Is Somalia Going to be Fixed? Implications of Hope

By Said M-Shidad H. Hussein
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1) Introduction

This article is mainly based on my former essay "Why Somalia Can't Be Fixed? Sources of its Political Problems and their Solutions", published in 2013 and 2014 and presented since then at different centers. The essay has since then been modified and extended. The article is selected summary of that modified work.[1] The aim of the article is to recapitulate the discussions on the nature of our political problems and recommendations for solutions within relation to the recent political developments. The discussion covers the nature and interconnection among the drivers of the problem such as chronic leadership and educational deficiency, psychosocial factor in the conflict, misconception on clan issue, and injected foreign ideas and influence; a paradigm of a solution; and the case of the current government. The descriptions and statements in the text have regarded both the central and regional governments before the current central government, that is from 1967-2016, and they are still applicable to the current regional governments.

2) Anatomy of the Problem

Before we take the discussion of the problems, let us show the nature of interconnection of the problems in the following figure. According to the figure, political problems start with bad leadership. A bad leadership releases a chain of other problems that cause steep decline and finally a collapse. These problems recycle and come back to the leadership, keeping it to remain as a bad leadership and maintaining the failure.

Problems in category '**A**', are seen here as causes, while categories '**B**', '**C**', and '**D**' are seen as effects, as they are shown in the figure and the subsequent explanations. But effects may result in a chain of other effects and unknown end. What kind of scenario can be after a failure then?
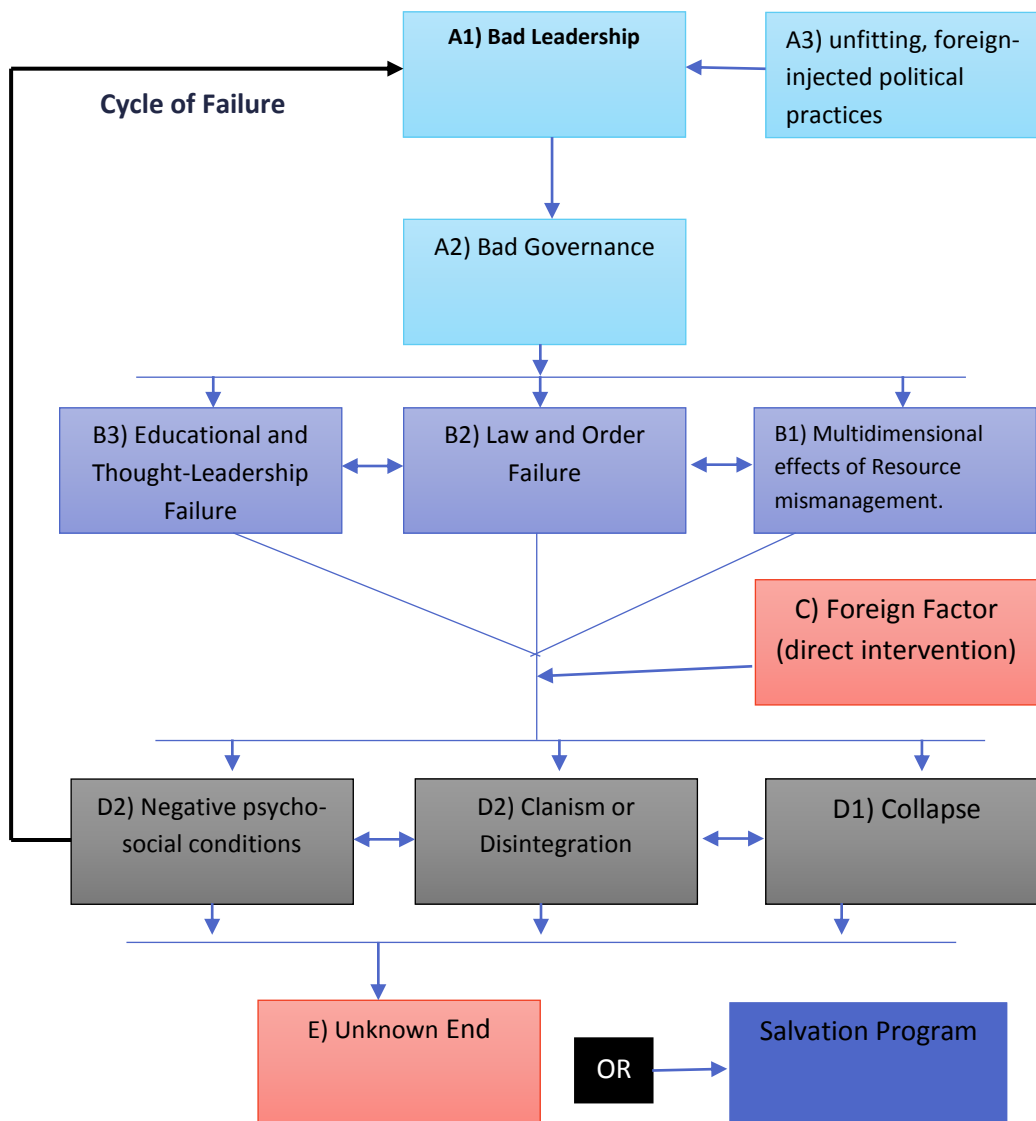
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                          │ A1) Bad Leadership │◄─────│ A3) unfitting, foreign-│
   Cycle of Failure  ─────►│                  │      │ injected political     │
                          │                  │      │ practices              │
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                          │ A2) Bad Governance │
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Figure 1: Anatomy of the problem

2.1 Leadership and Governance Failure

Usually, Leaders are accidently-positioned, visionless, power-oriented, arrogant, misspeaking, manipulative, and Machiavellian. In governance, these characteristics have caused Inability to serve but self-serving, State Privatization, favoritism, divisive; inability to deal with useful ideas or their producers.

Leaders as Liability

Nations fade, fail or disintegrate because of repetitive, fatal mistakes of their leaders. When a series of leaders fail to deal effectively with pressures exerted by aggressive outsiders or corrosive civil war, the existence of their nation is in danger. This means that they don't

understand or care about the harbinger in the events. The biggest failure for a nation is a failure in drawing a lesson from the past. This means they don't know or make use the history.

Leadership efficiency is not measured by a leader's total dependence on himself or special supporters, but a leader's character, and ability to gain public support and honest advice. Without this support or advice a ruler cannot refer to the past and cannot control the present to save the future.

Leadership is building a trust and a courteous relationship with your people; working hard for meeting their expectations from you; being considerate to their aspirations; appreciating their contributions and welcoming them into decision-making. If you find yourself fighting or dividing your people, you are a failed leader.

The common behavior of current system includes:

- Forming incompetent big government with high frequency of cabinet change.
- Distributing the job without describing the job. Since the administrators and employees are not given a described assignment or duty, they use their offices for personal interest.
- Wasting the resources on meaningless conflict.
- Seeking to cover up the failures by finger pointing, unjustifiable excuses; misleading and propagandistic communication by claiming, for example, the credit of internationally-provided projects and local community efforts.
- Avoiding implementation of effective judiciary system, and check and balance mechanism in general.
- Resisting to the reformation and implementation of the process of democratization.
- A lot of unnecessary external travels at the expense of the domestic work.
- Tendency of hiding something always and avoiding to have honesty advices.

Why a good leader can't raise in Somalia? The source of the Somali leadership problem is due to corruption and poverty; Corruption assisted by the international system, and poverty sustained by that corruption. It is also due to the loss of trust by the society in the leaders and absence of acceptable nationwide civic movements.

2.2 Incompatible political practices from a foreign source

Colonialism, socialism, despotism, extremism, sectarianism, genderism: These have corrupted or confused the indigenous culture in the leadership behavior and political thinking, as Mark Turner of Financial Times has noted nearly two decades ago: "For the past half a century, Somalia has been a testing ground for all political theories the outside world could throw at it: colonialism, European-style statehood, Soviet and, later, American cold war philosophies. None worked."[2]

Even prior to the Independence of Somalia, Somali politics were internationally abused in relation to the Cold War conflict. Italo-American administered political black mailing process caused in late 1950s a split of Somali Youth league (SYL), the movement that led Somalia to independence. As a result, more nationalist strong wing was blocked from the elections of 1959 and consequently from the government due to allegations of inclining to the East. Seeds of instability or corruption were planted in the heart of the upcoming Somali government with obvious long-term effects.[3]

2.3 Law and order failure: violent, chaotic situation in the daily life

In 1970s there was a political factor in the administrative and legal systems. In 1980s these systems were openly corrupted which contributed to the downfall of the government. Although unusual capability of survival approach and useful indigenous law utilization were observed to be at work variously in Somalia during the years of the civil strife,[4] inexcusable sad experience of chaos could also be observed. Human behavior falls on behavioral space that connects the angel behavior with the wolf behavior; relative prevailing circumstances determine the type of human behavior; but it is the leaders and the will of people that make difference in the circumstances; by the options in that space, it is a choice to be like an angel or a wolf.

2.4 Educational and Thought-leadership Failure

Education is a formal and informal never-ending process of learning ideas, principles, values, and skills and applying them in life and in leadership. But education loses its meaning if it is assumed to mean only earning a sort of certificate or degree for privileges. That is how the Western-originated education has been perceived in Somalia. This education was mainly seen as a way of getting a job from the government. University staff and students are not trained to produce serious ideas.

Leaders do not welcome productive education because they hate to hear honesty advices against practices of corruption and bad governance. Propaganda takes the role of education and knowledge.

How does this affect our brainpower or thought relevance? As political leaders divide and deceive us, so mainly do our opinion-makers or thought-leaders. Some of them usually make their employment to propagate baseless, divisive or seditious word; to focus on weaknesses of the nation, and to demote the morale of its people; while they don't mention its unique strengths and don't show the light in the tunnel.

Others have accustomed to somalize common human mistakes or failures as no human other than Somali has ever been experienced these problems. Others miss no opportunity to join violent or

corrupt circles; while others even curse the nation and dig into molesting its identity and mutating its history.[5] What resulted from this problem include the following:

- Ignoring the inherited values and teachings.
- Incompetent educators and Pseudo thinkers.
- Misused or unproductive education.
- Unfitting education in social studies.
- Lack of teaching in public responsibility, good citizenship, and concept of statehood.
- Lack of interest in education among the young generation.
- Inability of intellectual production generally.

2.5 Effects of Negative psychosocial conditions

There have been two stages of psychosocial or socio-psychosocial conditions: those developed before the civil war and those caused by the civil war.

Before the civil war

This was caused: **a**) the differences among the histories of communities in effective joining of the urban life. Disparities in joining urban life, mean that disparities in educational, economic, and political participation opportunities. Although 'self' and possibly the government should naturally be got blamed, the people come up with their own assumptions on the disparities in a way of negative perception. Usually those feel remaining in a disadvantaged position, blame the clans of the successful leaders, connecting individual fortune with clan background, and without regarding the history of the case in question. They always fail to recognize the role of local communities and individuals on shortcomings in making efforts for promoting their own causes. Someone has to be scapegoated.

b) Policies of some governments exacerbate the issue. Power manipulating policies means that inviting a fear, and inviting a fear means making an enemy, actual or perceived one. Accordingly, until recently some leaders practice a policy of marginalizing or victimizing some communities because they are less empowered, or because they can question about unpopular political dreams of the person or group in the power. Additionally, behavior of some leaders earns blame for their own communities because members of them openly support those leaders. The situation was generally confused as to whom in a position to be accused or to accuse someone.

Psychosocial conditions or Negative perceptions caused by the civil war:

The above-mentioned situations have also been the cases of the civil war era with an exacerbation as following:

- Disguising greed under grievance, fighting a supposed enemy, and counteraction measurements have become the cornerstone of the conflict.
- Silent grief that puts the nation collectively in a sad condition of health situation.
- Frustration, perception, opinionated, mistrust, miscommunication (a word of warfare).
- Failure to recognize self-weaknesses and others' strengths or concerns.
- Loss of national aspiration.
- A cycle of violating agreements on peace and reconciliation, and even avoiding a genuine reconciliation.
- Adopting a behavior of narrow-mindedness by taking irresponsible actions for attaining at short-term gains at the expense of community and national interests.
- Accepting up normal acts as they are normal generally.
- Reacting within emotion and lack of commitment for determined changes.
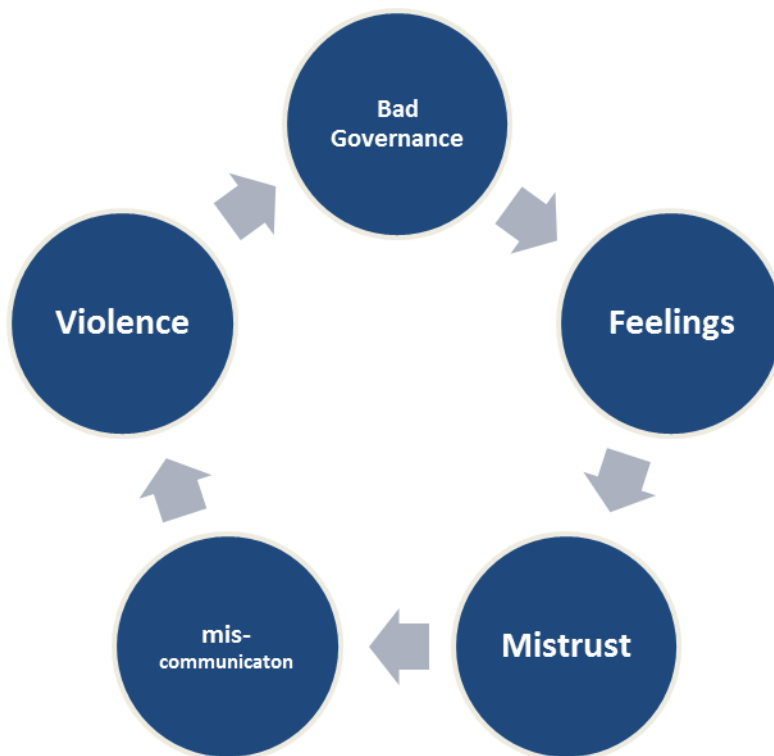- Inability to control minor differences that are usually turned to be major confrontations.

Figure 2: Cycle of the negative perception

Generally, the decline of our psychological and consciousness qualities has a tremendous impact on our intellectual, ethical, attitudinal, and physical ability and enthusiasm. It's sometimes said that "public perception" is reality. But public perception is not reality when it is politically created, become part of sources of problem, or chronic and multiplicative in nature. A more right reality is that, one problem begets more problems and one solution begets more solutions.

Bad leadership and bad governance therefore immediately and deeply affect the following three areas:

i) Livelihood of the people because of resource mismanagement.
ii) Order of the day because of shortcomings of legal system.
iii) Consciousness and proper thinking of the people because of educational and intellectual production deficiency or absence of a culture of knowledge-consumption. In this stage, the majority of the people were angary and their unity was deeply damaged. Governmental system was vulnerable. Equally offending, public response was mostly illegal and destructive. This opens a passage at the back door for a sharp foreign intervention.

2.6 Direct Foreign Intervention

This is well-known scenario with briefly the following aspects: Deliberate exacerbation of the unfavorable situation in the country and pre-emption on positive developments; inter-governmental contending interests at the expense of Somali interest; flow of arms from the neighbors (the author saw three different times in 1991 heavy arms coming beyond the southern borders of Somalia); and illicit money, usually from Arab source, to a Somali group or individual.

2.7 Collapse:

This stage is characterized by failure in political, social, economic, environmental, ethical, healthy, legal, and security dimensions.

3) Misconception on the issue of clan role

Some people seek to describe the political problem as clannism phenomenon. But clannism is not a basic problem; it is an effect of poverty, corruption, bad leadership, and the resultant attitudes and aberration. You cannot control an effect within active cause; and you cannot solve the problem by clan-based arbitrary quota in government.

Kinship has been a natural social organization in Somalia before it is misused in the current politics. But clannism is distortion and it exists where the power and law are abused, and the society has no means for change. Consequently, it is used as an offending or defending cry; so as a political aspect, it is mainly a clash between two communities created by greedy leaders. Crooked rulers in general use make the available divisive factor for power gaining or maintaining. The Somalis are divided only by lineage, and that is what is left for the opportunist leaders to use for the tactic of 'divide and rule'. The more the situation become stabilized, the less the clannish association do have a chance to exist.

In his unique work on contemporary sociopolitical problems of Somalia, Hussein Bulhan does not see the clan issue as a basic problem in Somalia. He suggested that the sources of crisis are: flawed state that took root under colonial rule; local elite that transformed the colonial into auto-colonial order; and the distorted clan system but something distorted by such forces.[6] Other scholars are almost in a similar view. According to Besteman and Cassanelli, masses were organized for power gaining with seeking to seize economic resources including 'land, water, labor' which should face counteraction (defense).[7] Kapteijns argues that the basics of the problem have been a manipulation of clan sentiment by greedy political and military leaders to gain exclusively control over the state.[8]

The situation reflects clan phenomenon because an appropriate atmosphere for ending the socio-psychological conditions and hostilities has not been created. Relevant discussions about the nature of the problems and their solutions have not been conducted. A true reconciliation has not been carried out. Some superficial conferences for making a kind of government, with determined injection of sedition by powerful external forces, cannot defuse the effects of nearly 50 years of misgoverning or civil war.

4) Paradigm of a Solution

The answer for the question: 'why cannot Somalia be fixed' was concisely taken to be as a need of controlling bad attitudes and developing good attitudes, all components of attitudes: our feelings (emotive), our thinking (cognitive), and our actions (behavioral). However, this needs an explanation points as following:

a) Normalizing the Atmosphere

This should take organizing coherent local and national movements for reconciliation, social reintegration and state improvement; and conducting a constructive dialogue and discussions with engagement-platforms for generating useful ideas for solutions.

b) Operationalizing the Ideas

The generated ideas must be operationalized through an organized human instrument. This means that turning the ideas into planned and principled objectives and goals driven by nationalistic spirit and actions. Thus it has to be equipped with social movement and adoption of resourced conceptual framework. In other words, if a change is to take place, the process must be run by a carefully-built, vibrant civic movement which is led by a screened, non-sectarian team with qualities of character: vision, determination, courage, integrity, sincerity, selfless service, Perseverance, accountability, and flexibility.

The signs of success in this stage include: relevance of the approaches for the demanded change, quantitative and qualitative factors of the supporting human force, and quick preliminary achievements or immediate tangible performance.

c) Managing the State Lift-off and Fighting at the Real Battle

Good ideas don't work at a place where there is no peace in mind. The task of this stage is constituted by fighting a battle for fixing minds and systems. Thus the stage demands: starting a process of establishing effectively-functioning security and legal systems; transforming the negative political discourse into reasoning and respecting practices; restoring the lost spirit of nationalism; empowering the general public to assist and check the government for being accountable to the public; and developing a safe relationship with the engaged countries and organizations.

Why is a state of mind a real battle? The loss of dignity and leadership do not prevent many Somalis from immersing in a hard struggle for survival. Under these rare tragedies, they have initiated or adopted a unique art of endurance and existence, and they may outdo in some activities many peoples of normal circumstances. However, there is no doubt that these self-inflicted tragedies have seriously degraded our national or individual aspirations.

Positive social changes occur when society make success in institutional forms, economic and intellectual productivity, and human development. The driving force behind the motivation is psychological. The psychological motive is almost the primary factor for the social change over other determinants of the change.

Promising leadership, ideas and actions instigate social aspirations and expectations. As the most moving force, rising ambition encourages the will and energy of society and directs its objectives and activities for achieving great results. Society's self-conception of what it wants to become and what it wants to achieve, inspires a collective aspiration. Such aspiration leads the society to making efforts and taking risks for attaining at greater achievements.

d) Checking the Efficacy of Prevailing Policies

There is a special need in our case for providing a relevant mechanism or measurement for adequately studying, substantially evaluating, reasonably challenging, and appropriately applying the prevailing political, legal and administrative systems. We should recognize that, there is a big problem in our underlying political culture. The components of this problem arise from confusion caused by invasive foreign ideas, and our own failure to understand or uphold the requirements of good governance, good citizenship and public responsibility with ignoring the God-given blessings in the nature of our nationhood.

We do need to understand, solve, and transform that problem through our own intellectual efforts and practical determination with reference to our own cultural heritage primarily. Our cultural

heritage, which has not adequately been studied and understood, doesn't fail us. It is the inability of the generation of ours to understand what it needs to do for our statehood that fails us.

e) Conducting a State Building

The above-addressed stages are requisites of building a well-functioning state: national strong one and effective local ones; introducing the long-demanded change and reformation; fostering a law-abiding and education-absorbing environment; promoting a home-grown educational system based on indigenous culture and modern scientific competencies with relevant creativity and intellectual production.

Somalia needs and can only be properly developed through a determined revolutionary administration driven by justice, vision, and work based on knowledge; and through a society whose social base is constituted by cultured, strong, happy families. This is an important issue because the essence of the Somali culture is values and ethics, yet the Somalis have been suffering from lack of exercising these basics of life for decades.

f) Repentance

When there is a persisting, perplexing case of a human failure in the course of the life, an existence of moral problem lurks in the feeling. This feeling does not only reflect an aspect of natural sense but it also refers to formal laws. Religious and historical accounts state that the humans can be punished by the consequences of their repetitive wrongful actions. Such punishment is usually presented by a serious individual or collective failure in a situation or situations in the life. The action of reversing the situation is managerially called 'problem-solving' and religiously or morally called 'repentance'.
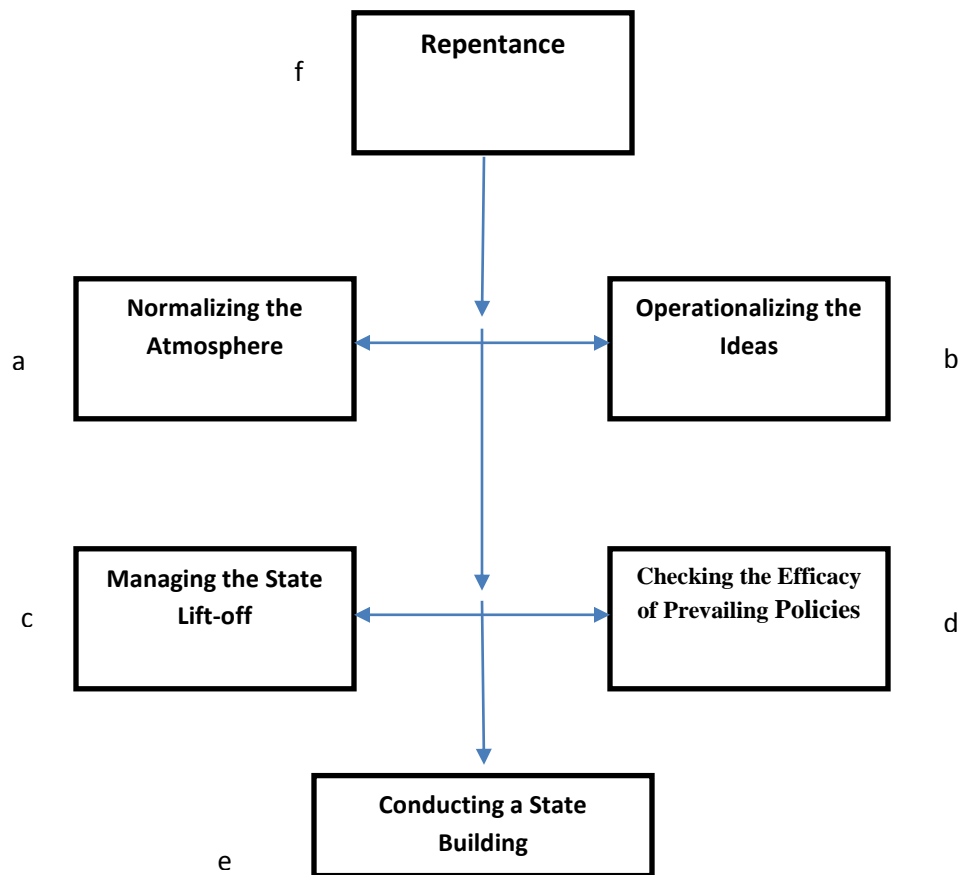
For the actions of the mistake correction, problem-solving and repentance have common requirements and diverse ones. For example, both necessitate sincere recognition of the causes of the problem and eventual cancellation of any more practices in the causes. They also demand a new behavior of law-abiding attitude. The problem-solving particularly relies on following new forms of administrative or managerial regulations. The repentance (at least in the Islam) needs deeper than that. A violation of divine law must be recognized; consequently a decision of not doing it again (in the limits of human capability) must be made. All types of the rights taken by overstep of the law must be returned or compensated. Although the repentance does not mind adoption of new forms of administrative or managerial regulations, it further wants adherence to the original law. As a requirement, it also demands that the person's actions to be guided primarily by a set of ethics and values not by a supervision of somebody.

This is not even something new to secular education. It is probably what Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was seeking to address when he was forming his moral theory 'The Categorical Imperative' in the midst of advancing the thoughts of educational and developmental secularization in the West. The theory teaches generally that the person's actions must derive from his or her beliefs as a duty of morality. According to the theory, our morality is questionable if it can't guide us to the right actions in every possible circumstance.[9] Kant's idea is now used as one of theoretical approaches for social development.

However, the history also shows us the difficultness of sustaining fulfillment of personal responsibility toward public interest without a checking supervision. Humans usually obey the laws in virtue of being feared by a certain punishment. Unlike the worldly law making and enforcing authorities, the Oft Forgiving most Forbearing maker of the divine law, Allah or God, does neither directly deal with us nor his punishment does occur immediately or at least appears to be so. We do not feel thus, as vicegerents, a pressure of accountability for failing performance of obligation. But this can be a sagacity of false condition of security.

Throughout the known history of the mankind, it can be detectable that it has always been ethical or moral decay which mainly leads to the breakdown of other laws and the collapse of the systems. Thus, since the Somalis themselves attribute their sociopolitical failure to violations of celestial and administrative laws, they have to accept that they need to fulfill all requirements of failure correction in accordance with their belief.

Figure 3: Paradigm of a solution

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In short, the process is to cover four operational areas:

a) Capable, volunteering civic movement under character
b) Generative discussions and decisive actions under control
c) Genuine reconciliation and readjustments under compromise
d) Government with background check, and with balanced social and administrative environment under contract.
e) An action of justice must be the core of every step because the justice is the secret of solving the problems. So the requirements of the justice must not be confused for any purpose.

5) **How can we correlate that old problem-solution framework to the rise and vision of the new government?**

The days before the election of president Farmaajo, there has been a sense of unity in the society which is mainly prompted by effects of foreign presence and intervention; great disappointment in the performance and behavior of the former regime; inappropriate but repetitive approach of electing members of the Gole (parliament); and the lingering concern about the impact of these and other problems on the future of the nation. As a result, the new Gole largely tended to understand the demand of the people which means that the prayers and pressure of the people have finally contributed to a change.

But the disturbing problem is that, effective social movements or coherent national front is still absent (although the new government appears to be taking that role now reasonably). During the election process, there were only loose small groupings which don't have characteristics of party or social movement. Since the pubic power is still week, the risks of inappropriate policies and actions on part of the governmental institutions, specifically the Gole, have still no means of check. Eventually, the general public can partly be misled by spoiling political or economic domestic opportunists, and external intervention can weaken the government.

Of the above mentioned stages of problem-solving, it is only at the first stage (normalizing the atmosphere) for the new government. However, the vision and work program of the government are so far meeting the expectations and are accordingly satisfactory, with an indication of growing challenges.

Owing to the general situation of the country, this government cannot carry out a lot of regular economic and social development programs. However, there are urgent needs which characterize basic requirements for the survival or recovery of the nation. These pressing needs demand prioritization by the government and close attention by the general public.

Reminding the government areas of immediate expectation of the people:

1) Ending the practices of bad governance and corruption.
2) Fixing the judiciary system and providing comprehensive justice.
3) Bringing under the government control the requirements of national security and sovereignty.
4) Organizing the people safely and leading them to ending the consciousness crises, and contributing to successful national reconciliation and state reformation, with having a power of protecting the government from unscrupulous internal and external pressures.
5) Seeking to improve basic human development determinants which include education with sense of public responsibility, health, and poverty reduction.

6) Seeking to provide services for land and water management, livestock health, and mitigation of environmental degradation.
7) Establishing a system of controlling the quality of our imports such as food, medical, and manufactured goods for ensuring to be safe for our health, environment, economy, and general well-being, which is not the case now.
8) Controlling negative effects of contending interests of engaged counties on our country.
9) Ending and preventing the plunder (ongoing or eventual) of our marine and mineral resources.
10) The new Gole must improve its ability and attitude toward representing the people.

6. Conclusion: No Gain without Pain

Our condition still begs a response. We have to respond for a change. On the response, there will be great need of resources for the struggle; that requires a sacrifice. There will be a great deal of challenge from domestic and foreign spoilers; that requires a unity. And there will be tremendous discouragements and distractions from our own situation; and that needs character.

The problems persist because we don't practice these principles. At the same time, our heritage can lend us basics for changing our condition. But a change will not take place until we prioritize collective participation of achieving that goal at the expense of our own personal preferences. Understandably, a formation of an effective civic movement is not an easy job in the Somali situation, but it is not difficult within amount of efforts and commitment by a group of people. If today can be made brighter than yesterday and latest move can be made better than a former one, there is a hope.

Every nation has strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses of the Somali nation have long been overplayed at the expense of its strengths. It is not easy to imagine how this affects destructively the collective attitude and ambition of the nation. If some of its strengths would appropriately be operationalized, that would cancel the weaknesses and certainly would make Somalia one of the most successful nations around the world.

It is the leaders with vision, commitment and integrity that change a situation of a nation or people. It is not a collection of elders, women, youth, and opportunists injected with foreign ideas. These are masses when organized for a momentum cause, show enthusiasm and may sing together patriotically. But when the event is over and the people go back to their business, embrace again their special interests and ignore the stories at the meeting. They are masses that need to be led and changed by such a leadership.

Although the Somalis have been wronged by their leaders for a long time, and their energy and intelligence were wasted for meaningless ends, they are known as capable and courageous people. But we should know that, the leaders can also be wronged by their people if the people

lose their sense to special interests. It is time to be re-awakened for recovering the national potential, pride, and dignity. We don't have a choice but to end collectively and individually the era of consciousness crises, the era of agony and aberration.

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