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VARIATIONS ON THE THEME
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Tribalism and Islam

- Variations on the Basics of Somaliness

1. Introduction

Somalia constituted a cultural and territorial nation before the colonial intrusion. Political nationhood, in the sense of having an overall central political authority, however, was the product of a nationalist endeavor, and was achieved only after European rule. Notwithstanding the influx of Islam in the Somali coastal areas as early as the seventh century,¹ and its gradual deep penetration, Somalia had neither been incorporated effectively in the successive Muslim Empires, nor had it been established on its own into an Islamic state.² Indeed, it had remained segmented into small tribal states in the rural territories and Muslim city-states dispersed throughout the coast.

Scholars of Somali studies never disputed on three important facts about Somalis. First, they are socially divided into tribes with primitive modes of production. This fact indicates that the Somali nation-state was built on an aggregation of tribes each carrying a divisive ideology of tribalism. Second, they are Muslims of the Sunni school of thought. This fact indicates that a strong Islamic faith, *iman*, with its ingrained universal values such as justice, equality, brotherhood, cooperation, discipline, and *shura*, 'consultation', is capable of soothing the insidious and negative aspects of tribalism. Third, the homeland of the Somalis is the Horn of Africa. This turbulent region of unstable antagonistic states and worldly strategic significance has brought misery and perpetual plight for Somalis for the last five centuries.

Indeed, the successive Somali governments failed to deal effectively with these three factors. They failed to devise a practical approach bridling divisive political tribalism. Also, instead of supporting Islamic activism, they curbed it and promoted indecent alien cultural values. Furthermore, the unwise state policies towards regional geopolitics greatly contributed to the final destruction of the state by the armed militia organized and supported by neighboring countries.

During the prolonged Somali crisis, Islam and tribalism, as the two indigenous ideologies, were greatly used to legitimize internecine wars and as a means for reconciliation and conflict resolution. Currently, Islam and tribalism are not only shared ideologies for all Somalis, but also many organizations were founded on these ideological bases. Nowadays, more than 50 tribal factions and, at least, two major Islamic organizations representing political Islam are operating in Somalia. It is the purpose of this paper to study tribalism and Islam, presupposing that they constitute the two major pillars for Somaliness and the only available local elements to reconstruct a new Somali state.

2. Tribalism: the first base of Somaliness

Tribalism is a state of mind, an act of consciousness which generates tribal solidarity, '*asabiyah*', and strong loyalty to one's own tribe. Its objective factor is the existence of a tribe and of a means of economic subsistence. Yet, its subjective factor is a high propensity among tribal chiefs to invest in the goal of controlling grazing land, wells or government.

Tribalism serves two important functions. First, it satisfies the basic human need for love, affection and a sense of belonging and identity. This means that every citizen of Somalia belongs to one of the tribes either genealogically or by alliance. Indeed, the natural answer to

the question of 'who are you?' would be to tell descending or ascending levels of identification groups such as a lineage, the *diyya*-paying group or the main tribe or the Somali nation-state depending on who asks the question and the circumstances.³ Second, tribal identity generates group consciousness in the segmented society. Highly consultative tribal local states were established, providing social welfare and security in the absence of a centralized government, or even afterwards. In this situation, identifying oneself with his tribe automatically entitles an individual to certain rights and requires from him fulfillment of a set of obligations. This is regulated by an unwritten common law of the tribe, known as *xeer*, which consists of ancestral tribal customs mixed with Islamic laws.

Somali tribal culture is based on the following three concepts. First, the fame of an individual is derived from 'the fame of and glory of his ancestor'.⁴ This belief leads to the glorification of forefathers, making annual sacrifice for them, and building their tombs. That is because the glory and virtues of the ancestors 'are transmitted to progeny'.⁵ This practice satisfies the need for self-esteem and respect from other people. It also leads to the feeling of self-confidence, worth, strength and capability. As a result, others value every member in Somali society not only for his personal quality but also for who his actual forefathers were. Indeed, 'men who could not boast of ancestors worth mentioning were despised'.⁶ Small tribes and families who are admitted to the larger tribes in an alliance are, therefore, often looked down upon and considered second class citizens in the tribal confederacy.

Second, in this tribal system, compliance with all the duties, which are connected with family ties, is inviolable. 'The quintessence of the tribal value is loyalty to, and self-sacrifice for the sake of all who are connected with one's tribe'.⁷ This is a manifestation of real '*asbiyyah*', which limits political loyalty only to the person's tribe, thereby creating chauvinistic and hostile tribal interests which ignites continuous tribal wars.⁸

Third, there is a need for the fulfillment of the law of blood revenge.⁹ This value is connected with the concept of common defense. Tribal quarrels in the rural areas often arise over the use of scarce water or grazing land. As a rule, quarrels, which cause a loss of life, are followed by retaliation as a general rule. Tribalism in Somalia is based on a chain of successive loyalties to different levels of the tribe in relation to other tribes that are higher in the tribal genealogical counting or alliance. Tribalism in itself is neither good nor evil. Its group solidarity quality may be used for virtuous causes as well as for sinister motives.

2.1. The nature of Somali tribal structure

The Somali nation consists of two major tribal groups: the Samale group which includes the four main pastoral tribes, namely, Darod, Hawiye, Dir and Isaaq; and the Sab group which comprises the two main agro-pastoral tribes namely, Digil and Mirifle.

Samale clan-families dwell mainly in the arid land in the northern and center and, to some extent, in the far south, outside the political border of Somalia. According to anthropological categorization of the traditional African political systems,¹⁰ the Samale group could be classified as a classical segmented system where 'cultural unity exists, but politically diffused and broken down into a number of smaller political units whose basis of membership is [essentially] kinship'.¹¹ The nature of this system is a high propensity among its members to compete with one another for political domination, fissionaryness at times of crisis, and a weak territorial attachment.¹² Each clan family of the Samale groups consists of numerous clans, subclans, lineages and sub-lineages, which are agnatically related.

Sab clan-families are mainly dwellers of the area between the Juba and Shabelle rivers in southern Somalia and their political structure is a universalistic-segmented system, which does emphasize a need for common socialization process among age groups.¹³ Moreover, because of the abundance of water and cultivable land, which motivated mixed farming, Sab clan-

families developed a sense of attachment to a certain land. In fact, contrary to the Samale group, this has created 'greater social stratification among Sab group'¹⁴ which is divided into dominant original landowners, long standing cultivators and recent clients.¹⁵ Tribal membership is acquired mostly through common territory although kinship and clientship are also present.

The main distinction between Samale and Sab clan-families is due to their different ecological settings, which produced distinct economic cultures and linguistic dialects. Samale tribes are mainly pastoral nomads and camel herders who move constantly in search of grazing land and water and speak the *maxaa tiri* dialect of the Somali language.¹⁶ Sab tribes are agro-pastoral and speak the *may tiri* Somali dialect.¹⁷ The building block of Somali society is the *diyya*-paying group. This unit is the fighting unit of males, who receive and pay blood-wealth in common. In the late 1950s, there were 950 recognized *diyya*-paying groups in the Italian Somaliland and 361 in the British Somaliland.¹⁸ Every *diyya*-paying group as a primary socio-political unit has:

1. A territory, although vaguely defined, used as grazing area during seasonal movements;
2. 'Home-wells' to which clan members return during dry seasons;
3. Customary laws known as *xeer* which regulate intra-tribal relations as well as the relations with other tribes;
4. Tribal chiefs and Sheikhs as political and religious leaders of the tribe

In the Samale group, the politics of the *diyya*-paying group are characterized by decentralization of power, an egalitarian political process, and individual subgroup autonomy. The decision-making process is basically consultative, and all male members of the lineage have the right to participate and discuss matters of the tribe in a general assembly called *shir*. However, the executives, who are the chiefs of the lineage and assistant sub-lineage chiefs, meet routinely and manage the affairs of the state. The religious *ulama* of the tribe enjoys the reputation of having religious power and are counselors of the chiefs in matters of 'religion'.

During the colonial incursion, many tribal chiefs became colonial collaborators receiving material rewards. Tribal chiefs of Berbera in Northern Somaliland, and Obok in French Somaliland, Obbia and Majertain in Italian Somaliland, signed commercial and protection treaties with British, French and Italian colonial companies in 1827, 1862 and 1893 respectively.¹⁹ The chiefs were used to pacify their tribes and advise the colonial administration on tribal policies and customs.²⁰

In the British administration that was based on indirect rule, tribal chiefs were incorporated into the colonial system at an early stage while in the Italian colony, the process of containment and integration of the tribal chiefs was not easy and continued until 1917. Mutual relations between chiefs and the colonial administration began with the distribution of gifts to the notables and religious judges. According to the Sorrentino report of 1891,²¹ many chiefs of the Mogadishu area who were on good terms with Italy, proposed to Filionardi that a port should be built at Adala.²² In 1908, most of the tribal chiefs were incorporated into the administration when the Italian regional commissioners nominated 577 chiefs on the government payroll with salaries ranging from 6-50 rupees.²³ This policy worked well for the pacification of the interior tribes after the Biimal Revolt of 1898-1908 and the Lafole accident in 1896 in which sixteen Italians were killed.²⁴

2.2. Tribalism and political ideology

There are two types of tribalism. First, the traditional social tribalism. It is the natural and the only viable way of survival in the nomadic and semi-nomadic societies where no central authority exists to arbitrate their disputes and to provide security.²⁵ This tribalism may be also

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called 'rural tribalism'. It plays the same vital role in the small tribal states that nationalism does in the modern nation-states. Second, political tribalism, which is urbanized tribalism, the product of rural migration to the urban centers where migrants preserved their tribal allegiances. This kind of tribalism developed gradually from serving the members of the migrated *diyya*-paying group in the new urban environment, and was responding to the need of its social welfare. When the concept of establishing political parties appeared in Somalia, political elite utilized the existing tribal organizations as a basis for their political support and rallies. Since then, it has been playing a major role at all levels of the political process in Somalia. Political tribalism emerged strongly and consciously in the process of creating national institutions, such as the national assembly, where their fellow tribesmen elected members of parliament as a political constituent. It reflects a manifestation of the fear of domination of one tribe by another tribe, competition for scarce opportunities for employment, and political exploitation of masses by the modern elite who are vying for the control of government.

In fact, a number of political factors and economic imperatives created a web of tribal networks and loyalties within the national institutions; and thus, established Mafia like clandestine connections between employees of the different branches of the government, surpassing national regulation and promoting their group interest. Although for many decades, Somali nationalists were trying to find a solution for the dual loyalties within the polity, it was observed that tribalism had cloaked itself in the mantle of nationalism, distorting both tribal values and the ideology of nationalism.²⁶ It is a fact that the culture of kinship connections coexisted with the newly adopted national political organizations. Saadia Touval strongly suggested that 'the most significant fact about Somali politics is its essentially tribal basis'.²⁷ The modern elite who espoused the ideology of nationalism was in a real dilemma within the dual polity and loyalties [tribe and nation]. It was obvious that within a dual polity, and sharing loyalties the 'modern elite are not, and they can not be of their tribal connections'.²⁸

Tribal divisions had an important influence on the formation of political parties. Political parties and non-tribal organizations were not entrenched in the Somali political culture, and the only socially accepted trans-clan organizations were Islamic organizations, represented at this period by the Sufi Brotherhoods. It would be expected, therefore, that forming such organizations in the urban centers would suffer organizational weakness, fluidity of ideology and traditional alignments, at least in the beginning.

In southern Somalia, twenty political parties participating in the first national election in 1954 'were associated with a particular Somali clan'²⁹ except SYL whose thirteen founding members, in 1943,³⁰ were not related to specific tribes.

Figure 1. An attempt to show political alignments along tribal lines in 1960s.

| Party 1960 | SYL | SNL | HDMS | GSL | NUF | PLGS | SNU | USP |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--|
| Tribes | Darod Hawiye Digil Mirifle | Issaq | Digil & Mirifle | Majer-tain (Darod) | Habar Toljala (Issaq) | Abgal (Hawiye) & Biimal (Dir) | Reer Hamar | Dhulmahante Warsangeli Gadabursi Isse |

We deduce from Figure 1. the following points:
 1. To form any political organization there should be an expansion of the political unit of the traditional political system from the *diyya*-paying group to at least the lineage level or higher;

2. Among all political parties, trans-clan membership and a nation-wide following are evident in SYL whose leaders were more enlightened at the early stage of the national movement,
3. Tribal alliances based not only on kinship but on political and economic interest had began to emerge. An example is the alliance of Dhulmahante, Warsangeli, Gadabursi and Issa, who, despite their diverse tribal affiliations, became united in the United Somali Party (USP).

Political scientists have suggested three major approaches to the study of tribal societies with respect to nation-state building. These are: proportional representation, maximum devolution into regional governments; and the use of political coalitions. Nevertheless, successive Somali governments used none of these approaches. Instead, they adopted unsuitable and unjust electoral system which provoked resentment and created political imbalance in the parliament and the high echelons of the government. The number of the elected members of the parliament was not based on the population of the different constituents. They also propagated radical steps of denouncing tribes and rejecting the use of tribal names, thinking the less said about tribalism the easier it would be to eradicate.

The most severe step in dealing with tribalism was to enact legislation suppressing tribalism. For instance, two important laws were passed prior to 1969 to curb tribalism. These were intended to reduce the authority of tribal chiefs, to lessen tribal solidarity. Furthermore, the military regime applied even harsher measures. However, live examples of overt tribalism of the government were more educative to the population than the anti-tribal rhetoric of the state propaganda machine. Therefore, after the military defeat of the regime in the Somali-Ethiopian war in 1978, radical tribal political factions were formed in Ethiopia. These militias, with the help of Ethiopian intelligence, succeeded to topple not only the oppressive military regime, which was what they probably fought for, but also the Somali nation-state, as Ethiopia planned, in 1991.

Figure 2. The tribal militias in 1991 compared to political parties in 1960 and tribal alignment

| Militia 1991 | SNM | SDM | SSDF | USC | SPM | USF | SDA | SNF |
|--------------|-------|-----------------|------------|-------------|--------|------|-----|-------|
| Party 1960 | SNL | HDMS | GSL SYL | PLGS SYL | SYL | USP | USP | ----- |
| Tribes | Issaq | Digil & Mirifle | Majer-tain | Hawiye | Ogaden | Issa | Dir | Darod |

- We deduce from Figure 2. the following points:
1. The complete absence of the ruling party, the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party from the political scene, SYL disappeared in 1969.
 2. SNL of 1960 remained unchanged getting the new acronym of SNM, and largely representing the Issaq tribe. This party, who had greatly promoted Somali unity in 1960, declared separation of the Northern Somalia from its Southern part in 1991.
 3. HDMS of 1960 also remained unchanged receiving the new acronym of SDM, a largely Digil and Mirifle confederation.
 4. Supporters of SYL, the national ruling party 1960-1969 was broken down into tribal alliances as members of the Socialist party joined their tribal affiliations.
 5. USP, representing the alliance of four northern tribes, was also segmented into tribal lines.
 6. New tribal political alliances emerged, such as USC of Hawiye, SSDF of Majertain, SPM of Ogaden, and SNF of Darod (later SNF became Marihuana faction).

During 1991-1992, the pinnacle of political tribalism was reached due to the common threat posed by the crazy civil war. However, when the situation calmed down, tribal political segmentation continued even worse. The strong tribal movements of 1991 disintegrated into sub-factions. For example, USC gave birth to 12 sub-factions, SDM to 7 sub-factions, SNF to 4 sub-factions, SSNM to 5 sub-factions. Since they had destroyed the central authority of the Somali State, tribal factions failed to establish any viable local administration in their area of influence, let alone restore national government, even with unwavering support of the international community. In conclusion, political tribalism had proven beyond doubt its unsuitability to create any civilized system of administration, let alone re-institute the Somali nation-state.

3. Islam: the second base of Somaliness

Islam found its way to Somalia during the first century of the Islamic calendar. Somalis subscribe to the Sunni Islam and follow the Shaf'i school of thought. After colonial powers dominated Muslim countries in the 18th and 19th centuries, Muslims felt humiliated and as a reaction, nationalistic and religious movements emerged. In the last three decades, Islamic movement has taken great strides and received the attention of the mass media and of western scholarship.

Active Islamic work which is called Islamic movement is narrowly defined as 'the organized popular Islamic work which aims to bring Islam to the leadership of the society and direct the life of all the people'. This definition emphasizes what has been called, by the western scholars, political Islam. It is based on the belief that Islam is *Din* and *Dawla* (religion and state), a comprehensive system of life, universally applicable at all times and places.

Nonetheless, in general terms, any organized group working to spread the word of Allah could be considered as belonging to the Islamic movement. Regrettably, modern scholarship on Somalia has not given its Islamic heritage sufficient coverage. The Islamic revival, which has been spreading the message of moral renewal everywhere, and its recent organized movement, has received even less consideration.³¹ Similar to many other Islamic countries, in Somalia, there are four major Islamic trends. First, the *Sufi* brotherhood, second, the *Ikhwan* Muslim brotherhood, third, the *Salafiya*, fourth, *Jamaat al-da'wa wa al Tablig*. It is not the purpose of this paper to cover all the groups of the Islamic movements, but to focus on the traditional schools represented by Sufi brotherhood and modern Islamic movements represented by *Ikhwan* and neo-*Salafis*.

3.1. The traditional school

Islam in Somalia is dominated by the *Sufi* Brotherhoods, which have been penetrating deeply in Somalia since the 1820s.

Enjoying a pan-clan following, they became the most organized religious group and gained potential influence on the majority of the political organizations in the past and in the present time. There are three main *Sufi* Orders:

1. *Qaderiyyah* founded by Abdul-qadir Al-jaylani (d. 1166) in Baghdad, Iraq;
2. *Ahmadiyyah* founded by the reformer Shaykh Ahmed ibn Idris al-Fasi (1758-1836); its Somali leader was Shaykh Ali Maye Durogba (d. 1917);
3. *Salihyyah*, the offspring of *Ahmadiyyah*, founded by Shaykh Mohamed Salah in Mecca, Mohammad Abdulle Hassan, the Darwish leader (d. 1921), was his deputy-in-charge in Somalia.

According to Brad Martin, three divisions existed in the religious groups with respect to their response to the colonial onslaught:

1. The 'rebels' and resisters, who preached Jihad and took up arms;
2. The 'moderates', who occasionally preached hatred against infidels, but did not actively engage in fighting;
3. The 'conservatives', who practiced mystical Islam divorced from its social environment and [some of them] became collaborators of the rulers.³²

The oldest and the most widespread Sufi Order is *Qaderiyyah*, but this order ostensibly was either apolitical or acquiesced to the presence of the colonial ruler.³³ The *Qaderiyyah* community in the North, such as Shaykh Madar of Hargaysa (1825-1917) and Aw Gas of Berbera,³⁴ never took up arms at the time of Darwish Jihad against the British. It was even reported that they had cultivated an excellent rapport with Colonel J. Hays, the British commissioner in Berbera. In 1900, the most prominent representative of the Order was Shaykh Aweys Al-Barawi (1847-1909).³⁵ He returned home in 1881 after visiting the holy sites of Mecca, Madina and the center of the *Qaderiyyah* Order in Baghdad. During his journey, Al-Barawi had received about ten years of mystical learning from Shaykh Sayyid Mustafa ibn Al-Sayyid Salman Al-Jaylani. Although he was 'suspected of opposition by the Italians', Shaykh Aways paid little attention to politics, devoting all his energy to the establishment of *Qaderiyyah* farming settlements.³⁶ The *Qaderiyyah* followers were famous for their practice of visiting tombs and asking for saintly intercession. That practice created antagonism between them and the *Salihyyah* Order. Doctrinal disagreements and political differences between the Orders led them into controversy and the assassination of Shaykh Aways in 1909 by a follower of the *Salihyyah* Order.³⁷

Not all of the followers of the Sufi brotherhoods in the south were conservatives. According to the analysis of Cassanelli, 'religious leaders stood in the forefront of anti-colonial resistance in Southern Somalia'.³⁸ He mentions, as examples, Ahmed Haji Mahadi *Qaderiyyah*, Abikar Ali Jelle *Ahmadiyyah*, Haji Abdi Abikar 'Gafle' *Salihyyah*, and includes Moallimin (Qur'anic teachers of the Biimal) who played an active role in all Biimal-Italian conflicts.³⁹

The Italian authorities were aware that religious men posed a threat to their colonial plans. Sorrentino, the Italian commissioner who investigated the Lafoole Massacre, accused Shaykh Abikar Yerow of instigating the accident. He noted that 'the religious [men] are those who make the worst elements, ... They preached religious hatred ...'.⁴⁰

The most puritanical and rebellious religious brotherhood was the *Salihyyah* Order whose teachings became widespread in northern Somalia due to the efforts of the famous Darwish leader Muhammad Abdulle Hassan. The open Darwish rebellion against foreign powers, namely British, Italian and Ethiopians, started in 1899 and continued until 1921.

Traditionally, in the terminology of *ulama*, *wadad* is used to refer to all shades of religious men who have the title *Shaykh*, *Mo'allim*, *Khalif*. The *ulama* can be classified according to their affiliation into two groups: independent *ulama* whose names are according to *Mo'allim* and *Shaykh* and the *ulama* who belong to one of the Sufi brotherhoods whose names are attached to *Khalif*. The word *Shaykh* is a title for those persons who can at least perform marriage contracts and administer the laws of inheritance whilst the title *Mo'allim* is a person whose work is the teaching of the Quran, and the elementary principles of Islam. *Khalif* is the title of a person who at least took an allegiance or an oath to one of the Sufi Brotherhoods and holds the banner and the chains, the *silsila*, of the affiliated Brotherhood. Except for a *Khalif*, who holds explicit title for the Sufis, members of the *ulama* may or may not belong to one of the Brotherhoods. The independent *ulama* are individuals within the lineage who have learned the Quran and the Islamic law, and independently exercise their expertise in the service of the community, mostly in return for their livelihood.

To reproduce itself, the *ulama* had created a web of educational system in Somalia, which was the only education available to the Somalis before it succumbed to the colonial penetration of its structure.⁴¹ Religious prevalence is explained by J. S. Trimingham, a prominent scholar of East Africa, who writes: '[Muslims], wherever their religion has spread, have always concentrated on education'.⁴² Although teaching the Quran and elementary jurisprudence dominated the schools, an efficient system consists of Quranic schools called *Duksi* or *Mal'amat* and higher education in the Islamic sciences.

Two characteristics underscore the structure of the traditional educational system. First, it is highly decentralized; i.e. competent individuals wanting to teach are free to establish a school, without fear of official interference in its affairs. Second, the system is relatively self-sufficient. Students' parents support Quranic schools, and higher education is free. Since independence, traditional schools have not been considered as a vehicle for mass education and have not received government support.⁴³

3.2. Modern schools

The modern Islamic movement has educational roots in Somalia's modern, Arabic language schools, which was introduced into the educational system during the fifties. Many of the educated elite were able to learn about Muslim brotherhoods' thought and ideology due to the language proficiency factor. In addition, universities in the Arab world became more accessible for Somali students.

The Institute of Islamic Studies was opened in 1953, marking the cornerstone of Arabic language education in Somalia. Scholars from Egypt's Al-Azhar University assumed teaching roles. The institute coached students in fulfilling the professional requirements of positions as judges, lawyers, Arabic teachers and Islamic scholars. Moreover, Egyptians administered secular and religious schools which spread all over Somali major cities and contributed to the creation of an Arabic speaking elite. Graduates of these schools often received scholarships, many of which were provided by al-Azhar and Saudi Arabian religious universities. Furthermore, because of the cultural, military and commercial relations with the Arab world, Somalis had the opportunities to join civilian universities and military institutes in Egypt, Sudan, Syria, and Iraq. Therefore, many of Somalia's elite were no longer merely Italian and English speakers, but well-versed also in Arabic.

4. The Islamic revival

Due to the close ties with the Arab world and its educational system, pioneers of the Islamic movement in Somalia were primarily graduates from religious universities in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Somalia's Islamic revival gained momentum because of internal pressures and external factors during the seventies. Western scholarship tends generally to explain the Islamic revival gaining momentum in terms of reaction to social crisis. R. H. Dekmejian, for example, identifies the issues as 'a crisis of legitimacy of political system, a paucity of social justice and excessive reliance on coercion, military vulnerability and disruptive impact of modernization'.⁴⁴ Conversely, Khurshid Ahmad, Vice President of Jamaat-e Islami in Pakistan, writes: 'The Islamic resurgence is an expression of dissatisfaction with the ideals and values, the institutions and the systems of government exported from the West and imposed upon them,' as well as 'a critique of the Muslim status quo'. Khurshid explains that it is not just a question of political and social rearrangement, but 'it represents a reawakening of faith'.⁴⁵ In Somalia, three major factors other than those expressed by Khurshid contributed to the emergence of an Islamic movement.

First, the relative religious freedom accorded the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the aftermath of the 1969 Arab-Israeli war. The Brotherhood's literature was more easily

disseminated to Somali religious intellectuals. Among the most influential works were those by Sayyid Qutb, his brother, Muhamad Qutb, Hassan Al-Banna and Pakistan's Sayyid Abu Aala al-Mawdudi.⁴⁶ The Islamic organization of *Al-Nahda*, as well as other Somali Islamists in Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, was instrumental in distributing these books in the early seventies. In addition, since most Somalis do not speak Arabic, members of al-Nahda provided, in the Abdulqadir Mosque in Mogadishu, Islamist interpretations of the Quran in the Somali language.

Second, Somalia's military government sought the implementation of a secular state based on socialism during 1971. According to Barre, this ideology '[was] not Islamic socialism nor African socialism, but the original scientific socialism'.⁴⁷ Since all social and political groups were banned, religion was the only avenue of expressing protest. Thus existing organizations, such as *al-Nahda* and another organization called *al-Ahli*, became more active. Al-Ahli was joined primarily by secondary school students, for whom al-Nahda, with its membership of graduates from the Islamic university, provided training and modern Islamic movement books.

Third, due to higher Gulf state revenues from increased oil prices in the post 1973 period, a large number of Somali workers traveled as migrant workers to the oil rich countries. Thus, blue-collar workers acquired a working knowledge of Arabic language and came into close contact with modern Islamic movement preachers. Somali students also found it easier to join Arab universities. The influx of Somali students peaked immediately after the repressive policies implemented by Siad Barre in 1975. Religious organizations, such as *Dar al-Ifta* and *Rabita al-Alan al-Islami*, from the Gulf states sought to counteract official socialism in Somalia. They sponsored graduates from Islamic universities in the Arab world and sent them back to Somalia as preachers. Nevertheless, although the oil boom was not irrelevant to the Islamic resurgence, it was not the real cause of it as Daniel Pipes claims.⁴⁸

Barre promulgated a family law that contradicted Islamic doctrine, in January 1975. Tensions were exacerbated among Somali Islamists. Their reaction was an overt denunciation of the government policies and its deviations from the proper Islamic way. The military government responded harshly; and on January 23, 10 leading *ulama* were brutally executed. Furthermore, more than 2000 people were detained without fair trial. As a result, many al-Ahli and al-Nahda activists fled the country. Al-Ahli, although espousing the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas, had failed to structure itself adequately and ultimately was disbanded. In the north, *al-Wahda* Islamic organization was operating freely until April 1978, when more than 350 of its members were detained.⁴⁹ Thus, initial proponents of the Islamic revival were significantly weakened at this stage.

While the leadership of Somalia's Islamic groups expressed solidarity with the Muslim Brotherhood, most lacked the social or political maturity necessary to build a similar, resilient infrastructure. Neither al-Ahli nor al-Nahda existed by the early 1980s. The *Takfir* (excommunication) group, the ideology which emerged from the Egyptian jails, was also dwindling in numbers and popularity. New organizations filled the vacuum left by the defunct, earlier groups.

5. The modern Islamic movement: the groups

Several underground organizations were formed during the seventies. Nevertheless, after the military regime began to show signs of losing control, two of these groups became well known and more politically active: *al-Islah* of the Islamic Movement in Somalia (IMS) and *al-Ittihad al-Islami*, of the Somali Islamic Union (SIU).

The Islamic Movement in Somalia, known as al-Islah appeared first in Saudi Arabia during 1978 and announced its official formation via a Kuwaiti magazine, *al-Mujtama' al-Islami*. Al-Islah identifies strongly with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood methodology.⁵⁰ The cross-

cultural affinity felt by al-Islah emanate from Hassan al-Banna's vision of the group as a 'Salafiya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-educational union, and an economic [institution like a] company'.⁵¹

The communal spirit is reflected in al-Islah's goals, which outline the union of all Muslim nationalities in the Horn of Africa.⁵² It has been politically active since 1989, publishing a number of communiqués calling for, among other things, national unity. Al-Islah seeks a return of the Somali people to an Islamic way of life under an Islamic state. Its declaration, entitled 'O Islam', strongly criticized successive Somali governments since independence for not applying Islamic law. It also appealed to 'the Somali people, the *ulama*, the government, opposition movements, Somali elders, intellectuals, merchants and the armed forces' to realize that 'the only solution to save Somalia is the Islamic solution'.⁵³ It opposed the tribal conflict that followed Barre's overthrow.⁵⁴ Since the collapse of the Somali government, and despite civil conflict, al-Islah has taken an active role in the national reconciliation process. It has also established viable social service institutions in the health and educational fields. Furthermore, it strongly opposes the use of violence and condemns all sort of terrorism. It also promotes democratic process, multi-part system and respect for human rights.

The SIU announced its existence on September 22, 1991 in the *Manifesto of an Islamic party*. The document asserted that the SIU had operated underground for decades because of 'the lack of security and [the] existence of a brutal dictatorial regime bent on repressing religion and religious activism'.⁵⁵ The SIU's charter is vague regarding the group's outlook, yet observers believe it to be a neo-Salafi movement.⁵⁶ The group's primary objective is the establishment of an Islamic state. Other declared goals include the rejection of all un-Islamic polity; the attainment of Islamic justice; economic reform; Islamic propagation; and countering devious beliefs. Finally, the SIU aims to establish a strong army after the creation of an Islamic state. Until such time, it rejects the idea of forming political alliances with non-Islamic forces.

The SIU's command structure has grown more militant since 1991, and it actively participated in the villainous civil war, mainly in three locations: Lower Juba in 1991, North Eastern Region in 1992, and in Gedo in 1997-1998. The SIU method of propagating Islam created conflict with the Sufi brotherhoods. Furthermore, their active military involvement also produced a negative image in Somalia at large.

Overall, the two Islamic groups have several aspirations in common. First, they seek the promotion of Islamic culture as an alternative to the concept of tribal affiliations. Second, they gain support via their active involvement in establishing schools and health clinics to serve the Somali people. Finally, they invest a great deal of energy in promoting social awareness based on Islamic values. Despite the difficult situation in Somalia, Islamists succeeded to launch effective social programs. However, they have been unable until now to create any national political forum capable of uniting diverse tribal groups and restoring the Somali State.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Political factions

Political factions representing political tribalism are a forgery of the reality and a deceptive invention of the failed elite. They neither hold the traditional values of the tribes nor the culture of the modern political parties. Moreover, these factions never encourage or provide the basic needs for their destitute tribes, but they are only devoted to satisfying their economic and political ambitions. Since 1991, factions not only failed to establish any viable administration, but also greatly hindered any genuine efforts in that direction. It was observed that, wherever factions were weakened or dissolved, local administration gradually emerged. Of course, it is the inherent nature of tribal forces not to abide by laws, as Ibn Khaldun noticed, 'Bedouins are not concerned with laws'. And, they 'can acquire royal authority only

by making use of religious coloring, such as prophethood or sainthood or some great religious event in general. ... But when there is religion [among them] ... then they have some restoring influence upon themselves. The quality of haughtiness and jealousy leave them. It is, then, easy to unite them'.⁵⁷ According to Ibn Khaldun, Somalis are severely in need of strengthening their Islamic values as a precondition for constituting sustainable national government.

6.2. Political Islam

Political Islam and Islamic revivalism has taken tremendous strides in Somalia since the 1970s. In studying this phenomenon, both militancy and moderation has been widely observed. Al-Islah and al-Ittihad, the two Islamic organizations, disagree on their social views and political programs. Realistically, none of the two groups is politically developed enough to lead alone the devastated nation at this stage.

Nonetheless, Islam as a universal religion, a mercy to mankind, has all the doctrinal capability of setting up strong foundations for unity of all the Somalis. The Islamic religion, contrary to the false image produced in the last two decades, does not have any connection with fanaticism, extremism and radicalism. The true Islamic way, the right path, is entrenched in moderation, wisdom and humanism. Moreover, a moderate interpretation of Islam does not disprove of the democratic process, a multiparty system, and respect for human rights.

6.3. National consciousness

New revival of the national consciousness has been gaining momentum because of the failure of the political factions, prolongation of the crisis, the threat of cultural alienation in the diaspora and the fear of possible international intervention. If early Somali nationalism was primarily secular and anti-colonial, the new revival is for reawakening of the moral values and reestablishing a national Somali State. Furthermore, the new revival is more experienced, fairly mature and very conscious of the nations cultural values.

Nationalism instead of tribalism, Islamism instead of secularism, will ultimately lead to the rebirth of the nation, more united and well prepared to face great challenges. The new brand of national consciousness has begun to express itself in the form of social organizations and political parties.⁵⁸

6.4. The actors

Regional and international actors engaged in the Somali crisis have contributed greatly to creating and sustaining Somali plight. The initial international policy of focusing on the faction leaders, the fissiparous group, strengthened factions and weakened any revival tendencies of Somaliness. The image and prestige that factions gained from the international conferences and meetings with high profile leaders, the covert moral and material support they received, had enabled them to monopolize the solution of the crisis in the last eight years.

Currently, regional powers are polarized in supporting different faction groups. Egypt and Ethiopia, representing the Arab League and IGAD respectively, are following opposing directions for the Somali reconciliation process. Synchronization of all efforts of the external actors is more important than ever to bring about lasting peace in Somalia. Finally, it is the interest of the Somali people and the international community to support emerging moderate nationalistic tendencies, and abandon encouragement of tribal forces.

Notes and References

¹ Although many historians believe that Islam had reached Somalia at the time of the Muslim

migration to Ethiopia, another version affirms that it introduced during the reign of Abdul-Malik b. Marwan (65-76 H.) by Musa Ibn Bani-Khat. For more details, consult Muhammad Abdu al-Mun'im Yunus: *Al-Somal: Wadanan wa Sha'ban*, Al-Qahira: Daru al-Nahda al-Arabiya, 1962:132.

² There were seven Muslim kingdoms in the Horn of Africa, as reported by Shaykh Abdallah Al-Zayli in 1332-1338. These, however, should not be considered Somali states. These states, such as Ifat, Dawaro, Arabini, Sharkha, Hadya, Bali and Fatajir, were purely Muslim kingdoms and Somalis were part of the Muslim population, although they played an important role, especially in the kingdom of Ifat. See J. S. Timingham: *Islam in Ethiopia*. London: Frank Cass, 1976: 67. See also Ahmed Nur: *Al-Naza' Al-Somali-Ithiopi: Al-Judur al-Tarikhiyah* Al-Qahira: Madba'at Atlas, 1978:21-29. It should be noted also that the Egyptian rule of the Northern regions (1875-1885) was ephemeral and the rule of Sheriffs of Mukha in Zaila and Omani Sultan of Banadir were nominal.

³ Laitin, David D. and Samatar, Said: *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987:30.

⁴ Ignaz Goldziher: *Muslim Studies, Vol. I*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1910:22.

⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶ Ibid., 40.

⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁸ Laitin and Samatar: *Somalia: Nation*, 33.

⁹ Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 22.

¹⁰ Christian P. Patholm: *The Theory and Practice of African Politics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1976:14.

¹¹ Classical Segmented System is not peculiar to Somalia, but is found in other African countries. For instance, the Kru in Liberia, the Nuir in Sudan to name a few. Forte and Evans-Pritchard pioneered the study of the acephalus segmented societies in Africa. See Ibid., 14.

¹² The difficulty of uniting various segments in the face of an outside threat is well illustrated in works such as Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann, 1958; and Elechi Amadi: *The Great Ponds*. London: Heinemann, 1969.

¹³ Patholm: *The Theory*, 16.

¹⁴ Lewis, I.M.: *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*. London: Longmans, 1980, 13.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ This is a dominant dialect used in the mass media as lingua franca in Somalia. See Cassanelli, Lee: *The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1500-1900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, 23.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ A. Samatar: *Socialist Somalia*, 16, 18, 19.

²⁰ Hess, Robert: *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966:108.

²¹ Sorrentino was the Italian commissioner sent to Banadir (the region around the capital city of Mogadishu) in 1896, in order to restore order. He distributed 296 thalers to the Walis,

notables and religious judges 'to gather friends for Italy' For more details consult Ibid., 33.

²² The town of Adala was the first Italian port established in 1891 and local Somali leaders had signed a treaty of protection with the Filionardi Company. To commemorate this occasion Adala was renamed 'Itala' by Filionardi. See Hess: *The Italian Colonialism*, 31. See also Lewis: *A Modern History*, 52.

²³ Hess, Robert: *The Italian Colonialism*, 108.

²⁴ Ibid., 63.

²⁵ Ibnu-Khaldun: *The muqquadimah*, 261. The author stated that 'only tribes brought together by group feeling can live in the desert.'

²⁶ See Ali Galaydh: 'Notes on the State of the Somali State,' *Horn of Africa*, 13:1, 2 (1990), 6; Laitin and Samatar: *Somalia: Nation*, 46; Lewis: *Pastoral Democracy*, 229.

²⁷ Touval, Saadia: *Somali Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963:85.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Laitin and Samatar: *Somalia: Nation*, 65.

³⁰ The names of the founders of the SYL party are as follows: Haji Mohamed Husayn, Muhammad Nur, Abdulqadir Sakhau Addin, Ali Hassan Muhammad, Diriye Haji Diriye, Muhammad Mursi Nur, Dahir Haji Osman, Muhammad Abdullahi, Fadah Hayis, Khalif Hudow Moalin, Muhammad Farah Hilowle, Yasin Haji Osman, Muhammad Osman Barbe, Osman Gedi Rage. See Rajab Mah: *Wathaiq*, 284-289.

³¹ 'Islamists', or *Islamiyyun* refers to the proponents of an Islamic solution to the crisis of the Muslim world. *Asaliyyun*, 'the authentic ones', or *mutadayyimin*, 'the devotees', are other terms used to refer to this group. Western terminology prefers fanatics, extremists, radicals and fundamentalists. See Sivan, Emmanuel: *Radical Islam. Medieval Theory and Modern Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990; see also Dekmejian, R. Hrair: 'Islamic Revival: Catalysts, Category and Consequence' in *Politics of Islamic Revolution: Diversity and Unity*, ed. by Shireen T. Hunter. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988:10.

³² Martin, B.G.: *Muslim Brotherhood in Nineteenth Century Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976:8.

³³ In 1885, a pro-British Shaykh was appointed as the official Muslim judge in place of two anti-British judges. See Lewis: *A Modern History*, 49.

³⁴ Aw Gas was a famous Qaderiyyah Shaykh in Berbera. He was on good terms with the British administration and became the most ardent opponent of the Salihyyah order led by Muhammad Abdulle Hassan.

³⁵ See B.G. Martin: 'Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Aways, Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qaderiyyah Brotherhood in East Africa', *Journal of African History*, 10:3, 1969: 471-486.

³⁶ Cassanelli: *The Shaping*, 237.

³⁷ The tomb of Shaykh Aways is located in Biyoley and is one of the sites of annual pilgrimage for the followers of Qaderiyyah Order.

³⁸ Ibid., 233.

³⁹ The prolonged Biimal revolt of 1898-1908 was attributed mainly to the unity of the *Mo'allimin*. See *ibid.*, 223, 226.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 235.

- ⁴¹ Abukar, Ali Sheikh: *Al-Da'wa al-Islamiya Almu'asira fi al-Qarni al-Ifriqi* (Contemporary Islamic Propagation in the Horn of Africa). Riyadh: Ummaya Publishing House, 1985, 175, see also, Yunus, Muhammed Abdu al-Mun'im: *Al-Somal: Wadanan wa Sha'ban*. Cairo: Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, 1962:132.
- ⁴² Trimmingham, J.S.: *Islam in Ethiopia*. London: Frank Cass, 1976:142; see also, Nur, Ahmed *Anaza' al-Somali al-Ethiopi: al-Judur al-Tarikhiyah* (The Somali-Ethiopian Conflict Historical Roots). Cairo: Atlas Press, 1978:21-29.
- ⁴³ Touval, Saadiya: *Somali Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963:82.
- ⁴⁴ Dekmejian, R. H.: 'Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World'. In *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, ed. by Ali E. Hillal Dessouki. New York: Praeger, 1982:22.
- ⁴⁵ Ahmad, Kurshid, 'The Nature of the Islamic Resurgence'. In *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. by John Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 226.
- ⁴⁶ Ahmed, Mohamoud Sheikh: 'Somali President's Ambivalent Attitude to Islam'. In *Issues in the Islamic Movement: 1985-1986*, ed. by Kalim Saddiqui and M. Ghasydin. London: The Open Press, 1987:157-159.
- ⁴⁷ Saddiqui, Issues..., 250. 39, p. 112.
- ⁴⁸ Pipes, Daniel: 'Oil Wealth and Islamic Resurgence'. In *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, ed. by Ali E. Hillal Dessouki. New York: Praeger, 1982:45.
- ⁴⁹ Aqli, 159.
- ⁵⁰ *Al-Sharq al-Awwsat*, 24 October 1992.
- ⁵¹ Esposito, John: *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984:132.
- ⁵² Interview with Mohammad Ali Ibrahim, Chairman of the Islamic Movement *Al-Muslimuun*, 15 February 1991. There are three Muslim nationalities in the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Oromo.
- ⁵³ *The Islamic Solution* Manifesto distributed by XIS members in Canadian mosques, 1 October 1990.
- ⁵⁴ *Al-Lewa-al-Islam*, July 1991; see also Declaration by Muhammad Ali Ibrahim, Chairman of XIS. *Al-Muslimuun*, no date.
- ⁵⁵ Somali Islamic Union: *The Manifesto of an Islamic Party*. Document issued during October 1991 by SIU members.
- ⁵⁶ Bin Dahir, Jamal, *Islamic Movements*. In *Al-Amal*, March 1991. While traditional Salafis abstain from politics, the SIU combines the Wahabi theology and political action.
- ⁵⁷ Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, 'Islam in Somali History: Facts and Fiction'. In *The Invention of Somalia*, ed. by Ali Jimale Ahmed. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1995:16.
- ⁵⁸ Peace and Human Rights Network, which is the umbrella organization for 22 NGOs working in Mogadishu and *Kulanka Walaalaha Somaliyeed*, the new national party based in Mogadishu, are the indicators of national social and political organizations.