believe that their region is a target of web propaganda campaigns. Somalilanders feel they are the target of web ‘crusade’ and consider the campaigns mainly due to jealousy of their achievement feel in a similar situation.

In September 2006 one item which took the websites by storm was a video film showing the torturing of Sheikh Mohamed Ismail by Somaliland security forces. The Sheikh was arrested following his criticism of the American policy regarding terrorism and the Ethiopian policy towards Somalia.

Many Somaliland websites as well as many local newspapers took the case as a plot against Somaliland. For example, Somaliland Times expresses it in this way, “... a group of militants from one sub-clan in Hargeysa has contacted a well known cleric from another sub-clan to endorse a plan for the proclamation of Islamic Courts administration in the capital.” (Somaliland Times, 2006). The paper further claims that the plan was dwarfed as the cleric “... rejected the plan but also warned those who contacted him that they would be responsible for the repercussions of such an action” (ibid).

The Somaliland Times editorial points that the “Sheikh’s case plot” is only the tip of the iceberg of propaganda against Somaliland (Somaliland Times, 2006). It goes further by implicating the BBC Somali Service in the distortion and manipulation of news events (ibid).

7.3.5 NEWS PROCESS

One main aspect of news form has to do with indications of relative significance of events, of type of content and with ways of structuring the whole. Indicating significance is mainly achieved by the sequencing of content and the relative amount of space or time allocated. For example, television news bulletins are generally constructed with a view to arousing initial interest, by highlighting some event, maintaining interest through diversity and human interest and holding back some vital information to the end, then sending the viewer away at the close with a light touch. The hidden purpose or effect of this is to reinforce a ‘primary

framework' of normality and control and a view of the world which is essentially ideological (Glasgow Media Group, 1980). Similarly, websites' hidden purpose is to attract their 'own' audience first.

The power of language is also manifested in the importance Somali attach to accuracy of news. Numerous proverbs and poetic verses bear testimony to the premium that Somali assign to accurate information (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 35). Nothing is as highly prized as a firm grasp of the situation.

Hubsiiino halbaa la siistaa
(Certainty is worth a she-camel).

Conversely, the following adage reveals the nomads aversion to uncertainty:

War la'aani werwer by kugu dishaa.
Wehel la'aanna waddadaa kugu dheeraata.
Waddan aqoon la'aanna waabashaa kugu disha.
(Lack of news begets worry).
Loneliness makes the road longer.
Unfamiliarity with the land makes you cautious.)

The speed and immediacy of the medium coupled with the 'instant rectifiable' archive capacity of any website does create a situation where a journalist might be tempted to throw ethics overboard in favour of deadline or scoop (ibid.). The fact that the need for accuracy (indeed a traditional professional value in journalism) is fundamentally challenged by this seems to force journalists to establish some kind of standard. The more accurate online journalism is the better it is. Information is verified in a number of ways. The Internet allows mistakes to be sorted immediately, even replacing certain parts of the news content in 'real' time (Deuze et al, 2001).

Traditionally, Somalis distinguished news bearer into *goob-jooge*, the one who witnessed an event who is also the one 'qualified' to speak authoritively of what transpired; and *maqle*,

attributed to the one who has heard the news. Both are evaluated according the immediacy of the information sources. The first is said to be *weris* which is the account of the first-hand observer, while the latter is regarded as *tebis* which is referred as the second-hand (or third, fourth and so on) relation of the original version (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 13)

The way information is treated by Somali webmasters reflects the Somali culture of treating information as a commodity. Culturally, information is considered as an essential commodity. Somalis say '*warbaa ugu gaaja wayn*' (information hunger is the worst hunger). This obliges whoever deals with information to have the virtue of '*wargalnimo*' (literarily meaning information handlers). Accuracy is crucial in news industry, and as websites do not have the resources to run a news agency (such as such as paying its reporter), there is always problem with maintaining it. Beside the lack of resources there is also pressure from competition.

Somali culture attaches *wargalnimo* with responsibility. *Wargalnimo* is also one of the attributes of man. A man who is unable of 'handling information' is deemed to be dishonoured losing dignity and consequently falls into a status of "he whose daughter would not be married" (*gabadhaa guurwaa*).

In recent times, however, such customs have become weakened and it is less common for news-bearers to make such distinctions, facilitating the transmission of rumours and hearsay. Generally, there are four elements (related in a different sequence) which can be found in the conceptions of the news-making process:

events → news criteria → news reports → news interest

This sequence begins with the word of unpredictable happening which 'obtrude' and breaks the normality and to which news media respond by applying criteria concerning relative significance for their public (McQuail, 1994: 136). This view emphasises the reality-responsive quality of news, the theoretical viewpoint, and the structured and autistic nature of the news selection process. They compile objective news reports of chosen events, and the public responds with attention and interest or not, a datum which feeds into subsequent selection behaviour (ibid. 106).

The alternative model of the sequence is

news interest → news criteria → events → news reports

Here the starting point is experience of what gains the attention of the public, which contributes to a rather stable and enduring set of news criteria, including the organisational and genre requirements. News events are only recognised as newsworthy if they conform to these selection criteria. News requirement and routing practices than by reference to the ‘real world’ of events or what audience ‘really’ want to read (McQuail, 1994: 274). It seems that websites prefer primarily the last model as this is influenced by attention-gaining. This tendency may lead the media to meet the needs and interests of their audience.

The political ingredient in website content has another meaning. Audience satisfaction is highly evaluated, and in some cases it seems that the audience are satisfied with what they get from their preferred website. Here there is a combination of satisfaction and political content which prioritises event.

satisfaction → content (political) → event

Event is considered important in relation to the interest (satisfaction) of the audience. In the opinion of a journalist “considering news event which the audience finds of interest is a first priority” (email message, 2003). In other words, what makes attractive seems to be political criteria, which are also highly demanded by the audience.

7.4 SOMALI WEB AUDIENCE FORMATION

Evidently, the ‘audience’ has been a familiar term in communication since its early days — it is the collective word to denote the ‘receivers’ in the simple sequential model of the mass communication process (source, channel, message, receivers, effect) deployed by pioneers in the field (McQuail, 1994: 285). There is an established discourse in which ‘audience’ simply

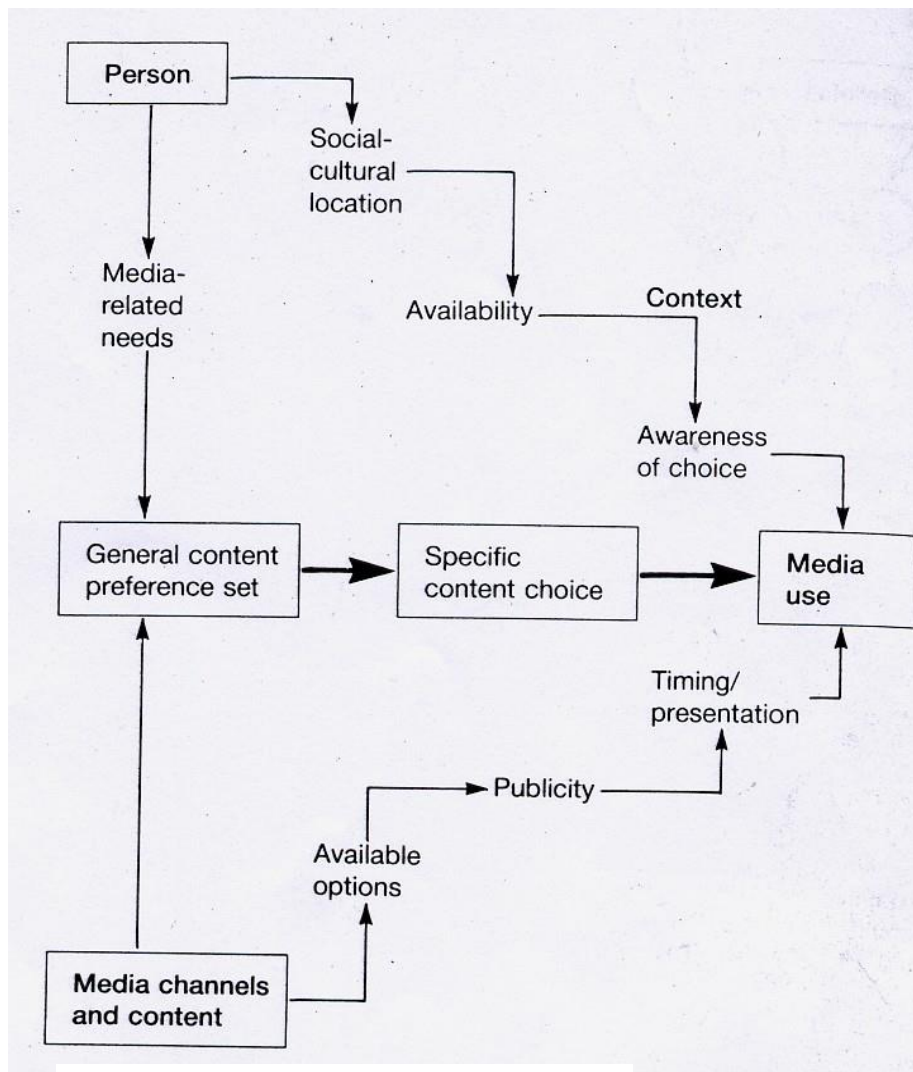
refers to readers, viewers or listeners of one or another media channel or of this type or that type have content or performance. Obviously, audience formation has to depend on what is made available by the medium and on how it is presented.

Audience can originate either in people and society or in media and their contents (McQuail, 1994: 289). Somali web media provision responds to demands from community and society — i.e. the needs of the local community. It may also respond to the assumed individual content preference of a particular sector of the audience. Both represent communication needs which arise out of pre-existing social experience. The difference between ‘social’ and ‘individual’ is also a macro-micro distinction, relating on the one hand to complete groups or social categories (a community, a political public) and on the other hand to overlapping subsets of individuals within the total media audience which express this or that requirement from mass communication (ibid.).

It appears that there are two main factors which influence the formation of Somali websites audience: those who feel ‘related’ to a particular website, and those who access casually for information.⁴⁸ The first type formation characterised with the Com/pol websites is social-oriented. Basically this will correspond with the existing social grouping, with shared characteristics such as place, group identity, politics, or culture.

⁴⁸ In many cases, users are found to access certain websites only to access to other websites using their links. This way saves users to memorise all websites’ URL addresses which requires to be typed at the address bar of Internet browser.

FIG. 26: VIEWER AND MEDIA INFLUENCE ON MEDIA USE MODEL



Source: McQuail, 1994

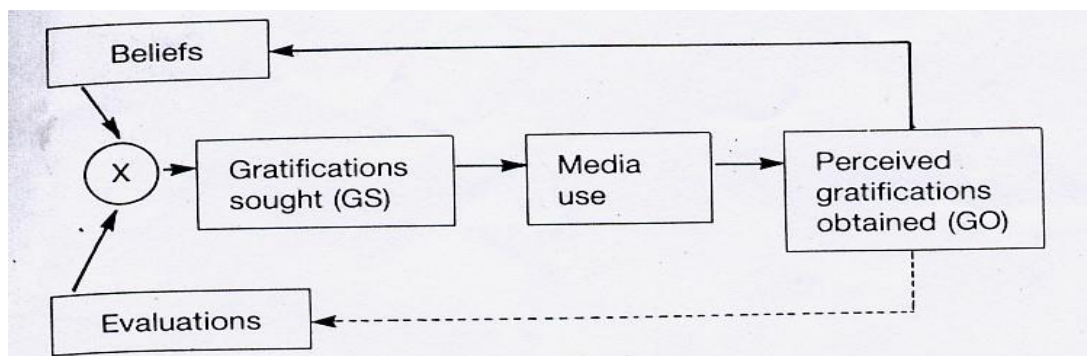
Generally, users may surf one or more websites. However, what is found is that users may show preferences for particular websites. The order of preference of the user orients him/her to the expected satisfactions to be gained from viewing/reading the web content. First, there is a generalised pleasure which guides the user to access the website as a way of finding the needed information. This general set is broadly influenced by the social-cultural factor and also by past experience and their typical content. Along the way, user makes or accepts a specific content choice which is influenced (on the 'viewer side') more approximately by availability at a given time, by degree of awareness of alternative and by the context of

viewing (Fig. 26). At the same time, choice is constrained (on the ‘media side’) by what the websites are actually offering at the moment in time.

On the basis of relevant past experience, the Somali user is guided by personal motivation as he/she expects the website to offer to them the needed information (reward). These rewards can be thought of as experienced psychological effect which is valued by the user. This is also called media ‘gratification’. Such rewards can be derived from actual item of content, and provide guidance for subsequent choices.

Media use serves a variety of needs stemming from the personal social situation of the individual. The ‘user and gratification’ approach has been centrally concerned with the choice and manner of response of the media audience (McQuail, 1994: 319). The media use are held to lie in social or psychological circumstance which are experienced as problems, and the media are used for problem resolution (the meeting of needs) in matters such as information seeking or social contact (ibid. 319).

FIG. 27: EXPECTANCY-VALUE MODEL OF MEDIA GRATIFICATIONS



Source: McQuail. McQuail, 1994

This model expresses the proposition that media use is accounted for by a combination of perception of benefits offered by the medium and the differential value attached to these benefits. This helps to cover the fact that website (media) use is shaped by avoidance as well as by varying degrees of positive choice among the potential gratifications expected from the

website. The model distinguishes between expectation (gratification sought) and satisfactions (gratification obtained) and identifies an increment over time from website use behaviour (see Fig.27). Where perceived gratification has a noticeably higher value than gratification sought there is likely to be a situation of user satisfaction and high rating of appreciation and attention.

Personal social circumstances and psychological dispositions together influence both general habits of media and also beliefs and expectations about the benefits offered by websites.

7.4.1 REPORTING AND PRODUCING EVENTS

Surprisingly the shooting incident was only reported on websites associated with Puntland. Some of these were: PunlandPost.com, GaroweOnline.com, AllPuntland.com, Wayaha.com, Idamaale.com, MudugOnline.com, BiyoKulule.com and HorseedNet.com. This exclusiveness can be explained as websites treating local news as their own 'property'. By 'claiming ownership' of the local event, they attempt to shun 'their properties' from preventing other websites to 'steal'. It can be said that this action expresses a feeling that can be articulated in this way: 'the local information belong to us'. Event Dayniile Online, one of the rivals and most vociferous websites of Puntland did not report Garowe incident until the third day.

Although many Puntland-associated websites reported the incident, they differed in their interpretation of the event. GaroweOnline.com, which is believed to be run by the supporters of Mr Faroole, reported the matter as a 'coup' by the president. In its headline it said that "so called parliamentary vote of confidence the president intended to overthrow his own cabinet" (GaroweOnline, 27 Feb. 2006). It further added that the incident followed a group of armed men who mutinied against "the injustice of the government of President Adde" (ibid.). They accused the president and his vice-president, Hassan Dahir Afqurac, of being responsible for what happened. Other websites tried to be neutral in their reports. AllPuntland which is one of the most active websites kept updating the event every hour.

Practically speaking, to produce daily news requires a substantial amount of resources which a website might not be able to afford. These expenses come from reporters' pay, editing, and updating. These activities involve also time.

TABLE 14: THREE WEBSITES' INCOME AND EXPENSES

Details	SahanOnline.com (category: on-news)	PuntlandState.com (category: Com/pol)	SomaliPen.org (category: pro/bus)
Income			
Adverts	\$1,320	\$2,400	0
Other sources	0	\$2,300 ⁴⁹	\$900 ⁵⁰
Sub total	\$1,320	\$4,700.	\$900
Expenses			
Domain registration 1 year ⁵¹	\$150	\$150	\$150
Web hosting 1 year	\$200	\$200	\$200
Services yearly expenses	\$2,120 ⁵²	\$4,200	\$600
Overhead and other expenses	\$1,200	\$1,500	\$300
Subtotal	\$3,670	\$6,050	\$1,250
Profit/Loss	-\$2,350	-\$1,350	-\$350

Although many website have adverts, the income generated is not enough to cover the yearly expenses necessary to run the web (see Table 14). The minimum yearly expenses of Sahanonline (URL address www.sahanonline.com) run to US\$ 3,670. Income generated from the web adverts could not exceed more than US\$ 1,320. An average shortfall of US\$ 3,670 is incurred every year where covered by two volunteer (including the author) in Europe and North America. Their services covered mainly the updating and related jobs. The cost was reduced in the production of news items as the website was a web version of Sahan Newspaper published in Bosaso, Puntland.

⁴⁹ Webmasters explained that the other source of the web income came as Somali community members' contribution.

⁵⁰ It is sponsored by the P.E.N International.

⁵¹ Domain registration and web hosting vary from time to time and from company to company. This amount has been taken as the fee incurred by the website.

⁵² This calculation is based on the minimum wage in Europe, North America and Australia which average US\$10.

SomaliPen.org is completely different from the two other websites as it is the web outlet of Somali Writers Club of P.E.N.⁵³ The Centre is established for charitable purposes therefore all its activities are based on its volunteers. Nevertheless, its expenses are partially paid by P.E.N. International.

Puntlandstate.com's condition was completely different from SahanOnline.com as it was expected to produce its own news items. This involved paying its reporters many of whom were found in Somalia. Beside these charges, the website had also to pay for the other usual expenses such as communication including (telephone, Internet accessibility, and faxes).

What at most a website can afford to produce is news occurrences which break in the regions where the website has an interest in or feels related to. This is because of the relation which the web managers might have with the local area. Other news is copied from other websites and modified as needed to conceal the source as in *Textbox 6* and *Textbox 7*. Generally, news originates from one website, other websites copy either entirely without changing or modifying as is the news in *Textbox 8* and *Textbox 9*. Similarities are underlined in the four textboxes. In *Textbox 6* and *Textbox 7* the editor has tried to modify as much he/she can but failed to completely hide the copying. However, in *Textbox 8* and *Textbox 9* they are alike except for a few lines.

⁵³ P.E.N. is a world-wide association of writers founded in 1921. PEN is a non-political, non-governmental organisation with category A status at U.N.E.S.C.O.

TEXTBOX 6: NEWS SAMPLE ON HORSEEDNET.COM (1)

Munaasabada 26ka june oo xalay laga xusay magaalada Baydhabo⁵⁴

Last Updated::2006-06-26 14:36:26

Muqdisho:- Munaasabada 26ka june oo ku beegan sanad guuradii 46aad ee ka soo wareegatay kolkii gobollada waqooyi madax banaanida ay qaateen ayaa lagu qabtay magaalada Baydhabo ee xarunta dawladda fedaraalka ayada oo munaasabadaasi ay ka soo qeyb galeen masuuliyiin ka tirsan dawladda oo uu ku jiray madaxweynaha dawladda fedaraalka C/laahi Yuusuf Axmed.

Xaflad si heer sare ah loo soo agaasimay, laguna qabtay aqalka madaxtooyada magaalada Baydhabo, ayada oo xafladaasi khudbado ay ka soo jeediyeen masuuliyiinta dawladda.

Col. C/laahi Yuusuf Axmed oo munaasabadaasi khudbad ka jeediyay ayaa ka hadlay madax banaanida dalka iyo dhibaataadii laga soo maray, waxa uuna xusay madaxweynaha in dagaaladii ahliga ahaa ee ka dhacay dalka in ay cuuryaamiyeen nolasha shacabka Soomaaliyeed.

Madaxweyne Yuusuf ayaa u soo jeediyay xubnaha dawladda in ay ka shaqeeyaan danaha umadda Soomaaliyeed, isaga oo xusay in ay jiraan qolo uu ku sheegay in ay dooneyso in dalka xoog ay ku qabsato inkasta oo uusan carabaabin qoladaasi.

C/laahi Yuusuf ayaa ku afgobaadsaday dawladdiisa in ay tahay mid dib u heshiisiin, isaga oo ugu baaqay shacabka Soomaaliyeed in ay taageeraan dawladdiisa si looga baxo mashaqada halakeysay dalka.

Munaasabadaasi oo ay ka soo qeyb galeen kooxaha baanbeyda ayaa saqdii dhexe ee xalay waxaa lagu saaray calanka Soomaaliyeed, taasi oo lagu xusuusanayay markii ugu horreysay oo calanka laga dul taago dhul Soomaali ay leedahay sanadii 1960kii, kolkaasi oo gobollada waqooyi xornimada ay qaateen.

Magaalada Muqdisho ayaan xalay lagu xusin munaasabada 26ka june marka laga reebo shaqsiyaad ka hadlay munaasabadaasi oo uu ku jiro guddoomiyaha gobolka Banadir ahna duqa magaalada Muqdisho Maxamud Xasan Cali Cadde.

HorseedNet.com

Source: <http://www.horseednet.com/horseednet.php?id=3141>

⁵⁴ Summary *Textbox 4* and *Textbox: 26 June 2006* is the 46th anniversary of independence of the British Protectorate of Somaliland. Just after four days (in 1st July 1960) the British Protectorate of Somaliland joined Italian Somaliland to form the Somali Republic. The occasion was celebrated in Baidoa, the interim capital of the Transitional Federal Government. The Interim President Abdullahi Yusuf read a speech at the occasion.

Xaflad lagu xusay munaasabadda 26-ka June oo xalay ka dhacday Baydhabo, iyadoo madaxweynuhu uu hadal ka jeediyay

MarkaCadey.Net, Monday, 26 June 2006

Madaxweynaha dowladda Somaliya C/laahi Yusuf Axmed ayaa hadal gaaban xalay ka jeediyay munaasabad lagu xusayay 46 guuradii kasoo wareegtay markii gobollada woqooyi ee dalka ay gaareen xurnimadooda, iyadoo munaasabadaasina ay ka dhacday magaalada Baydhabo oo xarun u ah dowladda Somaliya.

Masuuliyiintii kasoo qebgashay xafaladaasi oo kamid ah golayaasha dowladda ee Baydhabo ku sugan ayaa halkaasi kasoo jeediyay khudbadao kala duwan oo ay ku muujinayeen xurnimada iyo waxa ay shacbiga Somaliyeed ugu toorantahay, iyadoo intooda badan ay soo qaateen dadkii Somaliyeed ee gobanimo doonka ahaa kuwaasi oo ku nafwaayay gacanta gumestaha.

Madaxweyne C/laahi Yuusuf Axmed oo munaasabadaasi khudbad ka jeediyay ayaa ka hadlay madax banaanida dalka iyo dhibaataadii laga soo maray, waxa uuna xusay madaxweynaha in dagaaladii ahliga ahaa ee ka dhacay dalka in ay cuuryaamiyeen nolasha shacabka Soomaaliyeed.

C/laahi Yuusuf ayaa shaaca ka qaaday dawladdiisa in ay tahay mid dib u heshiisiin, isaga oo baaq ugu jeediyay shacabka Soomaaliyeed in ay taageeraan dawladdiisa si looga baxo mashaqada ka taagan dalka.

Madaxweyne Yuusuf waxaa sidoo kale uu ugu baaqay xubnaha dawladda in ay ka shaqeeyaan danaha umadda Somaliyeed, isaga oo xusay in ay jiraan kuwo uu ku sheegay in ay ka go'antahay in dalka xoog ay ku qabsato inkasta oo uusan carabaabin .

Munaasabadaasi oo ay ka soo qeyb galeen kooxaha baanbeyda ayaa saqdii dhexe ee xalay waxaa lagu saaray calanka Soomaaliyeed, taasi oo lagu xusuusanayay markii ugu horreysay oo calanka laga dul taago dhul Soomaali ay leedahay sanadii 1960kii, kolkaasi oo gobollada waqooyi xornimada ay qaateen.

Magaalada Muqdisho ayaan maanta waxaa munaasabadda xukeeda laag dhigayaa goobo badan oo kala duwan iyadoo laakin xalay aysan munaasabadaasi ka dhicin gudaha Muqdisho.

Jibriil Nuur Alghamidi
Xafiiska MarkaCadey & Hamarey ee Muqdisho - Somalia
news@markacadey.net
gabriyale@yahoo.com

TEXTBOX 8: NEWS SAMPLE ON HORSEEDNET.COM (2)



Wafdi ka socda Jaamacada Carabta, Midowga Africa iyo Urur goboleedka IGAD oo Imaanaya Soomaaliya

Last Updated::2006-07-01 12:13:52

source: <http://www.horseednet.com/horseednet.php?id=3199>

Muqdisho:- Wafdi ka socda midowga Africa iyo jaamacada carabta ayaa la filayaa maalinta isniinta in ay u soo socdaalaan dalka Soomaaliya si ay wada tashiyo ula yeeshaan dawladda fedaraalka kmg iyo hogaamiyayaasha maxaakimta islaamiga Muqdisho.

Go'aankan loogu dirayo dalka Soomaaliya wafdi ka kooban wakiilo ka kala socda jaamacada carabta, midowga Africa iyo urur goboleedka IGAD ayaa ka danbeeyay kulan ay isugu yimaadeen masuuliyiin ka kala socota midowga Africa iyo IGAD, kaasi oo ka dhacay caasimada Nairobi arbacada iyo Khamiista.

Wafdigan ayaa kulamo wada tashi ah la yeelan doona masuuliyiinta dawladda, hogaamiyayaasha maxaakimta Muqdisho, ganacsatada iyo ururada bulshada rayidka.

Wafdigan ayaa socdaal ku tagi doona magaalada Baydhabo iyo Muqdisho halkaasi oo ay ka kala taliyaan dawladda fedaraalka iyo maxaakimta islaamiga, ayada oo wafdigan uu ka dhaadhicin doono labada dhinac aqbalida waan waan laga dhex sameeyo si loo soo afjaro mashaqada ka taagan dalka Soomaaliya.

Imaatinka wafdigan ayaa ku soo beegmaya xili midowga Africa uu sheegay in uusan la macaamili doonin hogaamiyayaasha maxaakimta islaamiga Muqdisho ee la wareegay gacan ku haynta magaalada Muqdisho iyo nawaaxigeeda.

HorseedNet.com

TEXTBOX 9: NEWS SAMPLE ON ALLMUDUG.COM

Wafdi midowga Africa iyo Jaamacada carabta ka socda oo Baydhabo iyo Muqdisho kuso fool leh.

Date:01/07/2006

Source: <http://allmudug.com/waftijciyoau.html>

Wafdi ka socda midowga Africa iyo jaamacada carabta ayaa la filayaa maalinta isniinta in ay u soo socdaalaan dalka Soomaaliya si ay wada tashiyo ula yeeshaan dawladda fedaraalka kmg iyo hogaamiyayaasha maxaakimta islaamiga Soomaaliyeed.

Go'aankan loogu dirayo dalka Soomaaliya wafdi ka kooban wakiilo ka kala socda jaamacada carabta, midowga Africa iyo urur goboleedka IGAD ayaa ka danbeeyay kulan ay isugu yimaadeen masuuliyiin ka kala socota midowga Africa iyo IGAD, kaasi oo ka dhacay caasimada Nairobi maalintii arbacada iyo kuwa khamiista.

Wafdigan ayaa kulamo wada tashi ah la yeelan doona masuuliyiinta dawladda, hogaamiyayaasha maxaakimta Soomaaliyeed, ganacsatada iyo ururada bulshada rayidka.

Wafdigan ayaa socdaal ku tagi doona magaalada Baydhabo iyo Muqdisho halkaasi oo ay ka kala taliyaan dawladda fedaraalka iyo maxaakimta islaamiga Soomaaliyeed, ayada oo wafdigan uu ka dhaadhicin doono labada dhinac aqbalida waan waan laga dhex sameeyo si loo soo afjaro mashaqada ka taagan dalka Soomaaliya.

Imaatinka wafdigan ayaa ku soo beegmaya xili midowga Africa uu sheegay in uusan la macaamili doonin hogaamiyayaasha maxaakimta islaamiga Soomaaliyeed ee la wareegay gacan ku haynta inta badan gobollada koonfureed ee Soomaaliya.

C/kariim Xuseen Guutaale.

AllMudug, Muqdisho.

7.5. THE WEB MEDIA AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Somalis are accustomed to such a well-preserved pattern of freedoms. Liberty of speech and movement were inherent in their traditional livelihood, and the equalitarian political culture was famously described as a “pastoral democracy” (Lewis, 1961). Under the dictatorial regime of Siyad Barre, Somalis suffered two decades of brutal repression. Freedom of speech, association, and movement were denied.

Local Somali media appear to vacillate between excessive exercise of freedom in some regions and drastic control in other regions. Many have the opinion that journalistic should regulate themselves and feel responsible towards the society. The desire for freedom should be weighted against the need to preserve political stability and social harmony.

According to the Academy for Peace and Development reported, one of the most important elements for the media to demonstrate is responsibility. Many interviewees show their concern about the “lack of responsibility” by the media (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 49).

The media fall between social responsibility and journalistic freedom. The social responsibility model emphasises that the media have obligations to society and therefore, news media should be truthful, accurate, fair and objective (to the extent that objectivity is attainable). Social responsibility ethics assume that the human being is a composition of its particular cultural background and preferences, and the human free will does not guarantee ultimate good for everyone.

Given the appearance of the Internet news and the need to rehabilitate the Somali state, how online journalism should be defined was examined by Burtinle.com in early 2004. In a programme called “The Role of Somali Journalist”, Mohamud Yusuf Garre, the webmaster and his colleagues, took the programme in a form of interviews and comments.

The general view came to the conclusion that journalists have a huge responsibility to cover their communities in ways that accurately reveals the degree and understanding of

community life. If the media particularly Somali websites desire to retain their credibility, and if journalists want to be appreciated on the strength of their writing, then they should behave responsibly. It was commented that there is a general assumption among Somalis that Somali websites cannot be trusted or relied upon to be truthful. They concluded that question should be raised about the role of ethics and responsibility within the Somali websites.

Given the media's formidable power to influence, media can become a powerful instrument of division and violence. Under authoritarian regimes, legislation and intimidation of the independent media may be employed to restrict press freedom. Equally of concern is the danger that may arise if the media become hostage to certain groups, or amplifies particular issues while at the same time neglecting others that are of paramount importance for the public. In one opinion, "Sometimes the media becomes a source of conflict and chaos in disseminating contradictory news items and coverage"(quoted in Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 49).

It is believed that where the control over the media is relatively relaxed, the media is freer to define its own role. But with such freedom comes tremendous social and political responsibility. This is especially true in the context of divided society and politically fragile states. Professor Saleebaan Ahmed Guuleed, president of Camuud University, has described the Somaliland media as a "double-edged knife", capable of both instigating and mitigating conflict (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 9). Numerous maxims attested to the destructive potential of the spoken word. The famous classical poet, Salaan Carrabey, said in one of his poems:

Afku wuxuu la xoog yahay magliga, xawda kaa jara'e
(the spoken word has the force of a dagger).

Another proverb observes that,

Uli way qabowdaa ereyse ma qaboobo
(the pain of a stick passes away, but the pain of a word lingers).

Alternatively, the media can contribute to reconciliation and the consolidation of peace. Conversely, verbal moderation contribution to a state of peace,

Haddii aan afku xumaan, gacantu ma xumaato
(if words do not turn sour, violence can be avoided).

Cali Xasan Sheekhdoon, a member of Somaliland House of Representatives, argues similarly,

“the media could be a constructive element as well as a destructive one. It depends on the politics and objective it serves...” (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 9).

Comparable to this attitude, this is what a Somali proverb says about the matter,

“Dhawaaqna meel dheer buu ku dhacaa, dhaqaxna meel dhow”
(a statement travels far, while a stone thrown falls only a short distance away).

Media may encourage tolerance of social and political heterogeneity within a society, or communicate symbols of national identity. The media may also play an educational role, enhancing public awareness about how democracy functions, and about individual rights, responsibility, and roles with respect to the political process (ibid.6).

7.6. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Popular aspirations for participatory democracy with well-established manner were formed under the authoritarian military dictatorship that ruled Somalia for 21 years. With peace still fragile and war a recent memory during this writing, many viewed the desire for freedom of

thought, speech and act to be weighted against the need to preserve political stability and social harmony.

Newspapers in the Somali regions are respective to their area authority (sometimes warlords). In Somaliland many feel distressed by the control of the government on the media from 1998 onwards. In Puntland control on media work is much tighter than in Somaliland.

In the last decade since the collapse of the Somali state institutions, in Mogadishu the media developed to an astonishing level compared to the rest of Somali regions, particularly in Somaliland and Puntland — where there has been a relative peace and stability for many years. There are two international radio networks, two television stations, a dozen of local short-wave radios and more than a dozen high newspapers in Mogadishu.

The status of the city as the capital of Somalia and attention it received from the international community could be considered the first factor which influenced this development. A second factor could be attributed to the uncontrollability of the city and the anarchy which reigns. Following the state collapse, the city has been divided by rival groups vying for the national power. Each function set its own media to ‘fight’ its rival. The ensuing anarchy has nurtured an environment of ‘absolute’ media freedom that can be seen as ‘media anarchy’.

Despite the fact that the majority of Somali websites are managed by the Somali Diaspora, they also come under the restriction of local political and militia bosses when it come to reporting. In 1999, in Puntland, the regional administration arrested Abulkadir Ali and Mohamed Ali of the newspaper Sahan, and Ahmed Mohamed Ali of the newspaper Riyaaq, reportedly for writing articles critical of the Government. Both journalists were released during the year. Similarly, in Mogadishu, Somali Journalists Network (SOJON), reported on a number of journalists harassed, arrested, threatened, intimidated, and in some cases killed (see Table 15).

TABLE 15: SOMALI JOURNALISTS NETWORK REPORT

Sojon Report on Journalists Treatment in Somalia						
Date	Name	Title	Station	Town	Case	Assailant
1999	Abulkadir Ali and Mohamed Deq	Reports	Sahan	Bosaso	Jailed	Puntland
24/01/2003	Abdullahi Madkeer	Caster	DMC Radio	Baidoa	Killed	RRA
26/01/2003	Hilal Sheik Shuaib	Reporter	DMC Radio	Baidoa	Hurt	RRA
18/02/2003	Nuh Muse Birjeb	Publisher	Ra'yi Press	Bosaso	Jailed	Puntland Security
03/05/2003	Sharif Hussein Mohamed	Engineer	Benadir Radio	Mogadishu	Ransomed	Free Militia
04/05/2003	Omar Faruk Osman	Journalist	Ruunkinet.com	Mogadishu	Intimidation	TNG
31/05/2003	Ali Halani	Reporter	IOL	Baghdad	Tortured	US Troops
25/06/2003	Makail Rashid Bare	Reporter	Radio Shabelle	Marka	Jailed	TNG Troops
01/07/2003	Abdulrahman Hudeifa	Reporter	Radio Benadir	Mogadishu	Jailed	TNG Police
	Husein Gedi Mohamed (Hainuf)	Reporter	Radio Benadir	Mogadishu	Jailed	TNG Police
	Shafi'i Mohiedin	Journalist	Freelancer	Mogadishu	Jailed	TNG Police
2003	Ahmed Mohamed Ali	Journalist	Riyaq	Puntland	Arrested	Puntland police
2004	Sheekh Adduun	Journalist	Freelancer	Puntland	Jailed and tortured	Puntland police

Source: Abukar Sheekh Axmed, Somali Journalists Network (SOJON).

Many interviewees have the opinion that the media should not have to be controlled at all. Nevertheless, they believe that they should take responsibility for what they publish. In other words, they should self-regulate themselves instead of having a body to regulate them.

In order to emphasise the importance of ethical self-definition, ethics perceive that respect for truth and the publics' right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself as they convey information, ideas and opinions, privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They give a practical form to freedom of expression as they scrutinise power, but also exercise it. Because of the last point, they should be accountable.

It is logically impossible for Somali websites to have shared regulation, particularly during social fragmentation. Each site stands on its own interest which collides with the interests of other websites. In this way, this may cause concern for the maintenance of professional and ethical standards.

Ethical codes contain not only norms safeguarding free communication but frequently also a list of the values the media is to promote, such as democracy and human rights. According to the Academy for Peace and Development ethical guidelines also generally declare that it is a journalist's duty to:

- tell the truth without malice or prejudice,
- use honest methods,
- show respect for professional integrity and responsibility,
- exercise discretion,
- work for the solution of economic, social and humanitarian problems, and
- help to strengthen respect for human rights.

Samsam Cabdi Aadan argued that the media must be free to comment on the political process during the critical period of nation-building, likening the body politic to a growing child: “A child cannot be left to do whatever comes into his mind. We are obliged to look after him and train. The nation-building process is the same, and the free press plays the role of the corrective parent (ibid. 54).

7.7. DECISION MAKING AND SELECTION

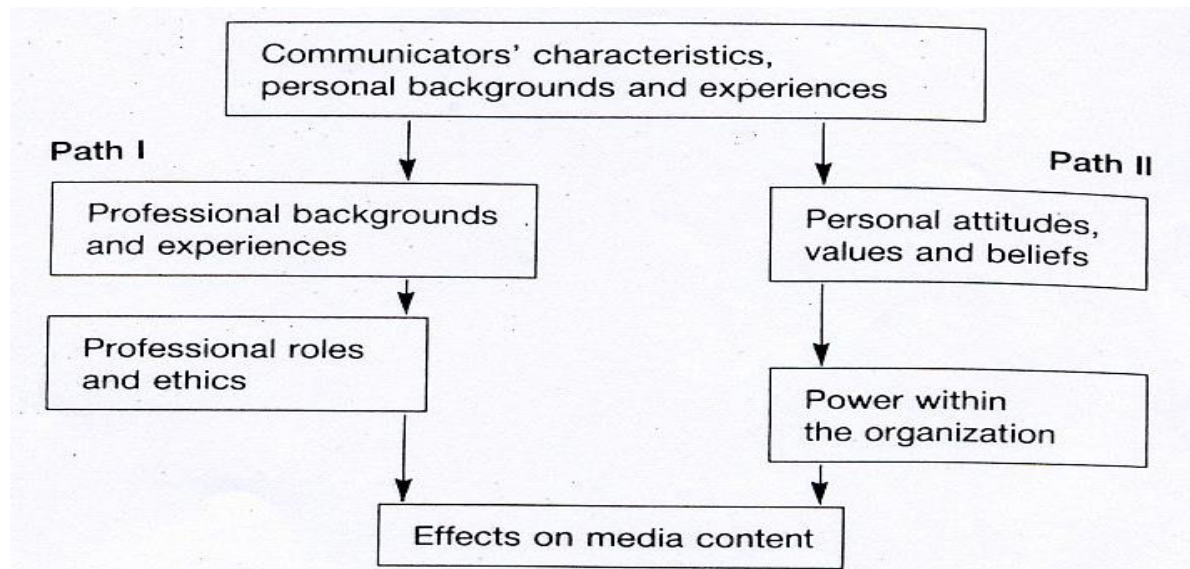
Tuchman (1978) argues that professionalism in news has largely come to be defined according to the needs of the news organisation itself. The height of professional skill is the exercise of a practical craft, which delivers the required informational product, characterised by a high degree of objectivity, key marks of which are obsessive facility and neutrality of attitude. The objectivity of news has become, in her view, the equivalent of a professional ideology.

Reflecting on the content of the majority of the Com/pol web types, there are two tendencies which lead their policies: one which is basically an individual preference and the other an organisational (website) preference. The expectation that media will ‘reflect society’ can be

supported on the grounds either that it is what their audiences want or that those who work in the media are a cross-section of society, at least in their values and beliefs. Nevertheless, this is not to deny that both arguments could be superseded by the influence of organisational goals and settings.

Shoemaker et al (1996) suggest that there are two paths one in which organisational role subordinates or conceals personal characteristics, and another in which having power or status in an organisation permits an individual communicator to express their personal beliefs and values in public communication (quoted in McQuail, 1994: 201). It is possible that when communicators have more power over messages and work under fewer constraints, their personal attitudes, values and beliefs have more opportunity to influence content (ibid. 72). According to Altschull (1984) “the content of news media always reflects the interest of those who finance the press”.

FIG. 28: SHOEMAKER ET AL COMMUNICATION CHARACTER



Source: Shoemaker et al, 1996.

Selection and processing news are other important aspect of the work of the websites. The first refers to the sequence of decisions which extends from the choice of ‘raw material’, to delivering the finished product. The second refers to the applications of work routines which affect the nature of this product as it passes through the ‘chain’ of decision-making.

In the case of news, the chains extend from ‘noticing’ an event, through writing about a news item for transmission. One correspondent replies in this way,

“There are two types of events: An event which erupts unexpectedly and one which is the continuation of a previous event.... Depending on the importance of the event, political considerations are always my priority.” (email survey, 12/04/2003).

In the industrialised media production, the chains involve a large volume of work which can become routines as a matter of necessity. Even the starting points — a news event or ‘creative idea’ — is strongly influence by convention and prior experience (McQuail, 1994: 209).

The processing of the ‘raw material’ of news, which usually consists of data about a supposed reality, begins at the first moment as a selection and can be considered in terms of a series of decisions and choices directed towards the achievement of a product which fits the goals of the website. One webmaster, who does not wish to be identified, has this to say, “what we don’t consider unimportant to our audience, we don’t give any consideration. We may consider it sometimes, but again we don’t prioritise.”

It is clear that the eventual news content of the web media arrives by several different routes in different forms. It may have to be sought out or ordered in advance, or its ‘discovery’ may have to be systematically planned. At times it also has to be internally manufactured or constructed. According to Fishman (1982), ‘what is known and knowable by the media depends on the information-gathering and information-processing resources’ of these agencies. Fishman writes,

“... news either reflects or distorts reality and that reality consists of facts and events out there which exist independently of how news workers think of them and treat them in the news production process.” (Fishman, 1980: 13).

Galtung and Ruge (1965) hypothesised that events become more likely when they fit certain organisational and also some cultural or 'ideological' criteria (McQuail, 1994: 214). Here the news which gets more attention in a way is that which is culturally close to the intended public.

Special relationships have also some obvious effects on the flow and selection of news in that these will be governed by physical proximity (ibid. 214). The nearer the location of news events is to the city or region of the intended audience, the more likely it is to be noticed. Nearness may, however, be overridden as a factor by other considerations, such as power or the intrinsic character of events (Galtung and Ruge, 1965: 178). Time has also an enormous influence as a consideration of selection. Timeliness is an essential ingredient of both novelty and relevance, both of which are highly priced in news, and it also reinforces one of the most significant prosperities of communication technology — its capacity to overcome barriers of time as well as space.

PART TWO

CHAPTER EIGHT

8. SOMALI ORALITY AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION: PUNTLAND/JUBBALAND MAILING LISTS CASE STUDY

8.1. INTRODUCTION

As case studies, the following two chapters will consider three Somali mailing lists: Puntland/Jubbaland mailing lists, the Somali Forum (SomaliForum) and Pan-Somali Council for Peace and Democracy (Israaca). The first group is a lineage-based group while the latter two are national level group lists.

Somali mailing lists have been created mainly by the Somali Diaspora for different purposes. There are different types of Somali mailing lists groups some of which are: (a) national level where groups of national interest meet virtually, (b) professional types where professional people communicate and (c) lists where groups meet below the national level.

Mailing environment is the arena where the Somali functional Diaspora has been taking place enabling the groups to organise and communicate. The mailing list medium has facilitated the Somali groups to take the Somali conflict outside the country. On the other hand, it is also where groups aiming as the supra-national level meet and get together.

Whatever the objectives of the mailing groups, what influenced their discussions are mainly events at home. The period coincided with the period which followed the rollback of the state boundaries. The breakdown of the central authority cleared ground for the creation of six major political units already discussed above.

8.2. BACKGROUND OF THE PUNTLAND/JUBBALAND MAILING LIST

Hosted under the name of `puntland_lj@world.std.com`, the Puntland/Jubbaland mailing list was established on 1st April 1998 by the Somali Diaspora from Majeerteen, Moorasaante (Dishiishe) and Arab Mohamud Salah communities — also known as Meheri. The group is

known also by the acronym MMM or 3M. Members are found almost on all over the world, including the Puntland region of Somalia. Between 1998 until 2000, Puntland/Jubbaland mailing list (hence the Gole)⁵⁵ included only members from the Majeerteen clan. In early 2000, it was expanded to include the other two groups. This is what it says in the mailing group's purpose,

“The purpose of Puntland and Jubbaland mailing list is to, but not limited to, facilitate privately the discussion of North-eastern and Lower Jubba social, economic and political affairs and to solidify the views of Majeerteen, Meheri and Moracase clan members in the Somali Diaspora” (Mailing group purpose).

Ethnically the inhabitants of Puntland are mainly from the Daarood and Meheri clans. The territory covered by Puntland is estimated as 186,385 square kilometres with a population of 3,200,000 (Puntin, 2000). Jubbaland is the southern part of Somalia. These groups live particularly in Kismayo and its adjacent area. The first group, the Majeerteen and Moorasaante (also known as Dishiiishe) came under the Harti of the Daarood clan-family. The Harti clan is the most scattered of the Somali clans residing in Puntland, in the eastern part of Ethiopia and as far as in Kismayo in Lower Jubba region.

The group formed a method to discuss and exchange news and information about their homeland from around the world. Other reasons for the formation of the mailing list were:

- finding missing relatives,
- meeting old friends and making new ones,
- helping and contributing to home development,
- helping the newly elected Puntland administration,

⁵⁵ The word *gole* (or *golaha* with article “the”) is related to the Somali traditional clan assembly known as *shir*. The *shir* usually takes the form of an open-air meeting held under the shade of a large tree where clan elders meet to discuss their affairs. As explained above, a decision in the *shir* is reached by consensus, after a lengthy discussion and analysis of the matter concerned. In recent time the word *golaha* became to represent decision-making institutions, such as Golaha Wakiillada (House of Representative), Golaha Sare ee Gacaanka (Supreme Revolutionary Council), Golaha Ammaanka (Security Council), etc.

- pooling skills of professionals, and
- promoting the interests of Puntland and Jubbaland regions.

The interaction of the group is meant to create a feeling similar to the intimacy characteristic of primary groups. Since social ties deepen in time, primary groups are relatively permanent, as relationships involve an identity of ends. In primary groups, the relationship is in itself an end and only secondarily or incidentally a means to an end.

Initially, the Gole was a fee-based mailing list. A fee of 50 US dollars was required to be paid by the prospective member (Article 3, (6)). Subsequently, members had to pay 100 US dollars every year. Beside the service fee, the subsequent money was to vary from time to time, depending on the needs and activity of the Gole operations. However, on 15 January 2002, the Gole was moved to a free yahoo group mailing host under the host name of puntland_lj@yahoogroups.com.

Despite the Gole moving to a free mailing list hosting, it was still supposed to be a private list. There are two types of accessing electronic list mails as far as accession is concerned: private and public. Public lists are those where members can subscribe or unsubscribe as they will. Private lists subscription is controlled.

8.3. THE GROUP'S FEELING

As what keeps the group together is shared values and objectives, one of the main reasons for the formation of the mailing list was to “create a means whereby the group could communicate outside their homeland” (email message, 12/01/2000). Besides the intimacy feeling, the Gole is also meant to create a sense of belonging among members. With this feeling, members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. (McMillan et al, 1986: 9)

As part of the sense of belonging, members identify with the group and feel a sense of buy-in (at least partially) to the group's purposes and values. Another effect of this feeling is trust where members feel safe with group members generally acting for the good of the whole as

members feel a moral imperative and desire to participate in activities and contribute to group goals. At the social level the group's roles include supporting, harmonising, and tension relieving, showing solidarity. At the task roles, group work towards information giving, elaborating and co-ordinating activities.

8.4. FORMALISING OBJECTIVES

Once the group established the Gole, the next phase was to draft rules and regulations to formalise the objectives and tasks. This included a constitution. The preamble says,

“Keeping in mind the development and general support needed for Somalia, particularly, Puntland and Jubbaland, we founded this forum to enable members to share the task of development of the homeland” and “to unite their political views, economic, social of the Somalis, particularly, that of Puntland and Jubbaland wherever they are” (Gole constitution).

The Gole is steered by a committee of seven members. It is further divided into sub-committees: the executive, the technical, disciplinary, and finance committees. Members elect the committee once every year (on every 15 December).

In case a member breaches the rule, his/her case is taken to the Discipline Committee. The Disciplinary Committee arbitrates also between members. However, it rarely happens that the accused is expelled from the Gole.

As in many cases, discussions are sensitive, and thereby, confidentiality is paramount in the Gole. To ensure and verify membership, a set of safety checks is in place. For example, prospective members are required to send a request of membership to a member of the list who should ensure the identity of the prospective member. This activity is primarily to prevent ‘infiltration’ and prove that the prospective person is ‘truly’ a member of the community (Article 3, (5)).

“Golahan waxaa ku soo biiri kara ruux kasta oo ku abtirsada Majeerteen, Meheri and Moorasaante oo raalli ka ah inuu ka qayb qaato sidii loo gaari lahaa himilooyinkii golaha loo asaasay oo ku xusan” (Article 3).

(This Gole could join those who are from the Majeerteen, Meheri and Moorasaante and who are ready to take part of the purpose that has been set for this list).

Attention is given to those who use free mailing accounts, particularly, those who subscribe to MSN (Hotmail), Yahoo, Dejanews, Mailcity, and Geocities. As those mailing lists are free, they can be registered by anyone pretending to use false identity(ies). Even if an account holder is genuine, some of these services could be easily breached.

In early 1999, hackers infringed MSN Hotmail free email service. Just a few days before, Microsoft had many complaints that expired Hotmail accounts retained the linked MS Instant Messenger buddy lists, and those lists were available to the next person who registered the same email address on a Hotmail account. Microsoft later patched the security hole in its MSN Hotmail free email service. This, nevertheless, remained a concern in the Gole.

In late August a non-member named Ali Salaad sent an email which frightened the members. Ali Salaad’s email was never supposed to reach members as he was not a member. Barre Mohamed, the founder and expert in mailing list security, send an email (Email 1) assuring the Gole.

EMAIL 1

From: BarreMohamed <barremoh@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: puntlandjj@world.std.com
To: puntlandjj@world.std.com
Subject: Re: yaa yaqaan ninkaan? Anigaa Aqaan!
Date: Fri, 1 Sep 2000 09:01:58 -0700 (PDT)

-BarreMohamed <barremoh@yahoo.com>

Mahamed iyo Gole,

AliSalad. Waa Isaaq, Habar Awal, Sacad Muuse. Reer Toronto, writer, free thinker, real Somalilander, [hence +/- real Somali], community developer, big mouth etc. I knew him @ soc. culture. Somalia in the early 90's.

Mr. Salad is not in our gole and Ahmed wouldn't dare to add him to the gole - in fact he didn't, unless the unification of the two regions is a reality. Ali Salad of Minneapolis, waa Ina Ali-yare, waana lagu yaqaan. Yaa siiyey Ali Salad emailkeenna? Well, once you compile a long list of real email addressees and openly send it to all organizations and media, it becomes a public domain. Ali Salad is only at the tip of the berg. Wait for the dirty dozen followed by all kinds of unsolicited sales and tempting advances.

Mr. Salad's mail is not coming from the Gole. Please don't get confused and disconcert the good standing security history of the gole. Mr. Salad is directly copying to your private email address. It is very easy to shut him up, be my guest and block him.

I will discuss the issue of the SomaliForum with the technical committee members in due course when it stops raining in Memphis a... Stay tuned.

Thanks

Barre Mohamed

Collaboration is directed into two ways: (i) to share resources and knowledge, and (ii) to unite the group with their region (alias clan) against the 'enemy'. In the preamble this is the wording:

“... midaynta aragtida siyaasadeed, iyo isugu-hiillinta halganka nololeed...”
(Puntland/Jubbaland Constitution).

(... unifying the political views, and helping each other in the struggle of life).

The prospective member is required to provide details such as name, place of residence, profession and education (see Appendix A). These details are used for a database to pool the

skills and professionals of the homeland so they could help in the development. Members are classified according to their profession. As mentioned earlier, following the civil war in Somalia in the early 1990s, the majority of the educated of every region in Somalia fled the country.

8.4.1 ORGANISING THE TASK

By mid 1990s as the Somali civil war was abating, the civil war entered in to a new situation: a phase that can be defined as an era of media war. This also coincides with the booming of global communication, especially with the introduction of the Internet. Besides being a medium for contact, the Gole's task was also to utilise the Internet technology in their mission. And to ensure its share of the Internet, the Gole, as early as 1998, created the Puntland State of Somalia website (www.puntlandnet.net)⁵⁶. Despite using the name of the self-autonomous region of Puntland State of Somalia, this website was never under the direct management of Puntland administration. Nevertheless, it was intended to facilitate the administration's correspondence with outside organisations. To facilitate members' tasks, the list was to include members of Puntland administration. For example, one of these was Ismail Haji Warsame, the Head of Cabinet whose base was Garowe, the regional capital of Puntland.

This is how the constitution emphasises the matter,

“In wararka iyo talooyinka lagula wadaago hoggaannada iyo maamulka gaar ahaan Puntland iyo Jubbaland” (Article 2).

(So the news and advice could be shared with Puntland leadership, particularly, the administration of Puntland and Jubbaland [community])

To manage its task professionally, the Gole also formed Puntland Intelligencia Network (<http://www.Puntin.org>) and Somalia Watch (<http://www.somaliawatch.org>). Puntland

Intelligencia Network (Puntin.org) was structured and featured as a 'think-tank' type while Somalia Watch website as a web front.

8.4.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE GOLE

Puntland/Jubbaland is a regulated mailing list. Regulated topics are those lists, which are regulated and have moderators to guide. These kinds of discussions are related to matters which require an action to be agreed by the members. It requires a quorum of 70 percent of member votes (Article 4 (4)). The results of the discussions are compiled and sent to members to reach an appropriate plan of action.

Members are required to abide by the rule of the Gole as they are obliged to submit themselves to the loyalty of the Gole by filling an oath form. The form emphasizes the loyalty of its new members,

“Are you ready to take part in the tasks of the Gole, such as voting for the selection of the committee and sub-committees. And to respect the decisions reached by the Gole?”

(Diyaar ma u tahay inaad ka qaybqaadatid hawlaha golaha (Hawl gaar ah, sida cod-bixinta markii laga codsado iyo inaad u codaysid xog-doonno, doorashada Guddiyeed, iwm). Diyaar ma u tahay inaad ixtiraamto go'aankii ku waafiyooaba arrin kasta oo golaha looga cod qaaday?)”

Nominated by the Committee, moderators are nominated for major issues which require considerable attention. Article 7 gives significant weight on moderators and their task. Moderator's main tasks include conducting debates and discussion timing. They also organize voting to reach an action.

⁵⁶ Since the beginning of 2001, the Puntland State website ceased to exist. From 2001 to 2003 there has been another Puntland State (www.puntlandstate.com) website which is not linked with the Puntland Administration.

Required quorum for validating discussion requires only twenty five percent whereas validating decisions require seventy percent of the participants. This demonstrates that many of the discussions are not participated in by all members. The quorum has been put in place to ensure that nothing escapes from the attention of the Gole.

Traditionally, the clan meeting was only for members of the clan. This was supposed not to be different from the Gole where discussions were expected to be confidential in the wake of the civil war in Somalia. Discussion could be general where every member participate, or for sub-groups where professional groups discuss their own topic or subject.

The Gole emphasizes the importance of discussion and open and democratic rules. Nevertheless, the notion of consensus is always the expected mode in every discussion. In the traditional Somali meeting, members are expected to reach consensus on clan issues. Despite accepting debate, the need for cohesiveness suppresses the freethinking. The cohesiveness tended to suppress the critical thinking, since members place high value on their relationship. In a way, it can be said that the Gole discussions create a kind of groupthink. This is not different as, traditionally, Somalis seek consensus in meetings in general, instead of taking decisions by majority vote (Lewis, 2000: 12).

The principal study of the impact of cohesiveness on decision-making is the work of Irving Janis on "groupthink." Janis' central conception is that high cohesiveness will tend to suppress critical thinking, since group members who place a high value on their relationships with colleagues will not be willing to risk those relationships by challenging dubious ideas during group discussions.

According to Irving Janis (1982),

"... groupthink is a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action."

Pressing the Gole member to strive for agreement discourages dissensions. To Janis, groupthink is a disease that infects healthy groups, rendering them inefficient and unproductive. During groupthink members respond to people who oppose their plan with suspicion and hostility.

The groupthink experience may distort thinking by rendering group members incapable of making a rational decision. In such a group, members refrain from speaking out against decisions, avoid arguing, and strive to maintain friendly, cordial relations with one another at all costs.

In one of the surveys in this research, a large number of list members said that they do not feel comfortable to discuss political issues, such as that of Somalia, with people they 'do not know'. In the Somali context, this knowing means to know the interlocutor's political affiliation and also his clan (email message, 12/01/2001).

Although in Puntland/Jubbaland members do not know each other personally, there is a probability that a member may be known from his family name or his/her genealogy. Genealogy constitutes the heart of the Somali social system. The clan, which is the basis of the collective Somali inclination towards fusion, is traced through males from a common male ancestor. Lewis reiterated that,

“Children learn their ancestors' names by heart back to 20 generations and more. A Somali does not ask another where he is from but whom he is from.”
(Lewis, 1992:14).

Ebyan Salah says that “when you are truly discussing an issue that matter to all of you, you don't have to know who the person is, but you will judge their contribution, ideas, and their arguments toward the issue. Of course sometimes when you see someone who is very articulated and well educated about the issue, and talk about it more in-depth it is human nature to feel, you should know him/her” (email, message 16 Nov 2000).

8.4.3 THE GOLE AND DEVELOPMENT TASKS

Health and education have been the two main tasks which the Gole focussed on in their developmental goals. Some of the most successful are the East Africa University (Bosaso), Mudug health centre, and Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development (GECPD).

Generally, there have been two ways to fund development projects: from the Diaspora financial support, and campaigning to the international community, particularly, the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the United Nations, the Somalia Aid Co-ordination Body (SACB), Organisation of the African Unity (now African Union), and the Arab League.

The international communities' attention was generally focused on the southern part of Somalia and particularly Mogadishu, the capital, as this part of Somalia was the most affected part of the country. This made the international community to neglect the peaceful part of the country. The Gole had problem with redirecting the international communities' attention to their local area, namely Puntland and Jubbaland.

According to Puntland Intelligencia Network, if most of the international aid given to Somalia were allotted to developmental projects in areas where there is stability, much of Somalia's problems would have been solved by now. It says that "instead of carrying out capacity-building projects in the areas where there are local administrations" (Puntin, 2000), the International community is trying to extinguish the outer flames of Somalia's fire instead of targeting the source. If Somalia is to be rebuilt from scratch, the peaceful areas need to be supported and nurtured by the concerned international organisations and individuals. According to Puntin, "These [areas] are the building blocks of the solution to the Somali crisis" (Puntin, 2000).

The existing administrations of Puntland and Somaliland are confronted with the awesome tasks of reviving the public utilities, rebuilding the necessary institutions and pacifying their fiefdoms. They claimed that their efforts, however, are being hampered by the lack of resources and the continuous dry spell that depleted the Somali livestock, the backbone of the Somali economy. Puntland Intelligencia Network also raised issues such as the looting of

Somalia's marine wealth by international companies which remained unabated, and these administrations have no means to exploit it or to prevent this illegal fishing (Puntin, 2000).

The approach of developing the stable areas of Somalia is believed to “create a kind of constructive rivalry in the country, a substitute for the very destructive power rivalry”. This, in turn, creates enough stimuli for peace and stability and would pave the way for a power-sharing formula among the hostile clans and the re-unification of Somalia. The international community must build on the policy of helping the reviving the public infrastructure if difference is to be made in Somalia.

Puntin.org thinks that the aid organisations must be relocated in Somalia. The Administration of Puntland has asked the local aid organisation to submit a report on their activities in order to make themselves transparent. This is the direct result of the Somalis' lack of confidence in the activities of the aid organisation. Somalia has many peaceful areas that would host them and where their genuine activities are very much needed and appreciated.

In Puntland, there is a well-known joke about the waste of Somali aid organisations. In Somalia there are daily flights of khat to the major cities in Somalia (the khat is green leaves imported from Kenya and Ethiopia. They are chewed for their narcotic effects). The inhabitants know the looks and the sizes of the all the flights that frequent the areas. An inhabitant in Galkayo asked if khat has come to the city. The other responded, "I think so, two planes came. One is definitely baakad-la-wirwira. The other is most likely the khat-flight.

Another person who overheard the response of the other man asked, "and what does baakad-la-wirwira mean (baakad-la-wirwira literally means the midday-packet-collector). The man said, "Have you ever heard of a plane dispatched from a distant country to collect a small packet of expired medicine from the Galkayo hospital? Compare the cost of that flight to the cost of that expired medicine. And that is how the aid organisations fool the world (ibid. 2000).

Many Somalis, including Gole members, doubted aid organisation services. One of the Gole members said this,

“Do you know why aid organisations prefer to do jobs in the violent area than the peaceful areas? I tell you why. It is simple. In the violent areas they benefit. There they can cheat by reporting false information such as looting aid material. They are here to make money...” (email message, 12/01/2001).

8.4.3.1 HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

As part of their health development task, Puntin.org as the mouth of the Gole, has listed the names of over 100 medical doctors in the Diaspora who hail from Puntland alone. It also helped founding the Puntland Medical Association (PMA). PMA later established its own website hosted under <http://www.angelfire.com/sd/pma/Main.html> and elected Dr Mohamed Jama Salad, a former professor of Neurological Sciences at the Somali National University, as its president.

PMA was established as a professional association that unites all Puntland State Medical Doctors in one organisation. Later, PMA became Puntland State medical organisation representing the majority of medical practitioners in both the public and private sectors and it is dedicated to promoting, educating and protecting the workers in the Puntland State medical field.

“PMA activities intended to promote the welfare of the Puntlanders through the quality of medical aid. Its aim is to promote the development of State's Medical field, to disseminate medical knowledge, to train health care workers and to improve the health of the population through collaboration with medical scientists, technologists and other professionals in Puntland State and other regions of the country. Our presence on the Internet is another method for the association to acquire assistance from its members living abroad” (PMA, 2002).

The objectives of the Puntland Medical Association are as follows:

- To promote the medical and allied sciences in Puntland State;
- To safeguard the honour and interests of the medical profession;
- To promote continuing medical education and medical research among the medical profession;
- To foster and preserve the unity and aim of purpose of the medical profession as a whole;
- To voice its opinion and to acquaint the Government and other relevant bodies with the policies opinion on problems of health in Puntland;
- To publish reports regarding Puntland health status and other materials in furtherance of these objectives;
- To maintain a high ethical standard among the medical profession; and
- To promote international and local fraternisation of the medical profession;

8.4.4 THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Puntlanders in the Diaspora started a fund-raising project for the restoration of adult schools in Puntland. In their first attempt to respond to the call for participation in the Puntland Development drive, and following an appeal from the Galkayo-based Puntland Development Centre, the fundraising campaign started in September and concluded its first phase in December. According to Ahmed Mohamud Haji Jama (known as Nero), the project co-ordinator, in the first phase of this fund-raising project, volunteers raised around \$10,000 US dollars for a project intended to restore the adult school premises and the development of girl's education in Galkayo, a city that bears the enduring scars of the civil war.⁵⁷ One successful project was the Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development. The campaign brought together Puntland communities living in North America, Europe and the Middle East to join ranks in lending a hand to their brethren back home (email message, 12/12/2001). Their initial contribution of \$11,927 was to play a role in the reinstatement of many other educational projects.

Hawa Adam, the head of the Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development, said that the money “enabled the Centre to build premises consisting of five classrooms and a teachers' hall in Galkayo” (ibid.). The premise has been used for giving vocational training courses to the residents of Galkayo.

8.5. FIRST GOLE CRISIS

In the first year and a half, Gole’s work was harmonious as this depended on the political atmosphere at home. The mood was dominated particularly by the euphoria of the creation of the regional administration of Puntland state. However, from the year 2000 the harmony was changing.

In mid 2000, the Somali crisis was again under world attention when, on 23 September 1999, the Djibouti president proposed an initiative at the 54th General Assembly of the United Nations. President Ismail Omar Guelleh proposed a new approach to the Somali case when he proposed to shift the peace talks to the civil society. In other words, the victims of the civil war were to lead the peace process. The objective was to revive the conflict management of Somali society which broke down during the civil strife. This method was seen as the practical way which could lead to a sustainable peace in the country.

Puntland Administration leadership welcomed the initiative. However, in a bizarre circumstance, before the meeting could begin, in late April 2000, Puntland withdrew. Puntland argued in this way,

“Violating the regional administrative structure of the Somali Republic by proposing and working towards re-making and re-inventing unfairly new districts based on bias to support certain Somali clans, a Djibouti syndrome known to the past participants in the Djibouti I and Djibouti II of 1991. Somali nationals had been barred to access the few documents that came out of the Djibouti Government. These documents were

⁵⁷ Galkayo is the regional capital of Mudug region and it is where the Hawiye and Daarood meet in central Somalia.

distributed in a restricted manner to only members of the diplomatic community and forums of foreign countries, not to Somalis” (Puntin, 2000).

The administration’s explanation for the rejection of the peace talks did not convince many of the Gole members. As the Gole’s reaction is the reflection of event at home, the Gole was to face its first major political crisis as it was divided into those supporting Puntland’s decision and those who disagree with the unilateral withdrawal of Puntland from the peace talks. Similarly, at home in Bosaso, riots broke out which led to two people being killed when the police opened fire on the rioters. In Puntland as well in the Diaspora, a line was drawn between supporters of the administration’s stand and those who opposed the boycott.

8.5.1 DJIBOUTI SOMALI NATIONAL PEACE BACKGROUND

The Somali National Peace conference was the thirteenth Somali peace meeting since the disintegration of the Somali state in the early 1990s. This peace process was made up of three symposiums: the Technical Consultative Symposium, the Business Community Symposium, the Elders Consultative Meeting, and the Somali National Peace Conference (SNPC), also known as Arta Conference. It is the last one which gets the most attention, as it was the major conference which was preceded by the three symposiums.

In theory, the Djibouti proposal advocated a peace process which could lead to many stages at different levels. “Process” defines a means to an end and not an end in itself. The aim was to resuscitate the Somali central state by using the "building blocks" approach. The "building blocks" approach concept was raised following the continued failure of Somali factions to respond to efforts to create a unitary Somali administration. Basically, shifting the focus of the peace process from the factions to the civil society was meant to turn the responsibility to the local administrative units arising out of a genuine consultative process.

Djibouti authority embraced the “building blocks” approach, when using the development of local administrative units as a basis for a decentralised approach to Somali unity. The initiative envisaged an approach where Somali authorities come together to establish a new central government.

President Omar Guelleh at the 54th session of UN General Assembly on 22nd Sept 99 stated that,

" ... indeed it [Somalia] is evolving into a country of stark contrasts between the troubled central and southern regions and the relatively stable and peaceful north, namely the self-declared Somaliland and the Puntland... this move towards decentralisation or self-administration by many parts and communities of the country is fuelled by the need to survive. The international community, therefore, need to support economically these regions or communities that have achieved relative peace, security and development. we must reward those who have made serious efforts to restore security and peace to protect human rights."

Many groups objected to the Djibouti initiated Somali peace conference some of which were Somaliland, Puntland, RRA and some of Mogadishu warlords. Somaliland's position relied on its political ambitions following their decisions to 'break away' from the Somali Republic. It has refused to attend all Somali peace conferences held since 1991. Acting as a separate republic, they claim that Somalia should solve its problem. With this view, they imply the idea of two separate regions: Somalia, which stands for the southern part of Somalia, and Somaliland, the northern regions.

Puntland, RRA, and other groups joined their action under the Somali Peace Alliance (SPA). SPA was formed in late 1998 in Garowe, the capital region of Puntland, Puntland, RRA, Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM Gabyow-faction) and United Somali Congress (USC Sudi Yalahow faction).

To cash in on the new initiative, the SPA claimed that they fill the entire requirement of Guelleh's initiative. They maintained that their support was based on being representative of their own respective area and has created an environment where civil society could work and flourish.

However, in an unexpected development, the SPA's support fell in disagreement with Djibouti before the proposal was launched. There had been some speculations which suggested that the alliance fell out with the Djibouti authorities when they attempted to 'take over' the process for their own ends. To save the proposal from early failure, the Djibouti authority was anxious that the proceeding would not be 'hijacked' by any particular party in the Somali conflict.

From this period, Puntland had a reason to fear the outcome to undermine its existence. Everything was set on distrust and for Puntland administration the decision of the Elders Consultative Meeting to formulate the representation on clan basis was a good excuse to withdraw from the conference for good.

Despite the positive initiative input, the Arta Conference was geared towards the reversal of the "building blocks" approach for the resolution to the Somali central authority. A kind of centralised approach was adapted thus making the Arta Conference glad to see things evolve with the motto: "a bad government is better than no government".

8.5.2 DEEPENING THE GOLE CRISIS

The Gole's initial crisis was over Puntland participation in Somali peace talks. Soon the crisis was transformed into an issue which centered on the personality of Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, the head of Puntland regional government. Members were divided into two groups: the for-participation and against-participation. And both groups were further divided. The for-Participation group argument was based on the virtue of participation arguing that Puntland should play a leading role wherever Somali peace reconciliation is held. However, some of this group remained opposed to whatever Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf stood for. Nevertheless, the other group within this group had the notion that participation should not be taken for granted, but decided upon on the merits of peace talks. Their view was that the administration should withdraw if judged contradictory to Puntland's interest.

The support of the majority of the against-participation, on the other hand, was based on the sentiment of lineage. Many of them were in fact from the lineage of Abdullahi Yusuf,

therefore they were in support of any decision reached by the administration. The rest of the group's support was based on Hawiye-Daarood hostility by reminding about the persecution suffered by Daarood civilians during the takeover of Mogadishu by the United Somali Congress (USC), the armed function supported by the Hawiye clan of central Somalia and Benadir area.

Without consulting other opposition organisations, and without considering the political and social repercussions of not doing so, the USC leadership appointed Ali Mahdi Mahamed as interim president on 29 January 1991. The unilateral decision was immediately interpreted as a Hawiye bid for power.

8.5.3 THE NOTION OF CONSPIRACY

Soon in the Gole the whole notion of the Djibouti peace conference was transformed and began to be viewed as part of 'Irir plot'. Under the Irir come the Dir, Hawiye and Garre. President Ismail Omar Guelleh belongs to the Issa Somali ethnic group of the Dir clan-family. Inhabited mainly by two ethnic groups, during the colonial time Djibouti was known as the French Territory of the Affars and Issas.

The conspiracy notion was reinforced when the Transitional National Assembly elected Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, a Hawiye and former minister of the former military regime of Siyad Barre, as president. The combinations of a Hawiye president and the election of a former regime member fitted Abdullahi Yusuf's 'Irir plot'. This was also to revoke the fresh memory of persecution of the Daaroods in the hands of the USC just discussed above.

Many in the Gole express popular fear that the Abdiqasim administration would try to rally support in Mogadishu by mounting an armed campaign against Puntland.

“We believe that Djibouti mishandling of the new Peace Initiative will contribute more damage to the Somali national crisis since it's geared towards the destruction of the Building-blocks and planting new seeds of contradictions, confrontation and mistrust among the Somali civil society. We are strongly convinced that the right course of any

peace conference is to build upon what have been achieved already: The Regional Administrations, which restored peace, law and order that led to stability in the areas under their control” (Puntland administration statement, 2000).

To line up the Gole behind the decision of Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, one of the members proposed a questionnaire called “Fact-finding of Djibouti Conference” (Xog-doonka Shirka Jabuuti). The proposal was written in a form of questionnaire, however, it was intended to have two results: the first to align the Gole behind the boycott, while at the same time to ‘sieve’ the Gole. Whoever opposes the position of Puntland was seen as siding with the ‘enemy’, namely, the Irir clan (Hawiye, Dir and Isaaq). One email said this,

“The history will record every ones action” (email message, 15/04/2000).

(nin waliba wuxuu galo iyo wuxuu gudo taariikhda ayaa ku qori doonta).

Another email threatens those who are, “those who are nostalgic of Mogadishu would better say frankly that you want to side with the Hawiye” (email message, 16/04/2000/).⁵⁸

EMAIL 2

Hawiye raaci meyno. P/L u baabi'in meyno nacayb nin. Haduusan wax maqleyn, ama aanu talada reerka uusan ku socon Ilaah naguma khasbin inuu madax noo ahaado. Kuwa qandhadu u heyso u cararka Xamar, marmarsiyaha raqiiska iska daaya, baad tihiine war anagu Hawiye baanu raaceynaa dhaha. Xasuusnaada Cabdullaahi kursiga kuma qabsan xabad, mudadiisiina hal sanaa harey. Ninkuu rabo hala <i>shiro</i> , qofkuu rabo ha arko, suurabo ha u hadlo. qofkuu rabo talada ha u dhiibto. Ninkii wax isku hayow waa inoo DOOXADII NUGAALEED. Laakiin ina adeerow calool jileeca iga daa Hawiye daba dhilifu noqon maayee.
--

Bashir Farah

During the peace talks in Djibouti, warlord Huseen Aideed, son of General Mohamed Farah Aideed and some other Mogadishu warlords were invited to Garowe, capital of Puntland. The

⁵⁸ In Somali version, “...kuwa qandhadu u hayso u cararka Xamar, marmarsiinyaha raqiiska ah iska daaya ee rag baa tihiine war anagu Hawiye baannu raacnay dhaha.

Against-participation group defended Aideed's visit to Garowe on the lines that the "enemy of your enemy is your friend". In this instance Aideed's interest coincided with that of Abdullahi Yusuf.

Nevertheless, many were appalled by the visit recalling the destruction and death caused by General Aideed when his militia captured Galkayo, in 1991. On 31 March, 1991, General Mahamed Farah Aideed's faction of the USC reported, in a military communiqué, the beginning of a large scale offensive against the Mudug and Magertenia (former name of the Bari and Nugaal regions). In the following days they attacked Galkayo, the capital of the Mudug Region, killing and wounding 970 people (USC Communiqué, March 3, 1991). Although the authenticity of the communiqué cannot be verified, the killings in Galkayo, have been confirmed by Amnesty International and some foreign observers who visited the area (Human Rights Watch, April 1995, p.22; Bradbury et al, October 1991, pp.56-8.).

8.6. SECOND GOLE CRISIS

The second Gole crisis started at the beginning of 2001. The year 2001 was the period which the three-year transitional period of the Puntland administration were expected to expire. Puntland declared itself autonomous in 1998, following a conference of local elders.

The process of the formation of the new administration had begun in March 1998 in Garowe with the Garowe Consultation Conference. In May 15, 1998, the conference laid the ground for what became known as the Garowe Constitutional Conference, which established Puntland State of Somalia. The constitutional conference took three torturous months, and finally, elected Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Ahmed Abdi Hashi as president and vice-president respectively, for a three-year term.

The Transitional Period and the arrangement set under Article 28 (4) and Article 13.5 (vi, vii) of the Provisional Charter, which emphasised that the Government should carry out a population census, drafting a new constitution followed by a referendum. The three tasks were so ambitious that the Constitutional conference could not realise their enormity. For example, a similar task has taken eight years to accomplish in Somaliland. According to

article 34 (2) of the Puntland Charter, once the mandate expires on 30 June 2000, the mandates and term of office of the executive and Parliament and power should devolve to the Supreme Judge, Yusuf Haji Nur, as caretaker president (Alnajjar, Commission on Human Rights, 14 January 2002).

“The Charter mandated the caretaker president to open a second constitutional Garowe conference to elect a president and vice-president and approve the Puntland Charter for a further three years” (ibid).

By the time of the end of the three-year period, the Administration and the House of Representatives, could not accomplish any of the assigned tasks. Colonel Abdullahi had all the reasons to refer the case to a General Conference which was the only legitimate place to deal with the case.

Rather than undertake the presidential and parliamentary elections that were required under the Puntland Charter, Abdullahi Yusuf's administration sought a three-year extension of its term. He convened unconstitutionally some selected traditional elders and called for an extension. On 27 June, the House of Representatives voted for an extension of four year for itself and for the executive a three-year term.

However, this was declared unconstitutional by the Chairman of the Supreme Court of Puntland, Yusuf Haji Nur, who announced that, in accordance with the Puntland Charter, he was assuming the office of the interim President of Puntland, pending the organisation of a “community conference” within one month, as stipulated in the Transitional Charter.

In the meantime, Puntland's traditional elders meeting in Garowe rejected Abdullahi Yusuf's extension, and confirmed the rule of law and therefore acknowledged Yusuf Haji Nur as the acting president until the election of a new administration was held.

Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, who at this period was not any more the constitutional president, tried to use force. On 6 August, he unsuccessfully attempted to take over Bosaso Airport. An uprising which forced him to retreat to his hometown, Galkayo.

The Chairman of the Supreme Court stated that he had no political ambitions and that he would organise a community meeting, as provided for in the Charter, to set the future course of Puntland. The conference was officially opened in Garowe on 26 August, with over 400 participants representing all five regions. Meanwhile, Colonel Yusuf announced on 12 August that he remained President of Puntland, claiming that Galkayo was the interim capital and blaming “fundamentalists” and the TNG for his difficulties. He also publicly declared the conference in Garowe to be illegal and refused to participate.

The Second Puntland Conference was held until the 26 August, and on 14 November 2001 elected Jama Ali Jama⁵⁹ as president and Mohamud Goonle as his vice-president. The new president was sworn in on 18 November 2001.

The contest which had been expected to go into three rounds if no candidate got 235 votes from the 468 delegates, ended in the first round. Jama Ali Jama got 283 votes in the first round, making him the outright winner.

TABLE 16: RESULT OF VOTES PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Candidates	Votes Received
Jamac Cali Jamac	283
Muuse Xaaji Abees	103
Cabdiraxman Ahmed Cayrow	47
Cabdirisaaq Sheekh Osman (Cali Baadiye)	11
Maxamed Abdirashid Cali Sharmarke	4
Osman Abshir Cigaal Yeey	2
Cabdi Cabdulah (Jinni Boqor)	1
Maxamed Haji Aden	1
Total Votes	452

Source: SomaliTalk, 14 November 2001

⁵⁹ Jama Ali Jama is a former army colonel who spent time in the jails of the late dictator, Mohamed Siyad Barre. Jama Ali Jama is one the longest serving political prisoners in Somalia, recognised by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience (International Report, AI Index: Afr 52/11/85, July 1985).

The former president rejected the outcome of the elections. And in disregard of the popular will, with the support of Ethiopian arms, he returned with force on 21 November 2001 to Garowe, killing several innocent civilians and nearly capturing or killing the newly elected president and persecuting all those who opposed him.

For the Gole events at home were a nightmare as this led to a division within. Not only the problem at home region continued, but also it continued to worsen. Once Colonel Abdullahi came back to power, he began persecuting his prominent opponents. For example, shortly afterwards, Colonel Farah Dheere, a prominent businessman in Garowe, was a key figure opposed to Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf. The bodyguards of Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf killed Mr. Farah. In similar fashion, on 17 August 2002, Sultan Ahmed Mohamed Mohamud (known as Hurre), one of the traditional leaders who opposed the unconstitutional extension of Col. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, was killed in Puntland.

The act of killing a traditional leader disgusted many in the Gole as it was an unprecedented occurrence in modern Somali history. As one of the Puntland Isim, Sultan Hurre stood firm in the defence of the popular will and interests, the nascent grassroots democratic institutions and the prevalence of the rule of law which began in Puntland State of Somalia following the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1991.

Many felt Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf's action could take Puntland to the brink of total anarchy by breeding a wave of tribal feuds. This was seen to upset and to curb the nascent grassroots-based democratic institutions which flourished in Puntland State of Somalia following the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1991. Since then Puntland people and the Gole members worried by what the future portended for their regions, a hitherto peaceful large swathe in Somalia. Already the signs are a symptom of Somalia of late 1990s was evident. Indeed, a good parallel can be drawn between Puntland in 2000 and Somalia of late 1980s. Some of the similarities are:

- Instability: the instability created following the constitutional crisis triggered by Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf following his unconstitutional extension of the presidency;

- ❑ Feud: the state sponsored clan-based feuds;
- ❑ Personal Arms: the clan rivalry and feud have been created a strong demand for personal arms;
- ❑ The breakdown of the institution: the failure and collapse of the rudimental governance institutions which could not survive beyond the mandated first three-year period;
- ❑ Failure of source of leadership: the manipulation and the suppressing of the source of leadership led to the failure of the traditional leadership which has been the fundamental source of stability of Puntland;
- ❑ Elimination of political opponents: political assassination, repression and eliminate of the political opponents a trademark;
- ❑ Impediments to development: closure of local and international NGOs;
- ❑ Suppression of free press: the closure of local mass media; and
- ❑ Abolition of basic human rights: disregard and contempt for human rights and the abolition of the foundation of freedom and justice;
- ❑ Using violence to legitimate leadership.

8.7. THE GOLE IN LATE 2004

Members in the Puntland/Jubbaland mailing list — referred as the Gole above — organised themselves to take part in the Somali civil war as well as the developments at home. The Gole experienced its ups and downs. At its height of existence, it created and helped many useful projects for the people of Puntland.

In the year 2000, however, the Gole experienced its first crisis, which followed the peace and reconciliation conference, held in Djibouti in mid 2000. In mid 2001, a second crisis began developing when in June 2001 Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, the former president of the self-autonomous region, sought to retain presidency by force.

Despite that the two crises were not being directly connected, it seems that the second became the sequel of the first. This, however, was a detrimental to the Gole's collaboration which almost ceased to exist. The crisis led some groups to form their own sub-clan mailing

lists. Some of these are Margaaga (Omar Mohamud), Shaaribo (Osman Mohamud), CalBari (Siwaaqroon), or Carmo (Ali Saleeban).

The Gole still existed during the last stage of this research. In mid 2003, some members even proposed the closure of the list.

“What is the use of the Gole if we cannot deal with the problem at home? We lost the mood and moral to collaborate. No need to be even here” (email message, 02/06/2003).

(Muxuu anfacayaa Golaha haddii aan waxba ka qaban karin dhibaata gudaheenna? Waxaan luminay niyaddii iyo damiirkii aan ku xiriiri lahayn. Looma baahna inaan meeshaan dhex joogno).

TABLE 17: PUNTLAND/JUBBALAND LIST MESSAGE HISTORY

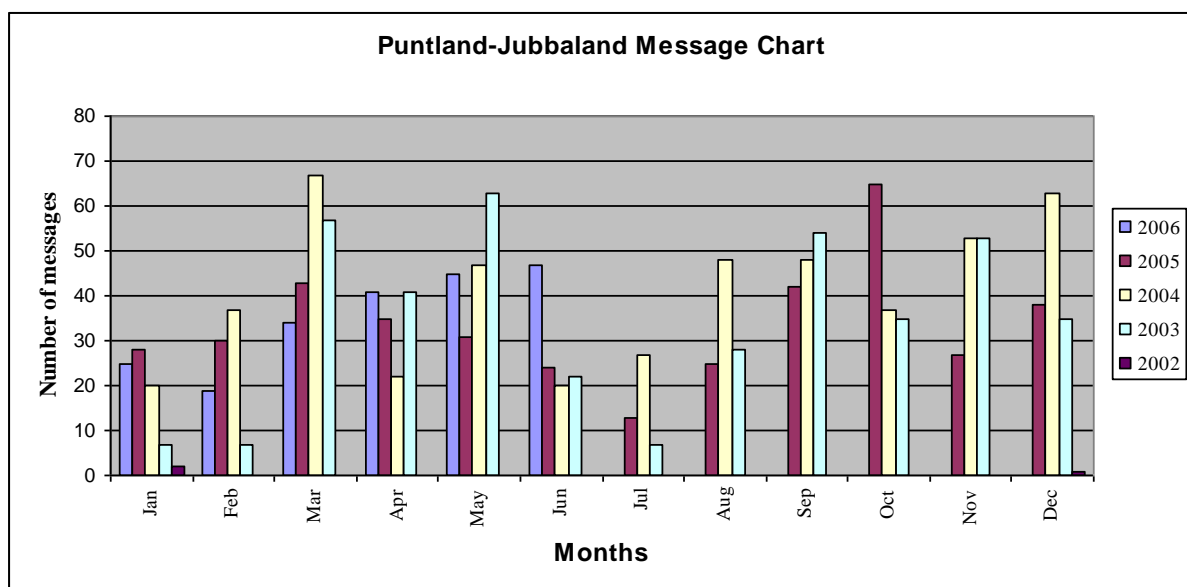
Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006	25	19	34	41	45	47						
2005	28	30	43	35	31	24	13	25	42	65	27	38
2004	20	37	67	22	47	20	27	48	48	37	53	63
2003	7	7	57	41	63	22	7	28	54	35	53	35
2002	2											1

On May 2004, the list had 78 members compared to 215 in 2001. This meant a drop of almost seventy percent of communication among the members. In the early period of the Gole formation, the average monthly message where roughly 126. By late 2002, the monthly average message dropped to almost 1.5 compared 74 in 2000. In 2004 the number rose to

40.8 and in 2005 it dropped to just to 23.7 (see Table 17 and as chart in Fig. 29). This fluctuation seems to have been affected by the election of Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as interim President of the Federal Somali Republic.

Although the number of messages has fluctuated since 2002, there has not been a major issue discussed among members since 2001. One positive thing was that members were willing to send to each condolence messages after the death of a member of the community.

FIG. 29: PUNTLAND/JUBBALAND MESSAGE CHART



CHAPTER NINE

9. SOMALI ORALITY AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION: SOMALI FORUM MAILING LIST AND SOMALI COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY CASE STUDY

9.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the Somali Diaspora mailing list of Puntland/Jubbaland has been analysed. As case study, it is examined how Puntland/Jubbaland Diaspora members united and organised themselves in their task to help their folks at home and to assist the Puntland demonstration. In their task, the Puntland/Jubbaland activities nonetheless involved taking part in the Somali civil war. This involved systematising their efforts using web pages to publish their interests and views in a form providing local information to their folks in the Diaspora. This was also intended to use this information to plan to counter 'the enemy'.

As part of the structure of this thesis, this chapter will look at two other Somali mailing lists: the Somali Open Forum (also known as SomaliForum) and Somali Council for Peace and Democracy (commonly known as Israaca). Creating a supra-clannic environment for their members had been the purpose of both mailing lists. This was to happen in an environment such as that of Somalia at a period of statelessness and civil strife during the late 1990s and early decade of 2000. However, it is difficult to envisage a peaceful environment for these two mailing lists.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part will consider the Somali Open Forum mailing list while the second will examine the Somali Council for Peace and Democracy (Israaca). Both mailing lists will be contrasted at the end of the chapter.

9.2. MAILING LIST ENVIRONMENT

As stated earlier, in the early 1991, Somalia was plunged into a vicious circle of violence following the overthrow of the military regime of Siyad Barre who ruled Somalia with an iron fist for 22 years. The subsequent crisis led to the collapse of the state institutions, and left Somali society torn apart. Because of the civil war, thousands of people have moved back

to their traditional homes for safety. However, the new safe haven could not cope with the needs of the new influx in terms of housing, water, health facilities, education, and employment opportunities. In fact, they became a burden to already fragile communities (Hassan, 1998). The ensuing led to a high flood of Somalis leaving their homeland to flee to many parts of the world, thus enlarging the Somali Diaspora.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the advent of the Somali crisis coincided with the booming of global communication, especially with the introduction of the Internet. The new Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has added a new dimension to the pattern of communication of Somali Diaspora and how they perceive themselves and the world.

The use of Internet technology by the Somali Diaspora depended on the group's objectives and purposes. While the Puntland/Jubbaland's interest maintains a clannish approach (discussed in the previous chapter), the SomaliForum and Israaca maintained supra-clannic objectives. In an environment such as the one which followed the Somali civil strife of early 1991, both mailing lists were expected to face difficulty of unity and aims.

Generally, there are two types of accessibility to mailing lists: public and private. Both mailing lists are private. Mailing lists can be classified as moderated and non-moderated. In moderated lists, moderators view all messages, while the non-moderated mails are passed to addresses without being checked.

9.3. SOMALI OPEN FORUM BACKGROUND

Somali Open Forum was formed in January 2000. Hosted by SomaliHome website (www.somalihome.com), it had the host address of somaliforum@egroups.com. The objective of the forum was “to create a means where Somalis across the world could communicate” (SomaliHome, 2000). Other objectives included,

- Meet lost friends or and make new ones,
- Preserve and protect Somali heritage

- Teach Islamic principles
- Create awareness of the danger of the issue of drugs
- Link Somali academic and students
- Foster basic awareness about environmental issues which are often ignored but cause serious social, health and economic problems in Somali society.

The founders of the Somali Open Forum (hence the Forum) were inspired by a newsgroup called soc.culture.somalia which was formed in late 1994 (email message, 10/05/2004). The soc.culture.somalia is one of the oldest Somali newsgroups, and it was still in existence at the time of this writing. For many years, countless Somalis took part in the newsgroups discussions and posted their opinions.

Membership in the Forum was open for all Somalis. When the list was formed, the management tried to include as many Somalis as possible so the environment could become a place for everybody. The author was also added and received the confirmation of membership shortly after. Members were also of all ages, from different educational backgrounds and skills.

The period during which the Forum was formed was also the time when the Somali state of affairs was getting attention following the new initiative proposed by the president of Djibouti and outlined in the previous chapter. President Ismail Omar Guelleh proposed to shift the peace talks to the civil society.

9.3.1. THE DISCUSSION ENVIRONMENT

Initially, members of the SomaliForum existed only as a newsgroup. However, after a period of time, the founders thought that it was time to move forward and convert the newsgroup to a mailing list.

It seems that the general mood produced by the Djibouti initiative was one of the main factors which influenced the list forum to ‘formalise’ and create an atmosphere where Somalis could

discuss their future state and peace. For all intents and purposes, the Forum viewed communication as a means to solve the Somali problem, therefore, open dialogue was seen an essential element needed by Somalis. It was understandable, therefore, for the Forum that the Djibouti initiatives become one of its main discussion items. Beside the Djibouti initiative, in the first period, discussions centred on the general topic about the Somali crisis.

However, as early as April 2000, Puntland and its allies, the Somali Peace Alliance (SPA)⁶⁰ withdrew trust and support for the Djibouti peace initiative. Puntland argued that Djibouti was violating the regional administrative structure of the Somali Republic by proposing and working towards, what Puntland calls, “re-making and re-inventing unfairly new districts based on bias to support certain Somali clans”. This is how it maintained,

“Somali nationals had been barred to access the few documents that came out of the Djibouti Government. These documents were distributed in a restricted manner to only members of the diplomatic community and forums of foreign countries, not to Somalis” (Puntin, 2000).

Officially, the conference began in March 2000 and continued until August 2000 at Arta, a small town in the Republic of Djibouti. After six months, the peace meeting, known officially as the Somali National Peace (SNP) ended with the formation of a Transitional National Assembly, a Transitional Constitution. In August, the Transitional National Assembly elected Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, a former deputy prime minister and interior minister of the military regime of Siyad Barre.

Abdiqasim Salad Hassan was sworn in on 27 August 2002 as the first transitional president of Somalia for the first time since 1991. The ceremony was held in Djibouti as all the sitting took place there. Abdiqasim took the oath in the presence of government leaders from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen. Charles Josselin, Minister for Cooperation, represented France. Josselin pledged the backing of the European Union. President Umar Al-Bashir of Sudan was the first head of state to recognise the newly formed Transitional National Government.

Soon the Forum became a place of battle between the pro-Djibouti conference and those who were opposed to it. Those against saw the formation of a government under a former minister as a ‘destabilisers factor’ and the return of the old clique of the former dictatorial regime, whilst the pro-group saw it as the ‘route’ to the revival of the central state.

The context of Somali nationhood was being contested here. One group blamed the clan for the Somali illness, therefore, trying to solve Somali problem with clan solution offers no way for the Somali nation (email message, 30/08/2000). Another group had it that there can not be a Somali state without the clan. It is “the clan which makes the Somali, therefore, Somalis must solve their problem through the clan” (ibid.).

9.3.2 FRENZIED CHALLENGE

On 28 August, just one day after the swearing-in in Djibouti of Abdiqasim Salad as interim president of the Transitional National Government, a member named Mohamoud Abey sent an email. The subject of email was “No to the remains of Afwayne”.⁶¹ As expressed in Email 3, Abey started by appealing to “All Allah-fearing, fair-minded” to reject Abdiqasim Salad as Somali leader. Abey attacked Abdiqasim’s election and called him a ‘non-believer’ and ‘shoe-licker’ of Somalia’s Hitler (email message, 28/08/2000). In Email 3, Abey explains Abdiqasim served under Siyad Barre’s regime for more than two decades as minister in different portfolios.

⁶⁰ Somali Peace Alliance (SPA) was formed in the late 1999 in Garowe by Puntland, RRA, Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM Gabyow-faction) and United Somali Congress (USC Sudi Yalahow faction).

⁶¹ Afwayne, which means Big Mouth, was the nickname of Siyad Barre. The title of the email in Somali was “No to Haraadiigii Afwayne”.

EMAIL: 3

```
>>> ----- Original Message -----
>>> From: "MahmoudAbey <quranalone@yahoo.com>
>>> To: <somaliforum@egroups.com>
>>> Sent: Tuesday, August 29, 2000 9:20 AM
>>> Subject: Re: [SomaliForum] No to haraagii Afweyne!!!
>>>> Hassan,
>>>> AbdulQassim served, serviced and was a loyal kabo-leef
>>>> for Afweyne for almost 18 years. What should we call such
>>>> a bloody criminal? He worked for a gaal and implemented
>>>> the policies of gaal-qudhmuun. Kab xun iyo xaarkeedba waa
>>>> la isia' xooraa.
```

Abey was referring to an interview given by Abdiqasim when he was asked by a Reuters news reporter “What will you do to the Somalis to believe you?” Abdiqasim replied, “The Quran.”. Abdiqasim meant that he was a man of the Quran and as Somalis are Muslims, they were to believe him as a man of God. Abey was angered by the answer. Through his eyes, Abdiqasim was “not a Muslim (a believer) as he served Siyad Barre, who, according to him, “is also a non-believer”. This is how he put it,

“... Quraan keliya ayaa xaqiiqa ah, qof walibana waa in dhinacaa lagu xisaabiya” (email, 28/08/2000)

(...only the Quran is the Truth, and everyone should be judged accordingly).

In reply to Abey’s burst email, two members (Huseen Salad and Gabanow) warned Abey for calling a fellow Muslim a ‘non-believer’. They both cited the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ the Prophets teaching ﷺ which says,

“Qofkii qof Muslim ugu yeera kaafir, isaguna wuu kufriyay” (email, 29/08/2002)

(Whoever calls a Muslim a non-believer, he will be out of the dariiqa)

EMAIL: 4

```
>>>>> ----Original Message Follows----
>>>>> From: MohamoudAbey <quranalone@yahoo.com>
>>>>> Reply-To: somaliforum@egroups.com
>>>>> To: somacircle@egroups.com
>>>>> CC: somaliforum@egroups.com
>>>>> Subject: [SomaliForum] No to haraagii Afweyne!!!
>>>>> Date: Mon, 28 Aug 2000 08:38:07 -0700 (PDT)
>>>>>
>>>>> Salamun Caleykum All.
>>>>>
>>>>> All Allah-fearing, fair-minded and just Somalis must
>>>>> reject AbdulQassim Salad as our Somali leader. Why?
>>>>> !) He was a loyal (Kabo-leef) to Somalia's Hitler until THE END.
>>>>> 2) He watched, without protest, the butchering and massacres
>>>>> Afweyne committed against our people in the seventies and eighties.
>>>>> 3) He was a member of those policy-making butchers.
>>>>> 4) He never opposed or spoke out against injustice, nepotism, and tribilism.
>>>>> 5) He watched his close friends executed in public.
>>>>> 6) He watched 11 innocent wadaads executed in public for their belief in 1975.
>>>>> 7) He is a smelling coward, because when he saw the shit they
>>>>> molded twenty years blowing up on their faces in 1991, he run away to Cairo.
>>>>> 8) He is a man who is self-serving and looks after his interests
>>>>> 9) He is an idolworshiper who does not believe in Allah Alone.
>>>>> 10) He is an idolworshiper who will not rule by the Quran Alone.
>>>>>!!) HE IS A DISBELIEVER OF ALLAH ALONE.
>>>>> No, to any such disbeliever. No to any survivor of SRC.
>>>>> No to anyone elected through a system based on tribilism.
>>>>> No to anyone who was a part of a butchering war machine.
>>>>> La ilaha ilia Allah.
>>>>> Abey.
```

Abey's message instigated a heated debate precipitating an already tense relationship. The days between 28 August and 7 September 2002 were the worst days of the list.

Soon the Forum where divided into those supporting the formation of the transitional government and those opposing it. Like Abey, the contra-group's position was based on three points: Abdiqasim's service to the military regime of Siyad Barre, his clan, and his personality and beliefs. Beside the rejection of Abdiqasim's election as transitional president, the contra-group was concerned about Somalia's fate being decided and controlled by 'outsiders'.

The first accusation which focuses on Abdiqasim's allegiance as minister under the regime of Siyad Barre for two decades. Abdiqasim became minister in 1973 holding various ministerial

portfolios until 1990. He remained Interior and Assistant Prime Minister⁶² until just before Siyad was ousted from Mogadishu.

The second accusation centred on his clan. Abdiqasim belong to the Habar-gidir lineage, the same lineage as that of General Mohamed Farah Aideed. General Aideed is well known as the man who fought the United Nations and the American forces in Somalia during the United Nation Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM). He also fought against Ali Mahdi Mohamed who was elected as interim president on 29 January 1991 by the United Somali Congress, the armed faction that ousted Siyad Barre from Mogadishu. The ambitious General Mohamed Farah Aideed, who was at that time the USC force commander, challenged the hurried nomination of Ali Mahdi Mohamed to the presidency. The ensuing armed confrontation resulted in thousands of Somalis being killed and wounded⁶³ as an observer described it, "the smell of blood and decay is everywhere."⁶⁴ Fighting between these two groups caused an already fragile situation to deteriorate. Consequently, famine broke out and as a direct consequence of fighting "every aspect of government and organisation in Somalia" was destroyed (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 78).

Besides the atrocity in Mogadishu, during the height of the civil war in the early 1990s, Aideed's group spread forcefully throughout the riverine areas, thus gaining almost all the important farmland in the south of the country (Menkhaus et al; 1996: 174). Their booty stretches from Marka, Lower Shabeelle, through Bay region up to Jamaame, in the Lower Jubba region. Many of the contra-group regarded Abdiqasim's election as 'legitimation' of the occupied land by the Habar-gidir.

The third allegation was associated with his personality and beliefs. As Abdiqasim served under Siyad Barre,⁶⁵ Abdiqasim was to be held responsible as Siyad Barre.

⁶² Abdiqasim Salad Hassan became minister in 1973 until 1990. He took different portfolio among them the ministry of industry, Information and National Guidance, Sports, Culture & Higher Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Public Works, State for Economic Affairs, minister of the presidency, and Commerce.

⁶³ Amnesty International, Somalia: A Human Rights Disaster, AI-Index:AFR-52/01/92, August 1992, p.2.

⁶⁴ Starved of Hope, The Guardian, 15th September 1992.

⁶⁵ There is a rumour which describes the reason for Abdiqasim to have remained as Minister under Siyad Barre's 22 year regime. Abdiqasim's father, who was a traditional leader of the Ayr lineage of Habargidir (Hawiye), was killed by Siyad Barre's Mareexan, Darood clan-family. Abdiqasim was nominated Ministry of Industry in 1973 as compensation for the killing of his father when he finished a scholarship from the former Soviet Union.

“Abdiqasim Muslim miyuusan ahaan jerkin mark-up u shaqaynayay Siyad Barre 22 sano?” (email, 29/08/2002)

(Wasn't Abdiqasim a believer when he was serving under Siyad Barre for 22 years?)

In another message, Abey brought up the emotional memory of the public execution of ten religious men on 23 January 1975. The religious men were condemned to death when they resisted the military government decree that amended the Islamic law (Sharia Law) of inheritance. The degree gave men and women equal rights under the Family Law (Xeerka Qoyska). The religious men accused the regime of attempting to distort sura Anisa (Women, IV) — and all matters related to civil status restricted by the Quran and the Sunna — after General Siyad Barre publicly asserted that certain verses of the Quran were obsolete. Many religious leaders openly opposed his interpretation and during Friday sermons they criticised the General's new law. Within hours they were arrested by the National Security Service men and a few days later ten religious men were sentenced to death by firing squad by the National Security Court (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 46).

From his email, Abey's view could be perceived as that of a Muslim fundamentalist who believed the strict tradition of Islam and that only the Quran is the Truth and that one must be judged through the Sharia.

To discredit Abey, Kayare, another respondent, sent a message which criticised Abey's Islamic belief. His focal point was Abey's email account which was quranalone@yahoo.com and his line of reasoning which believed that only the Quran is the Truth. Accusing Abey of a group of Muslims who believe only Quran and reject the teaching (Hadith) of the prophet Mohamed, Kayare said,

“Dadkaanoo kale waa bidci. Waxay noo dhex joogaan inay na gaaleeyaan”
(03/09/2000)

(Such people are infidels. They are here to make us infidels, too) (email message)

Another response to Abey's email came from Aden Ahmed. Aden's intervention was more to do with defending Siyad Barre than admiring Abdiqasim (email message, 05/09/2000). He spoke about Siyad Barre's contributions to the Somali nation, such as the writing of the Somali language.

Comparing Somalia with Swahili, Aden boasted Barre's success over Somali writing. Swahili language is spoken in many Eastern African countries. Beside Swahili, in each of these countries there are at least a dozen local languages and the only language they share is the English language.

Adopting a national orthography had been a thorny issue since the inception of the Somali Republic. Where the civilian government (1960-1969) failed to adopt Somali writing, in 1972 the military regime headed by Siyad Barre succeeded in adopting a new orthography. It used Latin characters. As stated earlier, on 8 March 1973, a literary campaign was launched with a much publicised motto "*Hadaad taqaan bar*" (if you are literate teach); "*Hadaadan aqoon baro*" (if you are illiterate learn). The self-help scheme (*iskaa wax-u-qabso*), which was one of the most important features of the Government's political programme, was intended to develop a social and economic infrastructure (Lewis, 1980: 102). It proved very useful in the first few years as it concentrated on the construction of schools, roads and clinics (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 98).

Nevertheless, following independence in 1960, the newly formed state's first task was to break the colonial legacy and influence under which British and Italian Somalilands had developed during the colonial time (Lewis, 1980: 89). The foremost difficulty was administrative and the matter was somewhat aggravated by linguistic barriers, as there was no official Somali script to facilitate communication within the government. In the south, the Italian language was the main means of administrative and legal communication, and in the north English was mainly used.

At the end of the message, Aden acknowledges Siyad Barre to be a dictator. However, he has faith in Siyad as a ‘benevolent dictator’, as he “could not achieve what he was to achieve for the Somali nation” (email message, 01/09/2000). Comparing him with dictators like Stalin, Siyad Barre “transformed the Somali nation forever” (ibid.).

“In kastoo uu dictator ahaa, misna wuxuu keenay ayaa ka muhiimsan wayn”
(email, 01/09/2000).

(In spite of his totalitarianism, his tyrannous action was directed towards a noble achievement).

Aden’s argument was challenged by Abdi Baabaale. Referring to the long research on Somali writing, Abdi Baabaale argued that the history of Somali writing goes back to more than two decades and that Siyad merely took advantage of this hard work. He added,

“In kastoo markii hore uu Siyad bilaabay hawl fiican misna dib ayuu isi rogay” (email message, 29/08/2000).

(Despite initial positive contribution by Siyad Barre, his regime began reversing the initial good initiative”).

Baabaale indicated that despite the good start, Siyad Barre and his military junta which later was named as the SRC, created the impression that the military government was more decisive than the civilian rulers had been. Party politics had disappointed and divided Somali society and the ineptitude of the civilian government had left the people disillusioned. Now there was a feeling that the army, which was apart from politics, had rescued the country and prevented it from plunging into turmoil (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 103).

Nevertheless, soon Siyad Barre introduced some sweeping legal and administrative reforms, by carrying out extensive social, political and economical programmes. Underlying the regime's extensive reforms was control of the people in the name of national security, and the

consolidation of the power of SRC, and in particular of its chairman, General Siyad Barre. A dictatorial form of authority was in the making (ibid.). The people could not perceive this.

To shift the discussion to his advantage, in 2 November, Aden instigated a new debate by sending a new message entitled “Who led to the destruction of Somalia?”⁶⁶ Listing all those who opposed the military regime of Siyad Barre, he assembled a list of people like Abdullahi Yusuf of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Ahmed Silaanyo of the Somali National Movement (SNM) □ and Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, who later became the first president of the Somaliland republic, Ahmed Omar Jees of Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), and General Mohamed Farah Aideed. The list also included Ali Mahdi Mohamed who was nominated as interim president on 29 January 1991 by the USC following Siyad Barre’s ousting of Mogadishu. According to Aden, the armed resistance were responsible for the destruction of Somali state institutions as they allied with Ethiopia which is considered to be “the arch-enemy of the Somali nation” (email message, 02/09/2000).

9.3.3 MEMBER GROUPS

Generally, the debating groups could be divided into three groups: those in favour of the peace conference (and its outcome), the moderates and those against the conference. The moderates’ messages were the most articulate. While they accepted the faults of the conference, they supported the Arta conference outcome. One worrisome fault was that of the representation of the conference. Both the moderates and contra groups criticised the representation.

The question of representation had been the most contentious issue in all previous Somali peace talks. As part of the forthcoming Somali National Peace (known as Arta Conference), the question of representation of the forthcoming peace conference was to be decided by an Elders Consultative Meeting attended by Somali traditional elders. The Elders Consultative Meeting decided that the representation should be based on proportional clan representation.

⁶⁶ The email subject: “Yaa Soomaaliya lumiyay?”

Nonetheless, to enable Somalis to choose their representatives for the peace gathering, they recommended delegates to be sent to all Somali regions.

The recommendation of the elders was rejected and instead, those present at the initial consultation symposiums and some who came as ‘visitors’ were asked to represent their own groups at the conference. This was seen as a complete infringement of the logic of representation and legitimacy.

Reflecting on the previous mistakes, Djibouti initiatives caution against the use of ‘clan’ representatives as the basis of representation. It warns, “... given these realities, it would be imprudent on the part of anybody to attempt to be dogmatic about representation” (SNP paper, 2002). Theoretically, the decision to base on clan was also to hold in contempt the concept of civil society as anything based on kinship is excluded from civil society. Helander has this to say,

“... the general feeling in political science debate would seem to exclude anything based on kinship from the realm of the civil society” (Helander, 2000).

The moderates’ position could be viewed from two perspectives: the first from the complexity of the Somali crisis, and the second as ‘a way out’ or for ‘the sake of a solution’ from the Somali crisis (email message, 03/09/2000). While the latter view was more to do with ‘despair’ by ‘conceding defeat’ a decade of civil strife, the first stemmed from the ‘common sense’ for a just solution to Somali problem. In other words, they both departed from a distorted idea which made some groups glad to see things evolve with the motto, “a bad government is better than no government”. They held that the notion that “it is better to have a minimum outcome than not having anything” (email message, 02/09/2000). They quoted this slogan,

“Xal baa dhacaye ee xaq ma dhicin”

(What came out [from the conference] is a solution but not [necessarily] justice).

They argued that what had been “agreed was just a temporary solution, therefore, we need to tolerate and create an atmosphere where Somalis could restart their lives” (email message, 02/09/2000).

“Soomaalidu xal ayay u baahan tahay waayo noloshoodu sidaan kuma dhammaysan karaan” (email message, 02/09/2000).

(Somalis cannot go on in this way for ever. They need a solution.)

The moderated received less attention despite their articulated and respectful behaviour. Some members articulated their messages in a way to be viewed as pro-Arta. They used to try to reconcile the two other groups by defusing the tension by reminding members of their status as educated people. However, it seemed that their attempt were in vain as they failed to narrow the gap between the two extreme groups. Many times, members were often reminded of their identity as ‘intellectuals’ asked to engage in ‘academic’ debate, one which is often defined as honest and unbiased.

9.3.4 THE FORUM’S PREDICAMENT

SomaliForum can be characterised as process-oriented despite that its cohesion was ‘Somaliness’ and that the means to that ambition was ‘for people to just communicate’, rather than to accomplish specific goals. This was aggravated by the notion of ‘Somaliness’ as the Somali nation was passing through its darkest time of history.

The period coincided with the rollback of the state frontiers as at this moment in time it was difficult to maintain a coherent view among members. It was impossible to avoid conflict of opinions which were always based on kinship. As the meaning of the text is 'contained' in the

text and it must be 'extracted' by the 'reader', readers would apply what the Somalis say "hadal waa mergi" (literarily meaning, that words are elastic). Every word is stretched to fit every conceivable meaning in whatever migh.

Although the intention of communication was to enable people to create an atmosphere of understanding, the course of the debates seemed to never succeed in creating such a result. It was based on the principle of “*Ha la wada hadlo waa ha la heshiiyo*” (lets talk means lets reconcile). So people by communicating could come up with ways of solving their differences.

Many viewed the forum simply as a place for the *fadhi-ku-dirir* (armchair fighter). *Fadhi-ku-dirir* is an allusion to people in villages and towns who waste their time in gossip and political debates.

There was another complex problem within SomaliForum which resulted from the variety of members as they where from all Somali clans. They were also of all ages, different educational background and levels. Members where always at loggerheads with each other and discussions were difficult to control by the moderators. All discussions were charged with extreme political views. Sometimes, abusive mails were exchanged and members were expelled from the list.

Maintaining a coherent view by many people who know each other virtually and hold opposing views was to be extremely problematic. SomaliForum was set on an impossible mission during a period of social conflict as this was not possible either in real life.

Groups are held together by common needs which require cooperation if these needs are to be satisfied. Members were poles apart in their views and interests as this depended on their clan at home. They were also from different backgrounds, professions and age. For example, there were doctors, engineers, merchants, and skilled and unskilled people, while there were also some politicians and students. No one could expect such varied people to agree on an issue, let alone when there is civil conflict.

As the group's belief in the purpose, or goal of the group was shattered, there was no chance for the Forum to survive, as members could not cooperate.

9.4. SOMALI COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

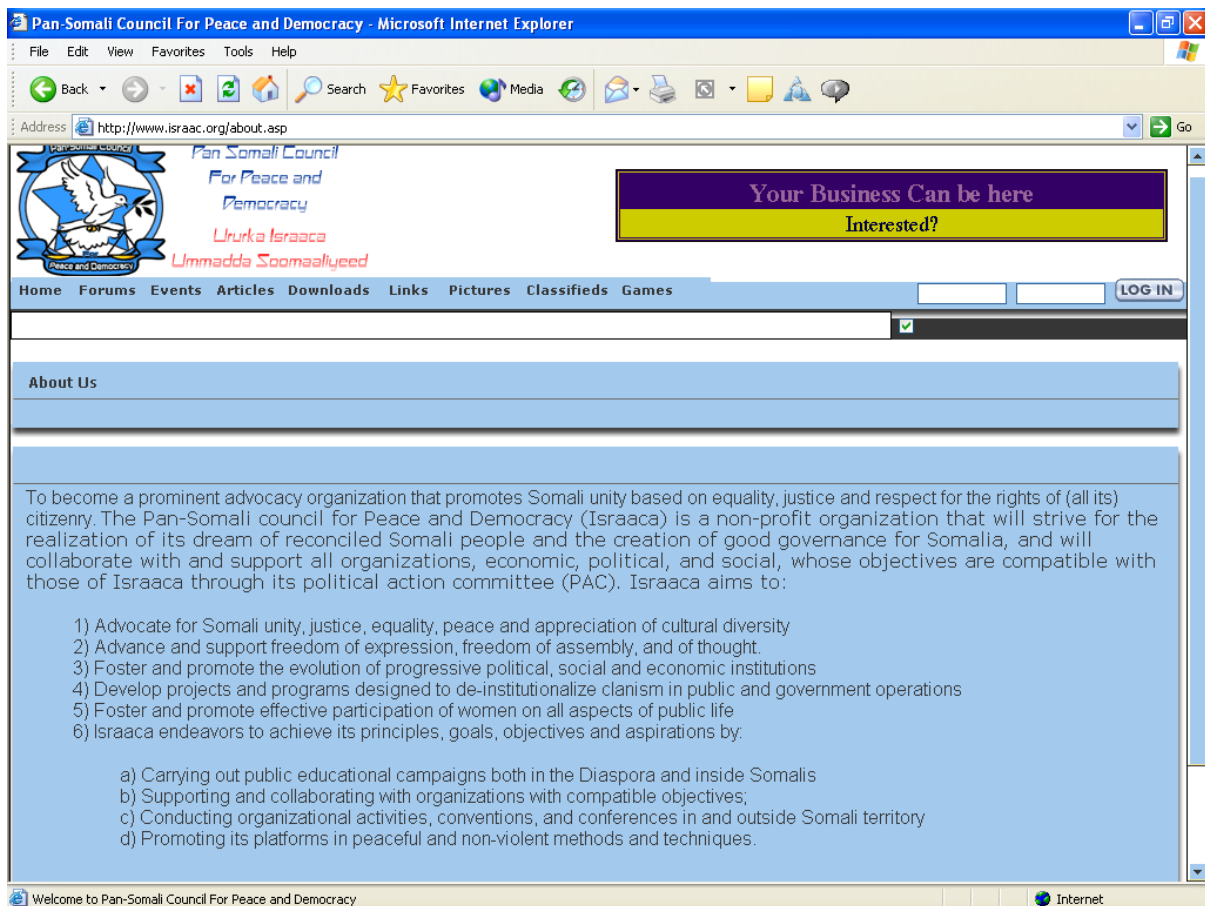
Somali Council for Peace and Democracy (aka Israaca) is a political organisation with political and social aims. It is an association of volunteer members linked together by an interest in which includes seeking lasting peace and good governance for the Somali people. It is also a non-profit organisation that strives for the realisation of its dream of reconciled Somali people. It has both a mailing list and a website under the host address of <http://www.israac.org>. They use the mailing list for members to communicate and deliberate about their works, while the website is used to publish the organisation's view and political campaigns. Its members are academics, professionals and lay folks.

Israaca was formed in late 1999 and on 31 August 1999 it was incorporated. Its headquarters is located in Washington, United States of America. Israaca derives from the Somali word unity: the unity of the two regions formerly British Protectorate and Italian Trusteeship in 1960.

The organisation has a large pool of global members from all walks of life, including professionals and intellectuals with one of its primary goals being to search for fair, peaceful, and negotiated ending to the protracted Somali civil war. It also aims to promote, through a conciliatory approach and the development of a culture of peace, the preservation of Somali unity and sovereign statehood. Israaca's long-term vision for Somalia envisages a stable society characterised by good governance, coterminous with the pluralistic Somali social structure, and an equitable national sustainable development.

Israaca believes in the unity of the Somali nation and the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Somali state. The naming of the organisation defines the organisation's beliefs with the motto, "where Soomaalinimo finds refuge". The motto implies that this is the home where the Somali individual finds his/her national identity as "the breakdown of the state institutions left behind a broken society with the loss of national identity" (Israaca, 2000).

FIG. 30: ISRAAC.ORG



9.4.1 THE ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A thirteen member Board of Directors, with an Executive Committee comprising a chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary, manages the organisation. Additionally, there is a technical committee, a forum management committee and an ethics committee. Committees are also formed, as needed, to gather and record the recommendations of the membership on tabled topics. These committees then forward their reports to the Board of Directors for follow-up.

Israaca maintains a forum where members interact and exchange ideas. Every year the organisation holds an annual conference in a different city, usually with large Somali populations. Its fifth annual conference was held in Toronto, Canada, in July 2004.

In their mission, Israaca works as an advocacy organisation established to promote justice, the de-institutionalisation of clanism, gender, social equality, unity and the peaceful co-existence of the Somali people. In order to rebuild the Somali nation, it advocates Somali unity, democracy and peace by fostering “the social and economic well being for all Somalis, with appreciation for cultural diversity and justice based upon equal opportunity for all” (Israaca Charter). According to its aims, Israaca’s mandate includes advocating for issues facing Somalis in the Somalia and the Diaspora. The issues they address are member-driven and as such reflect the interests and concerns of their membership.

9.4.2 OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

This is what Israaca says in its preamble,

“We the people of the Somali Diaspora, in order to re-form and sustain a vibrant nation of Somalia, commit to connect people across the Diaspora together, organise the considerable wealth and assets of our members, advocate for particular advancements that improve the stability and prospects for our nation and all our people across the Diaspora, and actively engage any and all progressive efforts that support us in this cause” (Israaca Charter).

The organisation has an emblem which represents a white dove holding the scale engraved upon the Israaca logo. The emblem symbolises the aims of the organisation depicting a peaceful solution to the Somali crisis based on justice and equality, just as in Somali traditional egalitarianism is a fundamental social value.

Following two decades of military totalitarianism in Somalia, entire generations lost the experience of basic freedom. Israaca focuses on these gaps by propagating the values of “freedom of speech, expression of thought, assembly and movement, inside Somalia and throughout the Somali Diaspora”. This is done through educational workshops, seminars and by utilising numerous media including Internet, television, radio, print, and popular education.

Israaca's aim focuses on both the internal and external problems facing Somalis. Externally, following the collapse of the Somali state in early 1991, the majority of educated Somalis left Somalia. The Internet technology enabled the Somali Diaspora to take the conflict outside their homeland. This makes it difficult to unite and reconcile the Somali Diaspora. In order to strengthen the communities, and connect assets across the Diaspora to national development objectives, Israaca's aims include fostering and promoting "the understanding and co-operation among the Somali Diaspora communities through workshops, lectures and conferences" (Israaca Charter).

Internally, the aim focuses on nurturing and helping the redevelopment of sustainable national, social, and economic civil institutions in Somalia. The lack of sustainable civil society in Somalia is one of the reasons for the failure to reconstruct the state. To redress the absence of the civil society, Israaca aims to build and strengthen the existing civil society organisations and promote capacity building by facilitating the following limiting factors: a. limited experience in management; b. limited structures and resources available for development in our country" (Israaca, Charter).

9.4.3 MEMBERSHIP

Israaca has two types of membership: general and effective. The general membership is a limited type of membership while the effective has more wide feature. Effective members are those who pay an annual membership fee. The effective member has the right to, (i) participate in the discussions and formulation of Israaca's policies and programs, (ii) take part in the management and administration of his/her chapter, without compromising the effective operation of the chapter, (iii) partake both as a candidate and as a voter in all the elections of Israaca, and (iv) petition all organs of Israaca and request redress of wrongdoings and other faults.

In other words, the effective members are those who take the burden of the organisational works as they share the burden of running and maintaining the effective operation of Israaca, and maintain contact with his/her chapter.

Israaca is a referral based membership organisation, where prospective members have to be referred by current effective members. When referring, the prospective member must “have a verifiable stature with any like minded Somali organisation anywhere in the Diaspora or in Somalia proper” (Israaca).

The organisation encourages Somali individuals to become members and to contribute to Israaca by participating and sharing experience and ideas. The home page of Israaca website opens with a welcome note by Zainab Mohamed Hassan, Chairperson.

However, because of the Somali conflict, the organisation targets those who have not been tainted by the political chaos. The strength and quality of members is what leads the soul of the organisation and “collectively, Israaca members possess all qualities of a modern community” (ibid.). For Israaca, “members of Israaca are the life and blood of our organisation. Without them, singly and/or collectively Israaca would not have become the pre-eminent national organisation it is today” (Israaca, 2004).

9.4.4 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ISRAACA

The organisational structure of Israaca consists of the general membership and the local chapters that are linked by common principles, rules and policies. The organisation has a central office managed by the Executive Director and staff.

The central office is located in the headquarters of the organisation. The Board of Directors appoint the Executive Director. The Executive Director can be a member of Israaca but once appointed to this office he/she does not have voting power.

Committees of the Board will include:

- a. Executive Committee
- b. Reconciliation and Governance Committee
- c. Environmental Protection Committee

- d. Human Rights Committee
- e. Political Action-Public Relations Committee
- f. Education Committee
- g. Policy and Programme Committee

The General Membership approves the framework of policies and programmes proposed by the Board of Directors. They also (i) approve the budget of the organisation, (ii) elect the board of directors, (iii) change and/or amend the charter/bylaws of the Israaca, (iv) choose the site of the general assembly's yearly convention; and (v) elect the audit of the organisation.

It is the Board of Directors which has to formulate the policies and platform that provides overall direction to Israaca as well as plans the strategies to achieve the organisational goals. They are also responsible for supervising and providing guidance to the Executive Director, especially to ensure the integrity of the organisation in consistently focusing on its mission and vision, regardless of the complex circumstances facing the organisation at any given moment.

9.4.5 ISRAACA AND ITS POLICIES TOWARDS MAJOR SOMALI ISSUES

Israaca's approach influences its position to many issues pertaining Somalia and its crisis. These include the case of secession of Somaliland, Somali unity, Islam, and clan (and clanism). As mentioned before, Israaca means unity in Somali. Israaca believes in the unity of the Somali nation and the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Somali state.

9.4.6 ISRAACA'S POSITION ON SECESSION

Since the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, the case of secession had been one of the major issues in the Somali political crisis as it had also been a stumbling block to Somali solution.

As mentioned earlier, on 18 May, 1991, approximately four months after Siyad Barre's regime was ousted, the Somali National Movement (SNM) which fought against the military

regime of Siyad Barre took control of the northern regions and declared the regions (what had constituted former British Somaliland), an independent Somaliland Republic.

SNM was formed in London in April 1981 following an uprising in Hargeysa, the regional capital of North-Western region. Some of the arrested were accused of belonging to an illegal organisation called "Men Born in the City" (*Ragga u-dhashay-magaalada*) (An African Watch Report, Somalia: 1990: 37).

The issue of Somaliland secession has also been a difficult case for the international community, particularly, the African Union. SNM leaders took the stance that they had to concede to the 'pressure of their people'. The SNM argued that its action was not secessionist but rather the reinstatement of the status, which existed for four days, 26-30 June 1960, before British and Italian Somalilands were united into the Republic of Somalia. This unilateral decision, however, complicated the Somali dilemma and further distanced the glimmer of hope for a conclusion to the Somali plight (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 112).

Israaca expands the matter of secession by adding another dimension that of Somali identity. It considers "the Somali people as one of the most homogeneous societies in Africa and that the epicentre for identity of Somali people lies with their common faith, language, cultural heritage and way of life" (Israaca, 2004). The social structure of the Somali people is comprised of a confederate system of independent and autonomous clan/sub-clan communities congregated together by common habitat. Each clan, in these confederacies, has a name of a genealogical origin. However, "the Somali identity is universal to all of the clan confederates that form the joints connecting the nation, and serves as the only societal identity of all of the inhabitants of the Horn (ibid.). It is this identity which is the basis of their nationalistic movement.

The act of the reunification after colonial rule was inspired by the public's desire to preserve the unity of their ethnically, culturally, and religiously homogeneous communities and the awareness of their highly interdependent way of life. Therefore, according to Israaca, dismemberment of such a reunion, which is the aim of Somaliland, "must be examined in the backdrop of the desires and the will of the people that led to the reunification" (ibid.)?

Israaca maintains that the colonial inherited boundaries are completely arbitrary created by the colonial interests. Speaking of the frontiers of newly independent Guinea, the Guinean Historian Jean Suret-Canale stated,

" ... they [the boundaries] are completely arbitrary? They do not reflect the limits of natural regions, or the limits of separate ethnic groups. They were shaped in their detail by the chances of conquest or of compromise between colonial powers" (Quoted in Israaca).

It is Israaca view that although 'Somaliland' nowadays "has been reincarnated as the former British Protectorate or British Somaliland constitutes neither a clan name nor confederations of clans of a distinct society (universal sub-identity of the Somali people)" (Israaca, 2004). It views the name 'Somaliland' as merely describing the arbitrarily defined geographical localities of the former British protectorate of Somalia (ibid). Though the people of the British 'Somaliland' and Italian 'Somaliland' have regained their independence from their respective colonial powers at separate dates (26 June and 1 July 1960, respectively), the colonisation of Somalia does not establish, legally or morally, the redefinition of the identity of our people.

The independence struggle waged in Somalia, and specifically in Northern Somalia, was primarily an anti-colonial nationalist struggle, and secondarily a "social struggle." Freedom was generally seen as a panacea and the union was envisioned as a fair and a benevolent she-camel with unlimited capacity to produce milk. The general sentiment was that with the birth of Maandeeq everything will be all right. In this struggle, Israaca has it that,

"... the northern communities belonged to mainly two clan-based parties, SNL (Isaaq) and USP (Gadaburse, Dhulbahante and Warsangeli). Although USP and SNL were clan-based political parties, the parties were democratic in spirit and action. There was no clan-induced hatred or intrigues. Eventually, the staunchly pro-union USP and apprehensive SNL came together and sent a unified delegation to Mogadishu to work out the terms of the union with the

southerners. After the birth of the Republic, unfortunately, few urban elite hijacked Mandeeq and turned it into a "clientelist" tool.”

Clientelism is viewed as slowly to give way to cruder mutative forms and eventually to clanism, until the state collapsed in 1991. It would only stand to reason that after the collapse of the Somali Republic in 1991, local government power would revert back to each community's traditional governance system. Notwithstanding periodic bloodlettings and the scourge of secessionism, northern Somalia's traditional leaders succeeded to achieve this aim with tangible results. There also was an opportunity to reconstitute a fairer and representative state, and even review the act of the union which has come under criticism from northerners who by then came to believe they were railroaded by the southerners. Unfortunately, the separatist camp, in their zeal to advance their goal of secession, had laid this opportunity to waste.

Despite that Israaca accepts a citizen demand to review the act of the union, which is morally and legally justified, such a review, however, it considers should reflect the genuine wishes of the Somali communities of any region that may sponsor the review, and the review must be overseen by legitimate and representative parties/government - elected or selected by the people of the communities involved. In such a review, logic and tradition dictate that each clan of the confederates of the region must be viewed as an independent, autonomous, and equal entity. No clan has legal or moral right to interfere with the independent and autonomous rights and destiny of another clan. In addition, the review must guarantee the unity of the Somali people caught in the middle and allow the freedom of movement mandated by the pastoralist way of life of the majority, which have indigenous rights over any established modern state or authorities.

9.4.6 Israaca's Resolutions Towards the Secession Case

In an attempt to heal the past wounds and to bridge the hearts and minds of all Somali communities, the organisation advocates the creation of a truth and reconciliation commission, akin to that of South Africa, so the public may hear the silent voices of our sons' and daughters' ghost that are crying for justice (Israaca, 2004). The commission must have

the powers to express regret and sorrow, on behalf of all of us, for the atrocities and human rights violations committed against the civilian population of our Northern (and central communities) by the previous Military regime. The commission is necessary to seek that the perpetrators of these crimes be brought to justice. The commission also required also to address and seek justice for crimes committed by warlords and their factions.

Besides that, it endeavours to bring forth an atmosphere of tolerance, democratic pluralism, and respect for human rights, which will safeguard the collective interest of our people. This could come as an engagement and discussion among the Diaspora Somalis in North America and Europe (both supporters and opponents of the secession) and opinion-leaders back home in order to systematically and methodically gauge the public sentiments and evaluate prospects for real reconciliation amongst our people. At last, it recommends,

“...the reestablishment of lost sense of civic nationalism and celebrates the contributions and the sacrifices made by the common men and women of our communities for the establishment of our statehood and the reunification of our people” (ibid.).

9.4.7 POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND LIST DISCUSSION

As an organisation with political and social aims, Israaca is not only a discussion group as is the case of SomaliForum mailing list. It has used the mailing to enable its members to contribute ideas for the development of their task which aimed to find a solution for the Somali crisis. The list attracts a virtual community of over hundreds of Somalis living in all continents.

It is a task-oriented (or product-oriented) list and members join only if they believe in the goal, objectives and aspirations of the organisation. Members should be ‘self indoctrinated’ in the aims of the organisation.

As discussions cover all facets of Somalia’s situation, sometimes debates are hot and controversial. In Israaca discussions are issue based while in SomaliForum every issue is

quickly transformed by matching with the conflict at home.

In the SomaliForum, the exchanges were usually, hot, emotional and sometimes biased. They were outright seditious and troublesome; mostly personal attacks and hate mails were common. Initially, the mail was uncensored and unmoderated. Sometimes when the discussion went out of control and personal attack became a common event, the organisers decided to change the status of the list by making it censored.

At the end of September 2000, SomaliForum sent a short notice to its members warning that change of the feature of the facility. This is what is said,

“Members of this forum are bound by Somalihome Online's Terms of Use. Somali Open Forum is moderated which means messages are read before they are released to the forum. Any message that is out of line or simply nonsense will not be delivered. Members do not want their mail boxes to be filled with meaningless messages. Only sensible and constructive messages will be approved” (SomaliForum message, 2000).

The list also warned members that there will be some delays in receiving their messages as,

“It takes time to check every message sent to the forum and for that reason; there may be a short delay before messages appear in your mail boxes. It advised members to not send irrelevant messages. It pleaded members “to refrain from any offensive language against members of the forum or any other individual or group”

Additionally, it warned that everyone was entitled to their opinions but offensive language is something that is warned about.

“If you have a point to rise, please do so in a sensible and logical manner. The whole point of the forum is to benefit from one another through discussions. And remember, the respect you give should be the respect you receive. Be

careful about private messages too, people don't want to waste their time on reading private messages. Thank you” (SomaliForum message, 2000).

The general rule was that members should engage and argue with whatever position they oppose and convince every one that their position is right until the other side backs down. Within a conflict environment, the position of an individual is not reasonable as his own, but the position of his social group or clan. The language used to reflect the conflict between the clans in Somalia. The debates used to get out of hand, since they mirrored the situation at home.

Intentionally, SomaliForum was meant to create an interactive online discussion that provoked and stimulated online discussion and sharing of viewpoints — an underpinning of classic conflict transformation. However, this free wheeling style backfired as it was not compatible with that the current Somali situation. The participants were virtually influenced by the local events.

Somali groups may unite and organise themselves according to their aims and purposes. Purposes may range from local/community (or lineage) or national level.

SomaliForum inspired a discussion group where Somalis could discuss about their problems. For Israaca the list technology has been a means to complement its objectives. SomaliForum could not survive beyond its first year. This was caused mainly by the impact of Somali local events. Contrary to what it was formed for, the forum became a battle ground of Somali lineage to ‘fight’ known as *fadhi-ku-dirir* (armchair fighter).

In an environment such as the one which followed the Somali civil strife of the early 1991, both mailing lists were expected to face difficulty of unity and aims. Beside the management, the fate of the list also depends on its aims and objectives.

CHAPTER TEN

10. CONCLUSION

This research study raised questions such as how do members of the Somali Diaspora communicate with each other? What is the role of the new communication technology which has enabled the Somali Diaspora to assist their people with the reconstruction at home? How do they take part in the homeland conflict? What are the factors which have caused the proliferation of Somali websites?

To answer the above questions an approach which is multi disciplinary has been taken. The study has used three website case studies and three mailing list case studies. In the case of Somali web types two categories have been focussed upon: the community/political and the cultural/literary categories.⁶⁷ This was because of the content of these web types in presenting the face of Somalia. The first web group's focal activity is for 'community', behaving as a clan front or simple a political group. This means that the majority of this group are oriented towards reconstruction of group identity following the rollback of the state frontiers. Therefore, such groups present themselves as agents of fragmentation of Somali society and epitomise the turbulent and darkest side of the history of the Somali nation. The second group, the cultural/literary, tend to depict the cherished cultural homogeneity (discussed in Chapter Six). However, because of the social fragmentation, the shared heritage is also challenged. This is no more evident than in some of the cultural/literary web group's publications and activities analysed in the chapters above.

In the context of modern technology, the new technology of the Internet turns out to be of particular value to Somali Diasporas whose culture is oral. Somalis are good at adapting technologies to their situational needs, and way to this is the 'culture of imitation' which explains why almost all websites have similar structures. Above all, these influences turned out to be crucial during the civil upheaval in early 1991, as a large number of Somalis fled the country following civil conflict.

Many Com/pol web types have been created by people attempting to have their clan presence on the Internet. Another important technology which helped the Diaspora to organise is the electronic mailing technology. Mailing environment is the arena where the Somali factional Diaspora has been active and provides the groups with the means to organise and communicate. It is also where the Somali Diaspora organises themselves as groups for their betterment and to help their people at home. On the one hand, the mailing list medium has facilitated Somali groups to take the Somali conflict outside the country.

Somali mailing lists have been created mainly by Somali Diaspora for different purposes. There are different types of Somali mailing lists groups some of which are: (a) national level where groups of national interest meet virtually, (b) professional where professional people communicate, and (c) lists where groups meet below the national level.

10.1. WHAT CAUSES THE PROLIFERATION OF SOMALI WEBSITES?

In 1998, Somali websites counted less than twenty. During the course of this research, there were listed 671 websites (see Appendix A), of which 43% have been categorised as community/political types. Next to the community/political web category comes the personal home pages where they stand at 25% percent. Although the number of personal websites amount to 25%, they are overwhelmingly not as determined and resolute as the Com/pol. Many have been created by students to improve their web skills. They are also hosted by free hosting, while community/political have their own domains which involves yearly fees for web hosting and related expenses.

The reasons for the proliferation of Somali websites appear to be two main reasons: (1) The loss of national identity following the breakdown of state institutions, and (2) The oral characteristics of the Internet which are participatory, expressive and dependent on involvement. The first factor is influenced by the new political and social situation which followed the disintegration of the state where people were to return to their ancestral roots.

⁶⁷ According to their structure, form, activity and content, Somali websites can be classified into seven categories: Professional/business, Online News, Religious, Personal, Radio/TV, Community/political and Cultural/literary.

The new situation became a breeding ground for the proliferation of Somali websites, particularly the Com/pol websites.

The Somali way of life favours decentralisation and this is in parallel with electronic communication which is conducive to freedom (Pool, 1993: 231). The Internet can be regarded as a relatively democratic technology because of its underlying structure as its lack of control (ibid.). This analogy might be another reason for the proliferation of Somali websites (and communication technology like telecommunication) as the anarchic Somali website is another term in a 'pastoral democracy' setting.

Other factors behind the propagation of Somali websites could be credited to: (i) the political elite at home who have been taking advantage of this new communication medium; (ii) the educated Somali who had the chance to learn and use the CMC medium; and (iii) the influence which the Diaspora has always had on the local Somali politics since the beginning of Somali nationalism in the 1940s.

In the early years of the 1990s, in many parts of Europe and North America, there were also efforts to create clan based local newspapers. However, almost none survived beyond the first year or first four issues. The Somali newspaper which is an exception is Kasmoo. Kasmoo, an independent and non-partisan newspaper, was founded on 27 September 1997. Its survival relies on publishing for a wider audience and the patience of its editors, Abduqadir Shire and Khalid Macow. Abduqadir is a former editor of Heegan, Somali Revolutionary Party newspaper, while Khalid is a former university lecturer. In 2004, Kasmoo started publishing its East Africa Kasmoo edition which is distributed to East Africa (including Somalia) and the Middle East. Kasmoo published forthrightly in London since 1998, is an independent and non-partisan newspaper.

Web designing has been more successful than printing and this is hardened by the economics of print which requires a good system of dissemination. From a publishing standpoint, an electronic newspaper can reduce the cost and time required to publish, update, and store information. In addition, electronic text is less expensive and less time-consuming to produce

and revise. Not only can electronic storage and retrieval reduce the production costs, it also reduces the amount of space necessary to store documents. This reduces costs even further.

Beside that, publishing on the Internet is automatically published on a global stage. Unlike print, web pages include not only text, but also graphics and sound. Web pages are more dynamic than print, and they are easily revisable.

The process of making web pages reflects the construction of identities as they reflect the construction of their makers' identities. According to Chandler (1997) web pages offer an unparalleled opportunity for group-presentation (or self-presentation).

10.2. SOMALIS AND THE INTERNET

Somali websites have different functions: (a) Performance in the sense that their activity involves a kind of symbolic transmission in the purpose of uniting for a cause. For example, the grave display on SomalilandForum.com and the holocaust images of Arlaadinet.com (and Arlaadi); (b) Preferential in the purpose of selecting specific content that will be attractive to their audience. The user's position in this case is seen as attracting to the expressive caused by the community shared experience; and (c) Expressive in sharing with users experience.

The explanation for the proliferation of Somali websites which followed the collapse of state institutions in 1990s can also be found in Somali culture in a stateless situation. Had the Internet been discovered before the inception of the modern Somali state, Somalis could have been the first people to populate the Internet. This is because every clan would have a desire to have a presence on the web. This experience could be viewed through the centuries old Somali egalitarianism. As Somali egalitarianism permeates all aspects of society "sometimes to the point of anarchy" (Lewis, 1961: 65), proliferation is normal in the expression of egalitarianism as the Internet could provide Somali clans with a new dimension of expression. Awes A.Osman writes:

“Since the emergence of the internet and its introduction to the Somali society, there are as many Somali internet sites as the total number of clans, subclans

and sub-subclans. The interesting feature is that each internet site corresponds to the political interests of a particular clan or sub clan except for very few sites that chose to stand neutral. (Osman, July 2005).

In the 1940s, the emerging modern Somali nationalism sought to suppress the segmentary clan policies of division and rivalry. During the same period, there were parties whose sole aim was their traditional interest, and some of these were the Independent Constitutional Party (Digil and Mirifle Party) known also as Hisbia Dasturul Digil & Mirifle (HDMS), Shidle Party and Liberal Party (also known as Partito Gioventu' Abgal). The HDMS represented the Digil and Mirifle clans of Italian Somaliland. For the need to adjust to nationalist enthusiasm and to legalise as a party, the HDMS changed its denomination to Hisbia Dasturul Hisbia Dasturul Mustaqili Soomaali (HDMM) (later it became the second largest party in independent Somalia) (Issa-Salwe, 1996: 89).

To foster and promote the myth of Somali nationalism, Somalis utilised national figures such as Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan, the man who led the Somali resistance in the early twentieth century against British, Ethiopian and Italian colonialism. Sayid Mohamed was to inspire at the end of the nineteenth century the modern Somali nationalism. Other nationalist figures included Imam Ahmed (Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi), known as Ahmed 'Gurey' (the left-handed).

In the 1990s, Somalis found themselves in a period of social division and disintegration where the sub-national forces took over where the state left off. This mood contradicted the ambiances which bred Somali nationalism in 1940.

In the process of 'reinventing the clan', it is common for many Com/pol websites to employ an approach such as that of Somali nationalism in the 1940s, but in a different format. To bolster the clan image they present pictures of some of their prominent clan members. Example, Geldogob.com has the picture of professor Said S. Samatar of the Department of History at Rutgers University, United States, whose remarkable work includes research on oral poetry and Somali Nationalism. Ogaden.com has General Aden Abdullahi Nur, former

minister of defence who became leader of the southern-based Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM).

But the two most remarkable in this approach are Mudulood.com⁶⁸ and Midgaan.com⁶⁹. Mudulood.com has a long list of national prominent politician and heroes, some of these are Aden Abdulle Osman, the first Somali Republic president.⁷⁰ The list also includes General Daud Abdulle Hirsi, a national hero and the first commander of the Somali Military Force in 1960s, Ismail Jimale Osoble, a well respected human rights lawyer, Osman Ahmed Roble, Ali Gedi Shador and many more prominent figures. The list also includes minor civil servants.

Those not missed include Professor Ali Mohamed Ghedi, who was selected as Prime Minister of Somalia in 2004 by President Col Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, following a long Somali reconciliation conference held in Kenya.

If Mudulood figures are mainly from the political class, Midgaan.com has completely different prominent figures in Somali art and literature from all the marginalized Somali found in the pastoralist society. These include individuals such as singer and composer Omar Dhuulle, singer Mohamed Saleebaan, and the Somali legendry star and singer, Maryan Mursal Issa. One significant point here is that Midgaan.com does not include political figures. It does not include even General Mohamed Ali Samatar, the charismatic former minister of defence and later Prime Minister under Siyad Barre's regime.

Although Mudulood and Midgaan.com have similar approaches, they definitely diverge in the purpose. Mudulood's intention is to boast and to convey the impression of a self-aggrandisement and self-important group, while Midgaan.com presents itself in the 'beauty and majesty' in the 'domain' of culture and literature. Literature and artistic figures receive great respect in Somali culture. By presenting themselves in this light, they mean to say "we

⁶⁸ Mudulood is one of Somali Hawiye clans Moobleen, Abgaal, Wacdaan and Ilaawaay.

⁶⁹ Midgaan is the common general term used for Somali outcaste groups.

⁷⁰ Adan Abdulle Osman was the first democratically elected president of Somalia (1960-1966) and the first African president who did not declare himself president for life but walked away peacefully from power (see Samatar and Samatar (2004).

present the best of the Somali nation”. The method used is intended to present themselves as people who suffered under the pastoralist society and to counter the negative treatment the pastoralists assigned them. Presenting positively their case this is what they say,

“Being Midgaan in Somali is not happy existence; it is to born in crime, being Midgaan in Somalia it means trying to smile when you want to cry, it means to hold on physical life in the midst of psychological death for more and much It means the pain of watching your children growing up in the environment that calls “ Midgaan” tells them that they are inferior because they were born from Midgaan families. What do you think the future of those innocent children?” (Ahmed M. Keynan, 2004).

10.3 COM/POL WEBSITES AND APPROACHES TO THE SOMALI PROBLEMS

As mentioned above, the Somali websites activities, layout and content portray the extent of the turbulence in which the Somali society was undergoing since the early 1990s which followed the collapse of the state. The vigorous activities typify Somalis’ conflicting views on Somali conflict and the way to solve this conflict which kept Somalis without a stable government for almost one and half decades. This ongoing debate is their engine as their activities have made the cyberspace another front to ‘fight’ in the civil war. In essence, websites’ attitudes and characteristics depend on their intended political perspectives as well as their group background. For example, the Com/pol web type’s characteristic and behavior can be found into the new political units discussed above.

Somaliland websites, i.e. SomalilandForum.com, interpret Somali crisis as north and south issue: the north being the former British Somaliland and the south the former Italian Somaliland. Contrary to that view, the non-Somaliland websites, particularly, all those Com/pol websites that are identified with southern Somalia — including those which could be identified with Sool and Sanaag — disagree with this interpretation. Puntin.org (Puntland Intelligentsia Network), which represent Puntland region, is one of the websites which opposes this view. Puntin.org claims that the Somali problem should not be seen as south and north as this notion is based on colonial ideas of the division of the Somali people.

Interpreting as a consequence of injustice and massacre made to its people by the regime of Siyad Barre, Puntin.org argues that the new Somali state should be based on the new situation which has developed following the civil war (Puntin, 1999). As online background information, Puntin.org emphasises the development which ensued following the civil war, where people were forced to return to their clan "areas". Clan enclaves began forming which created a situation where the country became divided into four or five parts.

Puntin.org reiterates that Somali conflict is based on ethnic lines and, therefore, solutions must come on ethnic lines (Puntin, 2000). To regain public confidence and reconstruct the Somali state, the traditional identity — namely the clan — must be applied. This view contradicts with that of SomalilandForum.com in two aspects: (a) SomalilandForum.com maintains that the basis of the state should be based on the frontiers created during the colonial period, and (b) that ethnically Somaliland represents various clans.

Riverine websites share similar views to those of Puntin.org. Nevertheless, they differ with respect to the historical background of the conflict. As mentioned elsewhere, Arlaadinet.com (and its sister websites) challenge the notion of cultural homogeneity of the Somalis as they argue that the distinction of the cultures of northern nomadic and southern agro-pastoral clans is evident with the wide difference of their culture, language and social structures (Arlaadinet, 2000). They give the importance of the local language as the basis of their case. These people speak the May (also known as Maay), a Somali dialect. They argue that May is not a dialect, but a language of its own and it is not intelligible with Mahaatiri (the pastoralists dialect).

Arlaadinet's challenge reflects the fragmentation of Somali society following the civil war. According to Hellander, before the civil strife, among the sedentary communities in the southern Somalia, one's residence was considered to be the most important identity which a person may hold. The clan identity was only a marginal one.

10.4 COM/POL WEB TYPE AS MEDIA ORGANISATION

Since the year 2000, the Internet has become one of the major home news for the Diaspora. What is printed on the Internet is also a major source of information for many local newspapers in Somalia. This might be one of the factors which influence news selection of Somali online reporters and webmasters. Evidently, website hits increase when there are major events at home. A hit counter is a number on a web page that indicates how many people have visited that page. It measures and displays the number of times visitors have viewed a single page on a website. Technically, hit counters measure requests sent by a visitor's browser to a server.

Other factors which influence Somali Diaspora using the Internet include:

- 1) *Cost of accessing*: It cost less accessing the Internet for information than the other media, such as newspaper.
- 2) *Value proposition*: users can access more supplies of information as a result of the many Somali websites. With the click of the mouse they can access many news websites.
- 3) *Ease of use and availability*: A user spends less afford and time accessing news on the Internet that reading from newspapers.

News is the main content of the Com/pol websites as they are dominated by political content. Violent news is what finds most likely attention. In this viewpoint, news values tend to favour events which are about conflict and violence.

The political news content in website news is intended to satisfy an audience and, in some cases, it seems that the audience are satisfied with what they get from their preferred website. Here there is a combination of satisfaction and political content which emphasises relevant events. Events are considered important in relation to the interest (satisfaction) of the audience.

Due to the effect of the civil war and because of mistrust, a web user is more inclined to trust and believe what 'his' website publishes. It is this feeling that leads Somali web designers to set up their group websites and 'furnish' with what they are expected to supply. Particular interest is where users identify themselves with some specific Com/pol websites.

Webmasters focus on how to attract 'their' audience. This is done by presenting news events that they believe might satisfy their audience. It appears that there are two main factors which influence the formation of Somali websites audience: those who feel 'related' to a particular website and those who access it casually for information. The first type of formation illustrated by the Com/pol websites is socio-oriented. Basically this corresponds with the existing social grouping, with shared characteristics such as place, group identity or politics.

The website is expected to offer the needed information (reward). These rewards can be thought of as experienced psychological effects which are valued by the user. Sometimes, this is also called media 'gratification'. Such rewards can be derived from actual items of content, and provide guidance for subsequent choices.

10.5 THE WEBSITE AND NEWS RESPONSIBILITY

The way information is dealt with by Somali webmasters reflects the traditional way of treating information as a commodity. Somalis say '*warbaa ugu gaaja wayn*' (information hunger is the worst hunger). This requires everybody to be a good 'information handler'. A good information handler is also one of the characteristics for personal quality what Somali call '*wargal*' which literary means, 'fit for information handling'. However, many Somali Com/pol web types fail these characteristics as many define themselves as 'not fit for information handling'.

As Com/pol websites lack resources to manage as media organisations, therefore, accuracy and some of the other crucial elements might not be maintained. This may lead to a breach of what Somalis call the culture of '*wargalnimo*', a characteristic which emphasis 'the quality of responsible reporting'. Somali culture endows the culture of *wargalnimo* with responsibility.

It is logically impossible for Somali websites to have a shared regulation, particularly during social fragmentation. This may cause concern for the maintenance of professional and ethical standards. Each site stands on its own interest which makes it collide with the interest of the 'other' website.

Sometimes the media becomes a “source of conflict and chaos in disseminating contradictory news items and coverage” (Academy for Peace and Development, 2002: 49). Many interviewees have the opinion that the media should not be controlled at all. Nevertheless, they accept that the media should take responsibility of what they publish. In other words, they should self-regulate themselves instead of relying on an authoritative body to regulate them (email, 12/10/2001).

It is appropriate to consider the relations between media communicators and their environment as, in principle, interactive and negotiable. It is also appropriate to emphasise that the media organisation operates within its own ‘boundaries’ and has some degree of autonomy and freedom of choice.

A lot of questions about the ethics and responsibility of Com/pol websites were asked during this research. Many interviewees showed their concern about the “lack of responsibility” by the media in general. Many believe that journalists have responsibility to cover in ways that accurately reveal the degree and understanding of community life, they believe that media, including Somali websites, should desire to retain their credibility and behave responsibly.

The view of journalistic freedom relates to self-regulation and responsibility towards the society. Particularly, at a time of social strife, the desire for freedom is viewed to be weighted against the need to preserve political stability and social harmony.

10.6 CULTURE AND LITERATURE FEATURE IN COM/POL

While Com/pol websites activities may be seen to represent the epitome of the turbulent Somali nation, the Cul/lit reveal a view of sharing as the majority of them share culture and literary content.

One common feature that can be found in almost all web categories is the literary and Islamic sections. These two features show the significance Somalis give to their most enduring heritage: literature and Islam. While the cultural/literary appeals to the shared and common heritage of culture and language, the religious sites concentrate on the other heritage of

Somalia: Islam. By providing some Islamic teaching material and information, the latter appeals to the individual and the community's moral ground. While the religious sites use "divine" appeals, the cultural sites use a mixture of sociability and sense of belonging.

The Cul/lit appeals to the shared and common heritage of culture and language and they tend to depict the cherished cultural homogeneity. However, because of the social fragmentation following the collapse of state institutions in the 1990s, the shared heritage is also challenged. And there is no more telling evidence than that found on Somali Com/pol websites.

Although Cul/lit features are part of almost all Somali web types, there are websites dedicated entirely to Somali culture and literature. The first is considered as Section Cul/lit, while the second group is considered as Dedicated Cul/lit websites.

One important aspect of the Dedicated Cul/lit websites is their consciousness of not mixing politics with the cultural argument, especially those divisive issues which are characteristic of Somali segmentary society. Nevertheless, cultural issues have never been excluded from spilling into political controversies to further the cause of Somali nationalists. In the Somali context, cultural issues are always prone to be incorporated into political interpretation, particularly since the onset of the conflict in 1990s. This comes when the 'cultural unity' is transformed into 'political unity'. Two cases are the riverine (particularly the Digil and Mirifle clan) case and that of Somaliland. The first has been endeavouring to have a 'cultural independence' while the second is to have a 'political hegemony'.

The Dedicated Cul/lit websites have their own domain and they are devoted entirely to Somali culture and literature as they generally seek the dissemination and preservation of Somali culture and literature. However, Section Cul/lit (of the Com/pol websites), which are run under the community/political (Com/pol) web types, have different approaches and they are defined by the web's political orientation. Generally, there are two approaches: the first is dedicated to the promotion of Somali linguistic homogeneity, while the second supports a heterogeneous view of Somali culture and language. The first group is mainly associated with the pastoral society, while the latter group is identifiable with the agro-pastoralist society of the riverine and inter-riverine area of Southern Somalia.

Using their local dialect, Maay, as the main political vehicle, the heterogonous endeavour to use the Maay language and 'culture' in a political drive to assert their own identity. At the forefront of the heterogeneous oriented group there are the Riverineland.com, Arlaadi.com and Arlaadinet.com which concentrate on the promotion of the Digil and Mirifle 'language' and 'tradition'.

The riverine websites attempt an approach that can be viewed as the 'reinvention' of Somalia. They accuse the pastoral nomadic society of misleading Somali history. Departing from the nomadic 'hegemonic' approach, they argue that the agro-pastoralists have imposed "an invented hegemony" representing "Somalia as the few culturally homogeneous countries in Africa, if not the world" (Mukhtar, 2001).

By promoting their culture and history, the riverine websites aim to use language as a means to further their political and social 'grievance'. Generally, in the nationalist aspiration, the language features as the main ingredient that is used to stimulate this aspiration. This view is indicative of the elite perception similar to that of the Marxist theory of hegemony where they view and portray all previous Somali governments since independence as 'Mahaatiri governments' and the Mahaatiri 'culture' as the dominant culture. In this perspective, the pastoral society is perceived as the 'ruling class' and the media is perceived to support the 'dominant class'. In other words, this process is viewed as the 'Mahaatirisation' of the agro-pastoralist society.

10.7 SOMALI WRITING

The present day high technological culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print is what Ong terms "secondary orality" (Ong, 1982: 11), as opposed to "primary orality," a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print (ibid.). Today primary oral culture in strict terms does not exist, since every culture knows writing and has same experience of its effects. Yet, many cultures preserve much of the mindset of primary orality (ibid.).

Even though writing has never been a significant communication medium in Somali society, the use of Somali writing on the Internet seems to reflect what the great Somali novelist, Nuruddin Farah, terms as a leap from oral tradition to technological sense "without going through the middle stage of writing word" (Farah, 1987: 7). This visionary observation illustrates the oral characteristics of the Internet which in a sense has turned us to an 'oral culture'.

The Internet is leading the expansion of Somali writing as the languages that websites publish in are overwhelming Somali and English. Although Arabic is Somalia's second language, Arabic language is mainly used by religious web types where they publish Koranic verses and Prophet Mohamed's teachings (the Hadith). In the opinion of Anita Adam,

"The computer linked community is where the Somali written language is being developed, through online newspapers, commentary and essays; and people are thus becoming accustomed to accessing information in a written format". (Adam, 2004).

While the Internet creates a sense of belonging and a sense of sharing for Somali groups, it is also an agent for 'fragmentation', Somali websites tend to depict cherished cultural homogeneity and shared heritage of Islam, they also portray the political and social division of their consciousness. Traditional Somali social setting is the basis of the main identity of Somali society.

A group is held together by what is special about it, and this 'specialness' consists of information that members have in common with each other and do share with members of the other group (Meyrowitz 1985: 56). Every group develops its own reality based on its own separate experience. This perception of different reality has consequences that mitigate against an organised society on a nation-wide basis. Website anarchy helps to explain how the social crisis deepened.

10.7.1 THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND THE SOMALIS

The rapid development of the ICT media — which has triggered what is known as post-industrial revolution — has revolutionised the global economy, changing the ways in which trade occurs and production and services are processed. This post-industrial revolution (also called digital revolution) is making society becoming knowledge based on knowledge based skill replacing physical or labour based skills in all walks of life (Harnad, 1991).

The digital revolution is the fourth information revolution in human history. The first was the invention of writing five or six thousand years ago in Mesopotamia. The second was the invention of the written book in China perhaps as early as 1300 BC. The third revolution was set off by Guttenberg's invention or printing in 15th century in Germany. Each one of these revolutions had ramifications far beyond its immediate context and dramatically altered the course of entire centuries (ibid.).

Many worry about the continuing growth of global information to marginalized Africa as the pace of growth accelerates even more and the gap between those who are linked and those who are not linked grows larger. Africa's disadvantage is the underdevelopment of the telecommunications infrastructure which is essential to keep pace with the said growth.

Although Somalis have been caught up by crisis arising from the collapse of the state and the subsequent civil strife, the experience did not leave them out of the loop of the new global communication technologies. Given the influence of the Somali Diaspora on their homeland, the enormous skills they have gained in the use of the digital technology might be a vital asset for future development. The chance to catch up with the pace of the digital evolution will also depend on their capacity to secure the needed infrastructure (computer terminals, networks and communication channels).

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia, telecommunications have been developing tremendously in all regions of the Somali territory. This business trend has been growing in complete contrast with other forms of business. The traditional Somalis' longing for information and communication drives this business boom. This trend has also encouraged

many Somali business people to venture into the international telephone trade in Somali region as well as abroad.

The Internet's multifaceted character has provided members of the Somali Diaspora with a way of presenting their anguish and the prominence of oral patrimony. But each site represents part of the total sum of this violent history: strengthening sense of community, sense of group belonging in a new dimension (virtual world), strengthening group identity, and ethnocentrism. Yet, the anarchic Somali website activities epitomise the turbulent, darkest sides as well as the best sides of the history of the Somali nation.

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APPENDIX A: SOMALI WEB PAGE LIST

WebList

Web Name	address	Category
4Somaliwomen	http://www.4somalwomen.com/	pro/bus
A`S Home Page	http://malik121.tripod.com	per
Aayaha	http://www.aayaha.com	com/pol
Abaaji	http://www.abaaji.com/	com/pol
Abaaqarow	http://abaaqarow.com/	com/pol
Ababshe	http://www.ababshe.com/	pro/bus
Abdi Isse	http://www.geocities.com/hollywood/lot/8168/	per
Abdi's Page	http://www.geocities.com/johst.geo/	per
Abdi's Web Site	http://www.geocities.com/johst.geo/english.html	per
Abdul`S Homepage	http://hem2.passagen.se/feyte	per
Abdulaziz M. Alibaadi Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/heartland/pointe/1258	per
Abdullahi Ahmed Nur's Homepage	http://www.tewa.pspt.fi/~nahmed	per
Abdullahi's Web Page	http://www.geocities.com/abdull18/mire	per
Abdulmalik Home Page	http://home.planet.nl/~kadir004	per
Abdulqadir	http://www.hanad.atfreeweb.com	per
Abdulqadir Home Site	http://takow.webjump.com	per
Abdulrahman's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/rodeodrive/boutique/9523/	per
Abdulrashidnet	http://www.abdulrashid.net/	rel
Abudwaq	http://www.abudwaq.com/	com/pol
Abuubakar As-Saddique	http://www.abuubakar.com/	rel
Adal Tribune	http://www.adaltribune.com/	com/pol
Addacwah	http://www.addacwah.com/home/	rel
Adduun2000	http://powow.com/adduun/adduun2.html	per
Adil's Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/naji_dk	per
Afdheer	http://www.afdheer.com/	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Afgarad	http://www.afgarad.com/store/scripts/	pro/bus
Afgoi	http://www.afgoi.com/	com/pol
Aflax	http://www.aflax.net/	cul/lit
Afnugaal	http://www.afnugaal.com/	com/pol
Afrika Dabari	http://www.afrikadabari.net/	com/pol
Afrikada Bari	http://www.afrikadabari.com/	com/pol
Aftahan	http://www.aftahan.com/	cul/lit
Ahmed	http://www.geocities.com/ahmire2000	per
Ahmed Dirie Multimedia Designer	http://www.webdefied.com	per
Ahmed M. Dirie's Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/siliconvalley/orchard/9363/	per
Ainashe	http://www.ainashe.net/	com/pol
Alasow Homepage	http://alasow.webjump.com	per
Albakrioil	http://www.albakrioil.com/	pro/bus
Aldalka	http://www.alldalka.com/	com/pol
Al-Forqan Online	http://www.al-forqan online.com	rel
Alfredi's Place @ The Net	http://www.nureldin.homestead.com	per
Alhudamedia	http://www.alhudamedia.com/	rel
Ali Baashi	http://home.bip.net/shamo	per
Ali3mbd-Personal Portfolio Website	http://www.ali3mbd.com/	per
Ali's Home Page	http://www.angelfire.com/ab/ali2000	per
Ali's Page	http://drop.to/ali	per
Ali's World	http://www.geocities.com/aliadan/	per
Al-Karama	http://www.alkarama.com/	rel
All Dalka	http://www.alldalka.com/	com/pol
All Mudug	http://www.allmudug.com/	com/pol
All Safari	http://www.bulsho.dk/index.php?topmenu=5	pro/bus
All Safari Video	http://www.bulsho.dk/index.php?topmenu=5	pro/bus
All Waamo	http://www.allwaamo.com	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Allah Amin (Somalia And 2000)	http://www.geocities.com/dheere20	per
Allbanadir	http://www.allbanadir.com/	com/pol
Allceeldheer	http://www.allceeldheer.com/	com/pol
Allgedo Online	http://www.allgedo.com/	com/pol
Allhiiraan	http://www.allhiiraan.com/	com/pol
Allpuntland	http://www./allpuntland.com/	com/pol
Allraaso	http://www.allraaso.net/	com/pol
Allsanaag	http://www.allsanaag.com	com/pol
Allsomal	http://www.allsomal.com/	com/pol
Alltaleex	http://www.alltaleex.com/	com/pol
Allwadani	http://www.allwadani.com/	com/pol
Altaqwaa	http://www.altaqwaa.com/	rel
Al-Tawxiidonline	http://www.al-tawxiidonline.com/	rel
Alxaq	http://www.alxaq.net/	rel
Amin Arts	http://www.aminarts.com/	pro/bus
Amohamed's Site	http://www.geocities.com/jamaad00/temporarypreviewfile.html?1010862194450	per
Amoud University	http://www.amouduniversity.com/	pro/bus
Amsas	http://www.amsasconsulting.com/	pro/bus
Aniga Waaye	http://www.geocities.com/yxalane/yusuf.html	per
Arday	http://www.arday.com/	pro/bus
Arlaadi Online	http://www.arlaadi.com/	com/pol
Arlaadinet	http://www.arlaadinet.com/	com/pol
Aroorsan	http://go.to/aroorsan	per
Arraweelo	http://www.angelfire.com/ar/arawelo/index.html	com/pol
Asad's Family Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/siliconvalley/mouse/3972/index.html	per
Asalaamu Calaykum.Aqyaareey Ku Soo Dhawaada Guriga	http://www.geocities.com/area51/station/2708	per
Aw Rabiic Homepage	http://rabiic.cjb.net	per
Awdal News N.	http://www.awdalnews.com/	on-news

Web Name	address	Category
Awdhegle	http://awdhegle.tripod.com	per
Aweys Homepage	http://www.angelfire.com/music/gambi	per
Awsome Page! About Me!	http://members.blackplanet.com/mohamed/	per
Axadle	http://www.axadle.com/	com/pol
Ayaamaha	http://www.ayaamaha.com/	on-news
Ayaanle	http://jambalul.hollywood.com/jambaluul.html	per
Ayaha Nolosha	http://www.markacadeey.com/aayaha_nolosha/aayaha_nolosha.htm	com/pol
Ayanle Online	http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ayanle	per
Ayuub`S Homepage	http://welcome.to/ayuub	per
Aziz Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/hollywood/1366	per
Baafin	http://www.baafin.com	pro/bus
Baaq Islaam	http://www.baaqislaam.com	rel
Baargaal	http://baargaal.net.ms/	com/pol
Baashe Boqor	http://home.t-online.de/home/misse/baashe.htm	per
Bahnan's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/bahnans/	per
Baidoa	http://www.baidoa.com/	com/pol
Bakaaraha	http://www.bakaaraha.com	com/pol
Bakool	http://www.bakool.7p.com/	com/pol
Balcad.Com	http://www.balcad.com	com/pol
Baligubadle	http://www.baligubadle.com/	com/pol
Banaadiri	http://www.banaadiri.ilcannocchiale.it/	com/pol
Banderqasim	http://www.banderqasim.com/	com/pol
Baraawe Post	http://www.baraawepost.com/	com/pol
Barbaarin	http://www.barbaarin.com/	rel
Bartamaha	http://www.bartamaha.com/	pro/bus
Bashiir's Website	http://www.angelfire.com/80s/kindaguy	per
Beerlula Online	http://www.beerlula.com/	cul/lit
Benadir	http://www.banadir.com	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Benadir-Islam	http://www.benadir-islam.com/	rel
Benadir-Watch	www.benadir-watch.com	pro/bus
Bilan	http://www.geocities.com/bilan011	per
Biyo Kulule	http://www.biyokulule.com/	com/pol
Biyokulule	http://www.biyokulule.com	com/pol
Bj's Home Page	http://expage.com/bjama	per
Boga Ibraahim	http://home.bip.net/faxal/	per
Bogga Kacaanka	http://www.geocities.com/hollywood/set/2160/feb.html	com/pol
Boodaaye's Homopage	http://www.boodka.purespace.de	per
Borame News	http://www.borameneews.com/	on-news
Bravanese Network	http://www.coding-zone.co.uk/bravanese/index2.shtml	com/pol
Buale	http://www.buale.com/	com/pol
Bualenews	http://www.bualenews.com/	com/pol
Bulhan	http://www.bulhan.com	com/pol
Bulshaawi---World	http://bulshaawi.tk	per
Bulsho	http://www.bulsho.dk/	com/pol
Buluugleey	http://www.buluugleey.com/	com/pol
Burco Online	http://www.geocities.com/burcoland/index.html	com/pol
Burtinle Online	http://www.burtinle.com/	com/pol
Buuhoodle Net	http://buuhoodle.net/	com/pol
Buula Barde	http://www.buuloburde.com/	com/pol
Buulaay	http://www.buulaay.com/	com/pol
Buuloburde	http://buuloburde.com/	com/pol
Buurhakaba	http://www.buurhakaba.com/	com/pol
Cabdicade	http://www.keysar.cjb.net	per
Cadaado.Net	http://www.cadaado.net/	com/pol
Cadami Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/cadami_j/	per
Cadayga	http://www.cadayga.com/	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Cade's World	http://get.to/abdi	per
Calayaale	http://calayaale.com/	com/pol
Cali Tiriig Web Page	http://calitiriig.i8.com/photo2.html	per
Calmadoow	http://www.calmadow.com/	com/pol
Carmooyin	http://www.carmooyin.com/	com/pol
Cayaaraha.Com	http://www.cayaaraha.com/	pro/bus
Caynaba	http://www.caynaba.com/index.php	com/pol
Ceelbuur	http://www.ceelbuur.com/	com/pol
Centre For Research & Dialogue	http://www.crdsomalia.org/index.shtml	pro/bus
Check Out, I Guess U Will Enjoy It, Uuhahu	http://www.naleye.4t.com	per
Cigonet	http://www.cigonet.com/	per
Cilmi Boodheri	http://www.angelfire.com/va2/zak10	per
Cilmi Info	http://abdi.isse.tripod.com	per
Codka Somali Galbeed	http://www.angelfire.com/bc/snrs/	com/pol
Codka Somalia	http://www.codkasom.com/index.html	rad/tv
Cogor Homepage	http://www.cogor.freesevers.com	per
Cogor's Web Site	http://cogor.freesevers.com	per
Committee To Aid Somali Education	http://www.somalieducation.org/	pro/bus
Cowslafil	http://cowslafil.com/	com/pol
Daallo	http://www.daallo.com	pro/bus
Dadkeyga	http://www.dadkeyga.com	com/pol
Daljecel	http://www.daljecel.com./	com/pol
Dalka	http://www.dalka-online.com	com/pol
Dangedo	http://www.dangedo.com/	on-news
Danjire.Com	http://www.danjire.com/	com/pol
Danowadaag	http://www.danowadaag.com/	com/pol
Darasalam	http://www.darasalam.com/	pro/bus
Darwiish	http://www.darwiish.com	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Dawan Press	http://www.dawanpress.com/	on-news
Dayaxnet	http://www.dayaxnet.com/	com/pol
Dayib`S Home Page	http://www.come.to/kadiye	per
Dayniile	http://www.dayniile.com	com/pol
Dayniileone	http://www.dayniileone.com/	com/pol
Deeqa Ahmed	http://members.tripod.com/deeqo	per
Deeyoo	http://www.deeyoo.com	cul/lit
Dhabad Online	http://www.dhabadonline.com/	com/pol
Dhagaxtuur	http://www.dhagaxtuur.com/	com/pol
Dhahar	http://www.dhahar.com/	com/pol
Dhiba	http://welcome.to/dhiba	per
Diilhare	http://www.diilhare.com/	com/pol
Diinsoor	http://www.diinsoor.com/	com/pol
Diriye's Homepage	www.geocities.com/paris/louvre/2521/diriye.html	cul/lit
Doollo	http://www.doollo.com	cul/lit
Dooynet	http://www.dooynet.com/	com/pol
Dr. Saeed's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/collegepark/pool/3512/index.htm	per
Dugsi	http://www.dugsi.com/index.html	rel
Dujis2007	http://www.dujis2007.com	com/pol
Dulmane	http://www.dulmane.com/	com/pol
Dur-Dur	http://www.dur-dur.com/	pro/bus
Duruus	http://www.duruus.com/	rel
Ease Your Mind	http://easeyourmind.blogspot.com	per
East Africa University	http://www.puntlanduniversity.com	pro/bus
Elektaroonig	http://www.outsidesomalia.net/default.asp	pro/bus
Ezmacils Ehome	http://www.ezmacil.20m.com	per
Faafan	http://www.faafan.com/	com/pol
Fadhil's Crib	http://www.expage.com/swahilizcrib	per

Web Name	address	Category
Falis's Home Page	http://www.expage.com/page/falis	per
Falsan	http://www.falsan.org	pro/bus
Famesite	http://www.seehowigetfamous.com	per
Farah Site Check It Out	http://www.go.to/farah	per
Farshaxan	http://www.farshaxan.com/	pro/bus
Fiqinet	http://www.fiqi.net/hof/index.php	com/pol
Foolow Homepage	http://home.swipnet.se/foolow2000	per
Fuad's Page	http://members.tripod.com/~fmoalim/index.html	per
Gabilay	http://www.gabilay.com/	com/pol
Gabooye.Com	http://www.gabooye.com/	com/pol
Gacmo Furan Ku Soo Dhowaada Walaalayaal	http://www.geocities.com/madisonavenue/boardroom/1183	per
Gad Ama Gado	http://gadamagado.com/	pro/bus
Galeyr's	http://www.geocities.com/galeyr_2001/index.html	per
Galool Homepage	http://www.welcome.to/galool	per
Ganacsiga	http://www.ganacsiga.com/	pro/bus
Gandarshe	http://www.gandarshe.com/	com/pol
Gantaal News	http://www.gantaalnews.com/	com/pol
Gantaalnews	http://www.gantaalnews.com/	com/pol
Garissa	http://www.garissa.net/	com/pol
Garowe Online	http://www.garoweonline.com	com/pol
Gashaamo	http://www.gashaamo.com	com/pol
Gedo Web	http://www.gedoweb.com/	com/pol
Gedohomepage	http://www.gedohomepage.com	com/pol
Gedonet	http://www.gedonet.com	com/pol
Geedoole	http://www.geedoole.com/	com/pol
Geeska Afrika	http://www.geeskaafrika.com	com/pol
Godan Shop	http://www.godaneshop.com/	pro/bus
Godane's Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/paris/cafe/1753/	per

Web Name	address	Category
Godey News	http://www.godeynews.com/	com/pol
Golaha Imaamyada Iyo Masaajiddada	http://www.imaams.com/	rel
Goldogob	http://www.goldogob.com	com/pol
Goldogobsite	http://www.goldogobsite.com/	com/pol
Golkhatumo	http://www.golkhatumo.com/	cul/lit
Goobjoog	http://www.goobjoog.com	com/pol
Gorgor News	http://www.gorgornews.com/	on-news
Gubta	http://www.gubta.com	com/pol
Guled's Homepage	http://www.guled.cjb.net	per
Gurey Web Page	http://www.geocities.com/hollywood/set/2160/rrrr.html	per
Gurey's World	http://www.dazzled.com/mnur99/gurey.html	per
Guulane	http://www.guulane.com/	com/pol
Guureeye Site	http://www.angelfire.com/ab4/guureeye	per
Haatuf News	http://www.haatuf.net	com/pol
Hadhwanaag	http://www.hadhwanaag.com/	com/pol
Hadhwanaagnews	http://www.hadhwanaagnews.com/	com/pol
Hadraawi	http://www.hadraawi.com/	cul/lit
Halgan	http://www.halgan.net/	com/pol
Hallane Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/hallane187/hollywood.html	per
Hamareey	http://www.hamarey.com/	com/pol
Hanuun	http://http://hanuun.com/	rel
Harardhere	http://www.harardhere.com/	com/pol
Hargeisa City	http://www.hargeisacity.50megs.com/index.html	com/pol
Hargeisa Net	http://hargeisanet.com/	com/pol
Harowo	http://harowo.com/	com/pol
Harwanaag	http://www.harwanaag.com/	com/pol
Hassan Sulub	http://www.sulub.co.uk	per
Hawd Iyo Nugal	http://www.hawdiyonugal.com/	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Hawiye Action Group (Hag)	http://www.hawiyeactiongroup.com/	com/pol
Hayaan	http://www.hayaan.net/	com/pol
Hayaan.Net	http://www.hayaan.net/	com/pol
Hi This Is Sakaria	http://www.expage.com/sakaria	per
Hiiraan Online	http://www.hiiraan.com or http://www.hiiraan.ca	com/pol
Hiiraan Today	http://www.hiraantoday.com/	com/pol
Hilinka Toosan	http://www.hilinkatoosan.com/	rel
Himilo	http://www.himilo.com/	com/pol
Hirda	http://www.hirda.org/	pro/bus
Hobyonet.Com	http://www.hobyonet.com/	com/pol
Hobyo-One	http://www.hobyo-one.com/	com/pol
Hoggaan Toosan	http://www.hoggaantoosan.com/	com/pol
Home Of Nefrun	http://expage.com/page/nabad	per
Hornafrik Online	http://www.hornafrik.com/	rad/tv
Horseed	http://http://www.horseed.com/	com/pol
Horseednet	http://horseednet.com/	com/pol
Horumar	http://www.horumar.org/index.php?lang=e	com/pol
Horyaal	http://www.horyaal.com	on-news
How To Talk To Anyone Anytime	http://www.geocities.com/xamar9	per
Hoyga Suugaanta	http://www.hoygasuugaanta.com	cul/lit
Hoyga Suugaanta Music Page	http://www.geocities.com/faaraxc/songs2.html	cul/lit
Idamaale	http://www.idamaale.com/	com/pol
If You Have One Minute	http://www.yonis.20m.com	per
Iftiinka Aqoonta	http://www.iftiinka-aqoonta.com/	pro/bus
Iftiinnet	http://www.iftiinnet.com/	pro/bus
libso	http://www.iibso.com/	pro/bus
Iki's Madnest	http://www.geocities.com/collegepark/bookstore/3786/index.html	per
Ikram's Home Page	http://www.go.to/nasteexo/	per

Web Name	address	Category
Ileeye Website	http://www.ileeye.4t.com	per
International Pen Somali	http://www.somalipen.org	cul/lit
Islamic And Personal Webpage	http://www.come.to/ahmedm	per
Islii Online	http://www.islii.com	com/pol
Ismail2000	http://www.koolpages.com/ismail/ismail2000.html	per
Italosomali.Org	http://www.italosomali.org/	com/pol
Jaamac Home Page	jaamac home page	per
Jamhuuriya	http://www.jamhuuriya.com	on-news
Jammaame	http://www.jammaame.com/	com/pol
Janaale	http://www.janaale.com/	com/pol
Jiggiganet	http://www.jiggiganet.com/	com/pol
Jiimonet	http://www.jiimonet.com/	com/pol
Jijigawe	http://www.jijigawe.com/	com/pol
Jowhar	http://www.jowhar.com/	com/pol
Jowhar Online	http://www.jowharonline.com/	com/pol
Juba Press	http://www.jubapress.com/	com/pol
Jubaland	http://www.jubaland.com	com/pol
Jubba Airways	http://www.jubba-airways.com/	pro/bus
Jubbavalley Online	http://www.jubbavalley.com/	com/pol
Jubboland	http://www.jubboland.com/	com/pol
Just For Somalis	http://www.expage.com/mohamedoof	per
Kaambo	http://www.kaambo.com/	com/pol
Kartuun	http://www.kartuun.com/	pro/bus
Kasmo Newspaper	http://www.kasmo.info/	on-news
Kenya Somalis	http://www.kenyasomalis.org/	com/pol
Kenyan Somali Community	http://www.kenyasomalis.org/	com/pol
Khalid Mosque	http://www.khalidmosque.com/en/	rel
Khalif Shino's Home Page	http://msnhomepages.talkcity.com/volunteerst/somali-one/	per

Web Name	address	Category
Khaliif Dirir Website	http://www.geocities.com/abdi68/amiin.htm	per
Kilil 5 Online	http://www.kilil5.com/	com/pol
Kismaayo Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/kismaayo2000/	per
Kismayo	http://kismayo.com/	com/pol
Kulmis	http://www.kulmis.com/	pro/bus
Kulmiye	http://www.kulmiye.com/	com/pol
Kulmiye C-Online	http://www.kulmiye-community.com/	pro/bus
Kusoo Dhawow Gurigii Jimcaale	http://go.to/jimcaale_99	per
Laascaanood Net	http://www.laascaanood.net/	com/pol
Laasqoray	http://www.laasqoray.net/	com/pol
Ladan Affi's Home	http://members.tripod.com/~caafi/	per
Lafoole (STAS)	http://www.lafoole.com	pro/bus
Leyla's Page	http://angelfire.com/a12/leylahome	per
Liban's Home On The Cyberspace	http://student.iu.hio.no/~kenadil/	per
Liban's Personal Page	http://www.geocities.com/liban55404/mypage.html	per
Liibaan Weirah	http://www.angelfire.com/ns/lib	per
Luuliyo	http://www.luuliyo.com/	com/pol
Luuq	http://www.luuq.net/	com/pol
Maandeeq	http://www.maandeeq.com/	com/pol
Maaneed	http://www.maaneed.com/	com/pol
Maanta	http://www.maanta.com/	pro/bus
Maayland	http://www.maayland.com/	com/pol
Madhibaan.Org	http://www.midgaan.com/	com/pol
Mahamed & Hamdi	http://www.geocities.com/mahamed_hamdi	per
Mahamed Yare Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/mucjizo3	per
Manaas	http://manaas.com/	com/pol
Mandeqnet	http://www.fortunecity.com/victorian/russell/348/	cul/lit
Manta Computers	http://www.mantacomputers.ca/	pro/bus

Web Name	address	Category
Mareeg Online	http://www.mareegonline.com/	com/pol
Marka Caddeey	http://www.markacaddey.com	com/pol
Markacadeynet	http://www.markacadey.net/	com/pol
Marogabey	http://www.morogabey.com/	com/pol
Marwan_Ismail	http://www.geocities.com/marwan_ismail202/enter.html	per
Marwan-Ismail's Castle !!	http://www.marwanismail.genxer.net	per
Masjid Shaafici	http://masjidshaafici.com/	rel
Masjid Towfiiq	http://www.tawfiiq.net/	rel
Michigan Boyz	http://takeoff.to/muhidiin	per
Midgaan	http://www.midgaan.com	com/pol
Midland State	http://www.midlandstate.com/	com/pol
Midnimo	http://www.midnimo.com/	com/pol
Mininka Caadil	http://www.geocities.com/hotsprings/oasis/3763	per
Mmplasteek And General Trading	http://www.angelfire.com/ok/mmplasteek/	per
Mogadishu University	http://www.mogadishuuniversity.com	pro/bus
Mohaa's Cornner	http://www.mohaa.co.uk	per
Mohamed F Ali	http://www.mohameda9.homestead.com	per
Mohamed Jaylani Hassan	http://jeylani.freewebsites.com/home.html	per
Mohamed Sa'eed's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/mo_said	per
Mohammed's Homepage	http://www.mohammed98.cjb.net/	per
Morogabey	http://www.morogabey.com/	com/pol
Moti's Home Page	http://www.angelfire.com/mo/abdulmoti	per
Mudug	http://www.mudug.com/	com/pol
Mudugonline	http://www.mudugonline.com/	com/pol
Mudullood.Com	http://www.mudullood.com/	com/pol
Muqdishocity	http://www.muqdishocity.com/	com/pol
Muqdishonet	http://www.muqdishonet.com	com/pol
My Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/heartland/pointe/1258/index.html	per

Web Name	address	Category
My Homepage Abdikadir	http://www.dazzled.com/abdikadir	per
My Homepage Ibrahim	http://www.members.tripod.com/ahmedibrahim0	per
My Life	http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/3443	per
Nasir Gutale`S Home	http://hem3.passagen.se/nasx/	per
National Somali Bantu Organization	http://www.somalibantu.com	com/pol
Nedsom	http://www.nedsom.com/	pro/bus
Nimo Jamah Web Page (From Djibouti)	http://www.multimania.com/nimojamah/nimojamah.html	per
North American Somali Student Union	http://www.nassunet.org/	pro/bus
Nugaal	http://www.nugaal.com/	com/pol
Nugaal University	http://www.nugaaluniversity.com/	pro/bus
Nugaalnet	http://www.nugaal.net/	com/pol
Nuruldin's Site 1	http://www.nuruldin.tk	per
Nuruldin's Site 2	http://www.nureldin.homestead.com	per
Ogaden	http://www.ogaden.com/	com/pol
Ogaden News	http://www.ogadennews.com/	on-news
Ogaden Times	http://www.ogadentimes.com/	on-news
Ogadensun	http://www.ogadensun.com/	com/pol
Omar's Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/augusta/links/2567/	per
One Somalia For Ever	http://www.geocities.com/dayibali	per
Onkod	http://www.onkod.com	com/pol
Osman Art	http://www.osmanart.net/	pro/bus
Osman's Homepage You	http://www.angelfire.com/co/osman	per
Pace Magazine	http://www.pacemagazine.com/	on-news
Pan-Somali Council For Peace And Democracy (Israaca)	http://www.israac.org/	com/pol
Pepsi Boy	http://www.geocities.com/nursayid	per
Philosophy, Sciences, Formalism	http://www.geocities.com/athens/parthenon/3761	per
Prince's Palace	http://www.angelfire.com/bc/prince/index.html	per
Puntland News	http://www.puntlandnews.com	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Puntland Online	http://www.puntlandonline.com/	com/pol
Puntland Post	http://www.puntlandpost.com	com/pol
Puntland Star	http://www.puntlandstar.com/	com/pol
Puntland Talk	http://www.puntlandtalk.com	pro/bus
Puntlandnet	http://puntlandnet.net/	com/pol
Puntlandstate.Com	http://www.puntlandstate.com	com/pol
Puntlandtimes	http://puntlandtimes.coms.ph/	on-news
Qaadisiya	http://www.qaadisiya.com/	com/pol
Qaamuus	http://qaamuus.somitek.com/	pro/bus
Qabridahare	http://www.qabridahare.com/	com/pol
Qabridaharre	http://www.qabridaharre.com/	com/pol
Qalaafe	http://www.qalaafe.com/	com/pol
Qanciye's World	http://www.listen.to/qanciye	per
Qandala	http://www.qandala.com/	com/pol
Qandala Online	http://www.qandala.com/modules/news/	com/pol
Qandalanet	http://www.qandalanet.tk/	com/pol
Qaran News	http://qaran.saffas1.com/pn/	com/pol
Qaran Press	http://www.qaranpress.com	on-news
Qaranimo	http://www.qaranimo.com/	com/pol
Qarannews	http://www.qarannews.com/pn/	com/pol
Qorahay	http://www.qorahay.com/	com/pol
Raasonet	http://www.raasonet.com/	com/pol
Radio & Tv Djibouti	http://www.ifrance.com/djibculture/info_som.htm	rad/tv
Radio Beerlula	http://www.beerlula.com/radio.asp	rad/tv
Radio Benadir	http://radiobanadir.com/realaudio/ramfiles/rbb1.ram	rad/tv
Radio Copenhagen	http://www.somaliradio.dk/	rad/tv
Radio Dalmar	http://www.soneca.nl/index4.html	rad/tv
Radio Dayniile	http://www.dayniile.com/raadiyo/www.dayniile.com14.rm	rad/tv

Web Name	address	Category
Radio Free Somalia	http://www.radiofreesomalia.com/	rad/tv
Radio Galkayo	http://radiogalkayo.com/	rad/tv
Radio Garowe	http://www.garoweonline.com/2004pro/index.php	rad/tv
Radio Golis (Rg)	http://www.radiogolis.com/	rad/tv
Radio Hadhwanaag	http://www.hadhwanaag.com	rad/tv
Radio Hormuud	http://www.radiohormuud.dk/	rad/tv
Radio Ileys	http://radio.somaliweyn.com/	rad/tv
Radio Laascaanood	http://www.radiolaascaanood.com/	rad/tv
Radio Lascaanod	http://radiolascaanod.com/	rad/tv
Radio Midnimo	http://www.radiomidnimo.com/modules/news/	rad/tv
Radio Qaran	http://www.www.qaranradio.com	rad/tv
Radio Sagal	http://www.sagalradio.net/	rad/tv
Radio Sahan	http://www.radiosahan.com/	rad/tv
Radio SCERDO	http://www.scerdo.com/radio.ram	rad/tv
Radio Shabeelle	http://www.shabelle.net/	rad/tv
Radio Somali Swiss	http://www.sr.se/rs/somali/	rad/tv
Radio Somaliland	http://www.radiosomaliland.com/	rad/tv
Radio SYL	http://www.sylradio.com/	rad/tv
Radio Warsan	http://www.radiowarsan.com/	rad/tv
Radio Xamar	http://www.xamarradio.com/	rad/tv
Radio Xoriyo	http://www.ogaden.com/radio_xoriyo.ram	rad/tv
Rayi' Press	http://www.rayipress.com	on-news
Realpuntlander	http://www.realpuntlander.com/	com/pol
Reexamar	http://www.geocities.com/sanubanadiri/	com/pol
Riinji	http://www.riinji.com/	com/pol
Risaala	http://www.risaala.com/	rel
Riverineland	http://www.riverineland.com	com/pol
Ruunkinet	http://www.ruunkinet.com	com/pol

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S.I.B Outsiderz	http://angelfire.com/ak4/insanecrips	per
Saadaq's Site	http://www.geocities.com/sadaqw	per
Saafi Phone	http://www.saafiphone.com/	pro/bus
Saaxil Net	http://www.saaxil.net/	com/pol
Saaxil Online	http://www.geocities.com/dararweyne	per
Saaxil's	http://www.geocities.com/saaxil	per
Saciid Somalipianet	http://kickme.to/saciid	per
Safariphone	http://www.safariphone.net/	pro/bus
Safi's Homepage	http://www.mightycollision.com/	pro/bus
Sahan Relief And Development Organization	http://www.srado.org/	pro/bus
Saleban's World	http://www.geocities.com/saleban74	per
Samaddoon	http://www.samaddoon.com/	com/pol
Sanaag City	http://wakeup.to/sanaagcity	com/pol
Sanaag Online	http://www.sanaagonline.com/	com/pol
Save Somalia	http://www.savesomalia.org/	rel
Saylac	http://www.saylac.com/	com/pol
Sbc Online	http://www.allsb.com/	rad/tv
Sbs Radio Australia	http://203.15.102.143:8080/ramgen/record/somali.rm	rad/tv
Scansom	http://www.scansom.com/	pro/bus
Scerdo	http://www.scerdo.com/	pro/bus
Shabeele	http://www.shabeele.com/	pro/bus
Shabele	http://www.shabele.com/	com/pol
Shabellaha Hoose	http://www.shabellahaoose.com/	com/pol
Shamso's Page	http://www.angelfire.com/pa4/movies/fahda.html	per
Shangaani	http://www.shangaani.com/	com/pol
Shareero	http://shareero.com/studio/	cul/lit
Shino Net	http://www.shiine.netfirms.com/	per
Sit Back Relax And Enjoy The Ride	http://www.themediator2be.homestead.com	per

Web Name	address	Category
Snn News	http://www.snnnews.net/	on-news
Somaali	http://www.somaali.com/	com/pol
Somal News	http://www.somalnews.com/	on-news
Somali Access	http://www.somaliaccess.com/	pro/bus
Somali Airlines	http://www.somaliairlines.homestead.com/somali.html	per
Somali Broadcasting Corporation	http://www.sbconline.net/	rad/tv
Somali Centre For Somali Centre For Water & Environment (SCWE)	http://www.somwat.com/	pro/bus
Somali Christians	www.somalichristians.org	rel
Somali Citizen	http://www.somalicitizen.com/	com/pol
Somali City	http://www.somacity.com/	com/pol
Somali Civic Web	http://www.somalishir.org/	pro/bus
Somali Cultural Association (Inc.) Home Page	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~somalia/	cul/lit
Somali Education	http://www.aqoonta.com/	pro/bus
Somali Family Services	http://somalifamilyservices.org/	pro/bus
Somali Fisheries Society	http://www.soma-fish.net/	pro/bus
Somali Free Media	http://www.somfreemedia.com/	on-news
Somali Has New Breed Of Rappers	http://www.geocities.com/somali_child/	per
Somali Heritage	http://www.somheritage.com/	pro/bus
Somali Heritage Book	http://www.alkarama.com/maktabad/bookshop.html	cul/lit
Somali Hip Hop	http://www.somalihiphop.com/	cul/lit
Somali Home	http://www.somalihome.com/	com/pol
Somali IGAD	http://www.igad.ca/somali.htm	com/pol
Somali Institute Of Management And Administration Development (SIMAD)	http://www.simad.org/intro.htm	pro/bus
Somali Inter	http://www.somaliainter.com/	com/pol
Somali Irrigation Company (Sico)	http://www.somaliirrigation.com/	pro/bus
Somali Islamic Media	http://somalimedia.se/	rel
Somali Journal	http://somalijournal.com/	on-news
Somali Law	http://www.somalilaw.org/	pro/bus

Web Name	address	Category
Somali Mad Love	http://www.expage.com/somalilove	per
Somali Magazine	http://www.somalistartpage.com/magazine/newsletter1.html	pro/bus
Somali Market	http://www.somalimarket.com/	pro/bus
Somali Medical Association Or North America	http://www.somalimedicalassociationnordamerica.com/	pro/bus
Somali Music And Ringtones	http://www.somalisongs.tk	pro/bus
Somali News	http://www.somalihome.com/	com/pol
Somali Playboy	http://www.geocities.com/somali_playboy/new.html	per
Somali Post	http://www.somalipost.com/	com/pol
Somali Press	http://www.somalipress.com	on-news
Somali Radio On The Net	http://listen.to/somaliradio	per
Somali Radio Sweden	http://listen.to/somaliradio.com	rad/tv
Somali Refugees In Yemen	http://www.somalirefugeesinyemen.com/	pro/bus
Somali Roots	http://www.somaliroots.com/	com/pol
Somali Shop	http://www.somalishop.com/	pro/bus
Somali Social Unity Party	http://www.ssup.org/	com/pol
Somali Songs	http://mohamedjmaa.tripod.com/s_music.htm	per
Somali Sport And Culture	http://www.somalisc.com/	pro/bus
Somali Sports	http://www.somsports.com/	pro/bus
Somali Star Tv	http://www.somalistartv.com/	rad/tv
Somali Start Page	http://www.somalistartpage.com/	com/pol
Somali State	http://www.somalistate.com	com/pol
Somali Students Association	http://www.somalistudents.net/	pro/bus
Somali Sunah	http://www.somalisunah.com/	rel
Somali Teachers' Association	http://www.barre.co.uk/	pro/bus
Somali Tv Online	http://www.somtv.net	rad/tv
Somali Voices	http://www.somalivoices.com/	pro/bus
Somali Water & Environ	http://www.somalihome.com/	pro/bus
Somali Website	http://www.somaliwebsite.com/	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Somali Weyn	http://www.somaliweyn.com	com/pol
Somali Wide	http://www.somaliwide.com/	com/pol
Somali Women	http://www.4somalwomen.com/	pro/bus
Somalia (Kamaal)	http://kamaal.7p.com	per
Somalia (Qoslaaye)	http://qoslaaye1.tripod.com/	per
Somalia Canadians Today	http://www.somalicanadians.ca/index.html	pro/bus
Somalia Hanoolaato	http://www.geocities.com/collegepark/gym/3613/	per
Somalia Rebirth	http://www.somalia-rebirth.dj/	com/pol
Somalia Site	http://www.somaliasite.com	com/pol
Somalian Students Society Malaysia	http://www.sssmalaysia.org/	pro/bus
Somaliawatch.Com	http://www.somaliawatch.com	com/pol
Somaliawatch.Org	http://www.somaliawatch.org	com/pol
Somalibantu.Com	http://www.somalibantu.com	com/pol
Somalidoon	http://www.somalidoon.com/	com/pol
Somaligalbeed	http://www.somaligalbeed.net	com/pol
Somaliherald	http://www.somaliherald.com/	com/pol
Somalihome Online	http://www.somalihiphop.com	com/pol
Somalijecel	http://www.somalijecel.com	com/pol
Somaliland Center	http://www.somalilandcenter.com/	com/pol
Somaliland Cyberspace	http://storm.prohosting.com/~mbali/	com/pol
Somaliland Democracy Watch	http://www.somaliland-democracy-watch.co.uk/	pro/bus
Somaliland Democracy Watch Organisation (Sdwo)	http://www.sdwo.com/	com/pol
Somaliland Future	http://www.somalilandfuture.com/	com/pol
Somaliland Global	http://www.somalilandglobal.com/	com/pol
Somaliland Green Awareness	http://www.geocities.com/collegepark/bookstore/9971/	pro/bus
Somaliland International Recognition Action Group	http://www.sirag.org.uk/	pro/bus
Somaliland Mirror	http://www.somalilandmirror.com/	pro/bus
Somaliland News	http://www.somalilandnews.com/	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Somaliland Organisation	http://www.somalilander.org/	com/pol
Somaliland Patriots	http://www.somalilandpatriots.com/index.php	com/pol
Somaliland Software	http://www.somalilandsoftware.com/news/newsd.asp?id=946	pro/bus
Somaliland Talk	http://www.somalilandtalk.tk/	com/pol
Somaliland Tv Europe	http://www.tvsomalilandeuropa.net/	rad/tv
Somaliland Web	http://www.geocities.com/somalilandfr/	com/pol
Somaliland Women Association	http://www.somalilandwomen.com/	pro/bus
Somaliland.Org	http://www.somaliland.org/	com/pol
Somalilandera	http://www.somalilandera.com	com/pol
Somalilandnet	http://www.somalilandnet.com	com/pol
Somalilandnews	http://www.somalilandnews.com	com/pol
Somalilife	http://www.somalilife.com/	com/pol
Somalimagazine	http://www.somalimagazine.com	on-news
Somalinet	http://www.somalinet.com/	com/pol
Somalinimo	http://www.somalinimo.com/	com/pol
Somaliobserver	http://www.somaliobserver.com/	com/pol
Somalisan TV	http://www.somalisantv.com/	rad/tv
Somalisix	http://www.somalisix.com/	com/pol
Somalism	http://www.somalism.com/	com/pol
Somalitalk	http://www.somalitalk.com	com/pol
Somalitoons	http://www.somalitoons.com/	pro/bus
Somalitribune Somalitribune	http://www.somalitribune.com/html/index.php	on-news
Somaliuk	http://www.somaliuk.com/	com/pol
Somaliunited	http://expage.com/page/somaliunited	per
Somaliview	http://www.somaliview.com	com/pol
Somaliwatch.Com	http://www.somaliwatch.com	rel
Somaliwebsite.Com	http://www.somaliwebsite.com/	com/pol
Somcamel	http://www.somcamel.com/	pro/bus

Web Name	address	Category
Somitek	http://www.somitek.com	pro/bus
Somlink	http://www.somlink.com/	pro/bus
Sool, Sanaag & Hawd Development Agency (Sshda)	http://www.sshda.org/	pro/bus
Soomaali	http://www.somaali.com/	com/pol
Soomaalinews	http://www.soomaalinews.com/view_page.php?articleid=277	com/pol
Southern Somali Union	http://www.ssunion.us/index.html?_ret_=return	com/pol
Sscayn	http://www.sscayn.com/	com/pol
Stn-Tv.Net	http://www.stntv.com/	rad/tv
Suldan Hurre Human Rights Focus	http://www.suldanhurre.org/	pro/bus
Susa Network	http://www.susanetwork.com/	pro/bus
Suxayfa	http://www.suxayfa.com/	rel
Suxufi	http://www.suxufi.com/	on-news
Syl Online	http://www.syl2.s5.com/	com/pol
Tahlil's Home Page	http://www.isxul.homestead.com/index.html	per
Taleex	http://www.taleex.org/	com/pol
Talowanaag	http://talowanaag.com/	com/pol
Tanadland	http://www.tanadland.com/	com/pol
Tawakal Lifeline Somali Women's Group	http://www.tawakal.co.uk/	pro/bus
The Best Homepage Ever	http://geocities.com/wiseman228/fun.html	per
The Most Beneficial Site In The Web.	http://www.faisal.gq.nu	per
The Somali Resource And Heritage Center	http://www.angelfire.com/ma3/somheritage/	cul/lit
The Supreme Page	http://www.geocities.com/muse_ahmed187/farhan.html	per
The Tighest Dhtml Ever Made	http://members.blackplanet.com/somali_playboy/	per
Togane	http://www.togane.org/	pro/bus
Togdheer	http://www.togdheer.com/	com/pol
Togdheer Net	http://www.togdheer.net/	com/pol
Togdheer Org	http://www.togdheer.org/	com/pol
Totallysomal	http://www.totallysomal.com/	com/pol

Web Name	address	Category
Towfiq Awes's Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/heartland/flats/9381	per
Transitional Federal Government Of Somali Republic TFG	www.dfks.gs	com/pol
Truesomali	http://www.truesomali.com/	com/pol
Ucid Party	http://www.ucidparty.com/	com/pol
Ufurow	http://www.ufurow.com/	com/pol
Uhubso	http://www.uhubso.com/	pro/bus
Umak	http://www.umak.tk/	com/pol
Usuuli	http://www.usuuli.com/	rel
Van Pasten Homepage	http://hometown.aol.com/hujaale/myhomepage/index.html	per
Waaga Cusub	http://www.waagacusub.com/	com/pol
Waano	http://www.waano.net/	rel
Waberi	http://www.waberi.com/	rad/tv
Wadanka	http://www.wadanka.com/	com/pol
Wakiil (Somali Business Center)	http://www.wakiil.com/	pro/bus
Wamostate	http://www.waamostate.com/	com/pol
Waqooyi Bari Kenya	http://www.waqooyibari.com	com/pol
Wardher	http://www.wardher.com	com/pol
Wardoon	http://www.wardoon.com/	com/pol
Wariye	http://www.wariye.com/	rel
Warsame Home Page. Welcome To My Page	http://expage.com/page/warsamos	per
Warsan Times	http://www.warsan.com	on-news
Waxgarad	http://www.waxgarad.com/	pro/bus
Waxweyn	http://www.waxweyn.net	com/pol
Wayaha	http://www.wayaha.com	com/pol
Weah Page	http://www.axp.mdx.ac.uk/~af190/	per
Welcome To Abdi Ali Musse's Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/6521	per
Welcome To Abdihakim's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/abdi_22/abdi.html	per
Welcome To Abdinasir*S Homepage	http://www.astud.chalmers.se/abdhas00	per

Web Name	address	Category
Welcome To Foozi's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/foozi99_99/welcome.html	per
Welcome To Gergaduud Homepage	http://members.tripod.com/shiino/frontpage.html	per
Welcome To Ikraan's Homepage	http://www.expage.com/page/ikraan	per
Welcome To Liban Haji Web Bage	http://www.angelfire.com/mn/libanhaji	per
Welcome To My Homepage	http://www.geocities.com/farhanos/farhan.html	per
Welcome To Suhaib's Corner	http://www.angelfire.com/ab4/taekwondotoday/	per
What Ever Happens Somalia Is My Country	http://campus.fortunecity.com/law/374/index.html	per
Widhwidh	http://www.widhwidh.com/	com/pol
Xaajo Online	http://www.xaajo.com/	com/pol
Xamar Cadde	http://www.xamarcadde.com/	com/pol
Xamarbile	http://www.xamarbile.com/	com/pol
Xamarnet	http://www.xamarnet.com/site/news.php	rel
Xaramka	http://www.xaramka.com	com/pol
Xararyaale	http://www.xararyaale.com/	com/pol
Xarfo Online	http://www.xarfo.com/	com/pol
Xasan Nur	http://www.xasansuni.cjb.net/	per
Xassan's Home Page	http://www.geocities.com/paris/metro/1946	per
Xeraale	http://www.xeraale.com/	com/pol
Xiddigaha	http://www.sosca.ca/	pro/bus
Xiddigta Banadir	http://www.banadir.com	com/pol
Xisbiga Udub	http://www.xisbiga-udub.com/	com/pol
Xog-Gaal	http://www.xog-ogaal.com/	on-news
Xogwaran	http://www.xog-waran.com/	com/pol
Xurnimo	http://www.xurnimo.com/	com/pol
Yaaqshid	http://www.yaaqshid.com/	com/pol
Yabaayil Net	http://www.yabaayilnet.com/	com/pol
Yabaayil-Online Yabaayil-Online	http://www.yabaayil-online.com/	com/pol
Yamayska	http://yamayska.com/	on-news

Web Name	address	Category
Yoobsantimes	http://www.yoobsantimes.com/	com/pol
Youth Anti Aids Somalia	http://www.youthantiaidssomalia.org/	pro/bus
		Total number
		671

Professional/business (Pro/bus), Online News (on-news), Religious (rel), Personal (per), Radio/TV (rad/tv), Community/political (Com/pol) and Cultural/literary (Cul/lit)

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

1.1 Please, tick your age group:

18 - 24 |---|

25 - 44 |---|

45 and above |---|

1.2. Male / Female

1.3. Level of education / schooling: -----

(e.g. diploma / degree)

1.4 Profession: -----

1.4.1 if you have other professions please write below:

QUESTION 2:

2.1 Your skills of using computers:

Beginner |---|

Intermediate |---|

Advanced |---|

QUESTION 3:

3.1 How many times you log-on the Internet per day?

Less than 5 times -----

More than 5 times -----

QUESTION 4:

4.1 Which websites you usually visit or browse?

(please, list below):

1. -----

2. -----

- 3. -----
- 4. -----
- 5. -----
- 6. -----

4.2 Please, specify which web type, or which part of a website, you usually visit (or browse):

- 4.2.1 News / political |---|
- 4.2.2 Literary |---|
- 4.2.3 Medical |---|
- 4.2.4 Education / sport |---|
- 4.2.5 Religion |---|
- 4.2.4 Others -----

QUESTION 5:

5.1 Are you a member of other electronic mailing lists (including this one):

- NO: |---|
- YES: |---|

(Please, list below the names of the other electronic mailing list you are a member)

QUESTION 6:

6.1 It is believed that media can create a sense of sharing and belonging. As a member of this electronic mailing list, do you feel this sense of sharing and belonging?

QUESTION 7:

7.1. Which of the two following types of communication do you prefer or you feel more conformable with:

Face-to-face |---|

Mediated communication (e.g. e-mail, telephone) |---|

7.2 Please write below the reason for your preference,

QUESTION 8:

Traditionally when Somalis communicate they like to know the person with whom they are conversing. The electronic mailing medium, such as this, creates a social situation where you write to or discuss with people whom you have never met before.

8.1. Have you experienced the need to know more about the background, age group or social group of the person you are discussing via this mediated communication?

NO: |----|
(go to 8.3)

YES: |----|
(please, write below)

8.2. Is it possible for you to know about this person from his/her writing, ideas or views?

NO |----|
(go to 8.3)

YES |----|
(please, write below which features help you to identify/know your interlocutor)

8.3 Usually e-mails are not signed with the country of the sender. Would you prefer senders to add their location?

YES: |----|
NO: |----|

QUESTION 9:

As a group this medium has given you a chance to disseminate information quickly and to organise ideas and views. This is a complete change from the traditional face-to-face communication.

9.1. What effect has this medium had on the traditional oral Somali communication pattern?

=====

APPENDIX C: WEBMASTERS RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

1. About the website

a. Name:

b. Address (URL)

2. How you manage the web?

a. As a committee [] individually [] or other [-----]

b. (optional) Name:

3. Date website founded?

4. Please could you outline your objective towards your service?

.....

.....

5. Who are your target users (audience)?

a.

b.

c.

d.

etc.

6. What benefit you expect your users to gain from your service?

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.
