Somali Reconstruction and Local Initiative: Amoud University

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Summary. — No one could have predicted Somalia’s disintegration into “clan” fiefdoms. The country was thought to be one of the most homogenous nation-states in Africa. Many observers strenlty insist that clan structures are necessary for Somalia’s rehabilitation. All international sponsored reconciliation conferences premised on the centrality of the clan failed. I argue that Somalia’s shared cultural values were necessary, but an insufficient basis for national cohesion. Public institutions are key to sustaining shared values and foraging an inclusive identity. Local initiatives like Amoud University, a community-owned institution, is the forerunner of a new type of Somali institution that caters to common, rather than sectarian, interests. If initial steps are sustained, this local initiative could mark the birth of a new Somalia. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Observers of African nation-states assumed that Somalia was unique in the continent as the nation and the state nearly overlapped. The population shared many social and cultural traits, such as language, mode of economic production, and religion. Given its social and cultural base, the state was thought to be viable. Just over a decade ago, it would have been impossible to imagine the disintegration of the Somali state. Today, many political commentators are similarly strident about the clan structure being essential to the very essence of a Somali community. The commentators argue that it is not possible to reconstruct Somalia without the clan being the basis of the new polity.

These essentialist arguments are grounded on a limited understanding of Somali political history. They also lack an appreciation of the art of state formation. The “shared social and cultural heritage” thesis fails to recognize that common traits can form a necessary, but insufficient foundation for building state institutions that cater to the community’s collective interest. The ability of cultural resources to bind a society together depends on how they are used. The socially unifying appeal of these resources declines when mined continuously without the society reinvesting in them. The callous exploitation of shared cultural resources not only impoverishes their richness and resiliency, but may also turn them into a national liability. This is exactly what has transpired in Somalia. If a society does not take the long-term vitality of cultural resources for granted, however, but continuously and consciously replenishes their richness and value, they will continue to be a source of social cohesion. This means that a society must actively nourish inherited shared values and develop new ones that reinforce the appeal of this common heritage.

The most important addition to Somalia’s pool of shared resources since the middle of last century has been the (colonial) state and its institutions. The imposition of the state, in its colonial and post-colonial forms, induced

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social processes that had the potential to reinforce and positively transform shared value in an inclusive manner, or to undermine and distort their appeal to the entire community. The state’s impact on the vitality of shared values, depends on whether the authorities use public institutions to nurture a common or sectarian agenda. The diminishing attractiveness of traditional shared Somali values is not due to Somalis’ primordial predisposition for divisiveness. Instead it is due to the misuse of public institutions and resources for private gain. Moreover, the use of public power to intimidate and punish those who try to protect common causes has delegitimated public authority and the worth of these public resources. The authorities’ cynical manipulation of shared values and traditions to mollify public distrust and prolong their tenure further alienated the public from the state. The public is not only hostile toward the state but is deeply mistrustful of anyone who attempts to mobilize them on the basis of shared sentiments.

Traditional analysts of Somali politics have cited two occurrences as evidence of the Somalis’ sectarian nature despite the fact that they share a common language, culture, and religion. These occurrences are the Somalis’ recent antipathy toward the state and nationalism, and the warlords’ success in carving up the country into fiefdoms. Advocates of the clanist thesis wrongly insist that a clan-based federal dispensation is the only political formula that will reunite Somalia. They erroneously assume that genealogical differences led to Somalia’s disintegration. I argue that the causes of the Somali calamity are: state leaders’ failure to nurture shared cultural and social commonalities and sectarian entrepreneurs’ instrumentalist accentuation of social differences. The innocuous differences’ transformation has become lethal weapon in the hands of sectorians.

The state’s credibility has been destroyed because it failed to guard common interest and the erosion of social solidarity based on inclusive values makes Somali reconstruction an awesome task. Putnam’s thesis that building a stock of social capital requires many decades seems to apply here. If Putnam is right, it will take a long time for generalized social trust to develop (millenarian). Tendler’s thesis that public trust can be built in a relatively short time seems more feasible. These authors’ seemingly contradictory positions are reconcilable. Communities and states can steadily generate trust and confidence for common cause. Shared values across communities are the basis of civic bonds and trust in a society. But the state must take leadership in nurturing society-wide civic bonds. Communities, in turn, must scrupulously monitor state actions to ensure that public institutions function in ways that consistently enhance the quality of those shared values. Such partnership between state and community will facilitate social capital generation in relatively short time.

The following discussion about Amoud University shows that building people’s confidence that they can work together for common good and establishing their trust in public institutions is not necessarily a long-term proposition. I argue that there is one critical factor to reversing the trends of the last three decades in Somalia. That key is to create institutions that constrain sectarian entrepreneurs while strengthening shared values and hopes. The community-owned Amoud University may signal a new type of public institution in Somalia, one that will enhance accountability, rebuild public trust, and advance a common agenda.

The rest of the discussion is divided into three parts. Section 2 panaramically sketches Somali elite politics and describes how they destroyed public trust for state institutions and undermined the importance of shared norms. Section 3 narrates how Borama community members are trying to resuscitate common cause through the establishment of Amoud University. Section 4 assesses Amoud University’s significance to the remaking of public trust in Borama and Somalia and the re-forming of an inclusive national identity.

2. ELITE POLITICS AND DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC TRUST

A key development problem in Africa is the discrepancy between states’ claims and the impacts of its actions on communities. Most Africans assume that state managers care little about the common good and are in business for themselves and their clients. Somalis are extreme among Africans in this antipathy. Hostile feelings toward state authorities rarely existed 40 years ago when most countries become independent. Hoping to replace colonial bosses with regimes that respected Africans’ dignity and managed public affairs justly, Africans routed colonial authorities. This section briefly sketches how the mismanage-
ment of public institutions in Somalia turned Somalis’ hope into despair.

Public despondency in the continent is deep. In fact, today citizens are shocked when they receive courteous and efficient service from a public servant. This sharply contrasts with popular opinion from 40 years ago when people embraced the nationalist project. Somalis shared this optimism in 1960 and their nationalism generated incredible fervor and social unity that reflected their hope for democracy and development, the sanguine public did not realize, however, that their hopes depended on the quality of the national elite and intraelite politics. Somali elite politics manifested two contradictory political and economic tendencies. One tendency emphasized a Somali-wide identity, nationalism, the protection of common good, and justice in the dispensation of the rule of law (civil movement). The other predisposition embraced sectarianism and clanism, driven by individualistic interest without regard for community wellbeing (sectarian movement).

The Somali-wide versus the sectarian trajectories were opposing postcolonial national strategies embedded in the new republic’s fabric in 1960. The struggle between these two elite political projects marked the state’s institutional history since 1960. Four elite qualities shaped the civic or sectarian impacts on public institutions and public trust. These characteristics were: the degree of elite unity or lack thereof; the legitimacy of its leadership within the group and the public; the leadership’s understanding of the nature of the collective project; and clarity of their strategy in translating plans into concrete reality.

The independence euphoria and the unification of former British and Italian Somali lands in 1960 generated national cohesion that masked differences between groups with competing agendas (1960–64). The patriotic fervor induced by the 1964 war with Ethiopia prolonged this spirit’s life span. But appearance of nationalist solidarity was short-lived. The regime’s leadership enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy with the public, however, the leadership showed no sign of understanding the particulars of the nationalist project. Moreover, the leadership did not articulate a clear road map for achieving its development agenda. Consequently, it undertook minimal institutional reform, other than streamlining the British and Italian colonial administrations into a single apparatus.

The second republic (1964–67) is singularly unique in postcolonial Somali history on two accounts. First, the 1964 national parliamentary elections exposed the ascendancy and strength of the sectarian forces and the opportunistic tendencies of many elite members. The number of political parties proliferated into 24 as individual elite members tried to gain a parliament seat in order to loot the public purse. Only four of these parties succeeded in winning parliamentary seats. Second, the nationalist forces made their last systematic effort, after the elections, to contain the sectarian tide from engulfing public life. The nationalist forces attempted to insulate the civil service from undisciplined politicians’ particularistic intervention. President Osman and Premier Hussein wanted to do more than integrate the two former colonies. This regime failed, however, to enunciate its development project clearly. In spite of this weakness, the Hussein government understood that to make public institutions effective and root out corruption and the abuse of public power, it needed to bureaucratize its institutions.

Two of the Premier’s initiatives signaled his institution-building strategy. First, he appointed his ministers based on their professional skills. As a result of this action, a significant number of key portfolios went to northerners. Many southern MPs were not happy with the ministerial line up and accused the Prime Minister (PM) of favoritism. One of the northerners, Mohamoud Issa Jama, who was nominated as minister of agriculture, gave up his post so southerners could be accommodated. The second and most important decision was to reform the civil service and establish a professional and autonomous Civil Service Commission. The Commission’s mandate, with technical assistance from United Nations experts, was to professionalize the service. The Commission started reevaluating all major posts in the civil service and the qualifications of their occupants. It discovered that many senior officials were unqualified and ill-equipped to lead their departments. Consequently, the Commission recommended relieving these individuals of their responsibilities for two years and giving them an opportunity to improve their competency. The Prime Minister heeded this advice and dismissed nearly 200 senior officials over the next year. All those discharged were from the republic’s southern region except for two northerners. Those
discharged were some of the southern elite’s leading elements.

This attempt at institutional reform was short-lived as an administration less concerned with curbing corruption and insulating public service came to power after the 1967 presidential election. President Osman appeared to have lost the election for three reasons. First, he was competing with a popular former Prime Minister. Second, Premier Hussein’s anti-corruption drive and termination of a significant number of southern elite members from the civil service alienated a powerful political constituency. Third, candidate Sharmarke and his allies promised seductive rewards for parliamentarians who voted for him. Sharmarke’s promises worked their magic, and he captured the presidency with a slim margin.

President Sharmarke and his Premier, Egal, understood the volatility of the electoral process. Immediately, they started planning for the 1969 parliamentary election. The elite, and especially those in parliament, failed to be united by anything except their willingness to trade off any public resource for private gain. The leaders of the government, having fueled this tendency during the presidential election, knew the only way to remain in power was to appeal to each MP’s material interests, tantalizing them with rewards and promises. Given these priorities, the regime abandoned civil service reform initiated by its predecessor. Corruption and the politics of divide and rule, rather than fostering inclusive collective project, became the name of the game.

The 1969 parliamentary elections proved that the elite’s sectarian faction had gained the upper hand. The struggle for individual political survival divided and united this cohort. The political process disintegrated as 62 political parties fielded candidates. Ambitious individuals who were not selected by the main parties formed their own. These so-called opposition parties won 50 of the 123 seats. As soon as the election was over, however, the opposition MPs abandoned their parties and joined the ruling party. The shift of political “loyalty” was induced by the clear recognition that MPs could access public largesse only if they were associated with government. Moreover, political bosses in power enticed these MPs to join the ruling party. The only opposition member of parliament was former Prime Minister Hussein.

The military took control of the government before the sectarian stampede could run its course and the public poured into the streets to rejoice over the termination of corrupt politics. The military regime enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy during the first years of its tenure. The swift and effective management of the 1973–74 drought, the introduction of Latin scripts for the Somali language and the expansion of education and other services increased the regime’s popularity. The military, with the Soviet’s prodding, adopted socialism as its development strategy. But, the government showed no sign of comprehending what socialism meant in the Somali context as it blindly adopted Soviet tested but unproductive economic management methods. Consequently, it retained, at first, the rudderless public service policy of the last civilian regime.

The Somali army’s defeat in the Ethiopian–Somali war, 1977–78, brought the regime’s honeymoon period to an end. The government discarded citizens’ rights and any pretense of supporting inclusive national project as the public and significant elements of the military challenged the regime’s right to govern. As paranoia engulfed the leadership, it began a massive campaign to put loyal supporters in all key government positions without regard to merit or due process. The majority of these new and quickly promoted public employees did not have the skills or experience to manage public affairs, further damaging competency of state apparatus. Having lost legitimacy, the regime used military power to punish entire regions and communities deemed disloyal. A most sectarian and brutal use of the military machine occurred in 1988 when Hargeisa and Burao, two of the country’s largest cities, were destroyed. These cities were targeted for special treatment after one of the opposition movement’s, Somali National Movement (SNM) guerrillas imputuously entered them. The local populations were devastated, and survivors fled to Ethiopian refugee camps.

The country bled for another three years before the regime was finally ousted from its final stronghold in the capital. By then, unfortunately, all national institutions were ruined. Moreover, the separate opposition movements, who collectively destroyed the old regime, were sectarian themselves and had no national reconstruction program. They fought each other for control and in the process ruined what little the old regime left behind. The prolonged civil war and the terror instigated by warlords reversed integrative national processes. Warlords and factions leaders fragmented
the country into “clan” fiefdoms. Most reasonable Somalis agree that Siyad Barre’s regime was dreadful, but it was better than what followed it. They often note that “a bad government is better than none.” Every government since independence made some contribution to shared values, except for two: the 1967–69 and those dominated by warlords.

The people’s antipathy toward public management is the antithesis of how Somalis felt about the nationalist project in 1960. The thoughtful citizen who takes account of what unifying values have been added to the old stock of shared traditions since independence will find slim pickings. The first reinforcement of shared traditions was the unification of British and Italian Somaliland in 1960. Northern Somali leaders spearheaded this act. The second episode is President Osmany’s dignified and democratic departure from the presidency in 1967 after failing to be reelected. President Osmany’s compliance with the constitution signaled that no one was above the law of the land. Somalis now recognize him as an exemplary founding president whom they wish others emulated. A third tangible addition to the Somali social capital was Premier Hussein’s valiant effort to professionalize public service and insulate it from sectarian political intervention. Premier Hussein’s qualities underscore the character of public service for which most Somalis so desperately yearn. The fourth and perhaps the most enduring addition to Somali social capital was the development of orthography for the language. The writing of Somali language is taken for granted to the extent that even faction leaders desperate to create their little “homelands” use it as their official medium.

Somalia’s social and political balance sheet since independence is dominated by liabilities that have significantly diminished the country’s sense of a common destiny. The murderous and illegal uses of state power and sectarian exploitation of national resources figure prominently in the population’s collective memory of the last three decades. Moreover, incompetent management of public affairs for most of the country’s recent history has eroded Somalis’ communal self-confidence. Undoing these liabilities is what reconciliation and reconstruction is all about. Creating common projects that are effectively and fairly managed is essential to establishing collective self-worth and rebuilding inclusive polity and identity. These seem to be Amoud University’s guiding principles.

3. AMoud UNIVERSITY: The REBIRTH OF PUBLIC SPIRIT

Attempts to rebuild the Somali State have floundered and conventional international strategies promise not to produce meaningful results. 18 Warlords’ and faction leaders’ machinations to create homeland-like, mini-states in the provinces have also failed to gain the public’s respect and the international community’s recognition. Two of the more “advanced” clan-states have succeeded in restoring peace in most areas of their provinces but have failed to establish legitimate and functioning and inclusive institutions. Even some of the ardent supporters of these entities admit that they are corrupt and beyond reform. 19 In their present guise, then, none of them can be a blueprint for national redemption. The alternative to these efforts has been civic-minded local initiatives to repair community infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, water, and electricity. These local initiatives have made important contributions to reducing hardships in many communities across the country. However, these efforts and others by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) whether local or international have not been able to do more than restore local services.

Amoud University is the only known exception to this locally-oriented activity. This recently chartered, community owned institution is also instigating new debate between localities about national concerns. Before examining dynamics this event generated, it is necessary to consider the historical background of Borama community that made the university’s establishment possible.

(a) Borama: a brief history

Like other towns in British Somaliland, Borama, a village established in 1921, had only Qoranic schools. Religious men dominated Borama’s social circle, although, many urban people from Zeila, an old cosmopolitan coastal port, who moved to town had a moderating influence. 20 A British colonial officer with a leg injury came to Borama in the mid-1930s to determine whether the town’s population was more receptive to secular education than others in the Protectorate. Borama’s elders learned that people opposed to secular education in Burao injured the officer. Since religious men dominated Borama, they, too, rejected the officer’s message and influenced Borama’s
opinion makers to organize a demonstration against the officer’s visit by hoisting tall religious flags and singing religious hymns. Nonetheless, the demonstrators never threatened the officer’s personal safety.

Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor 21 established Borama’s first non-Qoranic one-room school (Madrasa) in 1932. He taught Arabic and arithmetic. Similar schools existed in other regions of the country. Religious leaders did not object to Madrasas since Christians did not run these schools and the language of instruction was that of the Quran. Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor, however, was not a typical religious man who taught in Madrasas. He invented non-Arabic and non-Latin script for the Somali language and trained some of his pupils in the use of this script. Moreover, some of the merchants in Borama and Zeila used the script to conduct their business correspondence. Borama’s religious opinion makers did not object to Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor’s Somali script, despite its being non-Arabic. Although Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor’s history or that of his script have not been thoroughly investigated, Borama’s religious men may have tolerated Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor’s invention since he was a member of their club and came from a prominent religious family.

The religious community’s acceptance of Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor’s orthography as a non-threatening innovation may have softened Borama’s political terrain for secular education in later years. A decade later, his Madrasa students were among the most educated and respected young men of Borama. Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor’s school had become an institution with an excellent reputation by the 1940s. About this time, Mr. Mahmoud Ahmed Ali visited Borama. Mr. Ali, a former head clerk in the colonial service in Berbera, had resigned from his job to campaign for secular education in the Protectorate and to convince Somalis about the benefits of modern education. 22

Mr. Ali’s initial strategy was to introduce secular education in English to Somali people through Madrasa teachers in various towns. He assumed that by collaborating with religious Madrasa teachers he would blunt more traditional leaders’ opposition. His first encounters were in Madrasas of Sheikh Jama in Berbera and Sheikh Ali Ibrahim in Hargeisa. The two teachers turned down his offer, for they did not intend to become involved in non-Islamic education. Mr. Ali tried, but failed, to win over the two teachers that modern education did not mean abandoning Islamic learning or proselytizing for Christianity.

Mr. Ali’s final stop was in Aw Abdi Sheikh Noor’s Madrasa in Borama. He explained his secular education program for Somalis and his disappointing encounters in Berbera and Hargeisa. Aw Abdi told Mr. Ali that he would call a meeting of town elders so that Mr. Ali could directly present the secular education case to them. When Mr. Ali explained his ambition at the elders’ gathering, they endorsed mission. 23 “Qabuul”—which means accepted in Somali—was the word elders used to signal their approval. Mr. Ali was moved by the elders’ simple response and those six letters of approval marked a watershed in northern Somali educational history. Borama elders decided to try something, namely secular education, that the leading lights of the Northern Somali community had rejected. This was the second time Borama took the lead in such matters, the first occasion was Aw Abdi’s invention of Somali script.

At that meeting, Mr. Ali inquired about who paid Aw Abdi’s salary for teaching in the Madrasa. The answer was no one—Aw Abdi depended on his father. Mr. Ali then asked whether the community would be willing to collect 360 rupees to pay for Aw Abdi’s services for the following year. The elders successfully raised the money from the community by noon the following day. Mr. Ali took the money and deposited it at the main government office in town and told Aw Abdi to collect monthly pay of 30 rupees from that office.

Mr. Ali told his supporters in Borama that he would go to Hargeisa and solicit the colonial government’s support for secular education. He also promised that Borama would receive its fair share of whatever resources he was able to obtain from the administration. A few months later, he returned to Borama and reported to the elders that the colonial government gave him 17 pounds for education. Mr. Ali invested most of the money in a classroom hut in Hargeisa. However, he presented a set of textbooks, pencils, and chalk to the Borama elders. The elders were disappointed as they thought that Mr. Ali should have given Borama a better share of the money.

The colonial regime finally decided to initiate its educational program for the Protectorate in 1944, by building elementary schools in several towns, including Borama. For the first two years Borama children were smuggled into school to register, as the religious leaders’
opposition to secular education was still fierce. But, that opposition dissipated in the third year as people realized that the children were not being converted to Christianity. Consequently, the school could not accommodate the large number of children who came to enroll.

The need for an intermediate school arose as the first group of children approached the end of the elementary school program (third grade). Intense competition ensued between Hargeisa and Borama over the intermediate school’s location. Mr. Ali, who was then a senior education officer, was the chief advocate for the Hargeisa location. Claiming Borama was a better location than Hargeisa, the Borama elders petitioned the Education Department. R. C. Bell, a new education officer for the Protectorate from Rhodesia, arrived in the middle of this tussle. After some deliberations, Hargeisa was ruled out as a site for the school due to a water shortage in the area. Arabsiyoyo (35 miles west of Hargeisa) was discussed as an alternative site. Bell was impressed with Borama elders’ persistence that he decided to travel there with a deputy, Mr. Yusuf Haji Aden. Once in Borama, he asked the town elders to take him to the school’s potential site. The elders took him to Amoud Valley. It had rained a few hours before Bell and his guides came to the site, and the intermittent river was still full. Amoud Valley was then thickly forested, and the beauty of the valley and the surrounding mountains absorbed Bell’s attention. Before leaving the valley, he decided to build the first intermediate school in British Somaliland there.

Four years later the struggle over the location of the Protectorate’s first Vocational Training Center (VTC) began (training center for primary school teachers and government clerks). The contest was between the Protectorate’s eastern (areas east of Hargeisa) and western regions. The Governor and his team awarded the bid to Amoud. R. C. Bell laid the foundation stone for the school in 1952. When VTS accepted its first class of students, Borama needed a secondary school to have a complete primary, vocational and secondary school system in northern Somalia. Amoud Secondary School was established later. Shiekh village in the east was the only other town in the Protectorate that had a complete primary and secondary school system at this time.  

Borama was at the forefront of educational development in northern Somalia during the final years of colonial rule. Now let us briefly consider Borama’s role in Somali postcolonial politics, until 1991. During the civilian regimes, 1960–69, Borama had three members of parliament. Mr Abdi Booni was deputy Prime Minister in the first government, while Mr. Aden Issaq was the minister of education and defense in Premiers Hussein’s and Egal’s cabinets. During the military years, Colonel Musa Goud was Borama’s native son in the governing military council. He held various ministerial posts during the military’s long term in office. Generally speaking, Borama district, and later Awdal region, played a political role proportionate to the size of the region’s population. Some dispute this and claim that Borama played a greater role in public service in the Somali Republic due to its more educated population. Whatever these arguments’ relative merits Borama avoided being caught in the conflict of “clan giants.” Consequently, for the most part Borama was spared the physical devastation of the civil war that ruined Hargeisa, Burao, and later Mogadishu.

In 1991, the sectarian Somali National Movement (SNM) claimed sovereignty over northern Somalia after the collapse of the military regime. Immediately thereafter, SNM declared northern Somalia’s pseudo-independence. This act broke SNM’s promise, made during its years in political wilderness, that Somali unity was sacrosanct. The north’s secession did not produce peace and political stability, nor establish a functioning administration. The governing coalition’s tenure ended in April 1993 before stability was restored. Elite SNM and non-SNM factions could not agree on a leadership succession method and many feared that a regional civil war might erupt in Hargeisa. Borama elders took the lead to mediate between the two groups by hosting a regional peace and political meeting in Borama that lasted for more than three months. A new head for the so-called Somaliland Republic was elected without hostilities breaking out immediately. Borama remained one of the most peaceful towns in Somalia during this period, and the community’s elders were the principal guardians of stability. Two of the most distinguished elders, Haji Dahir Elmi and Haji Jama Muhumed, had supported Borama education for over five decades.

Borama residents rehabilitated local schools and the hospital which had fallen into disuse. By 1997, nearly 8,000 students were in schools in Borama and its vicinity. Such a success alerted town elders to what was to become of
the growing number of school children after they completed high school without jobs or further educational opportunities available to them. Some of these children had already joined militias that terrorized people in the region. At this time, the idea of a Samaroon owned university began to circulate among some of the educated people in Borama. Several pamphlets, entitled Awdal University, were produced in the Middle East and distributed among Somali Diaspora in late 1993 and early 1994.

(b) Amoud University: investing in community institutions

The idea of establishing a university originated with a small group of Awdal natives living in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates. Their intention was to find an outlet for the many children in the region who had no real prospect of productive employment other than joining the roaming militias. Four of these individuals, Abdisalan Ahmed Nur, Hassan Ali Haji, Suliman Ahmed Wallad, and Idris Ibrahim Awaleh, came to Borama in the summer of 1994 to share their idea with local groups. Given the community’s dire need to find resources to support the small community police forces, and rehabilitate water and electrical services, most citizens considered the idea of establishing a university impractical. The advocates went back to Arabia, but discussions of the university idea continued in the community. A year later, they returned in another attempt to persuade the community of the value of the venture. This time, the discussions held in Borama and in Hargeisa were encouraging. A small committee was created to plan and organize a workshop in which the idea would be ventilated.

Fifty individuals participated in the deliberation of the workshop, held in Borama on 6–7 August 1996, including senior town elders, intellectuals, and other concerned citizens. Participants debated three key issues during the workshop: the need for and feasibility of the university; the proprietorship of the university; and location of the university.

The town elders, inspired by the workshop organizers’ commitment, took the lead in affirming the need for a university. Haji Jama Muhumed and Haji Dahir Elmi were key figures. The two Hajis were pivotal in the development of public schools in Borama since the first one was built. The elders insisted that all major institutions of higher learning in other parts of the world had humble beginnings and Borama’s should not be different. Despite the audience’s skepticism, the elders’ enthusiasm carried the day. By the first evening of the workshop, participants saw the need for a university. Furthermore, they concluded, in line with the humble beginning argument, that Borama natives at home and abroad would have to mobilize the necessary resources to lay the institution’s foundation.

An item in the workshop that caused the most spirited debate was the university’s name and owner. The workshop organizers and others felt that the institution should belong to the Samaroon clan. This sectarian attitude was typical in all regions of the country, even to this day. Some vocal participants cautioned that it would be difficult to raise money from the local population and the Diaspora if the university was not the sole preserve of the Awdal community. This feeling did not run as deep as one might have expected, however, given the conditions in the country. Other workshop participants argued that the university should belong to the community but must be open to all qualified Somali students, regardless of their region of origin. The reasoning behind the inclusive pan-Somali thesis moved many. Consequently, they accepted Amoud as the university’s name. After all, Amoud had been the home of the oldest public schools in Northern Somalia. Moreover, the old boarding secondary school had a national reputation for academic excellence, and its student body came from all regions of the country.

Once participants reached these agreements, they elected two bodies: the University’s Board of Trustees and its Management Committee, now known as the Technical Support Committee. Board of Trustees members were respected Borama elders. The Technical Support Committee (Committee from here after) consists mostly of intellectuals and other professionals, some of whom had taught at the old Somali University.

The Board and the Committee had two strategic short-term objectives: (i) to challenge the community to support materially and morally the establishment of the university (self-reliance on local resources); and (ii) to rebuild community trust in public institutions and consequently reduce the influence of sectarian ideas. Well-attended public rallies and focused group meetings educated the public about the university project. The Committee set
a first precedent in self-reliance. Each member contributed $150 to the university fund. Next, the Committee invited the 40 business leaders to a meeting with the Board and the Committee. All invitees showed up for the meeting. Committee members introduced the university idea and their plans for self-reliance. Once initial introductions had taken place, a leading businessman thanked the group for its efforts and invited his colleagues to take the lead in venture. The business people agreed to donate $8,000 to the university fund.

As community’s support for the University surged the Board and the Committee traveled to Hargeisa. They jointly petitioned the authorities to transfer ownership of the dilapidated former Amoud Secondary School property to the university; the authorities granted the community its wish. The Board and Committee then focused their attention on repairing the 8-km gravel road that links Borama and Amoud and school buildings. Many members of the community contributed labor and machinery to fix the road. The total cost of the repairs was over $8,500, of which the University paid $350.

Earlier, looters completely vandalized the former intermediate boarding school buildings, stealing all removable parts, such as roofing material, doors, and window frames. This was the fate of many public and private properties in all parts of the country during the civil war. As people fled the war, bandits stole whatever they could, often destroying valuables they could not take with them. Such acts of banditry came to be known as “bilibloq.” The school buildings were completely ruined, except for the principal’s house which was saved by a family occupying it. In contrast, the old secondary school, less than one kilometer away, sustained minimal damage. Once Borama elders and the families who lived around the school realized what had happened to the intermediate school, they protected the properties of the secondary school. The families who lived adjacent to the it took residence in the buildings and guarded them from looters. Further, they stored all school materials, such as books and furniture. In one instance, a known Borama resident stole a window frame from the school. When the guardian families discovered the missing frame, they went to town, confronted the thief, and demanded the return of the frame. The thief refused. Fearing that the stand off would lead to violence that sectarian entrepreneurs could exploit the elders intervened and purchased the frame back from the thief. Although the guardian families and the elders were worried that by buying the stolen frame they might be setting a precedent and encouraging other thieves to follow suit. Fortunately, no more stealing occurred. The only other damages the secondary school buildings sustained were from the elements because nearly all glass windows were shattered early on during the civil war.

The families living on and around the campus turned two of the old classrooms into a school for their children, and University authorities permitted the community to use the building until a primary school could be built in the neighboring areas. Moreover, families would continue to live in the school’s residential compounds until they find proper accommodations. For those who protected the property the university employed as groundkeepers and promised that their children could attend the university, providing they were academically qualified. Finally, the administration decided to reclaim slowly all school land from trespassers, some of them are well-known and well-off Borama natives, within the next few years. The University’s considerate and nonconfrontational approach to solving social problems has endeared the budding institutions to the community.

The date for Amoud University’s first entrance examination, to be held in Borama, was announced. Sixty-nine students qualified to enroll in preparatory courses. In September 1997, they began a yearlong remedial course in basic sciences, English, and mathematics. Since university facilities were still under repair, these courses were conducted at Sheik Ali Jowhar secondary school in the town. Borama citizens in Arabia bought and shipped enough textbooks (six subjects) to the 69 students. After completing their pre-university courses, 47 of the students received satisfactory grades that qualified them to enter the university. Students currently pay a monthly tuition fee of $15 that covers a fraction of the University’s operating costs.

The pace of activity increased as the University’s opening date drew closer, and classroom, library, and office repairs neared completion. Organized women’s groups played a significant role in these preparations. The women poured onto the campus in large numbers to prepare the buildings for use. Two of the three classroom buildings, each consisting of four lecture halls, the library building
which was completely renovated and expanded, and staff offices were in mint condition before the University was formally inaugurated. A local manufacturer produced the tables and chairs for the classrooms at a generous discount, and the Committee bought two buses to transport students since the campus was several kilometers from town, and boarding facilities has not been restored yet. Somalis in the Middle East paid $18,000 to get the buses to Borama in time for the school’s opening. 33

The University needed two drivers for its buses. The Committee consciously used the drivers’ hiring as trust building exercise. A committee of 10 people was selected of which five members were designated watchdogs of the five examiners. The monitors’ duty was to ensure that applicants received fair treatment from the five examiners. Such transparency was necessary because people did not have confidence that this competitive hiring process could produce a just outcome. The University advertised the posts in the local media. Twenty-three applicants satisfied the posts’ requirements. The hiring committee interviewed each candidate and tested him on traffic rules. Only eight candidates qualified to proceed to the next stage. The committee then announced to the community the date of the road test, and many people came to witness it. The examiners selected three candidates as the best drivers. The University employed two of the drivers and placed the third on a waiting list. The monitors concurred with the examiners’ selection. Finally, the onlookers applauded and declared the process fair and professional.

The University and the hiring committee earned a lot of public trust for the unbiased professional way that it conducted this minor, but foundational, event. The symbolic value of this event has been enormous, as the public has come to associate the University with professionalism and fair management of public affairs. The community calls on the University’s services when public issues are at stake, or it demands that others emulate the University’s practice when carrying out their responsibilities. 34

The Board and the Committee set the inaugural date for 4 November 1998 and invited 300 guests from the region to the opening ceremony. Senior authorities from Hargeisa came to inauguration to give their blessings to the University, and donated $5,000. The occasion turned into a major celebration, with nearly 4,000 people, rather than the 300 invitees, showing up. Most Borama businesses closed for the day. Many spectators compared the crowds joyous mood to the sentiment people expressed during the commemoration of independence in past decades. The University leaders announced that 4 November 1998, marked the beginning of an important chapter in Somali history. They told the audience that all resources, except for book donations to the library from Book Aid International, which went into establishing the University, came from Borama citizens or other Somalis in the region and the Diaspora. They challenged leaders in the audience to heed their civic duty to harness the enormous latent energy in communities to promote the public good.

Students began their classes the day after the inaugural ceremony. All students registered for twelve credit hours for the first term of studies. College English, introductory Psychology, and biology were taught during this term. Spring semester course offerings included College Algebra, English, Somali literature, and Psychology.

The University has two departments, education and business administration. University authorities selected education as a foundational discipline due to the country’s dire need for qualified schoolteachers. The community and the administration intend to reverse an old Somali educational tradition in which all university graduates expected to obtain positions in government. By contrast, it is hoped that those majoring in business administration will secure employment in established private enterprises or create their own businesses. Other disciplines envisaged include: public administration, public health and medicine, veterinary medicine, and agriculture.

Twelve lecturers, including the University’s two administrators, teach in the degree program. Three of these lectured at the former Somali University. The chief administrator of Amoud University, Suliman A. Guleid, was a former dean of the College of Education at the Somali University in the early 1980s. Earlier, he was also the principal of Amoud Secondary School from 1970–71, while his deputy, Farah Shuun, taught English at Somalia’s College of Education. Seven of the other instructors hold M.A. degrees. In addition, the pre-university program has three teachers. Other staff members include a registrar, librarian, eight groundkeepers, drivers, and watchmen. Staff salaries range from $500–100 per month. Since the university does not have a wealthy bene-
factor, its ability to pay staff on time depends on contributions from the local population and the Diaspora. Thus, the University operates on shoestring budget.

Nearly all faculty and staff members are all from the Awdal region, but three instructors in the degree and pre-university programs are not originally from Borama. Until last year, all Board of Trustees and the Technical Support Committee members were from Borama. Awdal natives also dominate the student population. Only three of the 50 first-year students are from other regions. The distribution of students in the 1999–2000 class has become slightly more diverse in regional terms. Ten of the 62 students are from as far away as Mogadishu. The class of 2000–01 is expected to be more diverse. Gender balance remains skewed. There are only 15 female students at the University.

According to University policy any Somali student who passes the entrance examination will be accepted. However, the problem is that most students live in regions where the University cannot conduct the entrance examination. As a result, Borama natives dominate the student body. This year’s entrance examination was conducted in two locations: Borama and Hargeisa. The addition of more examination centers in other regions will help to further diversify the regional distribution of the students. In fact, many areas in the country have asked for such centers. Somali communities in other regions are putting a growing pressure on the University to expand and rehabilitate boarding facilities speedily so that students from outside Borama can be accommodated.

University administrators are particularly sensitive to the gender gap in its student population. Local women activists have been urging authorities to develop urgently a strategy to narrow this gap. Both groups agree that a major factor in girls’ low enrollment in high schools, and consequently the University, is the heavy responsibilities girls bear in families. The girls’ burden in the family has become more exacting since Somalia’s disintegration. The ever-increasing rate of male unemployment, now estimated to be about 70%, and excessive male consumption of Kat, have forced women to become their family’s main income earner. Income-generating activities take mothers out of the home, compelling daughters to take over their mother’s responsibilities in the home. In some cases, this means daughters do not attend school. In other cases, they are permitted to go to school, but they are still expected to manage many daily family chores. As a result, they have little study time. These conditions have decimated girls’ enrollment in schools and negatively affected their classroom performance. A few women activists and a fledgling institution cannot immediately rectify these serious social problems. However, as some initial steps, University administrators are creating tutoring and other special programs to help prepare girls for the entrance examination.

Amoud University faces many challenges that may all together undermine its existence. Two of the most formidable risks are: the University’s shallow financial base, sectarian turn of politics in Amoud, and the possibility that sectarian entrepreneurs in other regions may try to duplicate the University and therefore undercut its national and civic scope. Despite these dangers, Amoud has already made its mark on the national map. The question is: how significant is the mark locally and nationally in terms of rebuilding shared values and public institutions that cater to the Somali community’s common interest?

4. AMOUD AND THE RECOVERY OF SOMALI IDENTITY

The military dictatorship’s collapse gave many Somalis false hope that a second liberation would come. Instead, they suffered the worst calamity in their history: political and social disintegration. Comparatively homogenous Somalia, which seemed free from ethnic cleavages, disintegrated more easily and speedily than other multiethnic countries in the continent. Sectarian entrepreneurs’ ruthless exploitation of shared values and Somalis’ unwillingness to protect public institutions made this fate inescapable. The failure of the international community and organizations who used clan divisions as the basic building block for reconstruction to help restore national institutions confirms that genealogical divisions within Somali society are not the cause of Somalia’s disintegration. This section of the paper encapsulates the symbolic significance of Amoud University in rehabilitating trust in public institutions and remaking social relations and national identity. The results of two surveys illustrate the social meaning Awdal community attaches to the University.
Furthermore, the results show how Amoud University students are rediscovering their national identity in a context of sectarian politics.

Borama differs from other major urban areas in Somalia on three accounts. First, nearly all public schools were reestablished within five years of the country’s fragmentation. Second, in 1993 Borama hosted the most successful peace conference in the country since 1991. Finally, Borama established the only institution of higher education in the country. A handful of seasoned community elders and intellectuals were responsible for these unique accomplishments. Borama citizens are keenly aware of these achievements and approve of the elders’ guidance. In contrast, the people have nothing but disdain for the local and regional governments. Two students and I interviewed 60 Borama residents. To determine Borama resident’s knowledge about Amoud University, their sense of identity (clanist or nationalist), and their attitude toward the University and Borama local government, we randomly selected interviewees who worked or lived in the center of town. Residents’ responses to five questions are summarized in Table 1.

Three key points are clear from this survey. First, according to question two 50% of those interviewed think the University belongs to the regional administration. Another 15% assume it to be a Somali University. Only 20% consider the University to be clan property. In other words, nearly 65% of the sample believe that Amoud University belongs to Somalis, not the Samaroon Clan.

Second, over 50% of respondents to question three indicated that Awdal natives in Borama and in the Diaspora fund the University. This contradicts interviewee’s answer to question two that the Samaroon clan does not own the University. Why would Awdal citizens fund the University belonging to Somalis, in a society where clan identity is presumed to be supreme? The respondents told us that clan identity is necessary in the context of lawlessness, but that clan can not replace nationality and the nation-state. Furthermore, they indicated that since the community initiated the idea of the University, the population is responsible for taking the lead for the time being, but, in the end, the University is a Somali institution.

Third, most respondents, to question four, recognized that the majority of current university students are from the Awdal region. But this situation is both natural and temporary. Because the natives of the region founded the institution, it was normal, at early stages, that proximate settlements will have an advantage. As Amoud takes root and expands, however, the composition of its student will change. Ten percent of those interviewed believe that only Awdal natives can attend the University. In contrast, 75% of those interviewed indicated that the University should be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
<th>Option 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Do you know about the university?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Who owns the university?</td>
<td>Samaroon</td>
<td>Somaliland administration</td>
<td>Somalis</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Who funds the university?</td>
<td>Samaroon</td>
<td>Somaliland</td>
<td>Diaspora</td>
<td>Development agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Who can attend the University?</td>
<td>Samaroon only</td>
<td>Somaliland only</td>
<td>Any qualified Somali Islamic world</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) If you had to choose giving a loan to the Borama local government or to Amoud University which would you choose and why?</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
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open to students from the entire country and to other Muslims. Survey respondents’ answers to questions two, three, and four suggest that despite Awdal region’s significant contributions to funding the University, all Somalis should have access to its educational opportunities. This nonsectarian attitude of the majority of those interviewed is surprising in the face of the common interpretation that clanist identity is the supreme driver of the country’s fragmentation. Given the retreat of civic-minded people from the public arena and the dominance of sectarian political entrepreneurs in the country, Borama’s citizens nationalist attitude repudiate the supposed deterministic force of clan identity.

Respondents’ answers to question five further establish the shallowness of clan identity. Ninety eight percent of the respondents felt that they would prefer to loan their resources to the University rather than to Borama’s local government. Interviewees also commented that the local government had yet to use taxpayer money in accountable and productive ways. They contrasted this corrupt behavior with the transparent way the University is managed. About half of our informants noted that they would still lend money to Amoud University, even knowing that they may not get their money back. They considered contributions and loans to the University as a worthy investment but not to the local government. When asked why they were willing to invest in the University when a majority of its students will be non-Borama natives, they replied that education and clanism do not mix. They underscored their hope that these investments will help create a better Somalia.

Nearly everyone interviewed was proud of Borama’s civic leadership in national reconciliation and reconstruction. Most of Borama’s population feels good about the civic role its elders played in the 1993 Borama peace and political conference, mediating conflicts in the eastern part of the northern region, and the pioneering role of Amoud University in jump-starting higher education in the country. This in no way means that clanist chauvinism is absent from Borama, but it does suggest that most people prefer to be part of the larger Somali community and yearn for public institutions that are democratically and professionally managed.

The second survey questioned first and second year University students about their identity. The students echo the populations’ sentiments. I wanted to know what the students thought of their identity given Somalia’s fragmentation into warlord or clan fiefdoms. Like the Borama population, their response was counterintuitive. Nearly 74% of the first year’s cohort and 76% of the second year’s class identified Somalia as their country of citizenship. Eleven percent of the second year students and 19% of the first year students claimed to be “Somalilanders,” 5% of the second year students identified themselves as Samaroon, and the remaining 8% choose not to answer the question. Seven percent of the first year students saw themselves as Africans and none claimed clan identity. Most of those who claimed Somali citizenship were emphatic about who they were. The three most assertive answers were: “I am a citizen of Somalia but not a Somaliland.” “I want to be Somali as I was before because nobody can change my [nationality].” “Obviously I am a Somali boy who live[s] in Somalia and never had the will to go elsewhere. [I am] not those who denied their nationality and claimed [to be] Americans or Europeans. I am a Somali patriotic boy.”

Amoud University has had several far-reaching influences on its students and on the local population. In addition, the inaugural celebration and commencement of classes has held additional meaning for some guests from war-torn or conflict-paralyzed communities in other regions. The first and most obvious lesson Amoud drove home was the necessity of peace and stability for any development. A Hargeisa elder, Abdi Warabe, summed this up. He told his old friend, Haji Jama Muhumed, “you are establishing a university for your young people while mine are roaming armed bands.” The restoration of peace and stability in Borama does not mean that the community is conflict-free and has reached consensus on all major issues. Rather, it signals that no issue is sufficiently important in of itself to polarize and give sectarian entrepreneurs an opportunity to profit from discord. Focusing on common ground may, in fact, lay the groundwork for peaceful resolution of contumacious differences in the future. Second, the opening ceremony also had another significance for some Borama natives and others who came from afar. Many of these individuals had been enthusiastic contributors and had supported the idea of the University, but they were skeptical the organizers could refrain from using public donations for their private gain. With such suspicion
in their minds, they inspected the University’s rehabilitated infrastructure with particular care. The organizers’ appropriate use of public contributions to jumpstart the University restored a measure of the skeptics’ faith in the feasibility of collective projects.

Third, from the opening day, Amoud University underscored the preciousness of investing in collective projects that strengthen common values and deepen peace. Without such investments, peace will remain fragile, and the community will be incapable of leaving anything behind other than a legacy of civil strife.

Fourth, nurturing collective projects advances common cause and inclusive politics, and marks the transition from peacemaking to development.

Fifth, the University’s foremost impact is that it has given the population confidence that local resources can be effectively mobilized to address development needs. The University’s effective use of resources and its professional and transparent management system convinced Borama citizens that public institutions need not be corrupt and inefficient. In fact, the public often contrasts the University with the corrupt local government—a difference associated with the latter’s appointment by the regional government and, hence not accountable to the population. This is not the case with the University that is financially dependent on the local people and the Diaspora.

Sixth, Borama citizens have witnessed the birth of a new type of public institution that is answerable to the community. If Somalis are by nature clanist as some claim, Amoud University, which was created after the national government’s disintegration, should have hardened community’s clanist feelings. Instead, Amoud has had the opposite effect. By contrast, Borama’s fraudulent local government has been fertile ground for divisive politics. The most potent lesson of Amoud University is that well-managed community or public institutions are the best defense against exploitation by sectarian entrepreneurs. This conclusion supports the initial thesis that shared cultural values are necessary, but an insufficient condition, to insure cohesion and national integration. Accountable institutions, which strategically build on shared traditions, foster tomorrow’s common values and identity. The implication of this finding is that Amoud University and similarly run community enterprises can play a vital role in reestablishing Somalia’s national government and inclusive, rather than sectarian politics.

Seventh, the Somali calamity and Amoud University’s establishment speak directly to the ways in which social capital is destroyed or formed. Instrumentalist uses of public institutions can easily demolish shared values built over decades, and may be centuries. This means that communities and states cannot take trust and common traditions for granted. Somalia’s story alerts us that national authority and the people should continuously reinvest in public institutions lest the nation’s social capital is eroded and/or destroyed. Moreover, common heritage is not sufficient enough to purposively unite people unless they are embodied in collective institutions that cater to the entire community. These institutions are the best defense against sectarian fragmentation and national mayhem. Finally, state collapse, as in Somalia, need not lead to despair in a society as individual communities can draw on their social capital to deal with collective needs. Single community bound projects may not be enough, however, to reignite national conciliation and development. Building national institutions that supercede particularistic projects and embody common cause is the next step in scaling-up shared values’ appeal. This is precisely the essence of Amoud University.

NOTES


3. For a critical analysis of ethnicity and national development in Africa, see Mustapha (forthcoming).


8. This section draws on Samatar (1997).

9. This division was clear even in the first Somali governments formed under Italian and British colonial masters in the late 1950s. Hussein, A. H. (Prime Minister 1964–67) Interview 21 October 1999, Minneapolis.

10. Major differences emerged between the President and his Prime Minister with regard to the government’s public management strategy. The President appointed a like-minded Prime Minister.

11. It must be noted that the integration of these two administrative systems into a coherent one was a major accomplishment of the first and second republics.

12. Several hundred junior employees appointed on the basis of clientalism were also dismissed. Hussein, A. H. Interview 23 October 1999. Among those fired was the Primer’s older brother who was hired employed by the Italian colonial administration.


15. Lewis (1972).


18. There have been over 12 international conferences, but none has produced tangible results. In fact, some of these conferences organized by regional leaders became instruments for exploiting Somali Fragmentation to extend the interests of Ethiopia, Kenya, or Eritrea.

19. These were revealed to the author in discussion with senior officials of the so-called Somaliland Republic. Gabileh and Hargeisa, June 1999.


21. “Aw and Shiekh” are religious titles. The latter is more educated than the former.

22. Various Somali governments recognized Mr. Ali as the father of modern Somali education. Schools and other institutions were named after him.

23. Haji Dahir Elmi was present in this meeting as a young man and a former student of Aw Abdi Shiekh Noor.

24. Borama and Hargeisa supported the Amoud location. Hargeisa people were comfortable with Amoud as their children were already in the intermediate boarding school there. The chief advocate of the eastern location was none other than Mr. Ali, who argued that the school should be built in the eastern region. The speaker for the Borama–Hargeisa coalition was Mr. Said Abby, a broker for the Wasame Birko company in Hargeisa. The two groups faced each other at the Protectorate Advisory Council held in the town of Shiekh. The Protectorate Governor, nicknamed “Kamekame,” chaired the meeting, and Bell participated. The vocational school was the last item on the agenda, and the two sides presented their cases. The debate between the two sides was acrimonious and the Governor had to intervene and cut the debate short.


26. Mr. Abdirahman Ali headed this coalition. He was the younger brother of Mohamoud Ahmed Ali.

27. Mr. Ali is recognized for gracefully accepting his defeat and relinquishing power as the head of the so-called Somaliland. He is the only one among the faction leaders and warlords to have done so peacefully since Somalia’s disintegration.

28. Samaroon or Gadabursi is the clan name for the majority of people of Awdal origin.

29. This section is based on my observations and interviews I conducted over the last two years.

30. I attended, as an observer, the meeting in which some of these issues were debated.

31. This term was added to the Somali language during the height of the civil war to denote brutal banditry.

32. When I visited the school in June 1995, I saw the physics and history textbooks I used as a student in the secondary school. These books were stored in one of the dormitories and protected from the elements.

33. More recently, The Djibouti government donated a new bus, one electrical generator, several computers, and two hundred chairs and tables.
34. In contrast, no one wants to deal with Borama local government, as it is thoroughly corrupt and staffed by sectarians. Moreover, the rehabilitated old intermediate school was turned into an agricultural school. The school was temporarily closed as nepotism marred its management.

35. The Diaspora is organized into three groups: North American contingent, Europe and the Middle East. These belong to the Friends of Amoud University.

36. The University has repeatedly submitted requests to local government authorities to invest in the institution by levying marginal taxes on water and electricity. The former mayor of Borama district repeatedly turned down these requests. The new mayor has promised to examine the feasibility of such taxes.

37. Kat is a mild stimulant men chew.

38. University’s Women Support Group, Group Interview, Borama, 3 April 1999.


40. This is changing slightly as a new mayor has started to rebuild city roads of Borama.

41. Somaliland is the name of the clan fiefdom for what was northern Somalia.

42. Evans (1996).

REFERENCES