

Gobannimo

Charting a new path toward conflict transformation in Somalia post London Conference

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With contributions from

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February 2012

* *Gobannimo* Institute is a trading name for *Gobannimo* Somali Centre of Ideas limited, registered in England with company number 7943558.

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Dedication

To the hundreds of thousands of Somali dead and wounded, to their families, and to the entire Somali Nation - all victims of tragic and diabolical civil war, famine, and foreign intervention.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to many friends and colleagues. I would like to thank Fmr PM Abdirazak Haji Hussen for his continued support and affection for the idea of *gobannimo* from the beginning. I am very glad, mudane Abdirazak, that our conversations about *gobannimo* and the best way to address the present difficult situation in our homeland will now have a broader audience. I also thank the other two leaders, Fmr President Ali Mahdi Mohamed & Fmr President Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, whose frank discussions about the timely need for clans to renounce power at the very top is the mainstay of the arguments presented in this document. I owe special thanks to many friends and supporters of *gobannimo* in the UK, Somalia and elsewhere who lent me a hand during the course of my testing or evaluating these ideas, researching and writing. Thanks to you all; you are truly the founders of *gobannimo*. Please rest assured that you will rightly be acknowledged in our full report, which will be published long before the big day in August 2012. Finally, a special note of gratitude goes to my wife Hawalin H. Elmi, my elderly mother Ahado Tohow, and my children for their endless support and understanding.

Foreword

Sporting a sky blue tie and white shirt, the colours of the Somali flag, the British Prime Minister David Cameron hosted the London Conference on Somalia at Lancaster House on 23rd February 2012. The final communiqué from the conference, which was attended by fifty-five delegations from Somalia itself and the international community, stressed that decisions on Somalia's future rests with the Somali people. The international community's role is to facilitate Somalia's progress and development on core issues, including political, security and justice, piracy, terrorism, stability and recovery, humanitarian, and the international coordination of these complex issues.

We argue in this paper that it is the human dimension of fractured Somali interrelationships that perpetuates this long-running conflict. As the conference rightly concluded, the international community can help facilitate core issues, but it is for us the Somali people to overcome clan rivalry, hatred, envy, and self-ambition, and to start rebuilding trust, cooperation and goodwill among our people. Our idea, *gobannimo*, addresses these negative elemental forces and the clan cultures of intolerance at the heart of this conflict.

Gobannimo is the product of many years of out-of-the-box thinking about the disaster that befell the Somali people. Long before the British Prime Minister David Cameron, in his speech to the Lord Mayor's banquet on 14 November 2011, announced that the UK will host a conference in London on Somalia to pull together international effort, I was working, with the support of few friends, on this much humbler idea which essentially called on the Somali people to, in that timeworn phrase, 'get back to basics' to achieve peace in their country. Indeed, peace has eluded Somalia for a very long time. The country has been at war for almost thirty years. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, millions have become refugees, and the conflict resisted every attempt to resolve it constructively.

At the core of this conflict is clan power struggle. *Gobannimo* calls on Somali clans to re-examine and transform their prevailing assumptions and approaches to power so that they can begin to negotiate peace and end the war in their country. Specifically, it calls on the 'majority' clans to renounce their claim to the three topmost offices of the state (the President, the PM, and the Parliamentary Speaker) of their own volition for the sake of peace in their country, and to support the creation of an effective national government led by individuals from the minority groups who are elected to office on account of their

achievement and personal qualities. In our view, the Somali people stand a better chance of ending the war and negotiating peace if the TFG is replaced in August 2012 by a minority-led government (i.e., non-clan political leadership) tasked with completing the essential work of ending the transition, including tackling security, constitution-making, fostering reconciliation, peace-building, and good governance.

When destructive conflicts persist for long periods of time and resist every attempt to resolve them constructively, they can appear to take on a life of their own, and become intractable. The Somali conflict fits this description. It is a deep seated clan conflict arising out of history of oppression, enduring cycles of violence, injustice and victimization, clan segmentation and polarized identities, fractured relationships, and over the past 21 years, clan rivalry and power struggles, sustained civil war and unending insurgencies, all complicated by the absence of a genuine government.

This precarious situation demands, more than anything else, a genuine moral and psychological reconciliation between the clans whose rivalry and antagonism brought about this state of affairs. And that cannot and will not happen as long as they are engaged in this endless clan contest for power and supremacy. The London Conference called for “broader and more representative” political processes to foster legitimacy in the TFG in August 2012. We ought to say here that this is the umpteenth internationally sponsored conference on Somalia where such formulaic ideas of clan representation were put forward, and signed by Somali leaders. Yet all that they produced was more clan power struggles, more rivalry, more clan paranoia, and hence more grievances.

Gobannimo is a credible alternative that is not just morally attractive but practically feasible. A political process aimed at resolving core differences and addressing legitimate grievances will require Somali leadership and commitment that are seen to be above clan politics. Non-clan leaders have much better chances of transforming clan hostilities across Somali society by dialogue, reconciliation, and trust-building. Non-clan leaders can better define conflicting interests as a mutual problem to be solved by collaborative efforts, helping the clan leaders to recognize the legitimacy of each other’s interests and the necessity to search for a solution to the needs of all. And non-clan leaders can create a feeling of agreement between the elites, and a rebirth of a sense of basic similarity in beliefs and values among the wider Somali nation.

Let us not forget that Somalia has already earned the dubious distinction of being the world's foremost graveyard of externally sponsored state-building initiatives. These earlier initiatives did not succeed partly because of their 'failure to utilize traditional Somali reconciliation methods'. We can incorporate new ideas into these traditional mechanisms, such as our own *gobannimo* which aims to transform the negative aspects of clan culture, and that in our view is where the space for effective action is nearly boundless. The role of the international community in this context, I would argue, is to support Somali-driven conflict transformation initiatives that have the potential to change the internal political dynamics of the clans to advance peace in Somalia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A manifesto for conflict transformation in Somalia

Statebuilding in Somalia has consistently been pursued via power-sharing arrangements without serious attempts at reconciliation of clans. But these efforts have neither dampened hostile political memories that still devastate Somali clan relations, nor reduced tensions in the wider society. Almost twelve years after the first transition was set up in Djibouti, the clan-politically driven approaches have failed to mobilize the Somali people for a clear moral purpose.

Therefore, I would argue that the tragedy of Somalia's 'great clan power politics'¹ cries out for a new approach that matches the causal complexity of the conflict. It is in this context that I propose *gobannimo*, a truly original approach for 'conflict transformation' in Somalia which if adopted in August 2012 when the term of the current TFG institutions comes to an end, can help the Somali people forge a sense of common nationhood to overcome clan, sectarian and communal differences, and to re-establish the institutions of the state for the common good of the Somali nation. *Gobannimo* is the opposite of what I call the 'clan power approach', where clans are competing with each other for supremacy especially for the top offices (i.e., the President, the PM, and Parliamentary Speaker) to have control of the state, with the destructive outcomes that we can see in Somalia today. In the clan power approach, opponents framed each other as "enemies" whom they attempt to outwit or destroy. Wisdom denotes that whether the participants in a conflict have a cooperative orientation or a competitive one is decisive in determining its course and outcomes. No wonder efforts at statebuilding in Somalia have failed so far.

Gobannimo is a collaborative problem-solving approach which, if adopted, can lead to durable and sustainable positive-sum/"win-win" outcomes between the clans. The objective here is to have all the communities achieve their positive goals, and none at the expense of others. This will throw a new light on politics in Somalia which, hopefully, will no longer be a scarce resource to be pursued in zero-sum, clan-centric terms.

¹ This is an adaptation of John Mearsheimer's apt title, the tragedy of great power politics (2001). New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company.

It is not good enough to rely on formulaic methods alone for Somalia, i.e., UN-brokered agreements between politicians who are isolated from their communities. Somalia is much too complex for such initiatives to foster legitimate and capable authority in the country on their own. The international community must be prepared to consider new ideas and principled commitments (not self-seeking projects for power and wealth) from the diaspora that can contribute to ending the conflict and fostering peace in the country. *Gobannimo* is a foundational idea that can stand this test.

Somalia cries out for visionary, but above all non-clan, leaders who can win the hearts and minds of the Somali people; leaders who can win the battle of ideas against militant extremists. I believe individuals from the minority communities are best placed to play this decisive and unifying role. Because they, or their communities, have not taken part in the recent and still ongoing civil wars (whether defensive or offensive) but rather were themselves victims of the violence, they can advance the cause of forgiveness, justice and reconciliation in Somali society. Because it would be a historic development for the Somali people as well as for these communities, the leaders elected will have the backing of the Somali nation across clan and geography. Such minority leaders can then potentially mobilize the Somali people behind peacebuilding and the reestablishment of legitimate and effective state institutions.

Somali cultural traditions have images of peace and peacemaking and drawing on these can help clan opponents see each other in a new light, and to explore shared concerns and mutually beneficial arrangements which can serve de-escalation and reconciliation. I define reconciliation as changing the relationship between contending parties instrumentally and emotionally so that each can more easily envision a joint future.² Destructive attitudes and emotions such as clan pride (*qab qabiil*), clan paranoia (*kala shaki qabiil*), greed, grievances (real or imagined), intense rivalry, envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, discord, enmity, dissensions, factions, and self-ambition are all conditions of the heart that perpetuate the intractable clan conflict in Somalia. The only way known to man that one can overcome these destructive emotions is through forgiveness and reconciliation. *Gobannimo* will afford these clans and their leaders the opportunity and moral resources to open up their hearts to each other, and reconcile. Let the man we despised and looked down upon throughout the generations lead the nation, so that we (the clans) will sit down under the shade of an acacia tree, and make peace.

² See Ross, Marc Howard (2007) *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge University Press, p. 320.

Lastly, *gobannimo* poses minimal threat to the social or self-esteem of those who must change - the clans. While it's a novel idea, it is neither wild, nor an implausible grand social-engineering experiment. Rather, it is a Somali-born solution to a very complex Somali-born conflict. In my view, the word *gobannimo*, in its straightforward meaning 'honour', 'independence' or 'self determination', is global enough for every Somali to accept. I would further argue that *gobannimo*, as it is proposed here, has integrity of motive in Somali cultural terms, and a reasonable prospect of success if supported by the Somali people and Somalia's partners in state-building, the international community. The alternative is unending transitions in the hands of obscurantist leaders vitiated by clan-power politics as none of these clans is likely to change their posturing that "Politics is war by other means", anytime soon. Such transitions will never win the battle of ideas against violent Somali extremists and their global partners, and will never lead to peace and security in our homeland.

Minorities

There are three main groups of minorities in Somalia: the traditionally excluded indigenous Somali groups, disparagingly called Boon, Gabooyo, Midgan, Tumaal, etc. (use of these terms are considered offensive; *Danwadaag* - cooperative or cooperants, in English - is an acceptable Somali name); the Bantu; and the Benadiri (including reer Hamar, reer Merka, and reer Baraawe, etc.). All three groups are themselves plural and heterogeneous, and their experiences in Somali society vastly differ. It is not the place to decide who, of these groups, suffered most at the hands of Somali clans. However, for the purposes of simple (or crude) categorization, I'd use terms such as 'historical injustices', and 'recent injustices'.

My argument is that the traditionally disparaged groups have suffered tremendous historical injustices in Somali society. The common experiences they share is that of an ethnic Somali group who live across clan and geography in all the Somali territories in the Horn of Africa, who were (and still are) stigmatized and oppressed by their fellow Somali countrymen and women. Their experience is perhaps best captured by an adaptation of pioneering social psychologist Gordon Allport's challenge about black American experience to his readers half a century ago:

"Ask yourself what would happen to your own personality if you heard it said over and over again that you are an outcast, a pariah, and considered unclean or impure. Because of your

inferior blood, you can only marry within your own particular group. We will not marry your girls, nor can your sons marry our daughters. Suppose this opinion was forced upon you by the majority of your fellow citizens, not because of your skin colour, culture, faith or language which is different from theirs. No, you share all of these characteristics with them. But because you happen to have some derogatory names ... (as listed above) forcibly given to you by the majority group itself. And suppose that nothing you could do would change this position”.³

The Bantu (*Jareerweyne* is an acceptable Somali name) mainly live in the inter-riverine areas of south Somalia. They were equally discriminated and oppressed by Somali clans. In the recent civil wars, the Bantu suffered enormously at the hands of clan warlords and their armed militias.

The Benadiri live on the coast and are mercantile people. They built Mogadishu and other coastal towns, and were instrumental in spreading Islam across Somalia. They traded abroad as well as inland with Somali nomads. These communities have suffered large-scale organized violence, including the rape of their women, massacre, expropriation, and expulsion, in the hands of Somali clans in the recent civil wars.

The *gobannimo* alternatives

In *gobannimo*, we set out an alternative strategy to the clan-centric approach currently being used to elect or appoint leaders to the three topmost offices of the state in Somalia (the President, the PM, and Parliamentary Speaker). The *gobannimo* alternative is a Somali-interest driven approach and, in our view, is absolutely essential if we want state-building efforts in Somalia to become less wedded to traditional, counterproductive, self-defeating approaches that lead to various self-made traps. We emphasize here again that *gobannimo* is not a project to be imposed on the Somali people by anyone or any authority. It is an idea by Somalis for Somalis to be considered as an alternative or addition to those that currently exist for replacing the TFG leadership in August 2012. *Gobannimo*’s alternative strategy consists of two options (of course, other options can be put forward as long as they accord with the premises of *gobannimo*). Option one represents, more or less, my original

³ Here is Allport’s original quote: “Ask yourself what would happen to your own personality if you heard it said over and over again that you were lazy, a simple child of nature, expected to steal, and had inferior blood. Suppose this opinion were forced on you by the majority of your fellow citizens. And suppose nothing that [you] could do would change this opinion - because you happen to have black skin.” Cited by Levin, Shana & Colette van Laar, eds., (2006:ix) *Stigma and group inequality: social psychological perspectives*. Mahwah, New Jersey & London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

gobannimo idea that I put on youtube at the beginning of 2011, and is fairly straightforward. Of course, I have learnt a lot since I first came out with the idea, both from the leaders themselves and from others, which resulted in some considerable refining to my original formulation, and I'm very grateful for that. Option two is slightly more complex because it represents, as much as I can make it, a combination of option one and some of the views of my contributors, the former leaders.

Option 1:

- a. all Somali clans will give up their claim to the three topmost offices of the state (the President, the PM, and Parliamentary Speaker) for the next term of the TFG.
- b. candidates from all the three minority groups above will be elected/appointed to these three top posts on the basis of their achievement and personal qualities.
- c. two conditions need to be fulfilled under option 1, b: that each of the three communities gets a post at the top table on merit, and that at least one of the leaders elected/appointed will be from the former Somaliland.

Option 2:

As I said above, this is slightly more complex. But the gist of it is that the three 'majority' clans (in alphabetical order, Daarood, Hawiye and Isaaq) whose contest for power and supremacy have decimated the Somali people and their country will, for the sake of peace, justice and humanity, give up their claim to the three topmost offices of the state (the President, the PM, and Parliamentary Speaker) for the next term of the TFG. Between them, these three clans produced all of the presidents and prime ministers (23 in total), bar one PM from a minority community, Somalia has had since executive authority was passed to the Somalis by the Italian colonial administration in 1956 (see Somali leaders' genealogies, p. 66). The idea is that they will come to their senses and accept the justice in the cause of the other clans (smaller clans, I should say). Brothers and sisters from these three 'mighty' clans, please ask yourselves: Aren't members of the Digile Mirifle clan Somalis? Aren't the smaller clans of the Dir, Somalis? Who makes the decision that only (again in alphabetical order) a Daarood or Hawiye will become President or PM for Somalia? Why not the others? But, more importantly perhaps, what have we (I happen to belong to those bigger clans) got to show for our stewardship (if I can use that beautiful word for it), other than large-scale losses of human life and a stupendous amount of destruction. So on that note, can there be a deal between the Somali clans whereby the big three will,

of their own volition having realized the justice in the cause of the others, agree not to field a candidate for the TFG presidential race this year? And as they make that noble decision (that is, if they make it), they can also add a nobler one which is to put on that ticket as PM and Parliamentary Speaker two outstanding individuals from the minority groups? That, in essence, is option two.

The means to *gobannimo*

We already have *gobannimo* as an idea, and in print. We also have the contributions of three prominent former Somali leaders. Some of these leaders have suggested ways that we could advance this idea, and most of it is to bring together all the relevant actors to propose *gobannimo* as a conflict transformation approach for Somalia. The types of actors they suggest include the following: top leadership (past and present), including political/religious/traditional leaders with high visibility; middle-level leadership, including clan leaders, intellectuals, academics, and civil society leaders; and grassroots level leadership, including elders and leaders of local NGOs and, separate from these structures, leaders from the Somali diaspora (see Fmr PM Abdirazak's conditions for the participation of former Somali leaders, p. 44). We envisage there will be two main items on the agenda for such a gathering. The first item will be that Somalia's former leaders who are alive today, and most of whom would be in the later years of their life, would publicly forgive each other and reconcile. That is a project both noble and practical: pursuing reconciliation demands thinking in new ways; it promises the relief of suffering and the freedom born of forgiveness. The second item will be that they discuss about our new idea, *gobannimo*. If these actors could agree on the way forward based on *gobannimo* ('majority' clans renouncing power to the top, and with it hopefully their rivalry, for the TFGs next term, and upstanding citizens from the minority community assuming the leadership of Somalia), that agreement is more than worth the effort. It is the first step toward creating the consent-based legitimacy that implementing a peace accord will require. But how this initiative comes to fruition depends on the extent to which the international community facilitates the process and provides concrete assistance for pursuing it.

Contributions from the leaders

I have deliberately decided not to produce a summary of the contributions from the leaders. Therefore, readers will have to look at their interview transcripts (in the case of Abdirazak, his piece) to get their side of the story.

Gobannimo

A manifesto for conflict transformation in Somalia

A work in progress

Aweys O. Mohamoud⁴

I.

This essay has two main objectives. The first is to present *Hindisaha Gobannimo*, or *gobannimo* for short, a fresh and truly original approach for ‘conflict transformation’ in Somalia. The idea exists already in the public domain, and an earlier video version in Somali can be viewed here <http://www.youtube.com/user/Gobannimo?gl=GB>. *Gobannimo* is an old Somali word which, when translated into English, variously mean dignity, honour, emancipation, freedom, and self-determination. As an idea for conflict transformation, *gobannimo* calls on the Somali people to re-examine and transform their prevailing assumptions and approaches to power so that they can begin to negotiate peace and end the war in their country. Specifically, it calls on the four major clans (in alphabetical order, Daarood, Digil Mirifle, Dir, and Hawiye) to renounce their claim to the three topmost offices of the state (the President, the PM, and the Parliamentary Speaker) of their own volition for the sake of peace in their country, and to support the creation of an effective national government led by individuals from the minority groups who are elected to office on account of their achievement and personal qualities. In our view, the Somali people stand a better chance of ending the war and negotiating peace if the TFG is replaced in August 2012 by a minority-led government (i.e., non-clan political leadership) tasked with completing the essential work of ending the transition, including tackling security, constitution-making, fostering reconciliation, peace-building, and good governance.⁵ The second objective, therefore, is to put forward substantial statements from three prominent former Somali

⁴ Aweys O. Mohamoud has MA and PhD from the Institute of Education, University of London. Field of Study: Lived Experience of Refugee Children. His doctoral thesis, to be published in 2012, was entitled: Growing up Somali in Britain, the experience of a group of young Somali men and women coming of age in London. An overview of his research is available at http://www.hiiraan.com/op2/2011/jan/a_new_research_on_somali_young_people_in_the_uk.aspx. Dr. Mohamoud has recently published an article, ‘Somali parents and the education of their children’, in Runnymede Bulletin’s Autumn (2011) edition, available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/70102404/Autumn-2011-Runnymede-Bulletin-Parenting>.

⁵ I acknowledge here to have read both ‘the statement’ of the roadmap for ending the transition and the resolutions from the recent ‘Somali National Constitutional Conference’ in Garowe I & II, Puntland. I’d argue that we need to go beyond formal agreements to create the consent-based legitimacy that implementing a peace accord among the Somali people will require. *Gobannimo* is a credible alternative that is not just morally attractive but practically feasible. If adopted, it will give us, for the first time in our history, the opposite of the ever present unjust status quo whereby the bigger clans are the only game in town at the top and are still squabbling and bickering over it. That arrangement is simply not tenable anymore for the Somali nation (including the major clans themselves). I ought to say here loud and clear that I’m putting forward this idea not out of envy or rivalry, but out of goodwill for the Somali people. I myself or the leaders whose names appear on the cover are not going to be leaders, nor are our relatives or friends, nor do we have in mind anyone who might want to become a Somali leader, as President, as PM and as Speaker of Parliament. And these are the three top offices of state that, I believe, ought to be filled on the basis of *gobannimo* after August 2012. Please read on!

leaders, namely (in chronological order of becoming a leader) Fmr PM Abdirazak Haji Hussen, Fmr President Ali Mahdi Mohamed, and Fmr President Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, in support of finding a negotiating framework based on clans renouncing power to end the war with a durable compromise settlement that leads to healing, reconciliation, peace and effective government in Somalia. The time to start that political process, we argue, is now.

For the sake of clarity, a few definitions are in order. Somalia, in this document, denotes the Somali Republic that emerged independent on the 1st of July 1960 by the union of the Former Trust Territory of Somalia under the Italian administration, and former British Somaliland Protectorate. Following John Paul Lederach, I define conflict transformation as *the theory and practice of* envisioning and responding to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, and increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships (my italics).⁶ Clan is an anthropological term which describes a body of people claiming common descent or ancestry. Clanship, according to I.M. Lewis, is the political principle regulating competition for sparse resources.⁷ His statement, however, that “... like nationalism, clanship is a human invention”⁸ is certainly not in accord with Somali belief. I treat beliefs broadly as those resulting from larger cultural, educational, and religious organizations of society.⁹ I subscribe here to Doyle and Sambanis’ opinion that, even though Somalis claim a common ethnic origin, the clan divisions that governed social relations in Somalia and that served as the basis for the organization of the rebellion and subsequent interclan warfare constituted the equivalent of an ethnic conflict. These divisions made a power-sharing agreement and the design of post-Barre political institutions more difficult.¹⁰ In her book, *The Fallen State*, Alice Bettis Hashim echoed this sentiment. She states that because the Somali people are of one race, culture, language, religion, and believe they have a common ancestry, the usual conditions of ethnic divergence do not apply. Yet the degree of hostility which the clans generate against each other equals or surpasses that between totally distinct ethnic groups. Thus, while the underpinnings are different, the effects of inter-clan and sub-clan hostility (wars within clan families) is just as disastrous as any inter-ethnic war.¹¹ The last word on clan must be a comparison between a clan and society. The latter is what we the Somali people

⁶ I know that says a mouthful but you can read the full details in Lederach, John Paul (2003) the little book of conflict transformation. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, especially chapter 3: defining conflict transformation.

⁷ See Lewis, Ioan M. (1961) A pastoral democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 127.

⁸ See Lewis, Ioan M. (1994) Blood and bone: the call of kinship in Somali society. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, p. 233.

⁹ See North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis, Barry R. Weingast (2009) Violence and social orders: a conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history. Cambridge University Press, p. 29.

¹⁰ See Doyle, Michael W. & Nicholas Sambanis (2006) Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, p. 158.

¹¹ Hashim, Alice Bettis (1997) The fallen state: dissonance, dictatorship, and death in Somalia. Lanham, New York & Oxford: University Press of America, Inc. pp. xiv-xv.

aspire to become. Society, according to Unwin Hyman dictionary of sociology, is any self-perpetuating, human grouping occupying a relatively bounded territory, possessing its own more or less distinctive culture and institutions.¹² But we know that societies are not actors. Societies do not deal with anything; individuals do.¹³ And that, in my view, is where clans (and especially in the Somali context) differ from society. Clans as well as individuals act in Somalia. The fact that clans act as individuals should now be used for the advancement of *gobannimo*, rather than the continuation of perpetual contest for power between them. In outline, the essay proceeds as follows. After a few preliminaries, I will talk about how *gobannimo* was conceived and, as it were, my journey of discovery in sections 2, 3, & 4. Then I will make an effort to proffer a rationale for *gobannimo* in section 5. In section 6, I present the statement of the *gobannimo* formula plus some more arguments as to why Somali clans should give up power to the top three offices of state for the sake of peace in their country. Finally, section 7 concludes the essay. I use the first person plural “us” or “we” in this essay to emphasize three points. First, I wish to underscore the idea that the difficulties that we Somalis are grappling with reside in people rather than forces of nature. It is people who generate these problems and who must react to them. Referring to “us” and “we Somalis” reinforces this sense of responsibility. Second, I want to make clear that I consider myself a member of the people (clans) I am criticizing - the groups that need to re-examine and transform their prevailing assumptions and approaches to power. I am not simply pointing the finger at others. Third, I use “we” to acknowledge the collaboration I’ve received from the leaders whose names appear on the cover. This is, of course, not an opinion or position paper reached by the group as a whole. All the leaders have their own separate statements based primarily on interview transcripts which I obtained from them. I am the writer of this piece, so any errors of fact, approach or interpretation are solely mine.

II.

A few warning words, first. Notwithstanding the grand title, this is not the magnum opus of a scholar who has for many years been publishing works on conflict resolution. I make no pretence at all to scholarly knowledge or practical experience in politics or in the study of ethno-political conflict, be it in Somalia or elsewhere. My background is in the social sciences, and in particular in the sociology of education. What I have, however, is a desire to act. Practical reason requires us to take the means to our ends. If doing a certain action

¹² Jary, David & Julia Jary (1999) Unwin Hyman Dictionary of Sociology (Second Edition). HarperCollins Publishers, p. 627.

¹³ See North, Douglass, et al. (2009), op.cit. p. 13.

is necessary or promotes a person's aims, the person obviously has at least a *prima facie* reason to do it. That is what I believe I'm trying to do here (more on this later), and the issue I'm concerned about is the situation in Somalia which at this moment demands the most serious attention and ought to engage every Somali citizen who can help, either in word or deed, to leave nothing undone to promote the cause of peace and security in our homeland. In an era of migration, globalization, and an ongoing armed conflict in Somalia for almost three decades, there is now a considerable number of Somali citizens or "incipient ethno-national" Somali diaspora, to borrow Gabriel Sheffer's¹⁴ fitting term, dispersed abroad. Most of us in this diaspora have an abiding interest and concern for the welfare of the people and the country we left behind. According to an article in The New York Times at the end of 2009, a recent UNDP study estimated the size of the Somali diaspora at more than one million (*other figures put much higher*) and the amount of annual remittances to Somalia at up to \$1 billion, equivalent to about 18 percent of the nation's gross domestic product (my italics).¹⁵ I call that patriotism or a special concern for the well-being of our people. Remember that old Somali saying "*Ninki dad xume ku yiraa, dad laawe ayaa la yiraa*" (roughly translated as: whoever says to you 'your offspring are bad', say to them 'you have no offspring')! But we also need to be deeply concerned about Somalia's moral revival and well-being, and not just its physical existence. In other words, it's the desperate state of Somalia's moral condition (i.e., the lack of effective central government with the capacity to consolidate or institutionalize peace and the rule of law) which needs our attention now. I am still referring to the diaspora,¹⁶ although I understand that they are not a tightly knit homogenous group collectively pursuing a single strategy. Somali refugees around the world are a multifarious collective, and are different in terms of their background (not just clan, but also education and socioeconomic status) and levels of adaptation in their host countries. Thus there will be various shades of opinion and positions in relation to Somalia. That is a given, but what is very much in evidence is the fact that most of us in the diaspora want to ensure the survival and success of our homeland. Some of us may have physical and/or financial resources to help rebuild the country. Others will have intellectual resources, ideas, lived experience and lessons learned. I'd say the latter is equally, if not more, important at this critical point in Somalia's history. In fact, the more I look at the Somali civil wars and the ludicrous political

¹⁴ See Gabriel Sheffer, "The Jewish diaspora and the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict," in Smith, Hazel & Paul Stares, eds., (2007) *Diasporas in conflict: peace-makers or peace-wreckers?* (pp. 65-89). Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press.

¹⁵ See "Somalia's Money is Lifeline for Homeland", by Mathew Saltmarsh, The New York Times, November 11, 2009, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/12/world/africa/12remit.html>.

¹⁶ Some writers contend that the diaspora metaphor is quite limiting because it reduces disparate masses to a "sameness in dispersal". See Ang, I. (2001) *On not speaking Chinese: living between Asia and the West*. London & New York: Routledge, p. 89.

failures of our society since the collapse of the state in January 1991 and before, the more it pains me that we've lived in a stagnant, irrational, and pre-modern worldview that has failed to respond to the challenges of modernity. In their pioneering work on the issue of modernity in six developing countries some forty years ago, Alex Inkeles and David Smith summarized what they called the modern man's character, and I can't resist quoting them here: "*The modern man* is an informed participant citizen; he has a marked sense of personal efficacy; he is highly independent and autonomous ... and he is ready for new experiences and ideas. That is, he is relatively open-minded and cognitively flexible. As an informed participant citizen, the modern man identifies with the newer, larger entities of state (*rather than tribe/clan*), takes an interest in public affairs, national and international as well as local, joins organizations, keeps himself informed about major events in the news, and votes or otherwise takes some part in the political process. The modern man's efficacy is reflected in his belief that, either alone or in concert with others, he may take actions which can affect the course of his life and that of his community; in his active efforts to improve his own condition and that of his family; and in his rejection of passivity, resignation, and fatalism [and one might add 'absolutism, inerrancy, and self-righteousness,' in the current climate) toward the course of life's events ... The modern man's openness to new experience is reflected in his interest in technical innovation, his support of scientific exploration ... and his willingness to allow women to take advantage of opportunities outside the confines of the household [*Italics are mine*]".¹⁷ It seems to me that essential values, such as progress, science, reason, freedom, and equality have not yet set in Somali society.¹⁸ And this, in my view, is where diasporic ideas and intellectual capital might come in handy. *Gobannimo* is one such diasporic idea which, in my view, can give us an opportunity for new beginnings to reason out a solution to Somalia's intractable conflict.

III.

Gobannimo as an idea is the product of many years of out-of-the-box thinking about the disaster that befell the Somali people. Some of this thinking was deliberative, especially in the last few years when I carefully thought about the subject to prepare the ground for introducing the idea into the public domain. But for the most part, my thinking about Somalia was unconscious or, dare I say, unpremeditated. We immigrants sometimes wish

¹⁷ See Inkeles, Alex & David H. Smith (1974) *Becoming modern: individual change in six developing countries*. London: Heinemann, pp. 290-1.

¹⁸ See Huda, Qamar-ul, ed., (2010) *Crescent and dove: peace and conflict resolution in Islam*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, p. xv.

that homeland experiences would “stay put” and not follow us. However, as the German novelist W. G. Sebald eloquently reminds us, historical trauma has a peculiar durability: “We also have appointments to keep in the past, in what has gone before and is for the most part extinguished, and must go there in search of places and people who have some connections with us on the far side of time”.¹⁹ I guess that must be true for all us, immigrants. But then we learn to live with it, and in the end some of that thinking proved positive for me. In the spring of 2009, while still doing my research on Somali young people at the ioe, I came across an autobiographical essay by the renowned American sociologist Herbert J. Gans where he talked about half a dozen areas or fields in which he was doing sociological research during his career. In the article, he demonstrated that working in many fields of research at the same time is not only possible, but can make for a productive and satisfying career. Gans encourages his readers to become what he called “multi,” that is multi-field researchers to develop more inter-disciplinary skills, something that was at the present time desirable and may one day be necessary for all social sciences.²⁰ Now there was a world of difference between myself, a self-financing mature student from a Somali refugee background in a London university with no funding, and a high profile American professor with his presumably profitable research business and highly remunerative work. Be that as it may, because those only pertained to material differences between us. But what resonated with me was his basic human message that I could embark on another study, alongside my already long-drawn-out doctoral research, with a view to understanding the problems ravaging my homeland and (where I can) to proffer some solutions to them. As my reading of that article spurred me into action, it is fair to say that it has in a way inspired *gobannimo*. I knew it was going to be a long climb up the hill, but I also believed and still believe that the view from the top was worth it. As they say, good intentions are not enough. So what I did next was to visit libraries across London to identify, locate and obtain resources. I had two questions at the back of my mind, namely (a) what went wrong? And (b) what can be done to put it right? I have read a copious amount of literature on civil wars, conflict analysis and resolution. I have also read some specialist literature on Somali politics, history and culture, and in particular on the dynamics of state collapse. My goal was to fashion new insights from this existing knowledge. All that was needed to make the points I wanted to make was to assemble some well-established pieces of popular and scholarly knowledge and hold them up to the light. The important insights emerge without much further help. Thus was born *gobannimo*, a truly original approach that can help us bring to

¹⁹ Cited by Hein, Jeremy (2006) *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, p. 243.

²⁰ Gans, Herbert J., “Working in six research areas: a multi-field sociological career,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2009. 35:1-9.

an end the long-running conflict. *Gobannimo* has also developed out of my background experience outside the academy. Ideas originate within a concrete social, political and intellectual setting, in part in response to this setting; they are not merely formal concepts but have a specific content that can be understood only with reference to the historical situation.²¹ Ergo, *Gobannimo* is the product of both my diasporic experience and also the historical position of my generation of Somali people who were born and bred in Somalia, but are now living as forced migrants in all over the world. We in this group possess an accumulated wisdom, or indigenous knowledge (IK) in the jargon, about the old country. Some modern institutions, including the World Bank, recognize that indigenous knowledge is a key element of the social capital of the poor and constitutes their main asset in their efforts to gain control over their own lives.²² I believe that statement speaks to *gobannimo*. I went public with *gobannimo* six weeks after handing in my doctoral thesis on Somali young people in the UK, referred to above. I decided to do it by way of video messaging on youtube, in Somali. The traditional media would not be prepared, I thought, to air such a radical idea (which was absolutely timely, in my view), and I was right to a point. But I won some followers, nonetheless. Thousands visited my youtube channel to view the videos, and many contacted me. Among these was an email sent to me by someone in London which contained 'An Open Letter by Former Prime Minister Abdirazak Haji Hussien, dated March 14, 2004' (see my English translation in this doc.). That letter really gave me a boost over the wall. I then contacted former PM AHH in Minneapolis and sent him both the DVD and *gobannimo*'s written version in Somali. I asked him to allow me to translate his Open Letter into English, which he kindly agreed. He is a wonderful man with a clear vision of what Somalia ought to do to resolve its conflicts. I spoke to him on numerous occasions throughout 2011, and whenever we spoke it simply reignited my internal fire and burning desire for *gobannimo*. He gave me several interviews in support of *gobannimo*. I also sent him most of the material contained in this document. He reviewed everything with a warmth of appreciation and understanding, a sympathetic insight and friendliness of expression for which I cannot be sufficiently grateful. I will say more about these and other Somali and non-Somali reactions and counter-reactions vis-à-vis *gobannimo* in my full report.

IV.

²¹ Iggers, George G. (1982) The idea of progress in historiography and social thought since the enlightenment. In Almond, Gabriel A. et al., (eds.) Progress and its discontents. Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press, p. 43.

²² See Nicolas Gorjestani, "Indigenous Knowledge for Development: Opportunities and Challenges," *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*, Vol. 8/1, 2000. http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/ikpaper_0102.pdf

We truly live in a globalizing age, and I am in particular referring here to the transnational circulation of ideas (including emancipatory political ideas), languages and culture. Vast numbers of people in the human race are today receiving information from all sorts of channels and interpreting it in the context of their own experience and existence, an opportunity that wasn't available to their own parents, a mere generation ago.²³ It follows from this that, and sorry about my rather pompous proclamation here, I would not be telling the truth if I didn't admit that President Barack Obama's stunning presidential victory on November 4, 2008 has been a vital catalyst to my perception of politics, race and ethnicity, and in particular the nightmare of clanism that paraded itself as legitimate Somali politics. A few days earlier, I was reading a racist slur on a black caller to the *Rush Limbaugh Show* quoted in a book by Richard Delgado, a professor at the Seattle School of Law and a proponent of critical race theory, which went like this: Rush Limbaugh to a black caller: 'Take that bone out of your nose and call me back'.²⁴ That disagreeable slur couldn't be much contrary (indeed, savagely contrary) to President Barack Obama's historic election victory which the whole world saw days later. According to Dennis Sandole, volumes could be, and have been, written about race in America, beginning with genocidal conquests of indigenous peoples by Spanish Conquistadors and other Europeans in South and North America, followed by the ubiquitous African slave trade, including in the Caribbean. African Americans - the identity group with which most Americans and others worldwide associate President Obama - have been slaves, servants, and segregated second-class (non) citizens in a quasi-apartheid social system, subjected to lynching and other egregious violations of their basic humanity. Against this backdrop, Barack Obama emerged as the 44th president of the United States: truly a revolutionary development.²⁵ The moral question of President Obama's election victory for me was this: Can Somalia ever reconstitute itself on the basis of the principle of equality of citizenship? I think that goes to the heart of *gobannimo*, but the answer will have to wait for another day!

V.

²³ My parents were both illiterate. They were born in the countryside of Aden Yabal, a small town/district of Middle Shabelle region (ex-regione di Benadir). As a child, my mother tended a flock of goats and sheep. My father drove a herd of cattle, and camels. Their families were also subsistence farmers on this arid land. Both came to town in their twenties. My father became *Askari* for the colonial administration, and later worked as a prison guard for the independent Somali state. My mother was a petty trader and a housewife. The historical changes I am living through and my interpretations of them would have meant nothing for my parents' generation.

²⁴ See Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001) *Understanding words that wound*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

²⁵ Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2010) *Peacebuilding: preventing violent conflict in a complex world*. Cambridge, UK & Malden, MA: Polity.

Somalia has been at war for almost thirty years. Since the collapse of the government in 1991, the international community has launched more than a dozen national reconciliation conferences to create a central state. None has succeeded. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), produced by the Kenya peace accords of 2004, represents the latest attempt to form a national government. However, seven years after the TFG was established, the country is a scene of great human suffering: tens of thousands of Somalis have died in recent months; a million are internally displaced and facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.²⁶ Also a combination of widespread violence, ineffective government, terrorism and piracy, insurgency, crime and lawlessness, and abysmal development grip the land.²⁷ The standard explanations proffered for this conflict are thus: 'that external diplomacy has been consistently misinformed and incompetent in its mediation efforts; that Somali leaders have been irresponsible and myopic in their quest for power and their stubborn refusal to compromise; that external states ... conspire to perpetuate state collapse and warfare in Somalia for their own reasons; that collective fear of the re-emergence of a predatory state undermines public support for peacebuilding processes; and that the powerful centrifugal force of Somali clanism works against coalitions and central authority, making quests to rebuild a Western-style central state a fool's errand.'²⁸ All of these theories have merit, but we neither accord nor refute them here. Our position is that peace is possible in Somalia, if Somalis on all sides can overcome their divisions and if the international community is willing to support a new negotiating framework, based on clans renouncing power to the top offices of state for the next term of the TFG, to create an effective national government led by individuals from the minority groups who are elected to office on account of their achievement and personal qualities. **The *gobannimo* conception is based on the simple proposition that clans renouncing power to the top three offices of state is an important precondition for the beginning of a genuine political process to end the war and to rebuild the state.** A peace settlement will have to address two broad sets of issues: at the national level, a political order broadly acceptable to Somalis; and at the international level, the individual security interests of various regional and international stakeholders as well as the shared global security

²⁶ See Foreign Secretary William Hague's statement in the House of Commons on 28th November 2011 re UK Government's London Conference on Somalia. Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm111128/debtext/111128-0001.htm>.

²⁷ See, *inter alia*, International Crisis Group (2011) Somalia: The Transitional Government on Life Support, Africa Report N°170 - 21 February 2011; Kaplan, Seth (2010) "Rethinking state-building in a failed state," *The Washington Quarterly*, 33:1 pp. 81-97; Bruton, Bronwyn E. (2010) Somalia: a new approach. Council Special Report N° 52. Council on Foreign Relations. Centre for Preventive Action. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/21421/somalia.html>.

²⁸ Menkhaus, Ken (2004) Somalia: state collapse and the threat of terrorism (Adelphi Paper 364). London & New York: Routledge, p. 6.

concerns of all.²⁹ *Gobannimo* is only focussed on the former, internal Somali issues, and not the latter. In our formulation, ‘terrorists, insurgents, and militant extremists who seek to use political violence to oppose or derail a political process’³⁰ are all part and parcel of these internal issues. The Somalis themselves will have the responsibility to reach compromises on the internal issues, including division of power, authority, justice and rights, etc. State failure in Somalia is largely man made, not accidental. All the issues that caused the collapse of the state hark back to decisions or actions of individuals and groups (clans and men, rarely women). This is what Robert Rotberg calls the hand of man.³¹ So we’ve got to repair it by the same hand of man, especially since human agency rather than structural flaws or institutional insufficiencies, is at the root of the problem. That hand of man, in the Somali context, is the clans freely removing themselves from political squabbling, feuding and intrigue at the top for a limited period of time for the sake of peace and reconciliation in their country. **My fellow Somali country men and women must wake up to this warning: a genuine moral and psychological reconciliation will be almost (or completely!) impossible to achieve between the Somali people in the face of political clan squabbling at the top with its constant assertion of exclusive identities, power and supremacy.** The hydra³² of the Somali problem is the clan. Just consider the following list of the tragedies that had befallen our country for the past many decades, and decide for yourself how much of what Basil Davidson called “Somali habits of thought [that] reinforced disunity”³³ has contributed directly or indirectly to their making: Sustained civil war and unending armed insurgencies taking place primarily in and around Somalia’s capital city, Mogadishu, for about 21 years now, but also in many other parts of the country, especially in south and central Somalia; Massive displacement and movement of refugees and internally displaced persons creating complex humanitarian emergencies [A statistical snapshot from the UN Refugee Agency website has, what it calls, a total population of concern numbering 2,256,807 as at January 2011; a breakdown of this figure shows nearly 1.5 million IDPs or Internally Displaced Persons inside Somalia, and almost 800,000 refugees living in neighbouring countries, especially Kenya.³⁴ I already noted above the figures released by the UK government]; Forced uprooting of large communities as a result of armed

²⁹ See Brahimi, Lakhdar & Thomas R. Pickering (2011) *Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace*. The report of the Century Foundation International Task Force on Afghanistan in its regional and multilateral dimensions. New York, The Century Foundation Press, p. 4.

³⁰ Lovelock, Ben (2005) *Securing a viable peace: defeating militant extremists: Fourth-generation peace implementation*. In Covey, Jock, et al., (eds.) *The quest for viable peace: International intervention and strategies for conflict transformation*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, p. 131.

³¹ See Rotberg, Robert I. (2004) *The failure and collapse of nation-states: breakdown, prevention, and repair*. In Rotberg, Robert I. (ed.) *When states fail: causes and consequences*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, p. 25.

³² In Greek Mythology, the many-headed monster that was slain by Hercules.

³³ Cited by Hashim, Alice (2007:204). See footnote no. 41.

³⁴ See ‘2011 UNHCR country operations profile - Somalia’. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483ad6.html>

conflict, random or targeted violence, and repression, causing food shortages, disease, lack of clean water, land and resource competition, and turmoil that kept on spiralling into larger humanitarian and security problems in all those years; Legacy of vengeance-seeking clan grievance, history of aggrieved clans and clan paranoia arising from recent or past injustices, which could date back centuries; Patterns of atrocities committed with impunity against various groups, clans against clans, and within clans; Specific groups singled out by dominant groups or clans for persecution or repression. This includes the traditionally based political and social exclusion of minority groups, their recent bloody repression and expropriation by the main clans; Chronic and sustained human flight causing brain drain of professionals, intellectuals and political dissidents fearing persecution or repression; Refugee flight and voluntary emigration of “the middle class,” particularly economically productive segments of the population, such as entrepreneurs, business people, artisans and traders due to economic deterioration; Growth of exile communities [Somalis are everywhere fleeing from their country; please spare a thought for Somali men, women and children trying to eke out a living or begging today as refugees in places like Yemen, East Africa, Southern Africa, Libya and other countries in the Maghreb, and even those in the West or East with all the problems they face]; Growth of religious radicalism and extremely violent fanaticism, currently coming in the form of al-Shabaab and all the deadly suicide bombing operations they’re carrying out routinely in Somalia, primarily in Mogadishu; Extreme social hardships on families and communities imposed by national economic failure in Somalia, as measured by per capita income, GNP, poverty levels, child mortality rates, and other socioeconomic indicators; Growth of hidden economies, including drug trade, smuggling, and illicit wealth; Increase in levels of corruption and illicit transactions among the general populace; Massive and endemic corruption or profiteering by various elites, including militia leaders and armed groups claiming authority in the name of clan, region, the Islamic religion, or government; Resistance of these elites to transparency, accountability, and civic politics; Delegitimization of the state, and any attempt or effort that aims at producing a replacement for the fallen state; Growth of crime syndicates linked to illegal trade, terrorism, and piracy; Disappearance of basic state functions that serve the people, including failure to protect citizens from terrorism and violence and to provide essential services, such as health, education, sanitation, public transportation; Disappearance of the rule of law and widespread violations of human rights, resulting in the following: emergence of armed clan/faction or private militias that operate with impunity to terrorize civilian populations, political opponents, suspected “enemies”, or conduct protracted violent campaigns against any attempt to recreate the state, either locally or centrally; Rise of clanism and fragmentation of Somali elites along clan lines. Use of clanistic, divisive,

sectarian, chauvinistic political rhetoric by these elites, to continue and perpetuate the warring and feuding of Somali society. Also clan scapegoating of other clans and their leaders or public figures as evidenced in the emergence of hate propaganda and stereotypical clan political rhetoric; Unresolved secessionism or separatism, and an irate disposition toward schism and secession from other groups; Continues military intervention of Somalia by other States (regional or global powers) and the meddling of its internal affairs by all and sundry.³⁵ I found existing theories of civil war insufficient to explain the hideous role played by clan or clanism in the continuing disintegration of the Somali people. Even I. M. Lewis's mid-to-late twentieth century anthropological analysis of Somali political order does not, in my view, go far enough to capture the whole gamut of emotions associated with modern day Somali statelessness. I know it sounds a leap in the dark to say these things about the doyen of Somali studies, but it is not an unfair assessment. At the time of Lewis's anthropological work, Somali speakers were found, from north to south, roughly from Dire Dawa in the northern Ogaden to the Gulf of Tadjoura in Djibouti and from there to central Kenya, and east to west from the western Ogaden to Cape Guardafui, the easternmost point of the African continent. The Somali cultural zone covered something like 400,000 square miles, an unusual phenomenon on a continent that numbers some 2,000 languages.³⁶ They were a people known for their oral tradition, storey-telling and poetry, but with no written language. At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty first century, millions of Somalis are literate, a large number of them in high tech global languages; telecommunications and computer science became popular areas of study and enterprise as they sought to rebuild their war-torn country and keep pace with new technology. Somalia, even as it held the cruel title of the world's foremost failed state, had one of Africa's most well developed telecommunications systems, as well as Internet service for its expanding computer networks. Education, income and the ability to speak foreign languages (rather than riches in camels) have become standards by which status was attained among urban Somalis and those in the diaspora. The latter is estimated roughly at two million,³⁷ to be found in nearly every urban conurbation in the Western world, Africa and the middle-east, where they are being incorporated into those societies. Increasing numbers of Somalis in the diaspora, especially those living in the West, sustain economic, political, and religious ties to their homeland even as they work, vote, and pray in the countries that have received them. And although it is unlikely that the children of Somali immigrants will be

³⁵ This list is in no particular order, and definitely not exhaustive. I've adapted it from FP magazine's 'Failed States Index 2011' @ <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/failedstates>

³⁶ Clarke, Walter S., & Gosende, Robert (2003) Somalia: can a collapsed state reconstitute itself? In Robert I. Rotberg (ed.) State failure and state weakness in a time of terror (pp. 129-158). Cambridge, Massachusetts: World Peace Foundation, p. 132.

³⁷ This figures comes from Lewis, Ioan (2008) Understanding Somalia and Somaliland. Hurst & Company, London, p. 129.

involved in their ancestral homes with the same frequency and intensity as their parents, the extent to which they will engage in transnational practices is still an open question.³⁸ I'd argue that Dennis Sandole's 'the three-pillar framework (3PF)' will enable us to identify conflict elements (parties, issues, objectives, means, conflict-handling orientations, and conflict environment); conflict causes and conditions (the factors that drive the conflict from the individual, societal, international, and global/economic levels); and possibilities for conflict transformation in Somalia than the anthropological studies of yore.³⁹ When it comes to their migration experience, the late American sociologist Charles Tilly's "Transplanted Networks",⁴⁰ and Levitt and Waters' "transnational lives of the second generation" are more relevant in examining how Somalis keep feet in two worlds and create communities that span borders. And lastly, the role of Somali diaspora in the conflict as 'peace-makers or peace-wreckers' can best be explained by the analytical and conceptual framework, and the case studies contained in Smith and Stares.⁴¹

VI.

Gobannimo proceeds from three premises. First, the fact that Somalis share a common ethnicity, culture, language, and religion might seem to be an excellent basis for a cohesive polity, but in reality the Somali people are divided by clan affiliations, the most important component of their identity.⁴² This clan identity served as the basis of our political and social life for most of our history, and there was no tradition of centralised political system or government. We state these facts to acknowledge that the fissures, schism and discord that ultimately led to the collapse of the state span pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Somali conditions. That may be a no brainer, but the historical Somali social structures, however 'uncentralized' or segmentary (to use Lewis's coinage) or divisive they may be, is just one part of the equation. In his noteworthy book, *Beyond State Failure and Collapse*, George Klay Keih Jr. aptly sets forth how the African people's hopes and aspirations for a democratic, stable and prosperous post-independence era have been shattered: "Clearly,

³⁸ See Levitt, Peggy & Mary C. Waters (2002) *The changing face of home: the transnational lives of the second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, p. 2.

³⁹ Sandole, Dennis (2010), *op.cit.* pp. 56-57.

⁴⁰ In one of his favoured aphorisms, Charles Tilly posited that "Networks migrate; categories stay put; and networks create new categories". In other words, whereas social ties are "portable," and immigrants maintain membership in networks even when they move, social identities such as ethnicity quickly gain new meaning in a new context. One can read 'Networks' as clans in the Somali context. See Tilly, Charles (1990) "Transplanted Networks." In Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (ed.) *Immigration reconsidered: history, sociology, and politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 84.

⁴¹ Smith, Hazel & Paul Stares (2007) *Diasporas in conflict: Peace-makers or peace-wreckers?* Tokyo, New York, & Paris: United Nations University Press.

⁴² See Doyle, Michael W. & Nicholas Sambanis (2006), *op.cit.* p. 146.

after more than four decades of independence, the post-colonial project has been enveloped in a multidimensional crisis of underdevelopment - cultural, ecological, economic, political, social, and so forth. Perpetuating this crisis, illegitimate regimes and ethnic entrepreneurs have manipulated primordial differences; water, land and the air have been polluted; Africans have some of the lowest standards of living in the world; both civilian and military despots have repressed and suffocated society; and basic human needs have not been met. ... these horrendous conditions have made the state distant and irrelevant to the needs of the vast majority of African peoples. In other words, the popular collective mirror image that the African masses have of the state is that of a brutal, repressive, predatory and anti-people apparatus.”⁴³ This is the other side of the equation that we think ought to be fully appreciated by all those who’re trying to rebuild the state in Somalia. Somalia (mainly, non-Somali) experts argue against, what they see as, a deeply-flawed centralising state model. They keep chanting the familiar mantra: re-establishing a centralised state, based in Mogadishu, is almost certain to fail.⁴⁴ We reject this proposition. What failed, **and this is our second point**, is the nightmare of clanism that paraded itself as legitimate Somali politics in post-colonial Somalia. The problem we see is that of a state devoid of any effective central power and of people (clans) lacking any consensus on many issues. In our considered opinion, the absence of a genuine government is the be all and end all of the internal crisis in Somalia. Therefore, establishing or re-establishing justice (or eliminating injustice) requires an effective central government for the Somali people. Of course, we agree that Somalia’s history, since independence in 1960, has been punctuated by attempts to build a workable state in Mogadishu, followed by that state’s division into feuding, and kleptocratic factions, resulting in its demise.⁴⁵ But it is the clans and their leaders who are responsible for this state of affairs, in our view. Clans undermined elections and the state administration in the 1960s. Clans also violently removed the dictatorial regime of Siyad Barre without adequate planning on how power would effectively pass from the old regime to the new one, and then began to carve up the country into hostile territories. Since the collapse of that state in 1991, repeated attempts to create a centralised government has managed only to sever the state from the society that should have been its foundation, yielding what Eben Kaplan characterised as “the very definition

⁴³ Kieh, George Klay, ed., (2007) *Beyond state failure and collapse: making the state relevant in Africa*. Lexington Books, p. ix.

⁴⁴ See, *inter alia*, Lewis, Ioan (2008) *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*. Op.cit.; Hashim, Alice B. (2007) *Somalia: state failure, state collapse, and the possibilities for state reconstruction*. In Kieh, George Klay (ed.) *Beyond state failure and collapse: making the state relevant in Africa* (pp. 201-220). Lexington Books; International Crisis Group (2011) *Somalia: The Transitional Government on Life Support*, Africa Report N°170 - 21 February 2011; Kaplan, Seth (2010) “Rethinking state-building in a failed state,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 33:1 pp. 81-97; Bruton, Bronwyn E. (2010) *Somalia: a new approach*. Council Special Report N° 52. Council on Foreign Relations. Centre for Preventive Action. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/21421/somalia.html>.

⁴⁵ Kaplan, op.cit. p. 82.

of a failed state”⁴⁶ - all thanks to the discord, strife, contention, dissension, conflict, clash, and variance of interests and principles between Somali clans. We posit that at the heart of this ‘definition of a failed state’ is an unending clan competition for power and resources, and what Alice Bettis Hashim called the ascendancy of group particularism over “the common good” (Praetorianism).⁴⁷ In a world of competing clans, fear is a constant cause and effect of their contest. A French proverb tells us that “fear is a bad adviser.”⁴⁸ At the level of national politics, it is the contest for power between the major clans and in particular the Daarood and the Hawiye (and within each one of them), especially to the top three offices of state, namely the President, the Prime Minister, and the Parliamentary Speaker, which is at the core of the conflict. The latter post is often elected for a person from the Digil Mirifle clan who then becomes a go-between the two or, as a cynic might see it, playing off one against the other. Negotiated power-sharing pacts are often, at one level, highly personal - which individual gains authority over what post? At another level, they are collective - how will ministries be allocated among rival clans?⁴⁹ According to Donald Rothchild and Philip Roeder, the power-sharing strategy embraces three main objectives: inclusive government, group self-government, and proportionality. Yet, the success of power sharing depends on the continuing commitment of the leaders of ethnic groups to moderate their own demands and their ability to contain hard-line elements within their own communities. Such moderation and control are likely to be in short supply after a civil war. Moreover, these authors’ argue, the incentives created by power-sharing institutions themselves encourage ethnic elites with the means to back their demands with political brinkmanship. For these reasons, as Rothchild and Roeder aptly put it, “power-sharing may get ethnic leaders to leave the battlefield, but then after a short lull transforms the bargaining room into a new battlefield.”⁵⁰ At the beginning of 2011, “Somalia: the transitional government on life support”⁵¹ was the title of a report published by ICG which accused the TFG of being ‘inept, increasingly corrupt and hobbled by ... weak leadership and divisive politics’. It warned that if the TFG does not make serious progress on correcting its deficiencies by August 2011, the international community should concentrate its support to, what it called, more effective local entities, until a more appropriate and effective national

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Praetorianism is defined as the control of a society by force or fraud, especially when exercised through titular officials and by a powerful minority. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/praetorianism>. See also Hashim, Alice Bettis (1997) *The fallen state: dissonance, dictatorship, and death in Somalia*. Lanham, New York & Oxford: University Press of America, Inc., p. xv.

⁴⁸ See Hoffmann, Stanley (2006) *Chaos and violence: what globalization, failed states, and terrorism mean for U.S. foreign policy*. Lanham, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., p. 33.

⁴⁹ See Brahimi, Lakhdar & Thomas R. Pickering (2011) *Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace*. The report of the Century Foundation International Task Force on Afghanistan in its regional and multilateral dimensions. New York, The Century Foundation Press, p. 28.

⁵⁰ Rothchild, Donald & Philip G. Roeder (2005) *Power sharing as an impediment to peace and democracy*. In Roeder, Philip & Donald Rothchild (eds.) *Sustainable peace: power and democracy after civil wars*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, pp. 8-9.

⁵¹ International Crisis Group, op.cit. p. i.

government is negotiated. At the end of December 2011, as I write, Somali internet sites are buzzing with rumours that the speaker of parliament was voted out of office, and that a fight broke out between his supporters and opponents in parliament. Here is an excerpt from one of those websites: “For the second time in a week, Somali lawmakers traded punches on the floor of parliament amid a dispute over who holds the post of speaker. Witnesses said lawmakers also wrestled and threw chairs at one another during Wednesday’s brawl in Mogadishu. A photo taken at the scene showed a lawmaker bleeding from his neck after the fight. Somali lawmakers first battled a week ago, after a group of them voted to remove Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan from power. The speaker’s supporters said the vote was illegal, in part because it was held when he was out of the country. The latest brawl happened when anti-Sharif Hassan lawmakers tried to set up a committee for electing a new speaker.”⁵² In our view, while clanism is a persistent issue in Somali politics, clan conflict presents a particularly complex and difficult challenge for building peace, security and the state in Somalia. The concern of Somalia’s rival clans with perceived injustices and other highly charged issues, and the usually hostile context, significantly reduces the prospect for compromise, trust and cooperation in the political process. The clan factor is the one that provides an intensity and durability to all political contentions in this context. After more than twenty years of statelessness, Somali society has become deeply divided. Lustick’s definition of deeply divided societies is aptly relevant here: “an antagonistic segmentation of society, based on terminal identities with high political salience, sustained over a substantial period of time and a wide variety of issues”.⁵³ The only way, in our view, we the Somali people stand any chance at all of coming out of this, **and this is our third point**, is for Somali clans to re-examine and transform their prevailing assumptions and approaches to power so that we can begin to negotiate peace and end the war in our country. We need to find an alternative to the power approach that dominated Somali political discourse since before independence in the late 1950s. We argue that whatever system is agreed by Somali leaders, i.e., confederation, federation, decentralised unitary state, or consociational systems,⁵⁴ will always find it difficult to rule a world of Somali clans with emotions and passions that often put reason at their service, and that reason only

⁵² “Parliament Plagued by Bickering,” Biyokulule Online, December 23, 2011 @ http://www.biyokulule.com/view_content.php?articleid=4224

⁵³ Cited by Nagle, John & Mary-Alice C. Clancy (2010) *Shared society or benign apartheid? Understanding peace-building in divided societies*. Palgrave Macmillan, p. 1. Tatu Vanhanen’s ‘ethnic nepotism’ theory may also be relevant here. Vanhanen noted that the more a society is ethnically divided, the more political and other interest conflicts tend to become centralized along ethnic lines. Of course, this further confirms Doyle & Samabani’s claim above that the Somali clan conflict was the equivalent of an ethnic conflict. See Vanhanen, Tatu, ed., (1999) *Ethnic conflicts explained by ethnic nepotism*. Stamford, Connecticut: JAI PRESS INC., p. xiii.

⁵⁴ See A study of decentralised political structures for Somalia: a menu of options. Report prepared by consultants from the London School of Economics and Political Science, commissioned by the European Union, EC Somalia Unit, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Office for Somalia, August 1995.

occasionally succeeds in mastering.⁵⁵ There are, of course, positive emotions and passions, but these (in our view) can only be found in our new approach *gobannimo*. At the core of *gobannimo* are the following: 1. The Somali people must overcome their long-running and destructive conflicts through forgiveness and reconciliation. It is only by these methods that we can achieve equitable and enduring settlements. And it is only by them that we can move beyond anger, hatred, resentment, grudges and the like, and engage in peace-building and peacemaking. 2. Somali clans must give up power/renounce their claim to the three topmost offices of the state (the President, the PM, and the Parliamentary Speaker) of their own volition for the sake of peace in their country, and support the creation of an effective national government led by individuals from the minority groups who are elected to office on account of their achievement and personal qualities. This is absolutely essential for transforming the conflict constructively. In our view, the Somali people stand a better chance of ending the war and negotiating peace if the TFG is replaced in August 2012 by a minority-led government (i.e., non-clan political leadership) tasked with completing the essential work of ending the transition, including tackling security, constitution-making, fostering reconciliation, peace-building, and good governance. 3. The individuals to be elected to these three top offices of state must come from our minority compatriots that we have despised and rejected over the centuries and called offensive names (Danwadaag is an acceptable Somali name; see page 11), and the Somali Bantu (*Jareerweyne* is an acceptable Somali name). These are indigenous Somali people who have long suffered historical injustice in the hands of the Somali clans. There are also other native minority communities, the Benadiri communities (i.e., *reer Hamar*, *reer Merka* and *Bravanese*), who have suffered large-scale organized violence, discrimination, expropriation, terror, expulsion, and massacre, in the hands of Somali clans in our recent civil wars. In all Somali reconciliation conferences, both communities were given the outrageous and discriminatory title “Others”. The prove that this chauvinistic ‘Othering’ was a device to further discriminate and exclude these minority communities by the majority clans came when the notorious clan-based formula known as 4.5 was adopted as a legally binding power-sharing agreement in the Somali National Reconciliation Conference at Arta, Djibouti (in the year 2000). In Somali traditional discourse, this can be reframed as four equal shares to the four main clans plus half a share to the “others” - all minority groups put together. The half a share represents not only a quantitative reduction of their share in political representation, it is also - in terms of traditional power politics of clan versus non-clan - an open or intentional offence, slight or insult against upstanding citizens of Somalia. *Gobannimo* calls for the inversion of this primary principal of our transitional political arrangements. Rather

⁵⁵ See Hoffman, S. op.cit. p. 28.

than 4 plus $\frac{1}{2}$ a share, we must have 5 equal shares. We must then have those despised, rejected and violated put at the top, and the violators at the bottom. I propose that the candidates for President, Prime Minister, and Parliamentary Speaker for the next term of the TFG must come from these three minority communities from the two regions that formed the Somali Republic on the 1st of July 1960. 4. Like many others, *gobannimo* has already called the current overblown TFP to be drastically reduced to a much lower and tolerable figure. So we welcome the reduced number of 225 MPs proposed in the recently concluded ‘Somali National Consultative Conference’ in Garowe, Puntland, although I personally felt that this reduction didn’t go far enough. We also applaud the decision of the Conference to increase the female MPs ratio in the parliament from 12% to 20%.⁵⁶ In our view, parliamentary candidates and prospective ministers must have an appropriate combination of minimum education and/or experience sufficient to demonstrate that the applicant possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform work in the occupation chosen. We believe even a further condition ought to be made that the quality of the combination of education and experience is comparable to that normally acquired through the successful completion of a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a Bachelor’s or higher degree that included a major field of study or specific course. A typical college degree would have included courses that involved analysis, writing, critical thinking, research, etc., and these are the things you’d expect someone who came forward to help disentangle Somalia’s intractable conflict ought to have.

VII.

Betty Reardon, a noted peace educator, is reported to have once said: “the failure to achieve peace is in essence a failure of imagination”.⁵⁷ This observation is apt in our case because we have failed to imagine for a long time in Somalia that we can have peace outside the deadly confines of ‘clan power politics’. The idea we’ve proposed here will surely give the lie to this calculated deception, if the international community responded favourably to our suggestions. But we also ought to say here that *gobannimo*, as a course of action, poses minimal threat to the social or self-esteem of those who must change - the clans. While it’s a novel idea, *gobannimo* is neither wild, nor implausible. In my view, the word *gobannimo*, in its straightforward meaning ‘independence’ or ‘national independence’, is

⁵⁶ See Article 29 [The Composition of Parliament] of the Transitional Federal Charter of the Somali Republic, February 2004, Nairobi, Kenya. It was here that the figure of 12%, as proportion of female members of parliament, was decided.

⁵⁷ Coleman, Peter & Morton Deutsch (2006) Some guidelines for developing a creative approach to conflict. In Deutsch, Morton, et al., (eds.) The handbook of conflict resolution: theory and practice (Second Edition), Jossey-Bass, p. 412.

global enough for every Somali to accept. I would further argue that *gobannimo*, as it is proposed here, has integrity of motive, and a reasonable prospect of success, given the confusion, chaos, and turmoil we're now witnessing in the TFP which (we can all imagine) bodes trouble for the whole TFG. Muthia Alagappa, writing about the basis of political legitimacy, talks of a politically defining moment as follows: "A politically defining moment is one of high political consciousness that can generate deep emotion and galvanize enormous support for a cause. The moment may be a single event or, more likely, the culmination of a string of related events such as national independence, revolution, civil war, holocaust, and international warfare. Inevitably there are differences over which moments are politically defining and why. Their significance may be contested as well. Nevertheless, some moments achieve a widely if not universally accepted political definition."⁵⁸ Can *gobannimo* bring about that 'politically defining moment' in Somali political consciousness in 2012? It is all up in the air, in my view. What is not in doubt, however, is that *gobannimo* will contribute to human emancipation in Somalia: it speaks to the cause of 'the poor, the disadvantaged, the voiceless, the unrepresented, and the powerless.'⁵⁹ We say it is time for the powers that be (TPTB) to put into their political agenda towards Somalia theories and practices that are most likely to advance human emancipation, and not simply those that serve their capitalist global political and economic agendas. When destructive conflicts persist for long periods of time and resist every attempt to resolve them constructively, they can appear to take on a life of their own, and become unmanageable.⁶⁰ The Somali conflict definitely fits this description, and I doubt it very much that the clans who caused so much destruction, bloodshed and mayhem in that country are the best qualified to repair by themselves the damage they have done. If you agree with me, then *gobannimo* is the way forward.

The election of national leaders for the Somali Republic: an open letter by Fmr Prime Minister Abdirazak Haji Hussen, March 9, 2004

⁵⁸Algappa, Muthiah (1995) The bases of legitimacy. In Algappa, Muthiah (ed.) Political legitimacy in Southeast Asia: the quest for moral authority. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p. 47.

⁵⁹ Said, Edward (1994:84), cited by Bellamy, Alex J. & Paul D. Williams, et al. (2010) Understanding peacekeeping (second edition). Cambridge, UK: Polity.

⁶⁰ Coleman, Peter (2006) Intractable conflict. In Deutsch, Morton, et al. op.cit. p. 533.

Translated by Aweys O. Mohamoud, Nov. 14, 2011

Let me start with some questions to the (Somali) reader.

Question: (Somali) Reader, would you like to see your native land Somalia transformed into a peaceful, stable and united country?

Answer: I believe your answer will be YES (what else could it be!).

Question: How can we get there? And where shall we start?

Answer: Of course, people are bound to have different views when answering these two questions. Suppose someone comes up with the idea that we can get there if we had honest, capable leaders who are not only sufficiently qualified to do the job, but are able to gain public trust from a majority of the Somali people. If you have a more reasonable proposition, please put it forward! But if the idea of ‘electing honest leaders’ sounds plausible to you, you might think (in fact I do) the upcoming leadership elections at the ongoing Somali Reconciliation Conference in Kenya would be a good place to start. This open letter is an attempt to begin that discussion.

Let’s now assume, for the sake of the argument, that we are all agreed to the suggestion of electing honest and capable leaders at the ongoing conference in Kenya. Sounds reasonable to me! But can we agree on a definition for what we mean by ‘honest leaders’? The current state of feeling in Somali society or ‘the national mood’, if we can call it that way, would tend towards defining ‘an honest leader’ as someone who is from the same clan as the person who is making that statement. The person who is not from the same clan as them is not honest, in their view, and so they would not accept their authority. Yet if we agree that the country cannot have more than one president, one prime minister, and one parliamentary speaker, what is there to be done? In my view, we can take our pick from two options: let’s forget about unity and national government, and continue to exist in our current state of affairs and worse, or else we need to have a rethink about the wisdom of forming opinions and making decisions solely on the basis of clan motives or perspectives.

Although I can understand the climate of opinion that existed at the time, I still believe that it was a fundamental error of misjudgement when the clan-based formula known as 4.5 was adopted as a legally binding power-sharing agreement in the Somali National Reconciliation Conference at Arta, Djibouti (in the year 2000). Rather than condemn the clanism and clan chauvinism that caused so much collective violence, destruction and suffering in the (still

ongoing) civil war, and instead of putting forward an idea aimed at raising Somali people's political consciousness for unity, fraternity and solidarity, and for the good of their country, the participants of that conference (albeit indirectly) have declared that all that had happened were fully justified (Is the bloodbath caused by the devastating clan warfare in Somalia ever justifiable?). Thus in effect it was decided that clanism will be, henceforth, the sole basis upon which power sharing agreements and participation in the political process is measured. But have we carefully thought about how we can reconcile (dogmatic) clan agendas with the imperative needs of nation-building for the country?

I believe most people want to see the destruction, statelessness and division that grips our country come to an end. If that is the case, then isn't it our responsibility to make as much effort as we can to work towards the realization of these goals (i.e., achieving the unity of our people, rebuilding the state, and putting a stop to the murderous atrocities being committed against our citizens)? The first step one has to take to achieve these goals is to elect the right leaders TODAY: honest and just leaders who will, for all time, be free from showing favouritism or granting patronage to relatives; leaders who will strictly observe and respect the rule of law; leaders who will use the powers and privileges of their office for the common good, and not to advance their private or family interests.

Granted that people are agreeable to these ideas, we will have (to move fast) to achieve these ends. This requires dedication, hard work, honest intentions, bravery and courage, especially on the part of young people whose (and whose children's) future well-being rests on attaining these (nation-building) goals.

If we look back at the past 40 years, let's say, we can learn something useful from our (often, unpleasant) experience. George Santayana, the Spanish American philosopher and essayist of the twentieth century, is reputed to have said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". An explanation of events of the past that is presented factually and not influenced by emotions or personal prejudices is very important for our historical record, and will help our people remember the past so that they won't repeat it. But these explanations must be free from party affiliation or bias. We must also avoid reports based on rumours and innuendo. In sum, we ought "to learn our lesson", but also we must be able to put past events aside to move on. Let bygones be bygones, as they say.

After some lengthy intros, may be these questions will capture the essence of it all. How can we start the engine? Where is the key? There is a stone wall between us and the keys

(to the house): **clanism and pride in numerical clan superiority**. Forget about the long-gone past, what have been the consequences of ‘**clanism and pride in numerical clan superiority**’ for us in the past 14 years of civil war? Any upright person with genuine interest in the welfare of the Somali people would answer thus: the evils of war; harm; misfortune; utter destruction, and irrecoverable losses.

Let me now relate the gist of my conversation to you. How can we find good leaders with honest convictions in advancing peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and healing between warring communities, and societal reconstruction through non-violence and social justice? How can we find leaders who are capable of constructing new political institutions that express a people’s shared sentiments for a reconstituted independent Somali state? How can we find leaders who are able to rescue the good name and reputation of the Somali people that was lost through the evils of war over the past two decades?

As a Somali proverb has it, “A man who says me, sets himself apart from others” (*Nin yiri aniga, dad iska reeb*). As with others, we Somalis have sayings embodying some commonplace fact or experience. This particular one expresses a basic truth about the concept of humility in old Somali lore. However good, smart or powerful in terms of position one may be, at least in the old days, the Somali people I knew, lived and worked with, preferred someone with a sense of modesty and humbleness in word or deed to the one that was being unduly vain and conceited.

With that in mind and having thought and thought about this over a considerable period of time, I propose that today we chart a new course for the debate. Let us also try *Shabshable* (“*Bal Shabshablana ku day*,” is a well-known Somali maxim. *Shabshable* is a type of Somali traditional dance. This maxim is about people trying new things or ideas when they see the old ways as not working or producing the required results). And what do I mean by a new course or (in the Somali version) ‘new path’? As we all know, there are two *reer* (Somali clans) who exclusively begrudge each other. In alphabetical order, they are D (for *Daarood*) and H (for *Hawiye*). These two *reer* have a deep sense of grievance towards each other. It is a story that has continued running for a long time, and still continues to run. But also the rest of the (Somali) people feel they have a legitimate grievance against both. One or the other, or both, of these two *reer* holding the top offices of the state would be like putting on the fire a bundle of easily ignited firewood. Instead of placing emphasis on restoring civic politics, inclusive identities and institution building, they will waste their time (or rather focus their finest effort) on rivalry, power struggles and pride in numerical clan supremacy,

and futile rhetoric that glorify the continuation or resumption of war and feuding. Whilst one cannot forecast precisely what might happen, the public record of the individuals from both D & H vying for ascendance in the upcoming elections can be seen as a measure of the difficult time ahead for efforts towards reconciliation and genuine cooperation between the Somali people to rebuild a functioning state.

People are fed up with war and feuding. They are also unwilling to put up with fanaticism and narrow mindedness, hate mongering, and propagandizing based on distorted clan histories any longer. After so much suffering and destruction for so long, they now understand why opportunistic politicians in the midst of power struggles would resort to such base appeals. And I believe, given the opportunity, they do not want to be part of it. Instead, the people of Somalia are yearning for peace, stability, reconciliation and reconstruction, and the rebuilding of a functioning state in their country.

Therefore, the right cure for Somalia today is for these two *reer* to renounce vying for ascendance to the top three offices of the state, namely the President, the Prime Minister, and the Parliamentary Speaker, in the next 5 years of transitional government. Individuals from non D & H community background must be elected to these top three offices of state.

Non D & H communities have come to believe, and with good reason, that they are marginalized in Somali society. So many of them felt that they were alienated, disenfranchised and unjustly treated in the hands of these larger clans, and that has some merit. In my view, that is why some people have advocated secession from Somalia. What is needed now is a sense of justice and sympathy to address these grievances, and the course I am proposing is the first step towards that direction. It would be very unfortunate if we didn't take it up.

My brothers of the D & H communities must think very carefully about my submission. It is of much greater value to think in terms of the public good and what enhances the well-being of our people than boosting the ego of one or two individual leaders by helping them come to power. I know some people will say that, by proffering this proposal, I am aiming at particular individuals. In my defence, I will say this: I have no one or more persons or a particular group of people in mind. The way I see it, this is an idea that can be a response or solution to the complex and insoluble issues that we face today. We are caught in a trap largely of our own making. This idea represents a way to release or set free ourselves from this trap. But also it is a temporary measure, and not a permanent one. It is meant for the

five years of transitional administration. The president and prime minister, etc., are not the only top office holders of state to be hired. My brothers, from the D & H communities, can have the lion's share of other top government positions, and can play a major role in the essential work of reconciliation and reconstruction which is a moral obligation on them. By acting in this way, they will be regarded as true leaders with a sense of honour and integrity, both by their own people and the rest of the world. Can the moral rectitude of this principle (i.e., Somali politicians, guided by their conscience, freely renouncing power for the sake of their country and their people) ever be contested?

President Aden Abdulle Othman (aka Aden Adde) was indeed wise to the politics of equality for all people, especially in their access to the rights and privileges of their society. One of his often repeated and familiar public expressions was thus: "Let the people get to know their men (their leaders)". What did he mean by this? He was basically asserting the equality of all men when it comes to running for office or being elected or appointed to it. His philosophy of social equality was the opposite of a rule by an elite group or a particular *reer*. He wanted jobs, roles and responsibilities distributed more equitably in society so that people will see for themselves the absence of discrimination based on clan or other forms of favouritisms. If I put it differently, what the President meant was that the offering of employment or positions in government must be based not on "who is the person?" but "what is the person?" Perhaps, we can sum it up in this way. Rights, including fundamental freedoms and privileges, belong to a person by reason of citizenship as a Somali but when it comes to appointing someone for a job or to an office, what matters is his/her competence and capability.

We need to work out fully in our minds that 'numerical clan order' cannot be the measure we use for the accomplishment of our national objectives. The criterion on which our government is established must be based on personal qualities such as uprightness, justice and fairness, honesty, integrity, reputation, and piety as well as on personal achievement including education, skills, competence and capability. President Aden Adde himself amply demonstrated the truth or validity of the argument that what matters is not 'who' the person is, but 'what' the person is in terms of character or achievement. It was because of his honesty, even-handedness, and feats of strength (what the person is!) that he was called "the Father of the Nation" (Aabihii Qaranka).

If this idea gains favourable reception, then I believe what we need are the right leaders with the right personal characteristics and achievements. Given the opportunity, in my

view, such leaders should be able to appeal to Somali people's sense of justice, reason and sympathy in fairly short order, and hence prove that 'what' (personal qualities of leaders) is more important than 'who' (clan attributes) they are.

Eebbow (Almighty God), you know what is good for us and what is ahead of us, so please help us come to an agreement to resolve our difficulties. Amen.

A long distance tel conversation with Fmr PM Abdirazak Haji Hussen

Following my translation of his Open Letter dated March 9, 2004, I called Former Prime Minister Abdirazak Haji Hussen in Minneapolis, MN, on Wednesday evening, 30th of November 2011, to ask him a few questions concerning the common ground or overlap between our

two proposals (i.e., *Gobannimo* & Open Letter by AHH). The questions I asked him were as follows:

Question One:

Do you think the ideas contained in the open letter you published in 2004, some eight years ago, are still relevant? And if so, what do you think can the major clans giving up or renouncing power change in the current dire situation which faces the people of Somalia today?

Question Two:

Sir, you're aware of my idea *Gobannimo*. In fact, you've commented that it was a noble idea that could bring about change in the right direction if people were to agree on it. Now, if the Somali people were to agree to appoint or elect an individual from either the minority or despised/rejected groups (*dadka la yaso*) as leader, someone who is also competent and has all the personal qualities you've described, do you think such a leader can bring about change in the right direction in the disastrous polity, that is Somalia?

Question Three:

Sir, having been the Prime Minister of the Somali Republic from 1964 to 1967, you preceded all surviving former Somali leaders into office. Thus if former Somali leaders (i.e., former presidents and prime ministers, etc.,) were requested to come to a meeting so that they can propose to the Somali people the idea that the clans must renounce power for the sake of their country and their people, and that the Somali people must come together for a peace conference and if you're able to do so in terms of your physical health, will you attend such a meeting for former leaders?

I fully transcribed the telephone conversation, and I believe the following narrative represents a complete account of the series of exchanges that took place between myself and FPM AHH in that evening. FPM AHH is an abbreviation of Former Prime Minister Abdirazak Haji Hussen, and AOM is an abbreviation for Aweys Omar Mohamoud.

AOM	Greetings to you <i>Mudane</i> (Honourable) Abdirazak Haji Hussen ...
FPM AHH	Thank you <i>Adeer</i> (dear son), I have received your letter that was faxed earlier today. I read it, and I can tell you that it has an enviable quality. You have done it masterfully in both languages (Somali and English) ... I have also read my one that you translated (AHH's Open Letter). You have done it equally

skilfully. I have noted down few things (items of correction) on the translation which I was going to pass on, but I have not found any errors on the new one so far. *Adeer*, you've done a superb job, may Allah reward you ... One may be a great orator or skilled public speaker, but the problem with Somali society today is this: who is going to listen to your oration? Nobody is going to listen to us; that is the difficulty we have ...

AOM Thank you *adeer*, A/Razak. I don't think I've done much. I merely translated your words, and I must say it was a pleasure doing that. I have nothing but praise for the beautiful ideas you put forward.

FPMAHH About the questions you've sent me today, my immediate reaction would be that the two letters we've written separately (AHH's Open Letter and *Gobannimo*) which you feel are closer in meaning or purpose are both still valid. I'd say the scope of your idea was vast, whereas mine was of more limited nature in the sense that it focused on two particular *reers*. But the real issue is this: are people ready for these ideas? As you've said, my idea may not have been well-publicized at the time. I remember it being carried by various websites ... but not by the broadcast media, and hence hasn't generated enormous publicity. As to their validity, I think both ideas are well-grounded. I'd even say yours, in particular, is more justice orientated as it advocates that we undo what we did to those people who we despised and rejected. Any society that subjugates or oppresses a segment of its population will never prosper. There are many societies in the world that have successfully sought to redress wrongs done to their minority groups. In India, for example, as you may know, there were groups of people traditionally regarded as *untouchables*. These people have faced violence and discrimination in the past. Such discrimination based on caste system has been abolished under the Indian constitution. Since Indian independence, significant steps have been taken to provide opportunities in education and jobs for these people. As a result, many of them have successfully integrated in society, and caste origins are increasingly less obvious and less important in public life. ... So you're making a powerful argument here (*vis-à-vis gobannimo*) which could have long-term consequences. But also things are changing on the ground. It looks to me, or feels like, the tendency towards tribalism or clannism that was prevalent at the time I put forward my vision (2004) may have somewhat subsided now. I'd say it lay dormant but still menacing. The clan (feuding) is now overtaken by the alshabaab and its war.

It looks to be a fight between secularists and Islamists that is going on now.

...

AOM ... There was a pause in the conversation at this point. *Mudane* Abdirazak had visitors come to his home, and he requested that I call him later. I did, and we resumed our conversation ...

FPMAHH Now coming to your questions, one of them deals with your ideas about the need for redress of historical injustices against the people we despised (*dadki la xaqiray*), and that is a very important issue that we all need to address. I believe these ideas have the potential to become the bedrock of our politics in the future. So we need to follow through on these ideas, and not let our attention drift. There is already a movement that's gaining strength to resist the open social discrimination against these people. But the idea that the Somali clans, to redress the wrongs committed against these people, ought to cede power to them, is something that is radically new. As far as I know, you would be the first person to put that particular idea forward. I don't think there is anyone who can deny that your new idea merits careful consideration. One might say that it is not the right time yet or whatever but they couldn't consciously fault the substantive and intrinsic value of your argument which is quite revolutionary, and anytime should be right for righting a wrong. My idea (AHH's Open Letter), as I said, was in relation to a peace conference in Nairobi (2004) with an ongoing negotiations at the time to form a government. It is still valid but, I'd say, it may have to be re-written in a slightly more technical way. Back then, it didn't get the chance to be publicized or promoted, and it wasn't translated into English as you've now done. Thus the criticism you made against Somali media for not bringing this idea to public notice at the time is, in my view, justified. ... The two ideas are not that different from each other. Both argue for political rights or equality for minority groups, and those who are socially excluded. They are also both in favour of egalitarianism and social equality and oppose the idea that clan numbers and clan pride is the determining factor in deciding who is appointed to where and what. What matters is the individual's personal achievement that should decide whether someone is fit for a particular office/position, or not. Thus people must not be discriminated based on their membership of a minority group. And that is what we both advocate. I believe it's just a matter of time before these ideas are put into action. I am sure you're also familiar with the Black civil rights movement in America in the

1960s which succeeded in outlawing racial discrimination, and the restoration of voting rights to black people. This was followed by the policy of affirmative action adopted by the U.S. government to achieve non-discrimination, and to compensate black people for past discrimination and exploitation. ... We could have a Somalia Affirmative Action to compensate our minorities for past discrimination, persecution and exploitation, and to address present-day injustices. My concern would be, because these groups had long suffered severe social, economic and political discrimination in Somali society, they may not have, relatively speaking, in their ranks enough number of individuals with the necessary skills, experience and qualifications, and hence the capacity to run for a top office of state. Of course, we cannot advocate that people who are supposed to be the leaders of a country ought to be uneducated and uninformed. If anything, we need to encourage learning, education and the possession of consummate skills. I must hasten to add that there may still be some individuals from these groups, although their numbers may be too small, who are educated and have the right qualities. The formula [clan quotas for power-sharing] that was adopted in Arta, Djibout, known as 4.5 is based on two premises. The first one is that it gives the larger clans equal shares in power, and by that logic it legitimizes clan preponderance in matters of state. That must be criticized because it is the clan mentality that is the problem for the Somali people. Where I feel this formula is positive is the inclusion of those minority groups who experienced oppression and domination in the political system with a set number of seats ($\frac{1}{2}$ that of a major clan) reserved for them both in parliament and in the government. That brought about a situation whereby you have a considerable number of them included in the government as ministers and parliamentarians since the establishment of the Transitional National Government in Arta in 2000. They never had such a good chance even in the civilian democratic governments that I served in the 1960s. Of course, I don't want to hype up the 4.5 formula because it glorifies clanism which causes division and disunity in our country. So we ought to change the 0.5 to affirmative action that grants these excluded communities, for a time, certain preferential treatment in specific matters as compared with the rest of the population. Such affirmative action should continue until such a time that we diminish or eliminate conditions which cause or help to perpetuate discrimination. Thus I'd say your idea (*gobannimo*) is impressive, and we should never give up on it. We should

argue that because these communities suffered discrimination and subordination in the hands of Somali clans for centuries, those past wrongs done to them must first be acknowledged and recognized. Once the recognition of these historical injustices is attained, then the country can begin the process of redressing past wrongs and correcting discrimination. ... I think I've covered the first two questions.

AOM Yes, that is correct.

FPMAHH Your third question, if I understand it correctly, is that former leaders of Somalia (Presidents and Prime Ministers), I would add Parliamentary Speakers, are brought together in a meeting with a view to progressing these fresh ideas that we've been discussing about ...

AOM And for the benefit of the reader, Sir, would you agree that 'these fresh ideas' we've been talking about recently can be summarized as follows: **to find a negotiating framework based on clans renouncing power to end the war with a durable compromise settlement that leads to healing, reconciliation, peace and effective government in Somalia?**

FPMAHH Certainly! I'd say that summary is fine with me. And if the former leaders can agree amongst themselves on the way forward along these lines, that they lead the nation towards these ultimate ideals; I think that was the gist of your question. In a way, this idea sounds very good. But there are, of course, issues that one has to consider alongside. For instance, Ali Mahdi would be the first of these former leaders you're talking about. He came right after MSB was removed from power. Abdiqasim Salad Hassan was next and, as we remember, he appointed PMs including Ali Khalif Galeyr, Hassan Abshir Farah, and Mohamed Abdi Yusuf. Then came Abdullahi Yusuf who too appointed PMs such as Ali Ghedi and Nur Adde. Sharif Sh. Ahmed was next, and the PMs he appointed, including Omar A A Sharmarke, M M Farmaajo, and Abdiweli M. Ali, current PM of the TFG. I have also met some of the Parliamentary Speakers, including the current one Sharif Hassan and his predecessor, Sheik Aden Madobe. ... I know some of these people very well. There is also a few others that I have met, albeit briefly. And there are some that I have never met. ... It may well be that these men can be found or are available, but in reality how much popular confidence or public trust do they enjoy, including myself, is an open question! ... Nonetheless, if such a meeting is to take place between these leaders, in my view, it is very important that they are all agreed upon the foundations upon which the whole thing rests prior to any

meeting. They must themselves give up their search for power (that is to those who are still entertaining to return to power or to continue in office). They must be willing to acknowledge and apologize for past mistakes, and to seek forgiveness in public. It must be clear to them that they are invited to a meeting to serve the interests of the Somali people and not that of a particular clan, and again that they themselves (as individuals) will not benefit from this exercise in terms of power or resources. They must be willing to come to the meeting not with personal, clan or sectarian agendas, but with true motives to heal and reconcile the Somali people. If criteria such as these are applied to the attendance of such a meeting by these leaders, then one can genuinely participate and contribute to its outcomes. ... Again I'll say that this is a good idea, but it has to be given a great deal of thought. I hope and pray that there are people around who are of the same mind as you're, because what this needs above all is people who are honest and fair-minded, whose sole interest is to save Somalia from its troublesome predicament [At this, FPMAHH names and recommends few Somali individuals in London who he says are genuine and honest people who will be willing to lend a hand] ...

A supplement to Fmr PM Abdirazak Haji Hussen's 30th November telephone statement

After I transcribed his telephone conversation of 30th November and faxed it over to him, I and FPMAHH agreed that we need to revisit some of the grounds he earlier covered in his answers, especially those that pertain to the common ground or overlap between our two proposals (i.e., *Gobannimo* & Open Letter by AHH).

Thus, in further telephone conversations on the 11th and 16th of December 2011, FPMaHH gave me a substantial statement on these and various other topics that are crucial to the issues we've been covering together concerning reconciliation and peace-making in our homeland. Because I didn't have my digital voice recorder to hand on the 11th, I took notes both during and after the conversation to be able to write up his account. On the 16th I taped and transcribed his conversation. Both accounts resulted in this statement which was later sent to FPMaHH for comment, and he has confirmed that the text produced was loyal to the oral statements he made on the two occasions.

Among the topics he covered (not in this particular order) included the following: historical beginnings of the contemporary crisis of the nation-state in Somalia; the crucial role of the educated class in the nationalist movement, and especially SYL to promote national consciousness among the Somali people; SYL's Somalization of the state system since the transfer of executive authority to the Somalis in 1956, and its positive approach of reconciliation rather than confrontation with its former enemies; unending political propaganda of clan domination and marginalization spread by some bad characters; extremely weak or non-existent economy, and widespread unemployment together with huge population movement from the countryside to the Capital City of Mogadishu following Somalia's independence in the 1960s; hate speech laws (forbidding to call someone a derogatory name, such as *Midgaan* or *Tumaal*, etc., or denying them the right to inter-marry with other Somali people on account of their supposed lower status) passed by FPMaHH as Minister of Interior in 1961, and a successful test case brought before a District Court in Hiiraan (after a Qadi Courts' disastrous misjudgement) on the basis of this very law to set a precedent; the need for robust and comprehensive affirmative action in Somalia to address the issues raised by *Gobannimo*; future negotiating positions regarding the new constitution for the Somali Republic and the way forward for healing, reconciliation, and justpeace among the Somali clans; and, finally, his answer to the common ground or overlap between our two proposals.

Whilst no doubt these are all weighty issues and I shall endeavour to compile them into a dossier at some future point, in these notes I shall limit myself to presenting what I understood to be his answer to the common ground between our two proposals (i.e., *Gobannimo* & Open Letter by AHH).

FPMaHH differentiates between clans that are hegemonic (*kuwa qab qabiil iyo awood ku faan la soo taagan*) and those that are, as it were, benign or of gentle disposition. Some of

the latter clans were marginalized during the post-colonial administrations. The hegemonic clans and their leaders make claims of cultural superiority and feed their people false information to the effect that they have the capacity to defeat and subdue other clans. They seek to subjugate rival clans, forcing them to accept lesser economic, political and social position. The leaders (or wannabe leaders) of these hegemonic groups play on clan fears, hatreds, and ambitions to gain or to maintain power, regardless of the cost to their constituency or to Somali society as a whole. They then set on a course of disputes, alliances, rivalry, clan propagandizing, and engage in crude power politics that threaten the state and the welfare of Somali society, and eventually cause unnecessary wars of misadventure and miscalculation. The question of historical responsibility to the Somali people for what happened either recently or in the past are not genuinely addressed by the leaders of these hegemonic clans. They whitewash the vast murders of Somali civilians their militias committed in the recent civil wars. But the crimes they deny are enormous, and hence their denial has serious ramifications, feeding the hostility of other groups against them. FPMHH names three major clans in Somalia which, in his view, fit this description, and they are (in alphabetical order) Daarood, Hawiye, and Isaaq. He has a benign view of Non D, H, & I Somali clans, and suggests that many people of the Digil Mirifle, reer Hamar and Reer Merka were marginalized by successive Somali governments. These three latter groups and the reer Baraawe have in particular suffered large scale violence and discrimination, expropriation of their assets, and other serious human rights violations in the hands of Somali clans in the recent civil wars.

On that basis and, in line with his 2004 Open Letter, he argues that these three major clans (Daarood, Hawiye, and Isaaq) must renounce or give up power, especially to the top three offices of State, for the sake of peace and security in Somalia. He suggests a transitional term of five years, so that these three political enemies can be healed and reconciled. The three top offices of state will be filled by people from non D, H, & I clans and minority groups, elected to office on account of their achievement and personal qualities. D, H, & I will have important ministerial portfolios, and will work for the reconciliation and rebuilding of their country. Before Somalia can have free and fair general elections, these three major clans along with the rest of Somali people must be reconciled to end their wars, fighting, violence, and hostilities, and to establish peace in their country. The minority groups, as they become the new masters, can play a major role in reconciling their larger fraternal clans for peace and security to return to Somalia.

As for the leaders coming together, FPMAHH emphasizes the need for political reconciliation between the Somali people and that the leaders themselves ought to start that process. All these former leaders will sit down together, talk, and make a public display of forgiveness and reconciliation in action. FPMAHH suggests that it is well known that some of these leaders have personal differences, and they shall be bringing those differences into the venue. But the main thing is that they're willing to resolve their differences by coming together. The event of the gathering itself will set the stage for this political reconciliation where they will be seen to interact and communicate on the basis of a shared project and mutual recognition. They will talk about the need for justice, truth, forgiveness and reconciliation, restitution and rehabilitation of victims. They will also talk about the need for reform and the building of institutions capable of preventing future human rights abuses, and the creation of reasonable terms of social cooperation, public trust and social justice.

In this connection, FPMAHH requests that Fmr President Abdullahi Yusuf be contacted asap so that if he can be persuaded to attend, he will come to the venue just at the same time as the others will be gathering around. FPMAHH hints that he and President Yusuf are not eye to eye on many issues, but that he will be grateful for the opportunity to meet and be reconciled. At this point, I couldn't help but interject with a remark that went something along these lines: "Thank you sir for being so generous and forgiving. I am sure President Yusuf himself too would be grateful for the opportunity to meet you and all the other leaders to settle whatever differences there may have been in the past, and to take part in a new peace initiative for the sake of his country and his people".

A long distance teleconference with Fmr President Ali Mahdi Mohamed on *Hindisaha Gobannimo*

On the 30th of April 2011 in the evening, roughly between 9.05 and 9.45pm London time, we (AOM & IsJum in London, & JeyMH in Norway) held a teleconference in relation to *Hindisaha Gobannimo* with Fmr President Ali Mahdi Mohamed who was in Nairobi, Kenya at the time. Roughly a week prior to this teleconference, IsJum and JeyMH spoke on the phone to Fmr

President Ali Mahdi in Nairobi to inform him first of the existence of the idea in the public domain and to ask for his opinion about it. As they learned that he had difficulty accessing the internet from the place where he was staying, they explained the idea of *gobannimo* to him orally. In our subsequent teleconference on the above date, we sought to gauge his perception about the idea, and to seek his support in putting it forward to the Somali people. The following abbreviations are used in this document: PAMM for President Ali Mahdi Mohamed; AOM for Aweys Omar Mohamoud; IsJum for Ismail Jumale; & JeyMH for Jeylaani Ma'allin Hassan. Ismail Jumale has BA in Politics and Development Studies from SOAS, and MA in Education and International Development from the Institute of Education, University of London. He lives and works in London. Mr. Jeylani Ma'allin Hassan lives and works in Norway. Due to a technical hitch, we lost Mr. Hassan's connection from Norway in the middle of the conversation, and hence he didn't take part in the latter part of the teleconference. Both Ismail and Jeylani were volunteering their time for the cause of *gobannimo* out of their good sense of patriotism and loyalty to their native land, Somalia. I (AOM) transcribed the teleconference dialogue, and I believe the following narrative represents a complete account of the series of exchanges that took place between us and Fmr President Ali Mahdi Mohamed.

IsJum	Intros and exchanging pleasantries with PAMM ... We understand from our conversation last time that you weren't staying at a well-wired place, so did you manage to view the Youtube videos about <i>gobannimo</i> ?
PAMM	No I am sorry, I didn't see them. I know you've given me sufficient time ... But whilst I haven't seen the details yet, from what you told me last time, I concurred with your analysis ...
IsJum	Yes, I do remember your position last time. I also understand that this is not something that is entirely new to your ears, and that whilst you've not shared with anyone, it was something that you yourself thought about in the past?
PAMM	That is true. ... I'll definitely look for the videos but, as I said, I really think what you're advocating is a truly novel suggestion ...
IsJum	Thank you PAMM. Although we relayed the message to you last time, tonight we have Dr. Aweys O. Mohamoud who is the mastermind behind the idea itself. So now, without further ado, let me introduce the originator of the theory of <i>gobannimo</i> .
AOM	Greetings to you PAMM ... I believe my colleagues, IsJum & JeyMH, gave you the gist of what I said in the videos when they spoke to you last time. If I can now sum up the idea for you: on January 27 th , 2011, twenty years after the

collapse of the Somali government, I put forward an idea for reconciliation and conflict transformation in our country by way of Youtube videos. I called this idea *Gobannimo*, and it is available in my youtube channel of the same name. As we speak, *Gobannimo* has followers from across Somali society at home and abroad. Here are the main points of *gobannimo* (reading from the *gobannimo*'s Somali version):

1. The Somali people must overcome their long-running and destructive conflicts through forgiveness and reconciliation. It is only by these methods that we can achieve equitable and enduring settlements. And it is only by them that we can move beyond anger, hatred, resentment, grudges and the like, and engage in peace-building and peacemaking.
2. Somali clans must give up power (i.e., end their clan competition for power) for the sake of their country and their people, for the next ten years. This means that the four larger clans, in alphabetical order Daarood, Digil Mirifle, Dir, and Hawiye, must renounce vying for ascendance to the top three offices of the state, namely the President, the Prime Minister, and the Parliamentary Speaker, for the next ten years. This is absolutely essential for transforming the conflict constructively.
3. The individuals to be elected to these top three offices of state must come from our minority compatriots that we have despised and rejected over the centuries, and called derogatory names, such as Boon, Midgaan, Tumaal, Gabooyo, Yaxro, Yibro, Gaalgalo, Xabasho, Addoon, etc. These are indigenous Somali people who have long suffered historical injustice in the hands of Somali clans. There are also other native minority communities, such as *reer Hamar*, *reer Merka* and *Bravanese*, who have suffered large-scale organized violence, discrimination, and illegal expropriation of their assets in the hands of Somali clans in our recent civil wars. I propose that the candidates for President and Prime Minister must come from our traditionally (and contemporaneously) despised and rejected groups, named above, from the two regions (i.e., the Italian and British colonial entities) that formed the Somali Republic on the 1st of July 1960. That means, if the candidate elected for President comes from one of the despised/rejected communities in the former Italian Somalia, he/she will appoint a Prime Minister from a despised/rejected community in the former British Somaliland. The individual to be elected to the post of Parliamentary Speaker must come from the *Jareerweyne* community. He/she could be born anywhere in Somalia.
4. The current overblown TFP must be drastically reduced to a figure at or below

the one that was inaugurated at the end of the Somali peace conference held in Nairobi, Kenya back in 2004. Also the proportion of women MPs in Parliament must be vastly increased from their current lowly position of 12%. All people to be elected or appointed to the TFP or the government must have the necessary qualifications in terms of education, skills, competence and capability, as well as the right personal qualities such as honesty, integrity, and good reputation.

PAMM

Thank you very much and I can tell you these are great thoughts that you're putting forward out of a noble sense of patriotism. In fact, these principles of subordinating one's personal preference to the general good ought to have formed the basis of our government and political system from the 1st day of independence in 1960 and throughout our post-colonial administrations, including MSB's government which stayed in power longest. That would have prepared our people to learn to be selfless or unselfish in their motives and deeds towards the common good and that, in turn, would have enabled us long ago to put our house in order. Sadly that has not happened and, as a result, we failed to advance issues of common concern or interest for the Somali people. Twenty years after the collapse of MSB's government, the country still fails to produce a government that can forge a sense of common nationhood, or re-establish the institutions of the state. And wherever you look at, we seem to be unable to overcome clan, sectarian or communal differences, let alone ending the wars. Now that being the position, I agree with you that we need to find a 'way out' (of this mess). As I said to you the other night, I had two ideas or plans in mind. My first plan was about an idea whereby the Somali people in the south would approach the leaders of Somaliland and offer them, in return for renouncing their secession, the post of President for the next five years of transitional government that will lead to elections. Should that fail, my second plan was to put forward an idea similar to yours which is that the four major clans ought to give up power, and that the minority groups be offered the top offices of the state. I see this as the only way forward for us in terms of reconciling our differences, getting our people to come together to re-establish cordial relations and to cooperate. As I said the other night, I am perfectly satisfied with the moral uprightness of your proposition. The only difficulty I foresee is how we can implement it, and not least in terms of the four major clans being asked to give up power. But I see no other way forward. One other thing I wanted to

mention was the outcome of the National Reconciliation Conference that was held in Mogadishu in 2007. I don't know if you've seen the conference report, but I can tell you that all the positive ideas you've expressed tonight include in that document. If I can just remind you some of the resolutions of that conference, they included the following: (1) that we, the Somali people, must choose the path of forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of ending our ongoing armed conflict, and addressing historical injustices; (2) that we must acknowledge the wrong that our people have committed, and that we all must strive to repair the harm caused by way of truth-telling, justice and reparations; (3) All tangible assets and property, including houses, buildings, farms and land titles, must be returned to their rightful owners. It was a very comprehensive document that was produced by the conference, and these are some of the points that I can remember. All Somali clan leaders, except the representatives of one particular clan, have agreed and signed the document. But also the clan that declined to sign the document initially changed its position later. Everybody came round to persuade them that this was for the good of everybody, and not for a particular group of people. In the end, they conceded the point and signed it. The point about electing or appointing skilled, competent and educated individuals who are capable of running the country at every level, from president to departmental head, is rather obvious. And unless we manage to engage such individuals from across Somali society, not much will be achieved. It is only through knowledge and education that one can solve problems and overcome material and social difficulties along the way. Someone coming to power or being appointed to office on the basis of clan numbers (exaggerated or otherwise) is not going to solve our problems. The skills needed to solve our problems require individuals, from across Somali society, with the right skills and education, who are culturally sophisticated and are able to work together as a team. The question must be how can we make sure that such people will come forward, and that the hopefuls who want to run for office will see that the only way to get there is by skills, education, and qualifications.

AOM

If we can go back to the details in points 2 and 3 of the proposal, I think you'll remember us suggesting that the four major clans give up power for the next ten years; that individuals from the traditionally despised/rejected groups be elected to the three top offices of the state, etc. If we can press for an answer to these details please, PAMM?

PAMM

Firstly, I'd say ten years is quite excessive. I think what we need is an effective transitional government that can lead to elections and the creation of legitimate state institutions. Once the political process reaches the stage whereby we can have democratic electoral processes, the idea of minority or majority clan being given this or that post will be rendered void. You will have political parties that nominate candidates for public office under their own names. My view is that the framework we're talking about can be used to cover a 5 year transitional period led by individuals from these minority communities, and that such a transitional government will lead to free and fair elections in the country. After the 5 years, whoever wants to come to office, including those leaders from the minority groups, must be nominated or fielded by a political party. I think that is more reasonable than saying the leadership becomes exclusively their domain for ten years. But the more important question is how such an idea can be implemented! "Somali clans must give up power for the sake of their country and their people," will not be an easy idea to sell, especially in the context of the numerous individuals that currently populate the TFG and its parliament. When one looks at the motivations and methods of operation of many of these individuals, it doesn't look at all that these people will place the needs of society as a whole above their own individual needs or desires. The picture we see doesn't encourage us to believe that they will support such a proposal. Therefore, I think it may be more realistic to think in terms of how can, with the help of may be parts of the international community, these proposals be brought before a new group of people in a new venue, selected specifically for the purposes of a national peace conference. One can still work out this formula to a more detailed level. But I can give you an example of some ideas input we made some years back, which I think is still relevant to any peace process in Somalia. This was a ... [name/nationality withheld] diplomat sent to us by the UN Secretary General. The ideas we put on the table included the following: Firstly, the UN Security Council must appoint an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of humanitarian law committed in Somalia. In that context and before the supposed peace conference, the UNSC must announce publicly that any individual who threatens to undertake or prepares for the continuation of the violence against the legitimate authority that is formed following the conference, shall be prosecuted at the international tribunal. Without that formal

declaration of threat of prosecution against spoilers, you will have groups and leaders who will continue their competition for power through violence and force of arms. They will never recognize the legitimate outcome of any peace conference. Secondly, the issue of participation in the said conference: we suggested that the participants must come from all sections of Somali society. But more importantly they should be technocrats, educated professionals and competent individuals with proven track record who, in addition to their experience and achievement, can demonstrate the qualities of honesty, integrity and good reputation. In my experience, you can have so-called 'educated individuals' who can be as intransigent as some of the radicals who are bearing arms. So it is very important that the individuals to take part in the conference must be people who are willing to compromise, and moderate their position. In our submission to this gentleman, we suggested that the participants must, by and large, come from the senior personnel who manned the various ministerial departments in the central government of Somalia and individuals from the diaspora who can present their credentials to the conference. ... I think some of these ideas would still be valid for any new peace initiative like the one we are talking about. But I do not think that the current 550-odd individuals in the TFG parliament are capable of resolving to do something as radical a solution to the problem as the one you've proposed. We need people with new philosophy and new ideas ... who are willing, not only to put forward, but to put into practice these fundamental changes and reforms to current structures.

AOM Thank you very much, PAMM. We're grateful to you for your excellent contribution. We believe your input will go a long way to helping advance the cause of reconciliation in Somalia. On that last point, can I ask you PAMM if you think you can play a role in putting this idea forward?

PAMM How do you mean? Can you elaborate, please?

AOM To be honest, we don't know how or what to do to carry the process forward, but there was a suggestion by various individuals as to how we might proceed with *gobannimo*. This suggestion was that we start off with a meeting or conference of former Somali leaders so that we can present the idea to them and then, if they or a majority of them agreed, they can commend it to the Somali people. When we say leaders, who do we mean? Again it was suggested that because there are too many people claiming to be leaders, that we focus only on the survivors of those who served as head of state (president) or head

of government (prime minister) for Somalia, from independence in 1960 up to now. Now this is my question to you: if Somali leaders of your standing (i.e., former presidents and prime ministers, etc.,) were requested to come to such a meeting/conference for them to propose the idea that Somali clans must renounce power for the sake of their country and their people, and that the Somali people must come together for a new peace conference, will you attend such a meeting?

PAMM I can tell you this much. I am ready and willing to attend, if requested, any meeting anywhere that is tasked with searching for solutions to the wars that have caused terrible suffering to my people in all those years, even if that attendance would cost me my life.

AOM Fantastic! You talked about, and we also understand, the difficulty of convincing power-hungry individuals in the four major clans to give up or renounce power. But if, by a miracle or an Act of Allah, that outcome was attained, what effect do you think it would have on the extremely difficult situation in the ground? Can such renunciation of power by the majority clans, for instance, help advance the cause of healing, reconciliation and peace in Somalia?

PAMM Absolutely, 100 per cent! I believe if it is done (the renunciation of power by clans) with honesty, sincerity and truthfulness, the whole situation could be transformed with speed and sensitivity. Who is driving the conflict? These four clans! And it is not all of them. It is primarily the Daarood and the Hawiye who are driving the conflict. So if the Daarood and Hawiye were to agree to a course of action in the sense that they will give up power, what they are saying is that they're not going to contest it by violence. By that logic, they will have to agree to lay down their weapons. Because they have given up their weapons, it follows that conflict, killing and hostility will come to an end. The 5 years of transitional government we talked about may not be necessary after all, if these conditions could be fulfilled speedily. It may all be over within two years, in which case we can go straight into elections. This is because we (the major clans) are the cause of the problem and if we stopped it, there will be no problem. If, for instance, all Hawiye gunmen in Mogadishu were to lay down their weapons tonight, could there still be fighting in the city?

IsJum No way will there be fighting.

- PAMM If the Rahanweyn in Baidoa and Huddur were to lay down their arms, will the fighting continue in the area?
- IsJum No way will there be fighting.
- PAMM If the Daarood in Gedo, Mudug and Bari were to give up their weapons, those regions will become quite. Won't they?
- AOM Indeed, they will become quite.
- PAMM Thus if the renunciation or giving up of power by the clans is sincere and based on true motives for peace in our country, the whole situation will be transformed the minute the agreement is signed, & Allah's peace will return to the land.
- AOM And how do you think the new leaders, if we have new leaders from the minority groups, will deal with such a grand transformation of power relations in Somalia?
- PAMM What is important is not so much how the new leaders feel about the changed power relations; it is the fact that the main clans will be agreeing to give up their armed struggle for power and, to be true to that agreement, will lay down their weapons. That is what will dramatically change the situation, and not the feeling of the new leaders. Of course, the new leaders will have public confidence and recognition both from the Somali people and others. In my view, that should make it all the harder for them to abuse their position of authority.
- IsJum That is very interesting. I think we have covered pretty much what we set out to do, so do you have any final observations or remarks about *gobannimo*, PAMM?
- PAMM Firstly, it is not an easy proposition to sell. The Daarood and Hawiye might especially adopt an extreme position vis-à-vis the idea of giving up power and letting the minorities rule. Those two clans will certainly be the most difficult to convince of the merits of your proposal. I think the other two clans, Dir and Digil Mirifle, will not be as intransigent or stubborn as the other two. As you suggest, it is a good idea to start off with a small number of people, like the former leaders that you've talked about. I think that is a brilliant idea. Let these former leaders get together and discuss these ideas, examine and consider them carefully. The idea, I am hoping, is that they will have a common position at the end of their encounter. And that common position will be that they commend their conclusion to another very important small group of people, called *Salaadiinta* (traditional and religious leaders, in rough

English translation). One can then move on to bring together a small number of these *Salaadiin* from across Somali society and geography. We must bear in mind that one has to be careful when selecting the *Salaadiin* nowadays because their numbers have enormously increased in recent times. Therefore, it is important that a small group of these *Salaadiin* are brought together to not only discuss and examine the issues themselves, but that they also give their blessing to what the former politicians have commended to them. I think once you reach that stage, you have a plan in a ‘rough form’ which you can proceed with potentially to a successful end. So in my view the strategy has to be to engage both groups of leaders (former politicians and traditional leaders or *Salaadiin*) before you can call a national peace conference ... It is also very important that a competent group of individuals who are capable of handling these issues are brought together from across Somali society for any eventual peace conference, rather than having people who are there only because they are wearing the right clan name tags. ... One has to also consider how to deal with or what to do about the various members of the present TFG, from MPs to President ...

AOM Thank you very much indeed, PAMM. We will certainly come back to you with the notes of our conversation, and we’ll take it from there. All the best, and may Allah’s blessings be with you and your family.

A long distance telephone conversation with Fmr President A/Qasim Salad Hassan on *Hindisaha Gobannimo*

In the evening of 2nd May 2011 roughly between 8.50 and 9.30pm London time, I (AOM in London, UK) had a long distance telephone conversation with President Abdiqasim Salad Hassan in Cairo, Egypt in connection with *Hindisaha Gobannimo*.

After President Hassan’s contact details were passed on to me by a mutual friend a week or two earlier, I contacted to inform him first of the existence of the idea in the public domain and to ask for his opinion about it. I subsequently emailed him a copy of the Somali language version of *Hindisaha Gobannimo*. President Hassan later confirmed that he had also viewed some of the tapes in the youtube Gobannimo channel. On the above date, I called the President to gauge his perception about the idea, and to seek his support in putting it forward to the Somali people. I fully transcribed the telephone conversation, and I believe

the following narrative represents a complete account of the series of exchanges that took place between myself and President Hassan in that evening. PAQSH is an abbreviation of President Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, and AOM is an abbreviation for Aweys Omar Mohamoud.

AOM Assalaamu aleykum President A/Qasim -

PAQSH Wa caleykuma salaam ...

AOM Intros and exchanging pleasantries with PAQSH ... I understand, Mr. President, that you've now read the document and I am just trying to gauge your reaction to it, first?

PAQSH I did indeed, and have several observations to make. The idea that the minority clans be allowed to take the very top leadership positions in the country is a principle of moral rightness and justice based on the Islamic faith and Shariah law. It is also right on the basis of the secularized worldview. When it comes to Shariah law, and in the eyes of the creator, someone can only be higher than another in rank on the basis of piety, goodness, and following what is morally right as commanded by Allah. Thus one cannot feel superior to another human being simply on the basis of their skin colour, or on the basis of some stereotyped assumptions made about them, such as that someone is *Midgaan* or *Tumaal*, etc. That said, the people that were despised (*dadka la xaqiray*) are not only those who were called *Midgaanno*, *Tumaalo*, and *Jareer* [the last, a derogatory name given to Somali Bantus]. The people who were the originators of Somali urbanization for thousands of years in our history, and who founded our major urban centres and towns from *Harar* to *Baraawe*, i.e., the *reer Xamar*, *reer Merka* and *Bravanese* people, have also been historically disenfranchised. Since our independence, they were only given a ministerial post or something similar but nothing above, and certainly not the posts of president or prime minister ... These were the people who led the urbanization of the Somali people. They built Xamar, our capital city, and led to our society becoming more urban ... I can remember a time when, apart from stick/wood dwelling and/or mud-huts (*Carshaan*), a few Somali families from the majority clans had stone-house buildings in the city. All the stonework buildings belonged to these urbanized groups. The majority of Somali people led a nomadic lifestyle. The rest led a more settled, agrarian way of life, especially in the inter-riverine areas between Jubba and Shabelle rivers in the south of Somalia. ...

- AOM Thank you, Mr. President. Can I now ask you, specifically, about your views concerning the idea that it's time for the clans to give up power and for members of the minority groups to assume leadership in Somalia?
- PAQSH As I said, all individuals from our country, whether minority or majority, have it as a legal right to elect or to stand for election to be elected to any office in the country, including the top offices of state. And that is in accordance with justice, morality, reason, and the constitution of the Somali Republic. In your submission, you said "It is time we transcend clanism and its concomitant evil, arrogance, conceit and haughtiness, and elect leaders from among those communities that we humiliated, despised and rejected". That is a good idea. But, as I said, the people who were despised and rejected are not only those who you mentioned. So we shall have to first explicate the basic assumptions of your idea before we can assess its implications. ... You may have heard about it, but I have already spoken about the need for forgiveness and reconciliation among the Somali people. I have done this through speeches and interviews I gave over the years. Even at Arta [a town in Djibouti where a Somali peace conference was held that produced a TNG led by President A/Qasim S. Hassan himself in August 2000), I took up the cause of national reconciliation and forgiveness. I did not in fact want to stand for office as president in Arta but, following persistent urging from various people, I was finally persuaded to put my name forward. The idea at Arta was to first reconcile the groups of the USC that were fighting in Mogadishu since the 1990s, and whose war had reached a stalemate. There we had a situation in which no progress can be made or no peace advancement was possible unless those groups were reconciled. At the next stage, once these USC groups were reconciled, all Somali groups would be brought together to engage in a reconciliation process that acknowledges past pains and begins the politically delicate work of putting the state back together. We continued on that path when I became a leader. But the work was difficult and hazardous and also involved much external meddling, especially from the powers that be (TPTB), in the region and beyond. Even now, I continue to work for those ideals - the principle that we (the Somali people) hold our own peace conference in a corner of our country and engage in a reconciliation process that acknowledges past pains and begins to envision an interdependent future. Let us gather and talk under the shade of a tree as our forefathers did for a month, two or three or more, and put all

issues - grievances, grudges, bitterness, rancor, injustice, wrongs, injuries, etc, on the mat, for the sake of national unity and to save Somalia. I suggest that all tangible assets and property, including houses, buildings, farms and land titles, be returned to their rightful owners. Only then can we begin the long journey toward reconciliation and forgiveness. The dead are not going to return so we must all firmly reject attempts to avenge the deaths of our relatives. But we must have accountability that is concerned primarily with keeping an accurate record of all the wrongs that has been committed. Once we accomplish that in the Somali traditional way, then the meeting under the shade of the tree can move on to issues of reconciliation. I have come up with a list of seven groups that can spearhead such a reconciliation conference, and these include clan elders and leaders (*boqorro iyo salaadiin*), educated professionals, women's leaders, religious leaders, leaders of the business community, leaders of youth groups, and delegates from the Somali diaspora. It is only after undertaking that political footwork in peace-building that we can move on to the next, and necessary, stage of state-building. The outcome of a successful peace conference that was launched on the basis of such a framework, I envisage, can be the creation of not a transitional government like the ones that we have seen but a legitimate state authority that can run the country for a full-term of 5 or even 6 years. And so, without necessarily formalizing or making it into law, we can elect a person with known characters of honesty, integrity and good reputation from among those communities who, as you said, were despised and rejected, i.e., the people given the dishonourable names such as *Tumaal*, *Midgaan* or *Jareer*, etc., or those others that these rapacious clans have decimated over the years such as the *reer Hamar*, *reer Merka* or *reer Baraawe*, etc. ...

AOM So Mr. President, you agree with the suggestion that it is time for someone from the minority tribes to assume power?

PAQSH ... My own view is that it would not be right to say a particular clan or group of people, whatever may be their position in numerical terms - minority or whatever, are exclusively entitled to that particular post, etc., because I think that would itself be unfair. But what I agree with you is this. For instance, we would all agree that the highest office in the nation is the President of the Republic. So I would think that people could be persuaded, for the sake of peace and reconciliation, to elect to the post of the President or the Prime Minister of Somalia for a person from those minority tribes. ...

What I also agree with you is that we should get rid of the 4.5 Sodare formula. It was the clans that adopted this framework on the basis that they are numerically superior to the rest (*annagu qabaailki haddaan nahay waa badannahay, qolyaha kalena wey yar yihiin*). My suggestion is that we should have 3 or 4 individuals with known characters of honesty, integrity, good reputation and piety from these minority despised tribes who did not take part in the civil war put forward by political parties, if they exist at that point, or by the conference itself. These individuals will stand for election. Then the representatives of the Somali people will make their choice, and the person elected will become President.

AOM So Mr. President, again to be clear of what you are saying here, your position is that 3 or 4 individuals from these minority/despised groups will stand for election, and then the representatives of the Somali people will make their choice out of these individuals from minority/despised groups?

PAQSH Exactly, I agree with you. The individuals (to be elected for President) should not be from the main clans. They should either be from those communities I spoke about, .i.e., *reer Hamar, reer Merka or Bravanese*, etc., or from the brotherly communities that we have despised, rejected and called derogatory names such as *Midgaan, Tumaal*, etc., over the centuries. These minority groups did not take part in the civil war, but they were victims of the war.

AOM If, by a miracle or an act of Allah, the Somali people were to agree to elect such an individual from a minority group, how do you think that might influence our extremely difficult situation at the present time?

PAQSH I think what happened to us may be described as some form of divine retribution for our wrongdoing during the long-running civil war. We have oppressed our own people and especially the minority groups both physically and socially. Thus Allah exacted punishment on our people, causing their doom. Because Allah loves righteousness and hates wickedness, if we acted in this honourable and fair way [clans giving way to an individual from minority groups to lead the country], Allah may reward us for that righteous act. We may also get closer to Allah for the moral lesson we've drawn from our troubles. For me, what is also important is the healing that could arise from this idea (*niyadsamida ka dhalan karta taladaan*), and the opportunity for us to seek to restore our relationships. That we can all Somali people join hands and pray together for healing, peace and reconciliation so that our prayers may be answered. Another important point I want to make is this. As

opposed to the progression of humanity and the enlightenment of peoples, we were stuck with primitiveness, backwardness, and tribalism - my tribe is better than your tribe mentality. ... This new idea will usher in a new era of political liberation and enfranchisement whereby people will see that a Somali person will be elected to the top most office of state not because of his clan, but because of that person's quality of being a good individual with moral excellence, piety and competence. Therefore, I believe the election of an individual from a minority tribe as a leader will transform how clan and politics intersect in Somali society.

AOM Thank you very much, Mr. President. Your contributions are quite valid, and I shall endeavour to incorporate them into my proposal. The question now is where do we go from here? I don't know, but we thought of an idea whereby Somali leaders of your standing (i.e., former presidents and prime ministers, etc.,) will be requested to come to a meeting so that they can propose to the Somali people the idea that the clans must renounce power for the sake of their country and their people, and that the Somali people must come together for a peace conference. Will you attend such a meeting for leaders of your standing?

PAQSH I have been calling for a peace conference from before Arta, and ever since wherever and whenever I spoke about our country. I wanted such a conference to take place inside the country. There is a large group of individuals, both inside and outside the country, that I have been communicating and maintaining contact with concerning this very issue. We shall take part in it, and we shall help lead this conference to come to a better conclusion than the previous ones. We shall put forward this idea that we just propounded and I believe it will be accepted. May Allah give us his blessing. When people open up to each other, sit down and talk. When our traditional leaders and clan elders come together to sit under the shade of a tree and discourse on all that has happened for a lengthy and considerable period of time, and all the transgressions, evil deeds, pillaging, plunder, robbing of goods by force, etc, had been written down. When all tangible assets and property, including houses, buildings, farms and land titles, are returned to their rightful owners, and all acts of injustice are accounted for. When we understand and forgive each other. I believe that will be the end of this long-running nightmare of Somali civil war. I also believe we can then say, in order for the main clans to start getting past their difficulties and to

move towards reconciliation and forgiveness, let us give the top most office of state, the post of the President of the Somali Republic, to a capable and competent individual from a minority tribe who did not take part in the civil war - a person who is not known to have overriding concern with ethnicity/clanism or the belief in the superiority of his own group, who has demonstrable skills and qualifications, and outstanding personal qualities, such as honesty, integrity and good reputation.

AOM Thank you very much, Mr. President. I am very grateful to you, and I shall come back to you with the notes of our conversation shortly. All the best, and May Allah bless you and your family.

Conclusion

Somalia has been at war for almost thirty years. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, and millions have become refugees. This excessively destructive conflict has resisted every attempt to resolve it constructively. At the heart of it is a clan contest for power to have control of the state. The Daarood and Hawiye dominated these contests, and competition between them and the Isaaq shaped much of the post-independence politics of Somalia. There are also significant levels of internal heterogeneity and fractionalization within these three major clans who have caused untold suffering and bloodshed in Somali society in the course of their power struggles. As well as undermining elections and the state administration in the 1960s, Somali clans have also violently removed the dictator Siyad Barre without adequate planning on how power would pass from the old regime to the new one, and then began to carve up the country into hostile territories. Since the collapse of that state in 1991, repeated attempts to create a centralised government has managed only to sever the state from the society that should have been its foundation, yielding what one analyst called “the very definition of a failed state” - all thanks to the discord, strife, contention, dissension, conflict, clash, and variance of interests and principles between feuding clans.

While clanism is a persistent issue in Somali politics, clan conflict presents a particularly complex and difficult challenge for building peace, security and the state. The concern of Somalia's rival clans with perceived injustices and other highly charged issues significantly reduces the prospect for compromise, trust and cooperation in the political process. The clan factor is the one that provides an intensity and durability to all political contentions in this context. After more than twenty-one years since the central state collapsed, Somali society has become extremely divided along terminal identities with high political salience on a wide variety of issues. In short, what we see today is a fragile state (TFG) that can barely sustain itself in the face of sustained civil war and unending armed insurgencies, and of people (clans) lacking any consensus on the issues that matter to ending the conflict, i.e., division of power, political order, justice, law, human rights, truth and reconciliation.

All the issues that caused the collapse of the state hark back to decisions or actions of individuals and groups (clans and men, rarely women) - 'the hand of man' in Robert Rotberg's famous phraseology. So we've got to repair it by the same hand of man, especially since human agency rather than structural flaws or institutional insufficiencies, is at the root of the problem. That hand of man, in the Somali context, is the clans freely removing themselves from political squabbling, feuding and intrigue at the top for the sake of peace and reconciliation in their country. A genuine moral and psychological reconciliation will be almost (or completely!) impossible to achieve between the Somali people in the face of political clan squabbling at the top with its constant assertion of exclusive identities, power and supremacy. Sadly, these cultures of intolerance have become the greatest curse of Somali society. Let us not tolerate them anymore, let us transform them; and *gobannimo* is the surest way of doing that.

Appendix A

Comments to Gobannimo Channel

Comments in English

Abdirazak Haji Hussen

Former Prime Minister of Somalia

Date: Thursday, April 14, 2011, 1:58 PM

Dear Aweys,

I just read with undivided attention your revolutionary vision.

It's fantastic, fantastic!

From my perspective, it's by all means superb. To many, it will certainly sound very, very strange, unthinkable and utopianistic proposition, to put it mildly. But, to someone who has slightest concern for the future of the Somali people, it's like a manna from heaven. It's very illuminating, very farsighted, very justice-minded, more importantly, very cogently, analytically and eloquently rationalised/reasoned.

It's in essence the same idea of the Somali Youth League (SYL) and I found it unusual that you failed to give credit to those, who back in 1943, created this "unheard-of" concept of denouncing and repudiating all the socially harmful, divisive and anti-nationalistic aspects of of Qabiilism/clanism, calling instead for national belonging and national consciousness (Soomalinimo only), equality ("kanu waa Addoon, kanu waa Ugaas waa inaan illownaaye-e").

The result? After 17 hard and unrelenting struggle for the right to self-determination and freedom/independence of the whole Somali nation, then arbitrarily divided into five parts under four different foreign rules, it was possible, thanks to the SYL's noble and selfless leadership, to have two parts of the divided nation regained their inalienable right to

freedom and self-governing. What happened thereafter is inconsequential for the purpose of this topic.

In its broad sense, I personally welcome your proposition, though, when it comes to reading between lines, there may here and there be some details to discuss about.

By the way, it's about three-four months since you posted this "project", can you tell me what reaction(s), if any, you have received? If any, what are they: positive, negative?

And, finally, I want to wholeheartedly congratulate you on this new vision, which I believe will fit a good space in the annals of this critical period of Somalia's history. Even if people failed to grasp the wisdom it conveys, history will not fail to grasp it.

Stay strong and stick in it because it's noble ideal worthy to die for.

Good luck and will be in touch

Abdirazak

Osman Jama Ali

Former Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia

Dear Aweys,

I have listened to your speech very carefully, very thoughtfully, and with great interest. I approve 100% your wonderful thinking and insight and nationalistic feeling and far-sightedness. I can say you are a genius.

Congratulations.

Yours,

Osman Jama

Tue, 26 Apr 2011 13:39

Aweys waan ku salaamay. Aad iyo aad ayaan ugu farxay your points, in particular points 2 and 3. I watched your video. I am and I will always be for what we call the 'Others' as if they are less Somalis than we are. If these points are accepted by the greedy 'noble' clans of Somalia, half of our problems would certainly be sorted out. Have you read my article on "Minorities rights in Somali: a neglected theme in the Somali crisis"? -- 1998. How would you turn this into practice? Every noble programme seems at the beginning impossible. I attended the Hiil Qaran party convention and I think may be that could be an option ... may be! Let me know what I can do to make it possible. Although I got so many family commitments, I will participate. All the best, Asha-kin Duale March 3, 2011 -- 7:40 pm

Comments in Somali

Dear Dr. Aweys, Bacdal salaam waxaan fursad u helay inaan daawado You-tube-kaagii gobonimo, si aad ah ayaan ula dhacay runtiina waa fikrad aad u fiican waana arin mar hore loo baahnaa, waxaana kaa codsanayaa in arintan la sii baahiyo isla markaasna laga dhaadhiciyo aqoonyahanada, waxgaradka iyo qaybaha kala duwan ee bulshada Soomaaliyeed. Markale si aad ah ayaan kaaga mahadcelinayaa hawshan aadka u balaraan, waxaana ku leeyahay ilaahay ha kaa abaalmariyo. Walaalkaa Abdi M Dahir Fri, 15 Apr 2011 19:11

Walaal Aweys, Waxaad iga gudoontaa salaam qaaliya marka hore. Marka xiga waxaan aad iyo aad u taageraya fikirka GOBANNIMO. Waxaan qaba in la raadiyo sida ugu wanagsan ee fikirkan loo gudbin karo, waa fikir macno sameynaya lakin u baahan in laga doodo sidee loo dhaqangelinkara? Dr. Ali Noor, Thu, 21 Apr 2011 11:06

asc wr wb waxaa sharaf wayn iyo nasiib badan ii ah inaan caawa dhagaystay hindisahaaga ugubka ah runtii waxaana hubaal ah in ay somali badan aad ugu farxi doonaan insha allaah waxa hubal ah in u noqon doono midki lagu aayo somali ku qaboowdo nabada iyo midnimo lo dhan yahay gobonimo qaran wayn intaba aan ku heli karno inbadan mahadsanid walaal waxaana alle kaaga baryenaa fikirka dheer iyo waqtiga badan ee aad ku lumisay si aad u hesho xal in alle kuugu badalo khayr fara badan aamiin aamiin aamin. Beerqaboojiye, Wed, Feb 16, 2011 10:20 pm.

Asc walaal waxaan dhagaystay oo daawaday youtube kii aad soo galisay Waaga cusub intaan hordhiciin waxfiican baad kahadlaysay sida soomaalidu ubadan tahay oo markay hadlayaan xalka iyo waxa fiican uga hadlaan sidaa darteed walaal waxaa dhici karta adiga iyo inta kula midaba ilay halaalaan oo dee rabi shimbir uga soo dhigo waadigaa arka aduunka waxa kasocda waxaanse ku su'aalayaa gogaldhigaagu ma haloo dhiibo hogaanka dalka dadka others loogu yeero miyaa maxaase aad ugu malaynaysaa hadii loo dhiibo in wax ku xalismayaan waxaad iga heli doontaa wada shaqayn aad ku faraxdo. By Aadan Amiin, 16 Feb. 2011.

Dear Mr Aweys,

Salaam.

Kadib Markaan Qaybo Kadhageestay Qorshahaaga Cawada Ayaan Goostay Anoo Muujinaya Shacuurkeeyga In Aan Dhanbaalkan Soo Qoro. Runtii Aad Baan Ula Dhacay Message-kaa Aad Gudbinaysay Aadna Waa Uu Iisaameeyay. Waxaad Mooddaa In Dhawaalaba Inaan Maqal Cidna Ila Share-gareeyn Dareen Noocaa Ahi. Waxaan Kugu Taageersanahay- Haddii Niyaddaadu Dhahday Kana Fayoowdahay Cuduradii Madaxdeenni, Aqoonyahanadi Iyo Cid kastoo Qorsha Somaaliyeed U Istaagtaba Diloon Jiray- Waana Fili Inaad Ka Fayoowdahay Inshaa Allaah, Qorshaha Aad Kadhawajisay, Yadadiilada Aad Muujisay Iyo Mustaqbalka Aad Larabto Jiilalka Soo Socda Ee Ummadda Shibku Daashaday Ee Soomaaliyeed.

Mahadsanid.

Abdinasser Moallem Nor

Arday Soomaaliyeed.

Master Of Economics, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"Sxb waa qorsho aad uu wanaagsan qorsha aad wado waxaana filayaa in qorsha haan uu noqdoo miid loga baxoo dhiibka maana somali ku sugantahaay," by gulled115, Tue, Feb 8, 2011 8:06 am.