

EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume includes a number of important pieces. For instance, for the first time, we have a fine article that addresses “Somalian” identity outside of the old Republic. Equally a first, the distinguished and senior scholar of Somali language and a founding international editorial member of *Bildhaan*, Professor Georgi Kapchits, has contributed two pieces. We express extra gratitude to Professor Kapchits. Another submission came from the pen of Dr. Mohamoud Jama “Sifir” as he was struggling with grave illness, one that ultimately ended his life early in the year. A wise and convivial elder, we already miss him badly.

The year 2017 has brought the Somali people and their sympathizers around the world two good and relieving political tidings, one distressing development, and two pieces of very sad news.

The positive occurrences are: (1) the peaceful *selection* by newly assembled parliamentarians of a new president for Somalia, followed by an orderly transfer of authority in Mogadishu from the venal, inept, and acutely despised regime of Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud to Mohamed Abdillahi, “Farmaajo,” and (2) the long-awaited confirmation of the date for *national* presidential and parliamentary elections across the Republic of Somaliland, finally set for November 13, 2017, and 2019, respectively. The expectations are high for both happenings. For Somalia, many among its denizens (and unionists everywhere) hope that the new president and his team will quickly reverse the chronically tribalistic small-mindedness and pervasive syndrome of fraudulence that has afflicted the disunited country for nearly three decades. In place of such burdensome legacies, the people of Somalia expect that President Mohamed Abdillahi will usher in a new time of reverence for civic integrity, managerial competence, and purposeful, creative, and daring engagement with Somaliland over the monumental issues that caused the demise of the old union.

To be sure, the full returns are not in and won't be for some time. Therefore, a degree of patience is still in order. Nonetheless, the early signs are very worrisome. First, keen and experienced observers underscore the heavy corruption of buying votes that formed the ambience — the most expensive in Somali history with some costing as high as \$50,000 each — during the presidential selection. Since candidate Farmaajo enthusiastically partook of this flea market context and in the end spent millions of dollars (money he did not personally own),

many are persuaded that his regime will not be ethically that different from those who had preceded it, and that he will carry water for external patrons.

A second signal is the appointment of the prime minister. Thoughtful commentators point out that the formula for choosing was predetermined by a replay of the perniciously regionalist-cum-tribalist “duopoly.” Third, the composition of the cabinet is, as before, quantitatively an embarrassing exaggeration (more than sixty-six in the last count) and with hardly any accent on high quality and relevant experience to boot. These and more factors seem to underlie the growing suspicion that the past is the present or, as the Armenians say, *Thunderclouds do not always give rain.*

The second pleasant tiding comes from Somaliland. Its *national* presidential contest is now set for November 13, 2017. Prior to this date, there were a number of disappointing postponements. The reasons included a lack of effective planning and organizational competence, insufficient funds, the absence of technological infrastructure, a crushing drought, devious machinations to extend the term of the president on the part of those who have garnered unearned privileges under the protection of his stature, and numerous parliamentarians whose tenure had long expired but have gotten spoiled by getting used to the easy salaries that came to them with minimum exertion of their legislative responsibilities. Despite all of these, albeit serious, impediments, however, the presidential contest is on now, with three nationwide parties competing. The parliamentary (House of Delegates) election is marked for 2019, with the House of Elders to follow in 2020. If the people of Somaliland (now really on an altogether different historical evolution and trajectory) and their lumpen-elite carry through these series of elections — particularly the one for the presidency and the House of Delegates — with conspicuous discipline, lawfulness, transparency, and forthright acceptance of the final count, their already differentially greater reputation in travelling some distance towards democratic, free, and stable politics will be greatly enhanced.

The distressing item is the continuous deterioration of the environment in the Somali-inhabited territories of the region. In particular, both the Republic of Somaliland and Federal Somalia have experienced a severe drought that is still dragging on. This is proving to be more than the old seasonal variability in rainfall. On the contrary, there is now enough scientific evidence to show that the Horn of Africa, as part of the great sweep of the Sahel Zone and the vaster drylands

of the world, has entered a whole new stage in its climate: drier seasons are lengthening, pulverization of the soil and omnipresent dust are becoming normal, pollution and heat are rising, and new killer diseases are in the offing. Consequently, the quality of life for most people, already among the lowest in the league at the world table, is in danger of greater deterioration. Equally dispiriting is the fact that while the emerging public cost of these advancing calamities are plain for all to see, leadership that can match these daunting challenges seems absent in both countries. One small but remarkable item in civic consciousness and standards of behavior that could be harnessed is this: when the recent drought gripped the pastoralists of the eastern regions of Somaliland, their compatriots in the western part offered succor by inviting them to graze their camels freely on their farms and land.

The saddest news comes in the announcement of the untimely death of two Somali scholars: Professor Hussein Adam, commonly known as Hussein Tanzania, and Dr. Omer Eno. Professor Adam was a colleague of multiple distinctions. Among these was his uncontested leadership in Somali Studies. More specifically, he was the primary force behind the creation of the International Congress of Somali Studies nearly forty years ago. The next Congress, in his honor and commemoration, will take place in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, in 2018. Furthermore, up to his last years, he was always the energy behind the convening and organization of the biannual congresses held in different parts of the world. He strenuously co-edited and saw to it that the proceedings were published for preservation and wider circulation. A good specimen of the latter is the large volume *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*. But Professor Hussein Adam was also a man of ideas, with a marvelous and productive intellect. Urbane and multicultural in his upbringing, he earned rare opportunities to study at two of America's best academic institutions, Princeton and Harvard. In his long scholarly life, Professor Adam taught numerous students and collaborated with colleagues at a variety of colleges and universities around the world. His numerous writings have helped many a junior scholar and continue to inspire new generations. I, for one, will always remember with fondness when, in the summer of 1986, he introduced with civilized kindness my brother, Professor Abdi Ismail Samatar, and I to present one of our earliest joint articles at the University of Rome, where the congress was being held. A few select examples of his works include *Rethinking the Somali Political Experience* and *From Tyranny to Anarchy*.

Dr. Omer Eno, though he came to the academic world somewhat late, will be remembered most essentially for his wakening passion and intelligence in defense of the long suppressed equal rights of a very significant and highly productive portion of the Somali people. A pioneering promoter of the human rights of *Jareer* Somalis, many of us were privileged to watch him in action as he courageously and with poignant bluntness battled ossified and indefensible pretensions of superiority by offering the larger audience versions of the *Jareer's* deep-shadowed condition — one of pervasive othering, exclusion, and exploitation. The Somali people need him more at this moment than ever before, as the mindless but abominable duels over perverted identitarian claims and counter egotistical assertions continue to block the coming at once of *senses communes* and the collective ascent of the steep face of transformative and practical republicanism. For those of us who want to remember Professor Adam and Dr. Eno and what they mean to us, then, we may find these lines from the distinguished American poet, Marianne Moore, worth sharing:

Life is energy, and energy is creativity. And even when individuals pass on, the energy is retained in the work of art, locked in it and awaiting release if only someone will take the time and the care to unlock.

We say goodbye to our assistant editor, Ms. Betsy Salvatore. She was a critical colleague in the administrative side of *Bildhaan*, and we will forever be grateful for her meticulous supervision of the myriad details of the production process, overall professionalism, and humane sensibilities. We wish her success in her new venture. At the same time, we welcome with enthusiasm Ms. Janessa Cervantes, our new assistant editor. Ms. Cervantes earned her B.A. degree in Psychology from the University of Minnesota and is on the way to completing her Master's degree. She is also the new coordinator in the Department of International Studies, the official home of *Bildhaan*. Lastly, we are delighted to welcome to the international editorial board Dr. Mohamed Aden Hassan "Kodhadhi." Already published in this journal (2015), Dr. Hassan is a young sociologist-cum-entrepreneur. A Research Fellow at the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmith College, University of London, he is currently exploring the impact of "Mobile Money" across the main contours of Somali society. As an upcoming entrepreneur, he is the founder-owner of STAR TV. The channel is intensely watched by communities in East Africa and around the world.

