VARIATIONS ON THE THEME
OF
SOMALINESS

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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, its gradual deep penetration, Somalia had never been incorporated effectively in the successive Muslim Empires, nor had it been established on its own into an Islamic state. 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, ushiysh, 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
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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 Somal identity generates group consciousness in the segmented society. Highly consultative tribal centralized government, or even afterwards. In this situation, identifying oneself with his tribe of obligations. This is regulated by an unwritten common law of the tribe, known as xeer.

Somali tribal culture is based on the following three concepts. First, the fame of an glorification of forefathers, making annual sacrifice for them, and building their tombs. That is satisfies the need for self-esteem and respect from other people. It also leads to the feeling of Somali society not only for his personal quality but also for who his actual forefathers were tribes and families who are admitted to the larger tribes in an alliance are, therefore, often

Second, in this tribal system, compliance with all the duties, which are connected with for the sake of all who are connected with one’s tribe. This is a manifestation of real and hostile tribal interests which ignite continuous tribal wars.

Third, there is a need for the fulfillment of the law of blood revenge. This value is connected with the concept of common defense. Tribal quarrels in the rural areas often arise followed by retaliation as a general rule. Tribalism in Somalia is based on a chain of successive genealogical counting or alliance. Tribalism in itself is neither good nor evil. Its group

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. Digaal and Midniile.

Somali clan-families dwell mainly in the arid land in the northern and center and to some extent, in the far south, outside the political borders of Somalia. According to anthropological classification as a classical segmented system where cultural unity exists, but politically diffused (essentially) kinship. The nature of this system is high propensity among its members to weak territorial attachment. Each clan family is autonomous. The semi-nomadic groups consists of numerous scattered sub-clans, lineages and sub-lineages, which are linguistically related.

Southern Somali and their political structure is a universalistic socialization process among age groups. Moreover, because

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’ which is divided into dominant original landowners, long standing cultivators and recent clients. Tribal membership is acquired mostly through common territory although kinship and clientage 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 maasai tiri dialect of the Somali language. Sab tribes are agro-pastoral and speak the mav tiri Somali dialect. 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. 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. Thechiefs, who are the heads 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, Obbia and Majerani in Italian Somaliland, signed commercial and protection treaties with British, French and Italian colonial companies in 1827, 1862 and 1893 respectively. The chiefs were used to pacify their tribes and advise the colonial administration on tribal policies and customs.

In the Italian 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, many chiefs of the Mogadishu area who were on good terms with Italy, proposed to Filibonnari that a port should be built at Adala. 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 rupi. This policy worked well for the pacification of the interior tribes from the Bnali Revolt of 1898-1908 and the Fallaci incident in 1896 in which sixteen Italians were killed.

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. 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 dlya-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 Maafa 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. 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”. 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”. 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” except SYL whose thirteen founding
members, in 1943, were not related to specific tribes.

2. Among all political parties, trans-clan membership and a nation-wide following are evident
in SYL whose leaders were more enlightened to adopt 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 Dhinamante, Warsangeli, Gabdaburis 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 systems which provoked resentment and created political imbalance in the parliament
and 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
laws were intended to reduce the authority of tribal chiefs, to lessen tribal solidarity. Furthermore,
these laws aimed to reduce the military regime applied even harsher measures. However, five examples of overt tribalism
of the military regime applied even harsher measures. However, five examples of overt tribalism
in the state propaganda and law 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-
Eritrean 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Militia 1991</th>
<th>SNM</th>
<th>SDM</th>
<th>SSDF</th>
<th>USC</th>
<th>SPM</th>
<th>USF</th>
<th>SDA</th>
<th>SNF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party 1960</td>
<td>SNL</td>
<td>HDM</td>
<td>GSL</td>
<td>SYL</td>
<td>PLCG</td>
<td>SYL</td>
<td>USC</td>
<td>USF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribes</td>
<td>Issaq</td>
<td>Digil &amp; Mirlle</td>
<td>Majertain</td>
<td>Hawiye</td>
<td>Ogaden</td>
<td>Issa</td>
<td>Dir</td>
<td>Darod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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, which had greatly promoted Somali unity in 1960,
   declared separation from the Northern Somalia from its Southern part in 1991.
3. HDM of 1960 also remained unchanged receiving the new acronym of SDM, a largely
   Digil and Mirlle confederation.
4. Supporters of SYL, the national ruling party 1960-1969 was broken down into tribal
   alliances and 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, SDF of Majertain, SPM
   of Ogaden, and SNF of Darod (later SNF became Marinhwa faction).
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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, SSMN 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 Shafi'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 directly 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. Similar to many other Islamic countries, in Somalia, there are four major Islamic trends. First, the Sufi brotherhood; second, the Islaam Muslim brotherhood; third, the Salafiya; fourth, Jamaat ad-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 Islaam and neo-Salafi.

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. Qadiriyyah founded by Abdu-qiadir Al-Jaylani (d. 1166) in Baghdad, Iraq.
2. Ahmadyyah founded by the reformer Shaykh Ahmed ibn Idris al-Fasi (1758-1836), its Somali leader was Shaykh Ali Maye Darooga (d. 1917),
3. Sulayhiyyah, the offsprings of Ahmadyyah, founded by Shaykh Mohamed Salah in Mecca, 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.

The oldest and the most widespread Sufi Order is Qadiriyyah, but this order ostensibly was an apolitical or acquiesced to the presence of the colonial ruler. The Qadiriyyah community in the North, such as Shaykh Madar of Hargaysa (1825-1917) and Aw Gas of Berbera, 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). He returned home in 1881 after visiting the holy sites of Mecca, Medina and the center of the (Qadiriyyah Order in Baghdad. During his journey, Al-Barawi had received about ten years of mystical learning from Shaykh Sayyid Mustafa ibn Al-Sayyid Saleh Al-Jaylani. Although he was ‘suspected of opposition by the Italians’, Shaykh Aweys paid little attention to politics, devoting all his energy to the establishment of Qadiriyyah farming settlements. The Qadiriyyah followers were famous for their practice of visiting tombs and asking for sanctity 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 Aweys in 1909 by a follower of the Salihyyah Order.

Not all of the followers of the Sufi brotherhoods in the south were conservatives. According to the analysis of Cassarini, ‘religious leaders stood in the forefront of anti-colonial resistance in Southern Somalia.’ He mentions, as examples, Ahmed Haji Mahadi Qadiriyyah, Abikar Ali Jelle Ahmad, Haji Abdi Abikar ‘Galle’ Salihyyah, and includes Moallim (Qur’anic teachers of the Bimah) who played an active role in all Bimah-Italian conflicts.

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

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, wakad is used to refer to all shades of religious men who have the title Shaykh. Mo’alim, Khalfi. The ulama can be classified according to their affiliation into two groups: independent ulama whose names are according to Mo’alim and Shaykh and the ulama who belong to one of the Sufi brotherhoods whose names are attached to Khalfi. 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’alim is a person whose work is the teaching of the Quran, and the elementary principles of Islam. Khalfi is a 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 sissor, of the affiliated Brotherhood. Except for a Khalfi, who holds explicit title for the Sufis, members of the sissor 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.

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To reproduce itself, the ulama had created a web of educational system in Somalia, which was the only reproduction available to the Somalis before it succumbed to the colonial penetration of its structure. Religious prevalence is explained by J. S. Timingham, a prominent scholar of East Africa, who writes [Muslims], wherever their religion has spread, have always concentrated on education. 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.

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 educated students in fulfilling the professional requirements of positions as jurists, lawyers, doctors, Arabic teachers and Islamic scholars. Moreover, Egyptians administered secular and religious schools that spread all over Somalia major cities and contributed to the creation of an Arab-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 three factors 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. Conversely, Khurshid Ahmad, Vice President of Jamaat-e Islami in Pakistan, writes, 'The institutions and the systems of government exported from the West and imposed upon them, of petroleum and public rearrangement, but it represents a reaffirmation of faith.' In Somalia, an Islamic movement first took root 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, Muhammad Qutb, Hassan Al-Banna and Pakistan's Sayyid Abu Aala al-Mawdudi. 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.' 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-Ahl, became more active. Al-Ahl 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-Ifiu and Rabita al-Ahli 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.

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 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-Ahl and al-Nahda activists fled the country. Al-Ahl, although espousing the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas, had failed to structure itself adequately and ultimately was disbanded. In the north, al-Wadhih Islamic organization was operating freely until April 1978, when more than 350 of its members were detained. 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-Ahl nor al-Nahda existed by the early 1980s. The tariq (excommunication) group, the ideology which emerged from the Egyptian jihads, 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-Mujahidihs 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-Mujahidihs al-Islami. Al-Islah identifies strongly with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood methodology. The cross-
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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 any group. 53
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 ilman, 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
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 propulsion, and countering
deviant beliefs. Finally, the SIU aims to establish a strong army after the creation of an Islamic
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 in launching
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 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 laisines 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-
Islam and al-Irshad, 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
developed 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 rationalism. The true Islamic way, the right path, is entrenched
in moderation, wisdom and humanism. Moreover, a moderate interpretation of Islam does not
dissease 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. Synchronisation 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
Somaliness

migration to Ethiopia, another version affirms that it introduced during the reign of Abd-
Malik b. Marwan (65-76 H.) by Musa ibn Bani-Khat. For more details, consult Muhammad
Abdu al-Mun'im Yu'us, Al-Somali: Wadnman wa Sho'b'an, Al-Qahira. Daru al-Nahda al-

2 There were seven Muslim kingdoms in the Horn of Africa, as reported by Shaykh Abdallah
Al-Zaydi in 1332-1338. These, however, should not be considered Somali states. These states,
such as Ifat, Dawaro, Arabini, Sharrka, Hadya, Bari and Fatag, 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. Timingsham, Islam in Ethiopia: London Frank
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 Zalla and
Oamni Sultan of Banadir were nominal.

3 Laitin, David D. and Samatar, Said, Somalia: Nation in Search of a State. Boulder


5 Ibid., 22.

6 Ibid., 40.

7 Ibid., 22.

8 Laitin and Samatar: Somalia, Nation, 33.

9 Goldzher, Muslim Studies, 22.


11 Classical Segmented System is not peculiar to Somalia, but is found in other African
countries. For instance, the Kru in Liberia, the Nuur in Sudan to name a few. Forte and Evans-
Pritchard pioneered the study of the achenus 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 Chiruwe Aschebe: Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann, 1958; and Elechi

13 Pathom: The Theory, 16.


15 Ibid.

16 This is a dominant dialect used in the mass media as lingua franca in Somalia. See
Cassanell, Lee, The Shaping of Somali Society: Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral

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 Waal.

Abdurahman Moallin Abdullahi ‘Baadiyow’
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 Filtonardi Company. To commemorate this occasion Adala
was renamed ‘Itala’ by Filtonardi. See Hess: The Italian Colonialism, 31. See also
Lewis: A Modern History, 52.

23 Hess, Robert: The Italian Colonialism, 108.

24 Ibid., 63.

25 Jorou-Khalidun: The moppadimah, 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),


28 Ibid.


30 The names of the founders of the SYL party are as follows. Haji Mohamed Husayn,
Muhammad Nur, Abdullahir Sakha Addin, Ali Hassan Muhammad, Dirayy Haji Dirayy,
Muhammad Mursi Nur, Dahir Haji Osman, Muhammad Abdullah, Fadah Hayis, Khalif
Hudow Moallin, Muhammad Farah Hilewlie, Yasin Haji Osman, Muhammad Osman Barbe,
Osman Gedi Rage. See Rajah Mah Warheg, 384-289.

31 ‘Islamists’, or Islamiyah refers to the proponents of an Islamic solution to the crisis of the
Muslim world. Alasayyo, ‘the authentic ones’, or musajjimun, ‘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
Revival, Catalysts, Category and Consequence’ in Politics of Islamic Revolution: Diversity and

32 Martin, B.G.: Muslim Brotherhood in Nineteenth Century Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge

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 Salihaynah order led by
Muhammad Abulle Hassan.

35 See B.G. Martin, ‘Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Aways
Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadariyyah Brotherhood in East Africa’, Journal of African

36 Cassanelli: The Shaping, 237.

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

38 Ibid., 233.

39 The prolonged Bimal revolt of 1898-1908 was attributed mainly to the unity of the
Mooallim. See Ibid., 223, 226.

40 Ibid., 235.
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47 Sadiqiu, Issues...200: 39, p 112.
49 Aqili, 159
52 Interview with Mohammad Ali Ibrahim, Chairman of the Islamic Movement Al-Muslimun, 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-Muslimun, no date.
58 Peace and Human Rights Network, which is the umbrella organization for 22 NGOs working in Mogadishu and Kalanka Walaaleka Somaliyeyd, the new national party based in Mogadishu, are the indicators of national social and political organizations.

Hassan A. Keynan

Male Roles and the Making of the Somali Tragedy: Reflections on gender, masculinity and violence in Somali society

1. Introduction

Societies evolve and operate in complex and mysterious ways. They embody both liberating forces and tyrannical tendencies, but they combine the two in ways that do not allow us to see them clearly for what they are. Societal systems are inward looking, evasive, and deceptive. They reveal very little to us both when they develop and make progress and when they sink into atrophy and decay.

The tragedy that has devastated Somalia since 1991 can be seen as a good example. This tragedy has made Somalia a household name, placing the country and its people in the spotlight on a scale not seen in recent years. So much has been said and written about what went wrong in Somalia (Besteman and Cassanelli 1996, Drysdale 1994, Gassem 1994, Issa-Salwe 1994, Lewis 1994, Omar 1996, Sahnoun 1994). Yet what we know is, at best, fragmented and incomplete. We are still in the dark as to how and why the Somali government and society disintegrated so completely and so violently. This paper adds to the ongoing research for answers. At the same time it parts company with earlier investigations in that it introduces into the debate a crucial, indeed central, issue that has received little or no attention in the literature: gender, particularly the links between masculinity and violence.

The paper begins by outlining the foundation and fundamentals of what I shall refer to as the ‘Somali equation’. It then proceeds to examine the making of the masculinity in Somali society, how it manifests itself, in what domain and in what consequences. This will be followed by a discussion of the ‘clanization of the Somali equation’ and what it has meant for women, for gender relations and for Somali society in general. Finally, the paper puts forward a number of suggestions aimed at reconfiguring the core traditions of the Somali equation, with a view to promote gender justice, peace, and democratic representation.

2. The Somali equation

In order to adequately comprehend the total and violent disintegration of Somali society and government, we need to understand how the Somali society came into being in the first place, and what kept it going. The Somali people are a product of what I shall call the ‘Somali equation’. By ‘Somali equation’ I mean the complex of ideas, values, beliefs and institutions that define and underpin the Somali society.

2.1. Core traditions

The Somali equation is founded on three principal core traditions: Somali (the clan system/nomadism), Islamic, and Western (the state system). Each core tradition constitutes a distinct system in its own right. At the same time it’s an integral part of a larger, more complex system. Through a long, tortuous process of interaction and integration, the three core traditions have dovetailed with each other, forming what can be referred to as an overarching meaning system. The Somali equation can be compared to the notion of culture as defined by Ali Mazrui (1990: 30).