Failed States

When governance goes wrong !

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For my
FATHER AND MOTHER
to whom I owe everything

"The truth defends itself,
it is lies which need defending."
Chinese proverb

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Abdullahi Dool

PREFACE

When an entity as complex as a state collapses -- for states do not just fall -- something must have gone terribly wrong and someone must be accountable. When a developing nation collapses at the hands of its own people, its wealth squandered, its people made destitute and dispersed and its very statehood in suspense, that is the time when you see the pointing of too many fingers at colonialists who left the country some decades ago as being responsible for the tragedy. So the question here is who is really to blame for the collapse of such failed states?

Exceptionally, in the case of Somalia, it may seem as though when the modern state was formed in 1960 the colonialists who left the country had arranged that it should self-destruct by putting sections of its peoples and territories in the hands of other nations. Like a person who wakes up to find parts of his body possessed by other persons, from the time of inception the newly-born Somali state embarked on a long treacherous and costly road to reunite its lost parts into the main fold -- the new Republic. All resources, human and material, were devoted to the recovery of those territories from its immediate neighbours. But, despite this sad legacy, are the colonialists really to blame for the eventual collapse of the Somali state? Certainly not!

When a developing state falters and, like Somalia, fails, only then do you hear this pinning of the blame on the tail of the donkey. Like a philanderer who blames his mother for his folly and complains that "something must have gone wrong while I was in the womb", such states point fingers wildly in the wrong direction. Colonialists simply are not to blame for what takes place long after their departure.

When one's state is given back, with whatever bitter legacy, one must not fool around and waste time. Like a grandma whose first grandchild is given into her care, one must not fuss but concentrate on propelling the state forward to the promised land of success. The blame for the collapse of the Somali state lies squarely on the doorsteps of the Somalis themselves: all those

politicians and rulers whose intrigues and miscalculations became a time-bomb for the disintegration of the most ideal nation-state on earth. Somalia's tragic demise was caused by greed, ignorance and folly on the part of its politicians. The country was run as though it belonged to no one.

Petty-minded, clannish rulers took over from the colonialists and established corrupt democracies and were followed by twenty-one years of military dictatorship. Finally, as if to escape the judgement of history and justice at the hands of its people, the leadership, which accumulated huge piles of political litter, indulged in an unnecessary bloodbath and put in motion events which led to oblivion for the state.

For heaven's sake, we were there! We, the Somali public, were there as helpless observers when the government, like a truck whose brakes had failed, careered out of control indiscriminately striking pylons and walls. The first step in our future recovery must surely be to recognise and learn from our past mistakes.

In order that the world community might understand the plight of failed states and the reasons why suddenly the Somali state has fallen apart and has slid into the abyss, and in order that in the future those who may lead and oversee the administration of their country may also take bitter lessons from the mistakes of their past rulers and politicians, this book seeks to describe how Somalia was transformed from one of the most ideal homogeneous nation-states to one of the most lawless and destructive societies on earth. Its statehood pillars, social fabric and cohesion, all dismantled as a result of the misrule, greed and ineptitude of unpatriotic politicians, a tinpot dictator and merciless warlords.

It was never easy to produce this publication. The facts revealed demanded presentation in the boldest form. No other way is open to present stark truth: it requires a measure of ruthlessness. What was at stake was the quest to lay bare all that underlay the collapse of the Somali state and the consequent degradation of its people as displaced and international refugees. No one could be exonerated who bore even the slightest responsibility for this tragedy. Like forensic scientists at a crime scene

determining the culprit and cause of the death of a person, every angle and avenue has been explored and examined. And, as the intelligence world loves to put it -- nothing has been left to chance.

The main aims of this book are: (1) To arouse, through documentation, public awareness and thus ensure that in future no more reprobates mar the reputation of the highest office of Somalia with their scandals. (2) To help raise the standard and quality of government in a future Somalia and in some of the developing countries where similar problematic public administration is experienced. (3) To help ensure that the record of those who seek public office in Somalia and elsewhere is without blemish and is seen to be so. (4) To promote nationhood and to help in any small way to raise and rescue Somali politics from the depth of clannism. (5) To contribute to the flow of ideas towards re-inventing the Somali state.

Obviously, a major part of this book deals with what went wrong and what was bad in the longest-serving government in Somalia in order to explain failed states. It cannot at the same time, cover all that was good in that government. When a state collapses not at the hands of foreigners but at those of its own people's government, it becomes irrelevant, even bizarre to talk about positive aspects of such government or, as it used to call them "*Guulihii kacaanka barakeysan*" ("Victorious achievements of the blessed revolution"). Like dictators before and after him, the Somali leader was his own worst enemy. What he built he destroyed with his own hands. As for his endeavours as a "benevolent leader", there is no legacy left behind to talk about: there is a difference between working for your people and working for yourself. History teaches us that those who, when ruling their countries, seek personal glory, seldom leave real evidences of achievement behind them.

Before the colonial era, although the Somalis on occasions wrote vital communications employing the Arabic script, the culture remained predominantly oral. Thus, what Somali leaders and poets said, or were reported to have said, and what the people believed, was all of vital cultural and political significance (true or not!). I grew up to recognise this and I thank God that I

was blessed with a natural curiosity and an ability to take note of things around me. From my parents and our family I was imbued with respect for truth and justice. It was my education which emphasised the need to place scholastic objectivity above emotional commitment and stimulated the realisation that objectivity has to preclude the clannism which has bedevilled every part of our nation -- intellectuals not least.

Finally, to guarantee the integrity of every part of this publication, all care and precaution has been taken to ensure that no unsubstantiated information is included. Facts cited herein were checked and double-checked to the best of my ability. Because of the degradation of Somali politics along tribalistic lines, in order to explain some of the events, clan names may be found in some parts of this book though not in the index.

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1
Vandalising Society's Fabric

If there is one element that societies have in common with clothing -- it is the fabric. As clothes are held together by fabrics in one piece -- society also has a fabric. Like clothing, once its fabric is tampered with or impaired, it disintegrates in tatters. The shape of the clothing is protected by sticking, seams etc. But unlike clothes, the fabric of a society is made and protected by traditions, religion, heritage, norms, ethics and values. It is very important that all factors which safeguard the wellbeing of the fabric of a society are protected from confusion and chaos. The most important unit of society which is its determining factor is the family. If the family is in health there will doubtless be a healthy society. It is the family institution which teaches men and women how to became husbands, fathers, wives, mothers and even responsible citizens. The family is the primary school which colours our views in most aspects of life and instills the values that are vitally important for society.

The foundations and fabric of the Somali nation suffered injuries and mutilation as a result of several factors which threatened it and led to its fracture and ultimately to disintegration. It is frequently argued that the first to menace Somali society structures were the colonialists who occupied all the different parts of the Somali country at the end of the nineteenth century and who attempted to replace the existing norms, manners and way of living with their own imported from Europe. But the worst dangers for Somali family structure and stability were the ones to be endured under the rule of the military dictatorship which exercised control over the country for nearly a quarter of a century.

The most dangerous negative influences on the society occurred after the implementation of "scientific socialism" in 1970. This was in total contradiction to the traditions, religion, ethics and

values of the country. Perhaps the most effective instrument which the imported ideology utilised took the form of branches of a deadly organisation which the military government called "*orientation centres*". This agency suddenly mushroomed all over the country.

Influence of orientation centres

The military government, having introduced a scientific socialism which was contrary to the values and beliefs of the people, in order to penetrate the family structure which is the most sacred and fundamental unit of any society, established what it called orientation centres in every part of the country and in every city, town and suburb. These orientation centres were the equivalent of the Soviet Union's *Comsomols*. For instance, Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, which the government had divided into fourteen suburbs, had fourteen orientation centres. The centres invariably had offices for their administrators; a large conference hall; prison cells for inmates and local courts; stores and an open venue for mass rallies, weddings and the delivery of haranguing speeches.

At the orientation centres all sorts of activities were conducted, everyday of the week around the clock. These activities interfered in all parts of the citizen's life and included marriage ceremonies, social courts etc. The centres penetrated into the heart of the society.

The function of orientation centres was directly copied from their counterparts in communist states where they were tightly controlled by the state apparatus. But those countries had different social structures and backgrounds. The orientation centres' influence on the society grew almost by the day and in the late 1970s their impact on the people reached its zenith. They became an integral part of the peoples' lives.

Emergence of an orientation-bred elite

In the 1970s, the orientation centres became the most important places for any one with a burning ambition to be recognised and placed in the different sections of the government. Otherwise useless activities in orientation centres became important because the rewards were very obvious. They became the best

job recruitment venues for the government. The more one used the evening microphones in emotional fervour in support of the leader and his government, the more one was likely to be yanked away from the centres into lucrative posts. The relentless activities in the centres also became a haven for those seeking scholarships and official tours abroad -- mainly to socialist countries.

Above the orientation centres there was the Public Relations Office (PRO). The head of the PRO was Colonel Abdulkadir Haji Masale, one of the twenty-five members of the Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC) who staged the 1969 revolution. Even though Abdulkadir was an honest and hard working man, he had total belief in the personal trustworthiness of the leadership. In the evenings in the serenity of his government-owned mansion he was known frequently to play tapes of those countless presidential orations. The PRO agency was, among other things, the government's recruitment office responsible for suggesting governors, district commissioners and various local government heads. Since the main purpose of these centres was to demolish existing society structures and to replace them with a communist model that had little or no moral fibre and standing, the social engineers who ran these centres were trained in communist countries -- mainly in the Soviet Union, East Germany, Romania and North Korea. Obviously the "revolutionary" regime knew that for any society to be transformed, the existing pillars and structures had to be changed. They recognised that the main foundation of any society was the family and it became their prime target.

Politicising the family

The family, second only to the school, is the most important institution where human characters and personalities are moulded. One of the last things which any government should seek to politicise is the family. It is the most essential social unit and nothing to do with the political ideology of the state. A family is formed by the will and consent of individuals of opposite gender, and constitutes the most important centre of life in the universe. The politicisation method introduced by the government was to offset the traditional balance, stability and hierarchy of the

family. In the traditional Somali family, like everywhere else, it is through the different roles of the father and mother that new influences come to change the family for the better. In every organisation, be it family, or a private or public enterprise, there is a role for leadership and loyalty to safeguard the continuity of all structures. Orientation centres endeavoured to offset this balance by declaring their version of equality between man and woman in the family. This was only a ploy and a cheaply concocted one. By undermining the existing balance in the family and creating disagreement between man and wife, and father and mother, there was advantage for the state. The aim was to undermine family cohesion. For instance, the father who left home early in the morning to earn a living for the family in a government agency, in a private firm or on his own as self-employed, came home in the afternoon only to find that the mother, whom he had left supposedly tending to the affairs of the family and the needs of the children, was away, engaged in activities required of her by the orientation centre, in other words preoccupied with new responsibilities crafted by the state.

In many respects the orientation centre, by politicising the family, required the undivided loyalty and services of both the mother and father. This created and inspired false new ambitions in wives and mothers. Female co-heads of the family were encouraged to act irresponsibly; they were now married to both family *and* orientation centre. They possessed new powers to stay away well into the night, citing the indisputable and irrefutably valid excuse of having been away in the line of duty. On the other hand, since this was not in any way employment that brought in extra income, the family did not benefit at all from the taking away of the wife and the mother. The absence of a mother was naturally felt not only by her life partner but by youngsters for whom the family role of their mother was very important.

The consequences were heavy. The wife was neither attending to the needs of her husband nor providing a stable environment for her children. Family break-ups, quarrels and beatings became more frequent. On the other hand, since the state empowered the mothers and wives of the family, it became very easy to incriminate fathers and husbands as an opposition (anti-revolutionaries), breaking state rules which granted "equal rights".

No matter what disagreements took place between a man and his wife, it became very easy for the wife falsely to accuse her husband of having objected to her taking part in state service. This became a common "criminal" offence and the number of male family partners incarcerated in orientation cells increased.

In order that orientation centres could enforce their will on the public, they had their own "armies". "Selfless" vigilantes, hired without salary by the orientation centres, were similar to the brown-shirted nazi youth in 1930s Germany and were called "*Guulwadayaal*" which means victory pioneers. Because these "victory pioneers" were "selfless" and unpaid, they had to subsidise their living by other means and methods. They bullied local businesses and the population at large in a thriving money-making racket to earn their living.

The role of "victory pioneers"

In 1970, in one of his typically long speeches, the Somali president introduced the formation of a "selfless" force called *Guulwadayaal.* No sooner had the new force been established, its monsters became a pestering menace to the public. They were soon dubbed "Green dogs" as their shoddily made uniforms were green. Their insignia was one big eye which was typical of the communist "big brother" approach. They were used by orientation centres in cases of domestic violence and to arrest troublesome husbands, petty thieves and those accused of being "*ka'aan-diid*" (anti-revolutionaries). During the revolutionary years, "*ka'aan-diid*" was one of the most common yet serious crimes of which one could be accused. It was not uncommon to be dubbed as "anti-revolutionary" by someone for unrelated personal disagreements which generally resulted in severe punishments. The country's judicial system did not have the *habeas corpus* fundamental law in which is enshrined the citizen's civil liberty and which calls for any detained person to be brought before a court of law within twenty-four hours of arrest to ascertain whether or not the detention is lawful. Citizens could be detained for days, months or even years by any of the dozen or so agencies or forces who had the powers to take someone into custody.

The *Guulwadayaal* eventually became two distinct forces. One, unpaid "self-sacrificing" and green-uniformed, still remained with

the orientation centres as the enforcer of punishment in domestic affairs, petty crimes such as theft and mainly manufactured political crimes based on disloyalty to the regime; while on the other hand there also emerged a well-uniformed, well-groomed *Guulwadayaal* force. The first powerful commanding officer, under whose direction and supervision this elite force was established, was General Abdirahman Abdi Hussein known as "*militia*", one of the president's many sons-in-law. This more important force later on became the fourth strongest force in the country and it had a huge compound as its headquarters, in the northern part of the capital, with regular military officers, proper budgets and payments.

Fixation with who was revolutionary

The last Somali leader came to power with too much unwanted baggage, part of which was the concept "*if you are not with me, you are against me*", much beloved by Mussolini. Like *il Duce*, former President Mohamed Siad Barre saw the world in black and white: those loyal to him and those against him. There was nothing in between. Even the ordinary man who was not concerned whether he was in power or not, was not left in peace. Citizens were even provoked and as Somalis say, "people's mouths were pressed with sticks" to ascertain their allegiance. This menace was mainly due to insecurity and lack of confidence on the part of the leadership. Having been trained and served as a "CID" criminal investigation department police officer in the Italian colonial administration, the president was by nature a very suspicious person, who saw and smelt crime wherever he looked. He did not trust anyone other than himself with anything. Like Joseph Stalin of the former USSR, he believed in conspiracy theory, fantasising that in every corner someone was conspiring against him and against his government.

That the military leadership which took power in Somalia in October 1969 claimed to have seized power to rescue the country and its people from oblivion, only to introduce new, uncalled for and unnecessary crimes, is an irony. One such crime was the infamous "*ka'aan-diid*" or anti-revolutionary charge already described as dangerous, because such incriminations lay in undefined grey areas with no specific boundaries. For instance,

a man who was jealous of another's progress or influence could accuse him of being "*ka'aan-diid*" and there was no requirement to verify or prove such flimsy accusations in a court of law. The simple accusation was enough to take one into custody. Even to be suspected, without necessarily having aired views, was enough to call for an arrest.

It was an obsession of the military government, under the leadership of Mohamed Siad, to waste time, resources and manpower to establish undisputed love for the revolutionary government on the part of all its citizens. This was a major preoccupation of government. There was a high degree of insecurity in the military government and it seemed very important to verify whether a citizen loved or loathed the government. Even the Almighty who created heaven, earth and mankind, did not prey and punish His creations while on earth in order to secure their love for Him, let alone a military government which imposed its will on the people.

No matter how ideal a government system is, there will always be those who feel their interests are not represented: those who see things in a different light. This is fundamental human behaviour. It must be understood that it is not possible to please everyone. As the Somalis say, "*Ilaahay farahaba ma simin,*" or "even God has not made the fingers on one hand equal." That is true throughout the natural world. It is why communism has failed. People who have different capacities, talents, tastes, interests etc. were subjected to bureaucratic uniformity, absolute subservience and undivided allegiance. It is not possible to look after everyone's interests. But it is very important that the best interest of most of the citizens be established. If everyone's interest were to be accommodated, conflicting and antagonising situations and scenarios would arise as shown by George Orwell in his book, *Animal Farm.* That is not acceptable in any society. On the other hand it is important for the government system to allow people to believe whatever they want and to air diverse views, as long as they use peaceful and legal methods which do not infringe upon the rights of others and are not at the expense of the livelihood and convenience of the citizenry.

Rather than busy itself with bettering the lives of its citizens and elevating the standard of living and the running of state affairs, it

was the leadership's petty-mindedness and insecurity which led to its busying itself with which citizen was *for* the government and which was not. So in order to satisfy its obsession, the government introduced a crime bill which sought to divide the population into two: "*ka'aan*" (revolutionary) and "*ka'aan-diid*" (anti-revolutionary) i.e., whether one liked the government or not. The punishments prescribed for such allegations were out of all proportion to the offence. For instance, one of the government's prisoners, Ahmed Yusuf Samatar known as "*Barda'ad*", was in solitary confinement for eighteen years. In 1992, when I asked *Barda'ad* what the crimes were which required him to spend nearly two decades in prison, he confessed himself still in bewilderment. He told me that after he was released, in order to know why eighteen years of his life had been taken away from him under such severe conditions of incarceration, he went straight to the president seeking an audience to know the reasons behind his arrest. The president's surprising response was that he did not know how he had forgotten this man in solitary confinement for such a length of time. The president's exact answer was "We needed to put you in jail but not with the intention that you serve such a long period of time. It should have been only for a few years." The main reason for his incarceration was nothing more than the insecurity of the leader.

In the 1960s, before the military revolution after which the country allied itself to the Soviet Union and entreated its super power friend to provide more arms and assistance to Somalia, *Barda'ad* was the man with the best socialist credentials in Somalia. He had his own socialist party and political platform. In those pre-revolutionary years, when the country was run by primitive and corrupt democratic governments, he used to influence the Soviets mainly in the granting of scholarships to those he approved of and introduced. When the military took over power, the new regime feared and dreaded *Barda'ad* as someone who may still have held trump cards with the Soviets. Mohamed Siad thought that if he stayed at large, the Soviets might prefer their long-time close ally to an unknown policeman and an untested military leadership. This resembled the reaction of President Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia towards the erudite Ethiopian communist demagogue Haile Fida, another opinion

former.

In Africa politics is not practised to serve. Opponents are either killed (mainly gunned down) or dumped where they cannot return to challenge. No wonder the Somali president saw *Barda'ad* as a threat not only to his rule but also to his livelihood. Even after the Soviets had left, he remained in solitary confinement for ten more years. Another good example of such a sad predicament was the brilliant first Secretary General of the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU), Diallo Telli who lost his life after enduring physical torture at the order of former President Ahmed Seko Toure of Guinea. Yet another victim of similar circumstances was the human rights activist lawyer, Ismail Jumale who used to be in and out of President Mohamed Siad Barre's prisons.

The lack of civil liberty watchdogs

In a country where the aim of governance is the welfare, prosperity and advancement of its people, a government must make the human rights of its people a sacred priority.

In order for a country's various law enforcement agencies to carry out their responsibilities without hindrance, fear or favour, they require the powers to do their job. At the same time, such institutions which are so important for the country and the public must be accountable to government-appointed bodies who oversee their actions and function. On the other hand for citizens who feel they have been wrongly abducted or pursued by such government agencies, there must be civil liberty watchdogs to close any loophole and mitigate sentences for the sake of justice, human rights and the welfare of the citizen.

In socialist Somalia of the 1970s and 80s, there were so many law enforcement agencies which all possessed statutory powers to make the arrest of a citizen. Such agencies included: (1) The National Security Service (NSS); (2) The Victory Pioneers *(Guulwadayaal)*; (3) Hangash, known by locals as *Dhabar-Jabinta,* which was an intelligence and anti-espionage agency; (4) The Somali Revolutionary Socialist party (SRSP); (5) Orientation centres; (6) The National Audit Office (*Xisaabi xil ma leh*) which was equivalant to the UK's Serious Fraud Office (SFO); (7) The Custodian forces which not only managed Somalia's jails but also had powers to detain; (8) The police; (9) The National Army; (10)

Civil courts; (11) The supreme court etc. On top of all these were ministries and individual government authorities and officials all of whom had power to call for the arrest of a civilian or a government employee.

Despite all the above authorities and individuals with the capability to detain a citizen, the country did not have a single body to watch over these organisations, to safeguard citizens' rights and ensure the legality of actions taken against individuals by the country's law enforcement agencies.

Watchdogs to oversee the actions of authorities are not only a good way of protecting human rights, but at the same time a deterrent to any agency which is carried away by excessive zeal, for they know they cannot abuse or misuse power with impunity. Those who enforce the law are humans who are fallible and it is a certainty that, without built in restraints, from time to time they will get carried away.

In February 1980 as the Somali Students' Association in Poona, India was celebrating in advance of the twentieth anniversary of independence (for students are on vacation in July), Hussein Mohamed Eisse Islan, a Somali student who had communist inclinations, was talking to the Indian press to denounce United States military involvement in Somalia. The Somali embassy in India which informed the leadership back home of this incident (with cuttings of his press coverage) must have come under intense pressure to kidnap Hussein and bring him to Somalia to stand trial. Mohamed Farah Awad, a counsellor at the Somali embassy in New Delhi, had visited Poona a few weeks earlier to make arrangements with the local police commissioner for Hussein's abduction. One fateful evening as students were going about their innocent activities at the hostel of Fergusson College where Hussein lived, two lorries of Indian police arrived. The counsellor was observed waiting in a taxi within the compound not far from the hostel. A handful of police officers and constables came to No.296, Hussein's room, and whisked him away.

Later that evening he was taken with a huge police escort to Bombay where he was booked on the earliest flight to Somalia via Abu Dhabi. Within no time, in fact that same evening, the matter grew to become a major international incident. It triggered

mass demonstrations throughout India. As the news of his arrest filtered through Poona, which has a large student population, people took to the streets to protest the action of the police. The Indian federal government intervened after an international outcry against the abduction developed, including pressure from the United Nations. Hussein was released the next morning at Bombay airport only a few minutes before the departure of his flight.

Even though most of the Somali students in Poona at the time did not approve of Hussein bringing his politics into the national day celebrations, they were horrified and disgusted at the heavy-handedness of government. Hussein had only been exercising his human rights in expressing his thoughts and feelings.

Enfeeblement of the social cohesion

Once a friend of mine who was not well acquainted with Somalia and her problems, enquired what the civil war was all about. "Like the problem in Bosnia which is now almost resolved, is the Somali civil war based on religion?" he asked me. I replied "No, as a matter of fact, we have no different religions, we are all Sunni Muslims." He went on by asking "Is it based on race and different nationalities." Again my answer to this was "No, as a matter of fact, we are all Somalis who speak the same language and are from one and the same ethnic background." This friend of mine, who did not understand what was the reason for all the carnage and international mass media coverage, in exasperation finally demanded "Then what is it all about?" Many millions who have been following events in Somalia still cannot understand for certain what went wrong and what made a paradise on earth, one people, one nation, indulge in savagery and blood spilling on a scale reminiscent of the religious wars of earlier centuries.

The bulk of the activities which set Somalia on this treacherous and unfortunate road originated in the doings and omissions of the small-minded politicians and governments which took over from the colonial authorities. But they are also to be attributed mainly to the last and longest serving government in the history of Somalia, that of President Mohamed Siad Barre. The first instalment of explosive charges started with social engineering which saw the fabric of the society seriously impaired. It is

necessary as a background to explore a few aspects of the attitudes and thinking which lay behind the tragedy.

In typical tunnel vision and short-sightedness, what happened yesterday appears not to matter and what happens today and tomorrow seems to have no connection with yesterday. Some of our Somali people would like us to forget what happened under the last government and the carnage carried out during the civil war in the name of "liberation" fronts. But yesterday can never be, like an island, cut off from what is happening today or what might happen tomorrow. This is why history is studied. World events are interconnected like a chain, one link attached to another. It has been wisely postulated that those who do not learn from history are condemned to re-live it.

Some of my friends have enquired why I should waste even a minute of my time writing about the wrongs and shortcomings of the last government. They argue that I should concentrate only what is happening now and those hooligans (*Mooryan*) who, even as I write this publication, are pillaging, and destroying Somalia. It is understandable that any one with vested interests in the protection of the last government may, in typical clannish thinking, still feel that the government belonged exclusively to them. Such persons may always harbour enmity towards those in Mogadishu and elsewhere in Somalia, as the ones who dethroned them. Narrow-minded persons, who yesterday used to run around and feel special at the expense of others, should understand that to claim what belongs to a nation as one's own, simply because those at the helm of power were from one's clan, is to hunger after power, establishing a precedent by which every time power was transferred, the rest of the nation might similarly suffer at the hands of the powerful.

During the civil war years those in Mogadishu and elsewhere who were not even a government but who thought that everything was theirs, could hardly be blamed, as this attitude is part of the negative cultural inheritance. They are bound to suffer in the doldrums for many years when the power shifts. The best way out of this self-made quagmire is never to lay claim to what belongs to the whole nation. No Somali should feel that the last Somali government was his particular government, or regard those compatriots who have overthrown it, and then destroyed

Somalia, as the enemy. In Somalia this negative culture was first introduced by influential politicians who took over from the colonialists and, like influenza, passed it on to the leadership of the last government.

One ideal example one cannot help but reflect on is the power transfer in the UK from the hands of the Tory government of John Major to the incoming Labour government of Tony Blair. On 2 May 1997 when the final results of the country's general election showed an overwhelming majority for the Labour party, the former prime minister -- hastily vacating the office at 10 Downing Street -- remarked to the mass media "When the curtains have fallen, it is time to leave." Unlike elsewhere in Africa and in other parts of the world, where long-serving leaders think the country belongs to them, the smooth transfer of power in Britain from an outgoing leader to an incoming one is a matter to be envied by many -- especially those of us who saw countries such as beloved Somalia gutted mainly for this very reason.

If the last Somali leadership was reckless enough to throw the country into the fire, at least someone must take the responsibility and the blame. I was shocked when, in 1994, out of the blue one evening, the former Somali Foreign Minister Abdirahman Jama Barre, in London for a short visit, telephoned only to say to me, referring to the former leadership, "*Wakaase maa nala dhaamo?*" "So how come until now no one has been found who is better than us?" I did not know what to reply. This was a man who was not blessed with much thinking capacity, but the type of whom Somalis say "*Calooshiis la iyaar,*" which though literally meaning someone who plays with his belly, simply implies a playboy. Since things went from bad to worse, he felt rejuvenated. He neither understood nor knew what has happened to Somalia. For the two decades he was in power, like Jean-Claude widely known as Baby Doc of Haiti who, after being displaced and replaced, took exile in France, Abdirahman was detached from the realities in his country. Until today, he does not understand that he and his cousin, the former president of Somalia, were the ones most to blame for the tragic situation in which they left the country. Having cast Somalia bleeding into the gutter, where it still lies, he wants to convince people that there is no one better than he. Typical! After all, he was comparing himself with hooligans

pillaging Somalia. This looks like the Somali story in which the man who wanted to rescue people was the same who, by strewing sharp nails on their doorsteps, first endangered them. He then offered to ferry his victims to the hospital to mitigate the pain and damage he himself had caused.

The bones of Somali fathers and sons which are strewn everywhere, are crying out from their makeshift burials all over the country for justice to be done and to be seen to be done. The last leadership of Somalia has definitely escaped the justice of the people. I do not much believe in recriminations. But such former Somali leaders who, with the subsequent warlords and others, are mainly to blame for the killing and destruction in Somalia, should not escape investigation of their human rights abuses and excesses. A commission should be established, similar to that of Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, for truth, repentance and forgiveness. Unless this painful process is gone through, the wounds will not heal and there will never emerge a new and healthy Somalia which puts its past to rest and looks forward. What one can say for certain is that, from the abandoned Jazira beach near Mogadishu to the northern town of Gabeley, the job of erecting monuments will be a priority. This is the least one can do for those who did not make it through the Somali tragedy.

When accountability is established, the country will require sound government. The *Mooryan*, including all of the men who still run around as the custodians of power in Somalia, must relinquish self-proclaimed offices. It is very important that they give way to the government and rule of legitimate future leaders whoever they may be.

Ali Mahdi, the self-proclaimed president, as a private citizen was the owner of the Hotel Meka in Mogadishu. Even though in the civil war -- as a politician who presided over the carnage and destruction during the darkest days in Somali history -- he will have to accept his share of the blame, although the main responsibility as mentioned above lies with the last leadership of Somalia. And who constituted the last leadership of the country? Basically, there were only two leaders. Like father and son, both are to be held accountable for all that happened in Somalia. One, the elder had better brains but little education. The other had more education but no brains whatsoever. One would have been

better without the other. Their combination constituted a lethal cocktail for disaster. The first one, the former Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre, without his younger cousin and protege Abdirahman Jama Barre, would have been a better president. The former president was a good actor who could cope with almost any event. With the help of other enlightened Somalis, he would at least have left behind a better Somalia than the one he torched. Together, however, they formed a political "*hangool*" for disaster. *Hangool* is a nomadic Somali traditional wooden stick which has a carved edge for the dual purpose of either pushing or pulling something. In Somalia, where one pushed, the other simply pulled: where the president lit fires, his cousin, the foreign minister, made fuel abundantly available. They formed a lethal combination and it was the Somali people, and indeed their neighbours throughout the Horn of Africa, who lost out.

I remember in 1988, as acting head of the Somali embassy in London, the office telephone operator connected a call from the Rome Hilton hotel. It was Abdirahman Jama Barre. The former longest-serving foreign minister was by then newly appointed as finance minister and deputy prime minister. No sooner had we exchanged greetings than he enquired "What do you think of the SNM [Somali National Movement] now? We [the leaders] have made a fellow northerner prime minister." He was referring to the newly installed Mohamed Hawadle Madar -- a Somali gentleman but a political creation and a puppet. "Don't you think they will all come home now? Isn't that what the SNM have wanted all these years?" I had difficulty restraining myself and nearly laughed. I could scarcely believe the extent of the naivety demonstrated by the second most powerful man in the whole of Somalia. He must have been living in "cloud cuckoo-land".

A feature of governments -- especially dictatorships -- which gives status to flatterers, is that they run a serious risk of losing touch with reality. The sycophants who surround them merely tell them what they want to hear. In later years, the Somali rulers grew more and more cut-off from the people and the geopolitics of the region. They, even more than their predecessors, were so out of touch that they saw themselves as another "chosen people" whose almost divine birthright was to rule. The Somali people are not by nature a bad people for they are very highly

talented. Regrettably they were misled by a leadership which they did not deserve and which did not know how to bring out the best in them. Unfortunately for the Somalis, their worst characteristics were brought to the surface. Once the fabric of society is ruined, the garment itself falls apart. Somalia collapsed.

A negative get-rich-quick culture

In almost all countries in the world, the traditional and legitimate way of possessing wealth is for it to be either earned, given or inherited. These three ways are not only the most righteous by any teachings, they are the only ways open to a law-abiding, civilised society. Unfortunately, in the type of society which was developed under the last leadership in the blazing sun of Somalia, the passage from rags to riches in a matter of days was one of the easiest things possible for some members of the society. This was mainly due to patronage on the part of the head of state. A "*bono*" (an Italian term for short orders written on pieces of paper or even adhesive paper attachments) directed to government agencies or large factories such as the sugar factory, ordering the general manager of the factory to provide one thousand sacks of sugar, was enough to transform the fortunes of a poor nomad or civilian who had a ten-minute audience with the president. Similarly, a *bono* directed to the mayor of the capital to grant someone two large plots of land was all it took: like in a lottery, one could become a millionaire overnight.

As a consequence of this, all the norms of traditional trading and the noble culture of a society, earning in the normal way by effort and dedication, were seriously undermined and eroded. Negative and irresponsible culture gave the message that short cuts made everything possible to the degree that traditional traders were looked upon as fools. A negative culture and trend had developed with consequent disasters. Since it was not possible for all to acquire lucrative ten-minute audiences with the head of the state, the art of deception and looting became the preferred alternative for those left out in the quest for affluence. All attention became centred on the president. The presidency of Somalia had become Camelot, as in the United Kingdom where a lottery company is responsible twice a week for making some of the country's citizens millionaires. This also led any clan or

money-oriented person to vie for the chance to replace the general manager of the rags to riches process -- the president of the country.

In societies that are based on the traditional balance and equilibrium of people, and where wealth is either earned or inherited, if you are a poor man in a council flat and if your immediate neighbour is a "filthy rich" man who has a large house with a swimming pool and several cars in the garage, there is hardly any bad feeling or sense of rejection. The simple fact is that in the back of one's mind, demonstated wealth is recognised as having been achieved in the normal and proper way: either earned or inherited.

The Somalis are an exceptionally intelligent and curious people who would always like to know what is going on -- not only in their country but also in the outside world. Even in the remotest parts of the country, it is possible to see a camelboy with a transistor radio listening to broadcasts such as those of the BBC Somali Service, Radio Mogadishu, Addis Ababa, Hargeisa and others. In the days of the last government, when people were just basking in the open around one of the many teashops on the main streets of the capital, it was common for them to notice a fancy Mercedes Benz car, Toyota Landcruiser or other expensive model and ask more informed friends or clansmen who was the driver. This was generally followed by a detailed Curriculum Vitae of such a person. The answer was usually who the man was. Then if the person was well known, the full name was given. A second question naturally followed, "Which clan was he?" as the manipulation of the clan factor was introduced and made important by the top office of the land. This was followed by the question "What does the person do?", "Don't you know? Oh! he is so and so from such and such clan and is the general manager of [this or that agency or a private company]." In order to establish if such opulence was achieved by the politicisation process or through the ordinary way, the next question was "By the way, what did he used to be?" Some of the answers were informative. A possible answer by the teashop "information officer" is "Don't you know, he used to weigh bananas in Afgoi." or "He used to lead camels." Such was the extent of the probing and cynicism which developed as a result of the economic and

social engineering of Somalia's society which only resulted in injustices before civil war engulfed the country.

As a result of the inequality in wealth and status brought about mainly by the leadership, in Somalia one of the factors underlying the social explosion which resulted in civil war was the envy and jealousy, tailor-made by the government, which had taken root. As a result of the head of state making individuals wealthy, and awarding titles and lucrative posts not according to merit but clan loyalty and his own whims and fancies, anyone seen displaying affluence -- no matter how that wealth was achieved or created -- was scorned. Because of a negative culture of politicisation in all fields of life, ranks such as colonel and general, ambassadorships and even ministerial status were arbitrarily bestowed by the president of the country. Envy and hate developed for all those seen to be successful. The well was truly muddied. And by none other than its custodian.

One of the good features to be admired about Western countries, including the United Kingdom where I currently reside, is that their societies are success oriented and success based. You may be an Albanian, an Eskimo or from anywhere on earth, but if you are in the West and successful in any field, whatever that may be, then you will be valued and respected for your achievements. One of the important pillars of life is the appreciation of success. In the UK an achiever on a national level may even acquire titles such as *Sir*, or *Lord*. This aims to encourage people to succeed in any field and others to emulate and idolise them. When many succeed, the nation succeeds. Whereas in Somalia, in the twisted and manipulated society under the last leadership, the opposite of idolising success became the norm; success was despised.

In the late 1980s, when things were falling apart, there emerged a group which took matters to the extreme. They snatched or destroyed anything that had denoted wealth, including even women's expensive ornaments and clothing. They stoned or vandalised expensive properties and vehicles. The public soon dubbed these gangsters as "*Faay Ali*" which meant those who snatched anything that has to do with wealth.

As illustrated above, some of the ills in a society can be caused by unnecessary government indoctrination and inter-

ference. A government must never politicise three cardinal fields: (1) trading (business matters); (2) the Judicial system and (3) education. These must be allowed to remain natural and neutral. In Somalia, unfortunately even these three fields were not spared the wave of government politicisation designed only to benefit some sections of the society and the standing of the leaders.

Interference in business affairs

A trader should earn his wealth through his own initiative, perspiration and after paying his taxes. In Somalia, men such as the aforementioned Ali Mahdi, who by their own will chose trade as a profession, and thousands of others in the 1980s, were later taken by surprise when the government, which was only supposed to contribute a secure environment and facilities for businesses to prosper, intervened. They were amazed when they saw the government creating affluent businessmen over-night. Soon a thriving population of traders with no business background or skills joined the field.

As if this was not enough, the leadership, by abusing public offices, made public financial institutions such as the government's banks and ministries concerned with finance and monetary matters, foot hefty bills incurred by such phoney fly-by-night businessmen. The culture of earning one's living in trading soon became ridiculed. These new traders were from clans favoured by the rulers. Business personalities such as Ali Mahdi saw that the real money was not in business but could be gained rather by joining the government. To take maximum advantage, he thought that the best place to enrich himself, his friends and clan members was to seek the top job -- the presidency.

A man who had been in business for fifty years could become confused and mystified by the number of instant millionaires whom everyone knew had acquired their wealth illegally. This led many others either to abandon their trading or to look for ways to obtain themselves some of the president's *bono* instructions, or even to buy from someone who had received a *bono* but chose not to make the slightest effort to get the commodity or land provided, preferring to pocket a few million Somali shillings in exchange for the much sought after golden "card".

Bogus traders who crippled the nation's currency

When the government flooded the country with unknown overnight millionaire traders, these bogus merchants knew neither how to trade nor how the economy of a nation worked. Some, with millions poured into their newly acquired bank accounts, went about enquiring what to do with their riches, how to become traders and what commodity sold best on the day. Emulating established traditional merchants, they soon used their acquired wealth, loan or grants authorised by the leadership from the government-owned banks, to solicit and bring from overseas much-needed goods.

Traditionally, Somali traders or animal exporters would collect monies from Somali expatriates while abroad, undertaking to transfer the equivalent in Somali shillings to their relatives or families back home. This transaction would normally be done by a trader's store or office in the country's towns or cities. This particular currency transaction is called "*Xawaalad*" (to be read as *hawalad*) which is an Arabic-derived word meaning transfer.

When these new cowboy traders with no real money of their own came into the market and soon became importers of goods, food, furniture and construction materials from Europe and the Middle East, they too, like the traditional traders, collected monies from Somalis, especially in the Arab Gulf countries, in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. In order to catch up with those already rooted in the market, they started to offer higher exchange rates to their customers, who were only too willing to receive inflated Somali monies in exchange for their *Riyals, Dirhams* or *Dinars*. They little knew or did not care that they were undermining their own national currency and helping to create mounting inflation that would later eat away their deposits and reduce their savings.

On the other hand, the leadership, which did not know one iota about how a country's economy works, neither bothered nor cared how the merchants they created were trading, or what was happening to the purchasing power of the nation's currency. They were accomplices in the country's economic downfall. In the middle, the heavy cost of massive commodity price rises was paid mostly by the suffering general public. As a result of this and other factors, by 1990 the country's inflation had reached hitherto

unknown heights over 900 per cent. Prices of commodities and food changed by the hour as things moved from bad to worse.

In 1988, in order to respond to the rising cost of living and to quell the country's erratic markets and bullish inflation, the president transferred his powerful cousin Abdirahman Jama Barre from his foreign affairs portfolio to the ministry of finance. Making use of his wide powers, Abdirahman was initially successful. He issued ultimatums to long-term money borrowers, mainly merchants, to return their loans to the banks. As a result, money was pouring into the dilapidated banks and they began regaining long lost local currency reserves. In return, the nation's currency, the shilling, for a few months held its ground vis-à-vis foreign currencies, mainly against the dollar. Where Abdirahman went wrong was when he introduced *price controls*. In a nation where almost everything is imported, including food stuffs, this proved a disaster. He lacked knowledge of the field of which he was put in charge and had poor advisers who put him into this particular mess. They too did not know how a market economy works. After the introduction of price controls, the merchants simply took their goods underground. This produced untold chaos and not only did prices of goods shoot up but the goods became scarce.

One such trader, who among other things also took part in the devaluing of the Somali currency, was a close clan relative of the president. This man was known to have been a former government employee and a small-time technician. In the late 1970s he enriched himself through presidential schemes of undocumented loans and grants drawn from the nation's public banks. In later years he grew to become a major force to be reckoned with, a powerful businessman who had amassed hundreds of millions in local currency as well as extensive foreign financial reserves. One day in 1989, this particular businessman went to meet the president. Accompanying him was a team of bodyguards and personal aides in protective Landcruiser vehicles. It is believed that, in his blustering way, he actually banged the table with his walking stick and bullied the president, who after all was the man responsible for his enrichment. He is said to have bluntly told the political leader of the nation to stay out of the sphere of his business activities. Otherwise, he threatened, he would lend his backing to all Mohamed Siad's many adversaries. He survived

only because he was rich and at the same time a clan relative of the president.

A typical contemporary case of economic mismanagement based on outdated doctrine is the announcement by Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe of commodity price controls and the confiscation of many of the large farms still owned by the white community who produce most of the agricultural surplus. Somalia has already been down the bumpy road of nationalisation and price fixing and could well teach the former ZANU freedom fighter the part they can play in a country's economic demise.

Intervention in judicial matters

In the legal field, as a result of politicisation, the government made its presence felt in an area in which any responsible government should never be seen to meddle.

In 1971, only two years after the revolutionary government came to power, a sergeant closely related to the president shot dead an army officer from the north in *Avizione* military barracks. No sooner was this heinous crime committed than the government put this killer on trial. He was convicted and put to death in the military government's usual way, by firing squad. By contrast in the 1980s, even though capital punishment was practised in Somalia and hundreds who killed fellow countrymen were condemned to death, there were several well-known cases where those who had openly killed were neither condemned nor even touched. The two most famous cases include one of the brothers-in-law of the president, a general who, while under the influence of alcohol, killed a Somali waiter in a nocturnal restaurant and night club called "*Jungle*", on the outskirts of the capital city. The second incident involved another general, who later in 1992 was killed during the civil war, near Bula-Hawa, a Somali town on the border with Kenya. He shot dead a Somali private in a military barracks in Berbera. Also a close relative of the president, this particular general was not questioned, let alone arrested for the crime he committed. Because of arrogance and ignorance, a two-tier judicial system emerged, especially in the later years: one which exonerates and one which condemns and convicts killers. In these two incidents, it was as though the Somalis killed were valued less than a rat. The public was incensed but unable to

mount an effective challenge; as the Somalis say, "*Laba Ali kuma wada hadlin*", "No two Alis talked about it."

One may be forgiven for thinking that in the 1980s when governance was in decline in Somalia, anyone who was related to the leadership was spared from execution for crimes that merited capital punishment. But there were unpredictable exceptions. In 1985 the son of a close relative and member of the president's clan, a former Somali ambassador and one-time chairman of the Somali Airlines, Hussein Aw Mohamed Isse, known as *Koofiya'adde*, a major in the Somali national army, while cleaning his pistol accidentally shot and killed his closest friend in his brigade. The family of the deceased agreed to take bloodmoney *(diyo)*. Everything was to be settled peacefully until the president ruled that that was not possible. The officer in question was brought before a hastily convened kangaroo court which, as soon as he was found guilty, condemned him to be put to death. The president, who, because the relatives of the deceased were willing to pardon their son's killer and accept compensation, had the authority to pardon him, nevertheless ordered his immediate execution. Everything depended on the likes, dislikes and moods of one man who was well known to be capricious to the degree that some local wits claimed that, as a heavy smoker, he changed his mind between lighting two cigarettes.

Government intervention was common not only in high level civil and criminal cases but in all legal matters. Politicisation in the name of loyalty became the basis on which to get away with murder and all sorts of crime. In order to show that the government was capable of exonerating someone of any crime, all it took was to declare that the "criminal" was a revolutionary *(ka'aan)*.

Tampering with education

Nor did the government shy away from making its unnecessary presence felt in the vital field of education. All levels and aspects, from appointments to the material that went into educational textbooks, were politicised. People who never attended schools, college or university classes were promoted on the grounds that they had been engaged on national duties -- mainly socialist party

activities. Like the two fields above, educational progress is something best left undisturbed. In education, as in trade, one must earn merit and recognition regardless of one's own position or the status of one's relatives.

All pass grades in school and university examinations were hopelessly lowered to ridiculous levels. This was to allow the government to issue astronomically inflated statistics of the annual number of students graduating from the academic establishments. This type of numerical manipulation and massaging of numbers, irrespective of quality, was purely for propaganda purposes. It also saw a growing number of shabby and baseless constructions and other ventures promoted to enhance the government's legitimacy.

Naturally, statistics such as these were music to the ears of the common people and they felt that at last here was a government which was tirelessly doing something for them and for the country. This was no doubt one of the greatest factors that served to prolong the leadership's hold on power. One of the main tasks of governance is to make things happen and in those days the revolutionary government obtained most of its public support through this method.

Academic credentials become obsolete

In a society where people are required to respect and idolise one another according to their achievements, no government should undermine academic achievement as something unnecessary for success in life. In the Somalia that fell into the abyss of civil war, it was common to witness personal achievement and success based on no known logic. Delinquents and dropouts from intermediate schools or high schools found their way in great number into the echelons of the nation's high society. Hence there emerged clashes between parents and those whom they had supported throughout their education. In many cases holders of masters degrees and doctorates from prestigious international universities, mainly in the West, who could not obtain jobs, were scorned as losers by those same relatives who had backed and supported them throughout the long years of study.

Back home, whenever such graduates opened their mouths, the immediate utterance from their close relatives and friends was

along the lines of "Do you know what has happened in all the decades you have been studying? Don't you see for yourself that so-and-so who left elementary school has so many cars and houses and wields great influence?" The older generations, who believed in education and who put all their savings behind their children, could not understand how and why those for whom they had sacrificed so much, could not make it in any significant way or even support themselves let alone support and care for their aging relatives. They naturally thought their children were to blame as people who did not want to outgrow the handouts, dependency and environs of their guardians. They could not understand that it was not their children but the warped system that was to blame for the misfortunes of those they loved. Society's values had been turned upside down.

When uneducated millionaires who demonstrated their wealth were confronted with the logic that they were rich but not educated, their answer was invariably the same. They were quick to say "So what! What is education when you can make it to the top without it? Don't you know I can buy hundreds of degrees with my money?" They thought that they could purchase what money cannot buy -- knowledge. Important academic credentials simply became superfluous. When the government, the general regulator, reformer and guide of a nation, twists the normal patterns of life and makes what is important obsolete, negative culture can take root, contributing to the demise of a society.

1968 had seen Somalia's last most anarchic and corrupt election under its supposedly democratic system which was abrogated by the coming to power of the army in 1969. The country was convulsed by social unrest and on the verge of civil war. During this last election more than eighty political organisations competed for parliamentary seats. All these were based on a primitive clan system which the modern world outgrew centuries ago. Thanks to the military, which intervened and took over power, the country was for a time salvaged from oblivion. The military government initially corrected ills and laxity throughout the Somali nation and succeeded in establishing law and order and introducing a period of stability, only to throw itself into the fire after twenty-one years of escalating misrule.

Since the Somali nation uniquely possesses a high degree of

homogeneity, when troubles are not brewed internally, the whole society enjoys total serenity. However, the population, whose confidence -- shaken after losing the war with Ethiopia in 1978 -- was briefly won back, soon came to realise the hidden agenda and true nature of the leadership. Colonial methods of divide and rule found their way into the system of administration. Injustice was perpetuated in the form of clan favouritism, unholy alliances and clan manipulation. These factors soon ate their way through the social cohesion which had made relative growth, construction and the advancement of the country possible. The leadership encouraged some of the clans to amass power, influence and wealth. On top of the abundant arms that came into the hands of the public as a result of the war with Ethiopia, the government, in the belief that it would help to prolong its lease of life, deliberately fostered clan militias and distributed arms to them.

In 1982, having accompanied a friend of mine -- a captain in charge of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) logistics -- on a short visit to Hargeisa, Somalia's second capital city, I was surprised to see a military colonel load two trucks of arms for his clanfolks in Yo'alle, an area in the interior where battles had recently erupted between two Somali clans. I could not comprehend how this could take place in a country under proper government. Rather than arbitrate and stop the bloodshed, regardless of clan, it seemed unfortunately that the government, through some rogue officer, was arming one clan against another. Later when I enquired of my friend about such actions, he revealed that the Ethiopians had armed the other clan through the SNM, the clan's front that was trained and equipped by the government of Colonel Mengistu on the other side of the frontier. Even so, this and other local conflict should never have been encouraged.

What the leadership did not understand was that by fueling troubles amongst its own people, it was breaching the very social cohesion of the nation on which depended the security and the stability from which its rule stemmed. No government should ever side with any one section of its own people against another. It is as if a head of a family were to instigate bloodshed amongst the members over whom he should have been presiding.

In 1989, about a year before its demise, the Somali govern-

ment -- under the "wise" guidance of the late president Mohamed Siad Barre -- brought home to the capital Mogadishu and its vicinity, one of its last war games. This was based on Italian fascist tactics of division and playing one member of society against another. The government armed and trained a small but fierce militia from a Somali clan called Galgala and set it against the Abgaal Somali clan, who lived around the capital city. This indeed proved to be the straw which broke the camel's back. After enduring provocation and menaces at the hands of a powerful Galgala militia, the Abgal finally decided to prepare actively to resist. They trained and armed themselves to the teeth, mainly from government stocks sold in the blackmarket by its own influential but corrupt senior officers -- such as the president's own son Maslah Mohamed Siad, who in those days headed the powerful No.77 military sector headquartered in the capital. They not only fought and overcame the new threat but made an alliance with the rest of the Hawiye clan members through the formation of a United Somali Congress (USC). This organisation joined the long-drawn-out armed opposition against the government and led to the late 1990 mass uprising in the capital and to the ensuing civil war which saw the end of the regime. Thus the government was finally brought down by deadly war games it had itself introduced and championed in the very heart of its own society.

The government's white elephant agencies

During the 1970s when the government in Somalia implemented scientific socialism modelled on that of the former Soviet Union, it also introduced associated wholesale changes. All foreign-owned businesses and banks were nationalised. The government also established several publicly owned agencies such as the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) which used to buy all privately produced products, store them and, later when the demand rose, sell them at higher prices and an agency *ENC* which used to import and export commodities. There were also other agencies such as *ONAT* which used to import agricultural machinery and spare parts; a government insurance agency *Caymiska Qaranka* (to be read *Aymiska Qaranka (Assicurazione)*), an agency importing medicine and medical equipment called

"*Aspima*" and an agency responsible for processing and exporting animal hides and skins.

On 13 November 1977, when Somalia expelled Soviet experts from the country and the influence of communism had waned, the government became more Western-oriented, and particularly friendly to the United States. Ironically, the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP) which included diehard communists -- whom the Somalis used to call "*Gar-yartii*", the small-bearded (goatee), meaning the Marxist-Leninists -- was not disbanded. Even its insignia, an adze crossing a hammer (inspired by the communist hammer and sickle), was neither removed nor modified.

Throughout the 1980s, when the country was supposed to be opened up for free enterprise, many of the old communist landmarks and influences remained unchanged. The president, who never liked westerners, was still under the illusion that his cherished Soviet allies and friends would one day return. In his contorted mind, turning to the Americans could even contribute to luring the Soviets back to the country.

Unfortunately, rather than helping in the country's development, the above mentioned agencies became needlessly expensive white elephants and impediments to economic progress. The IMF (International Monetary Fund), on which the country relied for its loans and hard currency, recognised these agencies to be part of Somalia's economic problem. In the structural adjustment plans which the IMF devised for the country, it frequently advised their abolition. Yet, until the government collapsed in January 1991, this never happened. One of the main reasons for the impasse was that most of these agencies were headed by the president's clansmen who had considerable power bases of their own, sufficient to ensure that they stayed afloat in any event. Neither the recommendations of the IMF, the Americans to whom the government was allied, nor any other authority in the country had enough clout to close those defunct agencies. They continued to contribute to the country's economic difficulties by consuming rather than generating income. Abdirahman Jama Barre, the president's cousin who had the powers to abolish those agencies was also removed within nine months of becoming finance minister.

Administration by trial and error

In 1969, when the military took over the running of the country, as in the rest of Africa they were inspired by the conviction that this was the time, after the failure of the corrupt civilian administrations which took over from the departing colonialists, for the continent's "boys in military uniform" to put right their countries' wrongs and address their nations' problems. They were influenced by other *coups d'etat* as one after another state fell into the hands of its own armed forces.

The military officers who took over Somalia, again as in the rest of Africa, did not have the proper vision to run the country. They would say, "Let us try this and see what comes of it." They did not know what they were doing. In many respects rather than became masters of events, they were dictated to by circumstances. They may have been more efficient than their predecessors but their solutions to problems were based on military doctrines occasionally with results akin to salt administered to wounds. Theirs was a cognitive world where structures, buildings and projects were erected in a short time with no vision or full consideration of their function or durability. Neither planning nor feasability studies were involved in their undertakings. The name of the game was "on the job training" and everything was done by trial and error. It was like a person with an ignition key in hand in the driving seat, not knowing how to drive but indiscriminately changing from one gear to another.

In 1970, immediately after they seized power and in order to use picture communication to demonstrate their beliefs and ideology, the Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC), commissioned a Somali film called "*Miyi iyo magaalo*" (urban and rural experience). This film showed an actor called Waberi playing the role of a certain civil engineer, who rejects expert advice not to drill a certain area for water. He drills and as soon as he penetrates the artesian aquifer suddenly a powerful gush of water rockets into the sky. This was indeed the guiding principle of trial and error on which the military government functioned for the twenty-one years it ruled the country. There were countless policy mishaps but initially also some limited successes. One of the fortunate implementations was the sand-dune stabilisation project in the south of the country. Here too the president rejected advice

and went ahead with a self-help scheme to check the encroachment of sand-dunes from the coastal areas on to cultivated agricultural lands. After thousands volunteered their labour to plant cactus and grasses, the shifting sand was halted: it was an unqualified success.

One of the bad policies was the forceful and sudden banning of *qat*, a mild narcotic leaf grown in the Yemen and north-east Africa which many Somalis chew. Consumed moderately there is little harm done, but without a shred of doubt the mass consumption of *qat* everyday becomes an evil which destroys families, income and the productiveness of its consumers. Rather than tackle the problem in a sensitive way, the government resorted to what it knew best -- brute force. As a result of prohibition *qat* was even more in demand. In the north, where, more than the south, *qat* was and still is very much part of the social life, people felt aggravated by its arbitrary banning. Many farmers who invested their life-savings and grew the stimulant plant to supply local markets, were forced to torch their lucrative plants, and were left with no other means of income. Daily violent incidents resulting in loss of life and confiscations were even more frequent in the north than in the south. In March 1984, when I paid a short visit to Hargeisa, it was widely known that while *qat* was legally inaccessible in the whole country, it was available abundantly to many senior officers of the army and other government officials in the north, all of course appointed from the south. The government's flamboyant military governor (viceroy) in the north was the man responsible for this double standard. Sack loads of confiscated *qat* used to end up in his official residence for personal use and distribution among friends, cronies and visitors.

Possession of this same confiscated and illegal *qat* inspired the killing, wounding or arrest of smugglers who were tempted by the exorbitant prices. The general, as head of the administration in the region, not only did not abide by the law of which he was the enforcer, he did not lift the ban for the benefit of all including himself, though he had the powers to do so. This further contributed to a host of prejudices that the north developed throughout the years since independence against the south. It was mainly instigated by irresponsible and insensitive government

officials from the south. The people in the north, who saw the banning of *qat* as another imposition, felt that even to obtain *qat* one must be a southerner. The imagined mentality of "occupation": the master and the enslaved, was yet again reinforced by this simple yet disastrous recklessness on the part of those to whom their ruler entrusted power. They were obviously not selected on the basis of sound judgement and sense of responsibility.

The total nationwide banning of *qat* on 17 March 1983 without proper studies of the likely consequences, involved loss of life, countless confiscations of properties and vehicles and the pointless imprisonment of thousands of civilians caught selling or using the drug. In the northern regions of the country, the sudden banning of *qat*, taken as usurping freedom, also aided local agitators to gather manpower and revenue. It encouraged the exodus of thousands of young persons mainly to neighbouring Ethiopia where many joined in the military activities of the Somali National Movement (SNM), sometimes taking vehicles with them. And smuggling, already highly organised, thrived the more.

Countless government projects failed. Some were educational, agricultural and developmental projects. In education, the result was mass mis-education. In agriculture, rather than alleviate the country's food needs caused by dubious and in many respects credulous agricultural policies, the farmers -- lacking incentive and enduring maladministration -- planted only superfluous cash crops for quick monetary gain.

Social decay and immorality

The degree of mutilation and degradation suffered by the social fabric amazed many millions of Somalis and even many foreigners who visited Somalia during the last decade of the former government. Society was left to rot. Aimless widespread prostitution was allowed by the leadership to take root in the country -- a situation probably without parallel in any other nation on earth. In Christian societies such as the United Kingdom, kerb-crawling is not tolerated even in semi-redlight areas such as around Kings Cross in London, let alone throughout an entire city. Yet in a completely Islamic society such as Somalia it came to be allowed and practised practically everywhere in the main towns.

Officials and commuters in cars propositioned, for instance, any woman standing on the pavement anywhere in the capital, be it in front of a mosque, house, government ministry or even in front of the national presidency itself. What angered most people was that this corrupt, illicit and foolish behaviour was not only viewed with a blind eye, but was even encouraged and condoned by the top leaders. Some of the country's most respected public offices became like brothels, even during daylight office hours whilst public affairs were being conducted.

In some nations, for instance the Phillippines and Thailand in the Far East, prostitution occurs because of the need for a livelihood for many migrants from the poorer provinces and interior areas to cities such as Manila and Bangkok. But an aimless, unethical and immoral type of mass prostitution, encouraged only by frustration, idleness and lack of government intervention, was the one that engulfed Somalia, prior to the civil war era. The style was nonchalant not necessarily with a material element.

In Somalia, as in any other nation, government must be accountable to the ethics and the way of life of its citizens, and such activity should have been condemned at once and stopped. What motivated those who just hopped aimlessly into cars? Frustration and hopelessness in the country? One visitor to the country wrote an article in an Arabic paper enquiring what could be the true aims of those women. They were driven, it seemed, merely by idleness and the wish to take time off with those with whom they had assignations. These illicit practices took a heavy toll on the general image and prestige of the nation and helped determine how Somalia and its people were viewed by outsiders who visited the country or who represented their country's or organisation's interests in Somalia.

The following story, told to me by a friend who was the Somali minister of information during the height of the Gulf War, illustrates how cheap our people could seem. During that war, even though many Somalis felt the need for local solutions to the problem, Somalia sided with the State of Kuwait, since no nation should tolerate the illegal occupation of one country by another. An ambassador from one of the Arabian Gulf countries -- not Kuwait -- paid a visit to the minister's office to protest about

Somali mass media coverage of the war by government-owned television and radio stations and the press. The ambassador complained that the Somali mass media were giving undue coverage to the alleged military prowess of Iraq. The minister replied that all Somalia's coverage was taken from the Western mass media, which used to broadcast much of what was said about the allegedly exaggerated might of Iraq.

After several minutes of argument, the ambassador "to smooth things" between himself and the minister finally told the minister he would send two sacks of rice to supplement the minister's residence rations. The minister of information, himself a former Somali ambassador to Japan, was shocked and very much angered by his visitor's attitude in offering him food to be delivered by his chauffeur. For the ambassador of another state openly to behave with such arrogance only demonstrated the cheap perception and low esteem he had of the country. It was not his fault as this was the path onto which Somalia was led by its rulers. Such behaviour reflects the degree of degradation of the country's sovereignty and how cheaply its citizens had come to behave under their country's immoral and detached leadership and government.

Some of the most important aspects of a government's task and responsibility is to keep watch, regulate, support, encourage, and legislate in the various aspects and walks of life of its people. Not least the moral as well as ethical standards of its population. When a large part of a nation's population acts as though there is no God and no law in a country supposed to be under a God-fearing government, the degradation and demise of such a society is imminent. In 1993 to 1994, in interviews for a documentary film which I conducted to document the reasons behind Somalia's breakdown, one of the questions I presented to my interviewees was: What were the reasons which led to the collapse of the Somali state? Surprisingly enough, some of the answers I got as being the causes for the state's demise focused on the sexual decadence known in Somali as "*fusuq*", a behaviour similar to that of the animals, and the moral decline suffered by the society under the last leadership.

The nocturnal restaurants, once called "Jungle" restaurants,

mentioned above were also grotesquely bizarre in their business dealings. Motorists who "dazzle" women from the streets of the capital would head straight to these restaurants, which were located on the outskirts. These obnoxious so-called restaurants each had thirty to forty fenced *zaribas* to cater for its customers. As soon as a motorist [with his passenger(s)] entered the main gate in one of these restaurants, a bellboy would guide them to a vacant secluded *zariba*. The customers would be provided with mattresses, pillows and their meal. People would mate as they pleased, the whole night if they so wished, with no restrictions whatsoever. A disapproving public later dubbed the *zaribas* "The Garden of Eden". This was supposed to be a God-fearing country. The leadership, as guardian of the nation supposed to keep watch over everything including the moralty of the society, was the reprobate encouraging and promoting prostitution in a large scale.

One of the areas which suffered extensively was the family unit as immoralty is its number one enemy. A nation's value is at least in part assessed on how its people behave and no less so on how its young women behave. When people behave like animals, the value of such a society is naturally debased. A society must behave in a way that is both decent and ethical. Before the last government came to power in 1969, Somalia had a police unit "*polizia de Costumo*" (customs' police) which was responsible for the protection of society from unethical and repulsive practices and obscenity. This force along with a meteorological centre which used to forecast weather in the country was immediately disbanded by the new leader when he came to power -- a fortaste perhaps of things to come.

2
Short-term Policies: Long-term Disasters

Since the purpose and responsibility of a government is to administer a country and since countries do not disappear and indeed are meant to last for ever, no matter how popular and advantageous they may seem, a government must avoid choosing merely short-term policies offering political gains, a longer lease of life, higher ratings in the polls and so on. Whatever a government does must take proper cognisance of the longer term. When policies are to be initiated, it is important to look at all angles such as viability, side effects, and in some cases even the season in which such policies are to be implemented.

One example of failure brought about by ignoring the seasonal factor was the fate of Alain Juppe's French government following President Jacques Chirac's attempt, in December 1995, to introduce restrictive social security measures. As a result of the French government's plans to join the EMU (the European Monetary Union), the country's economy and financial position had suffered. To quell market anxiety and compensate for losses, the government was forced to abandon its economic plans in favour of half-hearted attempts at trimming the welfare state, resulting in recurring strikes, which at times gridlocked Paris and put the whole national economy into disarray. One of the aspects that helped the protesters to pressure the government to reverse its decisions was none other than the severe weather. Due to wintry conditions, the whole country came to a standstill. Had such measures been implemented in spring or summer, the chance of success would undoubtedly have been greater.

Short-term policies for quick gains are pursued by governments mainly for two reasons. In a democracy, it is done to boost a

government's standing in the polls and better the chances of being re-elected. In dictatorships or totalitarian governments, such flawed negative policies are pursued mainly to consolidate government power.

In countries under former socialist government systems, for propaganda purposes, government business tended to be based on short-term policies. The last government in Somalia was no exception. As one of the former socialist countries where policies were designed either to enhance the image of the leadership and reaffirm its mandate or prolong its power, the last government in Somalia pursued shallow policies. Everything was done to trick the public into remaining in support. Schools, stores, roads, monuments and other important public constructions were also built within a very short period of time. Propaganda rather than viability was the guiding principle. All projects were completed hastily in order to be unveiled during the annual celebrations on 21 October, the anniversary of the revolution. Even though the government succeeded in selling to the Somali public the idea that it was developing and building the country, it was international legitimacy and advertisement for scientific socialism which it dearly sought. Not surprisingly some of the shoddy short-term policies which helped to consolidate its power came back to haunt the regime and speed its demise. The following are some of the government's futile propaganda efforts, which later on contributed to its collapse.

Mass mis-education

One of the most popular plans of any government is that seeking to provide good education for all its people. But it is something else when related schemes sold as genuine are set up only for propaganda purposes to gain popularity and legitimacy.

In 1969, when the military government took over power in the country in what it used to boast of as a "bloodless revolution", the number of the nation's annual high school leavers was 2,500. Even though this was a very small figure, they were all genuine students whose quality and qualifications were of a high standard. During those years prior to the "revolution", a good number of these students used either to join the local university or be sent abroad on scholarships to the EEC countries, USA, Canada,

Japan, Russia, Egypt and other countries in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In summer 1990, after twenty-one years in power, the "revolutionary" government's number of high school leavers exceeded 30,000. In order that the majority of students might pass each year, the education standards and the whole school curriculum was watered down so that it was not possible for any student to fail exams. Thus was the educational system politicised and undermined. In order to obtain such a high number of student graduations, a heavy price was paid, forfeiting quality in the country's education. The standard of education under the revolutionary government became hopelessly low. Some of the most important aspects contributing to a high quality student generation are decent school buildings, small class sizes, high standards, good facilities, modern teaching aids, sound instruction and monitored competition. After this there must follow a system which advances those who prove themselves. Examinations must be comprehensive and scrupulously fair. All this provides the incentive which attracts and ensures demand and continuity.

At the outset, the revolutionary government showed its dislike of quality as a criterion. To the new leaders, quality meant decadence. It implied the stigma of capitalism. It is obvious that the two aspects, quality and quantity, represent different goals. While quality has a longer-term dividend, quantity is only for short-term point scoring. Because of the quasi-socialist doctrines which the military and police officer corps, unschooled in *Marxism-Leninism*, sought to apply, the government felt it would be better off with greater numbers. Little or no concern was demonstrated, for instance, with how the national economy would absorb the sheer number of annual school and college graduates.

Another obsession of the government was to send all high school leavers for an eighteen month period of national service: nine months of military training and nine months as teachers in elementary and intermediate schools throughout the country. The second was one of the more disastrous ventures. It was to everyone's bewilderment that a high school leaver with no teaching qualifications should teach pupils in intermediate and elementary classes. It was typical of the military nature of the government, that where civilians would exercise caution and look

to the consequences in their planning, for the military, everything had to be implemented immediately and only later on evaluated for any consequences, questions or side effects. In 1990 the number of unemployed high school and college graduates who were at the same time militarily trained, numbered over 200,000. This indeed played a part in the government's ultimate fall. They fell prey to idleness and, as disenchantment with the regime spread, a sizeable number took part in the destructive efforts of their clan militias during the civil war.

Defects of compulsory schooling projects

In order that from the beginning every child in the country could obtain crash schooling, the "socialist" government started to build "mock" schools literally without adequate foundations and facilities in every part of the country's towns and cities. "Revolutionary" pronouncements called these schools "*Dugsiyada qasabka ah*," compulsory schooling projects. At face value this was a positive goodwill measure meant to educate all the nation's children. But there was a host of problems attached. These schools lacked proper planning. Most of them had no compounds and were devoid of facilities. They could not provide a stable and positive environment to build the character and personality of pupils -- a vital role. Nor was there a parallel project of teacher production to cope with growing demand. The government thought that it did not require teacher training facilities since every year's high school leavers could instantly become teachers for these schools.

During the government's twenty-one year tenure, nearly 200 of such low budget, poor quality schools were built. Falling walls and roof leakages were very common. Some of these shabby constructions collapsed on their pupils resulting in injury and even death. The military government, preoccupied with statistics and the desire to overwhelm the nation with its apparent "diligence", was never concerned with the long-term viability of its construction "boom".

This does not mean that the country did not have good schools. Built in the 1950s and 60s, there were several sound and solid schools. In the north, where there was no university, there were three good high schools, two prestigeous technical

institutes and an institute of commerce. Sheikh Secondary School in the mountainous town of Sheikh, built by the British colonial administrators, was the country's best school. Amoud Secondary School in the vicinity of the town Borama, also built by the British in 1952, was the second best school in the country. Other good schools were 1st July Secondary School, built by the EEC in the late 1960s in Hargeisa, Benadir Secondary School, and 15 May Secondary School in Mogadishu. Of all Arabic schools in the country, Jamal Abdulnasir Secondary School, named after the late Egyptian President, run with the help of the Egyptians was among the country's best educational institutions. On the engineering side, Burao Technical Institute was built and managed by the Germans in the 1960s. It was one of the best technical schools on the continent. Many of its engineering and wood craft graduates are now expatriates in the Middle East and in Germany. A second technical institute was located in Hargeisa, together with an institute for commercial studies.

In 1974, two years after the implementation of Latin script for the Somali language, the government precipitately introduced a nationwide "campaign against illiteracy". All the nation's students in high schools were mobilised and despatched to the rural areas to teach illiterate fellow compatriots how to write and read Somali in the new-found script. This, one of the positive achievements of the revolutionary government, was a very successful campaign for the local population. The students who took part in the campaign learned more about their people, culture and countryside. But disastrous side effects accompanied the programme.

Over-hasty implementation of the new script in schools

As soon as the Somali script was adopted, the government wasted no time in introducing its blanket implementation in all schools. Books on every subject were immediately translated into Somali and introduced into the schools with military precision. Within ten years of the introduction of Latin characters, the country's whole education system adopted the native Somali language, but to the exclusion of others. Again no studies were made of the long-term effects of the hasty steps the government was adopting.

One of the main disadvantages was a certain loss of public

trust and perceived credibility regarding the national education system in such a state of flux. People started sending their children abroad to study as early as at the elementary school level. Properly manned international schools abroad such as in Kenya and Tanzania, became the havens to which many parents sent their children. A large part of the country's self- and parent-financed student body also found its way to colleges in India, Europe and North America. Hence, one incidental casualty of the new education system was the country's meagre hard currency reserve.

Much needed foreign currency was drained by the lack of proper primary services such as education, health etc. Because of poor schooling and the inadequate provision of medicines, health facilities and hospitals, Somalis who could afford to, travelled to other countries such as capitalist Kenya, India, the USA, Canada and further afield. In the second half of the 1970s, the number of Somali students abroad in schools and colleges in Asia, North America and other parts of Africa reached tens of thousands. Few returned.

Disastrous side effects of script implementation

Even though the implementation of writing the national language was one of the positive achievements of the revolutionary government, it was misused later on and this had regrettable consequences. When Somali was written in Latin script, the government immediately introduced legislation that the national language was its official means of communication. Before the writing of the Somali language, government communications were conducted in either Arabic, Italian or English by properly educated officials. Within no time the leadership sought to kill two birds with one stone; it took advantage of this achievement to introduce "affirmative action" based on clan and revolutionary loyality. For example, an illiterate person, even an ambitious nomad fresh from the countryside, was held to need only six months, not only to learn to read and write in his language, but to qualify for any post in the government!

In the embassies, illiterate soldiers who had been sent to guard them suddenly found their way into offices with decision-making and other administrative responsibilities. This new-found elite did

not think they required anything other than their own imagination to write and submit political and economic reports and analyses for the Foreign Ministry. They became so sure of themselves, they avoided having properly educated and trained senior colleagues check their work. Knowing your language and being able to write and read it became qualification enough to write reports on any and every subject. Thus, the quality of information available to government on which decisions were made, plummeted.

Overnight throughout the whole country, unqualified directors, general managers, diplomats, colonels, generals and so forth were appointed and soon found their way into every part of the government's administration. It was the leadership's gravely mistaken belief that an illiterate person put in position by the revolutionary government would give undivided allegiance to the government and thus was a better appointment than an educated person of unknown or questionable loyalty. The government, or rather the leadership, did not care for the wellbeing of the country as much as for its own skin.

Students become teachers in schools

A nation's schools make up one of its most important institutions, moulding and producing its future teachers, engineers, doctors, managers and leaders in all the different walks of life. No nation can afford not to take this vital section seriously. On the contrary, it should be the priority of any nation to give utmost attention, care and consideration to the detailed needs of its educational establishments: schools, colleges and universities. Only after having introduced mass education and compulsory schooling for all youngsters, did it dawn on the government that there were no teacher training schools or institutes in the whole country. In a military-style solution, every high school leaver was ordered to teach for nine months in schools ranging from elementary to high school level.

In the mid-1970s, to add insult to injury, the government, in one of her hasty campaigns, also introduced a teaching project called "PP" (Primary Programme). This was no less a fiasco. Intermediate school leavers were required to undergo one year teaching training at the training depot Ceel Jaalle (to be read El-

Jaalle) located at the outskirts of the port town Merka, to qualify to teach in elementary and intermediate schools. This was in effect asking a teenager to become the teacher of another teenager. Immature "teachers" smoked in the presence of pupils and were often over-familiar with students of the opposite sex. Predictably, mass truancy and delinquency resulted. Throughout school hours, pupils were to be seen in their uniforms on the streets of towns and cities. Not all the pupils who enlisted in this programme to become teachers were hopeless, there were many bright ones who, because of low economic backround or for other reasons, sought this early age employment to help either themselves financially or their poor parents. In the 1980s the general educational environment rapidly degenerated and vandalism, depravity and venality were rife. Yet these were the very youngsters on whom the country's future would depend and it was from these classes that its leaders would be expected to emerge.

Throughout the 1980s, in boarding schools and colleges, including the country's oldest educational college at Lafole, the main preoccupation of students used to be where they could find food, for meals were not provided. Stomach illnesses such as gastritis and gastric ulcers were very common in these boarding institutions. The food rations which the government had allocated to these establishments used to end up on sale in blackmarkets to subsidise the lifestyles of irresponsible political appointees whom the leadership, thinking as always on clan lines, had appointed to head them.

The lack and degradation of health care

Health care was another area which suffered under the military government. Because of the poor conditions and facilities those who could afford to travelled abroad for treatment. This similarly used to drain much badly-needed hard currency from the country.

A vast -- and unused -- hospital complex was constructed by the Soviet Union near an extended airport runway on the coastal lowlands east of the port of Berbera. However, it was clearly a contingency provision, dictated by their view of potential geo-politics in the region, rather than a medical facility for Somalis, and all the country's other main hospitals were located in the

capital Mogadishu. Medina, a hospital built and equipped by West Germany primarily for the Somali police force, was considered to be the best in Somalia -- it incorporated an exclusive section for the elite of the country's ruling party. *Digfer*, built in 1963 by the EEC, was the main general hospital but by the late 1980s it had become squalid and rundown. Behind it there was an open sewer. Benadir, an antenatal and pediatric hospital, was built by the Chinese. Two general hospitals, built by the Italian administration, were named after Enrico Martino and Enrico Anzilotti both former chief administrators. Another main hospital *Fornari*, named after Giovanni Fornari, former Italian administrator, was for tuberculosis patients. There were a number of private hospitals. *Rava*, was built and managed by the Italians. The ministry of defence had its own hospital "*Isbitaalka Xoogga*" which was located in the northern part of the capital. Like the grandiose naval hospital in Berbera, it was built by the Soviet Union.

The hopeless degree to which the nation's health service had degenerated was proved to the president himself. In May 1986 President Mohamed Siad was involved in a car accident one evening on a wet road between the capital and the closest town of Afgoi. Confused bodyguards, fearing an ambush, machine-gunned villagers who rushed forward to help. Heavy monsoon rain continued to pour down as the seriously injured president lapsed into a coma. Even the country's "elite" Medina hospital could not produce the essential oxygen facility necessary for his life support. In a bizarre way the regime first appealed for help to Kenya -- the nearest country. Ironically, thinking that health facilities would be available, the Kenyan government despatched only doctors with little equipment other than stethoscopes. After their helplessness was realised, the former Foreign Ministry permanent secretary, Ahmed Mohamed Adan widely known as "*Qeybe*", made an urgent appeal to the Saudi government which ordered the king's personal air ambulance aircraft, containing a complete operating theatre unit, to land at Mogadishu airport. The patient was flown to a hospital in Riyad where he recovered and spent over two months recuperating.

Transforming the country into a one-city nation

Even though Somalia is a vast country with many regions, cities and towns, throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s it was transformed to resemble one-city states such as Kuwait and Singapore. Developmental and security reasons attracted the population to the capital. Despite its initial macho posturing and confidence, the revolutionary government proved the most insecure of all Somali governments. Since it came to power through a *coup d'état* (or as Mohamed Siad, after chairman Mao Zedong, used to put it "the barrel of the gun"), the military government was always nervous, worried and likely to overreact. One proof of this was the president's vigil throughout the night hours, fearful of any "dawn broadcast" and ambitious soldier (for the continent was blessed with many), who might seek to snatch power from him. He adopted a disruptive nocturnal work habit and used to sleep during the day.

Emulating the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which put all emphasis on Moscow, the former leader in Somalia stripped everything of value from the country's regions, cities and towns. Almost every development project was located in the capital Mogadishu or its surroundings. Citizens in the various parts of the country were forced to journey to Mogadishu for everything from university education to the arrangement of overseas travel. Foreign governments were also denied cultural or consular offices in the regions. For instance, Somalia's second largest city Hargeisa, with a population of well over half a million, did not have any foreign cultural or consular offices. The people in Hargeisa, or Kismayo -- after Mogadishu the largest port-city in the southern part of the country -- were compelled to come to the capital even to make contacts abroad by phone. If one wanted to fulfil the Islamic duty of pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the only way open was first to travel to the capital for visas, immunisation, hard currency, and all other essential arrangements. The economic as well as social impact of such restrictions was enormous. The inconvenience to the people, forced to endure unnecessary expenditures merely to live, prosper and advance themselves, was huge and all due to the incompetence and stupidity of the government.

In the late 1980s, as a result of such restrictions, everybody

wanted to move to the capital, for it became a universal dream to own "a place in the sun". Even though it did not have the amenities of many metropolitan cities, such as five star hotels, the capital expanded beyond recognition. It became a melting pot for the whole Somali nation. In 1990, one year prior to being engulfed by civil war, the city's population had reached over three million, nearly half the population of the nation!

On the other hand traditional big regional cities such as Beletweyn, Kismayo, Galkayo and Burao suffered stagnation, neglect and squalour. In 1984 I made a brief personal visit to Beletweyn where my family had lived between 1962 and 1964 when it was a bustling city. The level of degradation was indescribable. It looked as though Beletweyn was in the wilds in a country where there was no government. Everywhere one looked there was infrastructural decay, sewage and all the obvious signs of abject poverty and neglect.

The capital's lack of proper planning

During the first five years of its long tenure, the revolutionary government placed unmatched emphasis on the capital city. It thought that the best way to assert its presence and power, gain legitimacy in the public eye and delude everyone that it was doing something for the country, was to put all its efforts into building up Mogadishu. It started constructing roads, government buildings, theatres, orientation centres, stores etc. All this made many northern Somalis very critical of the government. They greatly resented its comparative indifference to the northern regions.

One of the successes in the 1960s was the housing of almost all government ministries in huge white government office building resembling those in London's Whitehall. They had been previously housed in colonial buildings known in Italian as *Uficcio Governo* where the cabinet and the prime minister's office used to be before the revolution. When the military government took power, it built separate buildings for all the twenty or so ministries. All publicly owned government agencies were likewise individually housed. During this initial five years, the capital undoubtedly benefited from the massive construction projects undertaken by the military government. But one main area which suffered extensively was basic planning.

Many people were inspired to leave their regions and flock to the capital. It was undergoing a huge expansion, but lack of forethought meant there were no services such as sanitation, water and electricity for the general public in the newly developed sections of the city. Seeking to check the capital's expansion to the north, all the various military camps, industries and institutions were located in the north-west and there was a complete halt to new settlement in that area. To the south-east, lay the Indian ocean. So the growth of the capital was to the north-east and the south-west and uncontrolled. There was in fact no proper town planning at all.

Selection based on clan loyalty

It is said that wherever there is selection there is also de-selection. When you choose less able men on the grounds of clan, you are simultaneously barring or deselecting able and qualified persons. When a government, for the sake of making short-sighted strategic alliances in order to stay in power, chooses unqualified, loyal but ignorant stooges over its dedicated and qualified citizens, the temporary stability gained is soon eroded by the ever more powerful and consequent dissent of those denied opportunity.

Throughout the 1980s, as discussed in other parts of this text, Somalia's foreign service was disfigured by ignorant diplomats chosen on the basis of clan. Outside the country's embassies, in almost every part of the world, there emerged a more qualified and demonstrative dissident population preoccupied by attempts to embarrass and if possible bring down the government. Through this process, the country's image and standing in the world arena was tarnished beyond repair. Neverthless, the country's precious resources were not infrequently squandered on vain efforts to counter such adverse publicity. The opposition, who were mainly driven by indignation stemming from the gross injustice, maladministration, divisive policies and ineptness of the government, did not, however, have any uniform policy. Nor did they differentiate between the Somali nation as a country and the government with whom they were in conflict.

In the Somali cabinet of the 1980s, ministers from the octogenarian president's household (sons, brothers, sons-in-law

and even fathers-in-law of his children) came to outnumber all others. But the writing was so clearly on the wall that any proposed policies or the several supposed "reinventions of the revolution", *laba kacleyn* (to be read as laba ka'leyn), announced by President Mohamed Siad with much fanfare, ceased to have either relevance or even audience, internal or external.

3
Personification

In many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, when a "son of a gun" becomes a leader, he soon loses sight of what leadership is all about -- which is to serve the people. In such countries no sooner do these types come to power than they become obsessed with self-promotion to the degree that the leader personifies everything: the country, the nation, the government, the spiritual leadership etc.

The Somali leader, even though he did not put his picture on the currency of the country, was not only exceptional when it came to cultivation of a sickly personality cult, but he exceeded some of the worst despots such as Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein and others in the continent of Africa. Among the many titles the late Somali leader acquired were the father of wisdom "*Aabihii garashada*", the father of the nation "*Aabihii gayigayagow*", the father of knowledge "*Aabihii aqoonta*": all claimed by a man who hardly knew more than how to read and write. On top of all these were the creation and daily airing on national television and radio of many songs of praise, poems etc., which the Somali leader, having encouraged and invested in their formation, used to relish and enjoy. To many, these, and his endless quest for love and adulation, only manifested a personality defect in the leader. In the eyes of the Somali public, such praise songs and many other unnecessary wasteful antics were totally *un-Somali*.

The local newspapers -- all of course owned by the government -- carried nothing besides his engagements and quotations from his long and tedious speeches. Throughout the country, everywhere one looked were pictures of the president. This was a man who came to power in October 1969 with the promise to rescue Somalia from danger and then to return to his military barracks. It has been claimed that in Iraq there are more pictures of Saddam Hussein than there are people. Also, in a recent

documentary film about the personality cult created in Libya by its leader Mu'amer Qaddafi, it is said that while the Libyan population is 5.2 million, there are 5 million pictures of Qaddafi, one almost for every man, woman and child in that country.[1]

The creation of the personality cult was very rapid indeed in politics and life in Somalia. I remember, on 20 January 1987, during my tenure at the Somali embassy in London, I was going home on a vacation. That morning, I arrived in Abu Dhabi hoping to connect with the Somali Airlines flight to Mogadishu three days later. It happened that the day after I arrived, the Somali foreign minister Abdirahman Jama Barre was also passing through Abu Dhabi to fly that same day on to Kuwait, where he was attending the annual Islamic Organisation Conference (IOC). Early in the morning, several visiting diplomats happened to be in the office of our ambassador who asked me to accompany him and some of the local as well as visiting diplomatic staff to the airport to receive the minister. The minister arrived and was driven in a United Arab Emirates (UAE) official limousine to the Sheraton hotel. We all followed to the hotel in embassy cars.

As was customary, everyone would see the minister in turn in his hotel suite. At one such meeting, with a particular diplomat, the minister started by asking about the embassy in which the diplomat worked and if there was any problem. In fact there was not just one problem, but many, mainly created by the greed and corruption of the ambassador. It was obvious that such problems were not confined to embassies but were typical throughout the whole system of government. It was probably with the hope that they would either be mitigated or resolved, that this diplomat seized the opportunity to spit out the ambassador's misconduct and greed by simply saying, "Yes! as a matter of fact, the ambassador I happen to work with is a man who is using the embassy as his own house or personal property." The minister, who was very light skinned by Somali standards, turned quite blue and become very agitated and angry. Suddenly without going any further, he burst out by saying, "Well that is enough! I have known this man since in the 1950s and he is my right hand man."

The meeting had to come to an abrupt end. What the diplomat had not realised was that by telling the minister (who was

notoriously known to have used the whole apparatus and machinery of the Foreign Ministry as his personal property) about someone who was similarly using a public office as his own house was like attacking the minister himself. Throughout the 1980s as a result of triple digit hyper-inflation back home, which made the value of Somali shillings virtually worthless, coins were not being minted. This, coupled with random dismissals and insecurity inherent in the system, caused many ambassadors to prepare themselves for rainy days on recall back to head-quarters.

On that occasion, the foreign minister, the very man I too came under, revealed he was not interested in mistreatment of any other staff at the hands of his sleazy henchmen. He was identifying himself with the corrupt ambassador; others could get lost. But they did not intend to go as quietly as he thought. I for one was already taking notes, for I believed that one day such abuses would be revealed and there would have to be changes.

I vividly remember that on that day, by attacking the ambassador's personalisation of the embassy, this diplomat had spoiled the minister's visit and his jovial mood; whoever would come later to talk to him would have no leeway with him. Indeed, by defending the ambassador's personalisation of a public office, the minister was defending himself. He was, literally, the *guru* of such misconduct and dishonesty, which the ambassador, as his disciple, was simply imitating. A culture which binds together all wrongdoers amongst government officials had been created and was being perpetuated. It was taboo to talk to another person about how one had been wronged. This minister was exceptional in giving lip service to transparency and cleanness in government. Nevertheless his own illicit involvement in all sorts of government misconduct was very clear to the whole nation.

Another thing one could not escape was the stark difference between the hopelessly low salaries which government officials obtained and the kind of high lifestyle, plush buildings and multiple vehicles enjoyed by corrupt government officials and ministers. As a Russian proverb says, a fish rots from its head. Corruption and immorality started from the head of the government. And, as is also said in an Arabic proverb, "If the head of a family starts beating a drum, the rest of the family

naturally start to dance to the rhythm." Once everybody saw that the leadership was corrupt and living way beyond the meagre means allocated by the very rules they set for the country, this was an invitation to blatant corruption.

Years later, one evening in 1991, I was chatting with an old colleague and friend of mine. When I told him the story of the diplomat's confrontation with the minister, he simply enquired "Why didn't he tell the minister the ambassador despises him. That would have been the effective way to ensure that he would have reacted and recalled the ambassador, the very day he returned from the conference he was attending?" In fact the ambassador whom the minister was defending did despise the minister. But it is not important who hated the minister or who liked him, as that is a personal matter: everyone has his own reasons to hate or like his superior. The diplomat who angered the minister thought it was his place to comment on how the office of which he was part was managed. That is what concerned and affected him - not the likes or dislikes of superiors. But that was not how things were, as it turned out. He was not in tune with reality or he would not have accused the ambassador of what the minister himself - as ultimate head -- was in fact to blame, for the misconduct which some of his subordinate ambassadors were practising.

No matter for how long or how well one knows someone, there will be something you do not know about them. There will always be something one does not know about either colleagues or superiors. It was not envisaged by many in the system who became victims of the greed of their superiors to think it was as simple as that to remove one rotten egg from the many in the government. Indeed, during the 1980s, the then leadership in Somalia increasingly lived under the illusion that someone who disagreed with them, or who despised them, was a traitor, and those who agreed or accepted wrongdoings became patriots in their eyes. So in the warped minds of those who were our leaders -- patriotism and treachery were redefined. They saw themselves as personifying everything: the country and the nation. Anyone who disagreed with them was the enemy of the country. They had replaced love and care for the nation and simply saw themselves as the ones who should be loved. Loving them *was* loving the country!

The culture of the personality cult and personification made everyone who headed anything in the government use their office and all that it stood for as personal property and this in a way encouraged corruption. For example, a corrupt ambassador saw the embassy he presided over, the public funds of the office, its transportation and everything which belonged to or came under the authority of the embassy, as his property. No wonder most ambassadors who became corrupt, acted in such a conspicuously corrupt way and were despised publicly by everyone. The excess confidence they demonstrated came from one direction and that was from the example of the minister's own public behaviour. Like children who emulate their father, they were simply doing what their minister was doing and behaving as he was behaving. They became brothers-in-arms with the minister in the business of thievery and indulgence in corruption.

The most disastrous consequences of personification were the savagery, destruction, dismantling and mass looting which took place in Somalia during the civil war which started in 1991. Because the state had been created in the image and name of the president, everything representing the state was now destroyed, especially by the generation which had grown up during the quarter of a century in which he ruled and who were now revolting against the state in place of the image. Even those things which were sacred to the Somali nation, such as the monuments recalling our history and heritage, went. Yet the destruction and mayhem are only symptoms of the Somali tragedy. One needs to look further into and beyond the origins and causes of the level of violence and hatred that was generated and brought out into the open in what had been perhaps the only truely homogeneous society on earth. Only those ignorant of events in Somalia would be satisfied by looking no further than the symptoms of the disaster that has enveloped the country. On the other hand, this is by no means to trivialise the crimes and savagery of those who destroyed their own country and dismantled everything with their own hands.

Almost all the monuments built in Mogadishu during the thirty years of independence from 1960 to 1990 were built by the last government, that of President Mohamed Siad Barre. The grandest of all these monuments, *Dhagax-tuur* -- meaning "the

stone throwing" -- was dismantled during the civil war, shipped and sold abroad for quick cash. The monument *Dhagax-tuur* has been built in commemoration of a bloody incident which took place in Mogadishu in 1943 between Somali civilians -- mainly members of the freedom movement party, Somali Youth League (SYL) and the Italian officials retained by the British and Commonwealth military administration, which had been set up after Somalia was recaptured in 1941. This incident saw the killing of six Somalis, and the monument, *Dhagax-tuur,* was built in memory of the death of those six freedom fighters at the hands of imperialist forces from Europe.

The irony here is how foreign oppressors, who were illegally colonising Africa, commemorated the killing of only six Somalis, while Mohamed Siad Barre, a local son of Somalia who was honoured to become its leader, killed hundreds and thousands of his own Somali people in many widely differing regions of the country. Even though I am not defending the crimes, chaos and destruction perpetrated by those who captured Mogadishu in 1991 after the flight of the former president, yet it is reasonable to ask if it is not a paradox that anyone should honour monuments built by a local blood-thirsty dictator in commemoration of six Somalis whilst the crimes and bloodbaths of the same dictator outweigh and outnumber by far those of any occupying force not only in Somalia but perhaps the whole continent of Africa. As it happens the monuments destroyed were not only those in commemoration of innocent Somalis killed by colonialists, but also those to national heroes, such as Imam Ahmed Gurey and Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan, who had struggled and died for the Somali cause. The answer goes back to this incongruity, that whenever one leader seeks to comme-morate a nationalist event and leave a memorial to withstand the test of time, he must not himself create incidents, disasters or painful memories that are similar or much worse than those of foreign oppressors. After all, crime is crime, and being committed by a local ruler does not make it different or less painful than that committed by outsiders. The bloodshed which took place in Somalia, during periods of President Mohamed Siad's misrule and the civil war era, is so enormous that it is inevitable that one day it will call for commemorative monuments all over the country.

History teaches us that what a dictator builds he also destroys. Adolf Hitler, in April 1945, with the allied guns blazing in many parts of Berlin, only a few days prior to taking his life in his bunker, ordered Albert Speer, his trusted confidant and architect turned minister of armaments, to flatten most of the city to punish the German public for disobedience and having let him down. Likewise in December 1990, a few weeks before the final count-down and his ejection from power, President Mohamed Siad Barre was contemplating the destruction of half of Mogadishu, the Somali people having similarly turned against him. He was under the delusion that he was the man responsible for the fast growth of the city and was therefore justified in pulling it down. The fact that twenty-one years is a long time in leadership of a nation and that his primitive and cruel rule had robbed the nation of vital decades of development and progress, quite eluded him. Despite his misguided beliefs, in 1969 when he took power in Somalia, many cities such as Nairobi were not world class cities but no more than big villages. In 1969 there were no Concordes, videos, camcorders, nor even colour TVs in many parts of the world. The world witnessed great material advances between the early 1970s and 1990: these were the most vital years during which military dictatorship misruled and mismanaged Somalia.

Similar bloodshed and mayhem has taken place in Liberia, but, unlike in Somalia where all the buildings were either looted or destroyed and even electricity and telephone wires stripped away, many of the foreign embassies, businesses and factories were not vandalised. Quite apart from factories and foreign-owned businesses, in Mogadishu and many towns in Somalia, all public and private offices were gutted, including public venues such as the national museum, the theatre and the conference buildings in Mogadishu. This only goes to show that personification had greatly contributed to the magnitude of enmity and destruction in Somalia but not so in the case of the civil war in Liberia. Even Liberia's embassies abroad are functioning normally while communication and maintenance from their country continues at the time of writing.

The other grave error which the former Somali leader made was that those whose nationalist efforts in building the nation were recognised and honoured by the creation of monuments

were exclusively from one group, namely the Darod clan. Even though no one doubts the contribution of such national heros, the question here concerns the efforts and endeavours of other Somalis from the various other clans who contributed in like manner to the struggle and nationhood of the Somali people. This is typical of Somali machismo. A Somali first and foremost must seek to recognise all the good deeds for the overall grand name which is his -- the Somali name and cause. But the problem is that, as in no other nation on earth, he does not stop there. The loyalty of a Somali is divided and fragmented.

For nearly a quarter of a century, the late president was foolishly building up his personality cult; seeking to personify everything of value. The whole generation that was born and brought up in this dark era of Somali history hardly knew anything other than the "centrality" of the president. All that was of value to the nation, be it patriotism, progress or nationhood, carried his plate or tag to the effect that everything including the country's name [-- Somalia --] become synonomous with the president. It was as though Somalia had never existed before the 21 October 1969 "revolution", the *coup d'état* which gave birth to the government. Everything had been tailored and reshaped to the tune of that infamous date. This personification even went to the extent of stripping prestige from any achievement by past governments.

Before the revolution, the biggest hotel built by past administrations in the capital was the hotel Jubba. In 1970, after not even a year in power, the government of the former President Mohamed Siad clandestinely torched and gutted this building only to rebuild it anew as the first implemented case under its economic engineering experiment of crash programmes which used to be called *"Iskaa wax-u-qabso"* (self-help). It would have been much better to leave this hotel intact and build a new one. But that was not the light in which the new leader saw things. He believed in a scorched earth policy, building anew with revolutionary taste and fervour under his own "wise" guidance that of the "Great" leader of Somalia. Put simply, the leader did not want anything of any stature that was not achieved by his government to be left standing. The trend was to give birth to a new Somalia which did not have or know of anything before his

military revolution.

The oldest school in the whole of Somalia "*Ma'alin Jama*", which was in the centre of the capital city Mogadishu, was bulldozed and on its site was built a three-storeyed building for *Ururka Hooyooyinka Soomaaliyeed*, the Somali Women's Organisation. In July 1976, only six years after his coming to power, the new leader made a bid to grab absolute power similar to that of the supreme head of state of the Soviet Union: he launched his Soviet-modelled Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP). The day of the launching of this party was 1 July -- Somalia's national day -- the anniversary day of the independence of the southern regions from Italy. This was also the Union day -- the north and the south Somalilands merged on that same day in 1960 to become the Somali Republic. One could be forgiven, since there are 365 days in a year, wondering if a separate date could not be found for the launching of this infamous party which set Somalia on the road to hell. The leader's launching of his party on the same date as the most important day in the whole Somali national calendar proves that he wanted to minimise the importance of that special anniversary and snatch its value for his party's launching. This was only one of many cheap ploys to prepare the country to believe that everything came into being only after he came to power. His hero was *Kim il Sung*, the late "Great" leader of North Korea who, because of his country's 1950 war with the South of the Korean Peninsula, succeeded in having his capital city Pyongyang levelled almost to the ground by United Nations forces.

In August 1982, during the deliberations of the sixth annual conference of the SRSP, several politicians who subsequently fell out with the leadership -- among them Ismail Ali Abokar and Omar Arteh Ghalib, who knew very well the character of the Somali leader and his love for the personality cult and titles -- proposed from the floor of the meeting that the president should be given the title of Field Marshal. This was only a clever ploy to further discredit and ridicule the head of state in the eyes of the Somali public and the world at large. No sooner did these politicians propose their generous title than President Mohamed Siad Barre, who was crafty at times, acknowledged the hidden plot behind the grand title. He suddenly became aware of the fact

that they wanted to put him on the same standing as the discredited dictator of Uganda, Idi Amin, who among many others had assumed this title. He was not that stupid and he rejected the offer outright.

All government ministries, agencies and headquarters of public organisations were required to set up monuments in their compounds bearing *quadral* glass-framed portraits of the leader. Such unnecessary monuments must have cost the public coffers millions of shillings, especially when included the extra commission and kickbacks to each minister or head of an organisation. It was a common practice that everything a government agency did or purchased, was seen as an opportunity for all concerned, from the head of the organisation to the accountants, to inflate the cost. The original cost of purchases, projects and constructions were doubled, tripled or quadrupled for the commission and kickbacks of the authorities concerned. This illicit business of robbing public money became so popular that the authorities and their accountants were never short of ideas and initiatives to create needless ventures.

Even the date, 26 June 1960, when the northern part of Somalia got its independence, was not spared but was taken as "cooperatives day". To return to and summarize the ethos of his transformation of Somalia, the late president's methods were to snatch, create, commandeer, rename, erase, destroy or borrow in order to create a Somalia in his image, and to do this, he spared nothing. In order that younger generations of a nation become patriots above everything else, it is very important for pupils to be taught in schools to love their country. Before the revolutionary government came to power, in the mornings, pupils would raise the flag in the school compound and lower it in the evenings -- singing the nation's anthem. When the leader of the 1969 October revolution came to power, he saw such nationalism as an impediment standing in the way of his new designs for Somalia. In order to lay the ground for the bogus society he was preparing to establish, not only were flag poles removed from school compounds, but at the same time all literature and text books that were based on love for the country were removed from school curricula and replaced with new "educational material" based on adulation for the leader and his revolution.

Throughout the 1980s, life in Somalia became difficult with soaring triple-digit inflation and the rule of the jungle -- survival of the fittest -- becoming the prevailing norm. Unemployment was the feared lot of most of the young generation who graduated from schools and colleges. Dissidence and open criticism of the Somali government increased in the 1980s. Widespread disatisfaction led to the leader's chronic paranoia. In later years, he thought his headaches could be eased not with paracetamol tablets, but with endless ministerial reshuffles and spilling the blood of his own people. In 1998, in Indonesia, a weakened wavering President Suharto found himself in a similar predicament. Following the economic crash, brought about by the government's mismanagement, corruption and nepotism, after a seventy per cent depreciation in the value of the rupiah, the capital Jakarta and a number of other cities in Indonesia were torched by angry mass rioters. In the initial wave of violence over five hundred people lost their lives as the people demanded nothing less than a change of leadership. Unfortunately, in his isolation, the president reckoned that a simple reshuffling of the faces in the cabinet was all that was needed to remedy his ailing terminal rule. Eventually he had to accede to the fact that, after thirty-two years of oppressive ruling, his days were finally over. In order to secure his and his family's safety, and protect his family's business fortune and interest, he installed his most devoted acolyte Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie (commonly referred to as BJ), as president. This was indeed the last thing the Indonesian people expected to happen.

One thing is certain, that blood brings more blood and violence ushers in more violence. Man did not emerge from the ground like a mushroom. Behind him he has people: brothers, sisters, parents and in Somalia also a clan (whose memory is permanently stained when blood is spilled). The misguided self-defeating policies of killing one's own people only lead to more anger and troubles. It is said that when a regime is dying, its fools dig its grave faster. In later years, the biggest fool in the Somali government was none other than the leader. That same mentality which in peacetime and the early youthful years of his power, led him to plot to commandeer the nation's history, and destroy or dismantle all that went before him, only to erect the same but this

time in his own image, emerged again later in his exhausted and declining years. Exacerbated by mass disenchantment and dissent, like the schizophrenic Thomas Hamilton who on 13 March 1996 ran amok with guns and killed sixteen children and their teacher at Dunblane primary school in Scotland, the late president simply thought the remedy for his troubles was to send his security forces running amok, rampaging with guns and killing his own people.

In a democratic government system losses may be quantified in votes which translate to loss of confidence in government; in totalitarian systems or dictatorships no votes are lost as power is not based on the electorate, but a political base can certainly be eroded so that dissidence increases and, like a tooth in a receding gum, the system is eventually exposed.

The following is one of the many manifestations of the ill-affects of personification which I came across during my service in the government. In the late 1980s the Somali opposition groups, mainly the Somali National Movement (SNM), were very successful in gradually isolating the government in world politics as well as in diplomatic arenas. Most of the government's records were either deliberately tarnished through powerful propaganda or damned by the government's own ineptness and malfunction. One of the areas which the opposition elite targeted forcefully were donor countries such as the EEC (then twelve countries), Japan and the United States, on which, for strategic reasons, the government was mainly dependent. Unlike the Ethiopian opposition which used to campaign for increased humanitarian aid for their people regardless of their misgivings, the Somalis urged these countries indiscriminately to cut off aid to their country. One of the main weapons the opposition used was the government's human rights failings, its poor record and the level of corruption that was eating away its legitimacy. As a result of this campaign the flow of aid and developmental projects started gradually to dwindle.

In January 1989, in order to counter this massive campaign to discredit it, the government launched a belated futile diplomatic offensive intended to upstage its adversaries. Four delegations, headed by the five most powerful men after the president, were sent to cover every region of the globe, to present the

government's view and re-establish and reaffirm relationships. At that time the delegations were: (1) Led by Mohamed Ali Samatar, first vice president and then prime minister, to tour part of Western Europe, mainly Italy and the UK, the US and Canada. (2) The second delegation had two heads: Hussein Kulmiye Afrah, second vice president was the nominal head. But the president's cousin Abdirahman Jama Barre, as finance minister, was the *de facto* head. They toured most of Western Europe and other countries in the region. (3) Mohamoud Ahmed Farah,[2] third vice president and member of the politburo, headed a delegation to the Far East, USSR, Pakistan, India, Iran and other countries. (4) Ahmed Suleiman Abdalla, known as *Dafle*, fourth most powerful man and a son-in-law of the president, headed a delegation to tour the Arab countries.

In early February, the first and most important delegation, the Somali prime minister and his team, arrived in London. Ambassador Ahmed Jama Abdulle, *Jungali*, and myself, with high-ranking UK government officials received them at Heathrow airport. They checked into the prestigious Churchill Hotel in London's West End. They soon embarked on a tight schedule of meetings, press and business conferences and many other important engagements. They also met Mrs Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street. One of the important issues raised as a concern by the UK prime minister was Somalia's "acquiring" biological weapons from Libya, mainly "nerve" gas, as alleged by the opposition. This was not true, as time has proved.

Amid all the pomp and glitter, what we in the embassy did not know for the first few days was the delegation's depleted financial situation. The finance minister, who was a very selfish man and who was conducting a bitter feud and power struggle with prime minister Mohamed Ali Samatar, had allocated to his mission only US $10,000 to cover all its considerable expenses. We also learned that the finance minister obtained for himself and his companion, the late Hussein Kulmiye Afrah, a hefty cheque for US $250,000. After only three days in the Churchill hotel, the bill had run to well over £12,000. That was how the embassy came to know of the plight of their mission. Ambassador Abdulle who was an exceptionally efficient man, telexed the Somali president

about the financial situation of the prime minister's delegation and within three days a huge amount of money was transferred to the delegation to cover all their expenses throughout their four week tour.

Whilst the powerful finance minister was impoverishing the mission of the man who was supposed to be his superior in the government, he allocated his less important mission a cheque twenty-five times larger. This was not only naked greed, but the result of personification, whereby what mattered was not the general good but the individual's prestige and wellbeing. In this scenario it is embodiment and the sickly cultivation of personality cults which was taking its toll. Rather than conceiving an institution like a boat in which all sailed, each one's stature became the significant factor and emphasis shifted from the system to the individual.

On 14 July 1989, only two weeks after I had accompanied a delegation on a visit to the Somali capital, troubles there which had started after the killing of the Vatican resident representative, Bishop Salvatore Colombo, escalated. A government clampdown by the security forces saw the indiscriminate killing of about 200 citizens that day alone. I saw this major ugly incident with my own eyes. I was particularly horrified to view from the upper floor window of the residence where I was staying, the battering-in of the skull and instant killing of a fourteen-year-old boy who, having thought the firing had stopped, had only wanted to get away from the house of neighbours and run to his family's nearby home. The boy's brain was spattered on the pavement where he fell.

When I talked to a good friend recently about those nightmarish years and the horns of the dilemma on which we civil servants lived, especially during the last few years of that government, he particularly asked why did I not defect since things were so bad.' It is very easy for someone who has not been in your position and through such nightmares or who does not quite understand what a government system is or how it functions, to argue this point, as if fleeing one's homeland is some kind of magic remedy. However, the issue is the future of one's country rather than whether or not to run away in such circumstances. This friend of mine is an educated and experienced man but many in Somali society who see the world in terms of a primitive clannish black

and white choice, would argue the same. The question is, what change would be brought about by the defection of a diplomat? The best thing a civil servant can do for his country when he is neither responsible for the actions of a merciless despot nor for his way of thinking, is to take note of abuses, excesses and repression, and at the same time continue to defend the wider reputation of his homeland from the enemy. Running away from one's home is not a simple matter like treading a catwalk at a fashion gala -- especially when one has strong feelings of patriotism and through thick and thin would like to stay on the side of one's country. To hell with the despot! But it is often cowards who run away!

This is not to deny that many in the opposition were legitimately forced by the system to flee from their homeland after government repression in their own homes and lives. My stomach churned when I read Dr Adan Yusuf Abokor's personal account, in Jama Mohamed Ghalib's *The Cost of Dictatorship,*[4] of the ordeal he suffered, involving torture and unlawful imprisonment at the hand of his own government. His only crime was to seek to better the sordid conditions of the hospital in Hargeisa, Somalia's second capital city. Nor was he alone. Mohamed Barood Ali has also written a horrifying report on his experiences inside Labatan Jirow maximum security prison. News spreads fast amongst Somalis -- especially bad news. Hence thousands fled without personal experience of mistreatment.

Personally, I will always remember a moment in the 1992 American presidential debate between President George Bush and Bill Clinton. The president pointed to the fact that his counterpart staged a demonstration against his own embassy in a foreign land, referring to when Bill Clinton, once a student at Oxford University, took part in a demonstration outside the United States embassy in London against his country's involvement of the war in Vietnam. Those of our people who demonstrated against their embassies are not to blame, as the analogies differ, but even so, staging demonstrations in front of embassies abroad against a tyrant in Africa would change nothing -- as in Africa, public opinion simply does not matter.

As touched on in previous pages, the reason why everything was destroyed during the ensuing civil war seems to be because

the psyche of our people, especially those who grew up in the twenty-one-year rule of the last government, held that everything belonged to the president rather than to the country. The nemesis of the government's narrow-minded greed and personification seems to have returned to haunt any achievement of the last government: it engulfed everything. There are those who blame the "*Moorvan*" (marauding gangs) in Mogadishu or the Hawiye clan -- because of their geographical proximity to the capital city. Most of these gangs were involved in the destruction and pillaging of the capital. But the answer lies at the gate of the man who personified a nation's efforts and achievements as his own. Those who were destroying and ravaging Mogadishu and the country as a whole, were driven on the one hand by anger and desperation into fratricidal warfare, whilst on the other they saw everything that belonged to the nation as having been crafted in the image of the man who was responsible for all national disasters.

For any leader who wants the achievements made during his tenure to last and stand the test of time and not to perish with him after he is gone, there are three cardinal rules to observe. (1) That leader must give due respect and due commemoration to all that was achieved before him. In other words he must recognise all that others have done for their country and have left behind. If he does not respect or even recognise what predecessors have achieved, how can his own achievements be recognised or attributed to his credit? (2) He should never personify what is achieved by a nation, no matter how much it was due to sole personal endeavour -- because in the governance of a nation, the leader's role is to perform his duties and not to follow a personal agenda to own or mortgage the nation to his own benefit. (3) He should never force anything on the public in an attempt to shape or influence how much they should love him or how he should be remembered. In economics, the market is the sole factor which decides how much a commodity is worth. Similarly history, which is the supreme independent judge of events, must assess a leader: how much he was worth and how much he has achieved. It is better to let the records speak for themselves.

Opposition leaders such as the late Brigadier-General Mohamed Farah Aideed and Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf had, in the footsteps of Major-General Mohamed Siad Barre, similar personal

agendas to mould Somalia in their image. This seems to be a weakness of many politicians in Somalia and elsewhere in many developing countries. Rather than promote the country, personal agendas based on self-advancement were pervasive. It is quite imperative for one to promote one's causes, not oneself. No one knows what lies behind such obsessions and why anyone would want to create a nation based on his or her own image.

In Somalia, many people used to criticise aspects of the former Somali president's insecurity, such as the way he always stayed up the whole night "in the service of the nation" as though he was a devil (*ibliis*) who did not require rest. The strain this practice put on ministers and others was immense. But let alone loving or caring for them, or for any of his people, the former leader did not even care for the future of his own grandchildren. The best testimony of this is that in 1990, unlike former president Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, who left power with his country and its capital intact to save it from oblivion,[5] when former President Mohamed Siad was presented with the choice of relinquishing power in order to save Somalia from the smouldering embers of a long and costly civil war, he chose the unthinkable which was "If I must leave Somalia, it does not deserve to stand intact."

There is a donkey in a children's story books who ordained in the event of her departure by death from this world, no grass would be grown on earth. Based on the famous Machiavellian principle that the end justifies the means, Mohamed Siad's motto was that love for the country was valid as long as he was at the helm rather than as long as Somalia wanted him to stay in power. This is hardly patriotism, selflessness or statesmanship. True devotion is when nothing is expected in return. Others who could have come after him, found not only that he was stranded but that he had destroyed the very ladder which he used to attain the leadership of his nation.

To what extent this personification sickness destroyed the last government of Somalia is unquantifiable. In 1986, fresh from my last station in Kuwait, I could not believe what I saw in the basement of the embassy in London. Nearly two rooms and one underground cellar were filled with documents carelessly strewn around. I could not comprehend this and thought to probe the reasons behind the reckless wastage of the office's important

documents. I questioned the caretaker of the embassy, a true gentleman named Mohamoud Hadhi, who knew much of the story of the embassy. I took him down to the basement and demanded an explanation. What he revealed to me that day was typical of "personification" which had deep roots and which finally engulfed the system. He told me that as soon as the ambassador whose tenure went from 1984 to 1988 arrived in London from his last posting in Beijing, China, he ordered the local staff of the embassy to dump all the documents of his predecessors in the humid rooms underground. I also could not believe it when I saw several hundred undistributed copies of a book entitled, *Go from my Country*, which was about the Somali regions in Ethiopia and the territorial dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia issued by the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), also dumped among the rubbish. It was very clear to me that the ambassador -- a lazy, conceited man -- was also against the policies concerning Somali territories in neighbouring countries. They were, at that time, a policy cornerstone of the government he represented.

This same incompetent ambassador, who misused public office and responsibility and who trashed government documents, was indeed the sole person whose name used to cross the minds of former government leaders when it came to enlightenment, and who was supposedly the most knowledgeable in the whole country they ruled. To them he was equivalent to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates. The former ambassador used to be seen as a man who was "dripping" with knowledge. This was nothing other than an image he had meticulously crafted. It was totally without foundation. Where all kinds of accountability had been lost, it was very easy to nurture and perpetuate any image however insubstantial or fallacious. Some well-known diplomats even got away with the purchase of multiple higher education degrees from which they cleverly benefited careerwise. Because of lack of accountability, there was no one to check the validity of their academic credentials or whether they had attended those institutions from which they had allegedly obtained them. This circumstance was a typical case of the English proverb "In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king."

By dumping and denying the existence of all that was achieved

by his predecessors, the ambassador, who was a political appointee from Somalia's Revolutionary Socialist Party, was simply following the personification culture set by his leader, the president of the country. But like his mentor -- the "father" of the nation -- what the ambassador did not recognise was that, those who dismantle or deny the existence of their predecessors' achievements, end up in similar straits.

Another example of that miasmatic culture is manifested in the following account of something which also took place in the London embassy. One day in 1989, while passing through the office of the ambassador's secretary, located on the mezzanine floor next to that of the ambassador, I popped into the tiny office next to the secretary which was occupied by the man who handled confidential files and the cipher of the embassy. He was busy shredding documents that stood in piles next to him. He looked at me a little embarrassed but carried on with this activity. I sought to know exactly what was going on but not by asking him, as insubordination was this man's middle name. He was one of the boorish soldiers who had jumped into the diplomatic service: a former bodyguard at the residence of the second wife of the president. I looked at the documents piled up for the guillotine. To my amazement they were all important confidential papers yanked out from the embassy files. I looked at the bottom of the documents and saw that they all bore the name and signature of another diplomat who used to head the embassy on occasions when the ambassador was absent.

I did not confront this vandal or question why he was engaged in this felonious act as that would have only involved an unnecessary quarrel and probably a fist fight in the line of duty. I simply left and went back to my office. As one of the leadership's many on-the-job trainees -- uneducated personnel off-loaded into the system -- this was a man who, during half of the first year in which he joined the embassy as a "diplomat", spent most of his time (at the expense of the Somali tax payer) using pad after pad of papers practising how to sign his name, or so a member of the embassy local staff who became his trainer used to claim. By weeding out all traces from the embassy records of a diplomat's effort and input, this poor man was also involved in the infamous vicious cycle of personification.

Obviously he was jealous of his superior, and hated the diplomat whose name and signatures the documents bore. But did he not comprehend that he was shredding the property of the embassy and the nation, not that of the diplomat he so obviously hated? The evils of personification by the last leader were spreading like plague throughout our society.

Notes

1. This documentary film on the personality cult developed by Libya's strong man Mu'amer Qaddafi was made by RDF Film Productions and screened on Channel Four in December 1996.
2. Mohamoud Ahmed Farah, third vice president of the government died in 1993 in Holland after a long illness.
3. Some of the Somali opposition members had written open letters in the press to the then serving Somali diplomats asking them to vacate their posts and, like them, to flee from their country. Despite what many in the opposition thought of themselves, the diplomats did not see the clan based opposition as a viable alternative to the incumbent rotting government. It is easy to see and point at the flaws of another. But always, it takes refinement for true self-assessment. As the Somalis say "*Maroodigu takarta isaga saaran ma arkee midka kale ta saaran buu arkaa,*" "An elephant always sees the fleas on the other elephant but not his own."
4. Jama Mohamed Ghalib, *The Cost of Dictatorship*, New York: Lilian Barber Press Inc. 1996.
5. After a deal brokered by the Americans in 1991 between the victorious forces of the EPRDF who were poised to take power, the former president Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia quietly gave way and left the country. He is currently in exile in Zimbabwe where he owns a farm and a garage. Mengistu is being tried *in abstensia* for genocide and crimes against humanity. Enjoying the hospitality of teetering Mugabe, former president Mengistu is reported to have so far cost the Zimbabwean tax payer, nearly 2 million US dollars.

4
Clannism, Nepotism and Cronyism

In October 1969, when twenty-five Somali military officers, headed by the then Chief of Staff of the army, Major-General Mohamed Siad Barre took power, they rescued the Somali nation from imminent collapse. This closed an era of misrule by successive democratic but corrupt and divisive governments which had ruled the country since independence in 1960. The country desperately needed a change. The first five years of the new revolutionary government saw the introduction, like a breath of fresh air, of a new political atmosphere: the new government became so popular that the country felt itself born again. All those government evils such as clannism, nepotism, corruption and cronyism, which had dogged the previous governments, were uprooted. As a result bonds between all the Somali people were re-established. The nation became one under its new rulers.

Even though this was a military government with a catalogue of shortcomings, the main recipe for its initial success and popularity was its establishment of an equitable political system for the first and last time for all the people. Clan domination of politics -- the major evil which always marred Somali governance, particularly during the reign of the last civilian governments -- was thrown out and the widely loved motto of: opportunities for all matched only with talents, was introduced. "The right man in the right post" was the leading domestic policy of the government. As a result, public reassurance and trust in their new rulers was instilled -- only to be betrayed in later years. These popular policies, as time was to demonstrate, were not because of the leader, whose character and dubious ways of doing government

business were to be unveiled during the last ten years of his rule when all powers of government were concentrated in his hands. Government decisions were taken collectively by the then powerful ruling Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC).

In later years, at the end of the 1970s, after Somalia went into costly war with Ethiopia and after the leadership sought to ensure its survival through policies of divide and rule and the award of jobs on clan and loyality bases, the popularity and trust in the leadership plummeted. Somalia headed down a slippery slope.

The fact that Somalis, even though exceptionally homogeneous as a nation, are also from various clans is not the root cause of the violence and bitterness towards each other which the world has witnessed in more recent times. In its original innocent form, the clan factor has no evil element in it which can destroy a nation. Criminalising clannism as taboo, arresting those who were heard in public using clan names, was foolish, since the leadership itself used the clan factor in all political transactions. Things got out of hand when the president of the nation, who was supposed to busy himself with the promotion of harmony and the wellbeing of his people, began to manipulate and unlawfully use the clan system in a way that served no interest other than his own. Abrogating all popular policies that were in the interest of the nation, he implemented discriminatory policies. Promotions and appointments all came to be made on a clan basis. He also victimised individuals on the grounds of their affiliations. No one chooses his clan or ethnic origin but rather finds it out after birth. When such factors became a dominant part of government policy, they proved a lethal cocktail for the nation. Clan in its ordinary form has neither teeth to bite nor force to destroy. The clan factor, when people talk in teashops, in their homes and in the countryside, is hardly an element worthy of mention: but when clans are politicised, manipulated and used as a tool to harm and divide, it becomes a deadly monster.

In 1970, after hardly a year as the head of the government, during those heydays of selling himself to the public and establishing his authority over the country, one hot afternoon the Somali leader mobilised tens of thousands in the capital city to march and give an effigy -- a coffin supposedly representing the deceased body of tribalism -- a mass burial. But the pretence of

their leader's "honesty" soon became clear to the Somali public as only one of many treacherous publicity stunts. Here was a man who exercised the famous principle of "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil," always giving lip service to all the good things, but at the same time invariably doing the opposite. That same leader was the one under whom clannism, cronyism and corruption plumbed depths the country had never known. This was a man who believed in nothing other than achieving his own narrow interests. He could promote anything provided there was something in it for him. When he was vulnerable and needed to establish trust and authority, he knew that the only thing he had to do was to be different and be seen to be different from his predecessors, those clannish and corrupt politicians loathed so much by the Somali public. But when he had asserted his authority and there was no need for him to demonstrate his credentials, his true image was unveiled. Using the infamous colonial tactic of divide and rule, he played one group against another. This produced resentment and disenchantment never heard and seen in Somalia and set the country en route for oblivion.

To understand the level such matters have reached and how they have degraded our people, I will recount how, one evening in November 1994, I received a telephone call from a friend of mine who was from the clan of the former president. In that segment of our people there are many who, unlike the former president, are patriots who love their country and people. As with everything and everybody else, he also used his Marehan clan only as a means to reach his goals. To many among them he passed on this fundamentally flawed message that the government was specially theirs and when the latter was defeated by none other than its very owners -- the Somali people -- some took matters personally. Each and every one of those deceived by his fallacy -- he used to say to them "*Dawladda idinkaa iska leh ee ilaashada,*" "The government is yours alone so protect it" -- felt some sort of personal humiliation.

This friend of mine was himself still entertaining the possibility of a comeback to power by the former president. That evening, he was exceptionally obsessed with this illusion. The purpose of his call was to inform me of an unfortunate bloodbath that he said

had taken place that same day in Burao. I detected some exuberance and I wanted to know what was so important or commendable about the spilling of the blood of our brothers and sisters in any Somali town. It was not the killing that he was happy about, yet because of the massacre, he was drawing a false conclusion out of this misery. I was shocked when suddenly he said, "You see, this only shows that our people cannot rule themselves and they need 'the old man' more than ever before, in order to stop the blood spillage." He was not an ignorant man, but what he said that evening only demonstrates the extent to which some of the Somali people became blinded by evil clannism. To me, this was like saying, "The killing of animals would stop in an abattoir, only when the head butcher returns." The fact that "his statesman" for whom he longed so much was the man who started the blood spilling in Burao and everywhere else in Somalia, evaded him. Nor could he know that evening that the former president who was in those days languishing in a cramped one bedroom flat in Lagos, Nigeria, had a mere month and a half left in the world of the people and nation he had destroyed, before he was summoned to face the judgement of his Creator.

Many among the Somali people seem to be under the lock and key of clannism. They see everything in black and white terms of clan. Some are even biased to the extent that they think that the policies of some governments towards Somalia are clan based. For instance, some not even ignorant but educated Somalis thought that Egypt or for that matter the ousted former Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, favoured one Somali clan over the others. I don't think Boutros-Ghali even knows or cares the clan of those who were in power in the last government of Somalia. Ministers and other government officials in foreign governments deal with whoever is in power in a country, regardless of their clan or sub-clan, as legitimate representatives of that country. When two officials from two different governments meet, they meet representing their country's interests not clan interests.

Nepotism is one of the evils which can break a government. In 1961 when John F. Kennedy became the President of the United States, he appointed his younger but domineering brother Robert

Kennedy as the attorney general of the country. Robert Kennedy was a highly qualified and gifted man who no doubt was an appropriate person to hold this or even higher posts. But such appointments, where a head of state brings in a member of his family, have more cons than pros. To start with, there is conflict of interest and ethics when those who are bonded by blood or marital relationships also meet in public offices. Not to mention the strong administrative and policy-making influence he had over his president brother, it came to irritate and frustrate Lyndon B. Johnson, the then vice president, and the other White House staff members when Robert Kennedy would spend hours every day in the oval office with his brother and so clog the system. This is not an unusual matter, as the relationship between two brothers whose paths of life also meet in such high public office becomes almost complete. The sky was the limit of what they could share and talk about: from personal childhood, family, nation etc. An ordinary attorney general who had no blood relationship or other affinity to the president other than a work relationship at most would have engaged the president for not more than two to three hours per week.

Another example of such misconduct is the sad story of the premiership of Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan. The appointment of her husband Asif Zerdari as finance minister in her government was perhaps the greatest political misjudgement she had ever made. As alleged, this husband of hers not only indulged in explosive levels of corruption but damaged her reputation and any future political prospect beyond repair. He is the man mainly responsible for throwing the whole country and government into a quandary.

Those who work together in power and also share another outside relationship, naturally interfere with the smooth functioning of both the office and responsibilities to the nation and fellow colleagues. The bad experience of the Kennedys and other incidents must have paved the way for the amendment to the American constitution which states that no public official may engage any member of his family or his spouse in a public office of which such a person is head. If that law were not passed, many presidents who had able relatives and wives such as the brilliant lawyer-wife of President Clinton -- Hillary Rodam Clinton--

might benefit from such relaxed laws.

In 1986 President Mohamed Siad, having survived a terrible car crash, introduced his sixteen-year-old son into politics. Having been born a few days after he became president of Somalia, he named this son of his "*Ayanle*" which means "The fortunate one".

During those last few years of hanging onto power and hoping that something may turn up, President Mohamed Siad, who was a very superstitious man, thought that the "good fortunes" of his son would rescue him and prolong his stay in power by injecting much needed steam into his sluggish dying presidency. Rather than aid his father's ailing rule, the boy only complicated matters and did untold damage to quicken the former's departure. He quickly amassed great powers and became the most powerful confidant of his father. He appointed and demoted officials like nobody else.

Rather than guide his young son to continue his schooling and seek higher education, what kind of caring father would ask his untrained teenage son to lose his innocence at a nation's presidency, and meddle and muddy the day to day running of the government? Like a driver who got tired of driving and gave his car keys to his teenage son, the president watched his boy totally discredit the Somali presidency.

No sooner did the teenage son of the president appoint officials to lucrative posts, than he telephoned them to arrange kickbacks. He needed income on the side to finance his lifestyle. One day in 1987, a woman whose husband he had just appointed the general manager of one of the government's white elephant agencies, the insurance agency later named as "*Caymiska Qaranka*", answered her phone. As soon as she put down the receiver she revealed to a group of people she was entertaining "Do you know who it was on the phone? It was Ayanle Mohamed Siad. There is good news and bad news. The good news is he [*Ayanle*] told me that he had just made my husband the general manager of *Caymiska*. But the bad news is he wants his infamous ten thousand dollars commission for the appointment as soon as possible". In all his shameful appointments, the most scandalous was the appointment of his procurer of women as a minister in one of the country's five top ministries. Turning against his benefector, in 1990 the procurer-become-minister joined the USC,

the very people who unseated Ayanle and his father.

Of all the Somali president's household members, his eldest wife Khadija Ma'alin was perhaps the most disastrous. The infamous mischief of which she was guilty is illustrated in the "Ethics and Standards" chapter of this book.

The most powerful and gracious Almighty allowed Major-General Mohamed Siad to become President of Somalia, but by making his cousin Abdirahman Jama Barre the Foreign Minister of Somalia, the former president shot himself in both legs. No one man or even group was more disastrous to the government, the presidency and to the country than this man. The foreign minister was under the illusion, because of his unchecked powers, that he was the most important man in the country. His greatest preoccupation and obsession was sex, salivating when he saw women -- any woman from the staff or outside the service. In the eyes of all at the Foreign Ministry and indeed of the whole nation, he was a man who had no colour, honour or value. This assessment was in part to do with his disregard of the value and respect due to others, be they superiors or subordinates. He and his cousin, the president were under the false illusion that by undercutting the value of everybody else in the government, they would be seen to sparkle in a nation in which everything was stripped of value. How wrong they were! No leader or top official of a country is an island cut off from everybody else; the more value and respect extended to subordinates, the more value those at the helm obtain in return.

Clannism, nepotism and cronyism in government systems have proved only to be catalysts in bringing down the governments which employ them. No sound or enlightened government would use such policies. They are only introduced as a means to an end -- survival. Such policies have proved to be failures based on tunnel vision and short-term political considerations. No public is totally unconcerned over how their affairs are managed. Whether they have a say through ballot papers or whether they are only spectators, they will eventually be the ones to decide whether their government deserves their support or whether they have to seek change through peaceful or violent methods. Any government seeking to retain power must eschew such self-defeating

policies as clannism, nepotism and cronyism.

Because of the crooked way the state was run and public affairs were carried on, many Somalis, who are in any case a very independent-minded people, nowadays feel strong antipathy to governance and statehood. And as a result of the level of misuse of public office -- abuse of power, injustice, corruption, nepotism, clannism, cronyism and all other evils exercised by past governments -- the Somali public lost all trust in their politicians. This applied not only to the old discredited politicians but even new ones whose only aim may have been to serve their nation and better the lives of their people. There is an element of mistrust and cynicism towards the whole profession. As one of many disastrous consequences of the demise of the state, this is a very dangerous trend. It is very important for nations to have governments which regulate, direct, facilitate and oversee the lives of their peoples. No nation can do without a state. On the other hand there can be no government without political operators: no politician means no government.

Any government which uses divisive methods and fosters unfair preferences is bound to attract resentment and disenchantment not only from those estranged but even from those who were chosen and rewarded. A father who shows preferences amongst his own children ends up losing the respect and love not only of those he neglects, but also those he favours. Invariably, a government which favours one group above others ends up alienating both camps and making many enemies.

This happens mainly for two reasons. The ones who were always favoured take things for granted and will invariably ask for more. These spoiled people get used to the taste of acquiring what they do not deserve and will never settle for less, even if this works against the interests of the nation or the credibility and very existence of the leadership. Secondly and on the other hand, those who were neglected also belong to the house and their resentment and anger will turn them against the government and even into enemies of the state. When the leadership seeks alliances with some groups and turns its back on others in order to consolidate power or prolong a mandate over the people, the disenchanted are liable to declare all manner of warfare.

A good example of what happened in Somalia is the state of

affairs in Somali embassies. At the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, many illiterate and ignorant soldiers from the rank and file of the national army were transferred as diplomats to take up often comparatively high [diplomatic] positions as third, second and first secretaries. When I was serving in some of those embassies, my sixty-four million dollar question was always, what kind of government would post someone who had never been to school in his life as a diplomat to represent the nation abroad? Unqualified individuals from the ruler's clan were given unique and previously unheard of opportunities as loyalty bonuses after serving as personal bodyguards to the president, the foreign minister and their families.

It is the height of folly for government to bring an ignorant person into the system. It is always the case in life and in work that an enlightened enemy is to be preferred to a friend or brother who is an ignoramus. The leadership which opened the flood-gates for illiterates to enter the diplomatic service did not foresee that no matter how generously these undeserving persons (known as "dummies") were granted high positions, they could not hang on to the ranks which they were wrongfully awarded when younger educated colleagues had to be promoted on their merits. Some even felt that having stayed in embassies in capitals of Europe and North America for many years they were thereby qualified for promotions. The rulers who set aside the rules and favoured them over deserving educated Somalis, both within the country and abroad, eventually concluded that their protégés did not deserve further promotion, and many were kept in the same positions for years. No human being, let alone one who had already been given something he did not earn, would pass judgement on himself as not deserving further promotion. It is in the human genes to want to move forward. In the Somali experience, a crisis situation developed throughout the embassies. Disenchanted "diplomats" became very critical of their leaders and the system.

On the other hand locally, the same individuals became a thorn in the side of properly qualified diplomats with whom they served. They regularly opened and read mail in the trays, snatched newspapers and milk, and some even shredded and

destroyed important messages. This is quite apart from other nuisances such as eavesdropping, insubordination and quarrelling with their diplomatic superiors. Other common irritants were heavy breathing, obscene phone calls and constant snooping and peeping Tom antics. Such behavioural patterns were commonly used as weapons of terror by such "diplomats" whom the others also described as "*excess baggage*". The sole consolation of living dangerously and working in those horrific embassies in those years was the opportunity to cultivate the virtue of patience which, once acquired, might be of benefit later on. The lesson for government is obvious: not to bring an undeserving, ignorant person into a public government service merely because he is an ethnic relative or clan member. Not only are such persons good for nothing even for themselves, they cause a lot of havoc and pain for all concerned in a government system -- including those superiors who made the mistake of hiring them in the first place.

It is useful to summarise the damage caused by the last government of Somalia, which made such unforgettable misjudgements, so that any other government in Africa or elsewhere, that is using similar policies of blind favouritism and choosing people on clan or ethnic bases in the hope of securing loyality, might benefit. These are:

(1) In the first place such people do not benefit themselves. Even those among them who courted the former rulers of Somalia to send them to overseas embassies to seek education did not get any schooling, because they had never been to school in their lives and could not swallow their pride and start from primary levels when in their 30s, 40s and 50s. They had been given opportunities they had never dreamt of which should only come after education. Sitting in their embassy offices as superiors and ordering about other more qualified local staff, they could do little to justify their positions. To them, taking a post after hard-earned education was only for the underprivileged who did not have a president or a minister as their clan member. Most had children attending schools and for them schooling was a closed subject -- almost taboo. They could not reconcile being an appointed government official in an embassy in a foreign land with beginning the schooling they had missed. Unfortunately there was no easy or even hard solution to be found. They simply

warmed their chairs and ordered more tea and coffee to quell their frustration. Some of them sought solace in pubs and nightly *qat*, many lost their precious health and developed high blood pressure and other ailments such as diabetes.

(2) They caused havoc and anguish to their colleagues and to the offices in which they worked. These wrongly favoured persons behaved like spoiled kids who take all things for granted. Their needs and demands kept changing all the time. And as time passed, they demanded to move ahead and leap into even higher positions.

(3) Such persons could not understand that they did not deserve further promotion which they could not earn. This was not their fault -- by simple and common logic, if one has already attained what one did not deserve, what else might not come under this same criterion?

(4) As time went by, they acted and sounded more and more like dissidents, critical of the system and those superiors who had sent them in the first place. Indeed, leaders or officials whose injustice or misjudgement wrongly favoured people in public administration are not spared; the injustices they committed come back to haunt them with a vengeance.

(5) It would have been better by far for all: the government, the country and the nation, for seats uselessly occupied by these undeserving persons to have been awarded to suitable citizens chosen on merit. Such enlightened action would also have reduced both the dissident population who busied themselves day and night conspiring how to bring down the government and the number of demonstrators actually on the streets outside the embassies throughout the western hemisphere.

(6) I can confirm from personal experience during the years I served in some of those embassies, no enemy is more dangerous than an ignorant person who has been given something he or she did not deserve and put in a position of privilege. The trauma, scars and abuses these individuals have caused to those with whom they worked is unimaginable.

Clan affirmative action

On 21 October 1972, the military government in Somalia, having considered the gains of combating illiteracy, announced the

implementation of the writing of the Somali language in Latin script. This is indeed seen as one of the important achievements of the last government. But the way even this positive achievement was misused leaves a sinister aftertaste. The following illustrates one of its many flaws.

In 1986, fresh from a posting in Kuwait, I became acting head of the London embassy when the ambassador went away on leave. Two weeks after the ambassador's departure, it was time to send diplomatic mail to Mogadishu. While I was busy with the departing mail, a colleague -- one of those referred to as "excess baggage" for he had never been to school in his life -- entered my office with a two-page "masterpiece" in his hands.

I remembered that morning that he had been very busy piecing together a supposed analysis of the parties and politics of the UK, a few months away from the general election of June 1987 which saw Mrs Margaret Thatcher sweeping into power for the third time. He had earlier called me twice to remind me of his serious analysis and to request that I wait for him and not seal the pouch. Appreciative of his efforts, but apprehensive in the back of my mind, I had wondered what he was going to produce on the subject. Finally when he came in I checked the report which he had put together in Somali, as all correspondence to the country was written in the native language. Nothing had prepared me for what I saw. Not only was he totally ignorant of the subject matter, he did not even know which party was which and which leaders were in which party. Surprised and embarrassed but not wanting to discourage him and make his day's effort appear futile, I tried to reconcile him to making certain alterations. As I started to make some fundamental corrections, he exploded in anger and left the office. If he had been someone who had any form of basic education he would have appreciated that correction of his work would have been to his benefit.

Almost all the embassies could testify that such persons, even though they were given the chance to serve their country, survived by eroding the work relationships and harmony between embassy staff and heads of mission, between local staff and the diplomatic staff and between the diplomats themselves.

The writing of a language is not an education in itself but a medium which enables one to educate oneself and be able to

read texts and books. The fact that Somali was written was used as a tool to justify fatuous comment and report on all subjects; the sky was the limit. The writing of the Somali language in Latin script was followed by a government campaign of mass literacy. Like mushrooms overnight there spawned thousands of self-styled "intellectuals" in every field, politicians, sociologists, economists etc. To the nomad, who by birth knew how to speak his language and whom as a result of the government's introduction of the script became proficient, there seemed no job in the land that he was not able to do. So many of the uneducated, now able to write in their own language, became diplomats, managers, directors, military officers etc!

People were created by the system who were very grateful to the revolutionary government and as a result became "loyals". The leadership's main aim in the hasty introduction of the script was to secure the scorched earth terrain of Somali politics. In many of his speeches, the president used to refer to his crafted stooges as "*Dadkii xalaasha ahaa*" (the holy people). In his eyes, he considered the properly educated elite, who were not created by the system, as unholy.

Starting from 1984, the Somali Foreign Minister Abdirahman Jama Barre -- a close relative of the president who became the longest-serving foreign minister in Africa after Pik Botha of South Africa -- pursued a self-defeating policy of establishing an inner circle of diplomats who were members of his own clan. This inner circle within the ministry made everyone else feel excluded and bitter against the preferred incompetent persons, the minister and the entire system. It resulted in the emergence of two groups within the ministry, all people from one and the same nation. Those preferred felt that the government belonged especially to them and felt protected. The minister concerned did not appear to understand that this was a heavy price to pay for small unnecessary gains. Hatred towards a small number of individuals soon expanded to embrace the minister's whole clan.

From the year 1980, when the Somali leadership clearly started to sail away from the known paths of governance and began to champion gutter politics, the level of nepotism and cronyism grew by the day. In those years of bewilderment, one of the things which the Somali public became expert in was inventing and

diffusing anecdotes based on the political dust storms and the murky situations which the country faced. The following is one of many anecdotes based on blatant levels of nepotism.

One day in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan, during his presidential tenure in the United States White House, got the shock of his life to learn that one of his daughters had married a private in the United States army. The president was in a bad state and did not know how to handle this situation. Sitting in his office, he recalled that it was the function of his chief of staff to manage and advise on military affairs. The chief of staff was sent for and he rushed to the oval office to find out exactly what it was that the president had only mentioned "as a situation that was bugging him."

The president sat him down and revealed his family trouble, the marriage of his beloved daughter to a private in the US army, and asked what he would do in his shoes as father of the bride and president who also happened to be the commander-in-chief of the army. The chief of staff, having realised the seriousness of the problem, requested the president to give him a few days to think it over and undertook to "*rush*" him (how the Americans love that word) a suitable solution.

The chief of staff consulted all his office aides and generals on a situation which all of them acknowledged as something "they have never previously come across." After a few days, the chief of staff returned to the president and told him that he had completed all his enquires and had come up with the best solution. The president listened with eagerness. The chief of staff started by saying, "Mr President, I didn't know before, but it seems from all the enquires I made on countries, cultures, governments and leaders who have been faced with such problems, the president of a country on the Horn of Africa called Somalia has become the most expert in the history of mankind on marital affairs of a leader's children and what to do with their spouses." "It appears that President Mohamed Siad Barre has had the largest number of presidential marriages of his children and his solution seems to be the best in the world. It is to simply grant the 'son of a bitch' the rank of major-general." The president nearly fell off his chair with laughter saying, "but how? From private to major-general; tell me, how on earth can this be done?

Washington is a rumour-mill which devours such stories as you know, and what about those vultures at the national press club, the media and the House committees on defence matters. God damn it! Do you intend me to be impeached like Richard Nixon?" Reagan exploded. But the chief of staff had brought with him a folder with a typed presidential decree in it promoting the private to major-general and he put the papers on President Reagan's mahogany desk and said, "There is nothing new under the sun, Mr President, just sign here; your worries will be over in minutes and I will deal with the rest of the matter. I will tell the public, 'The buck stops here with me and it is within my discretion to promote the president's son-in-law.' At least that is better, than a private who runs around the country claiming to be your son! Right?" "Right!", the president responded, "You are my right-hand man to give me such sound advice. Where would I be without you?" The private was given his rank and overnight became a major-general.

The damage nepotism caused to the last government of Somalia was incalculable. In the early 1970s, Omer Arteh Ghalib was one of the most distinguished and successful Somali ministers in a nation most of whose citizens initially felt that they had been reborn after successive democratic but hopelessly tribalistic and corrupt post-independence governments had damaged its reputation, economy and social cohesion. Omer Arteh, in a bid to win more confidence and trust from the president who had made him foreign minister, promoted Abdirahman Jama Barre from an obscure departmental directorship to become the director general of the whole ministry. Many of his colleagues warned against promoting an incompetent cousin of the president, who cherished the ambition to himself become the minister, but he assumed that by doing this return favour, he would consolidate rather than erode his power. Omer Arteh, with all his human limitations and lack of a strong personality, was a good linguist with a courteous manner and striking presence, and usually good at his job.

One of the characteristics that can most easily make or break the career and success of a foreign minister is how good he is at public relations. Even the devil is entitled to his due and Omer Arteh was not only good, but a master in this field. As Thomas

"Tip" O'Neil, the longest-serving Irish-American speaker of the United States House of Representatives once remarked, "All politics is local; all politics is also personal." What makes the world go round is a well-nurtured and cultivated relationship between human beings. After all, what one deals with in government is not machines but humans who are behind every move -- good or bad -- which a government makes. Nothing is therefore more important than to have good skills in public relations.

Omer Arteh, definitely no friend of mine, could at times be tribalistic and differentiate between his own staff solely on a clan basis but, unlike his successor, was fluent in both English and Arabic. I mention this because since the civil war and the last decade of the military government, our people have been made to lose objectivity. Things have gone back to stone-age opportunistic levels. Evaluation of a person is nowadays based purely on black and white terms: praise of virtues based on fair judgement is taken as either material or clan motivated. Condemnation of bad characters or lousy leadership is similarly taken to be personal. What many of our people have lost, is the ability to evaluate a person truly. Friend or foe, assessment must be fair and influenced by nothing extraneous like clan relationship or ulterior motives. One of the characteristics of any civilised society is objectivity. Omer Arteh was skilled in making friends. Conscious of style, he always carried a small comb with him in the rear pocket of his trousers with which to tidy his hair at any opportunity. He enjoyed the limelight and always waved and smiled to crowds, local or foreign.

In Omer Arteh's time, at the height of the cold war, a strong military government was allied to the Soviet Union superpower. During the early years, with good economic credentials, no civil strife, and with the highest degree of harmony in and among the Somali people, Omer Arteh was recognised not only as the best foreign minister in Somali history, but at the time possibly the best the African continent had ever produced. He made friends left, right and centre for himself and for Somalia. His name, and that of Somalia, rocketed to reach a peak in the international arena. Omer Arteh, naturally an easy going if somewhat self-centred man, was brought up in a relatively prosperous environment. He

never suspected that the president's cousin, whom he had promoted to become the second most powerful man in the ministry, was continually on the phone to the president conniving and conspiring to incriminate and discredit him, in order to unseat him and steal his post. Insubordination was the name of the game. For a few years, the president's cousin simply by-passed his superior until eventually the time looked ripe for a bid to get rid of Omer Arteh.

From envy, based on small-mindedness, and in order to further curtail Omar Arteh's success and popularity in the world arena, President Mohamed Siad blocked his nomination as secretary general of the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU) during its annual conference, held in Mogadishu in 1974. This is Africa. In Africa, those who are good are lucky not to lose their life simply because they are able. Ability invites jealousy and attracts the attention of enemies who ask for nothing less than your head. Omar Arteh, after pulling off the biggest diplomatic coup in the history of the Horn of Africa, is lucky to be still around.

After nearly a year in which the Foreign Ministry portfolio was empty, the president's cousin and protégé, who could neither speak nor properly write any other language and who was inept, nevertheless became the undisputed *de facto* foreign minister of Somalia. Then, at the height of Somalia's war with Ethiopia, in 1977-78, he was officially sworn in. On a personal level, the man who elbowed Omer Arteh out, though perhaps a little more disciplined, undoubtedly failed disastrously in his duties and contributed the most to the collapse of the country and the downfall of his mentor and cousin, the president. He served as foreign minister for nearly two decades and as he amassed power and wealth, he grew more and more possessive and greedy and busied himself not with the duties required of him, for which he had neither the talent nor the stature, but with an insatiable appetite for the opposite sex. He seldom recognised the huge responsibilities on his shoulders and it never seemed to occur to him that one day he would leave public office.

One of the innumerable damages Abdirahman inflicted on the country was to frustrate a grand project the Saudi government proposed to Somalia. In 1981, the late King Khalid Bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia sent his efficient ambassador and longtime

representative to Somalia, Sheikh Taha Al-Dugheyther, as special envoy with a very crucial message. The Saudi government, trying to check the expansion of communism in the Horn of Africa and the possible return of the Soviets to Somalia, proposed to the former Somali government the settlement of all territorial disputes with Kenya. As an incentive or bonus, the Saudi government was prepared to finance Somalia's developmental projects in the years ahead. Yet this constructive plan was rejected flatly by the leadership.

In later years, after it had become weakened, it did sign a peace deal with Kenya withdrawing all territorial claims, but by this time with no benefit attached. It became crystal clear that the man behind the scrapping of the important Saudi plan was Abdirahman. He was quite unrepentant and one day after the signing of this quite fruitless deal with Kenya, he bragged to Hashi Abdalla Farah, the then Director General of the Foreign Ministry, that he had earlier gone out of his way to abrogate the Saudi proposal. Whatever else may be said of him, Abdirahman was a patriot and he would never have sold out what he saw as Somali vital interests. A staunch advocate of independence and unity he remained an adherent to the Pan-Somali aspirations of the early years. In that area he often proved inflexible and quite failed to grasp that Somalia's long-term interests could demand that idealistic political positions could be modified and her policies developed to suit the changing diplomatic climate.

Another very crucial plan which met a fate similar to that of the Saudi's Kenyan proposal was a grand project presented by the head of the Indonesian Airlines *Garuda,* who wanted to make Somalia the hub for their flights to the Middle East, Europe, Africa and North America. This multi-billion US dollar project, which would have employed thousands of Somalis, was also killed by the former foreign minister. A problem was that everything instigated or negotiated by someone was widely suspected to involve kickbacks and brokerage. A negative culture developed in which one was regarded as successful as long as one succeeded in diverting a percentage of the cost of the project. The former foreign minister in particular suspected that others were benefiting from any scheme in which he was not involved and, avaricious as he was, he could never allow that.

Greed coupled with wild ambition knows no boundaries, values or logic. The country and the president himself were better off with the able Omer Arteh -- the falcon of Somali Foreign Affairs -- serving the nation. With an individualistic nomadic culture and the confident attitude of "I can do anything" the Somali is blessed with a mega-ego. A nomad who has never been away from his camels would be quite capable of confidently joining a line of astronauts waiting to man a spaceship. Even so, to others the difference between the two former Somali foreign ministers is at no time more stark than now, when Somalia is in tatters. The Somalis say *"Nin walba qiimahiisuu wattaa,"* "Every man has his own value [price tag] pinned on him." Omer Arteh was only foreign minister for six years and more than a score years have elapsed with him still in the limelight enjoying popularity and milking the name and friendships he made throughout the world. He enjoys the hospitality of governments, the loan of private jets, and the proceeds of financial gestures and gifts. Believed to be a long-standing friend of the Saudi Kingdom and especially of King Fahad Bin Abdulaziz, he based himself in Saudi Arabia after Brigadier-General Mohamed Farah Aideed ordered him to leave Somalia, and continued to live in some style.

No one seems to have heard even a squeak of the activities, if any, of the other colourless fellow, Abdirahman Jama Barre, despite his fifteen years as Somalia's foreign minister and undisputed second most powerful man. When he visited the UK (twice during 1994 and early 1995), by contrast, Abdirahman stayed at a small flat which the local council had allocated to a Somali refugee family in a North London neighbourhood, overlooking the settlement of incurred expenses.

An Arabic wisdom saying is "Your enlightened enemy is far better than your dull brother." Familial proximity to the leadership of a country is a measure neither of ability nor enlightenment. In governance your brother is he who is the winner who can deliver the goods. What is the point of hiring a chauffeur who cannot master the ignition of his car and handle that vehicle with confidence. It is better to tell an ambitious but inept brother "Sorry, you are not the right man for the job." That is not only good for the country but also for those driven by ambition who do not know their limitations.

Another exceptionally gifted man whose fruitful services were denied to the Somali nation was high-flyer, the late Hussein Abdulkadir Qassim, Minister of Mineral and Water Resources in the 1970s and early 1980s in President Mohamed Siad Barre's government. Like hundreds of others, he saw the writing on the wall and took refuge in the United States in 1987. He returned in 1991 only to die of despair (back in the United States) at a comparatively young age. A born leader, Hussein was perhaps the brightest person the former Somali leader ever employed. A witty and highly talented individual, he was naturally skilled in the art of diplomacy and international relations. He was a fine orator, eloquent in Arabic, English and Italian.

President Mohamed Siad Barre, realising Hussein's extraordinary abilities yet unable to choose him as foreign minister over his inept cousin, used to utilise him between 1977 and 1982 as an alternative representative of Somalia at international conferences and as an envoy to deliver important messages to heads of government. For a period, the Somali president was torn between them, although the difference was as stark as between the moon and the sun.

It is tragic when a leader is neither guided by patriotism nor is sufficiently enlightened to guide the affairs of a nation properly. The former president paid dearly for his misjudgement. During his last days up to his death on 2 January 1995, in exile in Nigeria -- broken-hearted and in financial straits -- he must have ruminated over the bitter lessons that blood-relationship is no watertight insurance policy. Meanwhile his chosen cousin had opted for a better life in the sunshine of California with his younger family.

The most important lesson to be drawn is that nepotism is an evil which erodes the credibility and mandate of any effective government. As a consequence there is inevitably loss of trust by the public and the downfall of the leaders involved. Any government in Africa or elsewhere in the so-called "Third World" which still pursues the self-defeating policy of "good and privileged positions for the home boys" must think twice and abandon such self-destroying practices. The best and most successful policy for any government administration which will result in blanket justice and strengthen the government mandate, is the flawless policy of always matching opportunity with skills. Those who represent the

local as well as foreign interests of a nation must always be chosen on the grounds of merit. This is not only an option but an absolute necessity.

The longest-serving Somali foreign minister, even though his street value in the Somali nation was minimal, was always escorted by half a dozen or more armed bodyguards, dwarfed only by the huge security entourage which invariably accompanied Henry Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State. Likewise, in African circles, the origin of the flashing lights and large motor cycle entourage, so favoured by African heads of state is often attributed to that of Haile Sellassie, but in fact the late emperor copied it from that of President John F. Kennedy. In February 1990, the then Somali ambassador in London Ahmed Jama Abdulle was appointed foreign minister, a post he would hold for no more than six months, after which he was to be replaced by another minister who would hold the portfolio for only three months. The term of service of a foreign minister was dwindling. This was a time when, in the last years of his rule, the former Somali president laboured under the illusion that his problems and unpopularity could be solely attributed to the ineffectiveness of his cabinet team. What the president did not understand in those last bewildering years was that serious political ailments are not cured by changing brands of paracetamol. That was a lesson he would only gradually come to acknowledge as the realities on the ground bit hard and fast.

In April 1990, less than two months into the job of foreign minister, Ambassador Ahmed Jama Abdulle, *Jungali*, stopped over in London for a few days for the first time in his new capacity. Upon his arrival at Heathrow, diplomats including myself from the Somali embassy in London went to the VIP section of Terminal 3, only to find that the minister, enjoying a good conversation with a fellow passenger in first class, had gone through the ordinary passengers' entrance. We rushed to the arrival section of the terminal to find Ambassador Abdulle alone with his trolley with not one single bodyguard. Here was a very down to earth and humble man so very sure of himself that he did not care whether or not he was received through the VIP section. As we exchanged greetings, one of the staff enquired what had happened to his bodyguards. The reply he received

was astonishing "What bodyguards? I need guards to protect me from whom? Is there any crime I have committed against my people?" (*Anigu ma eed baan dadkeyga ka galay?)*

The flight of the president

In 1991, when former president Mohamed Siad Barre fled into the interior, he hoped to live another day and wage guerrilla warfare from his former home turf of Gedo. Sheikh Zayid Bin Sultan Al-Nahian, the president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had earlier suggested he leave Somalia and move to the UAE. With the aim of helping Somalia deal with her problems he offered comfortable sanctuary with two residential buildings to accommodate all the dependants. Mohamed Siad did not show even the slightest interest in his longtime friend's offer. His political mystique and credibility in tatters, he still felt he had unfinished business in Somalia and a score to settle. Without a shred of doubt he knew that his political career was over. His sole remaining aim was to take revenge on his own clan. He had risked his presidency by having them as chosen overlords of the Somali people. Mohamed Siad had once thought that, with their support, he was invincible, but when the battle for control of the capital had started in December 1990, the first officers who fled, deserting the former president in his most critical hour of need, were senior military officials from his own Marehan clan whom he had favoured and groomed. They simply did not want to be seen with a loser. Nor did they think him worthy of their immolation. He had sacrificed his popular support amongst the Somali public and lost his mandate because of nepotism.

According to a Somali businessman who saw Mohamed Siad at Bur-Dhubo, his base in Gedo region, he confided in him the view that he had lost the war and fled the capital for no reason save that those of his own clan, whom he had nurtured and groomed as military officers, had deserted him at a time he most needed them. He had thought he was secure as long as he had their loyalty, service and protection. In his judgement he had spared nothing to boost his own clan, but the problem was that a clumsy man's efforts are always clumsy. Among his own chosen clan members, even the ones he most preferred and on whom he had showered positions of power and influence

(including his eldest son Maslah), were people who, rather than protect him from others, were themselves in need of protection.

In April 1992, when Mohamed Siad was finally ejected from Somalia altogether, even though the credit and publicity went to Aideed and his men, who pursued him to the Kenyan border, the real story was somewhat different. The main reason for his being eventually thrown out of Somalia was a quarrel with his own generals. On 9 April 1992, he had unilaterally ordered a brigade of his most loyal troops to move from Qoryoley to capture the strategic airport at Balidogle and the town of Afgoi. This was a direct confrontation with his generals whom he deliberately bypassed, resenting their persistent reluctance to mount any offensive attacks in those days. Even though his armies captured Balidogle and reached Afgoi, disagreement within his divided high command erupted into a violent power struggle between two camps: Mohamed Siad's versus that of General Mohamed Hashi Ghani. Interviews they had given to a camera crew of DHM Television productions in March 1992, only three weeks earlier, made it very clear that both men were seriously at loggerheads, denouncing one another.

27 April 1992 saw the dejected Somali president at the Kenyan border, menaced not only by General Ghani's army but by the troops of General Aideed who, once they got wind of the disagreements of their adversaries, advanced in hot pursuit. President Mohamed Siad saw the chance for revenge. On that day, he disarmed several thousand of those loyal to him by handing over their weapons, including ninety personnel carriers and "technicals" (vehicles modified to carry guns), to the Kenyan authorities. Certainly on that day Mohamed Siad had the last laugh. Having left his people disarmed and defenceless, he abandoned them by helicopter. Meantime, they were routed by General Aideed and his militia. The irony is that many of those President Mohamed Siad left behind together disarmed and routed, with many more from his own clan, still continue to idolise the former president. It would seem that the former president has succeeded in deceiving a section of the Somali people for all time even from beyond the grave. It was the legendary American President Abraham Lincoln who is believed to have said "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some

of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all the time."

The plight of the diplomats

If the soldiers and militia members suffered being caught up in the chaotic consequences of policies favouring individuals on the grounds of ethnic and family connections, so did the officials in the Somali diplomatic corps.

Of the embassies in which I served, the Somali embassy in London was the most chaotic. From time to time since the 1980s demonstrations had been staged across the street in front of the embassy -- which was housed in a rented building, number 60 Portland Place. The demonstrators numbered among them the cream of our people. No nation can afford to alienate and throw out such as these -- it was the brain drain of Somalia. They were the intelligentsia who, if they had been incorporated into the governance of their country, could have made a difference by ensuring the development, and above all, the continued existence of Somalia. Nothing turns the stomach of a diplomat more than to come out of the embassy building and see his or her own people transformed into enemies of the state by situations beyond the capacity of the leadership to control. In the true sense of the word, those Somalis who ended up in opposition, and who in the 1980s used to demonstrate against their own flag, had been alienated by their own country, specifically by their own government.

Individual civil servants who, like myself, stayed in their diplomatic posts throughout the 1980s and even beyond into the civil war era, were with the government not for love or materialistic reasons; pay was very low and invariably irregular. Our main reasons were as follows: (1) We as civil servants knew we were not to blame for how the country was run and what was taking place. We had no power to point out how or why the country was badly administered and run into the ground. My own or my colleagues' departure from the service would have changed it not one jot. (2) The country did not belong to those leaders who were in power and who misruled it. Everyone in government service had the right to remain employed for the good of the nation. (3) Like all others, members of the diplomatic corps yearned for a change and hoped for it to come. (4) The

opposition groups could in any case attract few from the civil service as they could be worse than the government. Many were unpatriotic, divisive, clannish, self-serving and after all some were controlled and manipulated by the then Ethiopian socialist regime -- an enemy government. To many it seemed better to stay with the devil they knew than the devil they dreaded. (5) To vacate posts and run away from your own homeland is seldom the best way to seek change. To retain hope and actively seek change from within is better by far than to surrender to the enemy or wander around in other people's capital cities.

Diplomats are civil servants, with the exception of very few politically hand-picked appointees who are designated from time to time by the head of state. A diplomat is neither a policy maker nor a policy implementor as regards his country's internal problems, but a representative of the goodwill of his nation and his nation's flag carrier in accreditation to a foreign government. But this does not imply that the diplomats did not comprehend why so many of our able men and women ended up alienated by the government and exiled, or in the armed struggle in opposition. The oppositions in Somalia and in Ethiopia were clearly of political interest to the other nation since the two governments were not on friendly terms. The Ethiopians, however, were to demonstrate greater maturity in some areas.

The new Republic of Ethiopia

Unlike in Somalia, which slipped into devastating civil war, when the victorious Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Forces (EPRDF), comprising the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and other Ethiopian factions, were poised in March 1991 to win the last vestiges of power by taking the capital city, Addis Ababa, the West, mainly through the United States envoy Dr Herman Cohen, then US under secretary for African affairs at the State Department, brokered and facilitated the peaceful transition of power from the fallen government of President Mengistu Haile Mariam to that of the EPRDF. This happened mainly for the following reasons:

Firstly, when troubles started in Somalia, the West, with whom Somalia was mainly allied, was preoccupied -- the Gulf war being at its height. Secondly, unlike Ethiopia, the opposition in Somalia,

which was poised to take power, in January 1991 was disorganised, undisciplined and even anarchic. Also, it was a general public uprising in Mogadishu, rather than a series of opposition controlled events, which led to the eventual fall of the government.

Beyond doubt the new rulers of Ethiopia are the first to break with a long tradition of nearly 3000 years of autocratic self-rule and introduce a good measure of democracy by African standards which is a degree of freedom of thought and the people to be able to choose their local administrators. Unlike their predecessors, the new elite at the helm of power are not only enlightened but also driven less by narrow self-centred and self-serving jingoism, as has previously and invariably been the case in the history of that country. In order to enter the twenty-first century, Ethiopia certainly needed transformation through political as well as economic reforms, to overhaul the sometimes almost mediaeval socio-political mechanisms which had for too long held the country back. Among the areas which have benefited from these changes is the Addis Ababa press which enjoys a comparative degree of freedom.

From personal knowledge of the personalities in power in Ethiopia, gained during my days in the Somali government, I confirm that several were active in the leadership of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). My acquaintance with them goes back to 1983 when I was acting as director at the Somali Affairs department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Relations with the political movements of the Horn of Africa came under this department. I no longer maintain any relationship with them; my former relationship was gradually cultivated as a result of personal as well as national commitment to change for the better in the region. Born in the Somali areas within the Ethiopian empire, I was more than ordinarily enthusiastic to see the back of Mengistu's repressive regime.

In 1989, one of the most active and gentle officials of the TPLF, who used to liaise aid to their people through the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), came to the embassy in London with his old travel document for replacement. One of the ways by which the Somali government used to assist liberation fronts in Ethiopia was to facilitate the promotion of their cause. I put the document with

the usual covering letter into our weekly diplomatic pouch together with the rest of the correspondence that was ready to go. After leaving my office, these materials used to be handled by two other officers. The embassy chauffeur usually saw the pouch through the special cargo section of the airport. I never suspected for a minute that the document with my correspondence might be sabotaged by any of those who were involved in the despatch of the mail from the embassy. For a year or so, to the dismay and inconvenience of the passport owner, his organisation and myself, attempts to establish the whereabouts of the despatched document or what had happened to it failed. How was I to explain to the person concerned when I discovered that one of our officers had deliberately mislaid the documentation? Because of centuries of enmity between our two countries, he had no sympathy for any cause which involved Ethiopia.

Ethiopia was for many years ruled by a well-established feudal group from the Amhara nationality who not only despoiled the country of its wealth, but denied an iota of benefit to other nationalities. The traditional rulers certainly needed to be taught that it is not possible to rule a nation for ever with a gun at the temple of everybody. Nor can a political system based on a narrow-minded, self-serving jingoism of the imperial nineteenth century type respond to the needs of a nation in the contemporary, ever changing world, approaching the twenty-first century.

The people of Ethiopia are in reasonable hands. Compared to any past leaders and politicians, the new rulers of Ethiopia are by far the most open-minded and responsible. Ethiopia has been fortunate to have Meles Zenawi as Prime Minister and Seyoum Mesfin as Foreign Minister. Former student intellectuals in the Haile Sellassie I University, the present leadership is high calibre over all. My personal recollection of the two most senior men in power is that they are disciplined and quite outstanding individuals. Like everybody else in the TPLF in the early 1970s, they went into the mountains to join the struggle to free their country, which took them along a path lasting nearly two decades of hardship shared with common men and women. Many of the latter went to great lengths, even sacrificing their lives, to bring Ethiopia from the clutches of terror and misrule by the *Derg*

government and usher in fundamental change.

In opposition, discipline was the main weapon which determined their lightning success and victory on battlefields against the sheer numbers and strength of the forces of the former government. In March 1991, when the TPLF forces reached the vicinity of Addis Ababa, the capital city's power station fell into their hands and was soon under their administration. In order to ensure the continued supply of the city's electricity, they sent gasoline tankers with a note to the enemy government of Colonel Mengistu in Addis Ababa, to release a shipment of fuel to the generating plant to enable it to continue functioning. The former government allowed a regular supply to the plant.

By way of contrast, in 1993, the Ethiopian government gave away some thousands of sacks of sugar to the then leaders in the Somali regions, whose administrative ethics were impaired by the blatant corruption current in Somalia. Intended for needy and impoverished people, no sooner was the sugar transferred into the hands of the concerned authorities, who were at the time in Addis Ababa, than the trucks which carried the sugar were diverted no further than the Markato, the bustling centre of the capital, and the sugar was sold there. The greedy Somali regional authorities put the proceeds straight into their own deep pockets. This made the new rulers of Ethiopia utter the famous wonder word one hears when Ethiopians encounter bewilderment, "*Abet! Abet!*". They had never in their life seen naked corruption of such an unprecedented magnitude. It was similar to the old Wild-West-style daylight bank robbery. One of the areas in which to check the sound credibility and strength of a government is how free the system is of corruption which can destroy its fabric and moral base.

Even though most of the developed nations of the West and Japan are pleased with the current leader and government of Ethiopia there remains a lot of coverage in the international press alleging abuses of human rights: torture, killings and arbitrary arrests and also disappearances by the hundred. Some have even alleged that if you grow a beard in the troubled Somali areas, as a suspected Islamic fundamentalist, you could attract the eye of the government security forces and be at risk of being

whisked away for interrogation. Similarly at risk are those who only recently began to abstain from drinking alcohol.

I know from experience during my years in the Somali foreign service that all sorts of negative material can be diseminated in any campaign to bring down a government. One example was the unfounded story of nerve gas which the Somali government was alleged to have received from Libya in the 1980s together with a variety of torture equipment. It had been exaggerated in many respects to cause maximum harm -- although torture did occur in Somalia. Once a government allows unnecessary abuses and excesses to take place, then naturally enemies avail themselves of the opportunity to take the utmost advantage of such scenarios in the media, which in any case has a tendency to thrive on frenzy and sensation. No doubt the massive critical campaign against the new government in Ethiopia undermines its credibility. Like a family whose household turns against it, once compatriots of a country turn against their own homeland, the world tends to listen to what they have to say.

After coming to power, by welcoming into Ethiopia Somalis who were dispossessed and displaced by civil war, the new leadership in Ethiopia to some extent succeeded in burying centuries-old suspicion and enmity between the two peoples. However, the August 1996 invasion of Somalia proper by Ethiopian gunships, infantry and artillery units in the Luq and Bula-Hawa areas, reopened old wounds and suspicions. There were also reports that in 1997 Ethiopian troops in pursuit of some Somali "fanatics" penetrated as far as Buhodle, deep into the territories of Somalia and then vandalised Qur'anic schools and mistreated pupils. Even the late emperor Haile Sellassie who could be cruel and authoritarian did not encourage such misconduct by his troops. He was very much aware that such things only inflame sentiments and usher in further dissent and troubles for the governing administration.

There is a Somali myth which says that Ethiopia, no matter what happens or what she does, is destined never to be a good neighbourly country but always an enemy waiting in the wings for the slightest opportunity to strike -- ever with evil designs and perverse interest in the affairs of Somalia. But many Somalis believe that it was not the intention of the country's leadership in

Ethiopia to invade, but that they were tricked into meddling in the internal affairs of Somalia by one of the Somali factions locked in bitter struggle with Islamic fundamentalist administrators belonging to the *Itihad* movement in the southern areas of Somalia.

The new leaders of Ethiopia were apparently led to believe that the troubles they faced from *Itihad* Islamic fundamentalist groups in the southern Somali regions of Ethiopia had their roots in southern Somalia. There it was said, a grand Islamic movement was planned. It seems there is no grain of truth in this. Clearly without alienating any party or invading Somalia, there were other avenues open to the new leadership in Ethiopia to minimise their troubles in the south. One of these would have been to isolate *Itihad* in the south eastern regions and win the hearts and minds of the Somali population by treating them well. This would have naturally reduced popular support and undercut *Itihad's* political base. Like all the other groups and nationalities in Ethiopia such as the Tigrayans, Eritreans or Oromos, the Somalis in Ethiopia have suffered enough under successive repressive regimes. News filtering from the Somali areas suggests that the new government is much the same or even worse than earlier regimes. Even so, the situation could still perhaps be reversed. The Somalis and many other nationalities feel that justice may have been introduced for the Tigrayans but not for others. Any government which comes to power in a country must take on its shoulders the responsibility to look after *all* those who come under its rule, whatever their ethnicity and creed. A government must go to almost any length to please its people.

Of course there will always be troublemakers in a country. That is a fact of life: one must take the rough with the smooth. But for whatever reasons, no matter how grave the situation might have appeared it did not justify striking at Somalia -- a nation that is on her knees. It is not manly to kick someone when he is down. Even in cowboy films, no one shoots anyone in the back. Sadly, much of the confidence building that had taken place during the first five years in power of the new leadership in Ethiopia has been lost.

The main objective of the new leaders in power in Ethiopia has been to free the country from a catch-22 vicious political cycle and transfer benefits from one group to all. They set out a

political agenda by which all the different nationalities of Ethiopia are listened to and response is made to the grievances etc. But after only a few years in power, as so often in the case of African governments, an outcry has developed from several nationalities, notably the Somali and the Amharas. It is alleged that in order to consolidate their power, the present rulers are acting more or less like past governments, allocating the country's welfare and benefits mainly to Tigrayan nationals and denying almost everything to others. On the other hand in Africa a person only remembers the existence of human rights when he becomes a victim. Amhara dissident groups who are nowadays discovering the benefits and use of human rights [an area in which they were not known to show interest] must be treated fairly and decently.

The application of political power, like everything else, always establishes its own shape, style and structure which end up in many cases differing from original plans and aspirations. This may not happen for sinister reasons or stem from hidden agendas, for when ideas, projects and strategies are implemented, they are moulded and modified by realities -- unforeseen forces or events. The final result is what political scientists term *new reality.*

If in Ethiopia the new government has chosen a course of absolute favouritism towards its own Tigrayans rather than to the rest of the population, this might not necessarily be due to the fault of the leadership. As always happens in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World, when a group comes to power, those who previously held power and who have a vested interest in keeping and enjoying it, start anew a fight to dislodge the newcomers. A power struggle emerges based not on ideology but merely on tribe, clan or nationality. This struggle is then perceived as a threat by the incumbent government. This well-known political cycle pushes the leadership more and more into accommodating and entrenching their own ethnic or clan population.

This pattern explains exactly what happened in Somalia. Initially the former leadership did not choose to bring in a majority of its sub-clan members to seize most of the positions of importance. Mass nepotism was witnessed only after April 1978, when a group of army officers from the Majerten clan attempted an

unsuccessful *coup d'état* against the government of former President Mohamed Siad Barre. Governments in Africa too often seem forced to abandon their original popular agendas of justice for all, in favour of choosing their own clan or ethnic group over everybody else. Ethnic proximity becomes a key factor in loyalty. This policy is fraught with dangerous pitfalls and any government which embraces mass incorporation of a single group, invariably that of the leadership, sows the seeds of discontent and future conflict. A government which relies on temporary alliances to prolong its life is bound to have to face the reality which time definitely brings.

History suggests that a government which alienates any group of its people is digging its own grave. And as is said in Somali, "*Dawlad marka ay dhimaneyso noqomadeedaa xabaasha aad ugu qoda:*" "When government is about to die its fools quicken the digging of its grave." Those fools are the ignorant and illiterate officials who were brought into the system through nepotism and favouritism. All who are given the chance to make a difference to their nation must either establish a system based on justice and equality or achieve temporary wellbeing over everybody else at the expense of the future. Surely the best way out of this cycle is to foster policies of reconciliation among the various sections of the national population and endeavour by all means to maintain harmony.

Eritrea: sowing seeds of discontent in a nation?

I have neither visited Eritrea when it was under Ethiopian occupation nor since it achieved its independence on 24 May 1993, but one may observe, in the media, comment on the current plight of many of its people, including some of its former freedom fighters. One could be forgiven for a sense of concern for this otherwise inspiring young nation. Eritrea is also an example of a nation which is said to have alienated a segment of its population and favoured a group of its people in preference to others -- only to sow the seeds of future discontent in the very foundations of the nation-state.

The strongest man in that young country is its President Issaias Afeworki. He is the man who can make a difference in that country and who has the authority for better or worse to shape

its destiny. The Eritrean president, whom I met several times during my days in the Somali Foreign Ministry, is an intelligent, eloquent and charismatic warrior with a long and difficult struggle for the independence of his people behind him. He planned and executed a strategy of war against all odds and against an enemy possessed of everything. Success in defeating and routing the strong forces of former president Mengistu of Ethiopia is a typical case of David vs Goliath. But with however much intelligence and charm, no human is perfect and like everyone else at the end of the day he too has human limitations.

It is taken for granted that the man who saw through the completion of the struggle, the defeat of such a mighty enemy and the dawn of independence for his nation, could transform himself from the chairman of the main faction of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation movement to become the leader for all the Eritreans. However, subsequent friction inside the country has been reported between the authorities and some freedom fighters, demanding greater recognition of their role. Also abroad in 1994, I was appalled to see Mohamed Osman, one of the pioneers of the Eritrean struggle, carrying shopping bags in a London suburb presumably walking towards his house and family still exiled somewhere in that part of London. A veteran courageous warrior, Osman was among the first Eritreans to join the struggle together with the late Osman Salah Sabbe -- a founding father of the Eritrean struggle for independence. But he is now among thousands of Eritreans who are out in the cold as though Eritrea had never achieved its independence and was still in the dark days of Ethiopian colonialisation. It is a pity that people like Mohamed Osman still remain dispersed all over the world without the opportunity to activate their lifelong dreams and aspirations in an independent Eritrea -- the fruitation of their struggle.

The main reason for being shunned, I am told, is that Muslims do not share the Christian religion with the leader or most of his cabinet. Christians are still most favoured in the country. As I have already pointed out at birth no one chooses his or her ethnicity or religion. One finds out to what one belongs in early childhood. Surely, no one should be penalised for belonging to a particular religion or ethnic group in any part of the world.

Likewise, citizens fought the same enemy if from different platforms and ideologies. If the blacks and apartheid masters of former white South Africa can reconcile and put aside their differences and harsh memories to coexist side by side and even hand-in-hand for the sake of South Africa, one wonders what it is that stops a young nation such as Eritrea from forgetting less severe disagreements between its peoples, for the sake of national unity. If Issaias Afeworki does not make a priority of bringing about a permanent solution to this much simpler problem of disunity, it could also be that by shunning a segment of his own people on the basis of religion, he is sowing the seeds of discontent. The leaves of bitterness have already started to grow among a large segment of his people and they have the potential to fuel a deadly civil war no less harsh than in Somalia.

I mention this bitterness in Eritrea because, as a Somali, I share many goals and aspirations with the people of Eritrea. Also as a former Somali government official, I have played a small part in assisting their struggle for freedom. I very much hope that this young nation and its creative and industrious people can put their differences behind them. They must gather together their disenchanted citizens strewn all over the world and heal their wounds to build a nation with strong foundations of national unity which can stand the test of turbulent times to come. After all, any nation founded on injustice and faltering race relationships will undoubtedly go up in smoke.

On the other hand self-reliance, which the Eritreans had perforce to adopt during the struggle when -- Somalia apart -- their plight was ignored to a man by the member states of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), has been made a central policy of the state. Issaias and his colleagues deserve great credit for this, as they do for taking an uncompromising stand against corruption.

The tragedy of favouritism, which is nowadays alleged to be taking place in countries in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere could perhaps also be because the leadership of nations is one of the loneliest jobs on earth. In many respects people who are around their leaders often feel insecure and are scared to tell them the essential truth. They prefer to feed them only what they would like to hear. It is quite possible that those around the seat

of power, who are harvesting the sweet fruits of freedom, are not telling the leader that, by alienating one group of his people, he is only sowing the seeds of wrath and future conflict within the boundaries of Eritrea. The time to reverse this terrible trend is now, otherwise it can only lead to misery for this nation and the region for generations to come.

It was Abraham Lincoln who in 1858 declared that "A house divided against itself cannot stand." It is too early to assess the foreign policy of the young nation, but it must be disturbing that conflict has arisen with neighbours to the extent that it has. Relations not only with the Sudan, but with the Yemen and Ethiopia have been strained. A government with divisive or abrasive policies, making preferences among its own people and demonstrating favouritism to particular groups over others, is not a government which will withstand the wear and tear of time. The same is true where no spirit of compromise exists. Such a government is neither really legitimate nor truly representative. Like a squatter who occupies property against the will and consent of the owner, eviction is only a matter of time.

5
Decline of Ethics and Standards

When an American president appoints senior federal government officials such as supreme court judges, cabinet members or heads of other government agencies to his administration, nationwide vetting of such public personalities by the country's top law enforcement agency (the FBI) always follows. The national mass media at the same time dig into the personal history of such persons revealing even petty scandals from their childhood. Such a frenzy of vetting can result in the withdrawal of potential candidates, however prominent. To the amazement of many in the wider world, minute matters which come up as a result of investigations can lead to confirmation of appointments being withheld. One such case was that of Judge Ginsburg, nominated by President Ronald Reagan. After some pressure Ginsburg admitted that in the 1960s he had used marijuana. Also affected by a similar problem were one nomination by President George Bush and several put forward by President Bill Clinton.

A question here is what relevance a youngster's use of pot, whether or not it was inhaled, could have on an appointment to a public post over five decades later. What makes misbehaviour in the remote past relevant in such appointments? Are such misdemeanours relevant at all? The answer is yes; it is very important to bar candidates even on such grounds. There may seem to be no connection between the early actions and sound judgement of a senior personality who has distinguished himself through many years of hard work and dedication and who has risen within society to became a potential candidate for the highest public posts. But relevance lies elsewhere, in the establishment and maintenance of standards and ethics at high levels. These naturally bar many would-be candidates, for they

would never abandon the serenity of their own private dwellings to come forward and seek important public posts if past indiscretions illustrating character weaknesses were thereby to become known. Establishing and maintaining a moral level as high as possible ensures that no one with the slightest stain on their record seek important posts in public adminstration. An analogy is that advertisements for a person who can jump a height of three meters -- with a bonus of a million dollars attached -- will only attract the very few who think they are competent.

An example of intense personal vetting and investigation was the 1988 nomination by President George Bush of Senator John Tower to become the US Secretary of Defense. The president at once aroused a press and public outcry. John Tower was allegedly notorious as a womaniser with a record of alcohol abuse. It was suggested that he would therefore be an unreliable link between the president and the armed forces. Moreover, it was argued that Tower's consultancy contracts with weapon building firms would severely handicap efforts to restore public confidence in the scandal-wracked Pentagon procurement system. President George Bush, not known as a quitter who quickly ditches those who earned his trust, defended John Tower to the hilt. But eventually even he had to concede defeat. On the recommendations of the Senate Bush withdrew the nomination. John Tower was soon a broken man.

Once government ethics and standards are allowed to slide there is no stopping place. Eventually they degenerate to the state of contemporary Somalia where those who have spilled the blood of their fellow citizens and looted the country as *warlords* unashamedly vie for the highest honour in the country -- its leadership. What makes a country so rundown that even blood-stained criminals unashamedly parade in front of the television cameras of the international mass media seeking to lead those whose brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters have died at their hands? The answer is to be found in the history of the longest-serving government in Somalia.

Before discussing incidents in this history, by way of illustration, it is perhaps appropriate to reproduce here excerpts from a US government publication on codes of ethics. The UK and the US are among the nations for which I have great admiration for their

high level of government ethics and standards.

Code of Ethics for Government Service
(US Government)

Any person in Government service should:

I. Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or Government department.

II. Uphold the Constitution, laws, and regulation of the United States and all Governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.

III. Give a full day's labor for a full day's pay; giving earnest effort and best thought to the performance of duties.

IV. Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.

V. Never discriminate unfairly by dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether for remuneration or not; and never accept, for himself or herself or for family members, favors or benefits under any circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of government duties.

VI. Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a Government employee has no private word which can be binding on public duty.

VII. Engage in no business with the Government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of government duties.

Employment of Relatives

By law, no public official of the government (including a member of Congress) may appoint, employ, promote, or advance, or advocate the appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement of a relative in the agency in which the official is serving or over which he or she exercises jurisdiction or control. A relative appointed, employed, promoted, or advanced in violation of these restrictions may not be paid. "Relative" for the purpose of these restrictions means a public official's father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, step-mother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, or half-sister. In addition to this legal restriction, most agencies have adopted code-of-conduct regulations aimed at controlling the appearance of impropriety and other prohibited actions. These regulations vary; some are narrowly focused while others are quite broad and may govern the employment of relatives.

A family business

In the 1970s the Somali president used properly to distance government affairs from members of his family. However, when one not acquainted with state affairs looks at the contrast between the later years of his rule and the first decade, one wonders what happened to the president to cause a U-turn, for he eventually transformed the nation's administration into a tightly knit small family business, only looking after its own concerns and related affairs.

The head of the state came to power with a hidden agenda to rule Somalia for many decades and create a dynasty. Having failed to achieve this aim through conquering Somali inhabited territories in the neighbouring countries, after the 1977-78 war with Ethiopia, he embarked on a naked path of corruption, clannism and nepotism. In the first years of his rule he distanced himself from the powerful Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC), which had initially been established, by transferring, piece by

piece, all power into his own hands. In these early years he was creating his power base and strengthening his "legitimacy" to rule. Having once achieved that, he started unashamedly to transform the affairs of the state into a family business. Sons, brothers, sons-in-law and even brothers and fathers-in-law of his children found their way into the cabinet. At one point, ten high posts were held by members of his own household.

In 1986 when the president was recovering from a near fatal car accident, he returned from abroad to witness hotly contested competition and intensive jockeying to succeed him. This state of affairs eventually led to a family feud, for several factions emerged within the president's Barre family. One group stood behind Abdirahman Jama Barre, his cousin the foreign minister. Another group supported Brigadier-General Maslah Mohamed Siad, the eldest son and *de facto* defence minister. While a third group wanted power to be snatched by Ayanle Mohamed Siad, the president's favourite teenager son, who after graduating from a nine-month degree course from Halane Academy of Political Science -- the president's own model of higher education where qualification was achieved in months rather than years -- ended up in the presidency, co-managing the national affairs with his father. Parallel to these parties from the president's own household was another major group which backed the supposedly heir-apparent Lieutenant-General Mohamed Ali Samatar, the first vice president. This group were called the constitutional group. Behind Samatar was Ahmed Suleiman Abdalla, *Dafle*, a son-in-law of the president, founder of the NSS and third vice president.

In these later years, the only qualification any unscrupulous and ambitious person needed to reach any height in the government system was a mere marriage bond with relatives of the ruling clique. The leadership unashamedly put its in-laws and even would-be in-laws in positions of influence. Marriage with the children and other close relatives of the president and his powerful cousin was as highly valued as government bonds and assets in the bank.

Dogged by indecision

In order ro understand the tragic collapse of Somalia, it is important to unlock the quirky and complex character of the

leader who presided over the Somali state affairs for twenty-one years. As mentioned elsewhere in this book, President Mohamed Siad Barre was capricious by nature. But he was also known for his indecision on key issues which required decisiveness. The following are but some of the countless examples: the crisis in the north, diplomatic relations with South Korea, and the replacement of the foreign minister.

In the early 1970s, when the military government was new and the regime was seen to be making things happen, one of the former leader's few good steps was to appoint Brigadier-General Bile Rafle Gouled as governor to Galkayo, a city in the central regions of Somalia. He proved himself a hard-working conscientious governor in the early days of the regime. In the mid-1960s, General Bile had returned to Somalia as a fresh lieutenant from a military academy in Egypt. Within two years of his appointment, he transformed Galkayo, his first major assignment, from a backward and soulless place to a modern and prospering city. In return the Somali ruler rewarded him with a meteoric rise from captain to brigadier-general. In three years, Bile was transferred to Hargeisa, the second capital of Somalia, as governor. The general transformed Hargeisa beyond recognition within a few years. In the afternoon *fiesta* hours, when Hargeisa is eerily dead because most inhabitants remain indoors, many of them chewing *qat*, Bile would spend his time on the streets with his famous swagger stick and aides ordering civil engineers and bulldozer operators to clear land for development, pave asphalt streets or demolish derelict buildings. He was one of the best governors the "revolutionary" government had ever produced. After Hargeisa in the 1980s, Bile became minister of agriculture. Regrettably, he was unable to repeat his earlier successes as the fervour for amassing wealth engulfed the country.

After the departure of Bile from Hargeisa in 1976, Somalia even more deeply committed itself to war with Ethiopia. Even in 1978, after the war, the government showed little or no concern for its northern regions and life stagnated. The people felt that everything was being done in the south. In the early 1980s, troubles started in the north. The situation was aggravated by insensitive administrators who ran the region. Discontented with harsh treatment and neglect by their government, the people

grew weary. To start with, northerners, like the people in other regions, had to travel to the capital Mogadishu for everything -- placing phone calls abroad or to other regions in the country, obtaining travel documents or attending a university. Rot and neglect was visible throughout Hargeisa and other northern cities as living standards fell. Rudimentary services such as electricity, water, sanitation and health were in poor condition or unavailable. Many flocked abroad, especially to the Arabian Gulf countries, to earn a living and send support to needy relatives back home.

In 1981 a group of intellectuals, doctors and businessmen, disillusioned with the grave situation, formed a self-help group to better conditions in the hospital and other parts of Hargeisa. Built by the British protectorate administrators in the 1940s, the hospital lacked medicines, facilities and regular power supply: it was dying a slow death. Mothers died there while giving birth. Its squalid conditions were unbearable. The self-help group enlisted the assistance of the local business community and collected millions of Somali shillings. The hospital general manager and local doctors also forged close ties with foreign humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and started receiving medicines and some of the required basic equipment. The government's security chiefs and the Mogadishu appointed local military governor were livid. One of an inept government's characteristics, in the face of such competence, is to be intolerant.

In their ignorance government officials saw this positive move by the people as bypassing them and "a gross breach of sovereignty" amounting to treason. In an operation typical of the military government's *modus operandi*, seven of the main leaders of the self-help group were whisked away one by one from their homes under cover of darkness. They were intellectuals and local doctors. They stood trial in the security court of the region and were arbitrarily condemned to death. This was later commuted to life-imprisonment. Eight years passed in solitary confinement at the country's notorious East German built *Labatan jirow* maximum security prison before their conviction was quashed by the president and they were released. Their initial detention led to the escalation of hostilities and the creation of the SNM -- the clan-based military and political movement of the north.

In the early 1980s, before things got out of hand, the elders, politicians and traders of Hargeisa, Burao and Berbera in the north used to confront President Mohamed Siad with humble demands such as the restoration of electricity and health services and the release of detainees, including the innocent seven would-be reformers and hundreds of others rounded up during security sweeps. The president never heeded such demands. Owing to his indecisiveness and arrogance, the former president could neither navigate himself nor the nation away from the self-created troubles in the north. Throughout the 1980s continued unrest and killings became the order of life in the north and it was undoubtedly the SNM which contributed most to the collapse of the government and eventually of the country.

A second example concerns Somalia and South Korea. Whether or not to establish diplomatic relations with South Korea was in balance for more than a decade. From the late- 1970s till the mid- 1980s South Korean authorities, who were locked in diplomatic battles with the North, sought recognition from many countries, including Somalia. The government in Seoul offered substantial financial assistance and significant develop-ment projects to Somalia. One reason for indecision was President Mohamed Siad's exceptional adulation of the late "great" leader of North Korea, Kim Il Sung. This dates from 1971 when he had made an official visit to Pyongyong, accompanied by a large delegation -- not to mention a ship full of Somalia's wildlife! Meantime the North Korean leader was openly courting former President Mengistu. North Korea built many projects including guns and ammunition factories in communist Ethiopia. It was as late as 1986 before the Somali leader accepted that relations with South Korea were important to Somalia. Unfor-tunately it was by then too late and the benefit involved was minimal: some forty Korean-made Hyundai ceremonial cars and two or three million US dollars in development assistance.

A third example of the president's lack of decisiveness concerns the foreign ministry portfolio. For nearly sixteen years Somalia's foreign affairs was presided over by the president's cousin Abdirahman Jama Barre. He was neither competent nor of the calibre to hold the post. He was in the job for all the wrong reasons. For many years a handful of presidential aides, senior

government officials and other civilians who had access to the president used to advise the Somali leader to remove his inept cousin from the ministry and replace him with a more efficient and appropriate person. In 1986 a certain ambassador, a clan relative of the president but a man of honesty, integrity and ability advised the president to replace Abdirahman with ambassador Ahmed Jama Abdulle, *Jungali*, then Somali envoy to West Germany. Ambassador Ahmed Jama was not only an able man but he also happened to be from the north. It took many years for the president to come to terms with this advice which was appropriate at the time. In February 1990 at a time when things had already fallen apart, the president appointed Abdulle as foreign minister. It was a gesture, but a decade too late.

The presidency becomes a teashop

One of the things which the late president cherished was to see a large throng waiting for him in the evenings at the presidency. Even though he was already president of the country, he still always loved to be at the centre of attention. He felt important when long queues of people were wanting only to see him. Government ministers, army generals, general managers, directors general and even lower ranking government officials all vied to be seen at the presidency waiting for him. It was a very common practice for many government officials and the public to vie to go to the presidency to sit in front of the president and tell him anything -- including gossip about other officials and their wives, for which he had an insatiable appetite. He was unusually keen to meddle in public or private issues no matter how minute. He would even try to mediate between and to reconcile husbands and wives whom he may have heard to be at breaking point or who had broken up. Like a doctor in his surgery, people were allowed to flock to him between 7:00 pm and 8:00 am.

The former president used to sleep during the day time. He knew that most *coups d'état* in Africa, including the one which brought him to power, had taken place during the night. Thus those in power needed to outfox the power hungry soldiers of the continent by staying up smoking and drinking endless cups of hot black coffee (*cafe nero*). He knew how he had come to power and was determined not to be unseated by the same methods. He

would not risk being subjected to the aftermath of such takeovers: tribunals, kangaroo courts and even executions. He was a man who had time for everything for he was not preoccupied by affairs of state.

What kind of personality would want people to stream to him every night of the week, mainly for small talk? Surely not a responsible head of state with immense powers and the task of running a nation. He should have had no time for what the Somalis call *"huuhaa"*. There were many people, some in positions of real influence, who would not be drawn into the frenzied time-consuming visits to the presidency -- a useless and unnecessary practice. But the president whom God had blessed with a huge memory-bank, never liked such persons. One such was a General in the police force who would never uselessly roam around the presidency in the evenings. He believed in keeping public service and public servants as clean as possible and away from political contamination. A friend once asked him why he was not seen at the nightly congregations at the presidency and he replied "Why should I go to the presidency as though it was my office?" But not all the people were as confident and self-assured as he. Always there were those who made the presidential palace a holy shrine worth hanging around.

Personally, during nearly ten years of service, I had never visited the presidency to seek audience until duty obliged me when, on 2 July 1989 the president received a two-man delegation from Amnesty International, Kevin Boyle and Martin Hill, whom I had accompanied from London in order to liaise their week-long visit to Somalia. With other officials, I was duty-bound to present them to the president. The president encouraged visits to the presidency as he wanted to be seen as the sole authority and the key to everything. The president would enquire of absentees "I haven't seen so and so these days. What is he up to and why has he chosen to be out of circulation?" This was designed to make any scrupulous and even self-confident official feel guilty and insecure and start spending his nights on the benches and chairs at the presidency. They became quite a rare endangered species in the government. Most officials were wanting in scruple and self-confidence. Since one of the requirements for selection was the lack of these qualities, they needed

to demonstrate that they loved to be near the nest of power and their esteemed president.

In those days of bewilderment, small talk and gossip displaced important government business. National interest was at the bottom of the list. A cleaner sacked by a certain ministry or an irresponsible vagabond could sometimes be alone with the president for a whole evening. On such occasions he sought to make a special point to pass the message to waiting ministers, ambassadors and generals that importance could only be defined as what he thought important. He wanted to humiliate and belittle "big" people treating them as less important than any insignificant person whose company he chose to indulge in for a length of time. On the other hand such redefinition of importance used to create intrigue and curiosity among the waiting throng to find out the close connection and the reasons behind the person's apparent importance. In a very real sense Mohamed Siad had resurrected the medieval court. The attendance of all the "great men of state" was required. Moreover, the absence of a courtier was noted and frankly disapproved of.

One other thing the president loved was to make appointments for two warring persons on the same evening. For instance, a private from the army who was critical to his commanding general, and that same general, or a low-ranking civil servant and his minister were often scheduled on the same evening. When the minister or the general in this case saw his low-ranking adversary in the same long queue he might well become wary and nervous. To add insult to injury, the person received first would be the low-ranking officer and the president would sometimes permit such a person to stay hours alone in his company chatting about the office, as though the person was qualified to articulate its affairs and other issues which were properly none of his or her business. The president delighted in people from any department or office being out of harmony. It seemed very important that animosity engulf them so that the staff would spy on one another and thus make it possible for the leadership to glean intelligence. Such trivial personal information was perceived by those at the helm of power as "invaluable and interesting". This was an addiction, one the president acquired from his early years as a police intelligence officer.

Marriage counselling by the president

In May 1984, when I arrived in Kuwait to take up my post at the Somali embassy, for the first seven days I did little else than sit in the archives of the embassy and browse. I took time to study everything that had gone on or had passed through the station. This is useful for any person joining an office, for the answers to many current and future issues lie in those dusty files. Unfortunately, because of the civil war, there are now no archives left in tragically war-torn Somalia. Except for some few documents salvaged and stored in personal records, all have long since gone up in flames.

One of the many surprises on which I stumbled in my quest to learn about the station and its past was a file in which was correspondence about a certain army captain, in the Somali military attache in Baghdad, Iraq. Most of the file was mediation by the president between the captain and his estranged wife, whom I learned later had taken refuge in Kuwait. There were no less than eight letters from the president himself counselling on the marriage failings of the captain. It was very hard for me to grasp the reason behind the president's actions in meddling in the personal affairs of any official, be it a captain in an obscure job or even his vice president. He should never have had the time. But it was clearly one of the favourite activities of the president to mediate in personal and domestic disputes between government officials and their spouses. He would even award public cash as inducement for some of the obstinate wives, with the aim of resolving the dispute. In such cases the president would simply order his spendthrift cashier to provide local currency or dollars, often running into thousands. All this only goes to demonstrate the status of gossip at the presidency and the president's addiction to chit-chat and the titbits from the latest rumourmonger. In June 1986, when I arrived in London to take up my post, I met a certain lady for whom I had brought a letter from a colleague of mine in the embassy in Kuwait. She had achieved her PhD in the former East Germany, and told me the main reason she left Somalia was to escape from the president's relentless pressure to accept a marriage proposal from a certain minister in his government who at the time held the portfolio for livestock.

Small things please small minds

Apart from his good memory, already mentioned, the Almighty had blessed the former Somali president with stamina. He would not forget a small matter that took place fifty years previously, yet he expected people to forget what he did to them only the day before. The president was fond of small insignificant things. He cherished involving himself in everything; not to mention his love of being informed of scandal no matter how private or trivial. After gossiping, marriage counselling and soliciting, the president preoccupied himself with things that were hardly worth a mention. One such was that every time the Somali airline obtained a plane -- not even bought but hired -- the president would inaugurate it and lengthy local press coverage would follow.

Two things that no one learns in school are how to become a leader of a nation and how to succeed as a parent. One finds oneself in these two roles. Only time reveals whether one has been a good ruler or a good parent. As with a pilot in the cockpit of a jumbo jet, there are only two aspects to the presidency of a nation: a job to be done and a destination to be reached. Never mind if it is the highest office in a country, every job no matter how insignificant requires seriousness, dedication and a sense of purpose. Unfortunately, the environment the Somali president created in the highest office of the land resounded with insignificant matters that bore no relevance to the functioning of a country's leadership. He persisted in taking maximum pleasure and a sense of accomplishment from small matters which were hardly the material with which a leader of a country should be preoccupied. According to close sources, the president's finest hours were when he compared notes and exchanged saucy sex stories of the week with his cousin and confidant, the foreign minister. This became more or less an addiction.

Even though nothing a ruler or politician in government or in opposition does is completely private, private life should be distanced from the entanglements of public life. The Somali president was clumsy on this issue, with terrible consequences to the administration and the country. He would court women, including his colleagues' spouses. One example of this pattern was a certain powerful lady who used to be a high-ranking official in the Somali airline. In the mid-1980s, this lady became the

general manager of the airline's operations in the capital. The following story should suffice to illustrate this point.

In January 1986 at the end of a two months' vacation in Somalia, it was time for me to return to my post in the Somali embassy in Kuwait. This was an unusually hectic period for the airline. Because of the government's incompetence and bad practices there were long waiting lists for any flights from Somalia. One of the reasons was that although the airline owned two Boeing aircraft, the president would take one away at little or no notice, for many days or weeks with a huge delegation which included dozens of guards. This used to create bottlenecks in all travel arrangements. For several days I had to go back and forth to make my flight reservation to Kuwait via Abu Dhabi as there were no direct flights. On one such day I went to the airline's ticketing and reservation office which was located in the centre of the capital. The officer who was issuing my ticket was a very helpful acquaintance. He finally asked me to go to the general manager's office which was next door to his counter. As I entered this office the lady who was occupying the chair at an imposing desk started shouting in a shrill voice telling me to get out. In vain I tried to explain that I was a diplomat from the Somali embassy in Kuwait only trying to return to his station. She would not listen and she showed me to the door. This was an arrogance which I could not understand. Fortunately the officer who attended to my ticket was also embarrassed and took me to her deputy, a gentleman called Munye. Unlike the lady he was very courteous. As soon as my situation was explained, Munye immediately endorsed my ticket.

It was around 2:00 pm, office hour closure time in Somalia, and the young officer who had been so helpful asked me to give him a lift. As we left, in the back of my mind I still nutured an urge to know the reasons behind the lady's violent behaviour. Did she treat all customers who came to her in this harsh way or was it only me? I asked my passenger about the lady and he said "Don't you know? She is one of the top girlfriends of the president." I could not accept outright my friend's story as it is very easy for a disgruntled employee to spread malicious gossip about his boss. But even though stationed far from the country and a stranger to much of the country's decay, everybody knew

things were far from tidy. I decided to check with other reliable sources in the Foreign Ministry and elsewhere in the capital. They all confirmed to me what I heard.

Later on I also learned the obscenities in which the lady used to indulge when she represented Somalia at IATA international conferences. This misguided woman would not have acted in such a tempestuous way had it not been for the ruler of the nation who not only befriended her but put her in an important position from which she felt she could mistreat citizens and airline customers with impunity. It is of course an absolutely unacceptable practice to put mistresses in positions of influence to trample on the civilian population and government officials.

Milksops surround the president

A man is judged by the company he keeps and naturally a leader is judged by those he chooses to have around him. One of the former Somali leader's cherished customs was to choose less able and less competent persons for the echelons of high government office. He saw educated or intellectual citizens as his enemies. The president used to say openly that he preferred one loyal ignoramus to a hundred intellectuals who were not loyal. Perhaps because he had no higher education himself, he thought no one deserved to have a higher or even a proper education. He used to say "*Midkaan anigu surwaalka u galiyaan ugu jeclahay,*" "I prefer most the ones on whom I put their first trousers." He was referring to nomads who were brought from the bush and given opportunity to serve in the military or other public offices. Once asked why he preferred colourless and incompetent people, the answer he gave was typically "*Kuwaasey barakadu ku jirta,*" "Those are the ones blessed."

Mohamed Siad had a complex, lacking self-confidence, feeling "If you are more educated than I am you can't work under me." But that is not how the real world works. He always watched with a jaundiced eye those of whom he disapproved who one way or another had nevertheless managed to filter into government positions. There are not any particular diets, paths or schools in life which make or prepare one to become a leader, for those who have made it to the top to lead their nations have had diverse backgrounds. But when one does, the most important

thing is to know how to utilise the right people -- those who can make a difference. Each and every one of them must be an expert in his field of responsibilty, the best and the brightest available in every area of public management and administration. It is not because one knows the most that one becomes a leader. If that would have been the case only those who are professors in schools of political science would have become presidents and prime ministers. Nor is it important for the leader to be the most enlightened in a government.

The most important thing in leadership is to have an eye for the right people. One needs to be a good talent spotter or, if not, to employ the guidance of others who can attract into the government and national service those who are most able and qualified in their fields. A leader must have trust and accept the natural wisdom that no one can be the master of everything simply because our human ability is very limited. Being a leader is like conducting an orchestra; having the ability to make the handlers of the various instruments function properly and perform that which is required of them in unison. Of course the supreme power is the only authority which comprehends exactly why a certain good, bad, educated or illiterate person becomes a leader.

Late night "*otto-otto*" calls

It became customary for the former president to keep vigil during the night hours and sleep during the day. Late at night he would send a police patrol car, known locally in Italian by its numerical name as "*otto-otto*" (eight-eight), to fetch senior government officials for various reasons, such as to tell someone of his or her promotion or consideration for an appointment. Sometimes it was even in order to show off his power or displeasure to someone who had complained about a minister or other high-ranking officer. The following two stories can serve to illustrate such incidents.

One evening the president called for an *otto-otto* to fetch a certain minister who at the time had responsibility for the agriculture portfolio. It was around 3 am when the minister was whisked away from his home and told that the president was waiting for him. He gained the impression that something very serious must have happened. When the minister came to the

presidency, he saw the president seated in his office with a cleaner whom the agriculture minister had sacked. The old lady was a clan relative of the president and she had come to him to complain about her dismissal. He remarked "Mr President! How come we ministers have to tarry several nights to see you, because of the length of the waiting list, and this lady is able to see you so easily at such a late hour?" Even though the president understood the minister's point he simply said "Come in and take a seat to answer for your wrong doing!" Like many Somalis, the president had many divided loyalties and perhaps thought he owed this particular showdown to his clan even if it meant trampling on the rights and convenience of his minister in such a cruel way.

The second incident concerns Abdirahman Jama Barre, the president's own cousin and the second most powerful man in the whole country. In 1987 a certain lady, a long-standing opponent of the regime, suddenly decided to relinquish her antagonism, iron out her differences with the government and make peace with the leadership. In exchange, the Somali president appointed her as a counsellor at one of the Somali embassies in Europe. Having taken the correspondence regarding her appointment to the foreign minister in person, the minister only made her a first secretary. He did not think that she deserved the position on the presidential decree.

A few days after her meeting with the minister, the lady found out that she had been demoted to first secretary. She was disturbed by the news and made an urgent appointment with the president through *aide-de-camp* Abdi Madobe. It was around 2 am one June 1987 morning when the police *otto-otto* rang the bell at the foreign minister's residence. The foreign minister was also one of the confidants and a trusted adviser of the president. He hurriedly got out of bed and ordered his chauffeur to follow the patrol car. He thought something exceptionally "big" must have taken place. Upon entering the president's office, he at once saw the "powerful" lady sitting next to the president and immediately understood the reason behind this untimely summons. In the presence of the lady, the president simply asked him in an angry tone "Who is head of the government, you or me? Why did you ignore and belittle my instructions and demote this lady while you

place irresponsible people in higher posts? If you do not reinstate her with the rank I have conferred on her with immediate effect, you will be replaced!" The terrified foreign minister could utter no other words than "Yes Mr President! Yes Mr President, I will carry out your instructions this very morning!" A second decree appointing this particular lady as counsellor was issued and sent to the embassy concerned which had already received the original. The foreign minister neither forgot nor forgave this lady for having put him in an awkward position with his presidential brother. What the lady did not know was that if you cross the then foreign minister once, he will be at your throat for the rest of your life. For his part, the Somali leader loved such scenes.

During the last three years prior to the collapse of the government, this lady used to receive telephone calls at her home from the president himself and at times from his *aide-de-camp* when he wished to relay messages. She used to brag about these calls. The Somali ambassador under whose jurisdiction she came and his predecessor used to despise both the lady and the president for the special relationship they had. Unnerved by these continual calls, I remember one day the ambassador murmuring "I am the ambassador here, he doesn't call me, why is he all the time calling this woman? What exactly is the relationship between the president and this lady?" The impression she used to give was that it was only a matter of time before she become ambassador in the same station. The ambassador was naturally always suspicious of her intentions and heavy-handedness. He came to believe that there was a hidden agenda to replace him. The deal she made with the head of state was that she should pacify the opposition groups, reconcile them with the government and lure many among them to return home. The lady in question may never know the degree of emotional and psychological trauma her vanity used to inflict on the embassy staff, including the deputy and the ambassador.

Until the final days of Mohamed Siad, the lady in question neither replaced anyone nor did she become head of any mission. This was mainly due to the foreign minister. Upon her appointment to the embassy she had mounted a huge portrait of the president in an expensive and majestic fame. Eventually when the moment of truth arrived on 27 January 1991 and Mohamed

Siad was chased out of the capital Mogadishu, the lady was the first to throw the late president's picture out of her office. On that fateful day the staff of the embassy saw glass strewn all over the third floor of the embassy building adjacent to her office and enquired what happened. She raged, "He tricked me. He promised he would make me ambassador within six months of joining the service. He only wanted to use me. He never intended to make me ambassador!"

The president's children are denied opportunity to develop their own personalities

Even as late as 1990, the Somali president, who made a habit of bringing his children -- as soon as they graduated from colleges both locally and abroad -- into the government, was devising ways and means to make one of his last children, a pharmaceutical graduate from the Soviet Union, minister of health. In order to secure this appointment he had to recall the ambassador in the former Soviet Union, appoint the existing health minister ambassador in Moscow and then appoint his son as his replacement.

A traditional Somali nomadic proverb says "*Aabahay baa geel leh waxaa dhaanta anigaa dameer leh,*" "It is better to say I own a donkey than to say my father owns camels" -- the most precious things in the life of the nomad. It was better for the son of a president to be a waiter in a local restaurant and develop his own personality than to cramp his father in the corridors of power and illegitimise the rule of the country. In the history of Somali statehood only two presidents are remembered and admired for having kept their children and spouses at a distance from government affairs: Adan Abdulle Osman and Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke.

In 1986 President Mohamed Siad Barre invited his sixteen-year-old son, Ayaanle Mohamed Siad, to sit at the presidency and become a powerful politician who could enthrone and dethrone senior government officials and ministers. The more the son involved himself in decision-making, the greater the chaos that was created for the leadership. Things had started to fall apart. This decision to bring his teenage son into the highest office of the land only sheds light on the president's desperation.

In the late 1980s, the Somali president started to groom his eldest son Maslah Mohamed Siad, a civil engineer, to succeed him upon his departure from this world. In August 1988, during the staged deliberations of the twelfth annual session of the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP), this son was promoted from colonel to brigadier-general. The reason given for this promotion was that he had been responsible for the successful completion of a long store-like building in the "*Jaalle Siad*" Military Academy, which the president had named after himself. The conference was conducted there. Within a few months, Maslah headed the then powerful military sector 77 in the capital. In a parallel move, the president appointed a local lawyer, Hussein Matan, as a rubber-stamp defence minister. During Matan's short reign he remained under the thumb of the president's son who was the *de facto* defence minister. For most of the time Maslah, a notorious womaniser, was high on either alcohol or drugs.

Mischief of the president's first wife

When he became the national leader in 1969, the Somali ruler, despite having divorced some half a dozen women, had two wives. The eldest, and most ambitious, domineering and disastrous was Khadija Ma'alin, first wife of the president. As the eldest person who had accompanied him through most of the rough and tumble of his early years, Khadija Ma'alin exercised strong influence over him. Especially in later years as his grip on power weakened, he seemed never to question the validity or viability of any of her many calamitous ventures. She was alleged to have been behind the appointment and retention of the most venal and inept government officials. She was closely associated with all the decay in the system, receiving kickbacks and commissions from those who were notoriously corrupt. Their positions in government were relatively safe, for she would defend her protégés as ferociously as a lioness defends her cubs.

Khadija even established her own intelligence organisation. In order to rival the government's powerful KGB and East German trained National Security Service (NSS). She founded Somalia's second powerful intelligence agency called *Hangash*. No sooner did this organisation come into being, than the public dubbed it

"Dhabar-jabinta". Even though the Somali word *"Dhabar-jabinta"* literally means "back-breakers", it meant those formed behind the back of the country's main intelligence organisation -- the NSS.

Unlike Khadija, Dalaya Haji Hashi, the president's second wife, who bore most of his children, was a noble and wise person who confined her attentions to domestic affairs; she was purely a housewife. Whenever she was asked either to interfere in matters or to influence the decisions of her husband, she would simply make the point that the running of the government was none of her business. She stayed well away from everything political.

The *Hangash*, was born out of complaints from some of the president's clansmen that they could neither qualify for, nor get a foothold in the NSS. In the 1970s its founder Brigadier-General Ahmed Suleiman Abdalla, *Dafle,* who had graduated from the UK's prestigeous Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1962, only hand-picked the best and brightest who filtered through Somalia's education system. Under *Dafle,* the NSS was one of the best security services in Africa. It was efficient and admired as well as feared not only in Somalia but throughout the neighbouring countries. Some possessive, uneducated and unmoulded "officers" from the president's clan, who thought the government belonged to them more than to anybody else, complained to Khadija that the NSS employed only "reactionaries" from the north. It is a matter of fact that many of the NSS's middle- and high-ranking officers were from the north but they had earned their positions on merit. This complaint resulted not only in the establishment of *Hangash,* but the removal of *Dafle* from the helm of the NSS and the gradual decline and ultimate disintegration of the agency he had created. The somewhat sinister successor to *Dafle,* Brigadier-General Mohamed Jibril, became reknowned as a merchant rather than as head of the intelligence organisation.

The deadly consequences of *"bono"* slips

One of the things which the Somali president introduced and which destroyed the government administration was the issuing of small slips called *bono*. This is an Italian term for orders authorising everything from promotions to discounted purchases by individuals from government-owned factories. The issuing of

hundreds of applicants with *bono* was the major contributory factor which caused the collapse, in 1988, of the Commercial Bank of Somalia. A large lucrative *bono* business was established with brokers, sellers and buyers. There emerged people who could obtain *bono* and those who could not. The latter simply bought from the owners who, either because they were not in business or because they needed instant cash, did not know what to do with their "lottery-card". The ones who obtained *bono* from the president had access to the presidency either on a clan basis or through other influential persons.

During the civil war era, it was observed that both Ali Mahdi and General Aideed, emulating the former leader of the country, made use of this infamous *bono* practice -- a bad Italian influence which has taken a terrible toll on Somali governance. In 1992 when General Aideed flushed out Ali Mahdi from the capital, storming his residence, camera crews filmed thousands of bundles of fuel and food *bono* which had become playthings for children. They were strewn all around his wrecked bungalow and its surroundings.

It is believed that the introduction of similar traceless slips in government practice was one of the main features of the mass misappropriation of funds and endemic corruption witnessed in Pakistan during the short-lived and disgraced government of Benazir Bhutto that held power between 1993 and 1995. In a BBC documentary film *The Prince and the Playboy*, distinguished members of the Pakistani law establishment and other high-ranking officials attributed the introduction of this abhorrent practice to Benazir's jailed husband Azif Zardari.

Accusations and counter-accusations

In the last eight years of the former government, accusations and counter-accusations increased greatly in variety and number. Many were groundless, but even so dismissals resulted. This was mainly because of a lack of accountability and systematic disciplinary action against those who fabricated accusations. Would-be accusers took full advantage of any opportunity. Groundless accusations based on jealousy, envy and tribal animosities used to affect the level of the morale of many of the ministry's staff. I was once myself a victim of such unfounded accusations.

One day in 1985, while serving in the Somali embassy in Kuwait, Abdihakim Ali Yassin, an uneducated individual whom the president had forced on the ministry as a senior diplomat, telephoned me from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he was returning from a short stay in Cairo. He requested me to ask the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry authorities to cable their consulate general in Jeddah to grant him a visitor's visa. Even though I did not know this man, when he telephoned me on the personal phone of the consul general in Jeddah, as a member of staff of our Foreign Ministry, I immediately telephoned Jassim Bahman, a noble personality and a good friend of mine who happened to be director general of the consular department at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry. After some nasty bombings in Kuwait by some extremist groups, security in the country was so tight that even our consul general in Jeddah could not obtain a visa for this member of staff. Jassim Bahman was always efficient and in a matter of an hour his department had telexed a "grant visa" message to their office in Jeddah. The man, collected his visa on that same day. Upon arrival, because the airport was within our reach in the city, amid our busy embassy schedule I met him and saw to all his requirements. Even though a young man only twenty-four years of age at the time, he was huge and looked and walked exactly like Mr Blobby, the character invented by Noel Edmunds, the BBC's wizkid presenter of the House Party programme.

What I did not know then was that one of the main aims of this "official" was to visit the station in which I was serving to organise some kind of mutiny among our community members. Among other activities he urged them to write letters of accusation and see to my immediate removal. In order to succeed with his wild venture he engaged the cooperation of a Somali community leader. There were two Somali sheikhs: Sheikh Jama Digale, who died in 1987, and Sheikh Omar. Both were always jockeying for position and power within the 20,000 Somali community in Kuwait. Sheikh Omar was officially attached to the embassy and employed as the caretaker who looked after all embassy requirements from the local offices. The two were bitter rivals in those days. Sheikh Omar was at that time temporarily disgruntled, having several times seen the late Sheikh Jama Digale making

regular and cordial visits to our embassy office premises.

Our visitor had apparently studied the situation of the two rival sheikhs and he simply took advantage of the disenchantment of Sheikh Omar to persuade him to connive in the fabrication of accusations. He fed him with false information that the head of chancery, who controlled consular and community affairs, was endeavouring to replace him with his bitter enemy. The two conspirators sat down and simply concocted the bulkiest document of malicious accusations ever made against Foreign Ministry staff. This was the type of man the Somalis call "*ebar talaabsanaya*", a walking zero, a crony of the former president, who simply took advantage of a rotting administration. After less than six months in the job in Kuwait, I was one of his targets for contradictory and most illogical accusations which in due course were dismissed. But, naturally, it affected my morale and to my surprise this man was never reprimanded or disciplined. Among the long list of accusations was one, perhaps the most serious in those days when Somalia was still under the shady influence of communism, that someone was ideologically inclined to the West. To the president, who privately loathed any association with the West, this implied some kind of untrustworthiness in public affairs. Those who knew the psyche of those in power used to exploit their negative sentiments to get at anyone in the administration.

Abdihakim is of small consequence to me and may not be worth even a mention in this book, but to understand Somalia's collapse it is important to reveal that many like him took a full part in the defection of many bright and patriotic officials and contributed mightily to the degeneration of public life in Somalia. By attempting to derail the careers of government servants he, and those like him, caused great psychological and emotional strain on many of their colleagues. Eventually he was relieved of his duties. But that was not the end of him, for he was not a man who would quit quietly and disappear. Only a few months after his dismissal, he surfaced again, armed with a letter from the president, reinstating him with more powers than ever and a higher position. Since he had no education, his only two skills were deceit and a venomous and spiteful tongue. He would stay with the foreign minister and the president for long hours in their offices, thus creating human traffic jams in the corridors of the

ministry and the presidency.

The second ambassador with whom I served in Kuwait was fearful of this devious, shifty man and once disclosed to me that one evening, on leave in Mogadishu, he was astonished to see Abdihakim in the sole company of Mohamed Siad, the President of the Republic, watching a video in his private quarters at the presidency. It can be argued that, like a child who is not really responsible for his actions, the wrongs Abdihakim did should be blamed not on him but laid at the door of the president himself. It was the president who distorted the ethics and standards of Somali government and invited such persons to undermine honest government employees and officials. Nor was this man alone; his kind were in abundance in Mohamed Siad's administration.

The number of written accusations and counter-accusations made by one of any ministry's staff against another, or by outsiders, grew considerably because the minister who oversaw the work of the ministry for nearly two decades did not establish a sound system for dealing with them. In many cases, if the person accused was not liked or wanted by the foreign minister, this would be reason enough for dismissal. If the person accused was liked in one way or another, the minister would defend him or her to the last and disregard all accusations: everything rested on his sole whim and fancy. If the fabrication was exaggerated it should not have been followed up but merely filed away as groundless. Fortunately for me, that which was fabricated against me was considered exceptionally "spicy" and it became a sick joke in the ministry.

The lack of commissions of enquiry

Commissions of enquiry are an essential procedure in tackling problems that arise. In the last ten years of the former regime, perhaps the first time a Somali government official ever utilised a commission of enquiry was in 1989, when Major-General Abdirahman Abdi Hussein, *Militia,* returned to the country from his post as Somalia's ambassador to Egypt to become chief of the Somali police. Abdirahman, *Militia,* introduced a commission to investigate a serious incident which had become known as the "*container*" fiasco. This move by the then police chief was seen by

many as an enlighted one. Eleven Somali porters at Mogadishu seaport had been unlawfully arrested by a military colonel, who, for subordination, had been transferred from the presidential *koofiya-gaduud* (red berets) to head the port authority. The chief of police detained these unfortunate porters in an empty container at a time when the Mogadishu monsoon heat was taking its toll on the elderly and the emaciated -- throughout the capital, let alone those in a suffocating and overcrowded container. They all died of heat exhaustion.

The second and last time a commission of enquiry was appointed was also in 1989 when, as has been mentioned elsewhere in this publication, forty-seven innocent Somalis were taken from their houses in the darkness of one July night and unlawfully gunned down in cold blood near Jazira, a secluded beach near the capital, by the dreaded presidential guards who wished to avenge a certain colonel who had been killed by a mob two days previously. What happened in Jazira was a foretaste of the savagery yet to come: the dreadful civil war that was to engulf Somalia for many years. Public opinion, mainly expressed by the president's close aides and lieutenants, forced his hand. A man who had miraculously defied death in this cold-blooded massacre was brought to the home of Ahmed Suleiman, *Dafle*, fourth in the line of command in the country. He and others in authority exerted pressure on the president to appoint a commission to enquire into the incident. But no sooner than a four man commission had been hand-picked, on the very same day, the president started openly denying that such barbarism had ever taken place in Somalia, claiming that it was only propaganda concocted by misguided opposition groups. The public interpreted this to mean that the president himself had ordered the executions. Guilt was of course written all over him.

The lowering of standards to hopeless levels

By 1975, after only five years in power, and after it had been decided to write the Somali language in the Latin script and the introduction of the new practice in schools and in the public administration, the Somali leader started to introduce his type of people -- the ones as explained whom he called "holy"-- into the government offices. Also popularly referred to as *"xaabo"* (to be

read habo in English), which literally means firewood, they made a mockery of Somali public life.

Even chauffeurs have ended up as Somali ambassadors. For instance, one such who is still in office, a close clan relative of the late Brigadier-General Aideed, was, in the 1960s, chauffeur to former Somali Foreign Minister Abdullahi Issa. One of the ironies of the civil war is that such personalities who grossly benefited from the former government's misrule have revolted against their mentors, and during the civil war switched allegiance to the warlords for reasons of clan loyalty. During the initial years of the civil strife in Somalia this particular ambassador shuttled between Islamabad, the derelict station he held, the UK and the US, where his family is settled and where he owns property. He was also to be seen in Nairobi and Mogadishu assisting the struggle of his clansman the late Mohamed Farah Aideed.

When one builds a bogus society with no proper foundations, and not based on ability and value, abuses are bound to follow. A society with proper foundations is one in which the citizen properly and rightfully earns his place. The Somali people hold Abdirahman Jama Barre the former Foreign Minister and Ahmed Mohamed Adan, *Qeybe,* the former Permanent Secretary and later briefly Foreign Minister, personally responsible for promoting unskilled persons into such highly sensitive and prestigious national posts. Ours, so far, has been a very unfortunate nation. It is critical that any future government in Somalia should raise the standards of governance.

During my days in service, diplomatic counterparts from both developing and developed countries assured me that in their services bureaucrats -- clerks, accountants etc. -- never climbed up to become ambassadors. The peak for long-serving bureaucrats would be consul general, not beyond. Unfortunately, because of Somalia's lack of an educated core during the 1940s, 50s and 60s, there was often no one more qualified available. The former president was a colonial non-commissioned officer turned major-general.

Somali bureaucrats who became the nation's first ambassadors and ministers would always emphasise and brag of the number of years, even decades, they had been in the service. They would talk endlessly about *insianita*, seniority -- for the country had been

heavily influenced by Italian bureaucratic patterns. They think the more years a bureaucrat serves, the more enlightenment and knowledge he may possess to qualify him for the nation's high policy-making and policy-execution posts such as those at ministerial levels. How wrong they are! What makes a driver who has fifty years of driving experience behind him anything other than a senior driver?

Throughout the world, the Somali diplomatic system itself made difficulties for most diplomats but despite this I found no problems working with able and inspiring ambassadors. However, one day in August 1987, during the tenure in the London embassy of perhaps the most disastrous, irresponsible, inept and conceited ambassador ever posted there (1984-88), when discussing an issue in his office, he suddenly exploded and bragged about the number of years he had been in the service. I was flabbergasted. He started by saying "I joined the service in January 1955, what do you think I am, someone who came yesterday?" January of that year was in fact a few months prior to my arrival in this world, but in my exasperation on that occasion I lost my cool and wearily responded "How come you are fuming and nervous all the time? How come you are never at ease with yourself? Why is it I do not see you like my father in the service?"

It is natural that when someone is your proper superior in a field like, for example, the academic world, you sit back and listen with total admiration and undivided attention. When one is large, one does not need to flaunt one's size: it is there to be reckoned with. If he had anything to offer it was in my best interest to become his avid student. But whatever he may have thought of himself and whatever the number of decades he may have been in the service, unfortunately, like barren land, he had nothing to offer. The country had made him something he should not have been. Mohamed Siad's government notoriously attracted and advanced inadequate and unsuitable persons. Far from being a nation's ambassador in a capital city such as London -- a vital centre of culture, knowledge and civilisation -- the best that someone like this man was fitted for was appointment as commercial counsellor, at some minor posting.

Respect and honour are not necessarily attained automatically in relation to one's post. Like many things, they are earned. A

greedy, money-minded, unprincipled or unpatriotic "superior" loses respect in the eyes of those who work with him. One not only develops contempt for narrow-minded incompetent "seniors", but also scorn for those rulers who grant them honours and positions they do not deserve. It is a sad measure of the quality of the last government, that in its final years this ambassador was to establish a dubious reputation as the most "intellectual" person in the whole system.

Age alone is no guarantee of wisdom and ability

In the last Somali government one of the things which was used as an instrument to discriminate against those who were seen as educated or young and bright was not even experience, but merely age. It was as if it was an exclusive quality for some, whilst others seemed to stay young and not grow old. Ageing is a natural process that begins from the time of birth and whether one likes it or not, everyone grows old. As is said in English, "The child is father of the man." Growing old is not an exclusive gift or club, but an unavoidable journey that all humans undertake. It is foolish to stress it as though it were a secret weapon. What makes one person to be seen to be better than another is not how old they are but the special talents, skills, and qualities with which they are born, or which they have acquired and developed over the years.

There is explanation but not excuse for this. In the nomadic life of Somalia, where people lived in the open under the stars, there was nothing to differentiate and distinguish man from man other than age. It was also the most important factor, if not the only one, in determining the accumulation of wisdom. To stress the importance of age as the only life experience asset, the nomadic Somalis used to say "*Nin gu' kaa weyn gu' baas kaa weyn*," "One who is bigger than you by one year -- that is one hell of a year." In the nomadic life such an attitude is understandable. In the open spaces of the scrubland and semi-desert, there were no universities or other selective experiences to mould people and bring out the best of their various talents and areas of specialisation. But things are quite different in the governance of the modern world, where thirty-year-olds become Boeing 777 pilots or even government cabinet members in highly advanced

and hugely populated countries in the developed and developing worlds.

If the future Somalia is to stand a chance of survival in the more complex and more advanced twenty-first century world and beyond, the cream of the nation -- regardless of their clan origins or age -- must be given the chance to serve their nation. Age alone is neither knowledge nor talent. It is only into the safe hands of the best and the brightest of our sons and daughters that our future must be entrusted.

The abuse of power

With power must come responsibility. The proper function of power is to achieve positive development and not to damage, hurt or misappropriate. Both the president and his protégé cousin were notorious in the misuse of authority and public office. The foreign minister was infamous in this respect. He revised the whole apparatus of the Foreign Ministry, including many of its offices abroad, with the aim to serve none other than his own selfish interests. He gave one of his wives a sinecure position in the embassy in Paris. The Somali embassy in Abu Dhabi and consulate generals in Jeddah and Dubai were known to have been the caterers and suppliers of the minister's demanding and diversified personal interests including the needs of the residences of his two families. Diplomats in the above offices were diverted from their national duties for most of the time to ply between their offices and the airport cargo section, busy with the export of goods, foodstuff, spare parts and other personal needs of the minister from containers of mineral water to diapers for his children.

In 1987 the staff at the Foreign Ministry were amazed when the consul general in Jeddah flew in by special flight only to deliver a briefcase full of gold ornaments for the wedding of the foreign minister's eldest son. Money used to purchase the jewellery was of course public money from the consulate general's own budget and documentation levies. The foreign minister was indeed notorious for his gross abuse of power. In effect he transformed the whole ministry and its offices abroad into his privately owned company.

When ambassadors and ministers saw such abuse of power by the leadership, they followed suit. Each one transformed the office he headed into his own privately owned property. The whole government apparatus fell into the hands of greedy individuals who, where their superiors -- the leadership of the country -- introduced a yard of abuse, felt justified to move a mile.

Shattering the people's trust

Trust, like everything else, is something that must be earned and deserved. Without trust there can be no government system where there are administrators and the administered. The people give their trust, and in exchange politicians prove their worthiness by keeping and preserving it for the benefit of all. Trust is the key to delicate public service transactions. Once broken or shattered it is very hard to restore. One such example is the breaking of the trust of the German and Japanese peoples in the late 1930s and 40s by their respective governments. In both countries it was the enormous trust the people invested in their former totalitarian governments which allowed them to be led into costly and destructive wars. Even today, after fifty years, even though much water has passed under the bridge and both government systems have proved themselves beyond a shred of doubt, one key element is still missing, and that is trust in politicians to take part in global military matters and to decide whether or not to go to war. It was as recently as 1993 that the German government for the first time took part in military operations, when it participated in the so-called UN humanitarian mission in Somalia. Likewise, Japan, for the first time after World War II, took part in the 1992 UN peace efforts in Cambodia. Unfortunately, in the case of Somalia, only worse confusion ensued and the people's basic trust in anyone either to rule or to take part in the country's political life was shattered.

In October 1969, at a time when Somali statehood was at its lowest ebb and when it had lost all credibility both among its own people and abroad, those military officers headed by Mohamed Siad Barre who took over power in a *coup d'état,* initially succeeded in addressing the wrongs and reviving the system. Standards were elevated and ethics and principles in public administration reinstituted. Unfortunately, when it suited him, the

former president thought that he no longer needed the support of the Somali people. Starting in the second decade of his rule, the same leader destroyed the standards, ethics and achievements of the Somali governance for his own selfish goals. He shattered the faith that had been placed in him by the Somali people. Corrupt, inept and incompetent people found their way into every part of the government. Nepotism, favouritism and cronyism became bywords for the system. The Somali people in bewilderment withdrew trust and faith in the government. Many took to the bush and the desert and further afield to foreign lands, in order to fight their own government by whatever means they could. It will indeed take many years of painstakingly sound government endeavour to rebuild and restore the shattered trust and faith of the Somali people in any government system and its politicians. When that time comes, a revival in the ethics and standards of governance will be imperative.

6
Corruption

Corruption, which in Somali is known as "*musuq-maasuq*" or in short form "*musuq*", is one of the main evils of governance which, once having infiltrated government, gradually eats away all confidence, credibility, strength and effectiveness. The rot takes its toll and the system succumbs, undone by its own people.

One example of a corruption explosion is that of Albania -- Europe's poorest country. It is alleged that that impoverished nation had been systematically looted and stripped of all its wealth by none other than its president and his entourage. The historical heritage of artifacts and all valuable objects in the country's museums were carried away. As a result of the level of government corruption, the collapse of fraudulent pyramid schemes in which almost a third of the population had invested, and a plummeting standard of living, in 1996 the country erupted in protest. Rioters looted shops, seized weapons, stormed barracks and set fire to town halls, banks and police stations in impoverished towns across Albania. Thus was public fury with President Sali Berisha expressed. It was even alleged in the mass media that gifts presented by the country's president to international dignitaries, including those from the UK were among artefacts looted from the nation's depositories.

Perhaps the most grotesque and chronic cases of corruption in all government systems around the world are in Nigeria and former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is most unfortunate that the growing population of Nigeria, nowadays perhaps in excess of 120 million, is denied the benefits of the vast natural oil wealth of its country. The Nigerian power elite, mainly bred and produced by successive military governments, has so far shown no regard whatsoever for the wellbeing and care of the peoples of the nation now made destitute. The exceptionally high levels of avarice shown by the power elite --

so few in number -- have seen to the diversion of the national share of all proceeds extracted from the oil wealth. In other parts of the world where oil is the main asset, even in autocratic countries, most of the revenues obtained from the exploitation of natural oil assets are invested in the modernisation of those countries, but funds robbed from Nigeria's coffers invariably end up in personal bank accounts in western Europe and north America.

Some say that the self-styled head of state of Nigeria, General Sanni Abacha, was no more than a front put up by his predecessor General Ibrahim Babangida to cover his corrupt tracks in taking away from the coffers of his nation billions of dollars during the long years of his tenure as self-styled president of that country. Many, among them members of the international press, believe that the worst of all those offending Nigerian officers who, by taking advantage of their rule of the country, stripped their nation by salting away its wealth, is the former president Babangida. On the other hand, others see Sanni Abacha as the ruthless key soldier behind a succession of *coups d'état*, who, when he felt he had run out of suitable frontmen to cover the avarice of his military colleagues, finally took over power himself. In June 1998, the dictator Abacha dropped death due to heart attack at an early age of fifty-four.

What few of the beneficiaries of such corruption seem to understand is that when one's native nation is impoverished and one's own citizens forced to live in squalid conditions, denied and robbed of all benefits from national natural commodities such as oil or other forms of wealth, it is grossly immoral and degrading to maintain an opulent lifestyle and be driven around the highways at home or in other more responsible and caring nations, in expensive Jaguar, Mercedes and Rolls-Royce cars.

An equally grandiose case of corruption is the demise of the kleptocratic government of former president Mobutu Sese Seko of former Zaire. With the country's infrastructure decaying due to neglect and corruption on a huge scale, it is alleged that the country's former dictator hoarded over five billion US dollars in foreign, mainly Swiss banks. In the midst of the chaos in former

Zaire, the previous president was rushing back and forth to supposed national rescue meetings, racing in his flag-toting limousine through the slums and dusty streets of his neglected capital city. A certain teacher, when interviewed by a BBC camera crew, enquired "Who can claim to be my president when I did not get any salary for over a year?"

The lack of patriotism and the level of disregard for their country shown by such as Mobutu and the corrupt Nigerian public figures is by any standard almost unprecedented. Those selfish, greedy Nigerian politicians with their robes, who sit in international bodies such as OPEC, the United Nations or Commonwealth conferences, even though they may be technically equal with others as representatives of their nation, are everywhere held in low esteem while they steal from their country and impoverish their own people.

Perhaps by the year 2020, the international community, encouraged by the level of international cooperation in the prosecution of war criminals, might, possibly in cooperation with international jurists, approach the United Nations in order to enact global legislation to track down and freeze all accounts and assets of corrupt politicians who amass billions in hard currency in foreign banks. The devastating affect these personalities have on their countries and peoples is confined not only to their own soils but comes to haunt many nations in the world -- especially in the developed countries -- in the form of displaced persons and refugees. Also relevent is the constant need to aid impoverished populations. Destabilisation in those developing nations and the call for loans from International Monetary Organisations owned and financed by the developed countries, could be enough to instigate such legislation. The world would surely then understand that no crime is more grotesque than sucking dry the wealth of millions of people and impoverishing whole nations. When a man known to have been poor, such as one of his country's military officer-corps with no known accumulated or inherited wealth, amasses hundreds of millions of dollars or pounds after having acquired power and perhaps the trust of his people, then this accumulated wealth must be seen as stolen money, robbed from his nation. Such persons are no less worthy of prosecution than nazi or Bosnian war criminals.

Robbing the people: plundering the public purse

Between 1980 and 1990, in the last ten years of the former government in Somalia, the level of corruption witnessed in the country was similarly unprecedented in the short history of Somalia's self-rule. The level of corruption was unusually high and was instigated by the top brass of the government, and mainly by the head of state himself. This may sound incredible, for no sane leader sets fire to his own seat of power, but we shall see the reasons which pushed the Somali ruler to foster the corruption which riddled his administration. For fraud and corruption to rise to such levels the following must be considered.

. Rocketing cost of living contrasted with starvation wages.
. The lack of an independent, watchful press.
. A culture of *Geeljirenimo* (camelboyism).
. Exploitation of loopholes.
. Instability created by random dismissals and arrests.
. Forced retirements (*Hawlgab*)
. Kleptomaniacs entrusted with public resources.
. Personality cults which undermined patriotism.
. Corruption encouraged by the head of state.
. War with Ethiopia: consequences of the debacle.

Rocketing cost of living contrasted with starvation wages

During the debate in 1992 between presidential candidates Nelson Mandela and F.W de Klerk. Mandela answered part of a question on how he would put together a progressive programme for South Africa, by saying patriotically and selflessly -- if a little naively -- "Even if it becomes necessary for me to cut my wages, I would accept a low salary." Responding to this, President F.W. de Klerk, was dismissive, saying that cutting wages does not bring any benefit, let alone develop a country. President Mandela was a man who had been in solitary confinement for nearly three decades: the most crucial years of the 1960s, 70s and 80s in which this world saw great changes. Despite the apparent simplicity of this remark, he is a highly intelligent man and a quick learner. While in power he has proved to be quite up to the task of maintaining his country's growth and prosperity.

In contrast, the last government in Somalia, by constantly cutting the wages of civil servants and other government officials, hoped to create national prosperity. This too was very naive. Cutting back on fuel for a car is hardly the best way to reach destinations. Likewise starving government personnel was certainly not the way to develop a country. In the 1980s the biggest worry for a Somali civil servant was from where his next meal would come. One indicator of the development and progress of a country is how well people are doing: whether the salaries are going up or down. Salaries are the economic dividends of a country. Since the world goes forward not backwards, cutting back salaries represents regression not progress. Yes, since the military leadership took power in 1969, cutting wages as contributions to various so-called developmental projects caused considerable hardship to civil servants. This was hardly a sound credential for a nation that used to wage communist-style propaganda campaigns concerning economic progress and prosperity. How could anyone expect a nation in which the most urgent preoccupation of its civil servants and government officials was food, to develop and continue to progress?

In the United Kingdom, the value of £100 in the 1960s is little more than £10 in the 1990s. This is due to inflation, cost of living and the wear and tear of development which all take their toll on the purchasing power and value of any currency. Meanwhile, not to mention minor civil servants and other rank-and-file personnel in the government, the official salary even of a Somali minister or a veteran airline pilot was only Somali Shillings 10,000 a month. The real market value of this salary was a mere ten US dollars. The cost of one loaf of bread was 1000 Somali Shillings while a packet of twenty cigarettes was Somali Shillings 5,000. How on earth could anyone live on US $10.00 a month? On the other hand anyone who was never in Somalia in those fateful days may be forgiven for querying how on earth the people lived at all under such impossible conditions. Even though salaries were ridiculously low, because of obscene levels of corruption, the expenditure of some government officials was equivalent to one million Somali Shillings a day.

Residential buildings to the taste of the Arabian Gulf countries,

and Los Angeles Beverley Hills sprung up, built by government officials in many parts of Mogadishu, the capital city. A whole exclusive suburb, initially reserved for offices and residences for foreign embassies, was taken over by the upper government echelons. The opulent lifestyle of many civil servants and senior government officials was all too evident. The Somali public, realising that this was only done by looting the public purse, immediately dubbed this exclusive neighbourhood "*Booli-qaran*" which means loot from the public domain. Thousands of luxurious cars -- Landcruisers, Mercedes and others -- were imported to meet the expensive tastes of corrupt government officials at all levels in government -- mainly the ones on the pinnacle of power. This was a manifestation of impropriety.

When life became difficult because of low wages and a sky-rocketing cost of living coupled by mad inflation, the people mainly in the public sectors, developed a "*mamba*" culture of survival: in order to live, one would either seek support from close relatives or clan members or beg, borrow or steal. A director in the Somali Foreign Ministry in those days earned only Somali Shillings 3000 a month, but the level of corruption in this ministry was (exceptionally) minimal or non-existent. This was not because the needs of the personnel at this ministry were different from those of everybody else in the country or because they were superhuman. Almost every foreign ministry in the world is merely dealing with paper work. There are no projects or ventures of the kind similar to other ministries or agencies through which civil servants come in direct contact with anything involving money -- and corruption. Even in documentation departments, such as the consular, protocol and legal departments, where it was possible to become corrupt, the staff were not willing to risk their dismissal. The level of discipline which prevailed in this ministry was high but on the other hand Foreign Ministry people were slaves to their careers and did not want to do anything to jeopardise their jobs. There was always the consolation that one day one might be sent abroad to represent the nation as a diplomat under presumably preferable conditions -- mainly an illusion, though a real element of patriotism and prestige should not be discounted. The civil servants at the Foreign Ministry differed from other locally oriented agencies and ministries,

because those in other government institutions had few hopes or ambitions other than to survive from day to day.

In an enlightened government system one of the prime objectives must naturally be to discourage corruption. Once people are earning their living decently with inflation-proof wages on which they can live comfortably, the tendency to become corrupt becomes more a luxury than a necessity. In the case of corruption in Somalia, it has all the hallmarks of people who were forced into it, starved by an ignorant tunnel-visioned and irresponsible leadership.

In the case of Somali embassies abroad, the situation was equally bizarre. The funds of embassies used to be sent quarterly and used to be called "*tremester*", an Italian term. As economic conditions worsened and as hard currency became ever more difficult to come by in the last three to five years prior to the collapse of the government, periods of six to nine months with no remittance to the embassies was very common. For instance the Somali embassy in London used to get US $150,000 per quarter meant for salaries and other allocated sub-headings such as entertainment, stationery, health and transportation, and for services such as fuel, electricity, telecommunications, water and travel. This sum was reduced in 1988 after the introduction of austere measures by the new finance minister Abdirahman Jama Barre after the economic streamlining recommended by the IMF. As the London embassy was the only one in Europe where the government owned neither the chancery building nor the ambassador's residence, this sum excluded rental charges. Payments were sent by cheque under separate special cover during the first three months of the year.

The rent of the Somali ambassador's London residence, which used to be in an opulent Hampstead Heath suburb, cost £44,000 per annum. Rent for the embassy building at Portland Place was originally £20,000 per annum in a negotiated fixed rent agreement signed in 1968. In 1988, in a new lease negotiated and signed with its proprietor Leonard Mills, the rent became £140,000 per annum. This was at a difficult time when the government had more pressing priorities than the purchase of an embassy building in London, which was in any case more a status symbol than a

necessity, since business between the United Kingdom and Somalia was minimal and all developmental aid from the UK to Somalia was arranged either via Her Majesty's embassy in Somalia or through the EEC offices in Brussels. The Somali state owes unpaid rents and interest to Mr Leonard Mills which a new government will one day have to settle.

Even though everything from housing to children's education was considered for the ambassadors, all other diplomats, from the deputy head of mission down, subsisted on a meagre basic salary. The salary of diplomats was assessed in two catagories. In places with costly living standards, such as Japan, the countries of western Europe and north America, the salary of a Somali diplomat was only US $1,200 per month, with no housing allowance. In countries where the cost of living was "not that costly", such as in Asia and Africa, the salary was US $1000. These salary scales dated from 1960 and since that time only an additional US $200 for hardship areas was added. In the 1960s in places such as Africa and under developed parts of Asia, the living of a Somali diplomat was relatively comfortable compared for example to New York where the diplomats used to live well below the locally recognised poverty lines.

In many cases in those areas, a diplomat was at the mercy of the ambassador to make up the difference. In the 1970s, since there was money in the budgets of the embassies under a variety of sub-headings, some enlightened ambassadors were more honest and considerate than others who had become corrupt and predominantly money-minded. They took personal initiatives to make up the difference in the cost of living. In the 1980s, most Somali diplomats used to live in their embassies, some lucky ones in small cramped flats in the embassy building. This had been so in London since 1988 when the then ambassador, whose mercenary tendencies led him to concentrate on "ripping off" the embassy coffers, was replaced by a more patriotic and enlightened senior diplomat transferred from Bonn. The new ambassador was appalled to see the squalid conditions in which some of the diplomats lived and he at once took it upon himself, without consultation with headquarters, to increase diplomatic salaries from £850 to £1,600 per month.

With but few exceptions most Somali ambassadors used to run "their" embassies with minimum expenses in order to divert funds into their own deep pockets. This was not entirely their fault for most had already been corrupted for the following reasons. (1) Even though from housing to children's education, funds were allocated to the ambassadors, their basic salary was even lower than that of the diplomats who were allotted bare but supposedly comprehensive salaries. The salary of the ambassador was only £600 per month. When an ambassador was given so small a salary but given power to administer US $150,000 every three months, this no doubt constituted a clear invitation for "creative accounting". (2) Since ambassadors serving in embassies abroad did not live in isolated islands cut off from the their country, they knew what was going on at home and had a good knowledge of the endemic corruption and the high lifestyle with fancy multiple cars and plush houses enjoyed by their former colleagues in other departments and ministries. They also knew that the man they came under, the Foreign Minister, was one of the most corrupt senior officials in the country. (3) They laboured under a sense of instability because they saw the squalid conditions and poverty which had befallen the few honest and clean ambassadors who had retired back home after long careers. When, on returning to Somalia, they were reassigned in positions in the ministry's departments, they suffered living standards that were far below the standard they had enjoyed abroad and touched Mogadishu's poverty line. Some of them, after many years in service, were unable even to live in a privately owned house or own their personal transportation.

This all brought about a sense of insecurity, and gave birth to a negative culture where honesty constituted folly whilst embezzlement and the theft of public money was the accepted norm. After long and at times very distinguished service abroad, one's success was measured not in what had been achieved for the country but what make of cars were driven around Mogadishu's traffic jammed streets and what size of house(s) was owned. Unless you were a fool, you were not expected to be poor -- especially after long service abroad.

In September 1988, when the ambassador in London was recalled to head the Foreign Department at the Somali

Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP), he told the diplomatic staff he was leaving behind at the embassy, including myself who was the deputy, that two long-delayed quarterly funds of the embassy, which had just arrived (sent "promptly" to most embassies to help facilitate the departure of a long list of ambassadors and diplomats who had recently been recalled), were exclusively meant to subsidise his own departure. In other words, that he fully intended to take all the money after payment of the bare salaries of the staff. A few days prior to his departure, I learned from the accountant, who was also in that departure list, that the embassy bank account was left with a further huge overdraft. The ambassador, who very well knew what awaited him back home and the misery of the more honest of his predecessors, shipped a luxurious Mercedes car and several containers of goods to his villa near the Mogadishu Lido beach resort.

This departure was unremarkable in a nation in which all recipes for corruption were inspired by the government. Other diplomats, with the exception of embassy accountants, had little opportunity to become corrupt. This was true even if one was temporarily left in charge of an embassy in the event of an ambassor's leave (short or long). It has been pointed out that corrupt ambassadors, along with everybody else in government, perceived the office they were in charge of as their own personally owned "*makhaayad*" (restaurant). This term was the one later applied to public offices. Upon return to station, an ambassador whose "nest" had been tampered with, would moan and demand replacement and denounce the diplomat left in charge as a corrupt officer. Ironically, in a system which was as corrupt as the last Somali government, diplomats accused of corruption were thrown out or transferred back home, with the exception of those few cronies who had well-established connections. This was because, in the twisted culture which had developed, one was not expected to become corrupt before being given one's own office. In other words one should not be foolish enough to embezzle "*makhaayad*" where one did not have the ultimate power over it and where one could be accused of corruption by a superior. This was typical of the double standard hypocrisy of the leadership. Once one was exposed as being corrupt, the leadership distanced itself, not wanting to be seen to

be defending or encouraging corruption. Otherwise, theirs was a policy of hear no evil, see no evil.

While even the country's toddlers knew of the high level of his lifestyle and the sixty or so expensive villas he owned, it was typical of the longest serving foreign minister hypocritically to pose as Mr Clean; someone who did not benefit from even an illicit cup of tea. Meanwhile, he stripped millions of dollars from government coffers.

The lack of an independent, watchful press

One of the important tasks of a patriotic, responsible and vigilant press is to protect the ethics and standards of governance and expose those who fall prey to corruption. An established press, such as that in the United Kingdom, is a watchdog which endeavours to make sure on the one hand that legitimate paths of governance are not deviated from and on the other that the leadership appoints only senior personalities appropriate to hold public offices. In most countries where there is an effective press the work of discharging corrupt and sleazy personalities need not be by the sword of those who appointed them in the first place. Identification of wrongdoers by the press helps form public opinion about the relative dishonesty of such persons and the consequent pressure which builds up can eject the bad guys from the system and disgrace them. No matter how reluctant the leadership is to dismiss such persons, eventually as the heat mounts, they become political liabilities and have to be disowned and thrown to the wolves.

In the case of Somalia, there was no free and independent press, since freedom of thought found its expression in oral poetry rather than publications, and all the mass media were owned by a government which tolerated and even encouraged corruption at all levels. Government papers only ran the president's long speeches and engagements. There was no room for any journalist who worked for government papers or the national radio stations to point out corruption or name corrupt officials let alone criticise the leadership. Once the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party newspaper probed a few personalities and produced some stories. One such pointed a finger at the then minister of telecommunications Abdullahi

Osoble Siyad, who owns hotels and other business interests in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Because of this article and a few later ones, the paper was closed down. Any form of freedom of expression was stifled with terrible consequences.

The president not only disliked such daring exposure of his corrupt ministers, but took such matters personally. To him a finger pointed at any of his government officials was a finger pointed at himself. One of the reasons behind this intolerance on the part of the nation's leader was because he himself was behind the corrupting of the people and the system. He could dictate easily to corrupt officials and keep them under his thumb. That did not mean that there were not clean people in the system. Even though all conditions were biased to make one wittingly or unwittingly corrupt, yet there were some, including certain ambassadors and other senior level officials of government, who resisted corruption.

These individuals probably did not get the chance to head an office ("*makhaayad*") where they were sole master, or they sacrificed themselves by choosing to stay out of the dirt of corruption. Once having turned down an opportunity of which they could have taken advantage thus squandered their chances, the leadership made sure never to give such "fools" a second opportunity. One official who, unlike the few who chose to go hungry, literally swam in seas of corruption was surprisingly whimsical. He wryly told me that the officials who headed government departments had no way open to them other than to take advantage of those offices and break the trust conferred on them. He said "It is like a fun-loving teenage woman whom you know for certain that if you do not take her, because of her age, others will not neglect her. Any money saved by one official is taken by his successor after he leaves office."

After having denied the country its right to an independent press, the leadership grew more and more paranoid over the country's coverage in the foreign mass media. Government embassies received annually updated circulars adjuring them not to let foreign journalists slip through the net and visit the country. In 1988, the Somali embassy in London received a letter from the Foreign Ministry on the orders of the president and the foreign minister, to the effect that the government wished to see the

indefinite closure of the BBC's Somali Service that is transmitted from Bush House external radio service in central London. This action was in stark contrast to an occasion during the hostilities over the Somali regions in Ethiopia when the Somali government among others came to the rescue of the service by appealing to Her Majesty's Government to spare it from cutbacks.

In 1980, for budgetary reasons and because of the need to minimise expenditure, the BBC's Somali Service had been included in a list of services that it was proposed to cut altogether. However, the service was spared from the axe, among other factors, because of vigorous campaigning by James Callaghan, then a member of parliament and former British prime minister whose constituency, Cardiff, included a substantial Somali community in close contact with their homeland. Lord Callaghan persuaded over a hundred of his colleagues in parliament to put their signatures to a motion to save the Somali Service. They were backed up by pleas from the Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre and President Hassan Gouled Abtidon of Djibouti. This was at a time when Somalia was not blighted by tragedies and gross leadership mishaps. There were fewer troubles in the country for the government. In other words the house was less messy and the BBC's Somali Service was not then considered as a "threat" or a subversive "imperialist" tool.

When the correspondence from the Somali government, this time seeking to close down the service, came to the embassy in April 1988, I was in charge as a result of the ambassador's absence on leave. I knew that one of the qualities of the then government was not at the time decisiveness of thought but I was very irritated by the action of the government I represented. Rather than pass the correspondence to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, I placed the document under lock and key in my office desk drawer. This request from the government was not only an irresponsible affront to the Somali race as a whole, it constituted an attempt to deprive the whole Somali people of something they greatly valued. It is common logic that when a house is not in order there can be no shortage of critics. And the BBC's Somali section over forty years has built a reputation amongst the Somali people as being fair, unbiased and truthful. Thus its critical content became anathema to the

then leadership in Somalia.

The BBC Somali Service is the only tangible presence of Her Majesty's Government to the majority of the Somali people. Nor is it something whose closure is at all at the discretion of an incumbent government in Somalia. One may argue that even if the government was wrong at the time, it was equally wrong of me to disregard the instructions of the government. I accept that, but insubordination was my clear duty to the Somali people. It is very important for a diplomat, or for that matter any government official of any nation, to be one hundred percent obedient to the relevant authorities and government system, but less so, I felt, when the country was like a headless chicken running all over the place.

During the later years, when the regime ran out of steam and troubles reared in every corner of the country, no enemy appeared more awesome to the government than the BBC. In order to counterbalance and erode its towering credibility, the rulers in Somalia exhausted all avenues available to them even dubbing the BBC, by replacing its first three initials each with a Somali spoof "*Been-Been Sii*" which in translation becomes "false-false c". The Somali leadership could not come to terms with the fact that it could not blame the BBC or other international mass media for the rot that had set in in the country. It initiated a campaign to influence and even threaten Africa-oriented publications, editors and individual journalists. The leadership was never enlightened enough to see the bright side of criticism which was only a reminder to it to get its act together and do something about the mess. Instead an institution which normally possesses all the powers and discretion to lead the nation in the right direction and mitigate the problems of the country, became totally impotent, floundering and vacillating over the slightest criticism.

Somali artists, singers and poets through their conscientious efforts, contributed to the government's local legitimacy and early credibility and acted as a medium to convey to the people its objectives and achievements particularly during the first twelve years of its rule. However, in the next eight years they, like everybody else, grew disillusioned with the system and did not hesitate to state their displeasure. Through their strong artistic

medium they started to feed back to the government their perceptions of its folly and misrule.

One such example was a famous Somali song called "*Landcruiser*", in which the widely known Somali singer Sada Ali was trying in vain to convey to the government that it was no good roaming around cities with expensive cars while the common man toiled in hardship. In the 1980s, senior government officials, their spouses and children, made a fashion of owning four-wheel-drive Landcruiser vehicles fitted with utilities and all sorts of gadgetry. This was at a time when the country was the recipient of basic food, such as maize, from donor countries and was presenting begging bowls in every corner of the globe. No sooner did Sada sing this well-received song in a theatrical drama play, than she was forced to go underground as the most wanted person in Somalia. Eventually after many months of ducking and diving and evading capture, she fled the country in disguise under the cover of darkness.

Another equally formidable song was "*Yaasiinka*" which was centred on a verse in the Holy Qur'an which the Muslims are required to utter at the time of tragedy, despair or bewilderment. The melody was sung by a famous Somali artist called Abdi Aw Muhumed. This same artist, in 1970 in the early heydays of the government, had sung the revolutionary song "*Guulwade Siyaad*" which is "victory pioneer Siad". As time changes, people also change with it. Even rocks are not spared from the toll of changing times. These artists were in no way to blame for the ineptness of the leadership and the troubles in the country merely because they pointed them out. Rather than be touchy at the slightest criticism, the leadership should have taken quiet note of such comments, especially the mild and useful ones, from simple artists. Instead, both the message and the messenger were targeted almost as a priority.

A culture of *Geeljirenimo* (camelboyism)

Even though the Somali nation could be said to be one of the most homogeneous societies on earth, yet there is a degree of diversity based on ethnicity and background culture which in many aspects determines the behaviour and outlook of a Somali. This background culture can be classified as follows:

1. Urban
2. Agrarian
3. Coastal
4. Nomadic -- camel herders (*geeljir*), sheep and cattle herders (*ari iyo lo'jir*).

The aggressive behaviour of some individuals, mainly those from a camel culture background, is also termed in Somali as "*geeljir*". This does not mean that every man and woman from a camel background is violent or unruly. To every catagorisation and rule there are exceptions. Nevertheless, for many there are only two colours, black and white. Others can perceive 630 colours in the world and a variety of different shades and variations in every characterisation. This "camel background" can involve wild aspects such as looting, kidnapping and even killing. It is not dissimilar to the culture of violence nowadays seen in Wild West films. In the *geeljir* camel-herding background culture, looting camels and properties that belong to others is considered as a noble and manly characteristic. Those camel herders who loot camels are known by Somalis as "*geelqaad*" which literally means "camel-takers". They enjoy relative stardom within their own nomadic communities. Looting and thievery has never been lawful but it has always been the code of practice in the camel herder's nomadic way of life.

In 1975, in the middle of the capital Mogadishu at the height of President Mohamed Siad Barre's rule, I was one of many thousands of Somalis who were disgusted and appalled to see several expensive limousines that had clearly been stolen from Kenya, being freely and openly driven on the streets. One limousine was a Mercedes-Benz which had belonged to the then vice-president of Kenya. In Mogadishu it was no secret either that those cars were stolen or that they had come from "capitalist" Kenya. As Somalia was then a "socialist" country, most of the cars driven were modest Fiats. In those days of "revolutionary" Somalia, most Mercedes cars belonged to the government and were confined to the use of foreign dignitaries who visited Somalia.

Even though at the time the Somali state was under strict military rule, the government raised no finger to seize those cars from the thieves and return them to their owners in neighbouring

Kenya. On the other hand the Kenyan embassy in Mogadishu investigating the matter soon recognised that the cars were driven on the streets by the very thieves who had stolen them. The embassy relayed information to their government that their vice-president's car and two other cars stolen from Kenya were being driven openly in Mogadishu. The Kenyan Foreign Ministry called in the then Somali ambassador in Nairobi, Hussein Abdi Duale, widely known as *"Awil"*. When the matter was disclosed to the Somali ambassador he could hardly believe it. He took the first available flight to Mogadishu and went straight to see the president, briefed him and presented a written message of concern from the Kenyan government on the matter and a request that the cars be returned. When the ambassador finished and after the president had read the letter, he dismissed Duale, saying *"War orodoo meeshaadii isaga noqo, nin Soomaaliyeed baabuur aan ka qaaday Kiiniya loo celin mahaya ee!"*, which is -- "You just return to your station; I will not take away from a Somali what belongs to him and return it to Kenya. That is out of the question! Ignore those Kenyans. Let them shout. They will get tired and eventually drop the matter." It was a typical *geelqaad* (camel-taker) response. In the eyes of the president, not only was the theft of those cars legitimate, it was manly (*niman rag ah*). He was also trying to show, in his own way, that he was always on the side of his people -- a caring statesman. The matter was closed. Shaken, agitated and embarrassed, Duale returned to Kenya. Later in 1977, as an army colonel, he was to sabotage the Somali war effort against Ethiopia, by defecting to Kenya and giving an over-publicised press conference.

At that time, I was not in the government, but learned of the ambassador's earlier ordeal at the hands of his president and the Kenyan reaction, after reading Duale's book, *From Barre to Aideed -- the agony of a nation.* In any society where there is the rule of law, an individual, once having stolen property, be it from another nation or in his own homeland, is a thief. These thieves who robbed cars from Kenya should have been apprehended, tried and convicted and the cars returned to their rightful owners. By defending thievery and outlaws the president was sending the bad signal that for Somalis the taking of the belongings of others was condoned. It was an invitation to more unlawful acts

committed across the frontiers of Somalia.

But why would a head of state openly defend thieves who stole cars from a neighbourly nation, be it Kenya or any other? Even though he was born in the Shilabo area in Somali regions in Ethiopia, the president hailed from a violent camel-herding nomadic culture in Mudug region -- the Somali equivalent of Texas. There, looting and killing was endemic throughout the early years of his life and, as stated above, was viewed as a manly and noble act. It was an accepted role for a man to rob and flee with other people's property. Ibn Khaldun, the famous Arab traveller, went so far as to write, "The bedouins (nomads) are not concerned with laws, with deterring people from misdeeds or with protecting some against others. They care only for the property that they might take away from people through illegal levies and looting. When they have obtained that, they have no interest in anything further..." Thus, many Somalis who were honoured, given high posts and entrusted with grandiose projects, embezzled millions and either stayed in the country untouched -- receiving yet more honours since they had more money -- or they fled to other countries, mainly in the developed world where they could afford to enjoy expensive lifestyles.

Among the many examples of such embezzled and dismantled projects which foreign donor countries had presented to the Somali people was a sugar factory project in Marerey, costing several hundred million dollars, given by Sheikh Zayid Bin Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates. A shoddy secondhand factory from India was eventually substituted for the multi-million sugar factory. This was one of several ambitious projects that were destroyed by the greed of irresponsible Somali officials. The Sheikh also donated funds for a tuberculosis hospital which was never built. Likewise a number of factories including one which produced fertiliser.

The goal of Sheikh Zayid in handing out such a large sum of money to build a sugar factory was far-sighted: he intended to benefit the country in many ways, expecting it not only to have made Somalia self-sufficient in sugar but also to meet the needs of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the six rich Arabian Gulf countries. The hard currency earned could have then been invested in other more rewarding projects. This whole plan would

have made a big difference to the lives of many of our people.

It is worth mentioning in this context that among the foreign nations, nationals, aid organisations and companies who genuinely came to the rescue of Somalia and were actively engaged in the country, there were a number of unprincipled foreign adventurers, who sought only to enrich themselves by whatever means, looting the nation's resources and corrupting its officers to their own advantage. People such as these prey on many countries in the developing world. Typical is one evasive individual whom many Somalis believe indiscriminately indulged in the worst forms of piracy, taking advantage of the nation's increasingly desperate situation. His dealings with Somalia date back many years and he became a close associate of some high members of the former government and the civil authorities. This circle included some members of the presidential household, through one of the sons-in-law of the former president. Engaging in many activities and illicit deals, he even offered government-sponsored aerial surveys and viability studies to any takers. Before the civil war, he was a smuggler of all types of contraband, including ivory, currencies, arms and gemstones. During the civil war he acted as a photographer and reporter as a cover whilst smuggling refugees abroad -- for a price.

Other unscrupulous foreigners were Europeans, mainly Italian employees of road construction companies. To the amazement of the Somali public, many of their asphalt roads were eroded away by the normal torrential rains whilst still under construction or were never started at all. What was the point of foreign companies carrying out such expensive building and asphalt projects only for them to be destroyed by flood waters? These illogical acts were only to cover the shared proceeds from such projects; flimsy work was concealed because it covered the necessity of completing the project on time. But there was frequently little or nothing to inaugurate by the time of completion. It was soon obvious both to the leadership and to the Somali common man that the projects were largely mythical and the foreign donated funds were stolen by collaboration between ministers and other high government officials, consultants and hangers-on.

Fortunately, foreign-based organisations monitor, record and track the movements and illegal dealings of this kind and once there is again a government in Somalia, proceedings to bring to justice those who exploited the agony of a nation in civil war will doubtless be initiated. We who belong to the so-called Third World must firmly establish an international precedent that such individuals never again encourage and take advantage of war and chaos in developing nations such as Somalia.

Exploitation of loopholes

Even though Somalis are often highly intelligent and gifted people, like any other society they have their own shortcomings. But in every society there are those who take advantage of the system and exploit legal and other loopholes. The lives of many of our people in Somalia begin as survival-based nomadic struggle and because, in the last decade of the former government, people were pre-occupied by the simple need to survive, many emerged who were easily tempted to exploit the system and could be catagorised as masters of that evil art. Somalis are people whose best behaviour surfaces whilst abroad in other peoples' countries: they become different people. Unlike most nations whose peoples are more attached to their soil, one might almost say that some Somalis love foreign lands more than their own. Some demonstrate less respect for one another than for foreigners.

Somalis take things for granted at home and can demand total freedom to do whatever they please to the point of anarchy. In other parts of the world, people give more consideration and care to their domestic and national wellbeing. A Somali may respect other people's law and behave more gently abroad than in his own country. For instance, paying tax into the government coffers is one national duty many of our people used to evade totally, due to a strange feeling "one should not pay taxes" in one's own country. It could be that such recklessness has roots in the universal freedom of past nomadic life.

Many embassies in Baghdad and Tehran maintain bank accounts in Kuwait or Dubai. In this context, one day in 1984 during my tenure at the Somali embassy in Kuwait, as I was seeing off Yassin Shire, the Somali ambassador to Iraq at Kuwait

airport, a few minutes from check-in, at a distance we saw a Somali who was employed at the airport, running up and down apparently demonstrating how hard he was working. The ambassador wanted to be assured that this man was a Somali. I knew him and confirmed that he was. The ambassador retorted, "I am sure if he had been in Somalia and employed at his own airport, he would not have been working as hard as now." One of the follies of the last leadership seems to have been that since the best of the Somali character is helped to surface by the presence of foreigners, rogues apart, it did not encourage them. Despite a degree of national xenophobia, government should have allowed decent peoples from other nations to retain businesses and enjoy a livelihood in Somalia. Since the "revolutionary" government came to power in 1969, because of nationalisation of assets and other harsh circumstances, the foreign population dwindled, denying even fresh investment in the country. In 1989, after twenty years, with the exception of the international diplomatic community and other foreign agencies, there were fewer than five hundred foreigners in the whole country.

Instability created by random dismissals and arrests

When I was with the Somali embassy in London, a highly placed minister, one of the officers who had staged the 1969 October revolution and who was also a member of the Somali politbureau, was passing through London with his wife. As was the practice, as acting head of the embassy with other members of the diplomatic staff, I went to escort him very early one morning in 1988 from the VIP section of Terminal 2 at Heathrow. Later that day, after some engagements at the embassy, I went to see the minister in the lobby of his hotel, the Intercontinental in Park Lane, in order that the embassy might programme his contacts and engagements. With another diplomat from the embassy, I spent some time with the minister and his wife discussing life back home. Talk was mainly about the high cost of living, mounting inflation and the people's preoccupation with survival. Suddenly his wife, who like many of our people never tired of speaking her mind, mentioned that they had "stopped napping". She meant they had started seriously making money and

concentrating on their future and that of their children: in other words, they had started to take part in the endemic corruption that engulfed Somalia. She said "We started to wake up when Colonel Ismail Ali Abokar, was whisked away from his house late one night in August 1982 and arrested. The following morning, his wife and children, having lost everything -- government villa, cars, servants, bodyguards and all facilities -- became like homeless beggars on the street dependent on handouts from relatives."

Ismail Ali Abokar, a true son of Somalia, was perhaps one of the cleanest politicians in the then corruption-riddled Somali government. One day in 1975 in the heydays of the "revolutionary" government, when his ageing father suddenly died, Ismail found himself in a difficult financial position for he could not afford the funeral arrangements. The colonel was an honest, straightforward man who had become frustrated and felt cheated when he found out that the leadership was after all not what he thought it was. As minister of information and national guidance, he was one of the founding members of the then powerful Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC) which staged the October 1969 *coup d'état*. He was exceptionally able and colourful and one of half a dozen politicians who fell out with the leadership. They were picked up one by one from their houses on a fateful August night and taken away by armed presidential *Koofiyad Guduud*, into more than six years' solitary confinement before there was even a pretence of a trial.

That day, as the minister's wife spoke, Ismail Ali Abokar and his colleagues were still languishing in harsh captivity. This lady considered she was doing us a favour and passing on useful hints and tips as she elaborated on the reasons which "forced" many in the government to become corrupt. The then government did not realise that by randomly picking up officials and unceremoniously throwing them into jails, while hungry soldiers stripped cash and everything of value from their residences, they were sending tremors down the corridors of governance to all personnel with the message "All those of you who do not make arrangements for your future and that of your dependants by becoming corrupt and hoarding money, one day your fate will be similar." No one knew when and how that day might come as unpredictability is the middle name of authoritarian government.

In the developed western countries, there are many polling agencies and other indicators of public opinion which, together with the stock markets are barometers. In Somalia, which lacked even a free press, the mood of the nation could always be checked in *El-gaab*, the bustling central part of the capital, where, before the civil war, all sorts of information, political as well as financial, was available -- including the latest arrests, and a measure of the general instability caused by malfunction of the government.

When a government official of rank was arrested in such a high-handed and brutal manner, a week of stripping and looting of the apprehended official's spoils would begin, inspired by the actions of the soldiers sent to detain him. Personal property and wealth, as well as that of the government public facilities for which he was responsible, used to be scavenged by all involved, like hungry vultures devouring a fallen animal. These scavengers would even include some of the prisoner's colleagues -- starting from subordinates who, if others were not brought in, would move into the vacated post and inherit the houses, cars and property of the prisoner.

The leadership never cared about the consequences of its actions. Commissions of enquiry to look into government malfeasance including such incidents were only just coming into existence when matters got thoroughly out of hand in the late 1980s. Random arrests and dismissals were among the factors which gave birth to mounting insecurity and further encouraged corruption and fraud on a massive scale. Another factor was how shoddily the government used to handle *Hawlgab* (retirements) which became only a mechanism for discharging unwanted officials.

Forced retirements (*Hawlgab*)

In the history of the twenty-one year rule of the last Somali government, normal retirements based on fixed age were never the pattern. Retirement from any job responsibility, known in Somali as *hawlgab*, was mainly a matter of force. It was always the case, except in one instance which will be recounted below, that the person who retired did so against his will. The stark message which retirement indicated to those concerned and to

the public at large was that "The service of that person was no longer required". Like an object from which every bit of usefulness had been wrung, those whose employment was terminated were simply tossed aside. One other curious element in the way retirements were effected was the amount of money involved. Anyone who was retired after no matter how many years of service, be it five or fifty, received only Somali Shillings 10,000. There was no other cash reward or send-off of any kind. In later days, this sum would hardly buy three meals in a third-rate restaurant in the capital.

One of those prematurely retired was Ali Haji Hashi, a true gentleman, the first ambassador I served with in the State of Kuwait. His service ended with no mark of appreciation; nor was he alone. He was in a group of ambassadors who were similarly unceremoniously discarded in 1987. Also among them was Mohamed Jama Elmi known as MJ, an expert in the Arab world and one of the finest ambassadors with whom to serve. MJ's last appointment abroad was as ambassador to the court of St James' and he died in March 1998, in exile in the United Kingdom. Mohamed Siad's government repeatedly dismissed people but seldom if ever was any official honourably retired.

A better-known case concerns a senior colleague of mine. One day in 1984, Hashi Abdalla Farah, one of the ablest of Somalia's career diplomats and perhaps the most skilful director general -- a position later upgraded to permanent secretary -- the Foreign Ministry has ever known, was retired quite out of the blue. The intelligent and cultured Hashi did not do anything wrong, but was suddenly stripped of all titles and thrown out of the ministry. It was simply the leadership's desire to accommodate an incoming ambassador recalled on revised terms of service. In Hashi's dismissal, both the staff at the Foreign Ministry and the entire diplomatic corps in the embassies lost a dignified but friendly father figure who always did his best to smooth out the conflicts and squabbles which arose from time to time in the pressurised environment of embassies.

The new permanent secretary, Ahmed Mohamed Adan, *Qeybe*, was born and brought up in Aden, where he served as a clerk in the British administration. Even though he went on to become Somalia's ambassador in leading cities of the world including

Washington, Moscow, London and New York, and was Somalia's longest-serving ambassador with a career of twenty-two unbroken years behind him, unlike the polished and courteous Hashi, he was vain and crude. Throughout his service *Qeybe*, seemingly not moulded by long years of diplomatic experience, remained very touchy on trivial matters. Undoubtedly he had a capacity for hard work and fastidious punctuality but his manner never matched the grace, gentleness and thoughtfulness of his ousted predecessor. On the basis of length of service he should have been retired as one of Somalia's grandees, equivalent to Viscount William Whitelaw, Lord Geoffrey Howe and other big guns in the politics and governance of the UK. Staying on too long erodes effectiveness.

So perverse was the system, on the other hand, that not infrequently it was the dead wood which was retained in office. Remaining at their posts practically into their dotage, during the civil war, far from contributing to the prevention or mitigation of calamity, "big" personalities discredited themselves in that they could still be seen struggling for position and prominence by running after tinpot warlords and other would-be dictators. They laboured under the illusion that such blood-stained individuals, who have killed and maimed their own country folk, could successfully seize power in the country. Mere eight-year-olds would not be so foolish. The Somali people, myself included, still wonder how and why such persons, who could not even analyse the gravity of the situation in their country, could end up as Somalia's political and diplomatic front-runners for three decades or so. After forty years, the generation which took over from the colonialists, despite all their experience and travel in the world, have not outgrown the mentality of the clerks and non-commissioned officers they once were. Today no one knows the whereabouts of most former "big" names and in what activities, if any, they are engaged. Yet one's net value should become apparent on leaving the service.

Many among yesterday's Somali ambassadors, unable to analyse and report back the situation in those countries to which they were accredited, merely used to despatch to the home government cuttings from the local and international press as often as not stamped in red "*Qarsoodi*" or "*Sir-culus*" (Top Secret).

Far from understanding world trends and what goes on internationally, many of our self-inflated bureaucrats could not even assess or understand the situation of their own country. The most diligent among them have not come up with anything more than copies of UN periodicals, newspaper articles or at most what foreign anthropologists have gleaned from Somali teashops in Garowe and Galkayo. Some of our people know well how to use acclaimed foreign authorities on Somalia by feeding them with ethnocentric propaganda. Such mischief makers may never tire of harvesting benefits from such ill-conceived, exhausted and outdated notions. This is especially true of those who propagate imaginary supremacy concepts. We are a small nation of some eight million people and the well-known theme of oneness and unity must be the underlying concept in any future Somalia. After all, foreign scholars seldom feel the necessity to discuss who is inferior and who is superior in their home countries. Why anyone needs to devote a lifetime to the study of divisions rather than contribute to the cultivation of harmony and unity is beyond many Somalis.

An institution's worth is always measured by how it values its own members. A system which does not value its own people, let alone long-serving ones, cannot become anything other than what the Somalis call *xera goroyo,* an ostrich *zariba,* where ostriches are noisy to no effect. Those who shape things determine their value; for instance gold is of more value than most other metallic elements simply because the human race has given it this high value. It did not arrive from heaven with a price tag attached. Where those who serve in an organisation are valued, this value naturally reflects on the institution, be it government or a company. On the other hand, the integrity and worth of those who preside over an organisation reflect both on the institution and on those who serve it. By undermining the usefulness and value of its serving officials, the Somali leadership was simply undermining itself, the government and the country.

Amassing power, wealth, good clothing and fancy cars but ignoring those under one's authority, is no way to enhance true respect. The street value of those entrusted with public management and administration depends how they themselves value, care and consider all those who come under them, down to the

common man on the street. In the eyes of my colleagues at the Foreign Ministry, the value of the then foreign minister and his cousin, the president, was not more than a few Somali Shillings. They were recognised simply as two greedy persons who cared for no one other than themselves.

Leaving government service voluntarily was altogether unthinkable in Somalia. The leadership loved to throw someone out but not the other way about; that someone should seek to take himself out of the system was resented. In 1982, when Somali ambassador Abdi Ali Hussein, known as "*Abdi Habashi*", an able Somali diplomat was unceremoniously recalled from his post as Somali ambassador in Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania, his only crime had been to dismiss a Somali employed on local terms at the embassy who had become an Ethiopian spy. However, the spy was no ordinary spook. He was married to the sister of the foreign minister's first wife. The then foreign minister always had a soft spot for insignificant human relationships; they were more important to him than the nation's vital obligations.

When Abdi Ali Hussein returned to Somalia and took up a new post at the Foreign Ministry, there was no love lost between him and the leadership. He was bitter and utterly disillusioned with the system. Asked by his friends -- for many Somalis were fleeing at the time -- why, having been wronged, did he return to a run-down country, his response was typical. "*Marbaan soo fakannee ma carar baan ku jireynaa?*", "We have fled once." He was referring to his initial defection from the Somali regions in Ethiopia to Somalia. "Are we to be on the run for the rest of our lives?" Instead he quietly decided to leave the service and became a businessman. When he approached the foreign minister and asked to be relieved of his duties, the foreign minister was dumb-struck. Such a thing had never happened previously. It was an affront to the leadership, amounting to rejection, gross misconduct and arrogance. After he persisted, he was eventually let go in what the Somalis call "*feer iyo xusul duub*" (fist and elbowing), but the issue continued to rile the minds of both the foreign minister and the president. Abdi Ali became an enigma and Somalia's intelligence forces were unleashed and asked to keep an eye on him quietly as a potential trouble maker. Every possible scenario must have been explored and vetted but

eventually it became crystal clear that their target was only a man struggling with his life and that of his own family.

Some government officials, including at least one ambassador thought the same way as the leaders. I had occasion to observe that the ambassador who served in London from 1984 to 1988 was a very strange man. Even though his salary was meagre, and he represented a mismanaged and impoverished nation, he took delight in imitating the lifestyle of a *Maharaja* at the expense of the public purse. He had a barber and, unlike any Somali I have ever known, a manicurist in the expensive Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane. His assistant, who was exceptionally loyal to him, told me in amazement that they had paid £9000 for three specially made personalised silk shirts. He undoubtedly had a weakness for silk materials which he personalised with three initials of his name S.M.A -- as he did much of his property and personal effects. Ironically, these initials were very similar to the three letter initials of our monopoly agency which stamped all legally imported cigarette packets -- and even loose ones. The "S.M.A" -- *Somali Monopoly Agency* -- made the ambassador's peccadillo a joke for many Somalis.

Foreign ambassadors who paid reciprocal visits to the embassy were taken by surprise at his large spacious office, in contrast with the other parts of the embassy premises. Upon arrival at his post, he had spent thousands of pounds of public money on the refurbishment of his office. The ceiling was artistically made to resemble the interior decorations of the rooms in Buckingham Palace. Once, the distinguished long-serving Saudi Ambassador, the exceptionally gentle and considerate Sheikh Nasser Al-Manqour, Dean of Arab heads of mission, paid a return visit to the Somali ambassador. While passing through the entrance and the hallway ascending to the mezzanine floor of the building where the ambassador's office was located, he did not see anything special, for everything was shabby and gloomy. Suddenly, as the door of the ambassador's office was flung open, he was surprised to see a totally different decor as though he had been magically translated into a different world of virtual reality. The office was more or less recreated to resemble the spacious office environ of the villains in James Bond films. His hand flew to his mouth; Sheikh Manqoor could hardly contain his surprise.

It never worried the ambassador that the squalid waiting hall was full of worn-out chairs for he never bothered to enter any other room in the whole premises; it was as though he would require protective clothing against a virus loose therein. He would moan and groan when the quarterly embassy payment cheque did not arrive on time. Living only to steal public funds, he seemed never to care if Somalia was in flames. Yet such an attitude used to appeal to the leadership: but how wrong they were. When a man has no scrupules, cause or patriotism, he has no boundaries other than his own selfishness.

With the exception of very few well-known ambassadors who starved themselves into destitution, most Somali ambassadors were similarly obsessed with when the embassy quarterly cheque would arrive, devising ways and means to steal the money. It was wrong of the government in the first place to allow ambassadors to become preoccupied with money matters. The best thing would have been to provide them with salaries they could live on and have another staff member of the embassy sign cheques with the counter signature of the accountant. The ambassador would thus be left with the power of authorisation to oversee and check the embassy financial books now and again, to ensure that all was well.

One day in November 1986 I paid a courtesy call on my counterpart, Mary Odinga, at the Kenyan High Commission in London which is housed in building No.45 in Portland Place, opposite the Somali embassy. Whilst with her, I noticed that she was presented by a secretary with a file of correspondence among which were some cheques she was required to sign. She later told me that in their diplomatic service, it was the deputy head of mission, not the High Commissioner who was required to sign cheques, with the accountant. In her own words, as I recall, she said "The High Commissioner simply should not be made to be running after embassy pennies. He is too important to be tied down with accounts." I did not tell, and could not have told her that, unlike her enviable and comparatively clean government system, it was not only the job of the Somali ambassador to busy himself with embassy pennies and cents but many of our ambassadors were indeed like street-hawkers (*garab-safar*) obsessed to pocket each and every penny the government sent

to the embassies. Mary Odinga, a high-flyer, was one of the ablest and most colourful diplomats Kenya had ever produced. Perhaps once every three months she used to throw the most talked about diplomatic parties (the envy of most diplomats) in her government-owned house in north London. Later on in the 1980s she became her country's ambassador in Harare, Zimbabwe.

In 1988 the Somali ambassador in Djibouti, who was a close relative of the president and the foreign minister, cooperated with the local manager to rob the branch of the Commercial Bank of Somalia in Djibouti. To add insult to injury the ambassador subsequently fled to North America where nowadays he roams idly having already spent the million and half US dollars he took from the bank. This slap in the face to the leadership was a bitter lesson, teaching them that they were not immune to felony and crimes against the state on the part of those to whom they entrusted high government posts solely on clan loyalty. When ambassador designate Jama Dirir, also from the Somali president's immediate clan, was selected to replace the runaway ambassador and his nomination was presented to the Djibouti government. President Hassan Gouled Abdtidon turned it down outright, saying, "*Malaha cid kaloo Soomaali ah oo wax laga dhigo Soomaaliya maba jirto miyaa?*", "Is there no Somali other than from the president's clan left in Somalia to appoint for a post?"

An ambassadorship is an important and prestigeous post which a state confers on only very few of its most trusted and tested citizens. That an ambassador can rob his nation's bank -- especially one in the land where he represents his country -- continues to amaze me till this day. Of such paradoxical matters, the Somalis say "*Ninkii dhicin lahaa baa dhacaya,*" "Looting of the one who should have safeguarded." This tragedy obviously sheds light on the type of bad government the country had. Rather than award such highly prestigious public posts on merit and trustworthiness, the most significant criterion which dwarfed all other aspects and procedures in the public service was the clan factor; it was first among other irrelevant and even trivial matters which were invariably considered.

The former leadership in my country did not establish a system whereby people are rewarded or graded in accordance with their usefulness and ability. On the contrary, those who were found to

be incompetent were rewarded as they were expected to be "compensating" for their colourlessness, which did not concern the authorities, by becoming loyal stooges. That was the quality most sought after by those in power. This has naturally produced elements with no talent whatsoever in every part of the system, which, like mushrooms, spawned overnight. The consequence was that no one knew exactly his capability or worth.

In the UK many institutions exist that can determine the worth of personalities in the public domain or even in the private sector. When in 1994, John Smith, the late leader of the Labour Party, passed away, initially members such as Jack Cunningham, Robin Cook and Margaret Beckett showed interest in the vacant post. The press and other important institutions, which can set the value of personalities in politics, soon hand-picked Tony Blair as the individual most able to lead an election victory. This paved the way for him, reducing the vigour and number of competitors and enabling him to come forward with confidence and be elected to replace the deceased leader.

In Somalia, the leadership had set up a system that was not based on rewarding success, but where on the other hand the useless were rewarded and groomed. Nowadays, because of this legacy of inflated personalities, it is very common to come across someone who at most could become a section director of a department, living under the illusion that he could lead the nation and become the president of Somalia. That is why in 1991 there emerged more warlords and politicians than in the collapsed former Yugoslavia, all vying and jockeying to become Somali president.

The extent to which the man in power was detached from world affairs was such that even as late as 1989, when the Soviet Union was no longer a world class superpower, he was still possessed by illusions. Somalia represented just another begging bowl around international monetary organisations, whilst the Somali leadership was still living in the past and courting Moscow. It vainly sought to "regain" the preferential position in the communist camp which it had enjoyed during the cold war era when there was nothing on offer. As late as August 1989, a high level delegation led by the eldest son of the president Maslah Mohamed Siad -- then head of "sector 77", a military sector in the

capital, and whom in those days the public saw as "the crown prince" groomed by his father to take over after his death -- went to Moscow only to be received by the commander of the Moscow military barracks.

The former president had usurped all powers of government, especially after 1980, and rather than follow available reports and assessments from the nation's embassies abroad, was drifting into a past age in which the art of governance lay more in a Byzantine style of nodding, winking and gossiping than in the documentation which is a must if any modern government is to function properly. Warlords and unprincipled politicians similarly bring into disrepute the last vestiges of national honour, sovereignty and prestige as they scavenge in the decomposing hulk of Somalia. The behaviour of the likes of the former Somali ambassador in London is not irrelevant, for it was typical of how the mind of the Somali leadership worked: stripping everything of value, but feathering their nests until they retired into them.

It has been pointed out above that it was the unique lifestyle of the foreign minister that his long-time friend in London was imitating. The Somali foreign minister is said to have had a lift installed in his four-storeyed house built in the last few years, before the Mogadishu uprising. Some used to joke, asking if this lift were to malfunction, since there was no lift servicing company in Somalia -- the nearest one was in Nairobi, Kenya -- what would the minister have done? In the developed countries, irresponsible actions of governments are reflected in the performance of the stock markets; any impulsive government action affects stability. Unfortunately, Somalia did not have a stock market or a free press, but the barometers were an increase in the already massive robbing of public funds and property, an escalation of corruption levels and a growth in disaffection.

Kleptomaniacs entrusted with public resources

In the last government of Somalia many unpatriotic officials were kleptomaniacs who had found their way into high posts of influence and power. Within the country's highest decision-making cabinet there were three notorious kleptomaniacs who ran ministries controlling some of the country's most important resources. Even though these personalities and their thievery

were well known to the president, no one knew exactly the reasons behind either their nomination or their retention of highly sensitive and important offices.

Hoping to understand the destructive nature of the former president, one day a senior government official asked him why he placed a well-known con-artist and kleptomaniac as a minister in one of the country's most important economic ministries. The president's response was most bewildering. He simply said "I know very well that he is even capable of stealing from his own hand, but it is at my discretion that he be made a minister in the most important ministry."

Most of the government's kleptomaniacs seemed to live only to steal. They had little or no regard whatsoever for the wellbeing and welfare of their country or people. It has been touched on that there were many foreign nationals and companies who, when they saw that the local officials they came under were corrupt and irresponsible and did not care for their homeland, started to collaborate with them to steal the foreign donated funds meant for the projects and factories they were paid and entrusted to construct. Somalia's developmental projects and factories were usually either donated by the Arabian Gulf countries, the EEC, Japan or the United States. The largest part of the funds stolen by foreigners in collaboration with corrupt Somali officials used to end up in the pockets of those company officials, and were despatched to their accounts in banks in the developed countries.

Unlike in other properly run countries there was no auditing or national commission to evaluate and oversee public works. The government had never managed to appoint a civil engineers' commission to supervise important construction works by foreign or local companies. Even if there had been such a body, because of the government's hopelessly low salaries and lack of accountability, they would have been open to easy corruption and might well have taken part in the larceny and approved all such shoddy and unfinished projects.

The United States had announced in June 1997 that it was to revise its long-held policy of aid and development to developing nations and would embark on a new policy focused towards trade and investment. The United Kingdom and other developed nations followed suit. The golden era of aid and development

(between the 1950s and 1990s) was over and all developing nations, such as war-torn Somalia, which because of mal-administration did not benefit from such lax and fruitful packages, was henceforth left to tighten their belts and adjust to the new realities.

Personality cult which undermined patriotism

"Personification" in Somalia during the reign of President Mohamed Siad Barre as discussed in Chapter 3, encouraged the personality cult of the leadership but it also led to a massive build-up of corruption. Since personification was introduced and encouraged by the head of the state himself, everyone from the leader downwards came to regard public office as personal property. The foreign minister who comprehensively misused the resources entrusted to him, nibbled away at the hard currency of the ministry through monthly cheques which he took with him in the form of travel allowances and entertainment funds. Even the monthly cash earnings of the ministry teashop did not escape. Somali banknotes were blatantly taken by two ministry employees from the cashier's office straight to the minister's office in broad daylight (*maalin caddey*). One day in 1987, some ministry staff saw Halimo, a lady from the finance office, with another helper from the pool of manual workers, carrying the large sack containing this money. Upon her return, others asked Halima whether any pocket money was given to them by the minister for the service rendered. She said "No! He was ostensibly busying himself with paper work; without looking up, he pointed to the office corner muttering 'Put the damn thing there! Put the damn thing there!' "

Corruption encouraged by the head of state

No head of an organisation or government would choose to demolish the system over which he presides. Yet ironically, it is possible that the rot and dismantling of a whole institution can be consciously initiated by its head. A suitable example of this phenomenon is the second collapse of Mrs Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan government. She had been unceremoniously dismissed from the premiership and some believe that she returned for a second and probably last time seeking vengeance. Introducing or

condoning wholesale corruption, she turned the whole country into a barren lawless land where everything of value was stripped by her corrupt husband and his cronies. The fate of Pakistan was decided when, despite the humiliation she had suffered during her first government, she was once again allowed to head the state.

In Somalia, Mohamed Siad's appointments be they ministerial, ambassadorial or in the management of a public agency were not made to benefit the country but to reward unquestioned and absolute allegiance to the leadership. For instance one day early in 1985, a Somali ambassador who had been transferred from one of the country's embassies in Europe to head a department at the Foreign Ministry, resolved to see the president. After living many months in a rented villa with his large family, he wanted to build a modest bungalow on a small plot of land that belonged to him. Having put all his resources and savings into building this house, just before its completion he ran out of cash. This particular ambassador was one of the very few in the system who, had kept his "*public garment*" as the Somalis call it, clear from the nasty web of corruption. For several days he had worried how to raise the last remaining funds. At the presidency he aimed to set out his problems and request some assistance. Such a venture would not be at all unusual since the president was the "Jack of all trades and traders" and master of everything.

The arrangement of an evening appointment was no easy matter. The president used to receive locals or foreigners every night of the week from around 7:00 pm until around 8:00 am. At the presidency when his name was called by one of the aides, the ambassador entered and was seated on a sofa next to the president. He started his briefing by saying "As you are aware Mr President, I am no longer at an embassy, since I was part of the long 1984 list of ambassadors and diplomats who were recalled. Now I am at the ministry as director of a department. No sooner had I left my last embassy than I received the shocking news that the ambassador who replaced me had pocketed the $160,000 credit left in the embassy's account." He went on to explain to the president that as his was a large family, he could not continue living in rented premises since the cost of living was doubling by the day and he had invested all his savings and more in building

a modest house for his family. However, work on the building had had to stop at the final stage near completion. The ambassador later recounted his expectation that the president, who made no secret of giving away millions of shillings every day, would simply ask him how much he needed. He naively thought that his not being corrupt was reason enough to see him safely through the lion's den. Instead the president unexpectedly got up, lit one of his favourite "Benson & Hedges" cigarettes and without a word or gesture left the room. After a few minutes one of the presidential guards asked the ambassador to leave. This he did, pondering over his unceremonious dismissal.

Some days later he approached an influential friend who had better access to the president, and told him of his recent meeting. When this friend went to the president, the latter commented, "The other night when the former ambassador came to me, I thought he came to talk about important matters, but the fool only came to tell me that he did not benefit from the many ambassadorial posts I have given him in the past. I made him ambassador to benefit himself and members of his family and now he foolishly says he doesn't have a dwelling to house them. I used to think that this man was more intelligent than that." What angered him most, he added, was that "he told me even during his last days as ambassador, he left a large sum of money in the embassy account for an undeserving traitor." One of the president's many stark messages to the nation was clearly that, given the opportunity to work for the government, one must never waste such a golden chance but should take advantage of every occasion to steal public money. Transparency and cleanness from corruption were seen as a vice not a virtue.

In the government, when someone was appointed or nominated to head "*xafiis qoyan*" (a wet office) as it used to be called -- meaning an office where one had access to funds -- such appointments used to be called "*makhaayado*" (restaurants). And when a person was appointed to such offices, his friends and relatives used to say "*Hebal makhaayad baa loo shiday*" meaning "A restaurant has been opened for our friend." Without a shred of doubt the assumption was that such a person should better not only himself but his relatives, friends and members of his clan. The government was then credited with reaching out through him

to secure their loyalty to the regime.

Another example was the foreign minister: when he appointed or transferred diplomats and ambassadors to the nation's embassies abroad. At their final briefing, he used to say *"Adiga ayaan kuugu daneynayaa badalkan,"* "The appointment is solely made for your own personal benefit." This was unashamedly to inform them, by describing appointments as presents, that what was expected in return was absolute personal allegiance to the minister rather than to the state. Nothing should have been expected in return, but the leadership had strayed far from the true path of governance into private opportunism. It used to shock enlightened diplomats that their minister could make himself so cheap. This minister damaged his reputation by:

(1) Not making appointments solely on the basis of merit, ability, integrity, qualifications and patriotism.

(2) Appointing and promoting undeserving, uneducated, and ill-mannered persons solely on clan affiliations and loyalty.

(3) Running the ministry and the missions abroad as if they were his own property.

(4) Seeking backhanders and favours in one form or another from comparatively poor subordinates. He frequently resembled an elephant asking an ant for a favour.

Why did the Somali leader instigate and encourage corruption in the government? During the first six years of Mohamed Siad's rule -- his heydays -- some civil servants were even executed for stealing as little as 50,000 Somali Shillings. Could his attitudes have hardened after the setbacks he experienced in the war into which he ventured with Ethiopia?

War with Ethiopia: consequences of the debacle

Like everyone else who comes to power in his or her nation, the last president of Somalia, on the eve of his arrival at the helm, promoted patriotic and popular national agendas. He desired to do whatever he could for his country and even go down in history as a founding father. As ambitious as he was, he also wanted to be recorded as the longest-serving president in the whole world. It is a matter of record that President Mohamed Siad, when he came to power, rescued Somalia from imminent collapse and for the first six years presided over the most transparent and clean

government in the history of the Somali nation.

Obviously he sought to free all the missing Somali inhabited territories from the hands of Ethiopia and Kenya and the former French Somaliland, now the Republic of Djibouti. He wanted to incorporate those territories into Somalia and unite all the Somali people under one flag: the five-pointed white star set on a sky-blue background. He had grand ambitions, similar to those of Bismarck of Germany and Garibaldi of Italy. Once having achieved this goal, his other hidden ambition was to become the first "emperor" of Somalia -- as a reward for his achievements. In his eyes the most important territory in the jigsaw puzzle, that would have made the rest fall one after the other like dominos, was the eastern region of Ethiopia, or as Somalis call it, Western Somaliland. With its acquisition, the recovery of the other two lands from the hands of Kenya and France would have been only a matter of time.

Ever since Somalia gained independence in 1960, the fact that some Somalis remained outside Somalia under other governments constituted a thorn in the side of the newly born nation. Meagre national resources, natural or donated, were sacrificed for military build-up and the establishment of embassies and missions to score diplomatic points and achieve the favourable political climate for which she yearned. Although stopping short of applying to join the British Commonwealth, the young democratic state courted the West, hoping for military and diplomatic support to realise her goals. But the West did not have as much interest in Somalia as in Ethiopia; the main obstacle to solving Somalia's problem was their preferred nation in the region. This was the cold war era and anyone who fell out with the West could call for a red carpet in Moscow. In February 1964, after an unsuccessful mission to Washington, the then Somali President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke led a large delegation to Moscow. President Mohamed Siad Barre, who took over the power a few days after the assassination of Sharmarke on 15 October 1969, was then chief of staff of the Somali army.

One of the most important factors causing the Somali people to give popular support to the 21 October 1969 *coup d'état*, which saw the military take over the administration of the country, was the prestigious position which the army enjoyed. The military were

always seen as the potential saviours of the nation; the people who would bring back the lost territories into the motherland.

Emperor Haile Sellassie I, although he paid a visit to Somalia in 1974 to attend that year's annual OAU conference held in Mogadishu, did not yield much to Somalia. The strong army Mohamed Siad had built up by 1976 made the recovery of the disputed territories appear overdue. The people felt uneasy, and the increasingly powerful army, with resolving the vexed issue of the missing territories as a prime agenda which had taken over, was frequently questioned as to why it was waiting so long.

In that year, the president revived and armed the dormant liberation front for the Somali territories under a new name, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and sent it deep into Ethiopia. Under its chairman Abdullahi Hassan Mohamoud, the front made impressive initial successes, in the semi-desert of the Ogaden and Haud, the Somali president grew nervous at the slower progress of the front in more difficult terrain near the plateau. The enemy's defence was more solid and he judged it was time to commit the national army of Somalia. This was one of the major mistakes which would later pave the way for the degeneration of the government system and ultimate collapse of Somalia. In 1977, Somali military operations were extensively escalated and eighty-five percent of the disputed Somali inhabited territories were recovered.

But Ethiopia, having in 1974 overthrown the emperor to become a socialist republic, held more prestigious political prospects for the Soviet Union. On 13 November 1977, after demonstrating open support for Ethiopia with a massive airlift of military hardware, Soviet military and civilian experts were expelled from Somalia. This accelerated the Soviet Union's open involvement and that of other communist countries such as Cuba, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and even South Yemen, a sister member of the League of Arab States on the side of Ethiopia in the war with Somalia. Finally, in March 1978, Somalia was forced to withdraw to her former national boundaries. A condition was that she should withdraw all her military personnel and hardware from the disputed region of Ethiopia within a fortnight, if the Ethiopian forces were to halt their advance at the border.

No leader had ever before survived a defeat such as this: that

he did so was due to his personal popularity. The mood of the nation was that he had fought well on their behalf but lost. There was little resentment towards him. Rather the Somali people directed their resentment towards the Soviet Union and Cuba. The feeling was that "we defeated Ethiopia and it was only the involvement of the Russian superpower and its satellites which reversed Somalia's fortunes."

No sooner did Somalia withdraw from the Somali inhabited regions of Ethiopia, than a group of military officers from the Majerten clan, headed by Colonels Mohamed Osman Ero and Abdullahi Yusuf made a move. These officers were from a group who had long laboured under the illusion that they were the chosen people of Somalia and as such it was their legitimate birthright to rule. They had all returned from the battle areas in Ethiopia, possibly never caring much for Somalia's success in the war with Ethiopia. As they saw it, any victory in war would be President Mohamed Siad's victory and he was their arch enemy. During the time they served in various parts of the war zone, sabotage and treason were a main preoccupation. On the other hand they saw their despatch into the war zone as a God-sent opportunity to meet and woo fellow clan officers in an area and atmosphere free from the eyes of the National Security Service (the NSS), Somalia's KGB-trained intelligence agency, tailored to combat espionage, subversion and the possible organisation of *coups d'état* against the government. On 9 April 1978, they made their move but it did not develop into a successful coup as the aims and objectives of the group were well known to all Somalis.

Twelve years after their failed *coup d'état*, the fact that Mohamed Siad was still the national leader despite his misrule and folly having plunged Somalia into the abyss, was by then less because the public liked the former president and more a reflection of the degree of unpopularity such opponents had generated for themselves.

The crushing of the attempted coup of 1978 resulted in many changes in the thinking and execution of Mohamed Siad's rule. To start with it inspired the awakening of the Somali president's *alter ego*. Many members of his clan had taken up arms in the crushing of the attempted coup and felt, having invested in the existence and wellbeing of his government, that they deserved

preeminence. This also passed on their message to the president that "When another clan attempted to overthrow you, it was your clan which came to your rescue." All his popular nationalistic agendas went out of the window and in came new objectives consisting merely of a survival strategy: to cling to power by any means. Once having lost his personal objectives to free and unite all Somali regions, and become their undisputed ruler, he set Somalia on a new collision course with fate. Somalia was to collapse from misrule, corruption, nepotism and the destruction of its moral fibre. Moreover, there was another grave consequence of the debacle with Ethiopia -- the widespread circulation of weapons fanned the flames of hatred to the extent that in later years they engulfed not only Somalia but the wider region.

7
Twenty-five Telltale Signs of Government Decay

There are many ways that indicate whether a system is alive and fit or becoming terminally ill. The following twenty-five signs of government decay and malfunction reveal a government's condition. These are some of the ways to see how the pulse of a government is beating. Most of these twenty-five telltale signs of government malfunction and decay were observed from experience when rot set in within the government of former President Mohamed Siad Barre of Somalia. In the second decade of his rule of Somalia (1980 to 1990), matters went from bad to worse. The experience of that government has universal relevance and could be usefully noted by many developing nations that are experiencing turbulence throughout their political systems.

Animal remains on public streets

When remains of animals -- donkeys, horses, camels, cows, goats, dogs etc. -- are not removed from public streets and alleyways for days, weeks or even months... And their littering public grounds in cities or towns is a common sight, then there is hardly a functioning government. This is not just a small matter as it might seem, but a major indicator and evidence of government malfunction and impotence. This can only take place when the political system of a country breaks down and terminal decay has set into the apparatus of governance. Neglect of such minor but vital aspects of the image and wellbeing of a government can only be attributed to ills in the government system. This may sometimes arise because authorities who have presided over offices for many years or even decades have become consumed by the routine of their jobs. But even so, it can only point in one direction

-- neglect of duty. During the later years before the civil war, there were such common sights as these in Somalia; and they can be seen elsewhere in developing countries in Africa and Asia.

Broken windows, doors, signs etc. on government offices

When broken windows, doors or signs on government offices remain unattended for months or years... A government administration which is alive in spirit cannot allow broken windows, creaky doors and signs on public offices to be left unmended and unrepaired as the normal order of the day. A system which ignores such minor things is negligent, irresponsible and blind. It cannot be expected to be efficient or sensitive to any other major issue. In Somali a traditional saying exactly transmits the effect of this problem *"Ninkaad kabahaaga u dhiibaneyso kabahiisa fiiri;"* "Always look at the shoes of the one with whom you want to leave your own shoes." The implication is you must assess those you have to trust. A man with shabby shoes is someone who himself is in need of shoes and his need can transform him from keeper to user. It may seem a small thing, but being entrusted with the administration and general wellbeing of a nation is a serious matter. This example thus also demonstrates government malfunction and decay.

Divisive rule in national administration

When a government pursues a divisive policy by pitting one group of its own people against the other... Even though, this method of divide and rule is an old strategy out of colonial administrative textbooks, it is practised by many governments on their own peoples. The objectives behind this technique are merely to consolidate power and enslave people. A popular government would never resort to such abhorrent methods; usually such policies are pursued when governments lose face and popular support and seek a new lease of life as they cling on to power. In order to progress and prosper, a government must encourage harmony and brotherhood among its peoples. Unity is a key factor to move forward, yet division is rife in the "Third World" countries, where what matters most to the rulers is survival rather the wellbeing of their people. In the last ten years of his rule the

Somali leader divided the people and pitted one group against another in a vain effort to secure the very survival of his regime. Having himself been an Italian colonial police officer, trained and groomed by the colonial administration of the Mussolini era, he applied all the techniques he acquired. A government which depends on such methods is a government which has run out of steam. Divide and rule tactics typify government in the final stages of maladministration, malfunction and decay.

When government employees are not paid for months

When civil servants and soldiers are not paid for months... This is one of the more serious examples. When government employees are left to fend for themselves and not paid for many consecutive months, something is fatally wrong. Lack of cash in government coffers or publicly owned banks is a clear sign of malfunction within a government. During the last five to six years of the last government in Somalia, it was common practice for months to pass by without government employees having their wages released. This was indeed one of the points the leader of the "revolutionary" government proclaimed as the reasons for take-over of power. In the last three to four years prior to the civil war, I remember periods of six to nine months of no pay becoming commonplace in the nation's embassies abroad. Most became resilient in the hope that one day a change for the better would take place. Many continued to function only with the help of overdraft facilities. When the "*bucket of water*", as it used to be called in the vernacular, eventually arrived through the diplomatic pouch -- before the days of electronic transfers, the only convenient method of correspondence between an embassy and its ministry -- as often as not the whole amount could be eaten up by the interest that had accrued on borrowings.

Funnily enough, the bank with which the London Somali embassy had its overdraft was the Marble Arch branch of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) which itself collapsed in 1991, the same year which saw the collapse of the embassy and the Somali state. No matter how poor a country is, no nation should establish embassies on foreign lands if their major function is to exhibit destitution and misery. Back in Somalia the civil servants were forced to beg, borrow or steal for

their livelihood. Yet Somalia should never be a poor nation. The Almighty has blessed her with fertile land, one of the world's longest coast and untapped natural resources. Bigger than the UK and France put together, with their combined population of 120 million, before famine and civil war took toll of so many of its offspring, Somalia had a population of around 8 million. The destitution and desolation of Somalia's people and its civil servants and the country's downfall are all to be set against the maladministration and decay of its longest-serving government. Mainly because of poor leadership from the colonial clerks and non-commissioned officers who have ended up as leaders of their countries in the post independence era, this situation is rife in the developing world and beyond. A contemporary example is the state of the Russian government which as reported by the media is having similar problems while its large military forces, civil servants and coal miner population remain unpaid for month after month.

Occurrence of gunshots during day or night-time

When gunshots are heard during the day or night-time... In a country where continuous gunshots are heard during the day or night-time, things are clearly not under control. In civil-war-torn Somalia, it is commonplace to hear intermittent gunshots in the day and night. Even with a government and president at the helm of power, gunshots were a common occurrence in the cities and towns in the late 1980s. Gunfire is thus one of the last warning indicators before a country is overtaken by disaster and plunges into major mayhem and chaos. Stability is the mother of development, life, progress and continuity. Continuous gunshots discredit the image of incumbent government as pimples do to a face. One of every government's prime responsibilities is to establish and maintain law and order in a country. Continuous gunshots indicate a major breach of this responsibility.

One of the many casualties of Somali misrule is the wide-spread disappearance of wildlife. As late as 1960, in many parts of the country it was possible to see herds of elephant, packs of lions, zebras, gazelles and a great variety of game. It is very unfortunate that Somalia has lost this natural wealth for it is very difficult to regenerate and re-establish. In the 1970s before

Somalia went into war with Ethiopia circulation of weapons was minimal. Unfortunately, because of the wide availability of weapons -- mainly the dreadful automatic Russian AK-47 machine-rifle obtained in excessive quantities from the Soviet Union during the cold war era -- Somalia's wildlife has been decimated and chased from the country into the neighbouring states. Nor were they safe there from unscrupulous raiders who poached and smuggled skins, tusks and other trophies on to the international markets. At least some of the wildlife which is now part of the assets which attract tourism to Kenya are none other than Somali animals which fled from the lawlessness of the 1980s and the civil war era.

A future Somali government with a conservationist agenda and a mind to rebuild and preserve Somalia's endangered wildlife will face an uphill struggle. It may need to woo the likes of Kenya, South Africa and other nations rich in wildlife to assist the restocking of the country from scratch -- to such an extent has the environmental wealth been squandered by the military government and participants in the civil war. Nor are the foreigners, who aided and abetted the poachers or smugglers by organising lucrative illegal sales or in other ways, guiltless; they should be exposed, apprehended and prosecuted, if necessary through Interpol.

Banks stopping paying out to customers for lack of cash

When banks stop paying their customers for lack of cash... This is another example taken from the Somali experience. As a result of gross mismanagement and direct interference by the country's president in the day to day running of the banks -- demanding huge sums in unaccountable, politically motivated financial payouts and gifts and as unsecured loans to individuals without collateral assets -- Somalia's main banks defaulted. In 1988, due to chronic cash shortage caused by the above factor and the emptying of both the banks' safes and the government coffers, most of Somalia's banks stopped paying out to their customers. This resulted in the people's loss of trust in the banks, and the collapse of the Commercial Bank of Somalia represented the first casualty. When the people lost trust in their banks, which were government owned in a country where there were no other

privately owned or foreign banks, they started stashing away their savings in their houses, shops and stores. Some even took their cash to remote places in the country where they had clan militias to protect them. Some sent their monies to foreign lands having exchanged in the black market, while others put their banknotes in pits in the ground of their dwellings. The banks ended up with no cash and close-down was inevitable.

This bad news eventually reached the president. Rather than remedying the problem and improving the situation in the banks which had resulted in their loss of credibility in the eyes of the people, he resorted to a draconian method. In his usual lengthy speech to the nation, he announced that the government would not be responsible for the safety of any cash hoarded in houses and private premises. Soon this was followed by major break-ins and hold-ups by uniformed members of the military -- mainly by the notorious *Koofiyad-gaduud*, the presidential guards. The public saw all footprints leading into the cave and none coming out. They quickly put two and two together to suggest that in order to lure back the customers to the banks, the president was the one behind the break-ins by his guards.

Uniformed traffic officers and wardens turn beggars

When uniformed traffic officers or wardens beg motorists for cash to buy themselves food or other necessities... Where government employees such as the police, traffic officers and wardens are driven to stop motorists in order to beg cash to buy themselves food and other necessities, things are falling or have fallen apart. This was indeed very common prior to the civil war in Somalia and illegal road barriers are still a common phenomenon in many developing countries.

During the final seven years of rule of the last Somali president before the civil war, uniformed traffic officers and wardens began increasingly to stop motorists -- foreign or local -- to beg money to subsidise their meagre incomes and their families. The leadership had little or no concern either for the plight of its people or uniformed personnel as it was totally detached from the realities on the ground. When traffic officers and wardens openly levy unofficial taxes without fear or inhibition this is one of the most desperate situations in governance. Clearly, once

employment cannot guarantee basic livelihood then survival instincts are activated to the point of temptation to beg, steal or rob. While uniformed police officers resorted to stopping motorists, members of the army used to loot and rob civilians at random. The robbing business thrived and the criminal population quadrupled in no time. Along this road disaster lies and the system is bound soon to collapse like a house of cards.

When security of a country breaks down

When security in a country breaks down the situation rapidly degenerates into civil war or chaos... It is a basic human and animal instinct to live, work, reproduce and prosper in a secure environment. Once the pillars of national security start to crumble, may God save that country. When security is poor, an exodus of foreigners and affluent locals together with their capital occurs. Tourism and trade; investment and education; all decline and this is one of the more serious aspects of government malfunction; things will never again be the same.

In July 1989, after riots which saw over two hundred dead, one night a group of soldiers rounded up about fifty Somali citizens in one of the suburbs of the capital city Mogadishu. These citizens, were roused from their sleep and taken to a remote beach area where they were gunned down in cold blood. This was the last straw to break the back of all credibility and confidence in that government. Soon foreign embassies and business firms started packing up for good to leave Somalia. The United States, by then the only superpower which used to provide the largest amount of aid and assistance to the government, gave up and ordered its embassy to cut its ninety or so diplomatic staff to only four. The count-down to the collapse of the government in Somalia had begun and in less that eighteen months, the president found himself chased from the capital into the interior.

Constant delays, postponement and cancellations of travel

When airline flights are often delayed or postponed for days... Airline flights which are continuously delayed or postponed for days or weeks on end for no obvious reasons, other than political disarray or disorganisation, are another example of breakdown in a government system. The uninterrupted flow of such services is

one of the major responsibilities of a government and failure constitutes malfunction. The uncertainty brought about as a result of such disarray affects not only those concerned but the whole country in various forms of economic and social repurcussion.

Rampant blackouts of power and cuts in water supply

When electricity is out for weeks, months or even years... Utilities such as electricity and water, however rudimentary, are essential service industries that no nation-state can be without. The continuous provision for public or private usage of the population is a must. When supply of such essentials breaks down beyond repair, or associated equipment is unserviceable for weeks, months or even years -- then this is no small matter. Beginning in the year 1986, nearly five years of count-down to state failure and collapse in Somalia, water became scarce in the main pipes in the cities. Time reverted to the pre-independence era, when water was transported from the wells by carts and on the backs of donkeys. 1986 also saw the beginning of troubles with the main electricity generators in Mogadishu. From 1986 until 1990, the majority of the public were deprived of electricity. The dark ages of the past returned to blanket the nation's main cities. This saw the importation of thousands of mini-generators: for businesses and the dwellings of those who could afford them. Some government officials, their spouses and children, who were detached from real life and who lived in fantasy lands, bragged to one another that their home used generators that were fitted with silencers and even their neighbours could not hear them. Some merciless scheming merchants welcomed this catastrophe which threatened public health and education and many aspects of life and was one of the indicators of malfunction and decay at governmental level.

Robbing of coffers by government officials

When government officials, ministers and senior public servants openly rob a nation's coffers by constructing lavish buildings, acquiring vehicles beyond their means and diverting and hoarding public funds into foreign bank accounts... To the astonishment and anger of millions of Somalis, the corrupt leadership of the 1980s, some of the ministers and other senior government officials, openly

plundered the public purse and diverted foreign donations intended to build up and raise the prospect of the whole country. A complete suburb which was initially reserved for the offices and residences of foreign embassies was taken over by ministers and other top officials. Hundreds of residential buildings styled to the taste of Hollywood actors and the Arabian Gulf countries, were constructed. No sooner did the disapproving public note this expenditure, than they dubbed it as "*Booli-qaran*" which means "the loot of the public domain". Thousands of luxurious cars -- Landcruisers, Mercedes and other makes -- were imported to meet the expensive desires and tastes of corrupt government officials at the pinnacle of power. This daylight robbery of government and public monies contributed immeasurably to bringing down the state and as such was a prime example of government malfunction.

Promotion and privileged placements of special ethnic/clan groups over other nationals

When government offices, ministries including the presidency, produce lists of identical members of a family or clan for promotion or placement... This is yet another example of deviation from the true path of serving a nation and its people. On one fateful day in August 1989, the former Somali foreign minister, a close relative and protegé of the president produced a long list of sixteen officials, all members of his own clan, for promotions and appointments from consuls general to ambassadors to represent the Somali nation in its diplomatic missions abroad. This indeed was tunnel vision. The minister did not comprehend that the seat he occupied and was misusing belonged to a whole nation; it was not his privately owned company. An ugly fate always awaits those who misrule their countries. After this gross misjudgement, it took barely two years before the former foreign minister together with his cousin at the presidency were booted out of the country. Unless a government is run without any understanding of history it will never favour one group against another or differentiate among its own people.

Neglect of gallant officers and soldiers who have fallen or been wounded for the nation's defence

When army personnel who are wounded whilst serving the nation such as in frontier wars are neglected in their pain and abandoned in squalid conditions... When the proper priorities of a nation are turned upside down and all those vital matters which used to be sacred are overlooked or ignored due to dereliction of duty, corruption and lack of accountability in government, the writing is on the wall: that nation is doomed. I can describe from the Somali experience an example of a personal tragedy which has touched me. On 14 March 1984, whilst serving at the Foreign Ministry in Mogadishu, I was informed by a telegram from the Defence Ministry, that my third youngest brother Abdisalam Dool, who was serving as a lieutenant in a commando brigade in the national army and had been wounded on 12 March 1984, at the frontier in an exchange of fire with the Ethiopian army, had died on the following day on 13 March 1984, at a hospital in the town of Beletweyn. When I and others rushed there, we were shocked to find over a hundred wounded army personnel abandoned in squalid conditions, with no one to relieve their pain or to look after them except a cadaverous and weary dresser and a watchman. What was supposed to be the main hospital closest to the troubled areas of the front was derelict. There were neither medicines nor attendants to help those who had been wounded defending our soil. Most of these officers and soldiers were lying in anguish on wire beds with no mattresses. Back in the capital, to my astonishment and anger, I was shown the huge bungalow and lavish lifestyle in which the senior officer in charge of the army's medical and health services was living. This is one of the prime examples of government malfunction and decay. It can only take place, when, due to total lack of accountability, important national matters are made to give way to the superficial as dictated by the greed of the few who are not fit to be trusted with important positions in the nation.

When government becomes defunct and leadership impotent, while the people's living standard regresses, they would naturally demand a change. It also becomes clear to everyone that those who rule the country cannot deliver needed change and their removal becomes necessary. But the tragedy was that in

Somalia, the isolated leadership never thought of handing over power and never planned a way out of this impasse.

Lack of decisiveness: impotence to carry out duties

When a government is impotent to address its nation's problems -- danger is rife... This is another example from the Somali government experience. Nothing is more awkward than for a government to run out of ideas: it automatically runs out of steam, and gradually its political base withers away. A government out of ideas is like a bakery out of flour. But unlike a bakery it is a sitting duck, prone to any danger. Without the confidence of the people and with it the mandate to rule, a regime's days in power are definitely numbered. In the late 1980s under the strain of increasing and ever more serious crises, the government in Somalia became impotent.

Perpetuation and practice of injustice

When injustice is practised and perpetuated in a country by or under the unseeing eyes of its government... This is the most likely factor to bring down the government, especially so when instigated almost casually, with unseeing eyes, due to dereliction of national duties. One of the main tasks of a government should be to see to it that injustice is weeded out from its system and justice for its people made the order of the day to be maintained at all costs. Justice is the emblem of sound government. A leadership with no justice is like a sky without rain. The only place where earthly justice should and must come from is from the leadership of a nation. Where there is no justice there is no satisfaction or consistency in life and progress is doomed. Unfortunately in some developing nations their own version of justice is sometimes perceived as universal justice. Some rulers think that by making their long-suffering ethnic group more equal than others is just.

In the last six years prior to the end of 1990 when the flames of civil war eventually engulfed the capital, nearly three quarters of the population in Mogadishu could not afford basic standards and three decent meals a day. At the start of the economic troubles, in the early 1980s when the cost of living began to rise, many people lived on what the sociologists and urban strategists call the 1-1-0 option, whereby one can only afford the first two

meals of the day and cannot afford supper. Later on, as difficulties grew, it was very common for the majority of the people to fall back on a 0-1-0 option -- affording only lunch, for the other two meals were beyond their reach.

Neglect or repression of citizens

When a segment of a country's compatriots are neglected due to their ethnic origin... When this happens trouble is being stored for the future. Throughout the later years of the former leadership in Somalia, perception of the nation's enemy was gradually transformed to incorporate parts of the Somali people itself. That was caused mainly by incompetence and lack of proper administrative vision. As a result many Somalis died at the hands of their own defence personnel while many others were made to flee across the borders to seek sanctuary and assistance from a neighbour with a government sworn to destroy Somalia. The domestic opposition and their communities were outlawed and targeted as the enemy of the nation. A government must always shoulder responsibility for all eventualities good or bad that take place under its rule. An opposition group which is not in charge of the day to day running of a nation's affairs presents little or no danger. No good government can escape responsibility for mistakes and lack of achievement by blaming the actions -- whatever they are -- of an opposition. There is a catch-22 situation: there would not be a violent opposition if the government itself were not repressive. Experience demonstrates that violence brings violence. This is one of the reasons cited against regularly arming the UK police. The Home Office is always arguing that if the police are armed, the criminals would also arm themselves to respond to any threat from the police. The more a government becomes repressive, the more it is inviting opponents to meet this treatment with equal violence. Should a quarrel occur between a government and some of its people, the initial and statutory blame must always lie with the government. A child is not always responsible for its actions; a government that is not accountable is not a responsible government.

Neglect of a nation's compatriots in the hands of a cruel or uncaring foreign country

When a government neglects the plight of its nationals, subjected to cruelty or injustice by a foreign nation... This example is also taken from the experience of the collapse of the Somali government. In 1988 the Kenyan government, having in mind the deteriorating situation in Somalia, decided to take advantage and confiscate the properties and wealth of some 40,000 Somalis through a campaign they called "screening". Rather than come to the rescue of those beleaguered nationals by intervening and resolving this notoriously unpopular matter with the Kenyan authority, the Somali government chose to close its eyes and ignore the whole affair by openly declaring it "a Kenyan internal matter".

I remember the shock of many Somalis, myself included, when we heard on the BBC the then Somali foreign minister refuting a statement by the Somali interior minister criticising Kenya over her ill-conceived actions. The main reasons behind this naive and heartless government policy was that most of the Somalis in question were from clans which, having resented how their country was run, had fallen out with the government and supported the struggle of armed opposition movements.

Leader's loss of grip

When a country's leader loses grip on part of the country... 1989 provided a further example from the Somali governance experience. Having lost most of the regions to rebel movements, the area of effective control was closing in on the late president. By the end of that year, President Mohamed Siad Barre was being dubbed "the mayor of Mogadishu". Since his dramatic recovery from a near-fatal car accident in May 1986, the Somali leader had not been in actual control of the running of the country. Besides armed groups from the many fronts the government was fighting, there emerged various groups within the government who raced for control of the country and succession to the leadership. For nearly five years the country was in a state of political coma and indecisiveness prevailed.

One example of a similar situation is that of former president Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now after his eviction renamed the

Democratic Republic of Congo). When Mobutu came to power in 1965, he was a mere colonel in that country's national army. For over three decades of misrule he stripped everything of value. In his last decade or so former Zaire had been just floating after the leader had lost his grip. verywhere there was rampant decay and neglect of the country's infrastructure. For the six months following May 1997, when he was forced out by Laurent-Desire Kabila, the victorious rebel leader and later president of the country, Mobutu remainded in a make-believe cocoon of his own that he could hang on to power. When the moment of truth arrived and the rebels were poised to take the capital Kinshasa, he fled to his home region in the east of the country and thence to Morocco, still reluctant to relinquish power, but there the cancer he was also fighting eventually killed him.

When a government loses its confidence

When a government becomes hypersensitive and resentful of honest criticism and as a result of this, all forms of expression written or oral, are banned or whoever is seen with any critical literature is considered an enemy of the state... Criticisms, especially constructive ones, serve a government as a source of new ideas and improvements and when made such use of, can assist a nation to keep moving forward. They are food for thought, not war material or an expression of enmity towards a government. If citizens of a country dare not criticise their leaders and government who else will they be allowed to talk about? Constructive criticism is a nation's positive contribution: it is a sign of the citizens saying "We observe and care that our government and nation is on the right track." A government has more power than any individual or group and thus must always be seen to exhibit tolerance of dissent and criticism stemming from its people or it is not fit to govern. Tolerance is an indicator of enlightenment and strength. The more tolerant a system is, the more secure and wise its leaders.

In 1989, from the Somali embassy in London, I escorted an Amnesty International delegation to Somalia. And having afterwards taken personal leave, I stayed on and invited a British travel writer friend of mine to visit Somalia to realise a dream to tour the country and write about the culture, heritage, traditions

and travel in Somalia. A few days after his arrival in the country with his girlfriend, in July 1989, they were apprehended by an obscure security agency which was new even to me, *Faafreebka,* which had spotted him taking some pictures. I came to know later that the government used this agency as a filter to censor everything from foreign influence and literature to films passing in and out of the country. When news of my friends' arrest reached me, I went to this office to know what the problem was and secure their release. When I entered the office of the head of the agency, I was shocked to see that it was crammed wall to wall with all sorts of publications. Among the thousands of books, perodicals and magazines seized by the squads who represent *Faafreebka* at the Mogadishu points of entry, were editions of the Bible and the Holy Qur'an. The government's greatest perceived enemy was always publications in any form, and those who were seen with any unofficial publications or practising any form of free expression of thought were considered suspect.

Throughout the whole four-month period during which my two foreign friends were in Somalia, I could neither believe nor comprehend the sheer number of people -- mainly middle- and high-ranking government officials -- who approached me to talk about them as spies whose only purpose in visiting the country was to record facts and figures and smuggle them out. There has long been a general negative attitude towards foreigners who visit the country -- especially from the West. Of course the influence of the former Soviet Union over the years had not made a positive impact on such sensitivities.

Negative attitudes towards foreigners came right from the top. The leadership was extremely xenophobic and detested foreigners, especially Westerners. Besides prohibiting the taking of pictures of any part of the country, one of many widely held beliefs was that, as a stringent measure introduced to discourage foreigners coming to Somalia, her beautiful sea shores had been deliberately infested with hungry sharks. In later years starting from the early 1980s, after the Russians were gone and the influence of the United States and the West was in the ascendancy, the waters of Mogadishu's two famous beaches, Lido and Jazira were both swarming with deadly sharks which severed limbs and threatened lives. The old abattoir of the capital

had been closed and the new one, built near the main beach area, attracted them. It was rumoured that one evening the president explained to one of his many confidants the reasons that although the country had switched to the West, tourists and visitors whom he considered spies, still did not come to the country. He is supposed to have said "Once they can neither take pictures nor swim from our white sand beaches, how would the fun-loving Westerners consider coming to Somalia?"

The fact of the matter is that in those days there was nothing to spy on in Somalia. The country was in a pitiful limbo. Due to the extremely boorish and low standard of leadership, Somalia -- a nation that the Almighty had greatly blessed -- was represented in every corner of the globe by either a begging bowl, a host of refugees, or both. The foreign minister, enjoying his mansion residences and decadent lifestyle, used to invite representatives of the western donor nations and sometimes affluent Gulf cooperation countries for banquets and at the end of such functions used to appeal to those same guests to pledge more donations to Somalia, in his own words saying "We have nothing in the government coffers to run the country and we ask you to appeal to your governments on our behalf to furnish us with emergency funds." This was in very bad taste after such lavish dinners, for those invited ambassadors were always greatly bewildered and saw the irony between their host's opulent lifestyle -- equivalent to that of Hollywood stars -- and his unconvincing pleas supposedly on behalf of the impoverished and misruled Somali public. Something somewhere did not add up. It could only get worse. By the end of the 1980s, the major source of funds and food for the government including the military was international assistance intended for the refugee community from Ethiopia.

Interference of a leader's family in the day to day running of the government

When children or the spouse(s) of a leader interfere in the day to day running of a country... This is also another example from the Somali experience. In the later years of his rule, especially after his car accident in 1986, the Somali president lost the usually tight grip he had on the many members of his families: his children,

grandchildren, spouses etc. It had come to the point where the running of the government had become a family affair. Minor government appointments and dismissals up to ministerial level, were something of a ritual performed by the family. They were mainly conducted either by the president's eldest wife or some of his ambitious children and his many in-laws. Nearly half the cabinet members came from the president's household. Another very surprising aspect was also that a marital relationship with the leadership's children or close relatives became a highway to prosperity, power and promotion. There was not only a one way street from an employee in a ministry or in the government to his minister or superiors, but ironically, the superiors also shopped for would be in-laws who would become future ambassadors and ministers. The nomadic way of living had been incorporated into public life.

Such developments were not only in direct violation of the sound conduct and practice of public affairs but totally incompatible with the rules of governance. Properly managed governments would never encourage folly so degrading and self-destroying. For the powerful foreign minister and his president cousin, a marriage bond with anyone was enough to gain access to the keys of the government.

Hereditary autocratic states apart, one of the many mal-practices that may permanently take away the political gloss and credibility of a government and which can naturally lead to public disfavour is to be seen to be running a family business. Even in a repressive regime, the ultimate power without a shred of doubt rests with the people, and it is inevitable that malpractices on such a scale lead to public rebellion. No people can stomach the turning of governance into some sort of family business.

Loss of touch with the rest of the world

When a country, due to ignorance on the part of the leadership or other factors, loses touch with the outside world and becomes an unconnected entity... This is yet another example from the decay which set into the Somali government. Due to ignorance or other factors, the leadership of Somalia led the country into a way of life unconnected with world progress. Things were moving backwards rather than forwards. Important utilities such as water

and electricity supply which most of the cities and main towns had as early as the 1950s gradually begun to seize up in the 1980s. Important public services such as health, education and security were also deteriorating by the day. Air and telecommunication connection was becoming increasingly difficult and long-standing foreign businesses and expatriate agrarian communities were also moving out. Trade was in the doldrums and the government was not in control. Somalia as an entity was losing touch with the outside world.

The degree to which the government was detached from current events is clear in that even as late as 1989 it was courting the crumbling Soviet Union. As though living in the eighteenth century prior to the invention and use of the telegraph, the government of Mohamed Siad Barre persisted in the delusions of the past cold-war era and was actively trying to recreate relationship with the former Soviet Union. In July 1989 a high- powered delegation led by General Maslah Mohamed Siad, the president's eldest son, *de facto* minister of defence and head of the then powerful Mogadishu based military sector 77, left the capital for Moscow. The main purpose of this mission was to re-establish a cordial relationship between the two countries broken off during the war with Ethiopia, in November 1977. This was at a most difficult time; the Soviet Union was bankrupt and in the process of disintegrating. When the delegation reached Moscow the bewildered Russian leaders, who themselves were busy courting the West for financial assistance to salvage their country, had neither the time nor the appetite to receive such an inopportune delegation. Instead the head of Moscow defence barracks was delegated to receive the visiting Somali party.

One of the legacies of the last government's gross maladministration that is dogging the Somali people even today is the high level of cynicism the people have acquired. The majority of the Somali people are from a carefree nomadic background but they became suspicious. The leadership which was more or less frozen in the Stalinist era, believed that something sinister lay behind everything. Nothing was taken as it is or should be. Conspiracy theory was the norm of the day. Such negative attitudes cast terrible shadows on our society. I remember how when the Americans sought to relieve the misery of Somalia in

1992 rather than be positive about the new development, many were busy questioning the reasons behind the US-led intervention. Indeed a psyche developed that there was something unknown or sinister behind everything. This was typical of the nature of the last regime in Somalia. Suspicion and lack of confidence in dealing with the world were all-pervasive. Many of the government's high-ranking officials, firmly believed there must be hidden agendas that needed first to be understood before evaluating any issue.

Embodying the country and the whole nation

When a leader sets himself above all the laws of a country and sees himself as embodying the nation... Typical of all leaders who came to the helm of countries one way or another in the 1980s, and later hijacked power and with it the destiny of their nations, the Somali leadership was feeling more and more that it embodied the nation. The president saw himself as above the law and personifying the entire country and its people.

A distasteful personality cult was encouraged and the country's name and standing was replaced with that of the leader. It was as though the country did not exist before the military came to power in October 1969, for an attempt was made to rewrite everything relating to the nation and the state. The leader's mosaics, portraits on walls and buildings and his excessive self-promotion in many ways became a mockery as has been pointed out. It was one of the most demeaning and degrading ventures the regime had undertaken. In almost all cases these attempts backfired against the popularity of the leadership. Put plainly, this was totally *un-Somali* and against the social as well as political make-up of the country. In the same way that bodies reject some organ implants, the Somali public simply rejected such cheap shenanigans intended to promote the leader of the country. The problem was that the president, despite his supposed vast experience of his people, did not have a genuinely deep understanding of his compatriots. The Somali people are one of the most independent-minded peoples on earth. They have a huge sense of self-esteem and are extraordinarily proud people who see themselves as subject to no one.

Making the diffusion of a leader's pictures or personality a national duty

When the making or diffusion of a leader's pictures is seen to merit an office, department or ministry: when a government makes its priority expenditure the polishing of the image of its leader... In 1987 a small article was carried by the London based Arabic daily *Al-Arab*, in which the publisher Ahmed Al Houni claimed that an Afro-Arab nation's ambassador had approached the paper with a substantial amount of money and the requirement that it polish the image of his country's leader. The publisher's response to the ambassador was "Rather than wasting your meagre public expenditures on polishing your unpolishable leader, why not spend the money on the poor, the left out and the left behind of your population?" Needless to say, the head of mission in question who approached the paper was the Somali ambassador in London. It is regrettable that several ministries, agencies and other offices in Somalia displayed mosaics, statues and huge portraits of the late president. Diffusion of the president's portraits and pictures by itself became the task of a huge department with a substantial budget. The government never shied away from allotting huge allocations from the meagre financial purse of the nation despite the desperate needs of the poor and the tragic plight of civil servants on starvation wages.

Reaction to personification helps explain why, during the civil war era, the Somali people destroyed everything in their own country. All the symbols of the nation -- such as the flag and the anthem -- are important. Through education youngsters are instilled from early ages, with love for their country. This ensures that generation after generation pass on the love of their homeland. Rather than take this well-known, well-tested and safe route, the last leadership of Somalia personified everything. Then, when the president's tenure was prolonged, severe mal-administration brought decay throughout the government. Hard-ship transformed the people and they came to despise their leader and all he stood for with disastrous results. And when the civil war started, the hatred which the leader provoked turned to rage which destroyed all that had been achieved for centuries including the achievements of the government and previous administrations of the country.

Skyrocketing cost of living met by printing more money

When inflation is doubling by the day, eating up the value of a nation's currency and the incumbent government merely pursues a naive policy of currency printing as a "solution" to its problems... After war began in the north in 1988, Somalia's annual inflation figure reached over 400 per cent. In a BBC Somali service interview the then finance minister of Somalia, Abdirahman Jama Barre, described the level of inflation in Somalia as 0.4 per cent. This was a sick joke. The government, in order to quell the flames in the financial markets and the rocketing cost of living, pursued a naive policy of printing currency courtesy of *De la Rue Ltd,* of Basingstoke, England. This was a typical case of blind procedure and economic folly which could only lead to more inflation and a further rocketing of the cost of living. Such a policy has also been pursued by the warlords in the country as civil wars ravaged Somalia. They did not shy away from printing more and more currency in the hope that it would solve problems.

Devouring the nation's kinsfolk: killing, torturing and the mass murder of civilians

When in the darkness of the middle of the night, innocent civilians are taken from the safety of their houses and gunned down in cold blood, or when a leader of a government makes it a priority to torture or even massacre his own compatriots... On 14 July 1989, riots which started at a mosque in Mogadishu, resulted in the indiscriminate killing of some two hundred Somali civilians. Following this massacre, on 16 July 1989 a unit of the president's bodyguards under cover of darkness went to one of the city's suburbs and handpicked from their beds forty-seven Somalis who were sleeping in the safety of their houses in their capital city. They were taken by members of their own army only to be shot in cold blood and buried near a deserted beach outside the city. These innocent civilians had no direct or indirect connection whatsoever with the troubles which had occurred earlier. The suburb they were picked from was known to have been populated largely by one segment of the Somali people from the then war-torn north who were alleged to have been behind the troubles.

Such atrocities can only happen after all values that a govern-

ment stands for have been completely lost and priority is attached to torturing or massacring its own compatriots only to prolong the political life of the government -- a disgusting example of the systematic abuse of human rights practised mainly by nations with repressive and authoritarian regimes. Contrary to the prolongation of the life of the regime, this unfortunate incident further eroded its validity in the eyes of the international community and most nations started down-grading and with-drawing their diplomatic presence in Somalia.

When an authoritarian leader loses political confidence, as a survival strategy to cling to power, he may think killing his citizens can intimidate and buy more time. But once having gone down this disgraceful route he is on an unenviable slippery road which leads only to oblivion. When a leader mistreats his people, he also gets like treatment from the younger and future generations of his people. History teaches us that all those who resort to cruelty and politically deprived policies are doomed. And the Somali leader was no exception.

8
Infamous Opposition

An opposition which never held power is an organisation which is neither known nor tested by its constituency -- the people of the country. The only way open for such a national opposition to succeed is to be seen to be inherently better than the incumbent government. As is said in Somali "*Mira gunti kuugu jira kuwa geed saaran looma daadsho;*" "You never throw away your fruits in a basket for ones on a tree." And this only takes place when there are conditions which demand a change and these conditions coincide with the aspirations of an opposition which is known or seen to be better than the government.

In Somalia all the conditions which required the people to seek a change were clearly in place. An exhausted, inept and corrupt leadership, which had lost credibility and touch with the ordinary people, had occupied the seat of power for too long. Rot was visible throughout the system. But the opposition groups were far from responsible, being unpatriotic, naive, divisive and clan based. This gave the former government of Somalia undeserved political standing and prolonged its lease of life.

A primary rule for any opposition is also never to sleep with an enemy of the people. The best place for a fellow Muslim who wants to go to heaven in life after death, is not to go to a church but a mosque. The worst place for an opposition which wants to take over power in a country and introduce change, is to go into the hands of the enemy and sell themselves along with the nation's secrets. It is this factor which meant all opportunities for success for the Somali opposition groups were squandered. A God-sent opportunity which lent popularity and legitimacy to the government was when the Somali opposition groups adopted policies driven only by folly and lack of vision and one after the

other played into the hands of Ethiopia whose government was sworn to destroy Somalia.

The first group which staged a power struggle against the government was led by those who established a precedent for all Somalia's opposition groups -- to be a clan-based and not a national movement. In April 1978, as has been mentioned earlier, a group of officers mainly from the Majerten clan, staged an unsuccessful *coup d'état* against the government and the conspirators of this failed coup fled the country pursued by national forces. Thus every group -- and they were formed one after the other throughout the 1980s -- became not a nationally based forum but clan based. In many respects this detracted from any legitimacy or credibility these movements may have otherwise obtained and it hugely assisted the nation's leaders. They rallied the public behind them and turned opinion against all would-be reformers.

One after the other opposition groups rather than do away with the machiavellian tactics, bad judgement and misrule of the leader --- all of which had grown so unpopular -- hankered after them and even worse. It is very clear that even though they knew only too well the ailments of the system, they were envious of the leader's indulgence in corruption and clannism. They longed to replace him only to emulate him and rather than become keepers of the governance in their country, like the leader, they acted like poachers.

One of the many negative cultures the last leader introduced into the Somali governance, and which played the major role in the collapse of the state, was the endemic level of corruption in the public sector. It made the work of government appeal to all those whose driving force was greed, self-interest and how to make quick money. Another way in which the former leader undermined the national governance was by indulging in the issue of all-purpose *bono,* as mentioned earlier, an Italian term for small instructions or orders on adhesive slip or paper authorising practically anything. A government system is supposed to attract the altruistic patriot and certainly not become a haven for all the money-minded and selfish. Ali Mahdi left work in government in the 1960s -- he was a pest controller at the ministry of health -- to become self-employed as a merchant. Eventually in the 1980s,

with the help of his eldest wife who worked as legal advisor to the former president, he secured an interest-free loan from the government-owned Commercial Bank to build a three star hotel in the western part of the capital. Struck by sudden opulence, Ali Mahdi decided to do everything possible to join the government and aspire even to become the president no less. This was as a result of the signal sent out by government that those like Ali Mahdi who left it because of low wages and whose goals were to better themselves, could do so in no quicker way than by re-joining it.

The former president transformed the presidency of the nation into an agency to advance clan members and friends: overnight there were successful businessmen, privates became generals and within no time, ambassadors and ministers were discovered. This made people like Ali Mahdi think of themselves as no less than the president. Their obsession became how to inherit his seat. A friend of mine recalls that, during the bitter power struggle in 1992 between General Aideed and Ali Mahdi, which saw the total destruction of Mogadishu, the latter fled Mogadishu to the desert and in a television documentary was pictured beneath a tree swinging in the chair of the former president.

Automatic opposition membership on a clan basis

There were many able, enlightened and dedicated patriots among the Somali opposition groups, there is no doubt but that in general they were disorganised, irresponsible, misinformed and lacking a clear sense of purpose. One of their many faults, perhaps the most serious one, was over the question of membership. An opposition is an organisation which aspires to the huge task of replacing a government. Yet no matter who you were, no question was asked before recruitment if you were a member of the "*correct*" clan. You could forget any question about your background, ethics, convictions or credibility. Nor was there an accepted ideology. Known criminals, thieves, rapists and other irresponsible persons found their way to play some part in the struggle. In many cases there was no recruitment procedure. People of a clan simply flocked to their movement as into an open field. There is no worthwhile organisation in the world, let alone a political one, into the membership of which one walks

solely because of clan or ethnic affiliations.

Unlike the disorientated Somali opposition movements, other political movements in the region such as the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), now in government in Eritrea; the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) now at the helm of power in Ethiopia, and others in Ethiopia, were all well-established and well-manned organisations. They vetted applicants to assess their reliability, capability and motivations and took or turned away people on grounds of ideology.

In December 1990, only a few weeks prior to the collapse of the last government, a certain Somali in London repeatedly appeared on TV screens projecting his enthusiasm, emotion and exuberance. This gentleman was in fact self-appointed as head of the USC in the UK. Throughout his early life he had been taken care of by the state as a young boy in the nation's orphanages and educated. After high school graduation he walked into a government job as an accountant. As a privileged member of the government civil service nearly two decades ago, he was sent on scholarship to the UK to complete an undergraduate course. It took him sixteen years. In 1989, when he heard his clan was to assemble in Italy to form an opposition movement, like the other clans, to take part in the struggle and then look after its interests, he at once took a flight to Rome. The sole aim of this man was a driving ambition to become the nation's ambassador in the UK. Heaven knows who gave persons such as he the idea that they could represent a whole nation on a clan ticket.

In January 1991, a few days after the former president was chased out of the capital, a violent mob claiming to belong to the USC congregated at the gate of the Somali Consulate General in Jeddah. They chanted that the consul general should leave his office and transfer it into their hands. They even tried to storm the building. The police were telephoned and the mob fled but not before some of their ring leaders were taken into Saudi custody. The fact that government offices, whether in foreign lands or at home, belong to the peoples of the nation as a whole, was forgotten.

Most of those who stormed government buildings in the capital and ran amok with deadly arsenals, far from being individuals

who could manage public affairs or represent the nation, were desperados from the bush. They possessed none of the civility required to behave in a town. Drawing similarity between Somali civil war experiences and disturbances in Sierra Leone, I came across the remarks of a Sierra Leonean businessman, Sule Hassan, in *Time* Magazine: "When they looted my house they ran off with my computer thinking it was a television set, and these are the same people who are trying to run the country." An identical thing happened in Somalia when the central police and military stores were sacked in Mogadishu. Definitely if the clan mob which chased the last leadership from the capital were to succeed they would make Somalia even more of a disaster area than it already is.

The task of administering and managing a nation is far from simple. To start with it is a responsibility and a burden. It is a trust. On the other hand it requires special qualities and training. It is in the best interest of all concerned to agree to entrust such important national duties to those whose qualities have been recognised. When one looks back at such incidents, and similar early activities of the opposition, one draws the single conclusion that they were soon at a loss. Judging from what has happened since the overthrow of the last leadership, many were driven only by jealousy. It has since become abundantly clear that many, though not all, of the would-be leaders of the opposition were "Johnny-come-lately" figures in no way better than the former leader: they had little or no claim to redress the wrongs of maladministration.

Clan-based politics: undoing nationhood

Unfortunately, among the Somali opposition groups there are those who wish to divide the eight million one-nation Somali people by clan, villages, towns, cities and regions. Such elements do seem never to grow up, and they disregard other world societies and nations.

When Somali opposition groups used to meet officials and organisations from other countries, they would tell them outright which clan they were from as though it mattered. It was as if they were in the nomadic countryside of Somalia (*baaddiye*) dealing with other Somali clans. This used to lower their status and

undermine their position in the wider world. They were seen as small-minded, clannish groups who had not matured to undertake their country's national political administration. To add insult to injury, the opposition groups used to wonder why they were not supported; was this perhaps because bad propaganda had been made about their clan? They therefore used to indulge further in even more clan and counter-clan propaganda and publicity. Such medieval politics, which the world had passed by generations ago, used to affront further and put off many governments and organisations. They were not taken seriously. Why the world backed Mohamed Siad to the hilt right up to his last days, was in good part due to disillusion with the opposition.

Clan championship also explains why no one nation in the world formally recognised former northern Somaliland when it unilaterally declared independence (UDI) as "the Republic of Somaliland". The simple fact is that almost all countries in the world are comprised of many different nationalities with different backgrounds, cultures and languages. The world could neither comprehend nor stomach one small Somali nation whose people share everything, fragmenting into clan-states. The world is simply not interested in mini clan states. If one nation cannot coexist within itself and stand as a nation-state, it is also probable that such people would not stand as a mini clan-state; and in both the south and the north of Somalia, further fragmentation and division would follow unavoidably. In world politics nothing is more taboo than clan politics and worse, viewing the world in terms of clans, tribalism etc.

A diplomat from one of the EEC countries told me after some years, when we had come to know each other well, why he made his initial contact with the embassy. It was after having met several Somalis from the opposition groups whom he invariably found clan-minded and not nationalists, he wished to see from the government side whether we were all the same.

One day as we sat to have lunch at a restaurant in south Kensington, he suddenly asked me my clan. I was astonished and said, "You tell me first which clan you are from then I will tell you mine." He nearly slipped from his chair laughing but when he regained his calm, I said to him "What do you mean which clan are you? We meet as two equals who represent their respective

countries and you ask me some monkey business!" He reiterated, the first thing Somali opposition groups cited was the name of their clan. To them, clan was like a passport to be produced at a border check point, without questioning. One day in 1987 I met Stephen Ellis, the then *Africa Confidential* editor, and urged him to check the continual emphasis his corres-pondents placed on clan loyalties and divisions among Somalis. There was a clan-tag on every Somali individual mentioned. Mr Ellis was forthright and simply said, "I don't invent them. We get our stories from your people in the opposition and that is what they emphasised."

The opposition were under the false impression that government officials used to do the same. This is laughable. Government represents not a clan but a whole nation: a clan has no flag. Secondly no one abroad is interested in knowing which clan or family one is from. The Somali nation we represented was itself hardly known by the world. It is only because of the tragedy of the civil war that many people in the world are beginning to hear of us, and that is not altogether a good thing. The image the world is acquiring of Somalia is one of misery, hunger, war and mayhem.

In New York in 1995, Boutros Boutros-Ghali met a former Somali government minister whom he knew from his thirty years in the Egyptian government. He asked, apart from the warlords who did not care for Somalia, what had happened to all those Somali diplomats and government officials who used to represent Somalia. In the past when Boutros Boutros-Ghali used to meet a Somali official it was in his capacity as representative of his country's interest and the Somali he met likewise. Those Somali officials did not need to tell Boutros-Ghali who they were or the clan to which they belonged, because that is immaterial. Unfortunately, the way things have gone and the depths to which the standard of Somali politics and sovereignty have sunk, has even led some of our people to allege that Boutros-Ghali -- who lost his second term as Secretary General of the UN partly on account of his concern over Somalia -- sided with one Somali clan against the others. This is not only quite untrue but despicable. Clans are not entitled to UN membership.

All those who stood against the former government and formed armed opposition groups hypocritically hoping to appeal to the Somali masses, invariably failed to convince the Somali people because they were not nationally inspired. They all adopted the common name "Somali" and all-embracing terms like "national" in their appellations -- Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali National Movement (SNM), Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), United Somali Congress (USC) -- but the fact of the matter is theirs were never national movements.

Some opposition members believed that their interest was best served by the murky world of clannism and wished to make the clan a state within the Somali state. Anyone who loves his nation does not subscribe to patterns which erode unity and statehood in modern governance. The Somali people do not want a state within a state for that would only result in confusion and anarchy. What Somalia requires is one state which truly looks after all its people and their interests. Clannism is certainly one of the major ills which has destroyed Somalia. Strong safety valves must be established in future to protect the statehood of the nation from demise. The clan factor is a private matter which should have been kept out of public affairs which are everybody's business. An individual's clan is his or her business not the business of anybody else. If Somalia is to survive, the clan factor must be rooted out of its politics.

What all Somalis must understand is that the era of clan political domination -- no matter who benefits -- is over. In the United States, the people who came as refugees can end up in the highest offices of influence. An example is that of Madeleine Albright, formerly a noted academic, she became United States Secretary of State. Her father represented former Czechoslovakia at the United Nations in New York in the 1940s. Henry Kissinger was a German refugee who went to the US with his family to escape persecution of the Jewish people by the nazi regime. General Colin Powell, the brilliant son of a black immigrant family from the West Indies could rise to the pinnacle of the United States army and even be begged by his countrymen, white and black alike, to stand for the presidency of the United States.

What differentiates one from another in the quest for national recognition, including the leadership of the nation, must be how

talented and educated one is rather than clan affiliation; the underlying benchmark of public responsibility must invariably be talent matched with opportunity.

Divided loyalties

The Somalis are blessed to be people of one-nation who share almost everything, yet the division of their loyalty into different segments has so far become a major obstacle. For instance, in almost all countries, even though there are many ethnic groups -- in some cases hundreds -- the loyalty of the people is not fragmented and their main attachment after personal commitments is to their country and its wellbeing. In countries such as India, or even the United States, there are hundreds of ethnic groups, yet their national identity is the dominant factor in the loyalty of the peoples of these and most other countries.

A Somali first and foremost must seek to recognise all the good deriving from the grand identity which is his -- the Somali name and cause. Unlike any other nation on earth, the loyalty of Somalis is divided and fragmented. After accepting the common name and cause, a Somali still wants special things for his clan. One may even think that is where his final loyalty lies, but no, he goes down to the sub-clan, then down to the unit, then to the family and even to half-brothers and half-sisters. This is an undoing which has contributed to the destruction of Somalia during the civil war. In 1991, an atmosphere of hatred on the part of one group after another very quickly developed amongst the forces which took over Mogadishu. This accomplishment, however, was the final result of long ongoing struggle fought by the Somali people as a whole after disenchantment with the ages of misrule by the then ruler. Soon after that January 1991 day which saw the end of his rule, unfortunately, as subsequent events have manifested, the national victory was hijacked. There was temporary euphoria but it soon came to be exclusively felt by one group -- namely members of the Hawiye clan.

A British friend of mine, working with one of the Aid organisations operating in Mogadishu at the time, met Brigadier-General Mohamed Farah Aideed in those days of extreme exuberance. He told me of Aideed's long harangue to him and other foreigners about a new era for his clan. Having initially

thought that Aideed and his rival Ali Mahdi were broad-minded nationalists, he found them clan-minded opportunists even stepping in at the last minute to rob the people of their victory. My disappointed friend started doubting all who were on the merry-go-round in those early days. He realised that the fate of Somalia would be prolonged civil strife. Those who like my friend thought the unity of the Somali people would be achieved as a result of the demise of Mohamed Siad, were dismayed to see even the Hawiye clan split into two, four and then eight divisions. From the Hawiye clan, they went down to Hiraab. Then into two groups, until eventually each group split into three. During those first years when the civil war started, no one had ever reckoned that the bullets which would one day kill Aideed would be from the guns of his own close clan relatives.

The extent to which the clan factor is something primitive and outdated which destroys governance and should never be used in public affairs and the day to day running of a modern state should have been universally obvious. It became clear in Somalia that dominant among the dozen or so groups in the Somali president's Marehan clan was his inner sub-clan called Koshin. Later on after the mid-1980s when things worsened and the state structure further deteriorated, the most preferred among his Koshin sub-clan, became the sub-division Hassan Koshin. Preference had spiralled downwards from Somali to Darod to Marehan to Koshin and then to Hassan Koshin. Once one discriminates on clan terms, like a truck with failed brakes, there is no stopping and consideration degenerates to preferences for members of one's own family.

The best way to understand whether a modern Somali family, either overseas or in Somalia, is nationalist and above the clan factor, is to examine the attitudes and belief of the children. As mirrors of the parents or guardian, one can see through a child the thinking of the parents. If the parents are clan-minded the unsuspecting children utter outright their clan name. Worse still many Somali offspring would reveal their sub-clan as though they are in *baddiye* (nomadic life). Even if some of our "enlightened intellectuals", alerted by writing such as this, have "recoded" their offspring and instructed them not to tell their clan names to strangers -- children being children will admit that their father has

told them not to utter to strangers the names of their clans and sub-clans: the evil which destroyed Somalia.

Luckily enough, my father, who was above clan mentality and believed in the general name "Somali", never taught his children to which clan they belonged. However, in those days as one grew into boyhood, it was easy to learn the relevant detail from someone who belonged to one's clan who made a visit to one's family residence. As parents are the undisputed main opinion-formers and teachers of their children, the parent's views will always colour the world of their child. My children, when asked who destroyed Somalia, without hesitation, supply the names Mohamed Siad Barre and Mohamed Farah Aideed.

The lack of vision and sense of purpose

For one to have a vision it is a must to have a set of values. In 1991 two Somali opposition movements took control of the country. The Somali National movement (SNM) took over the regions in the north while the United Somali Congress (USC) took control of the capital city and some parts of the south. Unlike the USC, the SNM, even though clan based and secessionist oriented, was better organised and had a degree of sense of purpose. The USC was totally disorientated and disorganised. Their only sense of purpose was manifested as pillaging and vengeance towards fellow citizens who did not belong to their clan. Everything in their path was either looted or destroyed. Many Somalis and the world at large even doubted whether they had any aims or plans to rule the country. In 1992, according to his article in *The Times,* when the journalist and aid worker Sam Kiley met Mohamed Farah Aideed, artillery shells were falling around the group of journalists. Asked what were his future plans for Somalia they were flabbergasted when he responded with one word -- "tourism". This superficial comment sufficed for them all to define the type of man who was terrorising the Somali nation in those days.

During the civil war many Somalis who, on clan grounds were either victimised or ignored by the group who seized the capital, resorted to a massive campaign to persuade the international community to understand the situation in the country and freeze the nation's assets abroad in order to protect them from those

sectarian and tribalistic movements which were taking control. If a group of, for instance, forty persons deposit their common valuables in a bank safe and if one or two of them return to the bank without the others to steal and misuse what belonged to all, then the only way open to those who were about to be robbed would be to alert the bank in order to deny access to the unauthorised transgressors and to inform the police of the crime committed.

Intellectual poverty

Somalia is not short of intellectuals: engineers, doctors, scientists, historians, professors and philosophers. Unfortunately for all that, there is an intellectual poverty among many of those who have "learned for their nation".

One spring evening in 1997, I was taken aback to hear a Somali intellectual arguing in a private gathering, "No matter what happens or how educated one is, the clan is a state within a state and we must at the end of the day think the same way as the nomad who follows his animals." When one hears such statements from those supposed to be the "cream" of their nation, one can only wonder if after forty years of learning and travelling around the world, such a person still thinks, the same way as those who follow their animals, whether he should have left the herds in the first place, and what hope can there be for this gifted, yet unfortunate nation?

Has knowledge been pursued not to change attitudes or develop the person to be well equipped to face the challenges of life, but merely to achieve further ambition? Is this because of lack of self-confidence? When the person does not believe in himself and thinks that he cannot achieve anything on his own, does he glue himself to the clan? Somalia's problems are not the responsibility of the nomad and the common man. They were never masters of their destiny and they wait for their educated compatriots to show them the way. Somalia's tragedy indeed lies with those who were supposed to be the guiding lights of their nation. Many among them spearheaded the doom and gloom of division, ignorance and clannism. It is not enough to be equipped with education pursued to the pinnacle; one must change with the time.

The root cause seems to be that education has not been pursued to improve and better one's thinking, attitudes, and vision. Knowledge must not be acquired merely as a tool to qualify for government office and to obtain power only as a path to riches. Back home abject poverty is the lot of the common man but unfortunately there is also intellectual poverty among the country's learned elite.

Roaming around other peoples' capitals as a way of life

Now with all rudimentary and essential infrastructure destroyed or uprooted, Somalia is a mostly barren land made into a hell on earth by warlords who have rendered the country uninhabitable even for their own families and children. Even before the civil war when people used to see Somalis in every corner of the world, one would be forgiven for assuming that nationals from that paradise of a country were the most unfortunate on earth. The whole concept of being a Somali in opposition against the former government was to roam around the capitals of other people. This is hardly a quality which any nation's opposition should have. It is a regrettable fact that even those Somalis who ended up in the 1970s and 80s in the hands of a national enemy in Addis Ababa during the hostile military regime of Colonel Mengistu, behaved as though Addis Ababa was their own capital city. A fashionable but useless concept developed: being in the Somali opposition involved being in a foreign land.

This must not of course be taken as a stereotype and blanket generalisation that applies to every Somali man and woman. In every society there are many to whom no category would apply. As the saying goes, to every rule there is of course an exception. There are many Somalis who, under difficult circumstances, were honest to the last. But it is the concern of many Somalis that even when the dust of civil war settles down and normality returns, tens of thousands of nationals who fled the wars and put down roots overseas may not return to their homeland to live there and help rebuild.

Clan interests over the national interest

If it is to succeed, the most sacred thing for any nation is its national interest. Perhaps the worst thing which breaks up a

society when it becomes engulfed by clannism. Many Somalis have forgotten that like everybody else in the world they too have national interests and priorities. While Somalia is smouldering with unnecessary civil war, the nations in our region are looking after their interests and progressing. For instance, the Ethiopian economy has enjoyed a double digit growth of nearly 12 per cent. Kenya, even though troubles simmer, is a nation on its feet firmly addressing its own affairs. Eritrea is booming even though it too has its own difficulties. Nations in Africa and the wider world, including even civil-war-ravaged Liberia and Sierra Leone, are moving towards their rightful places in world arenas.

Meanwhile, Somalis have thrown themselves back to the stone ages still preoccupied with society's inconsequential divisions. The clan factor has become the most important thing for the Somali, more important than his own nation's interest. In order for people to go about their day to day affairs and march ahead in development they need unity as a nation. The positive creation and fostering of national unity is the only way open for any developing nation. The Somali does not seem to bother even about the *de facto* loss of sovereignty -- the most important jewel in the realm which invariably accompanies civil strife. The Somalis need to grow up and quickly. A Somali needs to ask the following important questions: Where am I? What is my national interest? Where is my state? Why can't I take my rightful standing in the world? Why must I fight my own people? How do we measure up to other nations in our region and the world at large who are manning their nations' affairs and interests?

Obsession with who is in the majority

In Somali political circles for some time there has been an obsession with who is in the majority and who in the minority among the six to eight million Somalis, who after all constitute one-nation. This is not only strange but very primitive. In the Somali nomadic countryside, when it came to clan warfare or other social or anti-social activities, an important factor used to be which clan had more men than their adversaries. But in modern warfare, the number of opponents is insignificant; it hardly matters any more, as the outcome of any warfare is determined not by sheer numbers but by tactics and the quality and capacity of

weapons possessed. In the UK and elsewhere in the modern world, it is taboo to mention who is in the majority and who in the minority among the English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish. For instance, the English who are 48.7 million do not consciously feel they outnumber the others -- the Scots who are around five million, the Welsh around three and the Northern Irish who are over one and half million. It is unimportant whether one particular nation, for instance the English, outnumbers the others, as nothing is gained from the sheer numbers of one group over another. If peoples of a country share important aspects such as language and religion, no one should be seen as the major or the minor partner, especially in a nation such as the Somalis who share almost everything. In any country, those who belong to other nations or countries may be seen as an ethnic or minority community. For instance in the UK the ethnic minorities are the Asians, the Blacks, the Jews, the Chinese etc. Similarly there are religious minorities, such as the Muslims, the Hindus, etc. However, the world has long since passed the stage where local clans matter. Thanks mainly to the last Somali leader and the opposition groups who pulled the whole Somali politics back into the murky world of clannism, one cannot avoid its discussion, especially when seeking to differentiate between the Somali opposition groups.

When one homogeneous nation such as Somalia becomes preoccupied with the unfounded obsession, who outnumbers whom, it can only stem from ignorance and from an archaic view of the social structure. There are even some international academicians who, by fuelling local obsessions, give credence to unnecessarily divisive story-telling based on which clan is major and which minor. To add insult to injury among these misguided foreign academics some have even gone further to suggest a classification on the spurious grounds of who is superior and who is inferior among the Somali people. The Somalis can do without such personalities lest they create in Somalia a fascism similar to that imposed on the German and Italian peoples in the 1930s and 40s, by the followers of Hitler and Mussolini respectively. Such negative writings only add to the divisions and cracks within the unity of our one-nation society.

To stand against tyranny only to exceed its excesses

One of the many ironies in which the Somali opposition movements have indulged, even though they claimed to have stood against repression, injustice, clannism and all sorts of government evils, is that in many respects they have by far exceeded the excesses and bad record of the last government. When someone who complained about injustice, suggesting and seeking avenues to change the situation, resorts to the same behaviour or worse after the defeat of the former regime, one questions how that same person can himself engage in what he more than anyone had detested. This only shows that when opposition is not based on the broader objectives of nation building and is busied with matters as low as clannism with no proper national agenda to rule for the better, the result is what happened in Somalia. Legitimate questions remain. Was it worth standing against the tyranny and excesses of the deposed government? The record of Somali opposition groups to date is not one which anyone could be proud of, as they have subsequently been shown to be as -- if not more -- irresponsible than the exhausted and disillusioned leadership of the last government. Was the sacrifice, and the great lengths they went to, only the result of jealous rage and insanity and not based on true patriotism and the will to bring about changes for the better for all?

Vengeance is not justice

Suspects and criminals, be they war criminals or other common criminals, should be tried in a court of law with proper legal procedures which ensure that justice is done. Unfortunately Somali opposition groups confused revenge caused by rage and insanity with justice. When rebels took over both in the south and the north, many acts of injustice were committed in the very name of justice. There were no proper courts of law to try people. Many innocent citizens were rounded up to suffer mob justice at the hands of irresponsible militias. A considerable number were executed. In innumerable cases their crime was only belonging to the president's tribe.

When the SNM captured the northern regions even though they were better organised and more humane than the USC, the mobs

took matters into their own hands and went on sprees of mass murder and the way those who were rounded up were dealt with was draconian. In the north, which fell under the more organised SNM, civilians were asked to give evidence and verify by shouting out whether suspects were good to them when the government was there, and those they declared to have been unfair or unkind were condemned and summarily executed. In these dramas it was not understood that vengeance is not justice!

Even in places such as Rwanda where the despicable crime of genocide has been committed and where over a million innocent civilians were murdered simply because of their ethnicity, suspected war criminals who took part in the killings have long been held in jails awaiting proper trials in a court of law. The same has happened in Ethiopia. The military clique and those personalities who over fifteen years were responsible for the killings of hundreds of thousands have been detained in jails while the government prepared documentation of their crimes.

The irony is that in Somalia, after the fall of the government, similar atrocities were committed by opposition movements who used to cry for justice. The Somali experience is somewhat reminiscent of an African story. Once all the wild animals had a government with a rotating leadership. One of the animals always complained of injustice and atrocities. Then came his turn to lead the animals and everything collapsed. Despite all the complaints about injustice, things still fell apart. Mayhem and bloodshed became the order of life.

In Canada some former Somali opposition members have taken clan squabbling and animosity into the Western hemisphere. In typical acts of clan vengeance, these groups have embarked on smear campaigns denouncing former Somali diplomats to the Canadian authorities as war criminals. Civil servants such as ambassador Mohamed Sheikh Hassan, who throughout his adult life has been an economist, have become victims, implicated in this despicable vendetta campaign. Adan Hirsi Eisse, commonly known as *Sandhere*, is also another Somali diplomat who have fallen prey to such incriminations. Obviously those behind these despicable campaigns are taking advantage of the ignorance and good faith of the authorities. The Canadian authorities should not have allowed themselves to be used in

such a clan witch-hunt. They should have been aware that unless a collective "guilty by association" verdict is introduced, no mere diplomat or civil servant should be held responsible for what a government has done, no matter how wrongful.

During the mass exodus from the misrule in Somalia in the 1980s some clan obsessed opposition members went further to bias immigration offices and authorities in many countries, especially in the West, against certain other Somalis on the basis of clan. In 1991 when the Somali government collapsed and many who either left the service or fled the country claimed refuge in certain countries, they met with a lukewarm reception and unjustified scrutiny that was different from that accorded to their predecessors.

Fixation with who should become the president

Normally leadership is an irksome burden which not many nationals seek to hold. It is a weighty responsibility and a unique task which not many can cope with. There is only one driving seat in the government of a nation and those who should seek such office are not only people with special talent but great integrity, cleanness and all the best qualities. Only those favoured by the Almighty God become leaders in this life -- for better or for worse as only time will tell.

Even Pol Pot, a demented visionary became a leader of a nation. He was responsible for the death of nearly two million Cambodians in the infamous "killing fields" after having forced the whole urban population of Cambodia to adopt a rural way of life. It is a mystery how the likes of Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Jean-Bédél Bokassa, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin became rulers. In the case of Bokassa, after coming to power through a coup in 1965 and becoming one of Africa's most notorious and profligate tyrants, he declared himself emperor in 1976. He is known to have participated in the massacre of some one hundred children.

One deadly legacy of the last government in Somalia is the question of who should become president. Years of irresponsible leadership and misrule have led to wide competition for the leadership of the country. The former president made the presidency of the nation a place to amass fortunes, to enrich clan members, friends and family members and to misuse power for

personal ends. Thus as a result Somalia has more warlords and unscrupulous demagogues who want to become national leaders than other contemporary civil-war-torn states. This is so because the standard and ethics of government have not just been lowered but totally abolished. Emulating the former president, even those who bear responsibility for the cruel deaths of the nation's sons, daughters, mothers and fathers unashamedly seek the highest office of the land!

Clan offices masquerading as national bureaux

Since Somalia plunged into the trauma of civil war, many Somalis have made initiatives to create new organisations. Any well-intentioned activity is to be welcomed but the motives of many of these persons are to find a livelihood, enrich themselves or serve their clan interests. Many of these "organisations" have touched the low ebb of clannism yet invariably the "institutions" adopt the word "Somali" in their titles. One such organisation is the "Somali Information Centre". Even though such activities need encouragement, as individuals are needed to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the country, it is important that the personalities involved grow out of clannism and make their activities truly national.

Information given to the mass media is currently all based on the clan factor. When the world wants to hear about Somalis and their affairs, it is certainly not interested in their petty competition and squabbles. As it is, there is little or no interest in national affairs due to constant clan bickering. The responsibility on the shoulders of all Somalis is to uplift Somali politics from the cheap and low level of clan to that of the nation. For instance, reading a piece about Somalia, in the informative *Africa Confidential* newsletter, I was surprised to come across a baseless assumption that the warlord Abdullahi Yusuf, and a former defence minister in the last Somali government, Adan Mohamed Nur, *Gabyow,* were included in the five member "ruling council" because they are from the two majority Darod sub-clans. Rubbish! When a Somali looks at such cheap stories not only would he or she automatically understand who the sources were, but also the aim behind such stories. Someone from clan X was actually planting his clan interest in the international press. It is

wretched! This is not Somali information, but, in the real sense, clan misinformation. Unfortunately, unsuspecting foreign journalists have become prey to the murky mini-traps of clannism -- the evil which has dealt a deadly blow to Somali nationhood. Serious journalists and the likes of the academics mentioned elsewhere, should not listen to teashop tittle-tattle or to misguided individuals who misinterpret events solely based on clan sentiments.

It is also worth mentioning that amid the doom and debris, the Uppsala based Swedish Life & Peace Institute are attempting a service for the Somali people. The Somalis are definitely indebted to them for their attention in the hour of trial. Their *Horn of Africa Bulletin* is not only informative but essential at this chaotic moment when the country has little access to information. Unfortunately they too occasionally are misled by the dirty trappings of clannism. Thanks doubtless to their Somali sources, they have started to insert lengthy clan trilogies describing all Somali personalities to whom they refer in their writings. This is utterly unnecessary and unwarranted.

All governments react to provocateurs

No matter whether one is right or wrong to pursue a cause, all governments, with no exception, react harshly to provocation. When one mounts an insurgency against any system, be it of the United Nations, authoritarian, democratic or dictatorial, all governments meet violence with equal or more violence. Many cases -- whether in Europe in leading democracies, or in Africa and Asia under authoritarian regimes -- suggest there is no system which accepts being dictated to by any rebel group within its jurisdiction. One example was the 1993 UN operation in the middle of the capital Mogadishu which turned against Somali nationals -- the very people it came to rescue.

In June 1993, when General Mohamed Farah Aideed sent a unit of his militia to counter a unit of the "UN blue helmet" Pakistani contingent bent on taking over "his" radio transmitter station (formerly the nation's radio Mogadishu), in the resulting ambush over twenty Pakistanis were killed. The UN authorities, led by the head of operations, Admiral Jonathan Howe, placed a Wild-West-style price tag on the capture of Aideed. In the subsequent hunt down of the skilful fugitive Somali general,

thousands of Somalis were killed. The world saw on TV screens UN gunships strafe and bomb Mogadishu like an occupying army and there were inevitable comparisons with the American war in Vietnam. The aim of the UN authorities was exactly similar to that of any authority. No system can accept the erosion and destabilising of its jurisdiction.

In 1982 in Syria, the government of Hafez el-Assad bombed the city of Hama to the ground to quell an insurgency of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is believed that tens of thousands perished in those operations. Equally, in 1988, when the SNM attacked Burao and Hargeisa, the then Somali leader bombed the cities to dislodge the attackers. Again, as recently as in 1994, when the alliance of two clans from the north of Somalia mounted an armed attack in Hargeisa and Burao against the government of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal's breakaway republic, like the former Somali leader, he resorted to the bombing of rebel positions in the two cities. Ancient Greek wisdom affirms, "Treat a friend as a future enemy, an enemy as a future friend."

In 1987 in Gibraltar when British security forces spotted three IRA terrorists who were about to plant explosives, they shot and killed them on the spot. Even though the three IRA commandos were unarmed at the time, they were known to have been travelling around in a car filled with explosives. All the above examples only demonstrate that no matter what, all authorities, be they governments or other organisational forms, invariably react to violence and anarchy in the same way.

Bloodbaths cause bloodbaths

When all the Somali opposition groups resorted to armed movements to overthrow the government and thereby bring needed change, what they did not realise was that those who come to power as a result of blood spilling invite their future opponents to use the same method to overthrow them. What made the war waged in Somalia differ from those in Ethiopia and elsewhere, was that in Somalia the struggle was based neither on differences of class or ideology but on clan -- the lowest form of any national struggle. When one organises on the basis of clan to overthrow a government, the leadership can also create alliances making use of the same tactics.

Another example is the Balkan civil war in Bosnia which has seen recriminations and reprisals for the killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. Religious as well as nationalist prejudices were involved. A clearer instance is perhaps the tragedy which took place in Rwanda. In 1994 the world witnessed the televised horror of mass murders when Hutu militias and government personnel started killing indiscriminately their Tutsi compatriots. Nearly a million Tutsis, including women, children and the elderly, lost their lives in this carnage. Not long after, the country was swept by Tutsi guerrilla fighters who came from neighbouring Uganda. Even though they were better disciplined than their Hutu predecessors, some bloodshed occurred. Moreover it was followed by the killing of many Hutus in refugee camps in former Zaire by either infiltrators from Rwanda or the Tutsi militia which helped the new government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to take power.

Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)

To assess the making or breaking of Somali opposition, it is necessary to start with the SSDF, the first and the oldest armed opposition movement. The SSDF were the pioneers or the mother of all Somali opposition movements. Yet they belonged not to the whole nation, but to a single Somali clan -- the Majerten. Like any another Somali community, there are many nation-loving patriots within them. Yet among them there are also many who have taken part in planting the seeds of Somalia's demise and destruction. To start with, the exaggerated enmity between Darod and Hawiye Somali clans is none other than a reincarnation of that between the Majerten segment of Omar and the Habar-gidir segment Sa'ad. There has never been any other known disagreement between any part of those two clans. If Somalia could be transformed into a paradise on earth as a result of the sound leadership of one who is not their own, in their eyes it would still be hell. Such a level of egocentrism, selfishness and conceit is neither heard of nor seen in any other part of the globe. It should be stressed, however, as pointed out above, there are many able and true patriots among them who are an essential component for the existence and wellbeing of Somalia. To take but one example, Abdirazak Haji Hussein, a former Somali prime minister

(1964-67), was perhaps the fairest, most impartial and cleanest politician and civil servant in the nation's short history of post-independence governance. In his four years of premiership he was known for introducing the famous *posto rosso* (dismissal by red envelop without redress) which endeavoured to weed out corrupt and incompetent government officials. Another example is that of President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. Even though, unlike Abdirazak Haji Hussein, he took a somewhat generous view of those guilty of corruption by arguing that the spoils of fiscal impropriety were invested in the country to its ultimate benefit, he was known for his unshakable patriotism and honesty. Tragically, on 15 October 1969, he fell prematurely to the assassin's bullet.

There is no greater folly for a group than to be under the delusion that what belongs to a whole nation can be exclusively one's own. On the other hand, the extent to which the people grow cynical regarding such a mentality is similar to a concept the Indian politicians used to believe in, pre-independence. Because of colonial experience, they used to say that if two fish quarrel in the middle of the ocean, the British were to blame. Many among the Somali people joke that if two goats quarrel even in the remotest areas of Somalia none other than members of this clan must be behind it. They have given the impression that trouble-makers, callous calculators and manipulators are all to be found amongst them.

As Somalis say "*Nin walba beerta uu beerto ayuu miraheeda gurtaa,*" "Everyone gets the crop derived from the seed he plants." The antipathy of many of the Somali people towards this group seems to stem from their political and social behaviour and attitudes. The instinct of any society is that people are nice to those who are nice to them. No one is born with innate hatred towards another, but many suggest that any prejudice and contempt felt towards this group is mainly of their own making. They have given the impression that they are the traditional brokers and beneficiaries of politics and power in Somalia. Some dwell under the dangerous concept that Somalia cannot [and should not] be ruled except by someone from amongst them. During the civil wars, because of their extraordinary astuteness and stewardship in local politics and their skill to influence and even associate with most of the warring factions, some Somalis

dubbed this group as "the man behind the tree in every reconciliation conference on Somalia". No doubt Somalia needs the acumen and skill of these citizens but with much less of their manipulation.

The 1940s, 50s and 60s, the years some members from this group led the Somali nationhood into oblivion, are long since passed away. For the last one hundred years, the world has changed beyond recognition in most dimensions but many of their attitudes and delusions of the core supporters of SSDF have never changed a jot. Self-indulgence has been their undoing. They seldom ask themselves what is good for Somalia, but only what is good for themselves, and they neither accept nor respect anyone other than from their own set. A few labour under the false assumption that they are ordained by divine law to rule Somalia. But in Somalia there has never been a hereditary ruling class. It is any citizen's birthright to seek or stand to lead his country. The Somali public wonder who gave them this wrong notion. For example in October 1969, when Mohamed Siad became President of Somalia, even before the month was out, some were saying that they had consulted a witch in the Somali town of Afgoi, and Mohamed Siad would not last another week. His rule went on for over twenty-one years.

The SSDF was officially formed after a group of military officers staged an unsuccessful *coup d'état* against the government of Mohamed Siad Barre in April 1978. At the time of this failed coup attempt and during their years in armed struggle, the mainstream Somali people did not feel sympathy for them; thus they only secured more support and sympathy for the former president. In the 1980s, the more they went on the air through their Radio *Halgan* (radio struggle) from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the angrier the Somali people felt. It seems they gained neither respect nor sympathy from the Somali public, including the opposition factions, for their struggle. It is not very helpful that the core SSDF supporters' group appear not to have grown out of their early negative concepts. They are notorious for the use of two identities. As one elderly Somali put it: "When they do the work of the devil they claim they are Darod; when they achieve their mainly lucrative aims, they claim they are Majerten."

As a result of this negative political culture of clan domination

which they introduced into Somali politics, many have emulated them. This greatly hindered what should have been the natural development of a modern and just system of recruitment, appointment and promotion within the civil service. Instead, what everyone had been in pursuit of, has been their model which suggests the absolute right to rule on clan grounds. They have established an unfortunate precedent by making any Somali struggle against the government not national but clan based. They have led Somali opposition into the hands of former president Mengistu of Ethiopia, who was a sworn enemy of Somalia. This has made the people give even more support to the former rulers of Somalia and if there is one single group the Somali people know like the back of their hands, it is this group. If today, after all the former president had done, the only choice were between him and the SSDF sympathisers as a group, the majority would request "Exhume Mohamed Siad!"

In July 1982, Ethiopian troops invaded and captured Galdogob and Balambal, two Somali towns near the border. To the horror of many Somalis, the SSDF came and fought with the Ethiopians against their own homeland. Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, who was the chairman of the SSDF, witnessed not only the seizure of the towns, but the commander of the Ethiopian invaders, ordering his troops to unfurl their three-coloured flag as if the towns belonged to them. This was a ground-breaking experience for the SSDF. As a Somali saying has it, "When a goat comes with a hyena for hunting, the hyena keeps the spoils and then kills the goat." And that is exactly what happened to the SSDF. After the clash of interest with their hosts at the seizure of the two Somali towns, the Ethiopians began to eliminate *incognito* SSDF officials and threw its chairman Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf into its notorious "*Alem-baqa*" (end of life) maximum security prison. It was after seven years of solitary confinement at the end of Colonel Mengistu's reign of power that Abdullahi Yusuf was released from his captivity.

In struggle, as pioneers, the SSDF were denied legitimacy and support by the Somali public as a result of their well-known self-centred ambition and their falling into the hands of the then enemy government in Ethiopia. Even after the collapse of the government there is ironically little or no regard for them as

champions of the struggle which had seen the end of Mohamed Siad's government. For Colonel Mengistu and his regime, the Somali National Movement (SNM) were preferred to the SSDF on the simple basis that, no matter how selfish, their struggle was one for a change in Somalia. The Ethiopians, who saw themselves as traditional enemies of Somalia, set out to encourage and inspire the SNM to break away from Somalia: a cherished goal coinciding with their national interest -- presiding over the disintegration and destruction of the Somali state.

Somali National Movement (SNM)

As the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) used to count to its credit the creation and organisation of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the only armed Somali political movement which openly brags as being responsible for the creation of the United Somali Congress (USC) is the Somali National Movement. Of all the Somali political movements, the SNM was undoubtedly the most organised and efficient. Compared to the other movements, theirs was a just cause even if it utilised unjust methods. The SNM was formed in London in 1981 and, like other Somali movements, was clan based. The formation of the SNM stemmed from genuine mistreatment, dereliction of the northern regions and injustices on the part of successive Somali governments. They felt that development was confined to the southern regions, mainly Benadir where the capital is located. This mistreatment goes way back to 1960, when the people of the north became independent from the British and within four days united with their brothers and sisters in the south who were emerging from Italian trusteeship.

In the late 1960s, since they too suffered from gross levels of injustice and neglect, many northern military officers, especially the twelve officers whose service had been terminated after staging a rebellion in the north led by Hassan Keyd on 10 December 1961, were very much wooed by the then chief of staff of the Somali army, Major-General Mohamed Siad Barre, posing as their would-be saviour. Most of the officers from the south of the country did not trust Mohamed Siad. They knew he was petty-minded, corrupt, tribalistic and above all extremely vindictive. In his military coup, in October 1969, he cleverly allied with and

received much needed support from the army officers from the north. They in turn thought that when the man they backed to the hilt, who had himself suffered personal mistreatment at the hands of the politicians, became president of the country, he would address their problems, redress the country's injustice and imbalances and establish a system that could accommodate the needs and aspirations of all. Initially, during the first five to six years of his rule, they were proved right. During this short period, mainly because Mohamed Siad used it to knit his power base together, he at least stood out as a man who wanted the best for all his people irrespective of clan affiliations.

The former president, despite his using everything and everyone for his own ends, neither really knew nor liked the northern Somalis. This was perhaps due to unfounded prejudices and their sheer geographical distance from where he was brought up. He thought of them as aliens from another planet. He came to the presidency with a huge baggage of prejudices and complexes which he should have shed long before he came to power, including undeserved total but unnecessary antipathy towards them as people. But as events would prove, following the formation of the SNM, they became the most serious opposition organisation truly credited with his downfall and that of his regime. Formed in London in April 1981 by a group of exiles, the SNM fought a guerrilla war which was highly successful in all theatres: political, diplomatic and military. The best known chairman of the SNM was Ahmed Mohamed Mohamud, widely known as *Silanyo*. He was succeeded by Abdirahman Ahmed Ali also known as *Tur*.

One of the many factors which assisted the SNM was the level of unity they fostered and maintained prior to May 1991 when, having captured northern Somalia, they proclaimed by UDI (unilateral declaration of independence) the "Republic of Somaliland". However, they promptly reverted to inter-clan rivalry. Unionist Somalis, who did not like their brothers and sisters breaking away from the rest of the country, dubbed their self-styled Republic of Somaliland as "*Laba qol iyo barsad*", two bedrooms and a sitting room -- Hargeisa and Burao, the two major cities in the north, being the two bedrooms while the port town of Berbera was the sitting room.

Even though for decades the north cried out for development, the fact is that consecutive Somali governments laid emphasis solely on progress in the south. Yet in 1991 when the SNM took over the north, it dismantled and sold off cheaply the only publicly owned industry in the whole northern region, a cement factory, located near Berbera. The whole plant was shipped off to Ethiopia to help expand a cement factory in Dire-Dawa.

Blessed with worldwide mobility equal or surpassing that of other migrants, since the turn of the nineteenth century the northern Somalis have moved to and settled in every corner of the world. Most Somali expatriates in rich Arabian Gulf countries originate from the north. Their armed struggle thrived less on assistance from other countries than contributions collected from their own expatriate, business community and other clansfolk. From all over the world, millions of dollars poured into SNM coffers to support the war effort against the government. Nothing was more damaging to the government than the massive media campaign mounted internationally by individual SNM sympathisers pointing out the blatant levels of corruption and discrediting the government in sensitive areas such as human rights.

The UDI failed to gather international support for recognition mainly because the world could not stomach supporting an organisation or a state based on only one or two of the many Somali clans. As diplomats invariably recount, the main reason why the world turned its back on the SNM and its UDI was because their political aim was based on that narrow clan factor which destroyed Somalia in the first place. The view of the world was that the Somalis should learn to live together as a nation and re-establish their state based on their single nationhood. The world chose to ignore clan-based sentiments no matter how genuine their case might otherwise be. How right the world was all along! Months had not passed without those who had shown absolute unity against the government and who struggled under the banner of SNM, unnecessarily divided themselves into sub-clans: the undoing of Somali politics and nationhood. This made their long drawn-out struggle against the former government absolutely pointless and demonstrated the futility of struggles based on clan sentiments rather than national grounds. If the world was prepared to recognise the so-called "Republic of

Somaliland", then what was to prevent a further split into mini-republics based on its three cities, the "Republic of Hargeisa", the "Republic of Burao" and the "Republic of Berbera"?

Prior to independence, many Somalis were under the delusion that once the colonialists were gone and they were left to manage their own affairs, they would plunge into a paradise. And in 1991 after thirty years of independence and a bitter experience with a military government, most of the northern Somalis have fallen into a worse self-deception of believing that once they break away and form a clan-based mini-state, they will be walking into the "Garden of Eden". This has also proved to be wrong. There was nothing wrong with their unity, but the Somalis as a whole have failed to administer themselves. Unless the Somali people learn to love and respect one another and as one nation take care of their own affairs, there will be no promised land and Somalia will remain in the gutter with its people scattered all over the world as stateless refugees.

The breakaway "Republic of Somaliland" of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, in a desperate effort to seek recognition, took on board Ahmed Mohamed Adan, *Qeybe*, as the chairman of its parliament. *Qeybe*, in his long years as a leading ambassador and as permanent secetary and briefly as foreign minister, had spent his working life fighting for Somali unity. A long-term opponent of the SNM, since 1991, when the north declared its UDI, he was known to have been a fierce and active adversary -- so much so, that the Somaliland office which had opened in Washington to lobby for recognition of the UDI, issued a leaflet attacking him. Prior to this, he had unsuccessfully offered his services to Ali Mahdi, Mohamed Farah Aideed and Osman Atto.

The fact is, the warlords, the various opposition heads, many among the former politicians in the north and south and the last president are all the same type of people: birds of a feather, the political species responsible for the plight and despair of the Somali nation. There is neither conviction and belief nor scruple guiding these personalities -- merely unfettered ambition.

SNM's disastrous attacks on urban areas

Reacting to the government's hasty and opportunistic "peace agreement" with the former Ethiopian government of Colonel

Mengistu Haile Mariam, concluded and signed in Mogadishu on 3 April 1988, the SNM military leadership decided to make daring attacks on Burao and Hargeisa. Extreme bravery on the part of the SNM was exhibited in the two attacks -- but they were nevertheless absolutely suicidal. No guerrilla movement in modern warfare has ever been recorded as having successfully stormed and held on to complete urban areas with government military garrisons.

On 26 June 1988, disillusioned with their host government's peace overtures with the government in Somalia, and as a result of pressure to match the military successes of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in Eritrea, the military wing of the SNM concluded that the only choice open to them was to cross the border with all their forces and mount dare-devil attacks on the major towns [Hargeisa and Burao] in the north. Significantly the date they chose to execute their operations was 26 June, the twenty-eighth anniversary of the independence of those territories from the British Protectorate administration.

Even though they succeeded in storming both cities, Burao briefly falling completely into their hands along with Goljano, a suburb of Hargeisa, the cost was heavy and within three months they were dislodged at an even greater price in men and materiel. Both cities, built up over many years, were devastated as a consequence of the military encounter which turned them into battlefields. On the other hand bringing warfare across the doorsteps of the civilian population they had set out to free in the first place, proved disastrous.

In modern guerrilla warfare, as the world-renowned military strategist and Chinese visionary Sun Tzu (2000 BC), elaborately states in his book, *The Art of War*, the worst policy anyone can embark upon is to attack cities. This act of the SNM, no matter how gallant it was, was undertaken without prior assessment of its devastating consequences. It destroyed historic cities, eventually leading to large numbers of the population of Hargeisa and the surrounding area (including a UN team of water engineers from China) fleeing to Ethiopia. The ultimate cost of those attacks ran into billions of US dollars.

Military victories and human rights outcry

It is never wise to invite the destruction and flames of warfare right into one's home and region. If one loves the people, the last thing one should contemplate is to take on a government -- especially a military one -- and fight it in towns, villages and the home countryside. War does not discriminate between its victims. As the Somalis say "*Dabkuu munaafaq shido mu'minbaa ku gubta,*" "Whereas the devil sets the fire, it is the innocent and the guiltless who are burnt." The tragedy which enveloped the north was twofold: government-created and self-inflicted.

Starting from 1982, the whole northern regions of Somalia became transformed into a battlefield far worse than Northern Ireland. The gloom and doom of warfare was everywhere. Meanwhile the economy, all developments and the regions' life stagnated. It is not that the people should not have addressed the injustice they felt. But to invoke the wholesale destruction of towns, cities and regions with incalculable human suffering was itself extreme. Perhaps the last thing one should do in addressing wrongs is to take on a government prepared to turn all settlements and homes into ghost towns.

One of the ironies of the war in the north was the SNM's double-edged strategy of military victories on the one hand and hue and cry over human rights abuses on the other. It was very common for the SNM to publicise military victories against the government and, while exuberance reigned, to cry out against human rights violations. Both were cleverly orchestrated deadly SNM propaganda weapons against the regime -- but they involved a measure of contradiction.

To sow hatred and harvest sorrow

It is a well-known fact that hate is associated with emotional as well as spiritual sickness. When the mind is emptied of hate, a long step has been taken towards recovery. Indeed, both good and evil can be planted among humans the same way that seeds are planted in soil.

When one looks impartially at the background of most conflicts among the uniquely homogeneous Somalis, one sees that most of them originate from unnecessary hatred sown by irresponsible persons. Either because of ignorance or personality deficiency

they thought that they would harvest benefits from inventing and circulating negative stories to their naive and unsuspecting clan audiences. The world has witnessed the evil flames of doom and destruction which hatred can inspire. One need look no further than the frightening history of the Third Reich. The 1930s, clique of the German nazi party headed by Adolf Hitler, resolved that the best way to influence the German people and seize power was on an agenda of sowing hatred. They indeed succeeded in their ploy but inciting hatred is like building on sand. Even though the nazis succeeded in their bid to come to power and swept across many parts of Europe and north Africa, the flames they lit came back to consume them.

The different petty conflicts among the various Somali clans have absolutely no basis outside of propaganda and vicious story-telling by destructive individuals. These elements perhaps do not comprehend the suffering and desolation their sowing of hatred can cause. Many northern Somalis do not understand what happened to them, why it happened and who was responsible. The fact that whatever grievances they suffered were caused by a bad government which they themselves provoked and fought, still does not seem to be widely recognised. Some naively believe that one clan was responsible for what happened to them. Others think the war was fought between south and north. Many also blame the union between the north and the south, which is as unrealistic as blaming the the moon for one's troubles.

In the past one of the negative aspects of the Somali nomadic culture was that if someone was killed, even after forty or sixty years, the blood of that person used to be avenged by his clansfolk killing an innocent person from the killer's clan. This person could even be someone who left say Camden Town, London, to visit his relatives in the countryside of Somaliland. No wonder those in the north who see things in this medieval light, judge everything by the clan to which the ruler happens to belong. But what if life makes twin brothers, one a serial killer and the other an honourable judge who presides over criminal cases? In any civilised and modern society no one should be made accountable for something he did not commit, no matter what relationship he might have to the perpetrator. This is to be guilty

by association. If a bus crashes, a passenger is not to be held responsible.

When recently some Issaq clans in the north challenged and fought President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal's "Somaliland Republic", as pointed out above, Egal, even though he was from the same clan, resorted to methods previously used by the former president Mohamed Siad Barre. In civil wars there will be many tragedies involving both the innocent and the combatants.

Many northern Somalis and perhaps many people in Africa, need to outgrow dwelling in the past and wallowing in the grief they have suffered. The best way to move forward is to take lessons from what happened and seek ways to ensure it never happens again. It need not involve breaking away from the nation for reasons of clan. Clans do not constitute nation-states. The Somalis of the north would be wiser if, after their breaking away, they recognised that they themselves have committed similar or worse wrongs and atrocities. Clannism is not the remedy but the problem. They need to identify correctly the root causes of all past Somali wrongs, maladministration and clannism. No one group has the monopoly of guilt.

One evening in 1996 I was talking to a friend, Ibrahim Ali Weyrah about the 1980s when I was in the embassy in London and Ibrahim was on the opposition side with the SNM. Since I came to know him in 1993, I have always found Ibrahim independent-minded and exceptionally patriotic. One of the many Somali intellectuals disillusioned with the government, he has lived in the UK for over two decades. Individuals like him should have been in the diplomatic service or in other important departments of government serving their nation not fighting it. Unfortunately the narrow-minded leaders saw the whole government as a privately owned *dabakayo* (kiosk) in which supposed loyalty and trust stemmed from clan proximity and other inadequate criteria. I was surprised to learn, among other things, that my friend thought the government used to send embassies news of battle casualties in the north. Unfortunately such sensitive information never left the defence ministry. Such information, revealing killings of our own people, would undoubtedly have harmed the morale of diplomats, but an information blackout from these areas served only to give the

misleading impression that the national army was engaged in war with combatants armed, trained and assisted by the then enemy, the government in Ethiopia.

In 1991 after the fall of Mogadishu, taking advantage of their geographical proximity to the capital, the Hawiye clan, with many of its elders and intellectuals present, unleashed what can only be termed as a "final solution", similar to the nazi campaign against the Jews, against fellow Somalis from the Darod clan. No doubt clan jealousy was a motive, but it is only the Almighty who can justly decide whom to terminate. No human race has the authority to eradicate people. Eight million Jews were taken away from their homes and transported to concentration camps while six million of them burned in gas ovens. The Jews did not develop blanket hatred for the German people. A few personalities with power to cause such atrocities were identified and brought to justice. Despite all the nazi power and atrocities, the Jews have survived to flourish and prosper.

The world has witnessed other appalling sufferings and unimaginable horrors including the recent Balkan tragedy in which Bosnian Serbs have deliberately massacred Muslim fellow citizens. Some at least of the war criminals responsible have been apprehended there also. Hate-mongering and negative story-telling do not help anyone to get over grief. The best remedy for the Somali people is to take lessons from the past, seek and sow goodness and vow that what has been endured should never recur.

Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)

This movement was formed in 1988 as a result of disagreement between the former president of Somalia and the former defence minister General Adan Mohamed Nur, *Gabyow*. Like all other Somali fronts, this movement was clan based -- on the Ogaden clan. In July 1989, after the rift between them widened as a result of the war in the north of the country, the general was arrested. His house was ransacked by the security forces, mainly the president's own bodyguards, the dreaded "red berets". The general's son-in-law initially led the movement which saw several confrontations with government troops. In late 1990, they were joined by another force led by Colonel Ahmed Omar Jees, who

had defected to Ethiopia in 1988. This group later became a puppet force for General Aideed with whom Jees entered into an alliance, joining forces to fight the government of Somalia.

In the 1960s Colonel Ahmed Omar Jees had fled Ethiopian oppression in the eastern Somali regions to fight in the Somali national army. In 1988, a high-ranking Somali officer, he again fled, this time back to the same repressive Ethiopia to fight Somalia. Ambition is sometimes a dangerous thing, especially when the means to an end is perceived as necessitating killing people.

United Somali Congress (USC)

The USC was the last Somali political movement to be formed. It was founded in Rome in 1989, less than two years before the collapse of the government in Somalia and the flight of the leaders into the interior. Many Somalis argue that the USC, based exclusively on the southern Somali Hawiye clan, should never have been formed as a movement against the former government. As it was, they argue, everything was happening for them. Their clansmen were serving in a wide variety of government posts while almost all national projects, developmental as well as others, were being established in the areas which are predominantly populated by them, namely in the regions between Hiran and Bay. Even though this argument is quite credible, since the leadership was inept and the system so despicable, there was cause for any Somali to stand up for human rights and better administration. Unlike the northerners, who believed rightly that the government had totally abandoned them and later on fought them, there were other reasons which led to the uprising in the south. One was that they did not like the way some Somalis were treated and made to feel more special than anybody else. Some felt they were marginalised by those who came from other regions, including the north.

Even though it was the policy of most of the business, political and other community leaders of the Hawiye clan to stay out of any struggle with the government, a sizeable number had no such misgivings. They could not fail to observe that in 1989 the regime was weakening and starting to crumble. The people were grouping into clan movements as a result of the leadership's vain

attempts to prolong its lease of life through divide and rule. This was coupled with the government's last desperate step to encourage war between the Galgale clan and the Abgal who are predominant around the capital. As a result, the Hawiye leadership felt the need to establish a political movement which, like the SNM and others, could join the struggle for the final overthrow and destruction of the government and reap some of the spoils. They sought security and their clan's share in the future. Thus had all things been reduced to the leadership's level of clannism!

But other forebodings also ran deep. The government, which should have fostered equality, made preferences. All forms of accountability were lost. The system was staggering and the country was on the ropes. In its final years, government-run utility industries, such as water, electricity, travel and health, all failed. Corruption reached unheard of levels; inflation likewise. Those who had left government to better themselves, such as Ali Mahdi Mohamed -- later on the self-styled interim president during the agony of the civil war era -- became disillusioned. The nation's presidency became a place in which to enrich oneself, family members, relatives, clan members and friends. Envy brought all to vie for no less than the post of president. Soon there was nothing for which to compete.

In the second half of 1989, the civil war in Somalia was moving like wild fire towards the capital, Mogadishu. The whole country was closing in on the leadership. During this time and throughout 1990, when soldiers of the president's own guard were engaged in bitter warfare in the central, Hiran and Benadir regions of the south, predominantly populated by the Hawiye clan, most of the government's key posts were also held by them. The second vice president, the minister of interior, chief of police, chief of the custodian forces, head of Benadir region national security service (NSS), mayor of Mogadishu, minister of interior, minister of finance (and of a new ministry "of money", formed to collect taxes), minister of industry, minister of minerals and water resources, minister of telecommunications and post were all Hawiye. When one looked at these facts, ironically it appeared that the leadership was actually on the side of the very USC it was fighting!

A further irony, however, was that while it is true that all the above and many more members of the Hawiye clan held high offices, yet the clan-minded duet leading the country (the president and his powerful cousin the foreign minister) were deeply engaged in waging clan warfare in the interior, killing the clansfolk of the above. Like Jean-Claude widely known as Baby Doc of Haiti, they were detached from all forms of reality. They believed that high and lucrative posts alone were enough to buy the constant loyalty of high officials. They even failed to consider what they would have done in their shoes, if whenever they went home they had been fed with the grim news of killings and massacres of their clansfolk by the very man they served. The president was so out of touch that in the second half of 1990, only a few months prior to his flight from the capital city, he was building a large indoor swimming facility in the residential compound of his second family located at Fiat square. Like a squatter who did not foresee his imminent eviction, after twenty-one years in power, he was just settling down to enjoy life to the full.

Contrary to the leader's delusion, senior government officials from the Hawiye clan continuously aided and abetted the USC in their vigorous campaign to unseat him. During office hours and private time they busied themselves financing and propelling the emergence and success of their clan movement. The divided loyalty of these officials reflects their antagonising roles. They were convinced that their causes, national or clan, would be best served by staying on in their government posts. On the one hand, by decision making, they helped make, and were well informed on, all government policies. On the other hand, they made use of their privileged positions to help equip and warn their underground kinsfolk. They took full advantage of being on both sides. Who could be more dangerous than one who decided to take part with outsiders, in the pulling down of the very house in which he dwelt?

What was asked of Abdiqasim Salad, the then interior minister, and other Hawiye senior government officials, was to perform the impossible -- to paint the moon. The leadership was playing irreconcilable and perilous games. They thought they could buy loyalty, but a dead brother or a dead father makes for a deadly

enemy. Nothing touches people more than a personal loss.

A politician is different from a soldier. A government may commission a general to pacify a rebel region populated by his clan or ethnic group members. It is very simple to ascertain where a soldier's absolute loyalties lie; when the crunch comes he either fights or defects. Normally, he will fight, since that is what he had been trained and groomed for over many years. When Brigadier-General Mohamed Saeed Hirsi, commonly known as "*Morgan*" was sent in the early 1980s to the central regions of Somalia to head the 21 Military sector *(Qeybtii 21aad)* and tame his Majerten clansfolk, the only thing on his mind was to win the war. As soon as he took over his task, he started combing the bushes for SSDF members as well as sympathisers. He destroyed civilian buildings, water tanks, and killed left, right and centre in his efforts to ensure the obedience of the population.

It is the central theme of military doctrine which states that orders must be carried out without question. In many cases the soldier is out to win medals, promotions etc. The whole prepared psyche of the military is very different from that of the politician. A politician's power and credibility stems from a constituency. In a democracy it is votes that matter. In a dictatorship like that of the former government of Somalia, society reverted to the medieval era of the clan system: the clan became the constituency. When the former Somali leaders was fighting his politicians' fellow clan members, it was eroding their political base, putting in balance the credence of those officials vis-à-vis their "clan constituencies". The government should never have fought its own people in the first place and should never have eroded the credibility of its own politicians. If the use of force was unavoidable then it was foolish to retain those politicians in sensitive posts.

The ultimate breaking point of any relationship, human, inter-governmental or organisational, is to go to war. You cannot have fire and water in the same place. When the United States was fighting Japan, as a result of the latter's attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, far from putting Japanese officials in positions of privilege, Japanese American communities were interned. These Japanese Americans were far away from Japan from whence they originated. In the case of Somalia the

relationship was much more intimate.

In December 1990, the civil war reached Mogadishu, the capital city. It started as a mass uprising. This led to a total breakdown of security. Police stations were stormed. Convicts, criminals as well as detainees, were freed and roamed the street brandishing and firing their acquired arms. The precarious situation of the city degenerated into a lynch-mob-rule. In 1991 after the fall of the government, the clan-minded USC leadership, which had first fought the government under a nationalist banner soon degenerated into targeting those from the Darod clan. If any one clan had believed they would be targeted after victory over the government, people would have prepared for such an eventuality. For their own safety, they would have reinforced the government and shifted some weaponry to their regions. Why no one, including officers from the president's clan, wanted to fight for the government was very obvious. The leadership of Mohamed Siad was a cliff-hanger which went on for many years imperilling the whole country. He overstayed his time in power while becoming ever more politically impotent and disastrous. The living standard of the whole people, with the sole exception of a very few corrupt government officials and businessmen, deteriorated by the day. As the late Chinese statesman Deng Xiaoping is believed to have said, "Only if living standards continue to improve will the people believe you and continue to support you." In 1990 everybody in Somalia reached the conclusion that anything was better than their vegetative president. Rather than retain him, people saw his removal as the key to ending all their misery and unhappiness and wished to see the back of him. However, no one consciously throws away a bad government only to be massacred after it is gone.

In the embassies abroad, manned by diplomats who are civil servants, a few days prior to the flight of the president, his pictures were taken down from the walls to be replaced by any legitimate leader who was to emerge. Nothing had prepared most of us who were in the embassies in those mad days for what did ensue. We were prepared to serve under any leader, be it Ali Mahdi Mohamed, Mohamed Farah Aideed or anyone else -- but not petty-clan-minded warlords driven only by a lust for power and personal enrichment: mirror images of the ousted ruler.

When they took over Mogadishu, what had started as a popular uprising of the whole population soon degenerated. It was a failure of leadership. Rather than inculcate a national vision and establish sound governance and better the lives of the people, the USC leadership resorted to unnecessary clan vendettas. There was an element of deception in the tactics of those clan-minded leaders of the USC. In order to secure the cooperation and consent of the whole people, they had consistently played a national theme. But they had hidden agendas all along. Employing the national weaponry amassed for decades by the state against real external threats, they started to terrorise, kill, rape and maim fellow Somalis. Why poorly armed citizens take on and in many cases win over powerful governments is because victory, as in David's win over Goliath, favours justice. But problems arise when those who struggle for justice, as happened in Somalia, indulge in all sorts of excesses and mayhem. Some resorted to clan cleansing similar to Bosnia's ethnic cleansing, in a campaign intended to rid Somalia of the Darod clan. Their actions were in vain; moreover it is an unpardonable sin in any religion to spill the blood of the innocent. In their criminal campaign, he who raped a Somali girl raped his sister. He who killed a Somali mother killed his mother. He who killed a Somali boy killed his brother and he who killed a Somali father killed his own father.

Some mistakenly thought campaign victories could be equated with and predicted from the sheer number of participants. Nowadays no one wins wars merely on numbers. It is forgotten that the Tutsis, who swept to power in Rwanda, amount only to 10 per cent of the population, after the massacre which saw one million killed prior to the defeat of the former government. Unlike Rwanda or elsewhere in Africa, in Somalia there are no separate nations. There is only one race and one nation -- the Somali people. The bitterness and wild rage observed in Somalia during the civil war years, was a result of hate-mongering by some clan members and manipulation by the late president. It was intensified and fuelled by thuggish warlords who, similarly ignorant, thought they could benefit from such ventures and seize power.

The immediate clan warfare which tore Somalia apart after the fall of the last government was also in part a trap stage-managed

by the former president. Coming to the realisation that his loss of power was imminent, he manipulated events to transform the struggle, which was a national revolt against the government, into a showdown between the Darod and Hawiye clans. In order that no one from the Darod would take over "his" presidency, his strategy orchestrated war between them and the Hawiye by arming some militias and ruffians from segments of the Darod. Of all the sub-clans within the Hawiye and Darod, only some from Majerten and Habar-Gidir are known to have a history of periodic fighting in their nomadic habitats. The sub-clans of Hawiye such as Ali Mahdi's Abgal, Murursade or Hawadle at no point meet up with any Darod sub-clan in their areas. No past tribal squabbles or fighting, normally arising from petty matters such as grazing or water rights disputes in local countryside areas, occurred. This loophole was one the USC leaders such as Ali Mahdi and Aideed in their quest for national rule, might have foreseen and closed, but unfortunately they failed to do so.

At the end of January 1991, after the flight of President Mohamed Siad from Mogadishu, those who united under the USC indulged in mass killings, looting and rape mainly directed at the Darod clan. Kangaroo courts also sprung up presided over by civilians who were not legally qualified. They acted as judges, prosecutors, jury and executioners. Draconian judgements passed in those courts were unheard of in any civilised society. They included rulings that some women be raped or have their breasts cut off, while males were frequently summarily executed.

As a result of the vast quantities of national weaponry looted from government ordnance warehouses, indiscriminate killing took place. Most of the affected civilian population, civil servants and defeated government soldiers and officials fled to the interior. These people who were forced to abandon their properties and houses were, like everybody else, fed up with Mohamed Siad's long misrule. They did not envisage that once the former president was overthrown, not only those involved in war crimes, but they too, would be targeted solely on a clan basis.

One important factor which played a crucial and decisive part in the overthrow of Mohamed Siad Barre's government, but which is often overlooked, is the parallel invasion of Colonel Ahmed Omar Jees and his forces. In December 1990 when General

Mohamed Farah Aideed and his guerrilla army entered the capital and its environs from the east, Colonel Jees led a similar incursion into the Baydhabo area, south of the capital. This was a strategic master plan by Aideed and his Ethiopian ally which had a devastating effect on the morale and defence of the former government. When troops on the side of the former president realised that they were faced not only with a local population supported by the capital's militia, army desertees and Aideed's forces from the east but also by Colonel Jees's forces, many saw no alternative other than to flee for their lives with their families. The main purpose of Jees's incursion was not only military but psychological. The capital's defences collapsed in no time. Colonel Jees was being used in a tribal warfare against his own clan. His personal ambition was to become Aideed's defence minister in the new government. But in March 1991, after he was no longer useful, his base at Afgoi was attacked and his forces driven into the interior.

Many who joined the USC clan struggle laboured under the mistaken idea that during the last government no appointment given to any member from the Darod clan was earned. This misleading concept was partly the legacy of former President Mohamed Siad who needed to show that he was absolute ruler solely bestowing prestigeous entitlements at whim, although mainly to members of his own clan. Under the belief that positions are only made at the stroke of a pen but not earned, when in August 1991, during the civil war, Ali Mahdi Mohamed was appointed as interim president, he formed what was perhaps the biggest government in the history of mankind. He appointed eighty ministers with eighty deputy ministers and eighty permanent secretaries. During his spree of appointments not only did he nominated over a dozen ministers from his own clan but he also selected all the eighty vice-ministers and permanent secretaries exclusively from his own Abgal clan. Because of President Mohamed Siad's clumsy administration one of the many negative cultures is that it is possible to appoint anyone without qualifications or earning to any post.

Such was the level of greed and selfishness of USC leaders in Mogadishu that during the UN operations in 1993 when they got wind of a German government plan to send a contingency of its

military personnel with engineers to help reconstruct and develop infrastructure in the Bossasso area, they tried every means within their grasp to impede the German scheme. Eventually it was diverted to Beletweyn as they desired. They forgot that Bossasso is also in Somalia. For the three decades since Somali independence, all investment, foreign-assisted construction and other developmental projects were confined to those regions in the south inhabited by their clansfolk, including Benadir where the capital is situated.

When the "terror" began, the persecuted had no alternative other than to stream out of the city. Some fled to the interior, others into neighbouring countries as refugees. Most went overland or by aged and grossly over-crowded vessels to Kenya. Nor was there any shortage of unscrupulous foreign entrepreneurs willing to arrange air flights and illegal immigration for a substantial fee in US dollars. That people flee from war areas and persecution is nothing new. It happens everywhere where civil wars are fought. It happened in Bosnia, Rwanda, Angola, Sudan, Ethiopia, Cambodia and elsewhere, but it is nonetheless tragic for all concerned.

On the lighter side, replying to a time-honoured Somali folk story that the Somali Reer Hamar are not brave, I was amused to note the diligent Somali ambassador Mohamed Osman Omar, in his book, *Somalia: A nation driven to despair,* trying to establish an analogy between two totally different scenarios. He chose to compare the terrorised Somali population who fled for their lives during the civil war with that story, by remarking that "Those who used to describe us as cowards have also fled."

The Somali Reer Hamar were among the first settlers in Mogadishu and they own nearly all of the ancient parts of the capital, dwelling mostly in their traditional one- or two-storeyed houses. Somalis from the interior used to say that when night fell, the Reer Hamar used not to bother those who came to steal animals from their compounds. It was said that in those olden days, any Reer Hamar, when he spotted a thief taking away his cattle, goats or sheep, used to utter from upper windows or balconies "*Xaggeed geyn sow bariba makaasoo gadan doono markaad suuqqa keento,*" "Where can you take my animal? Don't you know that tomorrow when you bring it to the market, I am going to buy

it back from you?" Such stories were nothing more than local chauvinism. Every society and every law on earth, including holy books such as the Qur'an, urge people to protect their property, belongings and members of their family from intruders and thieves. Equally the Qur'an, Torah and every law of society, permits people to leave troubled areas upon onslaught by merciless groups who, in tribal or religious civil wars, kill their own people and others. In the initial days of struggle, when Islam came into being, it is well known that the Prophet Mohamed, may peace be upon him, and his few followers fled Mecca to Medina for their safety from persecution by non-believers.

In January 1991, there were two avenues open for the USC leaders. One was to recognise the trap laid for them by the former president and give victory to the whole Somali nation. The other was to make the error of initiating a prolonged and divisive civil war among the Somali people and lose their legitimacy to become Somalia's leaders. Unfortunately that is what they did. What the warlords did not understand is that they could not seek the leadership of a nation while on the other hand shedding the blood of those they sought to rule. Of the two opposing routes, the more one embarks on one, the more one travels away from the other. The more the USC leadership resorted to clan vendettas and killing, the further they distanced themselves from power.

History teaches us that those who sought power by shedding the blood of their compatriots, if fortunate, die in exile and if not, are themselves consumed by the enmity they have created and fostered. While Mohamed Siad was fortunate to have evaded justice and escaped with his life, Mohamed Farah Aideed, who thought he could become president of Somalia, was more obstinate and suffered the same fate as many victims of the civil war. Some among Aideed's core supporters witnessed with disbelief that it took only two bullets shot by a member of his own clan, in the squalid war-ravaged Medina area of the capital, to slay the man who had outwitted the US military power. No wonder some staunch Aideed supporters, believing he stood for much more than the killing of his own Somali people, said "The man has died but the idea lives on" -- perhaps through his son.

Misplaced pride in savagery and cruelty

In at least one Somali opposition movement many were deluded and even thought that since they had killed many members of "opposing" Somali clans they should enjoy a more elevated status. In 1992 I came across one such individual, perhaps one of the most destructive Somalis I have met. Within no time he took out his wallet to show me his ID as a member of the USC, but my reaction must have implied that there was nothing to be proud of in being a member of an organisation which brought doom and destruction to its nation. I realised, however, that this particular individual had different values: looting, dishonesty and violence were deeply embedded in his upbringing. As he himself had admitted, his father was a well-known looter of camels and wealth from members of other clans in the nomadic life in Mudug and Hiran regions of Somalia.

The following is one of the common stories depicting the level of misplaced values and pride in cruelty. In Mogadishu in December 1992, during the heavy fighting between the Abgal clan of Ali Mahdi and the Habar-gidir of General Aideed, an armed member of the Abgal militia asked a certain Somali he encountered to which clan he belonged in order to ascertain his identity. The man told him that he was from the Darod clan. The assailant turned away saying "Where were you when I needed you?" This was only to emphasise that during the first year of the civil war starting from January 1991 members from the Darod clan were indiscriminately hunted down in Mogadishu and its surroundings. For some in Somalia, things have regressed to the standards of the stone ages; savagery has become a symbol of pride; wrong has become right and vice a virtue.

Looting their nation's assets

Starting from January 1991, when the country slid into civil war, all the nation's assets such as factories and public transportation of any kind -- including ships and aircraft -- were looted and the proceeds of sales either deposited in private accounts or dissipated by financing clan warfare. The whole country was stripped to the bone.

Some of the most serious and systematic looting of the country's assets -- still carried out -- include the looting of the

nation's cultural heritage, marine resources, minerals and national agricultural produce. One such example is the public company *Somalfruit* (formerly known as *Somalita*), headed by Mohamed Abukar Haji now based in Nairobi, but still operational in the country's fertile agricultural farms. The export of the famous Somali bananas and other fruits to Italy, the Gulf countries and other parts of the world, continues unabated but untaxed, with no benefit to the general populace. It is widely believed that proceeds from all such illegal exports are, until this day, mismanaged and misappropriated by Mohamed Abukar, and divided up between himself and his foreign and Somali partners, who shamefully include former Somali government officials.

A second example is the plight of the Somali national fishing fleet, whose continuing catches are mismanaged by Munye Saeed Abdalla. The operations are still carried out under the original public company name *Shifco*. Fishing in Somali seas continues, with foreign-owned ships also looting the marine assets. Yearly proceeds from the fishing operations, in millions of US dollars, are misappropriated and misused by none other than the company management. As though he is entitled to disperse these national funds as he thinks fit, it is no surprise to learn that Munye pays most of Somalia's warlords in the form of bribes to achieve temporary legitimacy and to silence criticism from those he now sees as the custodians of power in the war-torn country. Who authorised the likes of Mohamed Abukar and Munye to behave in this way? The people are asking many questions.

When the day dawns and Somalia rises again and regains her sovereignty, opportunist merchants as well as politicians risk being brought to book to justify their actions and to account for the millions of dollars worth of the people's property and funds received from the sale of national company assets for which they were left responsible when the country slipped into wanton war. In the entire commercial sector, many questions are as yet unanswered and more remain to be asked.

A preference for racketeering

Even though Somalia has been a country without a government, with little infrastructure left and no services such as health, security and education, there are many whose businesses thrive

as never before. These merchants, along with many foreign "charity" organisations, seem to help themselves and enjoy indulgence in the "delights of anarchy".

One of the unfortunate outcomes of the Somali civil war is the emergence of a strong contingent of racketeers -- in other countries they would be called a *mafia* -- who realise that without a government to regulate and tax businesses and profits, they have never had it so good. There has emerged a sizeable previously unknown business community whose members think that they are better off without government. There are also several foreign companies and individuals who are involved in all sorts of illicit businesses in stateless war-torn and dispirited Somalia. These include the *Somalfruit,* an Italian company owned by the *De Nadai* family, and *Sombana,* the Somali subsidiary of the US trader *Dole*. No one knows who authorised these companies and other multinationals to ship illegally Somalia's national assets and agricultural produce at a time when the country is in civil war and has no government. The Somali public are watching and noting!

It is very strange that coupled with warlords, unscrupulous as vultures, who do not care if Somalia exists or perishes but who are mindful only of their own narrow interests, there are unpatriotic and selfish businessmen and women who are doing very well, thank you very much, whilst their nation is down on its knees, and their compatriots scattered all over the world. Of all the strange and bizarre things which have come out of Somalia during the civil war, perhaps this is the most obscene. How could anyone with the slightest integrity and with a shred of patriotism and civilization, exchange sovereignty for racketeering when everybody else in the world has government? Unfortunately, they are encouraged by certain foreign "aid" agencies -- who have their own agendas and fundraising income to safeguard -- who discourage the emergence of national government by encouraging supposed local "grassroots development", as the former colonial authorities used to in years gone by -- a tactic which delayed full independence in Africa.

Among the Somali groups, many even see the establishment of government as their doomsday and can be relied upon to do anything in their power to hinder the forming of a government in

their country. These merchants of death travel as far afield as Hong Kong and Japan to import goods. They also indulge in bulky illegal export transactions to the Arabian Gulf countries -- mainly to Dubai and Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates -- by container ships, dhows and air transportation. It is even alleged that there are clandestine airfields in Sharjah, perhaps without the proper knowledge of the government, where these aircraft discharge and load cargo. Some of the commodities transported include national assets and the publicly owned agricultural produce of the country.

One eye-witness passenger who returned from Mogadishu in July 1996 aboard one of the many aircraft that traffic between Somalia and the Gulf, told me that, when they entered the United Arab Emirates airspace, the racketeering businessmen on the aircraft who owned most of the cargo it carried, became very wary and jittery about clandestine disembarkation in the UAE. An airfield in Sharjah was used, from where the passengers and the cargo that the aircraft carried were taken to an underground disembarkation facility. My source was also shocked when one of the racketeers on this flight, brandishing his riches in the form of a briefcase full of US dollars, said to her in Somali "*Waakaase maxay dawladnimo nagala maqantahay?*", "So, as you can see, what is amiss in the absence of government?"

The friendly UAE government, under the wise leadership of the fatherly Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, must make sure that this illicit traffic, which is neither good for the UAE nor for Somalia, stops completely as quickly as possible. All illicit trade which is conducted at the expense of the Somali masses by looting and stripping their assets, must stop -- and now!

Another tragic Somali story concerns the Somali ports such as Bossasso, Merka, Barawe and Kismayo where all sorts of illegal trade is conducted. It is alleged that even Somalia's unique female livestock such as sheep and camels, wildlife (including endangered species, horn and ivory), charcoal made by burning the trees and all sorts of assets are transported from these ports.

Anarchy is not freedom

To live in primitive conditions without security, public administration and services, regulations and all the paraphernalia that go

with good government such as sanitation, education, electricity etc. is not freedom but the outdated reign of uncertainty, chaos and terror.

In March 1991 only a few months after the collapse of the government, a friend of mine was caught up in the chaotic anarchy in Mogadishu. He was hiding in the residence of his relative, previously a high-ranking government official who used to be managing director in one of the government's white elephant agencies. He feared the clan mob who would not spare him because of tribal reprisals. He told me that one day as they were in their protected quarters, the wife of his host arrived hilariously describing what she had witnessed while away to visit her relatives in the neighbourhood. She was obviously very appreciative of the "fruits of anarchy" and to demonstrate to him "better conditions", she suddenly said, "Look, the freedom we have now! Someone just went into *Avizione,* the Somali airforce base in the capital, and fetched a barrel of aviation fuel for his family's domestic use. Don't you remember how no one even used to enter such highly guarded military camps?" Only then did the man realise how upset the values of former city dwellers had become.

In traditional Somali nomadic life, the people used to live in total freedom on the wheels of anarchy where the nomad was not subject to any authority. They used to occupy temporarily any plot of land until the rains had stopped and there was no water, only to move on to other places where the rains had fallen. They used to do whatever they pleased with no regulations such as taxes to pay and no restrictions whatsoever. But in the civilization of the modern era, one needs to be much more organised than that with a government that looks after the essential collective interests of the nation. The fact that the people in Mogadishu and elsewhere are without government and enjoying total freedom in their day to day affairs without having to bother about the various regulations and laws which come with governance, does not mean that they are leading better lives. If such primitive conditions are better than having a government, other peoples in the world would have opted for such a supposedly "ideal life", living as in pre-civilization eras. Anarchy is stultifying and in no way resembles freedom; far from it. Aid agencies please note.

Warlords: when the hospitality of foreign governments is better than reviving your own state

The former president, whose greatest obsession in his latter days was to go down in history as the man after whose departure Somalia could not form a government, not only influenced events in the twenty-one years of his rule but also seems at least in part to have engineered the situation after his departure. It is as though he had hand-picked those who would be concerned in prolonging their nation's tragedy. In 1997, the international press yet again reported a Somali tragedy: forty-one Somali warlords and politicians were entertained in an Ethiopian tourist resort (Sodere) for six weeks by the Ethiopian government only to sign yet another inefficacious peace agreement. Heaven knows what they were doing for six weeks in a resort.

The world knows very well by now what such so-called "peace agreements", signed more than two dozen times in cities in Ethiopia, Kenya, Seychelles and Djibouti, are worth. These meetings have become a by-word for indulgence and the prolonged enjoyment of a high lifestyle. The irony is that the same faces and names always appear at these meetings in whatever East African destination, ostensibly conducted for Somali national reconciliation and the formation of a national government. So who are these personalities who "represent" war-torn Somalia in such meetings and what really are their aims?

Among them are the very persons who destroyed their own state and country and killed, maimed and tortured their own fellow citizens. These vultures are still hovering around and squabbling for the spoils of Somalia. Rather than being touched by the tragedy, caring and being concerned for their displaced, destituted and dispersed compatriots, they are still jockeying for power and spoils in a non-existent state.

As most Somalis know by now, their only aim in flying to foreign cities and resorts and taking part in so-called reconciliation meetings, is not for Somalia but to enjoy for themselves the hospitality of the governments of host countries -- such is the plight of the Somali nation. One wonders how anyone with a shred of scruple and dignity can be concerned only with the enjoyment of another country's hospitality when his own is going through hell. It was in 1993 when the then UN information officer

realised that this same Somali baggage, whom they had gathered together in Nairobi in the hope of reconciliation, were only wasting time and money in order to stay in hotels enjoying themselves. But many governments in Africa and the world at large have yet to understand the low level aims and opportunistic objectives of the participants at such meetings.

The memorandums of the outcome of these unnecessary marathon meetings illustrate that involved Somali warlords and so-called politicians are predominantly interested in unfreezing Somalia's assets and bank balances locked away after the collapse of the state. The motive is obvious. These self-appointed elements are only interested in lining their deep pockets and taking away what remains of their poor people's frozen assets. No bank or government should allow a devastated nation's assets to be handled by such persons.

After the long meeting in Ethiopia, the warlords who gathered there flew on to Cairo, so they say, to convince the Egyptian government of their formation of a Somali "government". The Egyptians who, like many other governments in the region, are well-informed on the Somali problem, retorted that they had not even secured Mogadishu under their jurisdiction, let alone the whole of Somalia. To convince them the Somali adventurers invited Hussein Aideed, the son of the late Mohamed Farah Aideed to join them. When Aideed junior arrived in Cairo and met the Egyptians, who confronted him with the outcome of the Sodere meeting and urged him to accept it and join the other warlords' publicised "government", Aideed II only responded that his government is already in place and they should join his "government" rather than he join theirs. In a typical textbook copy of the former president's cold-war era tactics, the warlords then flew on to Qaddafi's Libya, a government often hostile to that of Hosni Mubarak's Egypt, in their bid to secure the latter's attention and recognition.

One of the fundamental bases for nation building is National Unity. What kind of a Somali state could be built on clan factions headed by warlords who care for none other than themselves? Any serious Somali who reads the outcome of this last meeting at the Ethiopian resort or the previous ones, would just laugh at the names and clan organisations these people are said to

"represent". Many among the Somali public feel Ethiopia's stance is similar to that of an existing Somali state extending hospitality to former President Mengistu and his colleagues during civil strife in a similarly torn Ethiopia. The Somali public are even now taking notes to differentiate between true friend and foe.

The Somali public, who at this stage are the spectators and judges of events, are asking themselves why the government in Ethiopia entertains warlords who are only vying for the chance to hijack Somalia and drag it to hell. What has Ethiopia to gain by championing warlords? Many Somalis cite the famous Somali wisdom saying, "*Waxba ha u qaban ee qawda maqashii,*" "Do not let him accomplish anything but only make him hear the clatter to believe you are doing something for him." Many also suspect the government in Ethiopia of having ulterior motives and an agenda to hamper any real peace in Somalia. Time will tell if such perceptions are valid or not. The fact that there is at present no one else on the scene, is not reason enough to invite and entertain a devil. The government in Addis Ababa needs to peer into the future and weigh up the long-term interests of the region. No doubt as "land is returned to the tiller (the farmer)", sooner or later Somalia will come back into the hands of her people.The Somali public considers many of these home-produced and good-for-nothing adventurers to be no less an evil than the Balkan war criminals.

9
The Demise of "A New World Order"

As the twenty-first century approaches, it must be acknowledged that during the last one hundred years, the modern world has witnessed great changes. After every major conflict and era, a new world order always emerges. In 1919 at the end of World War I, the League of Nations was established. In 1945 at the end of World War II, the founding of the United Nations similarly heralded change. At the end of the cold war in 1990, as a result of the collapse of the communist block in eastern Europe, there was great hope that a new world order that would reshape the globe would at last be achieved. Given new input and teeth the United Nations could become not only a guardian of peace but also an effective tool to intervene in world crises and ethnic or nationalist wars, and nurture failed or faltering states such as Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cambodia and others that are on their way.

The aspiration for such a new order was given a shot in the arm by the unsurpassed level of international (east, west and southern) cooperation in the execution of the Gulf war, which saw practically the whole world side with Kuwait and the coalition forces dispatched against Iraqi aggression. At the end of that war, President George Bush talked pointedly of a new world order that would be gentler and kinder. There were great hopes for the emergence of such a world and Somalia became its first testing ground. Naturally those in Somalia on the side of the late Brigadier-General Mohamed Farah Aideed -- who first welcomed such an intervention, but later, when what he saw as national interests collided with the aims and objectives of the UN, opposed it -- are critical of this operation.

In December 1992, the departing US President George Bush, his administration and the American public, fed up with emaciated television images from war-torn Somalia, moved heaven and earth to rescue Somalia from self-destruction. The United States government, always under the shadow of the debacle in Vietnam and the fear which that war left in the hearts and minds of the American public, was persuaded that the marines were only going to feed hungry children in Africa and would come home safely. The majority of the US public therefore went along with this supposedly humanitarian mission given the name "Operation Restore Hope".

There was indeed great optimism and hope in the air that once the hungry were fed and the pain in Somalia mitigated, the US military together with the UN might also help in the restoration of the country as in the case of its impoverished neighbour Haiti, and that Somalia would re-establish itself under the leadership of its people. The marines and other international forces would then be free to return to their homes. But it was not to be.

With top diplomat Robert Oakley as a guiding force -- he had served in similar war-torn areas such as Beirut, and in the US embassy in Saigon during the fateful evacuation in the last years of the 1970s -- the obsession was how to make the operation as casualty-free and safe as possible. To achieve this goal Oakley appeased warlords who, soon after the initial landing of the troops noting their clear-cut manifestation of overwhelming power, retired to assess the situation. He minimised the effectiveness of the whole operation, recognising that, as constituted, it could not tackle the fundamental problems of the country or even bother with the far-sighted goal of lasting peace. Hence balancing uneasy relationships with the various warlords, who were major parts of the problem and never of the solution, was his ma *modus operandi*. After initial success in distributing food to the needy, the eventual and predictable outcome was a clash between the group headed by warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed and the UN administration to which the US handed over.

By nature Oakley, like any diligent diplomat, is a man prepared to do anything possible to succeed in his mission. In the early 1980s he served as his country's ambassador to Somalia and proved one of the most active ambassadors who served their

nations in the country. As the representative of the most powerful nation to which the host government was allied, he was conscientious in developing and furthering the relationship. He took great interest in helping the government of President Mohamed Siad Barre's efforts to solve its problems. The role of any good ambassador is successfully to build bridges between his country and the host nation. To that effect he maintained close relationships with the leaders. Some of the Somali opposition groups who were perhaps less acquainted with international relations and how governments function, confess themselves still amazed at the level of cooperation and backing countries such as the US gave to the last Somali government. They do not understand that states prefer to deal with leaders of other states whoever they may be. This is to establish or assist cooperation. If the personalities in the opposition had been in government the same would have been the case.

I remember in 1983, while serving as acting director of the Department for Somali Affairs in Mogadishu, I met ambassador Oakley a couple of times at diplomatic receptions. One such occasion was 1 October 1983 at a national day reception at the Turkish embassy. On that breezy evening, Oakley appeared bewildered and rather disillusioned as a result of a recent meeting with the Somali leader. Among the issues discussed had been his concern for the government to open a dialogue aimed at resolving its problems with the opposition, mainly the newly formed Somali National Movement (SNM), which as he rightly told the president might eventually bring down the government. The former Somali president had dismissed this newly formed group as a bunch of good-for-nothing hooligans. The US envoy's disappointment and frustration were very clear, for at one point in our conversation he remarked frankly to me "We don't know with whom to deal in this country."

Even though it is the task and responsibility of a diplomat to report back such information to his authorities whom he meets, in this case it was pointless. The ambassador was accusing the leadership of ineptness. No one could change the nature of the leadership and it would have been totally pointless for me to have gone back and said to my immediate superior, the foreign minister, that the United States ambassador did not know with

whom to talk in the whole country. This is one of the situations which one cannot help other than to look on. What Oakley told me that evening was only a confirmation of what most Somalis knew about their rulers and the appallingly poor quality officials they choose to fill public posts. Eventually after a series of broken promises to reform the administration, Oakley fell out with the leadership. He left Somalia in 1984 to head the anti-terrorist division at the US State Department until 1988, when he became the US ambassador to Pakistan after the death of his predecessor in an air crash which also killed former Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq.

No doubt diplomat Oakley is one of the best and brightest US ambassadors, but given a clearer mandate and led by someone not dogged with past war failures and worries, "Operation Restore Hope" could have been less costly and more successful in alleviating the suffering of the Somali people. On the eve of the Gulf war, despite the background of guilt over the Vietnam war, which since its end in 1975 had coloured most of her military policies, the US president stated "This time we will not tie our forces' hands behind their backs."

Despite a *modus vivendi* with the warlords behind which Oakley had put all his weight, the first and fundamental task in "Operation Restore Hope" should have been to collect the numerous and widely circulating lethal weapons that were being used to terrorise the Somali people. This could have been achieved either by buying them up cheaply or by a clear ultimatum to the warlords to bring in all weapons in the hands of their militias. However, in December 1992 Oakley, despite his big stick and mandate to make sure aid reached the poor and to secure routes and peace in the country, chose rather to concentrate on how to survive and get out both with the United States marines and with the image of his mission unscathed. This is perhaps understandable, given the concern of American public opinion, the background of failure in Lebanon and Vietnam and the many unnecessary casualties he had witnessed. But Somalia was neither Lebanon nor Vietnam, where conflict was fuelled by tangible patriotism, ideology and religion.

In Somalia, civil war was based neither on ideology nor theology. The nation was in the process of being seized and

terrorised by opportunistic and greedy warlords whose prime motivation was to enrich themselves. Unlike Vietnam and Lebanon, initially even the warlords in Somalia did not see the Americans who landed in the country as an occupation army. Far from it; in Mogadishu they jockeyed with one another to reach out to the Americans for influence, honour and power. They were soon busy renting to the rich and powerful Americans the many properties they had looted from the civilian population most of whom had fled their homeland. Definitely, a great opportunity was squandered in those first months of the operation. The lives of many Americans as well as others could have been saved. In the event they were lost a year later when the operation was nominally taken over by the UN under the leadership of Admiral Jonathan Howe and all direction was soon gone in his personal confrontation with Brigadier-General Mohamed Farah Aideed.

After the departure of UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who tried his best to reshape the world to become a better place but who had his own strong opinions about Somalia and other hot spots, everything was left to his successor, the competent Ghanaian bureaucrat Kofi Annan. The Somali question was relegated to a back burner and the world press largely turned away.

Human rights, diplomacy and international aid

In February 1989, the Somali leader had finally succumbed to international pressure to take drastic steps to better the human rights record of his government. He established a commission to investigate complaints of human rights violations. In June that year, for the first time, he invited an Amnesty International delegation to visit Somalia and take their concerns to the authorities in the country. What made "the bull to see the sky" as we Somalis say, was the dawning of realisation that the international donor countries on which Somalia largely depended in those days would simply not cooperate with the government in Mogadishu and grant aid unless it took serious note of their concerns and did something about its tarnished image and record on human rights. Even though all doors were opened for the Amnesty delegation during their visit to the country (22 June - 2 July 1989) to probe all allegations and meet almost all the

dissidents and government authorities they requested to see, including the head of state, yet no sooner had the delegation left the country than riots occured, on 16 July 1989, against the government, leaving over two hundred civilians dead -- killed by the security forces. Only two nights after this incident, a unit of the president's own *koofiyad-gaduud* guards took about fifty civilians from their homes and shot them in cold blood. Details of this terrible incident are set out in other parts of this book.

In May 1990, the Arab League office in London was arranging for an Arab ambassador's council in London to pay a three day working visit to Ireland. As I was in charge of the London Somali embassy, the former ambassador having been appointed foreign minister, I discovered that with the exception of Egypt, with a resident ambassador in Dublin, and Somalia, which had neither an embassy nor non-resident diplomatic representation, all other Arab ambassadors in London represented their nations in Ireland as non-resident ambassadors. I therefore took the initiative to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. After all it was the famous traveller and intelligence officer Richard Burton who, in his 1886 book, *First Footsteps in East Africa*, described the temperament and character of the Somalis, and dubbed them the "Irish of Africa". I cabled to the exceptionally efficient Foreign Minister Ahmed Jama Abdulle, *Jungali,* in Mogadishu, who immediately approved, instructing that I should go ahead.

On 16 May 1990, as soon as we arrived in Dublin, as arranged through the Irish embassy in London, I proceeded to the country's Foreign Ministry to meet with the minister of state for foreign affairs. All the officers I met there were cordial and courteous. As soon as we had exchanged pleasantries on general issues, the minister said "Thank you for coming to meet me to discuss establishing relationships between our two countries. We appreciate your country's move to establish relations with the Republic of Ireland. However, currently the human rights record of your present government is not a good one. While we would welcome such relations with your country in the future, unfortunately, given the circumstances, we would be ill-advised to go ahead with such relations at this time." What the Irish government was implying that day was indeed linking bilateral relations and international cooperation with human rights. This concept had no

impact whatsoever on the leadership attitudes back home, yet it was surely a move in the right direction on the part of the Irish government.

Unfortunately, during the polarisation of the cold war, the world witnessed one or other of the major powers seeking to sustain, nurture and prolong the lives of some oppressive regimes, such as the former Rwanda government, Zaire, Sudan under Gaafar Mohamed el-Nimeiri, the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos, the central African Republic under former dictator Jean-Bédel Bokassa and the former government of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia. In the case of Somalia, the dilemma of the governments who aided her under former President Mohamed Siad Barre involved not only the worsening situation both in the country and the wider region, but also the bad human rights record of the government. Unfortunately, most nations including the United States, the main power to which the government was allied which footed many of its bills, felt there was no choice other than to support the regime. Unlike in Ethiopia and elsewhere, Somali opposition groups were hopelessly divided, tribalistic and were seen by most governments they contacted as lacking basic statehood concepts. As discussed elsewhere, their lack of patriotism meant that they all played into the hands of the dictatorial government of former President Mengistu of neighbouring Ethiopia. The human rights record of that regime was not only the worst in Africa but its orientation was toward communism, which did not endear it to the West and many rich countries such as Japan and the Arab Gulf States. However, in the 1980s, many countries held the view "Better the devil you know than the devil you dread" -- the opposition movements.

Campaign against criminal corruption

The world has come a long way in cooperation against war crimes. It started in 1945 when Hitler was defeated and World War II came to an end in Europe. In Nuremburg, Germany, several of those in charge of the nazi government, with the exception of Hitler, Goebels and Martin Bormann Hitler's henchman (previously thought to have gone to South America, but in May 1998 identified near Hitler's bunker through DNA tests from his family), who took their own lives, were convicted of atrocities

they committed. In the 1990s the world has also witnessed another despicable war, this time in Bosnia, in the Balkans, where many crimes were committed. Proceedings of the International Tribunal followed in the Hague, in the Netherlands, to prosecute supposed war criminals accused of crimes including genocide.

When a poor developing nation is stripped of its few assets by none other than individuals whom it trusted with public affairs and hundreds of millions in hard currency are transferred to international banks mainly in developed countries, this is an offence of no less magnitude than are war crimes. The greed of a few individuals can impoverish millions of people, and is *criminal corruption*. Populations, destitute as a result of maladministration and the robbing of public funds, come to depend largely on handouts from prosperous nations, while refugees from these countries also stream to the developed nations in search of safety and a new life.

In the future it will be imperative for the world to establish regulations to track down such greedy individuals, freeze their assets and if need be return stolen finances to their countries of origin. International legislation must be established since consequential problems created by individuals affect us all as collective citizens of the world. Corrupt officials, regardless of residence and lifestyles based on stolen wealth, must get the message that the world is not indifferent to the plight of destitute populations left behind. This would deter future would-be corrupt individuals, worldwide.

At the end of August 1997, the UK added a new role to its Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) schedule, to stifle the production of drugs at source rather than just catching traffickers as they entered Britain. The SIS has already an established post-cold war role to target drug traffickers and organised crime. Similar arrangements are in place at the government's electronic listening post which monitors radio messages. In August 1997, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook is reported to have said in Kuala Lumpur: "My government has decided to use all the resources available to it to fight this scourge. This is simply a restatement of old policy – we will refocus all resources to make this a top priority. Our diplomatic aid, law enforcement and intelligence assets will all be targeted at fighting the international drugs trade." This is a new

policy to address an old problem in an ever more complicated world.

One day in the future, the problem of criminal corruption will similarly require that an international body such as Interpol investigate all related matters. Individuals who are involved in corruption could be vetted, their backgrounds checked and the legality or otherwise of their acquired wealth established.

International cooperation on environmental issues

On this planet mankind shares two things with the rest of the created order: the carpet earth beneath and the umbrella sky above. What happens to either affects all mankind. The 1980s have seen the world open its eyes to the vital importance of the environment. This was very much a priority when a growing hole in the ozone layer was discovered. Many nations which hitherto did not pay much attention to the uncontrolled exploitation and degradation of the planet, began to recognise its warming climate, the increase in floods caused by the bizarre *El Niño* weather phenomenon, and in other areas the shortage of rainfall. All these were soon attributed to the recklessness of man and his overuse and gross misuse of the resources of the earth.

It is generally acknowledged that most of the degradation has been caused or at least encouraged by the developed world and its consumer patterns. The developing world has little or no means either to exploit its own vast resources or even to encourage demand in a variety of goods, as it lacks the purchasing power to do so. But even so, most of the countries which have destroyed their rain forests are in the developing world. They are in constant need to cut down their natural assets for financial gain with which to mitigate their economic and financial burdens. The pollution contribution is rapidly on the increase.

The world needs to do much more than come down on a few items which encourage environmental degradation, such as CFC gases. Before it is too late, there is a need for a wholesale shift of attitudes and priorities to stop the decay that seriously threatens the environment. Significant financial injections from the prosperous world to the developing world need greater encouragement. This is quite apart from the need for far-sighted

conservation. Many wildlife species are becoming endangered and even extinct.

Already in most Western countries there is a gradual shift in the attitudes of the people and companies towards recycling. Only a few years ago one hardly saw recycling containers. In the UK nowadays it is commonplace to see containers for bottles and hear an increasing demand to recycle paper. Daily newspapers and vast quantities of other printed material that used to be trashed are today recycled and reused as paper in various forms.

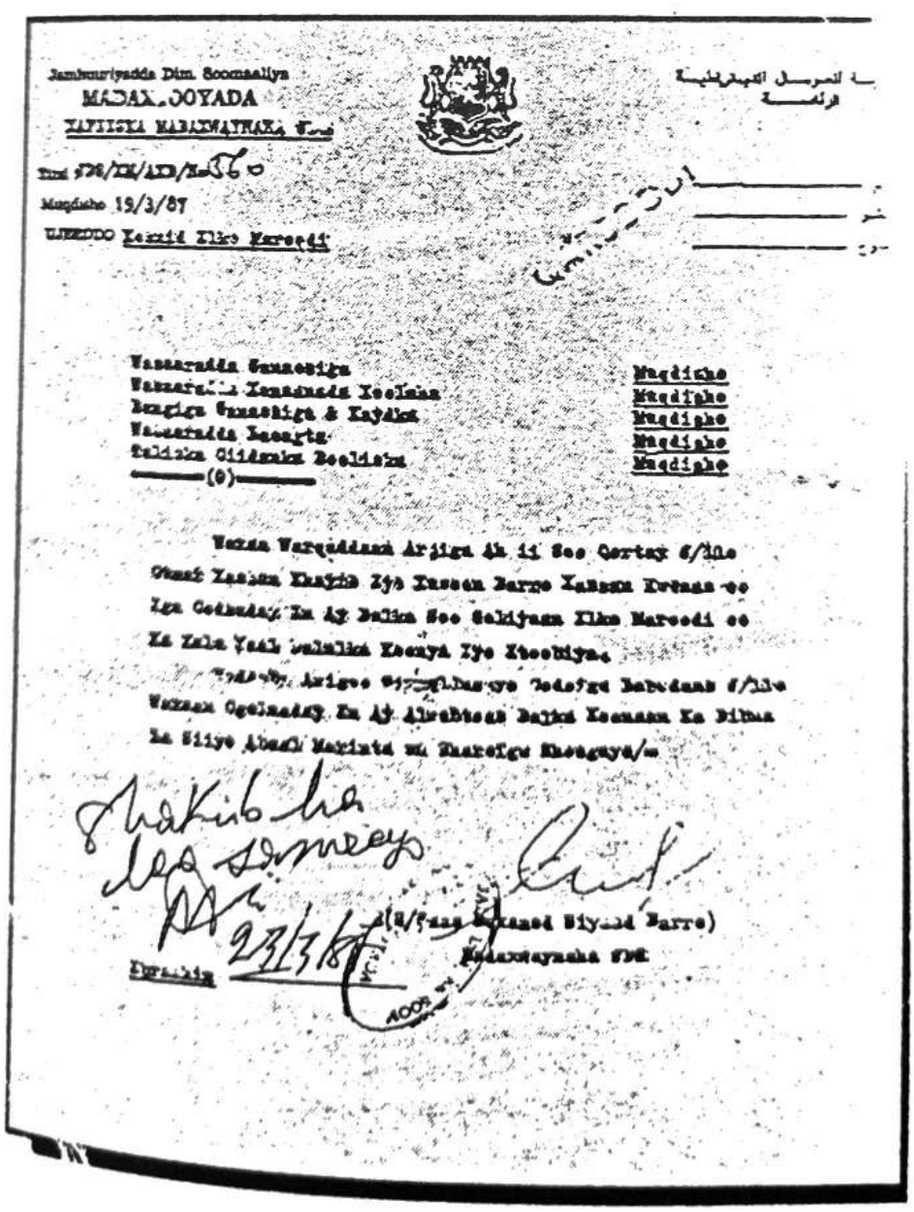
The mismanagement of the environment

In the failed state of Somalia, on face value in its early years, the last and longest Somali government could be called a green government with good environmental credentials. The president used to make lengthy speeches on the environment, specifically on the use and various value of trees and the necessity to replant whenever one is cut down. However, this very soon proved to be nothing more than token lip-service. On the whole the government's environmental record was a bad one -- perhaps the worst the Somali nation has witnessed. Lengthy speeches belied unsound policies. For instance, while the president indulged in tedious speeches on tree plantations, greedy and scheming merchants used to make lucrative business cutting and burning trees to produce charcoal for domestic use as well as for export. Hectares of Somalia's valuable natural timber stands were wiped out as a resuit. Hundreds of lorries loaded with charcoal were driven to the cities and towns from the interior. The government neither raised a finger to stop this degeneration of Somalia's environmental heritage nor introduced an alternative source of energy to replace charcoal. Cheap natural gas, in which the country was rich, could have been tapped or even imported from neighbouring countries such as Kenya.

Early in this century, and even before 1969 when the military took over power, Somalia was rich in wildlife. Lions, leopards, elephants and a great variety of wildlife roamed the countryside. Eventually they were lost to Somalia. As mentioned elsewhere in this text most of Somalia's surviving wildlife took to its heels and left for neighbouring countries, especially Kenya. One of the reasons for the destruction of Somalia's wildlife was the mass

circulation of automatic weapons which fell into the hands of poachers. Some of the president's *bono* slips authorising named individuals to smuggle and export quantities of wildlife, skins and ivory were among the factors which encouraged the mass decimation and flight of the country's wildlife.

Copy of one of President Mohamed Siad Barre's *bono* instructions which surfaced in London in 1998.



Jamhuriyadda Dim. Soomaaliya
MADAXDOOYADA
XAFIISKA MAAMMAYNAHA

Taariikh 19/3/87

U HEERDOO Xaaskii Xilka Haysay

Wasaaradda Gaashaanka
Wasaaradda Xeeldheer Iyo Xoolaha
Xarunta Gaashaanka & Xayawaanka
Wasaaradda Xaqnimada
Taliska Ciidamada Booliska

Muqdisho
Muqdisho
Muqdisho
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Muqdisho

—(0)—

Waxaa Warqaddaan Arjiga Ah ii Soo Qortay G/ilo
Ahmed Xaaskii Khaliif Iyo Xaaskii Barre Xaaskii Hersi oo
Iga Codsaday In Aan Dalka Soo Galiyaan Xilka Hareedi oo
Ka Xaja Yaal Dalalka Kenya Iyo Xabashiya.
Taas oo Arigoo Siinaayo Dadaigu Dabadeed G/ilo
Waxaan Ogolaaday In Aan Xiriirsado Dalka Xeeraan Ka Dibna
Ka Siiyo Xiriir Maxiata ah Xaaskiga Khasaya/=

Xaaskii Hersi
Iga Soo Noqday
23/3/87

(M/Guuleed Mohamed Siyaad Barre)
Madaxweynaha Guud

Xigasho

Translation

SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
THE PRESIDENCY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
REF: JDS/XM/AXD/NO.560
DATE:19.3.1987

SECRET

REF:Elephant Tusks

Ministry of Commerce	Mogadishu
Ministry of Livestock	Mogadishu
Commercial and Credit Bank	Mogadishu
Ministry of Finance	Mogadishu
Police H.Q	Mogadishu

The attached application was submitted to me by Comrades Omar Hassan Kheyre and Hussein Barre Hassan, requesting me to authorise them to bring into the country elephant tusks from Kenya and Ethiopia.

Having properly considered their request I am giving them due authorisation to bring the items under discussion into this country and (I) further instruct you to reward them, along the lines laid down in the relevant regulations.

(Signed)
Major General Mohamed Siad Barre
President of S.D.R

Typist:Ibrahim

A copy of this official correspondence was obtained by Professor Richard Greenfield in 1988 who passed it to the editor of *New African* for publication. There was an instant uproar worldwide. In

Britain the *Sunday Times* reprinted it and wildlife lovers were dismayed. In Kenya it caused a diplomatic incident. In the United States many "green" organisations, not least the *World Wildlife Fund*, took it up and the US Congress adopted a committee report that condemned the ivory trade in general and the Somali role in it in particular. CITES, the UN international ivory control system came under attack and one of the more immediate but unanticipated results was the placing of the world's declining elephant population on the schedule for maximum protection.

The government in Mogadishu was furious and caused the London embassy to prepare a long statement for distribution to leading editors and the BBC attacking several journalists and academics by name.

Finally, after the failure of US-led "Operation Restore Hope" and its sister UN-manned mission in Somalia, the world stood by impotent to prevent the genocide which was taking place in Bosnia in 1993 and 1994. It took many months of indecision and indiscriminate killing of civilians to act collectively and stop the genocide. One such appalling incident which shook the world to its core was the February 1994 Sarajevo market place shelling, and also the mass murders which took place in other cities in that devastated country.

10
Conclusion

The world is coming to grips with new realities: one is the reality of failed and faltering states such as Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and others that are on their way. The failure of states is one of the main factors calling for a new global order and asking that the world be prepared for such eventualities -- one way would be by empowering the United Nations or regional organisations to tackle them -- as they occur.

The Somali problem may now be in its final phase and the tide on the turn. Everything good or bad must come to an end and likewise war and mayhem in Somalia. The main concern now is not the past but the future and what it holds for Somalia. Whatever bitterness, agony and devastation it brought, the past has passed and there is gripping anxiety over the future. To say that, once re-established and reinvented as a state, Somalia's troubles are over could be fatally wrong; as the Somalis say "*Ayax tag eelna reeb,*" "The locust may have gone, but they leave behind a plague on the future." Past rulers and small-time administrators, possessed only by greed and ignorance, may have passed on, but, like the locusts of East Africa, no doubt many left a legacy in the form of their offspring. In the shattered world they left behind, as in Niccolo Machiavelli's book, *The Prince,* the pursuit of knowledge became valued as the means to power, and power as the means to wealth.

Apart from the impoverished, misery-stricken and bewildered commoners and the nomads, who were never masters of their destiny, there is no shortage of "intellectuals" -- copycats of their predecessors -- now "involving" themselves in the public affairs of Somalia, the hulk of which decomposes in the gutter whilst they foster the dreaded evil of clannism as did their ignorant forefathers. Even as late as 1997, one could hear some of our "intellectuals", forgetful of the times that have elapsed and the

sophistication of their audience, talking about fictitious ancient clan kingdoms in Somalia in areas where nothing was actually administered other than goats and greed. Their intent and purpose is solely to establish an imaginary clan *supremo* "tradition" to justify their aim to reign illegally over the people. Nothing and no one is subservient or supreme in our Somali society.

After all Somalia has gone through, it is a unique tragedy that such elements still yearn to put their myopic and destructive political ventures in place. But it is up to the Somali public not to lend a political platform to such people who have already contributed more than enough to their state's demise, nor to allow them to destroy yet again the sacred foundation of the future state. These elements did not learn from their past follies and do not seem to understand that, in their bid to monopolise and own Somalia through political clan-domination, they lose far more than they achieve. This time they should never be allowed to hijack the fate and course of Somali state "development"; everybody knows for certain what the end would be.

All the evils of bad government -- such as clannism, corruption, nepotism, cronyism and many more discussed in this book -- were factors which led to the downfall of the Somali state. With little or no regard for the welfare of their people and their country, former Somali politicians and many government officials embezzled public funds, drained dry foreign-donated developmental projects, and broke the trust of the Somali public. In the 1980s the living standard of most Somalis plummeted considerably and many people began to live on the poverty line. In the capital while some members of the society were pampered with all the amenities and services wealth can buy, the majority of the Somali public in the capital struggled to survive most of them on a "0-1-0" lifestyle affording only one meal out of the three meals required per person to live a decent life.

As always, there are many stark and dark forces lurking out there, competing to influence the outcome of Somalia's troubles in favour only of their own interests. Some of these groups are well known, having already been in a position to influence the original faulty foundations of the state only to put Somalia on course to oblivion a mere thirty years after its independence.

Somalia, if it is to stand a chance in a turbulent future likely to bring yet more treacherous and withering winds of hardship, needs to have a sound political system with enlightened leadership. Safeguards and safety valves must be established against any future demise of the state, to protect it from all quarters.

The major evil which riddled Somali politics and contributed to the demise of the state is clannism. The fact that the eight million one-nation Somalis are from different clans is not the problem. In 1969 when the revolutionary government came to power it had in mind that clannism, already a recognised disease in Somali politics, was what had destroyed the democratic system of former governments. It set out to uproot it from Somalia. Towards this goal, in October 1971, it mobilised tens of thousands of the population in the capital to take part in the burial of clannism. A coffin containing an effigy supposed to be that of clannism was taken to the local cemetery and buried. For the first six years of its rule the practice of clannism subsided tremendously and the people, when mentioning someone's clan, used to look around them since such utterance was a criminal act.

Unfortunately the practice of clannism took off after the war with Ethiopia in the late 1970s to engulf the entire period of the 1980s. The question here is why did it subside in the early years of the government and return again for the kill in later years? All arrows point to one direction. During the initial years of the military government the leader was seen to be distancing himself from its practice. These were his first years in power and in retrospect his aims appear to have been to let it take root. He did not then have enough self-confidence to produce his own agenda which would later show his true intent. In those first years he made most government appointments on merit not on the clan factor. Somalis from many different clans served in government ministries and even at the presidency.

After the debacle of the war with Ethiopia and especially after the attempted *coup d'état* in April 1978, the Somali leader felt more and more vulnerable. He lost his confidence and started to put his own clan members in all key positions in government. He appointed officials from his own clan and even some of his sons to head strategic military camps and establishments in the capital and its vicinity. He also started a gradual yet systematic

replacement of personnel on a clan basis. He introduced the policies of so-called "clan balance" and "clan representations". On the other hand he would entrust public responsibilities, based on clans including his own, to less able people so they would never challenge him.

In August 1989 the inept Somali Foreign Minister Abdirahman Jama Barre unashamedly produced a list of sixteen officials, all members of his own clan, for promotion and placement. This was a daring yet foolish attempt to transfer what belongs to a whole nation to one exclusive clan. On that day he looked more of a clan chieftain than a responsible government minister. He was neither concerned with, nor even recognised, the repercussions of such idiotic actions.

Taking note from the experience of that government, it is apparent that in order for clannism to be abolished at least in the practice of Somali politics, the following points could help:

(1) It should not be a crime for any member of society to utter clan names for that is not where the evil lies.

(2) If the leader stops the practice of clannism in government others will follow.

(3) A patriotic, vigilant and responsible press can help develop public awareness and further assist by properly investigating and singling out government offices or officials involved in the division of the nation.

(4) A government watchdog must be appointed to monitor this and other bad practices in government.

(5) A system of appointment and promotion on merit should make clannism redundant.

During the civil war as things regressed to the precivilisation nomadic (*baaddiye*) age, a Somali came to be liked, disliked and even prejudged by his fellow countrymen not on what he was or what he could be but on the clan to which he belonged. No one chooses his parents or the locality and ethnic group into which he is born. But one can resolve to be a patriot who loves his fellow nationals for what they are and not for the clan to which they belong. That is not to say that regrettably the behaviour or response of certain individuals cannot be predicted with their clan loyalties in mind. Unfortunately, the clan factor has come more or less to replace an ideology. Yet, the Almighty gave to each of us

brains to use and think independently. Those who remain so entrapped as to see all issues in black and white terms must make up their minds to further develop their own personalities.

Clannism, which has long bedevilled Somali politics and caused the demise of the country has also been endorsed and encouraged by the opinions and publications of some international scholars who have enjoyed a long involvement with Somali studies. In a seminar entitled "Menu options", conducted in London in 1996 and sponsored by the EEC, a senior foreign expert on Somali anthropology advocated Somalis allocate jobs and positions on clan lines. This was dismissed by most Somalis as mischievous.

One of the main evils which dogged the politics of the Somali state was the ill-conceived notion that, since resources were meagre, it was essential for clans to vie with one another to dominate the political life of the nation for self-aggrandisement and wealth creation. No wonder the state collapsed: such was the mentality of our petty politicians and their offspring. These are the real legacies of the colonial clerical mentality which knows nothing other than to work in government offices and wait for a meagre monthly stipend.

Another cultural factor which crippled Somali statehood is the despicable practice of so-called clan political representation (or "clan balance"). Political nominations based on clan ("Who is included in the government to speak up for our clan?") must be discouraged. This is not only primitive but incompatible with modern governance in which the overriding aim is to advance all the people and the entire country. Government systems mainly absorb people of three categories: (1) Those who themselves seek to serve in the government. In other words the door is open only to those who knock. (2) Those who prove themselves through competition or examination. (3) Those who, because of their special qualities, attract attention to themselves. These are the ones who without asking, give the impression that if they are incorporated, they would make a difference.

Breaking away from the traditions of past most unsatisfactory administrations, future government appointments must be based on known criteria such as qualifications, talent, integrity, honesty, patriotism, dedication and diligence. There is need to create a

meritorious system where people are judged and valued for they are, rather than the clan to which they belong.

Unlike previous bad administrations, future Somali rulers must guarantee the three most essential factors in modern governance: economic prosperity, political liberalism and universal human rights. Economic prosperity can only be brought about by liberalisation based on free enterprise allowing the rule of the market to prevail. Most economists would argue that the best way for an economy to organise itself to produce those goods and services that society desires is generally through competitive markets consisting of profit-seeking individuals. National economies grow because individual members of those economies benefit when they perform productive activities that generate profits, always provided that these are reinvested in the country. Unlike the situation under former rigid Somali governments, a stable but free environment must be created and maintained which allows businesses to thrive and prosper. One of the fundamental aims of a future Somali state must be the prosperity of its own citizens for, after all, the main purpose of governance is to look after one's own people. Everything must be placed in the hands of the people. Very little must be allowed to remain in the public sector and in the hands of the government. This will counterbalance small-time "clerical mentalities" which count only government salary pennies.

Political liberalisation resembles the undisputed right one has to go to a store and buy new clothes to replace worn-out ones, and implies that the public has the ultimate power to throw out corrupt and incompetent politicians. THE PEOPLE must be politically emancipated and given back their national birthright. This can only be achieved through a genuine democratic system where the politician is a servant accountable to his master -- the public. In 1960 when Somalia obtained its independence from Italy and Britain, it adopted a Western-style democracy. For the initial part of the nine years during this experimental period of democracy, Somalia became more or less the envy of many developing countries. One of the areas which encouraged democracy was the fledgling free press which the country enjoyed. Unfortunately, it did not last long as the political environment deteriorated rapidly. The system produced its own

death warrant. In 1969 the army moved in to rescue the country from self-destruction and mayhem.

The type of democracy practised during this post-independence period had its own imperfections. Democracy is an ideal system which among other things helps genuine and effective politicians to filter into the system while seeking to bar all who are corrupt, inept or bogus. It ensures that those who seek to serve and who prove themselves can come forward without discrimination on grounds of religion, ethnicity, gender and so forth. Unfortunately the infant Somali democracy became creator of its own demise. The biggest folly of this system was the practice of sending parliamentary candidates to their clan areas to be elected. This was not only wrong but it revived the terrible trend of tribalism which resulted in the formation of no less than eighty political parties based on the totality of the Somali clans. On the other hand, since candidates were not chosen on merit or issues of the day but on a clan basis this denied citizens of quality from entering parliament and representing constituencies. It lead to the clogging and malfunction of the democratic system which the country had embraced.

If you send a numbskull to his clan area, his clansfolk may well not see him for what he is but would choose such a candidate over the rest ignoring qualities other than ethnicity. Taking note, of such pitfalls, any future state must correct this. One of the fundamental conditions for parliamentary elections should perhaps be that no candidate be allowed to stand and contest elections in his own clan area. This would no doubt discourage and dispirit tribalism. Somali political parties might nominate candidates to any area other than a candidate's clan area. This would at least ensure a clean democratic election where people choose their parliamentary candidates in accordance with their choice of political party, based on its standing and agenda, the personality of the party leader, assessed competence of a candidate and the issues of the day. A person who is elected on a tribal basis to represent his clan in parliament cannot be called Member of Parliament (MP), but rather a clan chieftain. In modern governance members of parliament represent a national constituency which includes different peoples from various walks of life and if necessary ethnicity. In a lawless anarchic country, such as

present-day Somalia, no pioneering government can be expected to restore such a fundamental and ideal system overnight. But only those who do not have ulterior motives or hidden agendas can be trusted to serve their people and to secure the nation's wellbeing. They must firmly believe in the unquestionable benefits of a democratic system.

The decline of government ethics and standards was beyond doubt one of the major factors which led to the demise of the Somali state. Once they are compromised and standards of governance are lowered, there is no stopping point. The result is invariably as in Somalia, where eventually warlords and criminals who pillage the country and shed the blood of their people settle for no less than its highest office from which to misrule the nation. The government of Mohamed Siad, which misruled the country for over two decades, is mainly to blame for the degeneration of the ethics and the practice of sound statecraft. To exonerate it as not being responsible for what had happened, and to hold responsible only those who, during the civil war destroyed their own country with their bare hands, is to behave no better than a dog who growls at the stone that hit him and leaves alone the man who threw it.

The presidency was one of the many government institutions which lost its standing. As a direct result of the leader's quirky rule it became little more than a teashop. The president loved to be at the centre of the whole nation's attention. He created situations whereby he became the sole person on whom everything depended. Government officials and the public were required to see the president for everything, no matter how trivial. During evenings and well into the night many used to dally at the presidency seeking to grasp what was going on, who talked to whom and who saw whom: it was bizarre, for some became more or less addicted to the heady atmosphere of that frenzied environment. Sometimes when the throng was at its largest, an aide or a bodyguard would simply emerge from the inner walled compound court of the president to tell everyone to go home. "The president will not see anyone with the exception of so and so" -- an insignificant private in the army, a camel-driver from the desert, a bellboy or a watchman. This he thought used to add to his aura; in fact, it suggested only nagging intrigue. Important

people -- ministers, generals, director generals, ambassadors and others, sought hard to ascribe exceptional importance to those allowed to stay behind to enjoy the sole undivided attention of the president. This was like playing God, for if someone from obscurity could receive divine attention and enrichment, as the lottery company Camelot advert has it, "It could be you!"

Some Somali consuls and consuls general used to create a small regime like that which prevailed at the presidency in their own embassies and consulates. They acted through inefficiency or arrogance, and a sense of their own self-importance. A month after I began my tenure at the Somali embassy in Kuwait, in May 1984, in charge of the consular and the community affairs, a member of the Somali community took the trouble to visit me in the embassy. He came to give me "vital clan" advice. This was what he had to say: "The news in this country is that the people are happy about the work of the new consul because no one waits more than an hour for anything including the issuing of new passports. But this is done at the expense of your prestige and you are obviously undermining your authority and that of the past Somali consuls before you. Irritated by this I only came today to give you some important advice. Like Adan Hashi [this is a former popular Somali consul in Kuwait who outlived his usefulness by staying nearly a decade in the post] you have to do two things: to add to your respectability you have to buy yourself a pipe to smoke when meeting and interviewing applicants, and you should not come to the embassy before noon [workhours in Kuwait and most of the developing countries are from 7:30 am to 2:00 pm]. Like Adan Hashi before you, these two things will make you a much sought after and proper consul." In my eyes, this man's advice was irresponsibility of the highest order. Unfortunately the reply I gave to this "clan" self-appointed protector also did not go down well. I tried to convince him, "It is regrettable if some of my past colleagues in the post have acted this way. I don't quantify my importance on the number of people who come to see me and the length of time they languish in the hall waiting to meet me. We are sent to serve without delay and as an embassy we have other responsibilities to attend to: how many reports we send back home, how many local friends we make for the country and how many diplomatic visits and relations we may establish

during our short tenure in a post. On top of all these one needs to go to diplomatic receptions and functions." The "clan relative", thinking of me as a man throwing away all that was precious and important, left me more bewildered than convinced. He must have been reacting to the judgement of some of his friends.

Unlike the last government, which through ignorance made working for the government a "green card" to riches, working for any future government must cease to be something to be a frenzied envy. Working for the government must instead be seen as a dedicated and time-consuming duty -- restricted to patriotic men and women. This does not mean that people who work for their nation in public jobs should be impoverished. On the contrary, this only means that those who choose to start out on their own can be far better off. The people must be made to feel that there is a greater prospect outside the government than within its domain. On the other hand the government must be able to attract and accommodate the best and the brightest available: those are the winners who will make a difference for all. With sound guidance and fair and just distribution of wealth, all the people, regardless of clan affinity, must be made to feel that the system is theirs, there only to serve them. The future of the Somali people must depend much less on their gender and clan and more on their education, skills and ability. Put simply, opportunity must be matched with skill.

On human rights, true civil liberties must be established and the rights and freedom of the individual guaranteed and protected. Members of society must be able to perform their duties and enjoy their rights without fear of persecution. But this must not be attained at the expense of the masses. On this sensitive issue, the rights of the citizen should be equated with those of the society. In other words, an individual's rights should not infringe upon the rights of the society as a whole and lead to anarchy.

One of the many areas which irretrievably suffered under the military government of President Mohamed Siad Barre is the environment. Despite the former leader's lip service to good conservation, at the end of his rule the wildlife of Somalia and neighbouring regions had been decimated and many of its forests totally destroyed or irreparably depleted. In the 1960s before the revolutionary government came to power, the country was rich in

the number and variety of its game and wildlife. According to conservationists, in 1960 the country had about 35,000 elephants, 15,000 leopards, 10,000 lions and tens of thousands of different game which are all but lost today. This is owing to bad government policies and mismanagement, the leader's authorisation of poaching tusks and wildlife skins to benefit some bogus merchants including some of his own close relatives, wide circulation of weaponry after the end of the war with Ethiopia in 1978 and the civil strife which led to massacres and ultimately drove away the country's remaining wild animals. What was left of Somalia's precious wildlife fled the country to neighbouring states.

Despite the revolutionary government's success in stopping shifting sand-dunes in the coastal areas by planting cactus and because of the burning of large areas for domestic charcoal, the country lost most of its thicker forest. It is most unfortunate that during the civil war with the country's lack of government this illegal trend has been intensified by scheming merchants who burn trees on a scale larger than the country has seen before, for export mainly to Arab countries. A future Somali government will be faced not only with the mammoth task of tree plantation to avert complete deforestation, but will also have to court neighbouring nations such as Kenya to help revive its lost wildlife.

To many Somalis abroad and back home, living in idleness and hopelessness, indulgence in excessive vices as a means of escape has become a way of life. The culture of work, being productive and earning, seems undermined for ever. Leisure comes after work not before. These compatriots must also understand that it is ironic and totally out of place for people whose homes and country are in ruins to waste their lives in such a manner. Time is money and a lot of hard work awaits the Somali people wishing to rebuild their ravaged villages, towns, cities, and even their tarnished image.

Another sad reality is that many Somalis seem to love foreign countries more than their own homeland. Many roam aimlessly in cities and capitals around the world. The fact is that these preferred foreign countries were carefully built and not without sacrifice. Cities and towns in Western Europe and other countries were built over generations with enduring hardship and patience.

If our people desire to live in decent and beautiful cities with smooth public support systems similar to those in developed countries, they have to accept responsibilities and sacrifice. The first step in this direction would be to believe in themselves and in their country.

One of the things which contributed to the collapse of the Somali state was the last leader's quest to use everything for his own ends. Rather than build sound foundations to ensure continuity and safeguard stability of governance even after the departure of those at the helm of power, it undermined existing government agencies for its own benefit. In his quest for personal power, the president who ruled the country even politicised the civil service. A central theme of President Mohamed Siad Barre's *modus operandi* in government was to stifle, arm twist, manipulate and suppress citizens to gain absolute loyalty. This was quite contrary to the carefree background of the Somali nomadic culture.

A future state must observe not only the true path of good governance but in order that what happened is never repeated, sound institutions and watchdogs that oversee government administration must be established. Naturally an independent press should be in the forefront of such foundations. A very important factor for the progress of any society is its citizens' freedom of thought and speech. But such freedom must not be a means to harm or injure others. Everyday that passes, the world realises the importance and the many benefits deriving from a free press. But an independent mass media must function within a framework in order to perform the national duties without undue restrictions. On the other hand, any excesses or abuse of freedom by the press should not only be self-regulated but constitutionally curtailed. The paramount aim for establishing an independent press would be to help build awareness and particularly to encourage public scrutiny.

The state must build lives not destroy them. For the first thirty years of Somali self-rule, especially in the last twenty-one of them, the state was used as an instrument to inflict atrocities against its own people. The soil was drenched with the blood of its denizens. The whole country is riddled with makeshift graves, from which the bones of our people are crying out for justice.

From the magnitude of what has happened it would be suicide for any future government to embark on a road of yet further killings based on vendettas and vengeance. On the other hand, in order for the past never to return and with the aim of healing the wounds of bygone days, atrocities committed against any Somali must be investigated. As in South Africa, a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate accusations of brutality must be established. Repentance and forgiveness must be the keynote while those who passed away must be commemorated. The findings of such a commission must play their part in the schooling and education of future generations. Unless this course is followed, former horrific scenarios will no doubt be reincarnated. The dark era of persecution and the reign of terror must remain a thing of the past.

Nepotism was another evil which dogged the last Somali government and took a great toll. The leadership valued social relationships and marriage bonds more than anything else. The president unashamedly appointed his relatives and in-laws to the highest offices in the country until the government lost all credibility and became nothing more than a family business. In the clumsy administration that ended in ruins, the best credentials one needed to aspire to riches and fame became marriage bonds with the leadership. Because of this, many gold-diggers were attracted to the households of the leadership, namely those of the president and the foreign minister.

In traditional nomadic life such a pattern may have been important where relationships, marriage bonds, manpower and alliances for survival were needed. But in government such relationships should be insignificant and seen to be so. Emotional involvement with government business must be discouraged. What a ruler and officials in government manage belongs to the public, not to themselves. You cannot invite your brother, cousin or in-law to partake of something that does not belong to you alone. Those who marry into the leadership, ministers and other government officials for genuine reasons must nevertheless know best how to maintain their families without the dangerous ambition that they would benefit personally.

Another serious problem and one that must be laid at the door of the Somali public rather than the government, is that from the

first appointment of a leader, the administration is stigmatised as belonging to his clan. This happened, for instance, when on the attainment of internal self-government by Somalia in 1956, Abdullahi Isse, a patriot and true son of Somalia, became first minister. Vehicles which bore the Italian abbreviation GS, *Governo Somalo* or Somali government, were soon dubbed "*Governo Sa'ad*", the Government of Sa'ad, the leader's clan. In 1973, only a few months after the writing of Somali in Latin script had been introduced in October 1972, the revolutionary government decreed that all government business previously carried out in three languages (Arabic, Italian and English) be conducted in the new written Somali language. Government transport carried plates bearing the Somali abbreviation GD, *Gaadiidka Dawladda* or government vehicle. In the north the public started referring to the two letters "GD" as *Gaadiidka Daaroodka* or vehicles of the Darod, the clan of the leader. When certain members of the leader's clan heard such slurs, they soon started to react and behave like the sole owners of the government.

The question is who created this major problem? A government belongs neither to the leader nor to his clan. A leader is only a temporary custodian who will eventually, whether he likes it or not, pass the responsibilities on to another person. Government belongs to the whole nation. In any future Somali government, the Somali public must stop this folly. Unfortunately, previous Somali leaders did not educate the public about this dangerous and negative culture and alert them to abstain from such patterns. This and many practices were to come back to haunt them and contribute to the collapse of the state. It is even probable that past leaders, like their clansfolk, enjoyed the fact that the Somali public saw the government as theirs exclusively.

Another fault which lies at the door of the Somali public is that they helped turn the former leader into the absolute tyrant he became. Weak personalities throughout the administration applauded everything he said. Every conceivable way he behaved and every right or wrong thing he introduced met unequivocal approval. He was made to believe that he was infallible. He also grew to believe he could get away with anything. Many in the government including vice presidents, ministers and civil servants, extended favourable and often undeserved treatment to any one

they met from the president's immediate clan.

Most of the wave of uneducated and inexperienced so-called diplomats who transformed Somali embassy work environments around the world into unbearable anarchy and confusion only needed to be posted for them to be coddled and their careers advanced by weak ambassadors who showered them with undeserved positions and privileges. This trend was repeated and perpetuated throughout the country. Such weak officials naively thought that their own careers would be advanced and they would receive favours in return. Unfortunately this gave wrong messages throughout the country that members of the president's clan were some sort of superior beings to be respected and pampered. When any human is given undeserved attention or treatment that person becomes spoiled. Naturally some of the president's immediate or distant relatives deserved to be treated honourably and with dignity because of ability or enlightenment. Unfortunately many spoiled clan members indiscriminately believed that they were better than other people. Some still harbour this perilous state of mind even in exile. Future government officials must never give anyone, related to the ruler or not, unmerited treatment. If a man who is the twin brother of the leader seeks special privilege, like Billy, the troublesome brother of former US President Jimmy Carter, he must simply be told to get lost. There is only one way to run a government and that is the puritanical principled way.

Ineptitude and ignorance were the biggest enemies which dogged the country's administration. This does not mean the right people were lacking for the right posts. In the last decade of the last government that was not a concern of the rulers. The strength of those selected by the leadership lay in their weaknesses. Incompetence and weakness actually appealed to those who ruled the country as criteria for entrusting power and responsibility to individuals. One good example of hundreds of such persons was Mohamed Ali Hamud, the former minister of state for foreign affairs. He was a man who could neither speak nor write any language properly, including his own Somali. In the late 1980s after the then foreign minister had been shifted to another portfolio Hamud become the *de facto* foreign minister in that all too important ministry. He had been brought to the

ministry in the early 1980s, as its number two with the understanding that he was a yes-man. Emulating his power-abusing predecessor, Hamud went on expensive trips on Concorde to represent Somalia in important meetings such as the annual UN general assembly. The world simply listened and nodded in astonishment at what he had to say. It must have seemed that any type of person could come to occupy the driving seat of state affairs and become a leader in the country. When heavy state responsibility is assumed by a person who is not enlightened, disaster strikes. In the last government of Somalia the prime misfortune was that the leadership was just that -- unenlightened.

Since loyalty based on clan replaced enlightenment, many of the country's learned people fled the country as a result of boredom, the poor quality of life offered by their posts, and the misuse or neglect of their skills. Equally in our foreign representation, standards deteriorated until eventually they reached appalling levels. Ignoramuses with no qualifications whatsoever filled many diplomatic posts in vital areas where the nation could not afford to waste even one seat. In most Somali embassies abroad, indiscipline and the abuse of responsibilities and facilities were rife. The leadership's clansmen, former watchmen and bodyguards, took embassy affairs into their hands with predictable resultant chaos. Ambassadors with very few exceptions lacked not only leadership qualities but the basic requirement for the job -- analytical capability.

Arrogance was another defect which contributed to the disruption of government administration. Arrogance comes with power -- especially when those who are in power are ignorant. The foreign minister in particular was the most arrogant official in the whole government machinery. Banking on almost absolute and unequivocal support from his cousin the president, he made many difficulties for subordinates and superiors alike.

The law must be sacred in any country. As the English writer and politician William Pitt, (the elder) is believed to have said "Where law ends, there tyranny begins." It is the law which, like traffic control, makes a country safe to work and live in. Upholding it is in the interest of everyone including the ruler. No one must be seen to be above the law. The last Somali leader was not only above everything but he saw himself *as the law*. He was

most capricious when it came to upholding the law. He and his cousin foreign minister took enjoyment in the creation and maintenance of this perverse pattern: but there were heavy prices to be paid. Temporary esteem from reigning above the law of the land has a downside. In the long run it weakens and destroys the standing and credibility of the leadership. The establishment of different tiers of law for personal gain invalidated the whole system of government.

To take a few examples, capital punishment was the legal penalty for those who committed murder, treason and even embezzlement. Some of those who killed met the full weight of the law whilst others walked free in the streets without a question asked about their crime. It is said in Nigeria, "Do not steal a loaf of bread for you may be shot on the beach by the soldiers. Best steal a bakery." Similarly in Somalia, some who embezzled quite small amounts were sent for execution while many big thieves who stole hundreds of millions of Somali Shillings not only stayed out of jail but retained their posts. Some even got promoted or moved to other more prestigious posts in the process. For example in the late 1970s the brother-in-law of the foreign minister who headed the livestock development agency, embezzled tens of millions of Somali Shillings. This case was unprecedented. He was tried, convicted and then sentenced to be executed. The day following the verdict he hurriedly left for Bonn, appointed as Somalia's ambassador to West Germany. By letting him go through the disgrace and harrowing pain of the judicial system, the complex character of the Somali President sought to show other members of his family household, including the foreign minister and his wife who was the sister of the embezzler, how deep the troubles of their relative were. But by saving him from the gallows at the eleventh hour, he sought to demonstrate that with him everything was possible. In the embassies in Bonn and Stockholm, where he went after Germany, he was well known among Somali diplomats for theft, ineptitude and arrogance. It is no wonder that even this man had joined the USC. The Somali people looked on and steadily lost faith and trust in their system. All this took its toll not only on the credibility and standing of the leadership but on the whole system. When the leader of a country who is supposed to be its

guardian oversteps the law who else will have respect for it?

Another evil which has destroyed the effectiveness of government in many developing countries and especially past Somali governments was corruption. The effectiveness and credibility of a state directly relates to the degree of cleanliness and transparency in the system. The more, then the better the image, standing and strength it possesses. What corrupt government officials in the developing nations do not seem to have grasped is the fundamental wisdom of life. We come to this world with nothing, but armed with a long list of requirements and responsibilities. When it is time to leave at the end of a lifespan, no matter who made tens of billions of dollars or pounds, we all leave with nothing. Rich and poor at the end of each day eat from a plate and go to sleep. We are only passing through and goodness to others is the best accomplishment in our short stay in this life. Certainly there are more important things to achieve in life than for the politician to steal the meagre finances of a country at the expense of the many whose lives he is entrusted to better. There is much which makes life worth living other than amassing wealth from the poor by stealing.

Despite the example of many corrupt government officials and rulers in some of the developing nations, it does not make any sense to be obscenely well-off while the population at large is poor and struggling to survive. This is like becoming an island in the middle of a sea of destitution and misery. There is always a moral responsibility for the difficulties endured by the poor, especially if they have been stripped of what little wealth they possessed by none other than their own public servants. Africa, which has one of the worst records of corruption, is wising up and emerging from an age of plundering despots. Life is too short to be wasted aimlessly without purpose. With all his stolen fortunes, estimated in billions of dollars, the former Zaire despot Mobutu could not save himself from illness and early death.

Government officials in countries such as Nigeria must think twice and renounce past attitudes and evil actions which have so tarnished their image that they are seen as unethical hungry sharks who spare nothing for the destitute. It seems that the best way to combat corruption is to build strong and free public opinion and to foster a vigilant and responsible mass media. Different

nations of the world have different experiences which, if relevant, can be appreciated and emulated. When it comes to clean government, Singapore is one country that springs to mind.

During the confusion and disarray of the civil war and in their darkest hour of need, the Somali people were let down not only by the warlords who pillaged and took part in the destruction but by its grandee personalities -- supposed great politicians and civil servants of long standing who had distinguished themselves in post- and pre-independence administrations. Rather than avert or mitigate the calamity of civil strife they either took part in the disaster or ran after the warlords who were fuelling the flames, for positions or benefits. They did not give a hoot about anything other than their careers and pockets. They thought by aligning with powerful but unprincipled contestants, their interests would be best served.

Another section of the Somali nation who also let down their people and country and who cannot escape blame are the learned generations and intellectuals. The elite intelligentsia did not give a single ray of hope or suggest a solution but contributed to the crisis and mayhem of civil war. One at least expected them to be untainted by evils such as clannism and indulgence in the divisions created within our society. Still today many think and behave no better than the unscrupulous warlords and many are guided by them. It has come to light during the Somali civil unrest that it is one thing to possess the highest educational qualifications and quite another to be actually educated. The highest educational qualifications are worthless if the apprentice cannot make any use of his long investment to differentiate the good from the bad and evil from the sacred.

Internally every effort must be made to establish a system based on absolute fairness towards its citizens. Special favouritism and discrimination amongst Somalis must never be encouraged. Somalis must never again, as happened in the past, allow themselves to be used by any party, foreign or local, to become an enemy of the nation. Obviously one of the most important tasks that awaits any future government in Somalia is to restore its citizens' lost faith in the government system and its politicians. Not to mention the task of elevating the all-time low of our peoples' self-esteem to regain their joy, pride and glory.

On the question of the lost Somali territories, the Somalis must recognise that one of the post-independence factors which led to the collapse of the Somali state was the quest for, and the wars fought to recover and incorporate, ethnic Somali territories in the hands of neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya. No war must ever again be initiated or fought to recover such territories. The peoples of the region are tired of war. The new Somalia must seek the cooperation, understanding and brotherhood of the peoples and governments in Ethiopia and Kenya. The most important needs of the whole region are development and progress. Past enmity and belligerence must give way to a new environment of stability in order to reach such goals. The Somalis in Ethiopia and Kenya must not allow themselves to be used by destructive forces to destabilise their countries. They must cooperate with their governments to advance and develop their areas. Many Somalis suspect that Ethiopia, which nowadays is actively involved in the Somali peace process, as in the past, sees a weak and splintered Somalia to be in her best interest. If this is the case, this is sheer folly: an old colonial mentality which serves nobody. A weak neighbour is naturally a source of destabilisation.

Oppression only earns hatred and rebellion. It is widely believed that the new government of Ethiopia is only concerned about its own Tigrayan population. Everybody else feels somewhat excluded in the foundation and formation of the new Ethiopia. The message to the new rulers is: win over all your peoples for the sake of Ethiopia. Experience teaches us that anyone who is excluded in a country abandons sentiments of patriotism and can become the enemy of his own country. Even the Amharas whose rulers have been cruel and savage to everybody else in Ethiopia for generations, must never be excluded and made to feel undesired aliens in their own homeland. They also belong to the house. Despite all their past imperfections, outdated jingoism and vanity, they are special people and must be made to feel so. They must feel the country to be theirs as much as everybody else's. A strong and brotherly Ethiopia is no doubt in the interest of all in the region.

The Somali people are dispersed in all corners of the globe while some remain in jails even as far afield as Russia, Lithuania

and Estonia. The central theme and priority of a new Somali government must be concern and care of its people. In 1996, when a shelter housing 102 Lebanese refugees took a direct hit from an Israeli rocket and tragically all were killed, there was little or no global outcry or concern. It hardly made it to the front pages of the international press, except perhaps in the Arab media and in some of the Islamic countries. But on 13 March 1997 when a deranged Jordanian soldier shot dead seven Israeli schoolgirls, this was a major incident. The US president on the lawn of the White House received the press to express his shock. The king of Jordan cut short a state visit to Spain, flew back home and went in person to the homes of those bereaved families to console them. On the one hand, it is understandable for the king, who is by nature a wise and compassionate statesman, to feel some personal responsibility for the tragedy and go back to defuse the generally volatile situation in the Middle East. But even so, had the victims been Arabs on the other side of his border, this would hardly have qualified for any attention even from the king himself. He would not have interrupted his visit. Why is this?

Are the lives of Israelis more valuable than Arabs? Is this because of a zionist international media conspiracy, as some cynics would argue? No! The answer is very simple. The world frequently values people exactly as they value themselves. This value is measured in a variety of ways: (1) If the human rights record of your state is poor and you arbitrarily detain your people or torture and kill them in cold blood, this is one signal you pass on to the world that you value your people very little. (2) If because of the harsh conditions and instability you have created, your people flee their country and are scattered in all corners of the world as refugees in search of hiding places from none other than you, then they can command little international respect. (3) It is the same when tragedies or accidents happen to your citizens in foreign countries and your state does not show concern.

These are some of the factors which determine how valued are your citizens. The reason why the world did not give any attention to over one hundred Lebanese casualties and made an uproar over the case of seven Israeli girls is because of the contrast between the two nations in their history of care and attention for

their compatriots. Obviously when it comes to this prime state responsibility, concern for its citizens, no sane human can fail to note the example of Israel. It could be argued that the safety of the Jewish people -- especially after the horrors of the holocaust -- has become a guiding national principle.

In 1988, when the Kenyan government rounded up and mistreated 40,000 Somalis in an infamous campaign they called "screening", the irresponsible Somali government not only showed a complete disregard but its inept foreign minister went public declaring the matter an internal Kenyan affair that was none of the Somali government's business. If concern for Somalis was not their business, what else could have been? In the 1980s, even when Somalia had a flag and a government, I observed that Somali embassies and consulates where there are large Somali expatriate communities such as the Gulf states, did not give due care and attention to their people. For instance no one used either to visit or follow the plight of prisoners who were languishing in those foreign jails. In any one such country hundreds of nationals would be in custody at any given time. In the future governance of Somalia, no distance can be so great as to suggest a no-go area for concern over a single Somali. If it were to emerge that a Somali was mistreated in Malagasi, for instance, it should be the task of a top level delegation, if not the head of state, to see to the wellbeing and repatriation of such a citizen. No business must be more sacred for the new Somali state than the welfare and safety of its citizens. Somalia must take good care of its own.

Another evil which contributed to Somalia's demise was the practice of the so-called "politics of self-interest". It seems that this evil has its roots in the nomadic culture of individualism. During the last government a system developed which encouraged patriotism to take second place and self-interest become the driving force of many people to join the government. Even those in business who left the government to benefit themselves became aware that their businesses were not sufficiently rewarding and it was back in government that quick riches were possible. A government system must attract those with patriotic instincts and the will to serve their people rather than the ones who are driven by self-interest.

During the civil war years, so-called marathon conferences of reconciliation have become like a dog chasing its tail. Attended by warlords and other unscrupulous politicians they have been held in capitals such as Nairobi, Addis Ababa, San'a, Victoria in the Seychelles, Cairo and other cities and even places such as the Ethiopian tourist resort of Sodere. It should be noted that at the end of 1997, those meeting in Cairo in an "attempt to form a government" never even mentioned the terrible flooding and natural disasters which inundated the country of the central and southern Somalis at the very time of their deliberations. It is believed that in these tragedies the death toll exceeded 1800 with thousands more missing. It was left to the aid agencies, nowadays acting as a Somali government, to appeal to the international community for urgent help over this catastrophe. In January 1998, the warlords requested from the Arab League 4.5 million US dollars to hold another "reconciliation" meeting in Baidabo, Somalia. This was despicable and a ploy to obtain further funds. Obviously these so-called peace gatherings have become nothing less than a means of enrichment. Why would a gathering in a Somali interior town cost nearly 5 million US dollars? The Somali people do not expect anything from these meetings. Many of those who take part are the very lords of doom who participated in the destruction of Somalia. It is astonishing that anyone expects them genuinely to labour for the rehabilitation of their country or the reinvention of their state. At this stage, the people are so absorbed in their pain they spare little attention to reprobates who take advantage of their situation. But in the future everyone will face the judgement of history.

Neighbouring as well as other friendly nations who sponsor or harbour such "reconciliation" meetings must understand by now that their endeavours on all such events have to date been like pouring milk on the sand. These countries are simply honouring the dishonourable. The personalities who take part in these conferences have neither the vision nor the wisdom even to run a country, let alone to bring it back from the dead. They should never be entertained at the expense of the dignity and future of the Somali people.

There seems to be a chronic lack of dedication. For many the only stimulus is selfish opportunism. Unlike most other countries

where the motive for going into politics is to serve, a major aim in entering Somali politics has undoubtedly been to help oneself. Whereas power should be sought for the general betterment, unfortunately in the unholy politics practised in Somalia until today politicians only amass wealth and invariably take more from the system than they give. A future government must find a way to check the progress of such selfish opportunists.

During the civil war, Somalis have come to know who their real friends are. Naturally this experience will be the guiding light in future attitudes and foreign policy. It is astonishing that while our Arab and Muslim brothers, with the exception of Malaysia, have not shown much interest in our plight, the Western nations have become the ones who took us on their shoulders. During the tragic civil war years Western leaders lined up to visit Somalia personally and see the situation for themselves. One of the first leaders to visit Somalia was Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland who later became United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Those who visited include President George Bush, former Secretary General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Douglas Hurd, the then British Foreign Secretary and Linda Chalker, the Minister responsible for Overseas Development. We shall always have in our hearts the peoples and governments without whom we would simply have perished. Our gratitude and appreciation go to all those who came to our rescue in our hour of trial. Unfortunately, the secretary general of the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) Salim Salim whose headquarters is in Addis Ababa never visited Somalia and appears to have done little.

Contemporaneously in 1997 in a neighbouring Islamic state, thousands of Somali expatriates were rounded up and forcefully deported to war-torn Somalia. These deportees included uniformed school children whose families were not even informed. The Somalis naturally expected their Arab and Muslim brothers to be foremost in coming to their aid only to be tragically disappointed. Unlike the developed world which has shown interest in helping to avert and mitigate disasters wherever they happen, it is "Third World" culture not to associate with but rather distance oneself from the less fortunate. Ironically, in those parts of the world sympathy lies with affluence and wellbeing, not with

the underprivileged and the miserable. It is unfortunate that, far from showing compassion, some traditionally brotherly countries forcefully repatriated our distraught jobless and stateless refugees, sometimes driving them into ravaged country right among the warring clan militias. Many of those so returned were consumed in the ongoing chaos and mayhem.

On attitude to foreigners, regardless of their colour, race or creed, members of all nations on earth must be welcome to visit or invest in the country. This is in the best interest of Somalia. The guiding principle of any future Somali state must be the welfare of its masses and how to benefit the country and people through cooperation, in legally and morally viable ways, with any nation on the planet. It is quite possible to make Somalia the envy of the world rather than have it remain in its current pitiful situation.

At crucial points in time, in north, central and southern areas of the Somali Republic, national sentiments sadly gave way to narrow loyalties. For instance, the United Somali Congress (USC), which in 1991 with the help of the Somali people captured the capital, instead of busying itself with state correction and addressing injustices, embarked on settling old nomadic clan scores -- wrongs they had suffered at the hands of chauvinistic groups in the central regions. This USC venture was like a man who ran hundreds of miles to take a crown but sped off with only a piece of bread. Wherever they and their unruly mob reached, the USC plundered and destroyed cities, towns and villages, including the capital. Their actions were no different from those of foreign invaders and the way they pillaged their own homeland gave the impression that the country did not belong to them.

The whole idea behind clan indulgence was flimsy: let us throw out the other clan which cramps us in wealth distribution and opportunities. This was where they erred. Two wrongs do not make a right. If those before you illegally hijack what belongs to all, to service their own greed and selfish ends, there is no need to be vengeful about it. It is far better to get it right once and for all when you have opportunity. Unfortunately that is not how the nomadic psyche works. The motto is always: if he has got away with it why can't I? They forgot the wider task that awaited them and the national responsibilities that were on their shoulders. In

a way the USC thought they were justified in implementing the wild clan ambition to rule Somalia for themselves alone. For many decades they had witnessed greedy members of other clans dominating the public life of the nation. They thought their time to dominate public life had come. Where they got it most wrong was in their self-centred exclusion of others. Perhaps they never considered the civilian manpower their ideal "clan-state" would require to function and survive. As witnessed in Somalia, in both south and north, when one clan monopolises the affairs of the state, further division, squabbles and power struggles become inevitable. The exclusion of Somalis from other clans robbed the USC state-ambition of legitimacy and any international recognition.

In 1991, the clan which congregated in Mogadishu united, but not for long. Unfortunately the unity of one clan does not produce enough glue to hold a state together. The blood they spilled and the battles they fought amongst themselves were unprecedented in Somali history. The Somalis have singularly failed to observe that different nationalities can and do live in peace and harmony on the continents of the world. Once one discriminates among people on clan lineage, what is to prevent the splitting up even of families?

Unfortunately, after seven years of USC clan adventurism, wars, pillaging, nightmares and mayhem are rife. Yet undaunted, many are still pursuing the same wild-goose chase, the dream to rule Somalia through a government based solely on their clan. No lessons seem to have been drawn from the tragic consequences of their political adventures. They resemble a child who is not accountable for its actions and perhaps does not recognise the wrong of breaking even a cup. They must understand that every day that goes by without a government in Somalia is their responsibility. If they do not realise that, there is no doubt that history will.

Another negative aspect of Somali nomadic culture is that to repent or apologise for any wrongs or mistakes committed is considered unmanly and a sign of weakness. But no human is perfect. Flaws and imperfections are part of human nature. No one should be expected to be infallible. After recognition of wrongs or mistakes made, it is honourable and decent to admit

them and even apologise if necessary. This is not only civility but also good for the soul.

The USC must now understand that, like the hyena which came safely into a town at night and took a nap only to find himself still there at daybreak, whatever their intentions were, personal or otherwise, they have failed and wasted countless opportunities for themselves and for everybody else. One of the impediments to peace and normality in Somalia is the USC's continued attempts to try to rule Somalia solely on clan grounds. They are still in the footsteps of past irresponsible groups and on the road to hell. They attempted to impose a disastrous clan political hegemony to monopolise and hijack the public life of Somalia in order to benefit from its power and spoils. It was as if to say "Good luck" to those in the past who succeeded in hijacking for themselves what belongs to a nation. Alas! This is clearly one of the main factors which has destroyed Somalia. The grotesque greed of some has made every clan vie to monopolise the governance of the nation only for self-interest.

Another very crucial subject which needs to be addressed is the proclaimed succession of Northern Somalia as the "Republic of Somaliland". The big question is what would it take to restore the lost faith and trust of our brothers and sisters of the north in the union so that they might one day return as equal partners in the unification they joined with the south in 1960?

On 26 June 1960 the north got its independence from the British. Within four days on 1 July 1960, they voluntarily joined the newly independent south. The first question is was it worth doing so? Undoubtedly the unification of the north with the south was the right thing to do: a legitimate matter which no one questioned. The Somalis are one nation who share almost everything. Before the civil war when brother turned to brother they were envied for their unique homogeneity in an otherwise divided continent.

Under the dagger of the colonial scramble the Somali people suffered an exceptionally tragic partition. From the time of inception, the newly independent state, like a person who wakes up to find parts of his body owned by other persons, embarked on a long treacherous and costly road to reunite and incorporate its lost parts. So who is to blame for dashing the hopes, dreams

and aspirations of northern Somalis in unity with their kin in the south? To blame the unity itself is like blaming the moon for the troubles of Somalia. In the United States fifty different states with so many nationalities have come together over the last two centuries and have not looked back since. Unity among the common people only brings strength and power. So who is to blame for the sad story of the Somali disunity? Undoubtedly the blame for the proclaimed break-up of the union lay with former politicians in the south. Among other things they were greedy, clannish and short-sighted.

In 1960 when the north joined their brothers in the south, most thought they did not need preconditions. Believing that, like them the south also wanted simple unity, they failed to comprehend the reality behind the aims of those who headed political affairs in the south in those days. Like their former Italian fascist rulers they were treacherous and dishonest about everything including unity. On one hand they did not establish a system whereby people holding government posts emerged through ability regardless clan or regional origins. On the other hand, they laid shoddy foundations for the state based on clannism. The northern Somalis soon found themselves rejected as second-class citizens in their own homeland.

In 1969 when the revolutionary government of president Mohamed Siad took power, he was seen as a patriot who would not differentiate among his people. Initially he proved to be so by appointing officials on merit rather than on clan. At one time there were several ministers from one Somali sub-clan but people did not question it as it was clear they were appointed purely on ability. Personalities from the north held many posts including the foreign affairs portfolio. Six years later the president sacked Omar Arteh who was from the north only to replace him with his own cousin. In 1976, when the Republic of Djibouti became independent, the Somali leader asked the Djibouti president Hassan Gouled why he did not join Somalia. The reply he gave was precisely to the point, "Why should we join you when you will treat us like the northerners and throw to us only one cabinet post?" From then on things went from bad to worse until in 1988 the Somalis in the north, who like other clans formed an armed movement, were bombed by their country's own jets flown from

airports in Hargeisa and Berbera. As well as their own countrymen, the leadership hired mercenary pilots to fly these fighter-bombers.

It was in May 1991, several months after the defeat and flight of the former dictator, when the northerners who by then had captured their region, proclaimed a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) as the "Republic of Somaliland". During their struggle it was never a stated goal of the SNM to break away and the question which came to the minds of many Somalis and foreigners alike was why choose to secede; after all, the tyrant was overthrown. Naturally emotions run deep and the people felt cheated, betrayed, bombed and made destitute by their southern brothers whom they had joined in the name of unity. The breaking away was born out of frustration. Like most Somalis the northerners are interesting and gifted. They are hardworking, conscientious and straightforward people, imbued with a deep sense of pride and patriotism. They do not like treachery and despise the work of scoundrels. Groomed by the Italian fascists in the 1930s and 40s many of the southern politicians not only held most cards in the foundation of the state they had played them in devious ways to their own advantage.

So what do the northerners need? Politically what is required is a level field where individual citizens can prove and distinguish themselves and where people are valued in accordance with their ability. Northern Somalis are very sure of themselves and do not need quotas or affirmative action. Unlike the warlords in the south, they do not vie for something they do not deserve. What they would have liked is a system of government which did not discriminate but befriended and rewarded those who endeavour to succeed, work hard and display honesty and commitment. Economically they have always wanted a minimum of government intervention: industrious people as they are, they value a secure environment where businesses can expand and prosper. They abhor hassle and the arm-twisting of police states. So what would it take to restore the northern Somalis' faith in Somali unity? If the unity of Somalia could be salvaged by a precondition that the first future government leader of Somalia be a northerner, it should be accepted. Naturally any northerner harbouring such an ambition must be genuine, seeking only to address injustice and better the

lives of all the Somali people. Power must be sought for a purpose other than to massage clan egos or enhance personal benefits. Clearly, a shelter one intends to use must have sound foundations and strong construction lest it collapses. Likewise there is only one way to build a state and that is as near perfectly as is humanly possible.

After the northern problem, Mogadishu, the people's capital city of Somalia, presents another burning issue. Since the turn of the century, and especially since 1960 when Somalia got its independence, Somalis have been building up Mogadishu not only as the capital of the state but also as the capital of the whole Somali people wherever they may be -- in the Republic, in neighbouring Ethiopia, in Kenya, in the Republic of Djibouti or the diaspora around the world. In particular during the 1970s and 80s the "socialist revolutionary" government, emulating its super power ally the Soviet Union, made the capital resemble Moscow as the most important place in the country. It became a matter of necessity for all citizens throughout the country to travel to the capital for everything from travel documents to international telephone calls. There emerged a national frenzy to settle in the capital. This made it expand in population and space. It is believed that even President Hassan Gouled of Djibouti and many of his Somali-speaking citizens, own real estate in the Somali capital. It became a place in the sun for the whole Somali people and they invested and built with assets drawn from Somalis all over the world and with whatever the state could raise during the three decades of independence. Yet, most of this wealth was to be plundered during the first months in 1991 once the civil war started in earnest.

In a parallel agenda, some elements within the USC clan organisation embraced a most dangerous concept, seeking to make the Somali capital their own clan's backyard. They not only authorised or at least unleashed, looting and plundering of everything that belonged to individuals from other clans but also what was publicly owned by the state. Unruly vandals and anarchists began to massacre people and indulge in "ethnic cleansing". It is a sin to spill the blood of any innocent person. It is outrageous to assail a fellow citizen simply because he is a member of a certain Somali clan. In later years during the civil

war, it is understood that this narrow-minded policy gave way to a gentler but no less sinister agenda, the buying out of properties and assets of non clan members. It would be a step towards normalization and reconciliation if those who lead the USC ask their militias and other groups to evacuate houses and buildings which they forcefully occupied as squats, but which actually belong to other Somalis who were chased from the capital.

There is an ongoing national debate about the role of Mogadishu as a national capital once the civil war is ended. Many people feel that after what has happened and the bitter experience during the civil war, Mogadishu should no longer remain the capital. Even though there is much to be said for shifting the capital to another location this would be unwise. To begin with it would give victory to narrow-minded persons and clan groups who want to transform the people's capital into their own clan-dominated commercial city. On the other hand if the capital were moved and Mogadishu became some kind of a provincial clan city, this would further polarise matters and could poison any real reconciliation and healing in Somalia.

Thus this notion of shifting the capital to another area must be discouraged at any cost. The fact is that the tens of thousands of properties built in Mogadishu by different Somalis from different backgrounds make it attractive to perpetuate its pre-war status as the capital. Thus support, unwitting or not, should be denied to the greedy narrow-mindedness of individuals and groups who have ceased to think and behave in a national manner. The best way forward is to confirm Mogadishu as the capital and discard any notion of transforming it into a one clan city. The way should be paved for all its diversified residents to return voluntarily as time progresses. To those who want a clan city, the message should be: "Go and build it in the desert: you cannot take over something which does not belong exclusively to you."

Population is a formidable element in the progress of a nation. When it comes to development of a country in terms of population, big means better. The larger the population a country possesses, the better for its progress in terms of revenue generation, internal market creation and export productivity. In 1980 in India, I once talked to Dr Bashir Khan, a renowned Indian economist who had predicted in an article in the Poona Somali

Students' Association magazine, *Vanguard*, that India would leap forward and by the turn of the century could become a successful nation similar to the United States or Japan. One of the main factors on which he was basing his argument was India's vast manpower resources approaching a billion. He told me that a match factory in India has a potential market well over 800 million people. Unfortunately clan obsessed individuals and groups who would like to clear everybody who is not of their clan from Mogadishu are too petty-minded to grasp such a concept.

Wealth must either be earned, given or inherited. Anything else is illegal. One of the reasons which encouraged hatred and fuelled the flames of the civil war in Somalia is a type of envy and jealousy manufactured by the ignorance of those who ruled the country. In the 1980s the government introduced illegal ways to enrich some members of the society on the basis of their clan whilst deserving citizens, who had dedicated themselves for decades through education or other types of enterprise, found themselves socially excluded. Many illiterate persons whom everybody knew lacked any financial or cultural background were suddenly seen amassing wealth, erecting large buildings, dwelling in plush residences and driving obscenely expensive vehicles. In the small world of the leadership, the aim was for others in the society to feel that opportunities and good living derive from the simple fact that one was related to them. But this only damaged the social cohesion of society, the brick and cement of the nation's foundations.

In a normally run country, such as the UK, when you observe your neighbour exhibiting affluence in every way possible -- a huge imposing house; multiple swimming pools; several of the latest cars -- no matter how poor a neighbour you may be, bad feeling towards them would not arise -- one might even wish them well. Somewhere in the back of the mind one has absolute faith in the system which suggests such wealth has normally been come by honest labour: nowadays perhaps also through good fortune and the lottery.

When a government wants its society to be stable and harmonious it would establish a system which rewards among other virtues, hard work, honesty and success. It must also discourage attaining wealth in any illegal way. Unfortunately the

last Somali government promoted and perpetuated a system which produced a twisted society which knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing. This warped society became appreciative of the possession of wealth but unconcerned as to how such wealth was gained. The vice became virtue and virtue became foolishness. Rich individuals with no previously known wealth emerged overnight. Such wealth was either obtained through corruption or other illegal methods instigated, encouraged and even assisted by the leadership.

A country is like a family and its government is seen as its custodian. When you pamper and give special presents to some of your children and those brag to the others, naturally they will automatically know from where this unequal treatment comes. Bad feelings will be directed towards their favoured brothers and their guardians. The Somali people started to hate both the government and its most favoured individuals. Some even directed their resentment at all the members of the president's clan. The last leadership in Somalia did not understand the benefits for all of harmony within the nation. It did not establish a nation that is at ease with itself. The terrible flames of hatred it created came to engulf the whole country. Any future government must encourage a society based on enterprise in which its citizens do not feel envious of one another. This would allay hatred expressed towards those who acquire affluence through hard work and honesty.

Cheats seldom prosper for long, and crime does not pay. Even so, since 1991 many people in the country have looted and plundered what belongs either to individuals or to the failed Somali state. The country's whole assets and wealth to the tune of billions of dollars have been looted. The produce of public and privately owned plantations are still being illegally exported and sold by gangs and even merchants who regrettably have adopted criminal behaviour. In 1995 when the UN was leaving Somalia, individuals and organised groups were pictured on television and in the international media in the act of stripping and looting even the UN's leftovers. The nomadic culture of looting, has been perpetuated in all Somali villages, towns and cities. It can, however, never be the foundation of future development.

In any society there are those on the fringes who would like to

benefit and thrive through acts of criminality. In Italy and Russia there are mafias. In South America there are drug barons. In Somalia there are individuals and groups with distinct criminal tendencies who are seriously on the make. During the decades of independence such persons and groups were involved in racketeering, illegal currency exchange, drug trafficking, robbing, burning forests for charcoal, killing the country's wildlife for skins, tusks and ivory and a host of other illegal activities. True, a large number could be found among the population of Somalia's overcrowded jails, but they were seldom the ringleaders.

This segment of our people naturally saw the collapse of the state in 1991 as a golden opportunity. They always used to see the state and its apparatus as their enemy. Somalia without a government during the civil war has no police, customs, frontier and coastal guards or other agencies to enforce the law. It has no inspectors to regulate and tax in-coming and out-going goods. These elements import and export everything including illegal materials without the slightest hindrance. Goods and items that are illegal in all countries such as drugs, weapons, unlevied alcohol and otherwise obscene anti-social materials etc. come into the country without observation.

The export of illegal goods such as charcoal, skins, ivory, live wild animals, female livestock -- all of which used to be forbidden under former governments -- is nowadays similarly dominated by criminal elements. They export publicly owned assets, agricultural products such as the country's bananas, grapefruit, mangoes, etc. They have already uprooted industries owned by the government or displaced individuals and sold items abroad either as scrap or as spare parts. They have shipped billions of US dollars worth of publicly or privately owned vehicles, office and household goods such as computers, furniture, television sets, video-recorders, cookers etc. to other parts of Africa, the Middle East and even Europe. They have looted all abandoned properties and real estate in the capital and while some house their militias and families others are rented out to foreign aid agencies to generate extra income.

During the American led UN intervention they benefited enormously by housing UN staff in looted buildings and by providing logistics, guards and most of the local manpower.

Before and after this intervention they have thrived on providing armed militias to protect aid agencies' personnel, property and compounds. On top of all these they also benefited from the protection of television and film crews who visited the country during the civil war. They also levied all ships and boats that anchored in the ports. Even though most of the revenues and wealth acquired from crime or above mentioned illegal methods were consumed by the unrest and conflict in the country, yet there have emerged hundreds of previously unknown businessmen and new powerful groups. They fly to other parts of Africa, the Middle East, Far East, Europe and America carrying suit cases stuffed with US dollars and with the dangerous belief: "What is amiss if we have no government?" During the early years of the civil war, taking advantage of the lack of government in the country, some even profited by inviting and assisting toxic waste disposal companies to dump their lethal waste in the coastal territorial waters of the country. Unfortunately these wealthy individuals and groups are coming to see it as their vested interest that a government should never be formed in Somalia. They are literally prolonging the agony and anguish of their people and country. They are responsible for the continued displacement and homelessness of over four million Somalis who either languish in refugee and displaced persons (DP) camps or in foreign countries.

It must be clear to all that, being the only one in the world without a government, their country loses far more than the riches that they brandish. Once rich, such a person needs a secure and safe environment with services, to live and enjoy acquired wealth. On the other hand it baffles the conscience how anyone with a shred of scruple can enjoy affluence while his whole country and nation is in the gutter. Affluence also craves status and prestige. When travelling around the world, what kind of reception awaits them? Wherever they go everybody knows that they do not have a government, national flag or a safe and orderly country with services such as health, sanitation, education, security, passports, foreign representation and a host of other things which government systems bring.

In a television programme on Japan an African was asked if the Japanese discriminate against them. His response was

sickening. What he said was, "Before, the Japanese used to despise and discriminate against us as Africans and we used to claim to be Americans, for whom they have respect. But nowadays, even if you say you are from Somalia, they do not mind and despise you no longer."

For the sake of reconciliation and so as not to be consumed by vendettas once the state is established, those Somalis who acquired their wealth by dismantling their country and trading in contraband are not worth vengeance. That would only hamper the way forward. When one becomes a leader of a nation, it is very important to forgive all enemies. One of the reasons why the 1979 Iranian revolution has floundered for nearly two decades is because of indulgence in a spree of vendettas. They should be left alone to enjoy the "fruits and riches of anarchy" if they can. But the Somalis say *"Hal xaaraan ah nirig xalaal ah ma dhasho,"* "A stolen she-camel never gives birth to a sanctified child-camel." One of the laws of nature is that those who take part in calamity are, one way or another, consumed by calamity. They pay the price of greed. They will never be able to lead decent and rewarding lives for all will know that what they have acquired was through unholy methods at the expense of their state, country and people. They will be despised and for a naturally proud Somali that itself is anathema.

One of the many hurdles on the way to national reconciliation and healing is constant bickering over who should rule the country. Before we are submerged by this murky subject it is worth noting excerpts from one of John Buchholzer's books, entitled, *The Horn of Africa*. This Danish writer was one of a handful of foreign visitors who toured Somalia in the late 1950s, only a few years prior to independence in 1960. Starting his journey from Djibouti, he travelled through most of the country in the then British held north and the Italian administered southern Somalia. He asked:

> *Are the Somalis mature enough to govern themselves? "No", say many Somalis. "We cannot manage alone either economically or politically. We must ask for another ten or twenty years of administrative training". "The day the Europeans leave," they said, "we shall start fighting. We shall assemble with our weapons, spears, revolvers,*

rifles; and the result will be that every little village will try to win mastery over its immediate neighbourhood. Everybody will want to rule everybody else, and nobody will want to let himself be ruled. Everybody will want to be a king or a president." (pages 197 to 198)

Unfortunately even though this was recorded in 1958, almost four decades later, the situation seems chillingly similar. This does not mean that the Somalis cannot rule themselves. They have proved to the world for three decades that they can. But why after forty years of self-rule (including ten years of trusteeship), and after Somalia has been ruled by four leaders, did Somalia return to the pre-independence era and this quagmire? Once again, everyone either wants to be president or at least thinks that he could fill the post. It seems this is yet another dangerous and retrogressive legacy left by the last leader.

Everything of value was so cheapened by the former leader -- government ethics, standards and practice so degenerated that even criminals think themselves capable of ruling Somalia. In parallel with economic inflation the country suffered inflation of the human factor. Due to appallingly poor government appointments every nobody became somebody in the shambles of the last government. This gave the impression that there was no one who could not be placed. In order to establish his own world, the former president lowered the standards in every part of government.

There is no bickering in the United States because, of the forty-two American presidents, over half of them were of English origin. Why is this, especially since so many nationalities are represented in that vast country? According to *Facts about US presidents -- a compilation of biographical and historical information* by Joseph Nathan Kane, only nineteen of the fifty states have been the birth places of US presidents. No one from large communities such as the Italian, Greek, Polish, Latins and Blacks has so far become president. Yet they do not complain or vie to place one among them in the White House for the sake of it. The reason is very simple. Who becomes a leader is of course decided by the Almighty, yet when the system is fair and just, holding public office is not to be obtained by methods such as deception,

corruption, arm-twisting or manipulation, the outcome of elections is accepted without question. No contestant is barred or hindered because of catagorisation be it by gender, ethnicity or religion.

The leadership of a nation is an awesome responsibility which cannot be performed by everyone, as many Somalis have thought. High responsibilities and national leadership can never be allocated by quota, rotation or affirmative action. It is high time our people learned that it is pointless to be obsessed with which clan the Somali president should come from. That should not be the problem and hopefully a time will come when everybody will realise his true value in society and the lords of doom in the civil strife will no longer see only themselves as the most suitable persons for the top job in the country. It has even been accepted in India that over generations one family (the Nehru family) should provide rulers. What mattered was that they were legally chosen by the people to serve them for a fixed period.

Another problem with leadership is that to many Somalis, ruling symbolises some kind of colonisation. In the nomadic culture, all the people were equal and no one ruled over anyone. But Somalis have come a long way from nomadism and many possess far wider knowledge and experience. It is time they came to terms with the concept of modern government and leadership -- after all, in the Benadir, Somalis wisely say "*Ninkii kaa roon waa la raacaa,*" "Always follow one who is better than you" for this is in your best interest.

Yet another issue contributing to the unruliness of Somalia is egotism. Recently a friend of mine who was returning home after serving his tenure in his country's London embassy, and who is well acquainted with the Somali crisis, simply remarked, "The civil war in Somalia is brother killing brother. It is an ego trip." Unless we Somalis learn to respect each other and learn to follow one another in accordance with ability and enlightenment, we will not be able to succeed as a nation. An Arabic proverb says "*Anaa Amiir, Anaa Amiir, man yasuuqul Himaar?*", "If everybody says, I am the Amir who will drive the donkeys?"

There is no society in the universe where everybody is equal when it comes to ability, fortune and foresightedness and this is the wisdom of life. If it would have been otherwise it would have been impossible for the world to function let alone move forward.

One cardinal thing we Somalis must learn again is the art of loving one another as nationals. All the goodwill, unity and aspirations of the pre-independence years have given way to unjustified hatred and animosity toward one another. Of course we are not the only troubled community where this is a major task for the future, Ireland, Bosnia and South Africa are other examples.

When a state is established like any construction, it requires strong foundations on which to build a secure and stable future. The Somali state was built on shallow foundations. Its founders share the blame for its tragic collapse. They lacked adequate vision for such a grand task and were greedy, backward and petty-minded. Few tasks are more awesome, requiring genuine and honest intentions and dedication. A state can never be founded on petty agendas such as clannism, but must be based on a platform which benefits all citizens, recognising and utilising their input. We need to learn the achievements of former architects of nations such as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Jawaharlal Nehru, Thomas Jefferson and even David Ben-Gurion.

A state found to benefit a few or exclude the many is, like the former Somali government, a state built on sand. The Somali state collapsed mainly because some irresponsible politicians from clans who were at the time in advantageous positions, manipulated matters to benefit only themselves and their clans-folk. This does not mean that the state should never benefit some more than others, for that is inevitable. But the ones to benefit should be those who put more into the system. It is one of the laws of nature that if you are more productive, you earn more and reap the fruits of your extra efforts. This is why communism failed. No two men are equal when it comes to brain power, effort and dedication. The Almighty has never created a clone.

But even so, when He grants the golden opportunity to take part in laying the foundation of the state, it must be realised that what is decided is the fate not only of the country's unborn generations but also of one's own unborn offspring and their descendants. If one were assigned to build an asphalt road but embezzled funds from the project, the outcome would be rough and disastrous. As we know nature works in mysterious ways and it is even possible that among the casualties either killed or

fatally crippled in accidents on such a faulty road could be a son or other member of the greedy man's family.

The seeds of the civil war which started in Somalia in 1991 were planted in the 1940s and 50s during the foundation of the state. These seeds were the manipulation of the state to benefit certain members of clans over others and Somalia in civil war is back to square one. After nearly fifty years, the same folly is yet again being committed by warlords and amoral politicians vying to plant identical deadly seeds during so-called "reconciliation meetings" and to manipulate the outcome of the talks in favour of their own. While one marathon conference after another is conducted, they remain unprepared to learn from history and are emulating past disaster.

Any Somali, with an enlarged ego who loves his clan members more than his nation, and who would like them to take bigger slices of the national cake, does not need to get it by cheating and manipulating the foundation of the future Somali state. Like Adan Issaq, the true son of Borama in Awdal region, former education minister in the 1960s and later Somali ambassador to Pakistan in the 1980s, who inspired his clansmen to educate themselves; those who want their clansfolk to wield influence and be seen everywhere in government offices should encourage them to seek knowledge rather than have them turning into rapists, murderers and looters. This would also be of benefit to the nation as education is no doubt the key to development and progress. The world has tired of the clan squabbling of the warlords. The learned and truly intellectual Somalis must save their nation from total disgrace and discredit in the eyes of the world.

In Africa and elsewhere in many developing countries, power has become a means to fill one's pocket and stomach. There are all sorts of people who want to seize power. Naturally even religion has become one of the tools for those who want to fulfil their selfish ambitions. In Algeria there are evil men who behead women and children even during the holy month of Ramadan and who distort Islam only to seize power to misrule and destroy lives. Likewise there are those who want to implement a narrow short-sighted version of Islam in Somalia. Islam is not about hate, terrorism and disarray. Islam is about compassion, tolerance,

cooperation and harmony among nations and peoples of the world. Obviously some Muslims also labour under a misconception about the word *Jihad*, which means struggle rather than conflict for its own sake. The type of negativism which paints Islam as relating to violence belongs to the disenchanted and to the evil. God created all mankind in His image and hated no one. Thus no Somali should entertain such derangement.

The emerging new Somalia must be a tolerant country where every Somali has a place. All violent fanaticism must be discouraged and not allowed to destabilise either the country or its neighbours. Economic strength and wealth are the companions of stability; empty bellies produce fanatics. Naturally, when people are better off and their country is run wisely and justly, any critics of the system opening their mouths to air pointless grievances and encourage dissent, meet an apathetic or unwelcome reception.

In search of a model of administration for the country some Somali intellectuals and foreign scholars have argued for a federal type of government. Some have even gone further and recommended a "Swiss-style federal system". They also point out a supposed need for different parliaments in all the regions of Somalia. So-called parliaments in cities across the sixteen regions in Somalia would be nothing more than expensive talking-shops and a recipe for anarchy and confusion. These intellectuals and scholars seem never to have assessed what common grounds Somalia and Switzerland have. Switzerland is populated by three different nationalities French, German and Italians who unlike one-nation Somalis have very little in common. The Swiss speak different languages and have different cultures. The main problem with the Somalis in civil war is not the unitary system of government but that they have failed to govern themselves as one nation. The biggest worry of many loving and patriotic Somalis is whether their nation will get it right this time. They must, and do believe that in the near future the new Somalia will surely emerge again from the ashes of war. The last thing the eight million Somalis need is several mini clan-banana-republics.

That some Somalis have gone so far as to resort to secession and feel bitter about national unity is understandable. Post independence political misfortunes, misrule and brutality, have

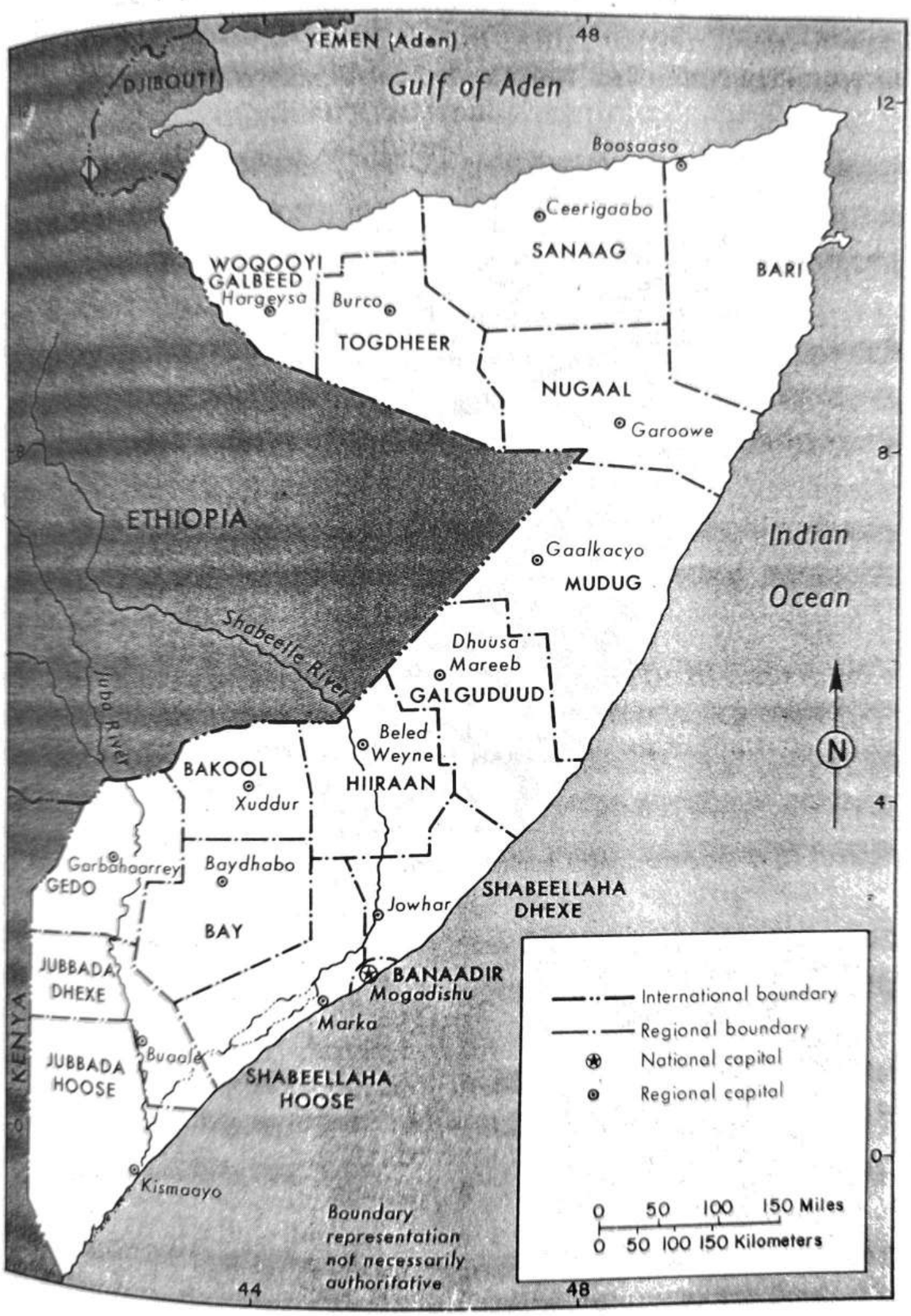
meant that emotions run deep. But nothing based on emotion is permanent. Tensions subside and disappear with time. Strength comes from unity. What we Somalis need is one state with an effective government capable of restoring the people's lost trust and establishing and delivering justice, equality under the law, economic prosperity, equal and fair opportunity, the protection of human rights, the upholding of law and order and political emancipation. Such a government must do away with all the evils which destroyed the quality and credence of past regimes. Above all, it must demonstrate care and concern for the welfare and wellbeing of its citizens.

There is only one solution to the Somali problem. First a national leader must emerge from within the Somali public. The Somali people must place all their trust in this leader whoever he may be. Then the world will open up its doors to Somalia. If this leader lives up to expectations, the doors will be open long enough for Somalia to rebuild, redevelop and reinvent its statehood. If he does not live up to expectations, support will dwindle and the doors will be closed, perhaps for ever. Such a leader must be in love with Somalia, not with himself. The most urgent task and test for such a leader would be to tackle the cardinal issue of the proclaimed secession of the north. Within two years, the new government must put to the people in the north [in Hargeisa, Burao and Berbera] a "yes or no" referendum to decide on the desired issue of secession. The challenge [for this leadership] is to reverse the age-old injustice and malfeasance in the north within two years. Based on sincerity, diligence and high-mindedness, I believe it is possible genuinely to restore the faith of our people in the north to see that it is in their best interest to stay in the union. The Somalis in the north have to remain in the union by choice not by force.

There is only one chance to fix the crooked statehood of Somalia for good. God helps those who help themselves and if we Somalis, and others in similar straits, do not make it right this time round, we may never have another opportunity. The wrongs and grief of the past are there to be addressed and understood -- not avenged but certainly learnt from.

Never again! Never again! Never again must the Somali state be shamefully allowed to fail and its people be forced to scatter,

despised as international boat people and refugees. Above all else, in preparation for a new beginning, Somalis need to change their old bad attitudes. Unless negativism, clan jealousies, animosity, unruliness and belligerence give way to harmony, decency, fair play, cooperation, concern and care for each other, there will neither be a viable Somali state in the future nor hope for the tens of thousands scattered all over the world, who wait in the wilderness -- the new diaspora-- to be brought home from the cold, statelessness, destitution and neglect. The future is ours to create.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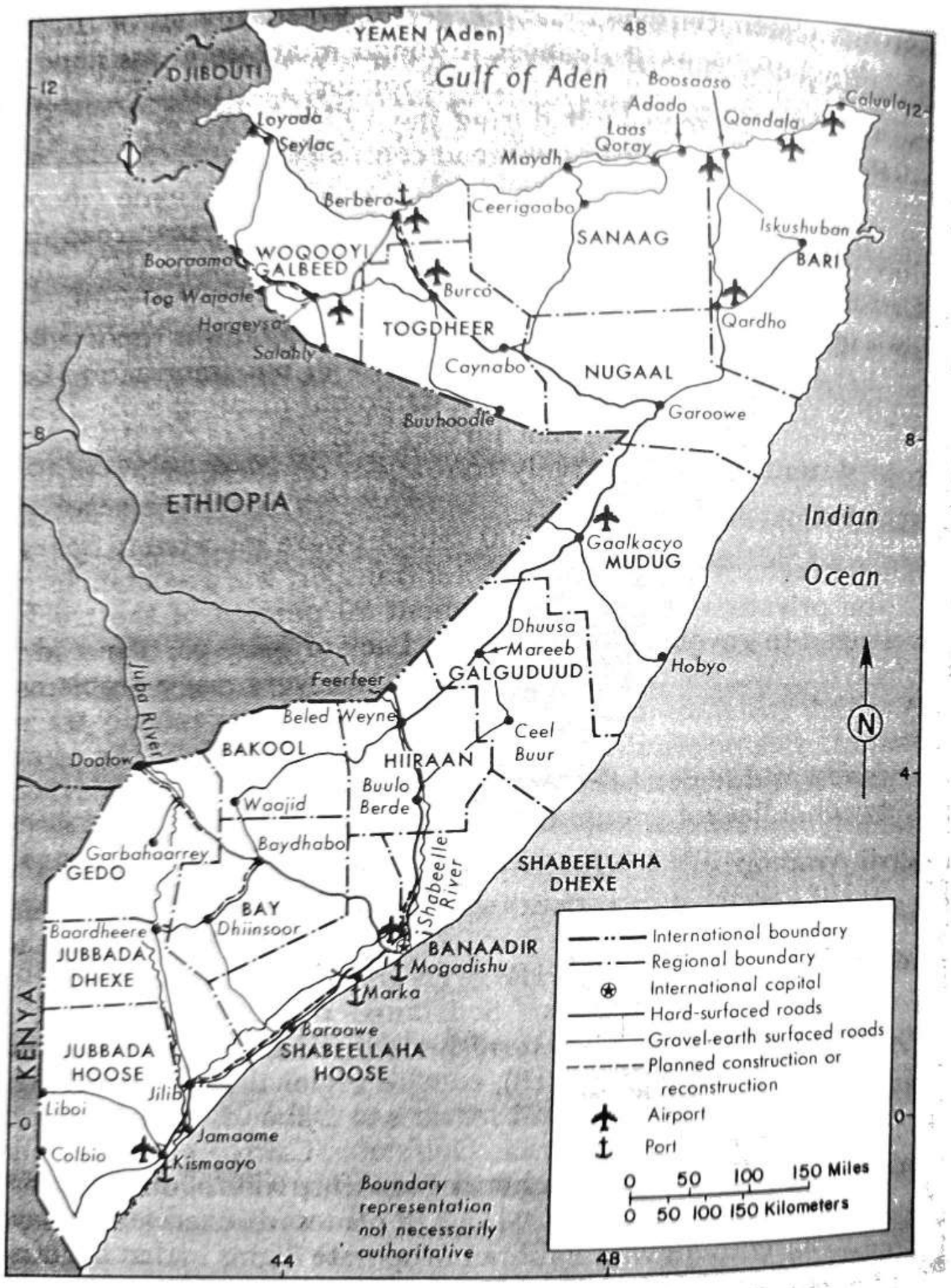
Somalia



Somalia: Transportation system

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About the Author

Abdullahi Dool was born in Qallafo, in 1955. On completing his schooling, in 1975 he joined Petty-Ray Geophysics as a trainee surveyor and then line-clearance supervisor. This company was engaged in oil exploration in the Conoco concession in the north-eastern area of the Somali Republic. In 1979 he returned to full-time education enrolling at Fergusson College, Poona University, in India. There as well as graduating with honours in political science and sociology he chaired the Somali Students' Association and served as president of All-India African Students' Association between 1979 and 1980.

In 1983 he joined the Somali Foreign Service and was acting director of the Somali Affairs Department in the Foreign Ministry in Mogadishu, the Somali capital, before being appointed in mid-1984 as First Secretary and head of Consular Affairs in the embassy in Kuwait. In early 1986 he was promoted to counsellor and in June that year transferred to London. There he had opportunity to enroll for further education, part-time, for on a number of occasions he was chargé d'affaires ad interim. In 1988, he was awarded a graduate diploma in international relations from the Regent's Park overseas campus of the University of Southern California and this was followed by an MA in international relations from Schiller University in 1990. The escalation of civil strife in Somalia led to his leaving the embassy's employ in 1991.

In exile in the United Kingdom, he threw himself into the ongoing struggle to revive the failing Somali state, producing a documentary film in 1993, *Somalia, a paradise destroyed*, published both in London and New York, and a number of analytical books in Somali.

He was a leading light in the establishment of non-profit organisations such as the *Friends of Somalia* and the *Somali Heritage Council*, which seeks to preserve Somali artifacts, archive materials, relevant broadcasts, publications and film footage which might well otherwise be lost in the depredations of civil conflict.

Failed States

Abdullahi Dool

The world has been waiting for some kind of explanation of how so ethnically homogeneous a nation as the Somali Republic could so quickly dissolve into anarchy and civil strife. Few were better placed than Abdullahi Dool, that country's senior diplomat in London, to observe and analyse the disaster. Although detached and usually powerless in the former Somali embassy in Portland Place, he could not but be privy to the seamier side of Major General Mohamed Siad Barre's corrupt dictatorship. Like many a proud young Somali, he could only look on in horror as his country slid into chaos.

Seldom have the inner workings of despotic rule been so candidly exposed. Throwing so much light on the Somali psyche and the quirky behaviour of absolute rulers, many a warning message for irresponsible military or civilian leaders of 'third world' countries may be gleaned from the pages of this book. As well as political scientists and students of public administration, the general reader will find Abdullahi's anecdotal impressions -- one moment amusing and the next terrifying -- both fascinating and easy to read. Wonderfully, although he also harbours no illusions as to the motives of today's squabbling warlords and pseudo-intellectual aspirants for state power, he never loses faith that the Somali nation will survive the present nightmare, learning some hard lessons in the process.

This is a brave book. Written by a senior diplomat in the Somali foreign service, it gives an insider's view of the corrupt and abusive system of governance which existed under the former dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, and which pushed the country into desperate civil war. Nothing and no-one is spared in the effort to right the record for these troubled years. On the firm assumption that only when the past is acknowledged can the future be approached, 'FAILED STATES' points to the lessons inherent in disaster, and lays bare the sordid truth in the hope of better days to come. It does so with great personality and humour, and a wide and educated political view which puts into perspective the troubles of Somalia without seeking to lessen their tragic impact on human lives.

This was a job waiting to be done; for the Somalis, and for those in the West, who, finding the Somali diaspora on their doorstep, might wish to understand its causes. This book is truly one of a kind; full of juicy detail but not lacking in overview; individual in its approach but globally sensitive. As such it is a window not only onto the state of affairs in Somalia since self rule in 1955, but into the workings of degraded regimes worldwide.

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