



Somaliland and Khatumo Talks Herald the demise of the Union

By Osman Hassan
August 31, 2016

Prof Ali Khalif Galaydh, the President of the Khatumo State of Somalia, has lately toned down his usual virulent anti Somaliland rhetoric. The one-clan enclave, he says, is not the one responsible for the creeping break-up of Somalia's unity contrary to the hitherto received conventional wisdom since the clan's declaration of secession in May 1991. The culprits, he intones, are Mogadishu and its myopic self-seeking southern rulers, namely Culusow and company, who couldn't care less about the union, and have done much to ruin it. Few in the north, whether unionists or secessionists, would disagree with the professor's perceptions and assessments.



Prof Galaydh's revelation about the current southern ambivalence about the union is nothing new but goes back to the negotiations for the union at independence, when northerners had to press for Somali unity at all costs to them and, in the face of foot-dragging from southerners, had to satiate their greed and consent to their grab of all the leading posts of the State. For all their sacrifices, their reward was to be ungratefully dubbed as the "misguided dimwits". In their defence, those founding fathers of Somalia were at least honourable nationalists for whom the union once enacted became sacred, unlike the current incumbents in Ville Somalia who are shamelessly corrupt and trade on the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia

Caught between a rock and a hard place, with Khatumo a victim preyed on by its predatory neighbours, Somaliland and Puntland, often in unholy alliance, and with the tacit or open collusion of Hassan Culusow and his Prime Minister for their personal or clannish ends, Prof Galaydh sought guidance in history. He took leaf from the book of the former Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, who, despairing of liberating their Israeli-occupied territories, resorted to the most inconceivable desperate action by opening peace talks with his arch-enemy. He could claim some modicum of success for his daredevil initiative albeit at the cost of making himself a pariah in the Arab world and beyond.

For his part, professor Galaydh, who like Sadat has failed so far to liberate his regions occupied by Somaliland, but merely relies on typically arm-chair professorial rhetoric and empty threats, felt obliged to do the unthinkable and do a deal with the devil he knows best, - the renegade one-clan secessionist enclave calling itself Somaliland. Just as Sadat did not consult his people as becoming of a typical Arab autocrat, so has the professor, no less autocrat in his own ways, embarked on this audacious mission without consulting even key members of his government let alone the wider stakeholders of Khatumo. Unlike Sadat, Prof Galaydh has nothing to show for his one-sided goodwill, and if anything has made Somaliland that much more provocatively cocksure and uncompromising. The talks are for all practical purposes aborted by Somaliland, reckoning Khatumo is in the bag and they can dispense with talks with a vanquished adversary. Over confidence, which is typical of the enclave, could be their worst enemy.

a. Somaliland's self-deluding Perspective

Somaliland believes that Khatumo is on the ropes and therefore all they need to do is to crank up the pressure and deliver the knockout. Judging by its actions, its aims can only be to further weaken Khatumo by creating mistrust, discord and disarray among its people, and to trigger a rush to embrace Somaliland among a competing, leaderless and demoralised clans each fending for itself.

Dr Galaydh, for whom Khatumo is only a means to an end is ready to cut corners and conclude what many observers expect to be one-sided appeasement, at best with some face-saving token concessions to soften the blow. Once he set his heart on this matter as he appears to have done, neither outraged public opinion nor the stigma of appeasement would deter him to rejoin his beloved Somaliland. Despite his protestations to the contrary, the secessionist enclave openly claim he is one of them, as one of the key founding fathers of "Somaliland" in 1991.



All the same, if Prof Galaydh betrays his people, he would go down the same ignoble road as another leader with whom appeasement is always associated: former wartime British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, who in Munich in 1938 signed away former Czechoslovakia to Adolf Hitler in order to appease him in the name of "peace in our times". Like that of Munich with Hitler, Prof Galaydh's expected appeasement deal with Somaliland, if it comes to it, would not be worth the paper it is written on.

Siilaanyo, Somaliland's often bedridden octogenarian president, could not resist the temptation to claim the credit, and embark on an ostentatious victory parade, not in Hargeisa, his capital, but it has to be Lascanod, the capital of the "vanquished" SSC regions, and all to add insult to injury. A monument to his achievements in Lascanod must have crossed his mind as he swaggered in the SSC capital's main street for all his people to see, masquerading as their conquering George Washington who first destroyed the Somali State and now "defeated" the resistance of Khatumo to achieve

their cherished triumphant "united" Somaliland. "Hail to the conqueror!!" must be ringing in his ears.

The Perspective from the Khatumo Side

Somaliland's triumphalism is seen differently in Khatumo. For them, the current people waging the struggle for freedom and Somali unity against the secessionists are the same people whose Darwish nationalist movement for freedom could not be defeated for 21 years by the might of the British empire. They cannot therefore be defeated by a Somali clan's ragtag militia. The fact remains that Somaliland's control is confined to Lascanod, but otherwise the rest of the SSC regions are free except for few isolated enemy bases here and there, and over ninety percent of the population have no contact or dealing with them. This hardly amounts to success but if anything represents defeat for the enclave nine years after they captured Lascanod.



Given the right leadership, they are confident that a people close to a million, inhabiting almost three regions and not short of resources, can ultimately defeat the invader. Much as Khatumo faces enemies on three fronts, and the going gets tough now and then, which is in the nature of all struggles, they believe that time is on the side of those who are defending their rights and dignity on their own soil, and vice versa works against the invader. They should know this as they never stop boasting that they defeated the strongest army in Africa.

For the SSC people, Siilaanyo will not go down in history as he would like to be remembered but as the one who, far from uniting the northern people in former British Somaliland, divided them by poisoning their brotherly relations for his misguided attacks on Kalshaale and other places in the Buhoodle district in pursuit of ethnic-cleaning and territorial conquest. Over a thousand men might have died needlessly on both sides.

The secessionists always talk of the invisible graveyards along Hargeisa's riverside and point to the toy Mig fighter mounted in the centre of their capital as unforgettable reminders of the atrocities committed against them by a departed regime, and say ad nauseam: "never, never again back to unity with Mogadishu". And for the people of Buhoodle and the SSC regions in general, the visible graveyards around Kalshaale, Sooljoogto and Maygaagle, and the on-going occupation to top it all - done to them by people they hitherto considered as their brothers- would be a living memory to the secessionist clan's chauvinism and aggression, and for similar reasons would say: "never, never unity with our nemesis". Both siege mentalities grounded on bitter experience could be overcome in time with better leaders, hopefully after Siilaanyo. But for now, his disastrous legacy rules to the detriment for both sides.

Possible Options for link-ups

For most people in Khatumo, any exit from Somalia can only be considered if discriminations against them, as people and State, continue to be maintained. In that case, Khatumo could be forced to quit the union. If it does that, it would have several options: either going on its own and declare itself an independent state a la Somaliland, or it could link up with other clans in the former British Somaliland - not with Puntland, God forbid.

a. Forming SSC/Makhir/Khatumo State

Unity with Makhir is the most preferred choice for Khatumo, whether they are together within Somalia as a single State, or alone as a separate independent State, or within the former British Somaliland again as a single State.

The case for Makhir and Khatumo link-up is overwhelming and requires little justification. More than any other people in the north, and for that matter the rest of Somalia, they are bound together by blood, territory, history and political cooperation during the struggle for independence and since then. In addition, they are geographically contiguous, and resource-wise complement each other.



Together, they are endowed with sea, huge territory and with immense natural resources (oil, gas, minerals, fish, etc). If they unite, it could make them the Kuwait of the Horn. The recent badly handled and botched attempt at uniting, which left a bad taste in the mouth, should not deter such a win-win union.

b) A Possible return to the former Somaliland

There are almost insurmountable hurdles to a union with the secessionist clan. The atrocities they committed in the SSC regions are deeply embedded in their memories and psyche, in particular those in Buhoodle. That, together with the continuing, colonial-like occupation of the SSC regions would make reconciliation, let alone reunion, unacceptable for many SSC people.

If Makhir/Khatumo people are to be swayed to embrace union with the secessionist clan, and that is a Herculean task, the necessary environment conducive for negotiations must first be created. These will include, *inter alia*:

- That, as goodwill gesture, the secessionists withdraw their militia forthwith to their bases in Burco and Hargeisa and no where near Makhir/Khatumo SSC territory (including Qorulugud). Since Makhir and Khatumo (and for that matter Awdal) have never invaded the enclave in the past, nor intend to do so in the future, there is no reason or need why their militia should be anywhere where they can pose a threat to others;

- Somaliland has to apologise for its crimes in the Khatumo territory and accept to compensate for those it killed or maimed in the Buhoodle district (Cayn) and elsewhere in the SSC regions;

The Framework for Agreed Reunion

When it comes to negotiations, if at all that happens, what counts is not Somaliland military strength but Khatumo/Makhir's soft power, in which they wield the veto over the link-up with the one-clan enclave. Their consent to, or rejection of the link-up can make or mar Somaliland (i.e. the clan enclave). Without Khatumo/Makhir's consent to an agreed form of union, Somaliland will continue to be condemned to remain a one-clan enclave, a status which denied it the recognition and statehood it has been craving for all these 25 years.

Regarding the main parameters of a possible constitutional arrangement for a link-up, it will have to be a loose federal arrangement in which the secessionist enclave, Awdal, and Khatumo/Makhir would have equal status and the federal presidency rotates. Each State of the federation will have its own autonomous Parliament and responsible for its own internal security, development and social services. There will be no need for national defence forces since no possible external threat can arise that could justify it. Puntland is the only neighbour and it has no history or capacity for invading others unlike the secessionist clan.

Foreign aid would be shared along state basis, and State resources would belong to the State except for a small percentage contribution to common services like postal services. Revenues raised through the ports from import/export duties will be equitably shared. States will have equal numbers in the federal Parliament which would deal with peace among the States and other matters of common interest. The contract for the union (constitution) will provide for an exit clause for any State Member wishing to do so, just like the EU agreement which permitted Brexit.

Nothing short of a loose federation along the lines outlined above is likely to be acceptable to the Khatumo/Makhir State/people. They would not be prepared to play second fiddle to another clan which itself did not want to be subordinate to southern clans and for that reason seceded from Somalia. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander and if that kind of federal relationship is not to their liking, then they can kiss goodbye to any link-up and remain the renegade enclave they are now.

The Presumed Ally that Turned out the worst enemy

One has to ask what made the SSC people, historically the champions of Somali independence and unity, to contemplate exit the union? Simply put, it is the travails and tribulations it has gone through over the years in defence of the union. That was not so much at the hands of Somaliland which is to be expected from a secessionist anti union occupying foe; but from those who are part of Somalia, like Puntland; or those who are the leaders of Somalia who were supposed to defend the union and as a minimum provide moral and material support to Khatumo but chose instead to back its predatory enemies.

Of Khatumo's various enemies, the most wicked and injurious is Puntland which is the complete opposite to what the SSC/Khatumo people expected from it when they joined Puntland in 1998 as co-founders. One has to recall that the rationale for SSC people to be the co-builder of Puntland was not so much for sentimental clan attachment but the need for alliances as a bulwark against a well-armed belligerent and expansionist secessionist enclave that had no scruples to invade other unarmed unionist clans and bring them under their dominion. That is what they did to the unarmed and unresisting Awdal region where the secessionist militia (SNM) committed massacres soon after the collapse of the Somali State. The SSC regions expected to be next and hence the rush for the Puntland alliance.

For Puntland, its dealings with others has to be subordinated to the clan interest. It uses each of the Darood/Harti/Somalia/Somali unity cards for what it can get out of it to serve its narrow clan interests but otherwise pays them all lip service. Its interest in the SSC regions is the costless benefits it can derive from them, mainly the economic and the diplomatic weight which allow it to punch above its weight in Somalia's affairs and international circles.

Puntland has no boots on the ground in the SSC regions and yet it gets the best of both worlds by simply cashing on its baseless preposterous claim to the territories even when the SSC people broke with it and formed their own Khatumo State of Somalia in January 2012. Puntland maintains its interest by keeping Khatumo under strangulation, both economic and social and, in this regard, it has common interest with Somaliland and for that reason they cooperate and collude.

Most people in the SSC regions lament ever joining Puntland and see it as their worst historical blunder and the one that has done them the greatest harm. In running away from Somaliland's clutches, all they gained was to go straight into Puntland's jaws. Since they have no legal bases to "own" the SSC regions, Puntland have simply cast them as "disputed territory" in order to keep away the international community that would otherwise have intervened to help.

The Enemy within

Both Somaliland and Puntland, each maintaining the fiction that the SSC regions are theirs, keep an entourage of self-seeking SSC puppets who hold nominal posts in their administrations, ranging from Vice President to ministers, the likes of Camay, Osman Garaad Soofe, Xagle Toosiye, Ahmed Karaash, Biindhe, to name some of the shameless. Most are from the diaspora and some held presidential posts in Khatumo.



Doing the bidding of their masters, these puppets are used as instruments for dividing and weakening the struggle of their people against the occupation, or for supporting the blocking of international development and humanitarian aid to their needy SSC people. Puppets are what the Chinese used to call "running dogs" of the enemy at the height of the cold war; in Europe, in the Second World War, those who betrayed their countries and collaborated with the occupying Nazis were known as "quislings", and

in Khatumo, those who sold themselves to Puntland and Somaliland are called "Horgolayaal" -different names but the same occupation, like the different names countries have for the world's oldest profession (prostitution).

Compare the SSC "Horgolayaal" for Puntland and Somaliland to those "exiles" from the secessionist enclave (Somaliland) who hold posts in the Somali government in Mogadishu, from deputy Prime Minister, ministers, MPs, and what have you. Far from harming their enclave and its government, these "exiles" defend Somaliland and its interests to the hilt within the Somali government and among the international community. Whatever job they hold, Somaliland is what matters.

It is because of their unwavering support that Somaliland is rarely ever censured for all the crimes it commits in the SSC regions, - from those in Kalshaale to the present time. Their votes in Parliament is for Culusow and, as a quid pro quo, Somaliland is untouchable and gets more than its share of international aid to Somalia. In private, Somaliland welcomes their good work but feels obliged to denounce them for public consumption to ward off likely hostile attention from their hosts.

Nothing demonstrates their loyalties and service for Somaliland than their threat to return to Hargeisa en masse in protest against perceived unfairness to their enclave in the distribution of Parliamentary seats. No longer uninhibited to say what they feel, they have now openly declared what they always believed privately that there are two equal Somali republics, that of Somalia and Somaliland, and they belong to the latter. One can disagree with their beliefs, but one can also admire their integrity. They shame Khatumo's shameless "Horgolayaal".

With a leader like Culusow, who needs enemies

Another source of support for Puntland for its claim on the SSC regions are the federal leaders in Mogadishu as well as successive UN Special Representatives to Somalia.

The people of Khatumo could have endured all these Puntland anti Khatumo and anti-union actions. But what has eclipsed all that was when Prime Minister, Sharmarke, gratuitously gave away the rights of the SSC regions and people to his clan enclave, Puntland, as if it was a personal gift from his pocket, and, at the stroke of his pen, empowered its President, Abdiwelli Gaas, to choose the SSC MPs to the federal parliament. The straw that finally broke the camels back came when this outrageous act was subsequently endorsed at the so-called National Consultation Forum in Mogadishu (more like a casino) where Mr Culusow and his cabal trade on others' rights for their own personal end.

What Culusow and company have to Khatumo is denial of the existence of the over one-million people in the SSC regions and their inalienable rights as free peoples, clans, and regions that have the same rights as other clans and regions of Somalia as enshrined in the constitution. It is a denial that renders the status of the SSC/Khatumo people as expendable exchangeable property no better than modern-day slavery. No other Somali clan or groups would accept this deplorable treatment and the SSC

people would not be the exception. Khatumo is bound to exit the union unless these actions are rescinded forthwith. The buck stops at Hassan Culusow's door and at the end of the day he is responsible for all the consequences of these warlordism being hatched under his roof that could lead to the break up of Somalia.

The consequences for Somalia

If Khatumo is forced to exit the union, the bridge that held former British and Italian Somaliland would have disappeared; or, using another metaphor, the "*umbilical cord*" would be cut as Dr Ali Bahar, a long-time commentator on Somali affairs has put it in his brilliant article in WDN ([*Somaliland/Mogadishu: the umbilical cord has been chewed away*](#)). The break-up of Somalia would not be confined to north-south but would have far reaching domino effect consequences in which the loosely-knit southern clans could follow suit and split apart.

The union between north and south was at the behest and pushing of the northern clans wanting to join their fellow southern brothers at independence. The bridge (umbilical chord) linking them are the SSC regions. Otherwise, historically, no other cord based on nationalism and Somali unity ever linked the different clans in the Somali homeland. What held them together instead was colonial rule, and, after independence, it was nationalism, a strong State and strong patriotic leadership- all missing today under Hassan Culusow's God-forsaken Somalia. That is not something over which Culusow (Sharmarke, et al) would lose any sleep. If the worst comes to the worst, and they are booted out, they still have their ill-gotten millions and move to their residencies in adopted or chosen foreign countries.



But will Culusow go despite his unpopularity and disaster? With Somali Parliamentarians expected to give their votes to the highest bidder, and with few other contestants able to match his cash, he will simply buy their votes as he did last time and be back beaming as ever. To think what more damage he would do to Somalia if that happens is too horrible to contemplate.

Siyad Barre is allegedly reported to have said that there will be no nation after him when he was being ousted by Ethiopian-supported warlords and clan-based rebels. Today, Culusow could say there will be neither nation nor country after him. That would be his legacy. The union (and Somalia) have known better times and today it is an "orphan" in Mogadishu. God save Somalia from these crooks- if there is still Somalia to be saved. General Mohamed Ali Samatar, the brave nationalist defender of Somalia and its unity to his last day and breath, must be turning in his grave across the road from Villa Somalia. May God's mercy be on him for all he did for his country.

Osman Hassan
email: osman.hassan2@gmail.com

Osman Hassan is a seasoned journalist and a former UN staff member. Mr Hassan is also a regular contributor to WardheerNews.