

Faithless Power as Fratricide: Is there an Alternative in Somalia?

Abdi Ismail Samatar

I. The Meaning of Faith

Mohamed Suliman's lovely and famous song for the Eid is not only suggestive of the joys of the past but reminisces about the great values that the Somali people shared and which served them well during testing times of yesteryear. Here is a line from the song:

*Hadba kii arrin keena Ka kalee aqbalaaya Ilaahii ina siiyay isagaa ku
abaa leh*

Simply put, this line and the spirit of the whole song echo Somalis' traditional acumen to generate timely ideas and the competence to listen and heed productive compromises. These attributes that nurtured their collective best interests have been on the wane for three decades and are now in peril or even to perish for eternity. As a result, much despair is visible in the Somali landscape. Yet it is worth remembering that there is no inevitability about the extension of the present despondency into the future as long as civic-minded Somalis are resolute and remain wedded to their compatriots' well-being and cardinal values.

The concept of Faith has triple meanings in the context of this brief essay (Figure 1). First, it means devotion to the Creator and the straight path of Islam. This is clear from the core principles of Islam (not as defined by sectarian ideologues but by the Qur'an and the Haddith), one of which is *imaan*. Second, Faith enshrines self-reliance and the effort to pull oneself up by the bootstraps as well as attend to the needs

of one's family. Third, Faith presupposes confidence in the community's (neighborhood or nation) commitment to justice and fairness for all its members. These three dimensions do not exhaust the richness of the concept, but they provide enough scaffolding for this article. The essay's focus is particularly on the first, with secondary implications for the latter. Implicit in the essay is the assumption that there was a time in Somali history when leaders and the general population were true to the edicts of *imaan* in public and family spheres. As the discussion will show, these two have been battered for the past three decades. The genealogy of Somalia's betrayal had four phases and the pathways to its rejuvenation will minimally require a return to the Faith—one sophisticated enough to cut through the muck of this age and with assurance to meet a globalizing and inter-civilizational world.

II. Faith and Freedom

A. Faith under Colonialism

The struggle against British and Italian colonialism was initiated at the turn of the previous century by the twin forces of Islam and Somalis' sense of being in the world. Sayyid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan, charged by the demands of the colonial officers to abstain from calling for morning prayers in Berbera and infuriated by the Christianization of Somali orphans, took the lead to rid the country of the colonial scourge.¹ Despite the existence of common values and heritage, it was extraordinarily difficult to mobilize the population for an anti-colonial resistance. In addition, the scarcity of military and material resources, and a nonexistent communication infrastructure, were major barriers to unified and collective action. Sayyid Mohamed's only instruments that gained the attention of Somali people were Islam and the enormous power of his poetic gifts.² The dearth of deep knowledge of Islam was compensated for by the strong attachment of Somalis to the axioms of the Faith. It was to this point that Sayyid Mohamed hitched his message of nationalist awakening. Most Somalis rallied to his side except for a few colonial lackeys or tribal chauvinists. Britain's overwhelming power was so deeply and repeatedly frustrated by the *Daraawiish's* skills that Somalia became the first colonial conflagration in which warplanes were used to subjugate freedom fighters. The guerilla tactics of the *Daraawiish* were so effective that they almost succeeded in driving the colonists out of the country in 1910. How-

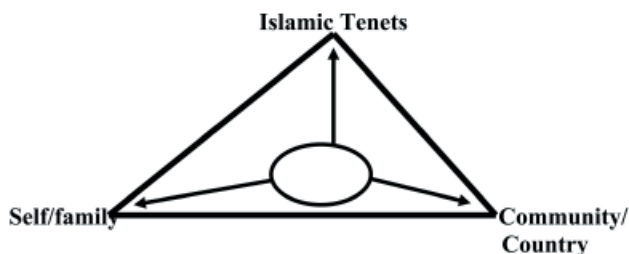


Figure 1: Dimensions of Faith

ever, hubris got the best of the leadership, which led them to fight a conventional war that ultimately resulted in the extinction of Somalia's maiden war of liberation. This was a glorious war, which inspired modern Somali nationalism and ultimately gave birth to the Somali Youth League (SYL). What made the Sayyid and his movement endure for more than two decades in spite of the overwhelming odds against them were intolerance of indignity and steadfast loyalty to the Faith and to a common destiny. Disaster followed on the few occasions when the leadership deviated from these principles.

Once the major Somali/Islamic resistance was contained, British and Italian authorities (in their respective Somali colonies) had the challenge of manufacturing consent from the population. They thus sought to bring on board certain religious leaders. Such efforts mollified some of the antipathy toward colonial rule while deliberately heightening clanist identity as the principal *political* signifier of the native population. This set in place a process whose dynamic continues to this day to undermine national solidarity. It was during this period of Islamic hibernation that anti-colonial movements led by the Somali Youth League/Somali National League (SYL/SNL) emerged.³ These parties tapped Islamic sentiments to rally the public for independence, but the rising political class never entertained a major role for Islam. Instead, it simply assumed the importance and presence of the faith in Somali lives and the new history. In the South, SYL came to dominate the political landscape after a brief period of existence. Word spread to all Somali territories, and, subsequently, the spirit of *Somalinimo*, which lay dormant for a quarter of a century, was resuscitated. Mogadishu became the nationalist hub. The managers of the Italian Trusteeship meted out utter cruelty to the SYL and its followers, often using what nationalists came to dub as "Pro-Italian" elements. Despite being out-gunned and "out-resourced," the Party maintained its resolve and the

population heeded its message of national unity, common civic belonging, and freedom.⁴

Italy's agenda of turning cultural genealogy into the principal political Somali identity got its first thrashing in the municipal elections of 1954, and the fate of such tactics was sealed by the overwhelming SYL victory in the 1956 election for the territorial assembly.⁵ What gave the Somali people confidence in SYL's inclusive political program was the way in which all were treated equally. Second, the leadership exuded trust and devotion to the collective good. A most germane example was the resistance of key leaders of the party to take up ministerial portfolios in 1956.⁶ Nearly all the individuals that Premier-designate Abdullahi Isa approached declined his offer, noting that "they did not want to shame themselves given that they did not have commensurate skills or the experience to adequately tackle the demands of such onerous responsibility." Faith in SYL's principles and fear of public ridicule were the reasons for their now stunning behavior (contrast this to today's Transitional Federal Government and other aspirants).

B. Democracy and Faith

Political divisions between civic nationalists and sectarian entrepreneurs re-emerged in the North and in the South during the dying days of colonialism, but the nationalists remained dominant. After independence, Somalia's new leaders anchored the liberal national Constitution on Islam, as Articles 30 and 50 make clear. Article 30 declares that, "The personal status of Moslems is governed by the general principles of the Islamic Sharia" while Article 50 states that, "The doctrine of Islam is the main source of Laws of the State."⁷ Despite these pronouncements, the state's political character was *democratic* and senior leaders were not concerned about political Islam.⁸ Yet, they were aware of the potential influence that Islamic leaders could command and attempted to channel it toward reinforcing the population's commitment to the faith while guarding against sectarian use of the faith for *particularistic political* ends.

The principal concern of the democratic leadership and those who remained faithful to the foundational principles of SYL and other civic-oriented parties was the gradual reshaping of sectarian elements in parliament. Some senior civil servants, whose core value was self-enrichment, exploited the very authority that the public *entrusted* to them. The first major indication of this development came during

the 1961 constitutional plebiscite when two disgruntled leaders tried to undermine the referendum by tacitly mobilizing their genealogical groups to vote negative (because they or their friends were not appointed to the highest offices in the land). These two individuals were less concerned with destabilizing the young republic and more committed to exacting political revenge in the hope that the defeat of the Charter would humiliate the nation's new leaders and thus afford them an unimpeded rise to power. These two senior ministers in the government failed to appreciate the value of supporting the Charter on its merits and honestly competing for political office in the presidential election that immediately followed the plebiscite. What made this behavior bewildering was the fact that these men were among the architects of the constitution and thus had every opportunity to shape it and in fact did so. The majority of the Somali people thought differently than the two officials and endorsed the Charter. One of the two men took the challenge and ran for the presidency. His effort almost paid off but the founding president of the republic went on to win by three votes. The challenger's camp refused to accept the verdict even after the Supreme Court verified the result.⁹ From then on, expediency became the guiding principle of the opposition. The democratic government was constantly confronted by opportunistic forces whose only manifesto was "bring down the government so we can take over." Loyalty to the nation and the Constitution, as well as accountable government that served the public, were not their priority. Such a *modus operandi* was essentially at odds with Islamic principles and the democratic traditions of liberation and Somali culture. It set a noxious political precedent for the country. Henceforth, most parliamentarians used their posts as a personal instrument for accumulating wealth and gaining favors, rather than serving their constituencies and the country. It is this odious practice that attracted the incisive verse of Somalia's poet laureate Timaade:

Members of parliament when we assembled them in one place,
Presidents and ministers when they were elected,
Healthy minds and people we were facing the same direction,
Then came those who confused us only to milk everything for their sole
benefit,
Never to lose an electoral seat whose only intention it was,
In our rural areas they put a knife in every hand,
Those hacks who bombarded us with fake wailings of sectarian
solidarity,

The poison they injected in us killed nobility of character,
Lies and lies they festoon us with, Beware.¹⁰

Such behavior desecrated all three meanings of Faith and subsequently derailed Somali democracy and the rule of law.¹¹ Figure 2 illustrates the nature of this order rooted in faithlessness. This practice induced a gradual erosion of the common values that Somalis shared and the regime that came to power in 1967 took this to new heights.

C. Dictatorships of Mistrust

Just when the population was on the verge of despair the national army intervened and removed the regime from power, with an outpouring of endorsement by most of the citizens. The military's honeymoon lasted for several years. A number of popular programs were undertaken, such as the script for the Somali language, literacy campaigns, establishment of the national university, and investments in infrastructure. While the regime enjoyed popular legitimacy during this period, its governance paradigm was shifting quietly in troubling ways. The military regime slowly destroyed the public service establishment's professional autonomy by first placing military officers at the head of every institution and then summarily appointing loyalists to posts for which they did not have qualifications. Fear replaced respect in the relationship between military political appointees and the professional cadre. Second, by the mid-1970s, recruitment and promotion in the military took on a distinctly clanist turn in ways never witnessed before in Somali public service.¹² In sharp contrast to the democratic constitution, the military sidestepped the Sharia and secularized family law. Once this was announced on national radio, it generated heated discussion about the religious character of the military leaders. The state proclamation reinforced the suspicion many Somalis had about "Godless communism." Thereafter, a number of major imams began to preach in Mogadishu's mosques and defied the regime's authority to change such an elemental law, even if some of the modifications were in the right direction towards greater gender equality. Conscious of the explosive potential of the challenge, the military rounded up ten imams and took them to a hastily arranged national security court, which sentenced them to death. The sentence was carried out immediately, breaking the most cherished feature of postcolonial Somali politics: open political debate without state coercion or violence.

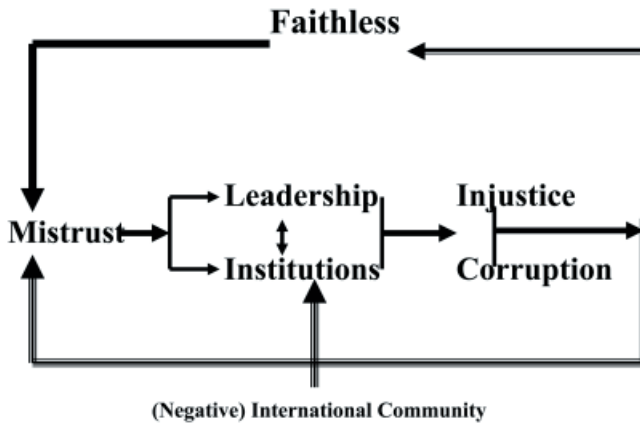


Figure 2: Faithless Order

This murderous use of sectarian power damaged the integrity of the system of order and the citizenry's collective projects. Having lost the popular mandate, the regime turned to un-Islamic and un-Somali tools to prolong its hold on power. By 1980 degeneration quickened, culminating in the destruction of parts of Hargeisa and Burao, effectively alienating communities from one another. Here is how this author described that situation in 1989:

Peripheral-capitalist tribal politics came to prominence in the early 1960s as a means through which certain groups within [ruling elite] gained access to the state apparatus and its resources under the pressures of the competitive political marketplace. The employment of ethnicity as a political ideology...in Somalia unleashed destructive forces which razed the parliamentary electoral process, fractured the governing class, led to unprecedented emergence of a repressive and authoritarian regime, alienated communities from each other in ways previously unknown in Somali history, undermined the basis of state legitimacy, and, finally, threaten the very existence of Somalia as a country by swiftly and fatally maiming Somali nationalist ideology...¹³

Similarly, the political and military opposition adopted the regime's tactics of dividing the nation into genealogical-political groups and thus substantially contributed to the devaluation of common belonging. For twelve long years these two actors, bereft of faith in any sense of the word, dominated the landscape and created conditions uncongenial to good governance, healthy communities, and the promise of a better Somalia.

D. Gargoylia

As *imaan* evaporated, competition for state power and commensurate privileges became more grotesque. Civic-minded and faithful Somalis kept a low profile and failed to mobilize the population. By the time the military dictator was chased out of the capital, warlords and sectarian political entrepreneurs had carved the county into fiefdoms, further depleting ethical capital. Bloodletting in Mogadishu in 1991 and the killing fields of the Bay region in early 1991–92, with warlords using food as a weapon against hapless people, was the ultimate consequence of a faithless power. The United Nations and the United States came to the assistance of the starving population, cleared the roads of the criminal gangs, and fed the indigent. Unfortunately, the humanitarian effort was not matched by a serious political investment to help the population rebuild their state institutions. Deleterious advice, based on an archaic worldview, wasted the fleeting opportunity and misdirected the effort, leading to the withdrawal of the multinational forces. The derangement of politics mushroomed into warlord and bigoted dominance and the misguided international community flirted with these monstrosities. The Somali peoples' ordeal failed to attract sympathetic attention from powerful states. Yet the possibility of three criminals hiding in Somalia was sufficient justification for the world's Superpower to provide more resources to the warlords and charge them to hunt down those suspected of giving these individuals refuge. Tested by their prolonged agony, the population rallied around religious leaders. Within three months, the warlords were routed and Mogadishu was relatively calm for the first time in seventeen years. The Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) was formed and soon much of south-central Somalia became liberated.

E. Hope of *Imaan's* Return

What made such speedy success possible? Loyalty to the Faith was the central "piston" in the emerging energy. Sentiments in the old capital were mobilized when the population realized that the warlords and their financial backers, who had no sympathy for their plight, were now willing to visit destruction on the people in order to capture three alleged terrorists. The confluence of these events and a rising temper of common Fate were reminiscent of 1949,¹⁴ when the world sided with the return of the Italian fascists and SYL led the charge to confront

this challenge. Faithful bonds can overcome towering menaces, as displayed in the people's revolts in 1949 and 2006.

The UIC led the way and restored peace to the capital. Inspired by Islamic principles, the movement spread quickly and much of south-central Somalia came under their sway. Even the renegade regions of the North and Northeast felt the heat, which quickly led their leaders to declare that they would adopt the Sharia as the law of the land. These swift successes concealed the serious systemic weaknesses of the UIC, best unveiled by the inability to manage the regions under its control. First, the UIC's incoherence was a product of its recent founding as well as its quick rise to power. It had to hastily organize an assembly and executive committee after the movement's victories became apparent. In other words, it did not have an organized institutional infrastructure in place. Second, although it established an executive organ, the line of command (particularly in military affairs) was not clear and this led to some less-than-strategic campaigns. Third, the UIC leadership and assembly lacked the intellectual, diplomatic, and political competence to understand the dangers of a world dominated by a "war on terror" mentality. The group failed to heed advice that might have mollified those risks.¹⁵ Fourth, given the absence of tight organizational discipline, much time was devoted to endless meetings, which were in part used to build cohesion among a diverse membership. Inevitably, this meant that relatively minor issues and details took center stage, and precious time was lost. Finally, the UIC's lack of coherent and workable governance strategy—beyond the call for the Sharia to be the basic law of the land—added to the incapacity. No other administrative competence existed. Additionally, there was no negotiating plan to bring on board skeptical but sympathetic Somalis, or to seriously engage a hostile international community, the TFG, and others. This created opportunities for the enemies of the movement to demonize the UIC, which provided political cover for the invaders. Despite all of these shortcomings, the spirit of *Muslinimo* and *Somalinimo* prevailed for six months and boosted the confidence of the Somali people to believe that they could restore peace to their land and begin governing themselves with dignity.

F. Struggling for Freedom and Faith

A ferociously hostile international climate and a determined Ethiopian enemy took advantage of the drawbacks of the UIC and derailed the

movement. Many commentators wrote off the UIC and the nationalist movement as the Ethiopian military committed heinous crimes against the population and destroyed life-sustaining systems the people had established during the previous fifteen years. More than 20,000 people were killed and 1.5 million had been displaced. The latter group and others face famine.¹⁶

Despite the war crimes the Ethiopian invaders committed, tough-minded young Somalis rose to the occasion and mounted a fierce nationalist resistance that has defied the agenda of the invaders and their international backers. Consequently, the inept TFG, which was holed up in Baidoa and a neighborhood in Mogadishu guarded by Ethiopian and African Union forces, became irrelevant. Ethiopia tried to put the best face on its defeat by claiming to be withdrawing “victoriously.”¹⁷ What these developments make clear is that the cruelties of an invading force can never hold a free and mobilized people in bondage without paying a heavy price, and that invasion is unsustainable and can never bolster an illegitimate regime.

Somalia’s new freedom fighters energized the population inside and outside the country. Their sacrifices created the possibility for a negotiated peace and genuine reconciliation. Harnessing the opportunity has been the responsibility of the leadership that called itself Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). This outfit was supposed to be a solidarity between the UIC, a handful of former members of the TFI parliament, and representatives from the diaspora, but the UIC was the core unit despite the pretensions of others. Unfortunately, the ARS and the UIC failed to develop a political strategy for re-liberation that honored and supported the resistance operations in the country. Moreover, the organizational ability of the UIC was compounded by the ineptitude of the parliamentarians and, collectively, they botched the effort. Having low capacity is not a crime in and of itself, and one must honor genuine effort that does not succeed due to incapacity, but incompetence is not the only thing that bedeviled the alliance. It has been apparent from the day the ARS was established that most of the parliamentarians were lusting for a way to parachute themselves back to the TFG and that their senior leaders were sponsored by the divisive tribal formula. In addition, they had neither the commitment nor the skills to engage in the tough-minded chess game with hostile international forces. They thought that nice platitudes on the airwaves and a weak backbone against the pressure of the hostile forces were the perfect strategy to deliver them to power and introduce false peace and

reconciliation. What became clear in the last few months of negotiations in Djibouti is the fact that the ARS leadership has been less than candid and less than strategic. It may have even engaged in activities and behavior that were fraudulent. Such conduct and deeds are best illustrated by concrete examples.

First, when the ARS leadership initiated its moves and went to Khar-toum and Nairobi in March and April 2008, troubling signs appeared when they indicated their reluctance to consult with key members, including the executive committee, by unilaterally signing agreements. When they were called on this breach of trust, they vacated town and moved to Djibouti. There they began a unilateral project of dealing with the TFG under the supervision of a devious U.N. outfit. Simultaneously, they accused Eritrea of instrumentally using the resistance for its own ends.¹⁸ Despite the goodwill efforts of some members to resolve the problem and restore confidence, the leadership ignored their work, which led to a split in the group. Further attempts failed to bear fruit and the “negotiations” in Djibouti continued.

Second, despite the support of the people of Djibouti, the ARS wing in Djibouti fell apart as a cohesive unit because its two leaders unilaterally decided what the position of ARS was going to be in the negotiations. In addition, incompetence marred the operations and management of the process as the entire affair lacked planning and deliberation. For example, there was an ARS delegation that came to visit U.N. headquarters, but no preparation was made for them to partake in the discussions. The delegation sat as observers rather than participants in the Security Council Chambers, amply demonstrating the organization’s ineptitude.

Third, another manifestation of the drift from the straight path became clear as the negotiations reached a high point when joint committees (composed of the TFG and ARS) were to be formed. One such committee was to consist of seven members from the TFG and seven from ARS, but the head of the ARS Council asked the Executive that he be allowed to add six extra members of his choosing. He added that he would make the request to the U.N. representative. This was allowed, and the rest is history.

Fourth, the final act of the negotiations was the agreement stipulating that 275 new ARS representatives would be added to the already existing 275-person TFG parliament. This was not only offensive to the Somali people, but also demonstrated the absence of coherence as the former Speaker of the Parliament is reported to have proposed that he

would “select 30% of the new MPs while the Hawiye tribe can share the remainder.”

Fifth, the head of the ARS Djibouti wing met with tribal groups in Mogadishu to try and work out a political deal, thus reneging on the UIC’s original motto of avoiding tribal politics. This particular affair was bizarre as he tried to replicate the very process that he and his comrades rejected when Ali Mahdi Mohamed tried the same maneuver in 2007. Lastly, the ARS Djibouti wing finally exposed its true colors by accepting the foul 4.5 formula as the basis of re-establishing Somali national institutions. This made the ARS political agenda identical to that of the TFG. In the end, the leaders of the Djibouti wing appointed 200 new MPs, who, in turn, voted to select their patron as president of the TFG. Subsequently, a prime minister was appointed, but he was deprived of selecting his cabinet, thus creating a farce. In effect, the ARS Djibouti wing became the dominant force in the TFG and has effectively traded the original faith-based agenda for their political ambition by breaching the ARS Charter as well as the anchor values of the UIC. In other words, they seem not to cherish any principles or agreements but subscribe to political expediency and, thus, embrace the faithless politics of the past—leadership without *imaan* and, therefore, no *amaano*! One must ask, then, the tough questions: was the damage exacted upon the population based on the 4.5 formula? Were those who sacrificed their lives for the liberation motivated by 4.5? If deception had moral persuasion, the old politicians would still be reigning.

In addition to these diversions from the straight path of *imaan*, significant elements of the “Shabaab” and members of the Courts have proposed that *they and they alone* have the wisdom and authority to interpret the tenets of the Faith. Furthermore, they are demanding that all others must live by this interpretation or be marginalized or eliminated. In other words, their personal interpretation is deemed more sacred than the generous and flexible ways of Islam. Second, they are turning Islam into a most rigid, authoritarian, and violent enterprise when it is exactly the opposite. Third, they are failing to realize that physical coercion can never make a person faithful and that teaching, nurturing, and engaging people are the most effective ways to convince Somalis to live by the spirit and word of the Faith. If violence were sustainable and effective, the old dictatorship and warlords would still be dominant. Such a strategy has no future.

III. Faithful Politics: The Alternative Future

Neither the machinations of ARS/TFG as we know them now nor a sectarian and perverted Islamicist rule will create the social and political climate required to restore *imaan* and rebuild the legitimate institutions the country so desperately needs.¹⁹ What, then, might be a formula that can build on the Faith and the democratic traditions of Somalis as well as the spirit of resistance? In the first instance, a regime founded on the odious 4.5 formula, headed by an Islamicist, is now in place, but it is unlikely to deliver the promise of peace and genuine reconciliation as it attempts to cling to power without a national agenda.²⁰ This is not an option for the Somali people who have defeated the Ethiopian occupation and thwarted the so-called international community's wrong-headed intent to impose an incompetent and tribal-based political dispensation.

I remember quite well when some civic-minded Somalis called upon the international community not to sanction the Ethiopian agenda of a warlord/tribal government for Somalia. Its response was that the warlords were a necessary evil needed to restore the peace, and that this was the only option available. The international community proffered that Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf was the tough guy who must be the head of state. His obstinate character would be enough to ensure that the Ethiopian regime would not have its way. Some people warned about the fallacy of these assumptions but insistence on it demonstrated either ineptitude to understand what was being said or it had the sole purpose of foisting a warlord outfit beholden to Ethiopia on the Somali people. It is ironic that the same actors have been clamoring to condemn Abdullahi Yusuf as the main obstacle to peace and to proclaim the invader's departure as creating a security vacuum—a vacuum for the millions of people they displaced! More recently, they have been praising the new TFG head as a moderate and legitimate leader. It is worth remembering that it was only two years ago that Mr. Sharif Ahmed and the UIC were being cast as extremists who were bedfellows of Al-Qaida. Unfortunately, there is nothing moderate about the leadership and the predatory cabal around the President as they imagine schemes to defraud the population.

A. From Faithless Power to Faithful Authority

Since 1967, the leaders of nearly all regimes have been marred by the absence of Faith and the dearth of counter-balancing institutions that could provide a sense of national orientation. Advocates of the tribalist thesis of Somali politics maintain that one of two scenarios can provide the basis of political stability in the country. First, they allege that a political regime based on the 4.5 formula will solve the problem of representation among Somalia's "competing" clans. Second, they posit that a combination of 4.5 and a national assembly consisting of two houses, with one chamber dedicated to traditional "leaders," will secure the tribal balance. We have detailed elsewhere the fairy tale of the tribalist thesis and why such propositions cannot and will not usher in a new era of faithful government and justice.²¹

Thus, ideas based on broadly understood Islam and civic identity can and will provide an alternative moral framework for a desirable future. Such grounding will not transpire through the amalgamation of the resistance with a defunct TFG, characterized by faithless power, because that has degraded the valor of the former. The power struggles between the two camps that claim to champion Islam have gutted the belief of the population in what used to be the UIC. Instead, *cosmopolitan religious leaders* and *civic nationalists* must call for a national conference inside that shall produce a blueprint for the road ahead. One of the principal tasks of the conference should be to draw up the mandate of two parallel, non-competing, and counter-balancing institutions for the country. These will consist of a Moral Authority (MA) and a Political Authority (PA) (Figure 3). A detailed presentation of the roles, responsibilities, and the operations of the two authorities will have to wait for another time, but this brief note should suffice as a prelude.

The Moral Authority will have four functions. First, it will be responsible for ensuring that Islamic and Somali cultural education are carried out across the country as part of a *progressive* curriculum designed to empower the society to partake in a globalizing Africa and world. Second, it will establish three major centers of Islamic and cultural learning in the country. Such centers will provide for a liberal interpretation of Islam and Somali traditions and shall not be dominated by any closed-minded sectarian interpretations of the Faith and culture. Third and most critically, it will create another three regional centers where communal conflagrations are resolved fairly and justly so that such conflicts are not transformed into political *mêlée*. In addi-

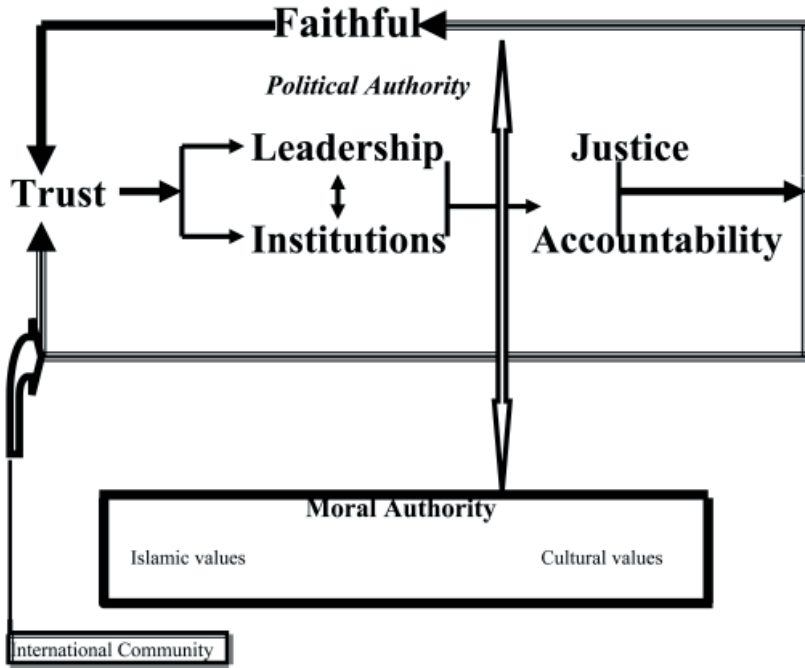


Figure 3: Faithful Order

tion, these centers will become platforms for communal cooperation. Fourth, MA will be a *nonpartisan* national anchor for providing direction when and if the Political Authority diverges from the spirit and word of the Constitution or becomes dysfunctional. Finally, the MA will produce an annual report that will address the moral state of the nation and the country's civic challenges. The report will be circulated through the airwaves as well as in community centers around the country.

Given the centrality of the Moral Authority for the nation's collective well-being and its nonpartisan nature, it is vital that those who will serve as leaders and members of the MA have exceptional credibility, an unblemished record of faithful/civic life, and superb training in Islam and Somali cultural studies. Such members must not be affiliated with and or involved in political or sectarian organizations. The Authority will have eleven members appointed for a period of seven years and will conduct its affairs on a consensual basis. An independently managed endowment will be established to provide the necessary resources for the operations of the authority, and the MA

will have a weekly radio and TV program that will discuss the major concerns of the country in order to educate the public. An independent board of trustees will be created whose only job is to vet, appoint, and dismiss members. The board of trustees will have a reserve list of at least eleven people at all times.

The MA will *not* have legislative and coercive power, but will use education and moral persuasion as its instruments. It will have access to private and state media and shall have the authority to mobilize the population against injustice and bad governance, and for faithful and progressive change. Such an ethical establishment is intended to demonstrate to the population the importance of high Islamic/ethical/Somali standards of public and communal life. Thus, the MA will *not* have the authority to dismiss governments but can inform the population of its good and ill deeds and how the problems might be tackled.

Likewise, the Political Authority will consist of political parties and governments (local, regional, and national). To ensure that the country is not re-victimized by exclusive political parties and entrepreneurs, there can only be two national political parties. Each party will be required to have a national base through its membership. Neither party nor its leadership will be allowed to use Islam or tribal belonging as the basis of its membership or program. Second, the two parties will be monitored by a national inspectorate associated with the MA that will use the highest ethical and moral standards. Any party found to engage in unethical practices will be held responsible and the public will be informed about such practice. Third, there shall be established an independent electoral commission whose responsibility is to organize and conduct national and local elections in the country.

Deliberately separating the role and responsibilities of the MA and PA is vital. It is meant to warrant that the shared values—Islam and culture—are not used by political and sectarian entrepreneurs. Further, it will affirm that the nation's institutional apparatus will maximize the use of and valorize the value of such assets. Simply put, it is not Somali faith or culture that has caused the catastrophe but the detachment of public power from such moral moorings. Resetting those principles as institutional anchors of public affairs will enhance stability and restore justice to the land. Put bluntly, in this new milieu, regimes and aspirant political actors intent on maldevelopment will never again be allowed to corrupt the spirit of ethical communality.

Finally, the need for such institutionalization of Faith and culture is paramount as it creates an independent authority that is not solely

driven by the lust for political power. I would venture that if the country had a legitimate moral voice when the crisis of governance began, the people would have had a trusted authority to turn to for guidance. Such an authority would have had the credibility to call on the people to maintain peace and order until a legitimate political dispensation was restored. Further, and more importantly, Somalis would have been sufficiently informed and educated about developments such that they would have stopped the abusive regimes long before the catastrophe. Only through this or similar methods of returning to faithful and competent authority will the country emerge from the current calamity of faithless power in the guise of pseudo-Islamic politics and parodies.

Notes

1. Abdi Samatar, *The State and Rural Transformation in Northern Somalia* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
2. Said Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). See also, Abdi Shiekh Abdi, *Devine Madness: Mohamed Abdulle Hassan* (London: Zed Books, 1991).
3. Appendix. All-Somali Conference on the Unification of Somalia (Mogadishu, February 1947). The signatories include elders of all major Somali groups. One of the most extensive petitions was drafted by the leader of the Somali National League, Mohamoud Jama Urdoh (Burao, 18 October 1948). FO371/53526. This petition for a united Somalia was signed on August 17, 1956, while the one opposed to the Bevin Plan was signed on September 11, 1946. Among the signatures on the first petition is Haji Ibrahim Egal, the father of the future political leader of the Somali National League. Michael Mariano became one of the leading nationalists in the British Somaliland Protectorate and later in the Somali Republic. Lewis Salool, who had a Somali father and an Indian mother, was "a native of British Somaliland and of a missionary catholic family. Educated in Bombay where he graduated M.A., LL.B Practiced as a lawyer in Addis Ababa under Italian regime, later in British Somaliland. He came to Mogadishu in 1945 as the Legal Advisor to SYL." FO 1015/51.
4. United Nations Trusteeship Council, "Official Record," Eleventh Session, 415 meeting, June 1952 (New York: United Nations, 1952), p. 18.
5. United Nations Trusteeship Council, "Official Record," Eighteenth Session, 703 meeting, June 1956 (New York: United Nations, 1956), p. 11.
6. Interview with Premier Abdirazak H. Hussein, Minneapolis, March 2002.
7. Somali Republic. *The Constitution of the Somali Republic* (Mogadishu: 1961): 11, 16.
8. Abdi Samatar and Ahmed Samatar, "Africa's First Democrats." Unpublished manuscript. Chapter 3.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
10. Abdillahi Sultan Timaade, Poem, 1968.

11. Contrast this behavior with that of the key national leaders prior to the change of administration in 1967. As the most critical Somali journalist of the time, Yusuf Duhul, acknowledged:

One thing is indisputably certain. It had never even occurred to the Aden/Abdirazak team to look into the possibilities of applying the norms of Somali tribalism to the state, or its institutions and functions. One reason for such disregard of any such thought is that the applying of tribal norms and criteria to the state and its institutions would have been then a flagrant violation of the Somali constitution...Paradoxically, the principal targets of the *Dalka's* verbal violence were the governmental team of the first president of the Somali Republic, Aden Abdulle Osman, and his choice of Prime Minister, Abdirazak Haj Hussein—whose government is now accepted by all to have been the best Somalis ever had. *Dalka* itself was not oblivious, even then, of that fact. Stating it openly, however, would have been seen as despicable and venal...*Dalka* then noted... The basic distinguishing feature of the...team was the fundamental factor underlying the political framework...consensual...One of the results of such consensual approach was the removal of the need to resort to political violence. Hence, neither the government nor its opponents considered intimidation as an instrument to use in the political arena...The advantage of this system of mutual tolerance...included...freedom from physical intimidation and from the resulting worry about their personal safety. Consequently, one of the common sights [in Mogadishu] of the period was to see Prime Minister Abdirazak Haj Hussein sitting in Juba hotel, sipping a cup of tea while dueling verbally with the critics of his government. He would, at the end, calmly walk, usually alone, to his house, situated a few hundred metres up the hill to the then Monopolio. An equally familiar sight of the period was to find the President of the Republic, Aden Abdulle Osman, performing his Maqreb prayers, beside his small Fiat, alone or with an ad hoc prayers gathering on the road side. There just were no reasons then for either of them to worry about his personal safety."

"The Dalka Days" (Unpublished paper, London, 1996), pp. 2-4.

12. Interview with Mohamed Ali Samatar, St. Paul, Minnesota, 2004.

13. Samatar 1989, p. 161.

14. Public Records Office, F.O.371/69417. "Findings of Court which Assembled in Mogadishu on 22 January 1948 to Investigate Disturbances that Began in Mogadishu on 11 January 1948," Court of Inquiry, FO371/53526, p. 2. See also Four Power Commission, Vol. 2, "Report on Somalia," London, 1948.

15. Personal Correspondence with the UIC, June 2006.

16. United Nations, "Humanitarian Situation in Somalia," *Monthly Analysis* (Nairobi, April 2007). Jeffrey Gettleman, "Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia is Worse than Darfur," *International Herald Tribune*, online at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/11/20/africa/somalia.php>.

17. Although Ethiopia has withdrawn most of its troops from Somalia, it is unlikely to change its hostility toward the country by providing support for warlords and other clients.

18. I was shocked to hear this on the airwaves as I didn't encounter anything like this when I asked them a question about this matter in Asmara. All I heard from them was

awe and respect for the government and the people of Eritrea. There is no mistake that Eritrea has an interest in seeing Ethiopia's defeat in Somalia. Nonetheless, these leaders should have dealt with the matter strategically rather than locking themselves and the movement into a tight corner.

19. For a discussion of different types of political Islam, see Ahmed I. Samatar, "The Porcupine Dilemma: Governance and Transition in Somalia," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 7 (2007): 39–90.

20. The present head of the TFG has already declared that he would like to impose the Sharia on the country in order to appease the "radical" opposition. Ironically, the TFG also wants to maintain the 4.5 tribal formula, which is anti-Islamic. Such attempts to meld together contradictory principles seems to reinforce the claims of many civil society Somalis that the head of the TFG and the cohort that surround him are a throwback to the faithless politics of the past.

21. Ahmed I. Samatar and Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Somali Reconciliation: Editorial Note," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 3 (2003): 1–15.