

The Former Somalia; Facts and Fallacies

By Abdul Ahmed III

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I have recently had the opportunity to explain the mechanics of disintegration, collapse and formation of alternative forms of social and political organization in the former Somalia. These came in the form of two articles titled (1) Understanding The Collapse of Somalia and (2) Regionalism and Alternative Forms of Governance.

The articles clearly explain the evolution of social and political conditions in the Somali peninsula; I put in clear plain words that what use to be Somalia is now essentially partitioned into three quasi states namely Somaliland, Puntland and Southern Somalia. Owing to this reality of gradual evolution from “a single nation state” to “a de facto” independent states, the articles concluded with:

- (1) The need for the international community to acknowledge this reality and base its policy formulation on the facts on the ground in the former Somalia.
- (2) The need for the international community to work with Somali people to bring about an endogenous Somali solution.
- (3) The need to abandon any artificial policy constraints to alternative/sustainable policy towards the former Somalia. I identify some of those artificial constraints as
 - (a) The idea of strong central authority
 - (b) The notion of a single monolithic state

I am taken aback and amazed by the paranoia being proliferated by some in the name of pretentious Somali patriotism and imaginary national unity. One must ask what this paranoia is!. What on earth is this Hue and Cry about Nothing? Why would anyone claim that my colleagues and I want to divide the former Somalia? Didn't the Somali people themselves do that? It is bewildering to see this over-enthusiastic shriek for attention! - That is all it could be! just an unpleasant scream for attention as I explain below.

In the following paragraphs, I attempt to discuss three relevant issues, (i) Uninformed and clumsy analysis of Mr Heebaan and Dr Bahar (ii) The core of the subject and the facts that my earlier articles presented (iii) An informative response to the fair critique of Dr Musse

(I) Big Hue and Cry about Nothing

The recent articles by Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan (presented as critique) are “long and cute essays” that either deliberately distort or regrettably fail to see the point of my earlier articles. I will however give the authors the benefit of the doubt and assume they fail to understand (rather than an intentional distortion). In contrast to the baseless accusations, none of my articles calls for the partitioning of the former Somalia; I merely acknowledge the very fact of a “de facto partition”. I also happen to advise the international community to (1) acknowledge this reality in order to comprehend what transpires in Somali socio-political life and (2) to devise sustainable policies toward the

former Somalia. I continue that such policies must affirm the local metaphors, uphold the desires local groups and the diversity of the Somali peninsula.

Contrary to the paranoia of a hidden anti Somali external enemies, Somalia's collapse (in large part) is only attributable to an internal driven process that was architected by Somali clansmen (willingly or otherwise). If truth be told, Somali clans have segregated themselves, transformed the demographic landscape of their cities and destroyed what use to be the nation state "Somalia". Therefore the claim that my colleagues and I or any other entity wants to divide Somalia is an imaginary and unqualified argument.

In an article titled "*Tigrean In Sheep's Clothes*", Mr. Heebaan essentially accuses the author (Abdul Ahmed III) to be an Ethiopian agent of sorts, Someone tasked to divide the former Somalia. He actually argues that Abdul Ahmed III is an odd name for a Somali, or for that matter for a Muslim.

In a rather straight forward response to Mr. Heebaan's presumptuous claims, Dr Janet Britt advised against casting out of the author (Abdul Ahmed III) as "non Somali" and "non Muslim". She stated that it would be unfair, undue and inconsequential to the subject matter.

Dr Britt also made clear that I have indeed recommended a Somali solution that incorporates the local metaphors in order to find a sustainable resolution to the problems of the former Somalia, This in sharp contrast to Mr. Heebaan's claims that my articles are hostile / anti-Somali views. Dr Janet Britt essentially advised Mr. Heebaan to refrain from seeing through pretentious populism and discuss the subject with intellectual agility.

In spite of all these sincere attempts to direct Mr. Heebaan to the core of the subject, there ascended yet another enthusiast perhaps even more emotional one in the name of Dr Ali Bahar. The emotional Bahar may or may not be full of intellectual prejudice but he is definitely not knowledgeable about the subject he desires to critique. (or at least he fails to understand the scientific origins of irreversible processes in social dynamics).

I couldn't also apprehend the fact that Dr Bahar didn't know what he was defending and against. In fact Dr Bahar seems to criticize a different article then Mr. Heebaan intended him to criticize. Mr. Heebaan's criticism was aimed at my earlier article titled *Understanding the Collapse of Somalia*. But for some unknown reason Dr Bahar imagines that Mr Heebaan was against my second article. Why does Dr Bahar think that Mr Heebaan was criticizing the second article? Did he read the articles he is defending or the one he opposes? Or was the might of his emotions blinding?

Perhaps the emotional article by Dr Bahar can best be justified as an impulse, over-enthusiasm. Dr Ali Bahar (with populist pretensions) and in defense of Mr. Heebaan surprisingly claimed that there was no such accusations or questioning of citizenship. Again did he read Mr. Heebaan's the article? Prior to defending it?

Owing to the above, it is only fair that I clarify and pinpoint the uncorroborated claims of Mr. Heebaan and the inept analysis of Dr Bahar. I do so with the believe that both authors are sincere but perhaps less familiar with the intention of the and the concepts explained by Dr Britt. I also suspect that they may not be familiar the scientific concept of irreversibility and social dynamics, the time evolution of the former Somalia, its collapse and the resultant conditions in the Somali peninsula.

For the purpose of objectivity, neutrality and for the record, I maintain that my ethnicity should NOT be an issue - It neither adds nor carts off any value from the subject matter. What matters however is that I as a team leader conducted a comprehensive study titled *The Dynamics of Collapse*, the study focused on evolution of collective social behavior, spatial dynamics and the emergence of alternative forms of governance? Excerpts of the study were published on some outlets for the general public, with the sole intention of describing why Somalia's failure may be irreversible, why do new institutions, new states emerge and what governs the dynamics of change.

Dr. Bahar asks Dr Britt “ *Here you are asking Mr. Heebaan to present facts and references for disagreeing with Mr. Ahmed III's article, which now clearly turned out to be yours. Why else defend someone else's article so vigorously with such a passion, unless, of course you are the author. It also struck me that even your article, this thing you called a research paper, did not bother mentioning or presenting citations or references, as required of all research work. Is this what you called a research*”.

I believe the details of the original work are best left for peer reviewed journals and symposia. Instead, I shared subsequent articles published by Wardheer News as Op-Ed pieces intended for the general public. As explained by Dr. Britt, the articles do not endorse any particular policy but rather attempt to illustrate the collapse of the former Somalia.

Dr Bahar unashamedly asks for references and citations. It amazes me that Dr. Bahar cannot understand that my articles are Op-Ed pieces published only as excerpts from a two year long rigorous study on Somali social structure, this in spite of the clarifications made by Dr Britt. Does he expect to see peer reviewed papers on WardheerNews? Did he ever see references and citations accompanying an Op-Ed? Again it is puzzling to understand or make sense of Dr Bahar's analysis, intention and for that matter his knowledge and experience.

If it matters and if indeed it will lessen the unfounded paranoia, I would share with Mr Heebaan and Dr Bahar that the study made use and combined multitude of scientific methodologies, complex modeling platform to quantify and incorporate a comprehensive empirical data into our model. Among the parameters used are the *Somali Clan Structure, Somali Social Homophily, Anthropological data on Cooperation, Coordination and Competition*. Certain sections of this work were recently presented at a Social Complexity Conference. http://www.asu.edu/clas/csdc/events/con_AcceptedPapers.html

Some of our novel contributions include computation of irreversibility, the influence of initial conditions, emergence phenomena, entropy, self organization and distributed governance in Somalia. Unlike Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan's articles, this work is not "long charming" essays or verbal tale about Somalia's sovereignty or unity. It is a contribution to long existing philosophical and scientific understanding of social dynamics, irreversibility and sensitive initial conditions.

Mr. Heebaan and Dr Bahar must not be emotional or irresponsible in their reaction to any article or any new findings by anyone, particularly if they are not familiar with the subject matter. They must try to understand the content and depth of the articles and if necessary seek more information rather than publish long (supposedly patriotic) essays and beautiful ideas that have no scientific basis to refute the subject they intend to question. Their unwise but innocent reaction is not only intellectual failure on their part but disservice to their community.

It is also fanciful (for Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan) to assume the role of heroes defending supposedly "a Somali nation state" against foreign experts. Distorting the discourse and misconstruing my articles as an argument against Somalia's sovereignty will not help!. Describing the articles in paranoid and apocalyptic terms will not aid Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan to present themselves as champions battling remote foreign experts or Ethiopians (or was it the Tigrean Abdul with non-Muslim, non Somali name?)

Mr. Heebaan and Dr Bahar articles are perhaps an outcry of and against the reality in the Somali peninsula. Their articles are mythical in substance and inept in analysis. Their idealistic or nationalistic views do not represent the social realities in the former Somalia. Their (supposedly) critique is indeed unwarranted, emotional and exaggerated hue and cry about nothing.

Dr Bahar writes

Like many concerned Somalis, Mr. Heebaan has rightfully commented on the weaknesses of the Author's views and rejected the notion that the International Community should not attempt to restore some form of law and order in these troubled areas in the south

I don't know what to make of this obvious fabrication and/or misrepresentation of the content of my original articles. Nowhere in the two articles published by Wardheer News, did I recommend that the international community shouldn't help the south. I recommend that Dr Bahar read the articles again, perhaps even explore the subject of my articles further, try to understand the study and the science of social dynamics prior to embarking on speculations, accusations and outright insults.

Contrary to Dr Bahar's claims, my assertion throughout was that the United State, the United Nations and the European Union must see the former Somalia as it is "a de facto partitioned country" and that there must be direct consultation with Puntland and Somaliland (and hopefully with future Southern Somali State). This would not be any worse than the current impasse in the Somali peninsula.! (A "Locked-In Coordination" for the worst, a coordination for a downward spiral to the bottom)

The question is however why Dr Bahar write misleading arguments that only stem from paranoia? Is it because he didn't read the articles just as he missed the point about ethnicity/citizenship? Or is he just an emotional and impulsive writer? A goal seeking" wanna be hero" ? What else is this Hue and Cry about nothing?

As I stated earlier, I would like to believe that Dr Bahar is probably well meaning but simply emotional and unapprised about the truth on the ground in what use to be Somalia. He is also definitely unfamiliar with the scientific concepts of irreversibility and emergence (even after plainly presenting them on Somali websites for the general public).

Another interesting observation is that the entire theme and substance of Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan articles was to cleverly select my paragraphs from my work and append it with their interpretation without due regard to the content and value of the work or subjectivity of their interpretations. Perhaps even without understanding the scientific value of these articles.

Dr Bahar writes

If Mr. Heebaan and other concerned Somalis have any ulterior motive, it is because they want a strong Somali nation with respected sovereignty, where all Somalis live and co-exist peacefully with each and with the rest of the world. We will take it any form we get it, federal or centralized, because we deserve to be a nation.

Contrary to the claims of Dr. Bahar and Mr. Heebaan, my colleagues and I have neither the intention nor the means to divide the former Somalia. In effect the Somali people have been very successful at dividing their homeland and segregating themselves so naturally into their traditional polities; much like those state-like traditional polities that preceded the colonization of the Somali peninsula.

Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan need to understand that my articles are not concerned with nationalistic views of restoring a Somali nation, nor do I necessarily oppose it. These articles basically focus on social dynamics that have tangible political implications. My colleagues and I care not to study the ideals that may exist in the hearts of Heebaan or Bahar or for that matter any other individual. I also believe that restoring or creating a Somali nation is an active political undertaking that my colleagues and I do not aspire to.

Restoring or creating a Somali nation state is up to the Somali people. If indeed Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan are the new national leaders (or the champions for Somali nation state) they must do so in their country and with deeds on the ground in the former Somalia. We will then speak truth to power, be willing to update our study based on new empirical inputs supplied by the champions! – we could all then agree! right? In the meantime would you spare us this Big Hue and Cry about nothing?

On the issue of *Traditional Polities* or what we term as Somali Traditional States, Dr Bahar asks Dr Britt to Name one “state” ! as if the former Somali Democratic Republic (SDR) of Somalia was the only state for all Somali people throughout history! Why do Mr. Heebaan and Dr Bahar reject the historical fact that the former Somalia existed on ly for 31-years (1960-1991). Why wouldn't Dr Bahar know that traditional state existed prior to the artificial modern Somalia.?

As I mentioned in previous articles, there is rich data and evidence that some areas in the Somali peninsula had a very advanced governing structures such as Sultanates and Kingdoms. Examples of these are the Obbio Sultante, The Hafun Kingdom, Taleeh Regional Polity (and its variant dervish rulers in early 1900s) and few Arab Sultanates in Southern Somalia. Some of these states are mentioned in Robecchi's Journeys in the Somali Country 1890-91. One particularly interesting state is the Obbio state which was invaded by the fascists sometime late 1920s and officially annexed to the greater Italian controlled Somalia in 1930. The Obbio Sultanate is blamed by some as an artificially imposed authority and brutal sultanate, while others defend it wholeheartedly. (Of course these are based again on clan biases). Other kingdoms include the Galladi in the far South and the rather very old Ajuuraan Kingdom and Zela Kingdoms.

In fact the Somali traditional polities were decentralized in organization (socially acceptable authorities) that could deliver public service far more efficiently than any centralized governing structure. The traditional authorities were not unique to the Somali peninsula only, there were similar governing structures in many parts of what we call today the Persian Gulf. Centralized governing structure in the Somali peninsula was first initiated by the European rulers and later legitimized by the subsequent Somali governments between 1960 -1991.

Contrary to the modernists and enthusiasts, the traditional Somali clan system provides the Somali people with social justice, egalitarian and participatory decision making and regulates social interaction. It is the obliteration of the traditional clan system that adversely impacts the society and limits the progress of some Somali communities.

It is not a random chance that Somaliland and Puntland are far more peaceful and prosperous than southern Somalia. These quasi-states were constituted through clan conventions that brought together various clans to chart a collective goal. It would have been equally commendable if the Southern clans could achieve the same. Perhaps it could even lead to a potential union or a nation-state for the people of the Somali peninsula.

(II)The Fair Arguments of Dr Musse

One bright and commendable exception of the paranoia is Abdiwahab Musse's article titled “*Re-examining the critical premises of Ahmed III's article without prejudice*”.

Dr Musse's critique is authentic and intellectually credible; I thank him for an objective and honest critique. However I would like to draw attention to the fact that the cyclical conflict and cooperation described by Dr Musse as Tol-&-Tolnima is a dynamic process in itself (similar to Malthusian dynamics). The only addition I offer here is that in

complex social dynamics there is a “tipping point” beyond which conditions are irreversible. It is here where my analysis diverges from the views offered by Dr Musse.

Dr Musse writes

Yes, the Somali people have natural tendencies of high affinity for clan identities that can be and have been exploited for sectarian purposes from time-to-time. Such synthetic and sectarian exploitation of this clan affinity, however, is in contrast to the ubiquitous inter- and intra-tribe brotherhood and bonds that have allowed them to coexist as Somalis and “bury-the-hatches” after brief conflicts for centuries. Take for example; it is the Somali customs that after an inter- or intra-tribe conflict to mandate the exchange of daughters-for-marriage between the rivals. The essence of this exchange is to establish lasting blood-bonds between the rivals so as to prevent future skirmishes or make it easier for its negotiations.

This exactly makes my point, the dealings between clans for collective gain is what we term as cooperation, preventing future clan war and negotiation is coordination. This cooperation and coordination as well as competition is very common in any AND ALL societies. What is unique to the Somali is that there is a construct called “the clan network” and “the clan affiliations” that govern the entire processes of social, political and civic transactions. (*Cooperation, Coordination and Competition*). The cyclical nature of this is also natural and expected though not guaranteed to be permanent!. Per our study, the conditions for competition, cooperation and coordination by and within the Somali society have changed, This means there is a phase change (i.e. a change in the environment and the manner the clan dynamics occurs). This is what we call irreversibility. It is similar and very much related to “*Tipping Point Concept*”. (*A concept that was first discovered by Thomas Schelling of University of Maryland*) .

Dr Muse continues to write

Ahmed makes the assumption [and it's one that is often made by Somalis and non-Somalis alike] because the building blocks of Somali society's rudimentary architecture consist of identifiable clans/tribes; Somalis must be politically assorted groups with competing interests and ideals. This is a blatant manifestation of intellectual dishonesty, if not outright logical laziness, and naïve understanding of the customs of the Somali society when it comes to tribes or clans

The argument that Somali groups are not complex organisms as suggested by Dr Musse is mistaken. Somali society is a complex dynamic system of self-organizing assorted groupings. This indeed is an empirically grounded truth!. In fact all societies are complex and dynamic including insect societies, gang groups, colonies of bacteria and wolves in the desert – amusing but this is scientifically well-founded fact!

Dr Musse's implied thrust that there is no evidence of competing groups of conflicting interest is also far from the truth. I ask what is the current regionalism. Disagreements from 1991 to date ?

Dr Muse writes

Ahmed's description of Somalis as being naturally competing groups of conflicting interests, without any definition of the said interests, falls short of critical examination of the historical coexistence of Somalis

Dr Muse, blames others (clan politicians and foreigners) for exploiting the clan system. While I agree with the fact that the political leaders of clans (and not the traditional leaders) often use selective clan histories to advance their political goals. It is crucial that we acknowledge that the clan system was NOT invented by politicians and foreigners. Politicians are only actors operating in an environment that allows them to exploit or may be they are reflections of the clan's will and desires. Politicians are neither the inventors of clan groups nor the custodians of the clan culture.

The above is important point to underscore because it is here where the Northern Somalis make a distinction. The northern Somalis (Puntland and Somaliland) have minimized the role of clan politicians as the sole authority. They have constituted clan sanctioned protocols and resurrected the traditional clan system complete with elders to referee/legislate and traditional polity to govern. Unlike the chaotic regions in the south. Both Puntland and Somaliland provide a very well regulated space for political leaders of their clans. Perhaps this is what makes them viable enteritis and functional states that the international community must consider to deal with directly.

This is also important because traditionally the "Clan System" was always the solution mechanism and clan affinity is the reason for instigating struggles. In the Somali pastoral areas for instance, often environmental and material factors condition the interaction of clan members. This helps to visualize collective behavior and inert-clan dynamics of cooperation and competition.

It is also true that one could observe patterns of competition and cooperation/coordination in the modern state Somalia that existed 1960-1991. For instance; evolving behaviors (i.e. mathematically model and evolve behavior temporally) to modern day, one observes rich and unquestionable evidence that clan based dynamics leads to patterns that show group competition and control of resources. Even prior to the civil conflict, under modern conditions, competition and cooperation were ever-present but often for different reasons. The centralized state (Government of Somalia) was the resource and governing it remained the grounds for competition. This was a fact of life in the former Somalia, even during the glorified independence movement examples of which I shall provide in the following paragraphs.

Dr Muse challenges me and others to resurrect Somalia, I must emphasize however that my work and articles are limited to studying dynamics of the collapse of the former Somalia. I am not interested in "what" or "how" should the former Somalia be governed,

be united or divided. For that reason, I would not address the comments related to prescribing policies for Somalia. I insist that such policies must come from within.

(III) Historical Political Competition

There is an ample historical data and experiential data in the Somali inhabited areas of the horn of Africa (DjBouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Puntland, Somaliland and Southern Somalia). But for brevity and to answer Dr Musse's claims I would provide few examples.

Dr Musse writes

As such, Ahmed's stated "problem of Somalia" rather than offering a real opportunity for a lasting solution merely reflects on the surface of the current manmade socio-political climates of the country. Moreover, Ahmed's references to the stability achieved by Somaliland and Puntland through "clan-based" process and arrangements is, in this context, quite misplaced as a viable solution for future prosperous and unified Somalia. The genuine motives behind the exercises taken by the Somali people of the Northwest and Northeast are consistent with the longstanding traditions/customs of the Somali people and in itself is not an evidence for the natural existence of political groupings with "competing interests".

Enthusiastic Pan Somali views aside, Our study shows that Somali people have always organized themselves into clan polities through which they express themselves politically and culturally (yes culturally). Owing to this, my articles identify two major aspects of the collapse of the former Somalia.

(1) Somali social structure has far reaching political implications (2) Somali social dynamics as the driving force for exclusive clan based cooperation and external competition in the Somali inhabited territories of the horn of Africa.

❖ Contemporary Examples:

- Somali people have forcibly (and sometimes voluntarily) segregated themselves into their traditional polities. There is a direct correlation (though complex and non-linear) between clan history, rate of clan interaction and spatial location of a clan member. A good example in contemporary Somalia is the killings of civilians in 1991 in Mogadishu. This merciless butchery was not just a political act but a collective drive for clan segregation on the part of some to oust certain groups out of the capital and out of the south for that matter. These are historic realities that must be noted for their value as facts regardless of one's nationalistic views or hopes for a nation state.
- **Segregation and regionalism during the independence movement:** The late 1940s and 1950s, Somali peoples self segregation (one with political implications) For fear of political domination the HDMS party rightly demanded the decentralized rule for an independent future Somali state.

This was followed by massive forced expulsion of some northern clans that were seen as pro Somali Youth League (SYL). Please note that both sides claim to be the victims of the other as is the customary rule in the clan based society. This historical fact shows the very truth of social dynamics and its political implications in the former Somalia. After all the glorious struggle for independence had its clan induced cracks!

(IV) Conclusion

Based on the facts stated above, I must point out

1. Dr Musse's claims of glorious Somali people with a common interest are undocumented and baseless to account for as a historical fact. His assertion that a bottom-up approach to Somalia is not original to my work is very accurate. However as I mentioned earlier the originality of our work is limited to computation and verification of irreversibility. I believe Somalia is no more, the days of single united nation state is beyond restoration. Somali people are better off saving what is left by constituting prescribing some endogenously driven course of action.
2. The betterment of Somali people MAY not be UNIQUELY dependent on what state or how many states there should be!. The argument for single state as opposed to multiple peaceful and prosperous states is a false choice because there is NO single state and there was none prior to 1960s. Perhaps Somali people would acknowledge the fact that conditions today are irreversible to their original state. The idea of a single unified central government cannot be starting point.(it is likely to fail just as it did for 15times since 1991). Conceivably, however, there may be plausible scenarios where peaceful Somali regions/states could choose to work towards a union for all Somali inhabited territories.
3. While I thank Dr Musse for intelligent critique, I would advise Mr. Heebaan and Dr Bahar is to explore the facts, study the essence of the article you so fervently oppose (even try to understand the science upon which it is based) before getting on with lust for destruction.
4. Emotional outbursts and personal attacks cannot be convincing substitute for sound reasoning. There is no need for unchecked enthusiasm or paranoia. There is no need for unfair assumptions without understanding the origins, the scientific basis and arguments in our work / the opinion pieces.
5. Dr Bahar's emotional article and Mr. Heebaan's narratives are just long charming pieces, simple nationalistic opinions (not facts). Likewise, their analysis is based on just false social modalities and void expectations of what Somali people should be!. Dr Bahar must refrain from undue personal attack on individual authors and misrepresentation of all the articles including the one he was attempting to defend. He either did not read them or could not understand

them perhaps due to the emotional might of his zealous vision for single centralized Somali nation state. I of course do not sanction nor blame his views but only ask for intellectual courtesy.

6. Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan must understand that any critique starts with understanding of the opposing view. They must appreciate that a critique has an aim of asserting a counter-argument (but not emotional outburst and personal insults on others). In fact, contempt for different opinions is a hallmark of ineptitude and it surely is short of intellectual reasoning. I believe that my two articles and the explanations provided by Dr Britt in principle unseat the long cute emotional essays of Dr Bahar and Mr Heebaan.

Finally, I don't see any reason to continue being part of unproductive perpetual argument. I however hope that both Dr Bahar and Mr. Heebaan learn and understand the scientific aspects of irreversibility, decentralized governance and social dynamics that we clearly explain in the excerpts of our study published for the public on WardheerNews.

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