

The Current Roadmap for Ending the Transition in Somalia: An Obvious Fool's Errand

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Waddankey ku noolayd abido	<i>From eternity, their ancestral land</i>
waaqeed ay joogtay	<i>since beginning of time</i>
Ummad waaraad loo qaybsadoon	<i>divided, pieces and parcels indifferent if</i>
kaba walaacaynin	<i>it is chopped into spheres</i>
Ummad aan ka waababa aqoon	<i>Ignorant and unwary to the laid traps</i>
dabinka weegaaran	<i>and the pits concealed</i>
Ummad wadajirka diiddanoo	<i>Fratricidal paranoid, rejecting unity</i>
kala waswaasaysa	<i>and inflicted with delusion</i>
Ummad waddici gobonimiyoo	<i>Faithful to yoke, scorns liberty and</i>
wacan gumaystiina	<i>inviting the tyrant colonist</i>
Ummad uu wadkeedii galoo	<i>In the hour of death, unbeknown a</i>
waalo tumanaysa	<i>nation dancing intoxicated</i>

Maxamed Cali Cibaar, (translated by
Rashid Yahya Ali)

“These regimes based on the family unit seem to repeat the age-old laws of endogamy and faced with this stupidity, this imposture and this intellectual and spiritual poverty, we are left with a feeling of shame rather than anger. These heads of governments are true traitors of Africa, for they sell their continent to the worst of its enemies: stupidity.” Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.126

There is a broad political consensus that the term of the current Transitional Federal Institutions should not be extended after August 2012. It is also apparent that, the best way to end the transition is not to put the current discredited politicians in charge of the management of the process aimed at finding their replacement. As the International Crisis Group rightly observes, “The TFG should not be allowed to hijack the agenda or dictate terms in negotiations about Somalia’s future. It should be treated as one party among many in the development of the constitution and creation of the post-August 2012 government.”(Africa Briefing no.89, p.9)

The current process to end the transition is micro-managed by the Transitional Federal Government, and other few haphazardly selected regional entities, under the auspices of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and IGAD, while the vast minority of Somalis stay outside the process. This is glaringly reminiscent of Mbagathi process where Ethiopian sponsored warlords and their supporters were given the ultimate authority to select

the members of the delegates and parliament members. That process palpably produced an ineffectual, illegitimate government and consequently exacerbated the political and humanitarian crisis in the country.

While the Mbagathi reconciliation conference was dominated by the same faction leaders, who failed to implement their countless previous pledges and agreements, the United Nations and other members of the international community continued to lend their support to the conference, and quixotically expected the faction leaders to find a solution to the protracted political crisis in Somalia.

Ironically, and perhaps unsurprisingly, after the conclusion of the Mbagathi conference that produced the Transitional Federal Institutions, the Secretary General of the United Nations candidly stated “it cannot be said that either peace or reconciliation has been achieved or that fighting inside Somalia has ceased.” This is a hugely significant confession given the energy and resources dedicated to the conference. At the same time, the United Nations realised that the success or failure of the government is not only dependent on the support it receives from the international community, but also “on the contribution of the Somali population at large, including civil society.” (S/2005/89, paragraphs 71, 77)

It seems that, no lesson has been learned from the previous failures, and another ill-considered Roadmap is being presented. Surely, the outcome would not be different from the previous failed ventures and may produce a replica of the current ineffective TFIs at best.

In actuality, the opposition to the current externally driven Roadmap for ending the transition in Somalia and the ill-conceived constitution-making process is increasing. For instance, members of religious groups, clan elders, and former politicians voiced their strong opposition to this fraudulent project. Additionally, a joint statement released in Mogadishu by seven organisations comprising political parties and other organised civic forces added their voice to the opposition to the Roadmap. In a statement, those organisations correctly warned that, if the Draft Constitution is adopted “it will recharge old antagonism and trigger new, multiple and combustible divisiveness.”

The difference between those who invent games and those who play them is said to be, players can win or lose but inventors always end up winning. The sad irony is that, the current unsuspecting Somali politicians, intentionally or inadvertently, seem to be playing a dangerous game concocted by others. Ironically, some of them are even genuinely trying to finish the work on time, in the words of the Somali nationalist poet Mohamed Cibaar, “ignorant and unwary to the laid traps and the pits concealed.”

It is imperative to state, though; the inventors of the current Roadmap for ending the transition in Somalia will not be the ones who will bear the brunt of the catastrophic consequences of their ill-advised policies. As is often the case, the ordinary Somalis will suffer the consequences of the misguided project. Apparently, the inventors of the current Roadmap started to issue the familiar threats and intimidations, in an attempt to force Somali people into accepting this ill-conceived scheme.

To that end, in a joint statement, the representatives of AU, UNPOS and AMISOM, stated “we remain greatly concerned that the Roadmap continues to be jeopardized by the actions of individuals and groups in and out of Somalia working to undermine the fragile progress we have collectively made in recent months.” In an Orwellian twist, the statement continues to declare “We have come too far, and too much is at stake for us to allow the progress to backslide at the exact moment Somalia has its best opportunity for peace in decades.” This grossly misleading statement is at variance with the political reality on the ground in Somalia.

It seems that, these representatives are attempting to railroad Somali people into supporting the current fraudulent protect intended for creating yet another unworkable, illegitimate transitional entity. In the face of unyielding opposition, the aforementioned organisations warned “non-compliance with, or active obstruction of the Roadmap for Ending the Transition in Somalia will be referred to the IGAD Council of Ministers with our recommendations for the immediate imposition of specific measures and restrictions.”

It is vital to note; nonetheless, no amount of threat and intimidation will force the Somali people into accepting this fraudulent protect. In that respect, it is necessary to point out that, Somali people have the right to participate freely in the political process of their country, and no one can deny them that hard-won right.

The Adoption of the Draft Constitution

Early last week, [Hiiraan Online](#) reported that, the President of the Transitional Federal Government, Sharif Sheik Ahmed made a statement implying that the approval of the constitution is a foregone conclusion, and stated “the rejection of the constitution is unacceptable, but individual provisions of the Draft Constitution can be discussed and any amendments suggested.” The statement of the president is problematic and demonstrates that the whole process is perchance nothing but political skulduggery. For a start, while there has never been any meaningful discussion of the system and the shape of governance that suits Somalia, this Draft Constitution provides for a federal system of government. In that regard, it is pointless to discuss individual articles of the Draft Constitution, while there is no political consensus on the shape of governance that Somali people want.

The only time Somali people had come close to a meaningful discussion of the shape of the system of governance, suitable for Somalia, was in 2000, when the Djibouti Government organised a Technical Consultative Symposium where Somali intellectuals, civil society members, representatives of various religious groups, clan elders and women representatives from inside and outside the country came together. On the future shape of the Somali government, the symposium proposed a decentralised unitary arrangement. (S/2000/1211, para.12)

It is crucial to state that, constitution-making is an immensely significant part of any peace-building and reconciliation, but experience elsewhere amply demonstrate that hurriedly, externally imposed constitutions only exacerbate the situation, and fuel further violence. As Lakhdar Brahimi, former special advisor to the UN Secretary General pertinently notes, “a constitution cannot be rammed through too early in the process: people coming out of a conflict are hardly capable of building the national consensus required for the successful drafting of a constitution.”

My point is not to advocate a particular system of governance for Somalia, but to highlight the inherent right of the Somali people to participate in decisions of choosing a suitable political system of governance. Nevertheless, in my opinion, a decentralised unitary system of governance suits Somalia best. I believe that in the final analysis, clan-based federal

system will unnecessarily fragment the country and create new, unending violent conflicts in different corners of the country.

Moreover, and more importantly, the proposed constituent assembly, tasked to approve the Draft Constitution, will be far from representative. On the surface, it may seem representative and inclusive in terms of clan representation but inclusion entails more than balancing clan membership quota. As it stands, the assembly members will be handpicked by the current politicians and will probably choose people beholden to them- this is an obvious continuation of the disastrous zero-sum game of the past. In fact, there is credible evidence that some politicians are personally selecting the new members. More worryingly still, [widespread irregularities and fraud is reported with respect to the selection of clan elders.](#)

The argument that the assembly members will be representative because they are selected by clan elders is problematic. Firstly, the clan elders who are expected to select the assembly members are going to be approved by the current politicians. Evidently, who approves clan elders matters because almost all Somali clans/ sub-clans have multiple leaders. Secondly, and more disturbingly, a committee comprising the current politicians, who declared their candidacy for top leadership positions, will have the final authority to approve of the selected members. In that respect, there is an obvious conflict of interest.

The Security Situation

The leaders of the transitional federal government argue *ad nauseum* that, the security situation of the country is improving and that they are winning the war against their opponents. To be fair, the security of Mogadishu has improved after the withdrawal of Alshabab militia from the city. The reason is that the daily heavy fighting and indiscriminate shelling of populated areas stopped. However, the security of the city is dependent on the presence of AMISOM troops because the transitional federal government failed to create a credible national security force without which any security in any part of the country will be tenuous at best. The presence of the UN mandated troops will only work when a credible, legitimate government is in place- which is regrettably lacking at present.

The claim of the government that its troops are in control of territories outside the capital turns out to be a canard. In fact, troops from Ethiopia and Kenya control all the towns and villages captured from Al-Shabab. It is also crucial to point out that, clan-based warlord militias accompany those foreign troops. Furthermore, credible reports suggest that, both Ethiopian and Kenyan troops refuse to cooperate with the TFG, and bring in their own warlords in order to make them in charge of the areas under their control. This is an obvious attempt by those countries to empower the warlords and keep the status quo that clearly benefits them in more ways than one.

In that respect, for Somalia to merge from the current political stalemate, the role of the neighbouring countries should be curtailed. The history between Somalia and its neighbours, particularly Ethiopia and Kenya, is riddled with mistrust and animosity. Additionally, their involvements in the Somali politics have been negative for the last decades. To enhance the trust of the Somali people in the next political dispensation, the role of the neighbouring countries should be limited. When Somalia stands on its feet again, close neighbourly relations between Somalia and its neighbours, based on mutual interest, can be encouraged and facilitated. However, such a relationship cannot be nurtured at the present moment when Ethiopian and Kenyan troops are in Somalia, and are empowering clan militias and unscrupulous warlords.

Additionally, in the face of precarious security situation and an escalating humanitarian calamity, it is difficult for many Somalis to comprehend the disproportionate attention and resources directed at the problems effecting foreign interests like piracy and 'terrorism'. In stark contrast, the issues posing the greatest threat to the lives of the ordinary Somalis are practically ignored. As the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, candidly recognised, "ultimately, only security and stability in Somalia will resolve the root causes of the current piracy problem."

Concluding Remarks

Edward De Bono wrote in his book *New Think*, "Logic is the tool that is used to dig holes deeper and bigger, to make them altogether better holes. But if the hole is in the wrong place, then no amount of improvement is going to put it in the right place. No matter how obvious this may seem to every digger, it is still easier to go on digging in the same place than to start

all over again in a new place.” It is obvious that Somali politicians, United Nations and other members of the international community have been using the same method to end the political stalemate in Somalia for the last two decades, digging a hole in the wrong place as it were. Sadly, the outcome will probably remain the same- more political turmoil and unrelenting bloodletting.

It seems, as the former special representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mohamed Sahnoun, poignantly observed early in the Somali conflict, “people in New York [and many other capitals] who knew nothing of the realities in the field make hasty and uncalled for decisions and persist in having them implemented, despite evidence of mismanagement and strong objection of the people in the field.” Sadly, the United Nations and other international actors are making the same old and costly mistake by gratuitously legitimising several regional administrations and current corrupt politicians, while ignoring the opinions of the vast majority of Somalis, the effect of which will be disastrous for all the parties concerned.

On the basis of the facts and evidence available, it can be reasonably concluded that the current Roadmap will probably exacerbate the already combustible situation in Somalia, and will, in all probability, produce another illegitimate, unworkable transitional entity. Unfortunately, and contrary to the claims of the actors involved in the implementation of the Roadmap, this current process will most likely be another fool’s errand. If the international community facilitates and finances such process, it would have to take moral responsibility for any violence and political turmoil it generates.

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