

A Model in Somali Leadership: A Unique Political Culture of Adan Abdulle



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Abstract

This paper delves into the leadership culture of President Adan Abdulle Osman (1908-2007) to extract valuable insights for the reconstruction of the Somali state. His peaceful power transfer in 1967 marked him as a pioneering democrat in Africa, earning him the title "Father of the Nation".

This paper contrasts Adan's political culture with the broader Somali elite political culture, highlighting his inclinations toward encouraging political inclusivity, scorning corruption, and reconciling the political elite. Analyzing post-Adan political shifts reveals his distinct approach from later elites palpable in rigging elections, establishing the one-party system, and subsequent Military coup d'état and what followed it of tyranny, armed opposition, a fierce civil war and state collapse. Furthermore, the paper examines the opposition of President Adan.

As Somalia reconstructs, embracing President Adan's leadership model is crucial. Equally important is exposing and understanding the detrimental elite politics that contributed to the state's downfall and still persists.

Keywords: Somali Leadership, Adan Abdulle Osman, Political Culture, State Reconstruction, Governance Model, Elite Politics.

A moderate and practical man, one of the most sensible and sensitive figures to appear in the political scene. Better educated by almost any Somali at the time, he brought a new sense of dedication and nationalist fervor to the party's office. He was a man ahead of his time and influenced me greatly, as he did everyone who associated with him.

(Prime Minister Abdirizak Hajji Hussein, quoted by Mohamed Trunji, President Adan, 48)

A combination of personal qualities, early life experience, cultural context, and the political climate of the time created an ambience that enabled them [President Adan and premier Abdirizak] to understand the national task differently than many of their Somali and African peers.

(Abdi Samatar, Africa's First Democrats: Somalia's Adan A. Osman and Abdirizak H. Hussein, 224).

1. Introduction

The significant role of leaders in building or breaking states is widely acknowledged, as they utilize their attributes, positions, authority, and power to frame a vision and provide direction or contribute to governance deficits, internal conflicts, repression, and criminality.¹ Nations blessed with visionary, transformational, and virtuous leaders live peacefully and prosper. Conversely, nations governed by leaders without vision and integrity are entangled in crises, poverty, and perpetual conflicts. In his renowned literary work, "The Trouble with Nigeria," the Nigerian scholar Chinua Achebe boldly asserts that Nigeria's fundamental challenge lies in its leadership deficit. He wrote: "*The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the*

*Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.”*² He contends that Nigeria harbors the potential to surmount its deep-rooted issues, including tribalism, lack of patriotism, social inequality, the pervasive culture of mediocrity, rampant indiscipline, and endemic corruption, provided capable and ethical leaders guide it. Achebe diagnosed the genuine sickness of all African states, including Somalia.

In post-independence Africa and Arab countries, to which Somalia belongs and bridges, there was a general tendency among leaders towards repression and treating states as personal possessions.³ Even so, a handful of laudable leaders, with President Adan A. Osman at the forefront, have established stable states despite formidable challenges.⁴ Amid Somalia’s reputation for military rule, state collapse, prolonged civil war, and persistent instability, it is essential to expose the democratic era of Somalia and its distinctive president, Adan A. Osman. Delving into the unique qualities that set him apart from his contemporaries is crucial to presenting him as a role model for the new generation of Somali political elites. As lucidly articulated by Mohamed Trunji, *“Most of today’s generation finds it incomprehensible that the Somali leaders of such high caliber existed in recent history.”*⁵

Adan Abdulle (1908-2007) emerged momentarily during the struggle for Somali independence, exhibiting his early leadership qualities within the Somali Youth League Party (SYL).⁶ His leadership ability was evident from the UN Trusteeship period (1950-1960), where he served as a member of the Territorial Council established in 1951, becoming its deputy chairman and the chairman of SYL (1953-56).⁷ Central committees of SYL were elected every year. The following are the presidents of SYL from 1947-1960, after which the president was

abolished and the secretary general of SYL was adopted. Haji Mohamed Hussein (1947-1950); Haji Farah Ali Omar (1952); Adan Abdulle Osman (1953-1956); Abdirizak Haji Hussein (1956); Haji Mohamed Hussein (1957); Adan Abdulle Osman (1958); Sheikh Isse Mohamed (1959). In 1960, SYL adopted the secretary general position only.⁸ In the first parliamentary election of 1956, when SYL prevailed, Adan was elected as the parliament speaker. During this period, his political shrewdness shone in dealing with the Italian administering authority, managing political polarization within SYL, reconciling clan-centric politicians, and dealing with left-wing tendencies.⁹

The introduction of modern state governance and democratic elections to the Somali clannish society in the 1950s was a novel venture unfamiliar with Somalia's cultural context. As the political environment changed, politicized clan-based division emerged bluntly, even among members of the SYL party.¹⁰ As the parliament speaker and elected chairman of SYL in 1958-59, followed by his presidency of the Somali Republic in 1960 up to 1967, Adan Abdulle's decency played a vital role in instituting the Somali state. Under his leadership, the nation passed through difficult post-independence years, focusing on the unification of the Somaliland British Protectorate and Italian Somalia, the peaceful quest for the Greater Somalia project, the fostering of democracy, and the laying of a governance framework. Moreover, to address this, Somalia actively engaged with various organizations, joining the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969.¹¹

President Adan Abdulle, often addressed as "*The Father of the Nation*," stood out as a symbol of Somali exceptional leadership and a pioneer of African democracy.¹² He earned extensive acclaim for his dedication to democratic principles, the rule of law, and political inclusivity. His distinct political culture positioned him apart from most Somali political

elites entangled in political clannism, self-centered, and power-driven ambitions. His graceful assent of loss in the 1967 election and peaceful early power transfer to a democratically elected president engraved his name as the first African president-democrat.¹³ Unlike many African liberation movement leaders, Adan Abdulle was not a political party founder but rose democratically within the Somali Youth League. His distinct background as a locally educated set him apart from his contemporary African leaders, who were mostly educated in European universities.¹⁴ Despite his limited education, Adan embraced democracy, rooted in Somali cultural consensus-building. After concluding his term, ex-President Adan Abdulle chose a path of non-involvement in active politics, dedicating most of his time to his agricultural firm in Jenale, a town south of Mogadishu.

This paper delves into the political culture of President Adan Abdulle in comparison with the broader Somali elite political culture. Building on the foundational works of Professor Abdi Samatar and Mohamed Issa Trunji, this paper focuses on a more nuanced understanding of President Adan's political culture.¹⁵ It focuses on the cultural subtleties ingrained in President Adan's approach, which were essential in fostering and sustaining a democratic ethos and inclusive politics throughout his term in the presidency. Additionally, the paper highlights factors that shaped his political culture and the motivations of his political opponents. The temporal nature of this democratic momentum showcases the subsequent challenges and shifts in political culture following President Adan's departure from the presidency. Finally, the paper offers a brief conclusion, finger-pointing that the evolution of the Somali elite political culture continues to reverberate through successive echelons, from the collapse of the military regime in 1991 to its resurgence in a more distressing form up to the present day.¹⁶

2. The Brief Biography of Adan Abdulle

Born in 1908 in El-Qurun, situated in the Hiiraan region of Somalia, Adan Abdulle's early years were marked by adversity, and he belongs to the Udeejeen sub-clan.¹⁷ As the sole child in the family, he faced the loss of his mother, Aurala Yusuf Dulad, within a month of his birth and his father when he was 18 years old. Raised by his paternal grandmother, Hawa Herow, due to his mother's demise, Adan's father had been a devout member of the Darwish movement led by Sayid Mohamed. At age ten, Adan's father relocated the family from Hiiraan and settled among the Ogaden pastoralists, where he was employed as a camel herder. Tragically, he was struck by a lion, leaving him disabled and unable to continue herding. As a result, Adan and his father moved to Hudur town, and after a brief stay, they relocated to Baidoa again in 1921.¹⁸ Adan's father established a Quranic school in Baidoa while young Adan undertook various menial jobs, such as preparing tea and coffee and fetching water for military personnel stationed there. In 1923, Adan traveled to Mogadishu with his Italian employer, Lieutenant Stiffen, and gained exposure to new experiences. However, Adan was highly motivated to enroll in school upon his return to Baidoa. Besides that, he served as a cook's assistant for his generous Italian teacher, Mr. Giuseppe Tusso, who was very encouraging and advised him to focus on mastering the Italian language and accountancy. His proficiency in the Italian language qualified him to become an interpreter, opening new avenues for personal and professional growth. Driven by a desire for further opportunities, he relocated again to Mogadishu, where he took on various jobs to sustain himself.

From 1925 to 1926, Aden's life took a significant turn as he was employed as a domestic helper in Jenale, catering to the needs of various Italian settlers, most of whom embraced fascist ideology.¹⁹ During this period, Aden experienced the cruelty of Italian fascism and their forced

labor and discriminatory policies. He suffered the loss of his father in Baidoa, and again, he relocated to Afgoye, where he got a job as a waiter in an Italian-owned restaurant. However, his life in Afgoye ends with suspicions about his relationship with the restaurant owner's daughter, Alfa.²⁰ As a result, Adan was deported to Wanlewayn; nonetheless, he moved to Baidoa, where he found employment with many Italians, including Commissioner Dominico Anda. He was selected to present a banquet for visiting Italian Crown Prince Umberto de Savoia in Baidoa, who later became the last king of Italy.²¹ In 1928, Aden moved again to Mogadishu, enrolled in a nursing apprentice course and evening school, and completed up to the fifth year—the highest level permitted for Somalis. Aden's profound interest in reading books and newspapers fueled his intellectual curiosity, contributing significantly to his multifaceted growth and familiarity with global events.

After securing a nursing job, Aden married Asha Elmi Matan, belonging to the Majeerteen clan family.²² However, following Italy's defeat in 1941 and losing his job, Aden relocated to Beledweyne and immersed himself in commerce. In 1944, he joined the Somali Youth Club (SYC), obtaining membership no.130.²³ As the SYC evolved into the Somali Youth League (SYL) in 1947, Aden became the leader of the SYL chapter in Beledweyne. Continuing his dedication to the Party's values, policies, and various positions, Aden became the parliament speaker in 1956 and took leadership of the SYL by 1958.²⁴ He became Somalia's first President after its independence in 1960, serving from 1960 to 1967.²⁵ After the election of President Abdirashid, Aden gracefully stepped down from the presidency. He actively participated in the parliament meetings as a permanent member.

The Council of Ministers recalled him as “Father of the Nation” by his exceptional personal qualities, Adan Abdulle enhanced the luster, prestige, and dignity of high offices that he had been

*holding from time to time. The government expressed its highest gratitude to the noble elder, wise leader, and respected President and wished him a long and healthy life.*²⁶

The president was enthusiastic about the unity of Muslim countries. Somalia hosted the sixth Muslim World Congress in Mogadishu (December 1964 - January 1965).²⁷ In his opening speech, President Adan Abdullah recommended uniting Muslim nations to form an international organization and convene an Islamic summit, ultimately leading to establishing the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969.²⁸

After the military coup d'état in 1969, President Adan was detained with many civilian-era government officials (23 October 1969- 1 April 1973).²⁹ Since his release from detention, he continued his work as a farmer in his farm in Jenale.

However, with the country's outbreak of civil war, the ex-president led the Manifesto group consisting of about 114 prominent politicians in 1990.³⁰ They signed a Manifesto expressing concerns about the escalating violence and endorsing reconciliation. As a result, many of his fellow signatories were detained.³¹ After the regime collapsed in January 1991, President Adan led a reconciliation team, including former PMs Abdirizak and Egal, and other dignitaries to Djibouti to pave the way for restoring the Somali state through reconciling the armed factions. Since then, Adan lived at his farm until he died in Nairobi on June 8, 2007, at 98. The Somali Government declared 21 days of mourning and organized a national memorial service in Mogadishu, where he was buried in the family cemetery. In his honor, Mogadishu Airport was renamed Aden Abdulle International Airport.

Adan's biography portrays him as an orphaned and self-made individual who supported himself through diverse manual jobs, avoiding dependence

on relatives. His passion and dedication to education were complemented by the ingrained work ethic he experienced since his childhood. His commitment to goals, marked by self-reliance and confidence, extended to attributes such as decency, respect, lawfulness, non-power-hungriness, anti-corruption stance, and adherence to democratic values.³² These qualities shaped his successful leadership in the early years of Somalia's independence.

3. Context Setting

Like many postcolonial nations, Somalia struggles with the imposition of the modern state system alongside the enduring traditional clan system and Islamic heritage. The political elites were caught up in the complexities of these two distinct systems, unable to create a smooth hybridization whereby modernity and tradition could coexist through cultural hybridization processes instead of clashing, producing what is termed Multiple modernities.³³ Traditional societies are rooted in the customs and practices handed down through generations. In such societies, social structures often revolve around close-knit communities where familial ties and communal bonds are paramount. These societies tend to be ingrained with cultural rituals, customary practices, and oral traditions cultivated over time. The authority and governance within such societies usually stem from revered elders, tribal or clan leaders, and religious individuals who guide the community's shared values and collective wisdom.³⁴ Traditional societies may rely on informal systems of governance where leadership is based on age, experience, or lineage. Moreover, individuals often find their identity and purpose within the context of the collective, with clear roles and responsibilities. In the Somali context, the traditional elites comprise clan elders and Islamic scholars who collaboratively oversee the governance of their clan, each entrusted with distinct roles and duties.³⁵ Furthermore, traditional societies rely mainly on subsistence agriculture, barter systems, or small-

scale local trade. However, these traditions are changing with changes in communication and globalization.

On the other hand, the modern state system characterizes formal institutions, legal frameworks, and bureaucratic governance systems.³⁶ It introduces a more formalized and organized approach to governance, defined by territorial boundaries, citizenship, and authority that enforces laws and policies. It often involves the adoption of written constitutions, legal frameworks, and democratic institutions that aim to provide a structured and equitable system for diverse populations.³⁷ Economic systems are often characterized by complex economies driven by industrialization, globalization, and technological advancements. The modern state's economic framework is linked to global markets, financial institutions, and a complex division of labor. Moreover, the role of individuals within the modern state system emphasizes individual rights, personal freedoms, and opportunities for social mobility. Citizenship becomes a central concept, and individuals are seen as autonomous agents with rights and responsibilities protected by the state. Power structures in the modern state are typically codified and institutionalized, with political leaders elected through democratic processes and accountable to the rule of law. The shift from traditional societies to modern state systems reflects a profound societal evolution, encompassing changes in governance, economic structures, individual roles, and power dynamics.

The most formidable dilemma faced by the modern state system of traditional societies lies in navigating the balance between preserving traditions and the necessity for adaptation and accommodation of new culture stemming from modernity. Inherent in this challenge is determining whether to eliminate ingrained customs, traditions, and values to implant modern values or to find ways to accommodate them within the newly adopted framework of the modern state. This predicament captures the broader dilemma of reconciling cultural heritage with the demands of modernity.³⁸ This task requires careful consideration,

as the choices made in this regard can significantly influence the cohesion and resilience of the state system.³⁹ Regrettably, the Somali political elites opted for the policy of eradicating traditional norms and values, including the significant aspects of clan culture and the crucial role of Islam in shaping society.⁴⁰ This choice had profound consequences for state-society relations and provoked conflict, which caused the collapse of the state in 1991. The political culture of the Somali elite underwent a transformation characterized by a willingness to distance themselves from traditional norms and an eagerness to embrace modernity. They were oscillating between these contrasting ways of thinking and forces within this transitional sphere.

Many scholars have studied Somali culture and characterized the people of Somalia in various descriptions, highlighting a consistent trait over time. For instance, Richard Burton, a British explorer and intelligence officer, in his Somaliland Expedition in 1854-1855, described the Somali clans as “*a fierce and turbulent race of republicans.*”⁴¹ On the other hand, other scholars have noted that the Somalis have “*considerable independence of spirit.*”⁴² Moreover, Said Samatar and David Laitin characterized the Somalis as “*politically acephalous,*” meaning a society that lacks political leaders or hierarchies.⁴³ Moreover, Said Samatar and Davis Laitin articulated that Somali segmentation is a unique blend of centripetal forces, fostering strong kinship and cultural unity and centrifugal forces, creating intricate clan rivalries. Individuals prioritize political allegiance from immediate family to the broader clan structure, leading to an integrated society where members view each other as kin. However, this cohesion is counteracted by clannish fission and factionalism, making political instability the norm in Somali culture.⁴⁴ The concept of these two scholars and followers of the anthropological school of Somali studies diminishes the role of other forms of culture stemming from a non-clan system. This dominant perspective accounts merely for the vertical relations of the clan system. It disregards the role

of horizontal relationships through marriages and institutions such as Islamic, social, and political organizations. This perspective was criticized for not providing a comprehensive picture of Somali culture.⁴⁵

Indeed, it's crucial to highlight that the political instability mentioned by Laitin and Samatar has not led to complete chaos and the demise of the Somali people over the centuries. Despite the potential for internal conflict due to "*clannish fission and factionalism*," Somalis have a system of self-governance based on a customary legal system called Xeer, a hybrid of local customs and Islam. This legal system is a vital restraint in disputes and preventing endless internal fighting. Throughout Somali history, the combined influences of Xeer have mitigated conflicts by resolving issues through groups of clan elders and scholars of Islam.⁴⁶ Decisions in the clan system are made through clan gatherings, where all males can voice their opinions, and scholars of Islam are often consulted to give legitimacy to the collective decisions.

The core of the clan system is composed of Diya-paying units, resembling miniature states with defined territories, a robust legal system (Xeer), and governing councils of elders and scholars of Islam. These units, functioning as cohesive social structures bound by familial ties, establish well-structured legal frameworks within their territories to govern members' conduct. The council's traditional elders and scholars of Islam play a crucial role in decision-making, maintaining stability, adjudicating conflicts, and preserving cultural knowledge. These Diya-paying units are foundational building blocks that embody governance, legal order, and collective identity within the clan system. Before colonial intrusion in Somalia in the late 19th century, traditional governance was overseen only by two distinct elites: clan elders and scholars of Islam, and there was no superior authority above them. Clan elders handled worldly matters, applying customary laws (Xeer), while Islamic scholars managed religious affairs. This strategic division ensured a balanced approach to governance. Clan elders, organized in a hierarchical structure, managed

everything from local dispute resolution to broader clan governance within a multi-tiered system, as conceptualized by IM Lewis. Traditional scholars of Islam in pre-colonial Somalia managed religious affairs, interpreting and spreading Islamic teachings for spiritual and moral guidance. These scholars, including Quranic instructors, jurisprudence experts, and Sufi masters, played unique roles in enriching Islamic knowledge and fostering spiritual growth within the community. This collaborative system, with clan elders handling worldly concerns and scholars of Islam overseeing religious matters, provided stability and coherence to the traditional Somali societal structure.⁴⁷ In essence, pre-colonial Somali society featured a dual elite system where clan elders and scholars of Islam worked together to maintain order, justice, and cultural/religious identity within the community.

The Somali peninsula witnessed the incursion of colonial powers at a time when the Somali people found themselves fragmented and debilitated, having suffered the loss of two pivotal central states, the Ajuran and Adal sultanates, that historically shielded them from external invasions.⁴⁸ Three European nations—Britain, France, and Italy—asserted their dominance through agreements forged with clan elders along the Somali coast. Concurrently, the Ethiopian empire expanded its influence, claiming a portion of territories inhabited by Somalis in the inland regions.⁴⁹ This colonial intrusion marked a significant turning point in Somali history, as external powers sought to carve out and control areas. The impact of these colonial legacies continues to shape the political, social, and economic landscape of the region, underscoring the enduring repercussions of these historical events on the Somali people and their cultural norms.

4. The Formative Period of Somali Political Culture

The Somali Elite Political Culture unfolds as a complex entity, initially shaped by the fusion of traditional clan systems, Islamic principles, and Italian cultural influences. Subsequently, the imprint of a socialist-

oriented military regime and the consequences of civil war further compounded new elements that deteriorated this culture.⁵⁰ Grasping this intricate amalgamation is crucial for comprehending Somali politics and the continuous development of its elite political culture. This paper limits its scope to the dominant political culture until the military coup in 1969.

The first aspect of Somali political culture is rooted in traditional culture, such as clan solidarity, resource competition, collective leadership, solid Islamic identity, and skepticism toward state authorities.⁵¹ It echoes Emile Durkheim's 'mechanical solidarity.'⁵² Clannism, akin to nationalism, may generate positive solidarity or oppressive culture, often leading to pride, superiority, and societal fragmentation.⁵³ Governance involves participatory decision-making, mixing hereditary leadership with elite sub-clan participation. Somali identity strongly aligns with protecting Islam, emphasizing sacrifice for clan culture and Islam. Finally, as noted by Ibn-Khaldun, nomadic authority derives from religious elements, intertwining local customary law with Islamic Sharia and rejecting imposed secular laws.⁵⁴

The second aspect of elite political culture centers around Islam, with three main branches: Ash'ariyyah theology, Shafi'i jurisprudence, and Sufism.⁵⁵ Ash'ariyyah theology emphasizes a balanced interpretation of Allah's attributes. It became the mainstream Sunni theology in Somalia, promoting a middle path and influencing its religious landscape. Shafi'i jurisprudence, founded by al-Shafi'i, contributed to the framework for deducing Islamic laws. It is one of the four leading Sunni schools of Jurisprudence. Sufism plays a crucial role in Somali religious identity, mainly through orders like Qadiriyyah and Ahmadiyah.⁵⁶ This moderate Sufism, rooted in al-Ghazali's teachings, preserves historical heritage through genealogies, educational institutions, and social functions. The period around Somalia's struggle for independence and Adan Abdulle

Osman's presidency saw the dominance of traditional Islam, and modern Islamist movements emerged later.

The third element of elite political culture is influenced by Italian political culture. Italian rule during the Fascist era (1922-1941) and the UN trusteeship period (1950-1960) left a lasting impact on Somali political development. During the trusteeship period, Somali political elites adopted a hybrid culture blending Italian and local traditional cultures. In contrast, British cultural influence during its rule was relatively insignificant. Italian political culture is known for fragmentation and instability. Italian political culture emphasizes local identification, low national pride, and a reluctance to make sacrifices when needed.⁵⁷ Key elements include localism, akin to clannism in the Somali context, and an "amoral familist" culture marked by greed, corruption, ineptitude, and lack of political direction. Widespread corruption, manifested in bribery and graft, is a prominent feature of Italian political culture, contributing to Italy's high rank in the party patronage index.⁵⁸ Instability and fragmentation are defining features, with over 60 governments attributed to factors like the party system and electoral model since World War II. Italy's politics is characterized by coalition building and power-sharing, aligning with the cultural values of Italian society.

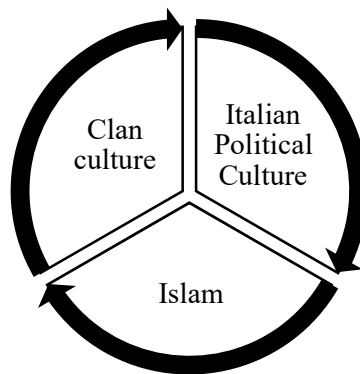


Fig.1. The three elements that influence Somali Political Culture

In summary, key factors influencing Somali political culture include the prevalence of (1) exclusion and prioritization of personal interests realized through clan rhetoric, (2) plundering with resource exploitation lacking strict adherence to rules, (3) disregard for state rules leading to political instability, and (4) decision-making dominated by self-centered behavior, hindering the establishment of inclusive political institutions. Additionally, (5) a strong sense of community interdependence fosters tight-knit bonds but resists external influences. Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing political challenges in Somalia. On the other hand, Italy's historical fragmentation contributes to a dynamic and unstable political landscape marked by frequent changes in government. Socially, familial relationships, networks, affiliations, and economic considerations intersect with political decision-making, shaping policies reflecting diverse sector interests. The Somali political elite has adopted elements of this compounded culture of local and Italian influences. Notably, few Somali leaders, including President Adan Abdulle Osman, fully embraced this cultural synthesis, often misused as a hindrance to establishing a stable state in Somalia. Exploring the cultural differences between Adan and his counterparts during his tenure, understanding the contributing factors, and examining the aftermath of his presidency are essential questions that remain unanswered.

5. Setting the Standard: Adan's Uniqueness in the Somali Elite Political Culture

Adan Abdulle's leadership exemplifies servant leadership, marked by a deep commitment to serving others and a focus on ethical and moral principles that set him apart from his contemporaries. His leadership style is defined by humility, empathy, and a genuine concern for the well-being of those he leads. Adan Abdulle prioritizes the needs of his constituents and works tirelessly to uplift and empower them rather than seeking personal gain or glory. He leads by example, demonstrating integrity,

honesty, and transparency in all his actions and decisions. Analyzing Adan Abdulle's biography reveals a unique political culture distinct from traditional Somali and Italian elite cultures. Unlike the prevalent norms of exclusion, embezzlement, and clannism in Somali politics, Abdulle demonstrated a departure by prioritizing democratic values, ethical governance, and transparency. His approach contrasted with the Italian elite culture, marked by greed, corruption, and a lack of coherent political direction. Abdulle aimed to establish a precedent for a more moral and accountable political culture, emphasizing values that stood in contrast to the corrupt practices often found in the political landscapes he navigated. Adan Abdulle was renowned for his principled governance, blending the strengths of traditional Somali and Italian political cultures while avoiding unethical practices. Grounded in Islamic values, he prioritized justice and moral conduct in his leadership. Adan recognized the significance of community ties and inclusive decision-making, deviating from contemporary politicians in five key aspects. His approach aimed at fostering a political environment aligned with principles deeply rooted in Islam, distancing from practices that contradicted ethical standards.

a. Encouraging Political Inclusivity

Adan consistently advocated against applying a majoritarian government formation in Somali politics, where clans play a significant role. His unwavering belief in the need for diverse representation led him to suggest to his fellow SYL central committees that smaller parties should be included in the government. However, his suggestion of forming a national unity government faced resistance from the party until 1960. For example, in the aftermath of the first election held in 1956, where the SYL secured 43 out of 60 elected parliament seats, Adan proposed “*a multi-party cabinet so that other parties could gain experience in the executive responsibility, but the party congress voted down his proposal.*”⁵⁹ Further illustrating his commitment to inclusivity, upon

being elected as the speaker of the parliament and chairman of the SYL party in 1959, Adan reiterated his proposal for a coalition government. Despite his efforts, the SYL congress rejected the proposal and “*passed a motion of favor of a SYL government.*”⁶⁰ Instead, consideration was given to the clan balancing in the government formation.⁶¹ In addition, during the Constitution-making process, the elected legislative assembly of 1959 was tasked with constituting an assembly to frame and approve the Constitution of the independent Somali state. Adan Abdulle proposed to include representatives of all political parties in the constituent assembly, which was finally agreed upon with the support of the UN Trusteeship authority. The application of inclusivity of government formation was partially realized in 1960, including members of USP and SNL in the government.⁶² The political inclusion was advanced more after Adan’s election as the President of Somalia in 1961 and the reappointment of Dr. Abdirashid as the premier. Even though SYL was a majority party, the formed coalition government brought together the SYL, SNL, and USP parties.⁶³ Notably, even individuals who were among the most ardent opposition to President Adan’s election, such as Mohamed Ibrahim Igal, Sheikh Ali Jumale, and Abdullahi Isse, were included in the cabinet.⁶⁴ This move was a significant gesture of reconciliation and inclusiveness, showcasing Adan’s commitment to fostering unity and representation across the political spectrum.

b. Despising the Culture of Political Clannism

President Adan’s second political stance involved rejecting political clannism and self-centered political behavior prevalent among politicians. Political clannism, a crucial tool for securing parliamentary positions, was the main arena where most individuals mobilized their clans to ensure electoral success. Rooted in Somali political history from the 1950s, this culture blended influences from the political system, such as the political party system, electoral laws, and traditional Somali practices. It created an ambivalent political atmosphere, significantly influenced by clans and

personal interests, leading to a constant inclination towards personal greed, often exploiting national resources and seeking external support. President Adan Abdulle, a prominent nationalist, openly rejected all forms of clannism in the public domain. However, clan sensitivities within the SYL party and smaller parties since 1956 have posed dangerous trends that challenged Somali independence. Adan was generally known for reconciling differences among political elites, which led to accusations of him abandoning his Hawiye clan during the 1961 election campaign.⁶⁵

Political clannism was prominently evident during various key political crises, such as the SYL leadership dispute in 1959, the conflict between PM Abdullahi Isse and Haji Muse Boqor, the 1959 government formation crisis, and the aftermath of the northern officers' military coup. The first crisis involved a rift between SYL Chairman Haji Mohamed Hussein and the central committee, leading to the resignation of Adan, the deputy chairman. This discord intensified between the Darood and Hawiye clans, causing polarization within the central committee. The second crisis arose after the government formation in 1959, balancing representation among Hawiye, Darood, and Digil & Mirifle clans. Parliamentarians, primarily Majeerteen Darood, criticized the government for election rigging and lack of professionalism, reflecting the influence of clannism.⁶⁶ The third crisis unfolded when Interior Minister Muse Boqor unilaterally reopened the offices of GSL and SNU parties, allegedly acting to the Egyptian wishes who supported GSL, previously closed on February 26, 1959, accusing them of inciting violence.⁶⁷ Despite reconciliation efforts, Muse Boqor's resignation heightened clan sensitivities, exacerbating the situation. The fourth crisis emerged following the failed northern officers' coup in 1961 and the unification of import taxes in the Somali Republic. Excessive force used in suppressing demonstrations led to casualties. Due to the clan-related mishandling of the incident by the Ministry of the Interior, the resignation of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal and Sheikh Ali Ismail Yaqub ensued. This prompted Isaq's MPs to protest by walking out of

parliament and gaining support from other MPs. The fifth crisis emerged when 11 Hawiye MPs led by Sheikh Ali Jimale and Haji Farah broke away from SYL and, in alliance with SNL, formed the SNC party.⁶⁸

c. Scorning Corruption and Vote-paying.

After the election of 1964 and the consultation to appoint a new PM, the central committee of the SYL proposed that Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke be reappointed as the PM. However, the president needed more convincing. He met some members of the central committee of the SYL party and told them (quoted from the Diary of President Adan):

*I want to do everything possible to deal with corruption, nepotism, and every other bad habit of the public administration, would help me to try to find a Prime Minister who could hold himself to the level responsibility required.*⁶⁹

After the no-confidence vote with the Abdirizak government, President Adan was dismayed by the self-centered and interested only in being appointed to a ministerial position. Describing this political culture of MPs, he expressed, “*God save Somalis from starving beasts in human form that are supposed ‘representatives of the people’.*”⁷⁰ Moreover, in the July 6, 1967, presidential election, President Adan refused to campaign and make any concessions or promises of government positions in exchange for votes. Groups of MPs flocked to him to promise votes in exchange for positions. Moreover, several businessmen, including Haji Ahmed Abdullahi Hashiish and Haji Naser Ali Hubeishi, promised the president to support him financially for his re-election. However, the president told them: “*I told them that I do not need money, for I believe it is not only shameful but unnecessary to do things using corruption.*”⁷¹ He played the politics of decency, honesty, and fair play, avoiding any actions that may jeopardize democratic culture and values. At the same time, his contenders promised everyone a job and used the oath to convince PMs of their truthfulness.

d. Refraining from Campaigning for a Political Position

A unique and admirable culture characterized Adan Abdulle's wide-ranging political career in that he never campaigned for any positions he held. This may look very strange in the modern political culture and environment. Mohamed Trunji described that "*he had never run or sought any of the positions he had served in during his long political career. His sense of the state and his political integrity were the base for his election to all the positions he served in.*"⁷² His election to various roles within the political positions, from being a SYL branch leader to the president of Somalia, was rooted in the trust of his colleagues because of his leadership capacity and his unwavering political integrity. Moreover, Adan Abdulle exemplified a leadership culture devoid of an insatiable hunger for power. His ascent to various positions was not driven by personal ambition but by a genuine dedication to serving the people. This distinctive leadership style, where individuals emerge as the people's choice organically, is a rarity in the annals of history.

In the 1961 presidential election, the central committee of the SYL endorsed President Adan's presidency, but he refused to campaign. Abdirizak Haji Hussein testified that:

[President Adan] believed that campaigning for himself would convey a feeling that someone who held the office would not want to leave it. It was up to members of the parliament to decide whether, in view of the interest of the country, he was the most qualified candidate."⁷³

Moreover, talking to his friend MP Hussein Abdi Abdulle (Farmacia), who was campaigning for him in the election of 1961, Adan wrote in his diary the following phrase: *In my life, I have never solicited votes for getting elected, and I see no reason why I should do now, for it is the undignified thing for a self-respecting person.*"⁷⁴ Moreover, in the 1967

election, President Adan expressed his unwillingness to the second term saying that “*he used all the gas in the tank*”⁷⁵ and it is a time to go.

Adan Abdulle’s commitment to this approach mirrors a cultural ethos reminiscent of the early years of Islam, a time when leadership was characterized by humility, selflessness, and a deep sense of duty to the community. Adan Abdulle embraced the essence of Islamic principles, mainly reflected in the following hadith:

*“Avoid seeking positions of authority, for if bestowed upon you without solicitation, you will be assisted in managing it; however, if acquired through your pursuit, you will be left to navigate it on your own.”*⁷⁶

Indeed, striving for leadership motivated by power and self-interest is discouraged, whereas seeking it for valid reasons is commendable and, at times, necessary for individuals with the requisite capabilities. This sentiment finds support in the Quran, where Yusuf (Joseph) seeks responsibility over the state treasury, underscoring his trustworthiness and competence for the broader welfare of society.⁷⁷

The difference which emerged in 1957-58 was not a personal matter only between Adan Abdulle and Haji Mohamed, but between Haji Mohamed and his close associates, on the one side, and the SYL party mainstream, the Italian administrator and the Somali government, on the other. Thus, Adan Abdulle withdrew his resignation after resolving contentious issues with the SYL central committees. In the 1967 presidential campaign, President Adan refused to compromise his principle of not campaigning for the position while his opponents did everything to gain the election of their Candidate, Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. Below is what President Adan’s writing in his Diary:

“I will seek re-election only if it is imposed on me by those who believe that the country still needs me.”⁷⁸ “if they wanted him as a president, he would be willing to serve. If they chose someone else, he would be equally happy.” After losing the election of 1967, the resident said: “As far as I am concerned, I consider the results as a blessing for me as that lets me return free.”⁷⁹

e. Reconciling Among the Political Elite

Aden Abdulle led the moderate members of SYL and always tried to mitigate internal conflicts within the party, in which sectarian individuals and more nationalistic elements were always in continuous conflict. The president was concerned about the number of ministers and the capabilities of some in the Abdirashid-led government. However, as a gesture to avoid internal conflict, President Adan did not oppose it. Even though he was dismayed by many actions and policies of PM Abdirashid and had the constitutional prerogative to dismiss him, he demonstrated restraint to ensure the stability of the government. President Adan recorded in his diary after the formation of the government in 1961 that:

“With the number of the cabinet ministers and the inclusion of the government of certain individuals, Abdirashid made me swallow a bitter pill for fear of who knows what. He left some good men out. I am sorry, but this is a disappointment and disservice to his honor.”⁸⁰

The president expressed that Abdirashid had done the same as he criticized the Abdullahi Isse government in 1959.⁸¹ For example, when Haji Mohamed Hussein, the chairman of the party, undertook a different left-wing policy in contradiction with the official policy of the SYL, Adan Abdulle met him while the party congress was still in session to discuss the issue of Haji Mohamed. Adan, for the sake of clarification and reconciliation, stated:

*The ill-feeling you harbor towards me cannot be interpreted if not in relation to your ambition to become, in the future, president of Republic, and you think that I might be among those, if not the only one, who may overshadow you. If this is the case, I swear on what I most value in the life that it had never crossed my mind to compete with you and that I have no obsession or anxious to become president, even I would not mind having such an honor.*⁸²

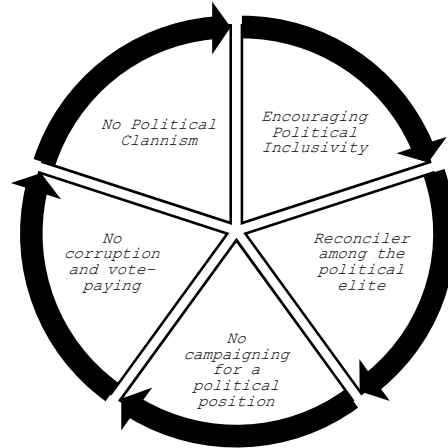


Fig 2. The Major Political Culture of President Adan Abdulle

Another example of reconciliation is when he talks to Sheikh Ali Jimale, a long-time friend from the same city as Beledweyne when they contended for the presidential position in 1961. Adan contacted Sheikh Ali Jimale to get assurance of collective work, regardless of who won the election. President Adan recorded in his diary:

I told him that life often plays tricks of the kind we are currently experiencing, putting friends and brothers against each other in competition for a position of responsibility and that the present confusion will be over in a few days' time when one of us wins the election. I said that if he is elected president, I am ready to extend my full collaboration to him, and I expect him to do the same in

*the event I win the election. Shiekh Ali felt instead that two individuals, divided by serious contrast, could not collaborate.*⁸³

6. Beyond the Surface: Factors Shaped Adan's Political Culture

Six factors shaped Adan Abdulle's political culture: his growing up as an orphan, his extensive experience working alongside Italians, his belonging to the Udeejeen clan, his marriage to a Majeerteen/Darood wife, his connection to his religious roots, and his passion for literacy and reading habits. These six factors shaped Adan Abdulle's unique political culture and leadership approach.

The first factor epitomized his life as an orphan and his self-made personality, eschewing any reliance on or residence with his extended family. The key to his accomplishments was a testament to his unadulterated self-reliance, sense of personal responsibility, and navigating life pathways independently and free from any external support or relatives. His unwavering commitment to self-sufficiency and resolute determination set him apart from most other political elites, becoming defining characteristics that engraved his unique identity. His life journey unfolded as evidence of singular dedication, a narrative written on the image of self-discovery. In every step he took, the resonances of autonomy and resilience reverberated, illustrating a remarkable commitment to shaping his destiny on his terms, unconstrained by conventional familial expectations and support.

The second factor was his childhood years working with many Italian individuals, absorbing the nuances of the European work culture from each of them. This immersive experience provided him with training in the dynamics of European professional practices. This multifaceted training broadened his skill set and allowed him to develop a profound understanding of the cultural particulars that shape European work ethics.

From mastering the art of effective communication with the Italian language, each employer contributed a unique example to their professional development. As a result, he emerged from this coaching period as someone who seamlessly integrates a culturally enriched approach to his work.

The third factor is his freedom from clan pressures, since he belonged to the Isse Mudulod (Udeejeen) clan, which was characterized by a lack of pursuit of dominance over other clans and state institutions—a departure from the prevailing trend among other political elites who hailed from ambitious, dominating, and power-seeking clans.⁸⁴ Unlike many of his contemporaries, whose political agendas were fuelled by the desire for domination, his clan adopted a more individualistic approach as citizens of the government and did not pressurize him for special privileges. This distinctive condition set him apart, positioning him as an advocate for a more harmonious and balanced political culture. In this regard, his clan can be said to have emphasized a commitment to the common good in a political landscape often marked by intense competition and power struggles.

The fourth factor was his multi-clan family, as he married a woman from the Majeerteen/Darood clan, thereby forging familial relations that bridged the Hawiye and Darood clan families.⁸⁵ In the confines of his household, these two competing clan families found a unique solace and synthesis that echoed his commitment to fostering unity and reconciliation. As he assumed a leadership role within the state, his residence symbolized a harmonious convergence of political influences from the Hawiye and Darood clans. Functioning as a mediator and reconciler, he navigated the dynamics between these two clans. His ability to handle the complicated web of clan politics with impartiality and tact earned him the respect of moderate politicians from the Hawiye and Darood clan families. The harmony emanating from his household became a symbol of inclusivity and cooperation, transcending the

political divisions that had often fuelled tensions. By cultivating an environment of mutual understanding and concord within his familial sphere, he became a beacon of hope for those advocating for a more collaborative and reconciliatory approach to politics.

The fifth factor was deeply entrenched in his religious family with an anti-colonialist background. The Darwish movement, to which his father belonged, represented a political ideology and a profound spiritual and cultural resistance against colonial domination. Raised within the nurturing embrace of a family deeply committed to Islamic values, such as equality, justice, transparency, and anti-corruption, he internalized the principles of anti-colonialism from an early age. As a member of the new anti-colonial movement of SYC, he actively contributed to preserving cultural identity and religious autonomy and rejecting external influences. Through his commitment to the cause, he emerged as a steadfast proponent of anti-colonial sentiments, blending his religious upbringing with a dedication to safeguarding the cultural heritage of Somali society.

The sixth factor was his unwavering passion for delving into vast literary works. Through an extensive exploration of literature, he gained valuable insights into global politics, nationalist movements, state-building processes, and economic development. Moreover, his literary pursuits equipped him with a profound comprehension of the challenges and successes associated with state-building endeavors. The diverse narratives and perspectives embedded in the literature he consumed allowed him to draw parallels between different nations' experiences, contributing to his ability to manage the complexities of governance and political development. In essence, Adan Abdulle's passion for literature was not merely a pastime but a dynamic force that enriched his political culture, providing him with the intellectual tools to deal with the complex environment of state-building and democratic values.

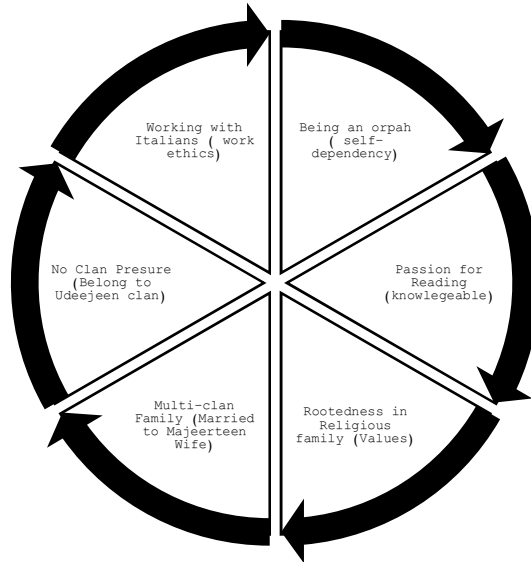


Fig.3. Factors that shaped President Adan's political Culture.

7. President Adan's Encounters with Opposition Challenges

President Adan faced opposition from diverse groups, each motivated by distinct reasons and agendas. These groups comprised leftist ideologues, some Hawiye politicians, certain politicians from the northern regions, and individuals of the deep state and previous members of the regime of PM Abdirashid. The convergence of these disparate groups against President Adan reflected the complex dynamics and competing interests within Somali politics. Their collective opposition posed significant challenges to Adan's presidency, culminating in his eventual ousting and Abdirashid's ascension to power.

a. Opposition from Some Hawiye Politicians

One of the groups that opposed President Adan Abdulle comprised some Hawiye politicians, fundamentally within the SYL party, who had anticipated an approach favoring their kin groups from a leader from their Hawiye clan. Their expectations were rooted in the desire of President

Adan to align with their clan-centric agenda and actively support their interests in the face of political confrontations with Darood politicians.⁸⁶ However, President Adan Abdulle remained steadfast in his commitment to serving as the president of Somalia, rejecting clan competitions and prioritizing national unity over factional interests. The discontent among Hawiye politicians manifested in their opposition to President Adan's leadership, driven by a perceived lack of special consideration for their clan within the broader political landscape. This opposition was particularly evident when these Hawiye politicians actively contested against President Adan in both the Somali Youth League (SYL) leadership in 1959 and the presidential race in 1961.

In the 1959 SYL leadership contest, Sheikh Mohamud Ahmed "Kutubaxoor," a Member of Parliament from the Adale district, competed against President Adan Abdulle.⁸⁷ This internal party competition underscored the growing dissatisfaction within the Hawiye political ranks, which sought a more clan-centric agenda within the SYL. This clan-centric politics was an open exercise of most politicians from other clan families, particularly the Darood politicians. On the other hand, the presidential race in 1961 witnessed another challenge to President Adan's leadership from within his clan. Sheikh Ali Jumale, an old friend from the same city, Beledwayne, emerged as a contender, further highlighting the division within the Hawiye politicians.⁸⁸ President Adan Abdulle's commitment to free from the influence of clan affiliations fuelled tensions with those Hawiye politicians. The political landscape, thus, became a battleground where competing visions for the nation's future clashed, revealing the complexities and challenges associated with achieving a harmonious and inclusive post-independence political order.

b. The Leftist Opposition

During the tumultuous era of the 1950s, amidst the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War, the winds of leftist ideology swept across various liberation movements worldwide, finding fertile ground in Somalia. This ideological current made its way into the nation through a conduit of educated individuals, particularly students who had studied in countries such as Egypt, the USSR, and China. Among these educated elites, one figure stood out prominently: Haji Mohamed Hussein, who emerged as a leading advocate of leftist principles within Somali political circles. Haji Mohamed Hussein's ideological shift was evident during his tenure as the elected chairman of the Somali Youth League (SYL) in 1957, a position he assumed following his education at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Embracing the tenets of leftist ideology, he swiftly became a vocal critic of what he perceived as the pro-Western leanings of figures like President Adan Abdulle, whom he accused of lacking genuine nationalist passion.

The ideological split between Adan and Haji Mohamed Hussein eventually reached a boiling point, culminating in Hussein's expulsion from the SYL on April 1, 1958.⁸⁹ Undeterred, Hussein established the Great Somalia League (GSL). This political entity attracted many prominent leftists and "*a segment of Darod tribesmen who resented Hawiye predominance in the government.*"⁹⁰ The GSL swiftly emerged as a formidable force within politics, positioning itself as a staunch advocate for the unification of Great Somalia under a progressive, nationalist banner. Central to the GSL's platform was the accusation against the SYL, which accused them of lacking genuine commitment to the cause of Somali unification. This accusation was a rallying cry for the GSL and its supporters, galvanizing widespread discontent and paving the way for a seismic shift in the political landscape.

c. Discontented Some Northern Politicians

In the aftermath of the Somali Republic's unification, a sense of discontent simmered among politicians from the northern regions, spearheaded by Mohamed Ibrahim Egal. Frustration brewed over what they perceived as Southern dominance in the newly unified nation's corridors of power. Three events showcased Isaaq's discontent: the aborted officer's coup in 1961, the resignation of the ministers Mohamed Ibrahim Egal and Sheikh Ali Ismael from the Government in 1963, and the revolt of Isaaq lawmakers.⁹¹ Egal, a shrewd political operator, became the Somali National Congress (SNC) leader, seen as mainly the coalition of Isaaq and Hawiye politicians who supported Sheikh Ali Jumale, forming the "*Irir coalition*" in 1963.⁹² The SNC party gained 22 seats in the election of 1964 against 69 for SYL.⁹³ Egal Strategically navigated various political platforms to ascend to the position of Prime Minister of Somalia.⁹⁴ Egal's political tactics gained traction as he garnered support from like-minded individuals who shared his dissatisfaction with the prevailing power dynamics. Among those who rallied behind Egal was a group led by Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. This coalition of disaffected politicians coalesced around a common goal: challenging the authority of President Adan and his Prime Minister, Abdirizak. The alliance between Egal's faction and Abdirashid's team marked a significant turning point in Somali politics, as it brought together disparate groups united by their shared grievances and aspirations for political leadership. Together, they formed a formidable opposition front, leveraging their combined influence and resources to mount a concerted challenge against the entrenched leadership of President Adan and Prime Minister Abdirizak.

d. The Group of PM Abdirashid:

The faction led by PM Abdirashid faced a significant setback following the 1964 election when the president declined to endorse his nomination

despite the central committee of SYL advocating for it. Consequently, Abdirashid and several ex-cabinet members were thrust into a vehement opposition against the Adan/Abdirizak administration. This marked the genesis of a tumultuous period characterized by intense political discord and strategic maneuvering as Abdirashid and his allies sought to assert their influence and challenge the ruling regime's policies.

e. Elements of Deep State:

The civil service reform implemented by the Abdirizak government, famously known as “*Pusta Roso*,” led to the dismissal of numerous veteran civil servants. Among them were seasoned individuals who had held high-ranking positions for years. Displaced from their roles, some of these experienced bureaucrats transitioned into politics. This transformation birthed a new opposition force against the Adan/Abdirizak administration, composed of individuals well-versed in the inner workings of government and armed with a wealth of institutional knowledge. Their entry into the political arena added depth and complexity to the landscape as they leveraged their expertise and networks to challenge the policies and decisions of the ruling regime.

Despite their concerted efforts, the combined opposition of leftist ideologues and discontented Hawiye politicians proved unsuccessful in dislodging President Adan Abdulle from power despite refusing to campaign for re-election. However, the political landscape witnessed a significant shift in the presidential election of 1967, where a formidable coalition was formed. This alliance comprised the previously disenfranchised groups, including those rooted in leftist ideology and disgruntled Hawiye politicians, along with individuals of northern politicians and from the deep state aggrieved by Prime Minister Abdirizak's civil service reforms emphasizing capacity and anti-corruption program.⁹⁵ This formidable coalition campaigned during the

presidential election of 1967 in a collective endeavor to dislodge President Adan Abdulle's presidency. Their approach encompassed a multifaceted strategy that exploited various forms of corruption, leveraging covert and overt means to sway the political climate in their support.

The culmination of these efforts resulted in the replacement of President Adan Abdulle with Abdirashid in the presidential election of June 10, 1967. The election marked a turning point in Somali political history, as the collective grievances of leftist ideologues, discontented Hawiye politicians, and northern politicians, and elements of the deep state coalesced to bring about a significant regime change. The success of this coalition highlighted the potency of a unified front against a sitting president, mainly when fuelled by a combination of ideological differences, ethnic affiliations, and internal disputes within the political structure. The events leading up to and following June 10, 1967, underscored the intricate interplay of power dynamics, strategic maneuverings, and the complex socio-political landscape that defined Somalia during this pivotal period. The president resigned on 30 June to give the elected president the chance to address the nation on Independence Day, July 1, instead of giving up power on July 6, 1967.

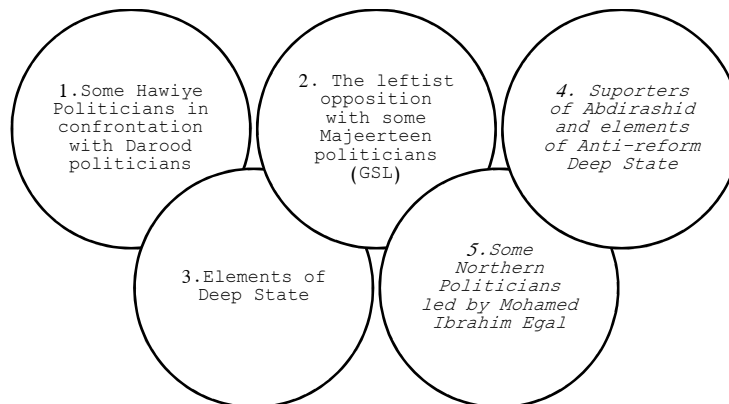


Fig.4. The five oppositions to the Adan /Abdirizak government

8. The Aftermath: Somalia's Path Post-President Adan Abdulle

The 1967 leadership transition from President Adan Abdulle and Prime Minister Abdirizak H. Hussein to President Abdirashid Sharmarke and Prime Minister Egal marked a pivotal moment in Somali history. Understanding President Adan's role in promoting democracy, fostering reconciliation among clan-centric politicians, combating corruption, and advocating for good governance requires juxtaposing with the tumultuous political environment of the ruling elites from 1967 to 1969. A lack of commitment to democratic principles characterized the political atmosphere two years after President Adan's term. The prevailing clan-centric politics fostered divisiveness, hindering the nation's progress towards unity and shared national identity. Corruption permeated the political system, with political elites prioritizing personal gain over the country's welfare.⁹⁶ Good governance practices were notably absent, contributing to a growing disillusionment among the citizens and educated elites.⁹⁷

The culmination of this era of mismanagement manifested in the 1969 election, which was marred by widespread rigging and irregularities.⁹⁸ The strategic plan prepared by President Sharmarke, PM Egal, and his interior minister, Yassin Nur Hassan, was founded on segmenting political parties, which reached about 80 parties and then joining them into a single political party, SYL⁹⁹. This plan was realized, and all newly elected MPs joined SYL except Abdirizak Haji Hussein. This compromised electoral process not only undermined the nation's democratic history and aspirations. During this period, the political performance was marked by terrible governance, ultimately leading to the rigging of the 1969 election and the establishment of a one-party system.¹⁰⁰ This era of political instability reached its nadir with the tragic assassination of President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke on October 15, 1969. His death further

destabilized the political environment, creating a power vacuum that was exploited by the military. The military takeover on October 21, 1969, marked a decisive turning point in the nation's history, replacing civilian rule with military governance. Political elites were detained, including President Adan Abdulle, Prime Minister Abdirizak, Prime Minister Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, and Speaker of the Parliament Sheikh Mukhtar.¹⁰¹

Military rule emerged from this political upheaval and endured for 21 years. Somalia underwent significant political, social, and economic changes throughout this extended period. Adopting socialism confronted traditional and Islamic values and aggravated state-society conflict. The one-party system that began to emerge during the Sharmarke/Egal regime was reincarnated by the military government, even though it had a different philosophy, socialism. The authoritarian rule of Mohamed Siyad barre regime continued until it was toppled by various armed oppositions in 1991. In comparing the events after the 1967 leadership transition with the period of the tenure of President Adan, the variance in the political culture of the leadership becomes very cloudless. In particular, the environment of the assassination of President Abdirashid Sharmarke and the peaceful life of President Adan in his firm as a simple citizen showcase the difference.

9. Conclusion

The life and leadership style of President Adan Abdulle stands out as a distinctive departure from the prevalent political culture among most Somali political elites. His approach deserves thorough study and consideration, especially for the emerging generation of Somali leaders aspiring to reconstruct the collapsed Somali state based on good governance. President Adan Abdulle's exceptional political values, characterized by his reluctance to seek positions and refraining from campaigning for political power in his long political career, present a

unique culture in the modern era. His life story started as an orphan, working various menial jobs, reaching the top level of education during that time, and joining the first nationalist movement, demonstrating his dedication and commitment to excellence. His biography is a testament to a principled and selfless approach to public service, which reflects a commitment to the nation's well-being, prioritizing the people's interests over personal ambition. For the new generation of Somali elites aspiring to rebuild the Somali state, the lessons from President Adan Abdulle's life are invaluable. Emulating his commitment to good governance, selfless service, and a moral leadership philosophy can contribute to developing a more stable and prosperous Somalia. By prioritizing the needs of the people and eschewing the divisive power struggles that have marred the nation's political history, the new Somali leaders can set a positive trajectory for the future.

Six key factors significantly shaped Adan Abdulle's political culture. The experience of growing up as an orphan instilled in him a profound sense of independence and responsibility. His extensive work with Italians gave him a strong work ethic and familiarity with state institutions. Belonging to a clan known for emphasizing individuality shielded him from familial pressures and expectations of government favors. Furthermore, his marriage to a Majeerteen/Darod wife strategically garnered support from politicians of the competing Hawiye and Darod clans. Adan's deep connection to his religious roots, influenced by his father's role as a Quranic teacher and involvement in the Darwish movement, shaped his commitment to values such as decency, fairness, anti-corruption, and adherence to the rule of law. Lastly, his passion for literacy and reading habits contributed to a profound understanding of statehood, institution-building, and a broader worldview. These factors collectively played a pivotal role in shaping Adan Abdulle's unique political culture.

Two years after President Adan's term, the political atmosphere witnessed a lack of commitment to democratic principles. Clan-centric politics prevailed, fostering divisiveness and hindering progress toward national unity. Corruption had become widespread among political elites, prioritizing personal gain over the country's welfare. The absence of good governance practices contributed to growing disillusionment among citizens and educated elites. President Adan's leadership, in this context, stood out as a stark contrast. His commitment to democratic values, reconciliation efforts, and anti-corruption measures set a new standard for ethical governance. The transition from Adan Abdulle to Abdirashid Sharmarke underscored the challenges faced by the nation and highlighted the crucial role of visionary leaders in shaping Somalia's politics. After handing over power to President Abdirashid, Somalia lost democratic credentials due to bad governance practices and began to slide into authoritarianism. The assassination of President Sharmarke, the military coup, the armed opposition, the collapse of the state in 1991, and the civil war are a testament to the worsening elite political culture, which still strives to restore the functioning Somali state.

Notes

¹ Robert I. Rotberg, *The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair*, available from <https://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/s7666.pdf> (accessed February 16, 2024), 24-26.

² Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Heinemann, 1984), 1.

³ Jackson Robert and Karl Rosberg classified African leaders into different types based on their leadership characteristics. See Jackson Robert and Karl Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa* (University of California Press, 1982). See more on Marsha Prepstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005); Nicola et al. in the Arab World (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006); Nic Cheeseman and Jonathan Fisher,

Authoritarian Africa: Repression, Resistance, and the Power of Ideas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

- ⁴ Abdi Samatar criticized the complete generalization of all African leaders, offering Somali leaders of the postcolonial period of 1960-1967 a leadership model best characterized as that of democratic statespeople. See Abdi Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats: Somalia's Adan A. Osman and Abdirizak H. Hussein* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 8.
- ⁵ Mohamed Isse Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle: His Life & Legacy* (Looh Press, 2023), xiii.
- ⁶ Dr. Cedric Barnes, "The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis, and the Greater Somalia Idea, c.1946-48," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 277-291.
- ⁷ Gilbert Ware, "Somalia: From Trust Territory to Nation, 1950-1960," *Phylon* 26, no. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1965): 173-185.
- ⁸ Following were the secretary generals of SYL: Sheikh Mohamud Mohamed Farah (1960-62); Yasin Nur Hassan (1963); Abdirizak Haji Hussein (1964-67); finally, in 1968, SYL adopted a party leader besides the secretary general. Mohamed Ibrahim Igal was elected party leader, and Ali Mohamed Hirabe was the secretary general.
- ⁹ While most politicians were aligned with the political norms of administering Italian authority, new individuals had appeared on the political scene expressing growing socialist ideologies. The most prominent among them was Haji Mohamed Hussein, the chairman of the SYL, who, after returning from Egypt, advocated Nasserism ideology. He was evicted from the party in 1958.
- ¹⁰ Samatar, Abdi. *Africa's First Democrats*. pp. 63-64.
- ¹¹ Bacik, Gokhan. "The Genesis, History, and Functioning of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC): A Formal-Institutional Analysis." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31, no. 4 (December 2011): 594-614. Sesay, Amadu. *The African Union: Forward March or About Face-Turn?* Uppsala: Universitetsstryckeriet, 2008.
- ¹² The second President of the Somali Republic, HE. Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke referred to President Adan Abdulle as the father of the nation in his Radio

address on July 1, 1960, and the parliament gave the same title. Trunji, Mohamed Isse. President Adan Abdulle, p. xiii.

¹³ The president transferred power from 6 July to 30 June to allow the new president to preside over the celebrations of Independence Day, 1 July.

¹⁴ While many African liberation leaders like Nkrumah, Nyerere, or Kenyatta founded political parties instrumental in achieving independence and education in Western countries, their political trajectory was authoritarianism. In contrast, Somalia took a different path under President Adan Abdulle.

¹⁵ In his commendable work, Abdi Samatar combined the biographies of Adan A. Abdulle and his PM Abdirizak, while Tunji focused on President Adan. See Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, and Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*

¹⁶ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. "Somali Elite Political Culture: Conceptions, Structures, and Historical Evolution." *Somali Studies: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal for Somali Studies* 5 (2020): 30-92.

¹⁷ Udeejeen is a subclan of the Mudulood, which belongs to the Hawiye clan.

¹⁸ Hudur is a town in the Bakol region, while Baidoa is the capital of the Bay region in the Southwest State of Somalia.

¹⁹ Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, pp. 26-19. Also, Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, pp. 25-33.

²⁰ During the fascist era, Somalis were not allowed to mix with Italians, implementing racial laws. Regardless, Adan used to practice his Italian language in talking to the children of the restaurant's owner, Mr. Cecchi. Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, p.17.

²¹ Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, p.18.

²² *Ibid.*, p.21.

²³ Adan joined SYC and registered his friends Abdullahi Isse and Sheikh Ali Jumale, the two prominent members of SYL. Samatar, *Africa's First Democrats*, p. 27.

²⁴ In this election, the contender was Sheikh Mohamud Ahmed "Kutubaxoor" from Adele district, who received 42 votes while Adan received 44 votes. Adan was not satisfied with this simple majority. Insisting to resign or certain

conditions are met, he finally accepted the chairmanship with the repeated vote of 66 votes.

²⁵ Somalia became the fifth independent state of Africa in 1960 among the 17 African states. Cameroon, Togo, Madagascar, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sheikh Ali Jimale was the presidential candidate competing with Adan Abdulle in the 1961 presidential election. In the final vote, Adan received 62, and Jimale received 59, which offered Adan an absolute majority with a very small margin.

²⁶ Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, p.134.

²⁷ The Muslim World Congress (WMC), *Motamar al-Alam al-Islami*, is an Islamic organization founded in Makkah Mukarramah (Saudi Arabia) in 1926. It aims to promote solidarity and cooperation among the global Islamic community (ummah). The initiatives and experiences from its conferences contributed to the establishment of, among others, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969.

²⁸ Demirkan, Onur. "The Quest for a Representative Role of the Muslim World in International System: The Case of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)" Accessed June 19, 2024. <https://avesis.aybu.edu.tr/dosya?id=f03b2bd1-45a9-4c5d-92ac-3c0adad5c09f>, p.39

²⁹ Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, p.162.

³⁰ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. Making Sense of Somali History. Adonis & Abbey, 2017, p. 24.

³¹ Ingiriis, Mohamed Haji. "The Making of the 1990 Manifesto: Somalia's Last Chance for State Survival." *Northeast African Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012): 63-94.

³² Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, p. 28.

³³ The developing nations have refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity. They developed modern patterns depending on different cultures and belief systems. See Eisenstadt, S. N. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1-29. Accessed February 18, 2024. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027613>.

³⁴ Dasgupta, Rajashree. "Main Features of a Traditional Society." Available from

https://www.govtgirlsekalpur.com/Study_Materials/Geography/GEOG_PART_II_HONS_Main_Features_of_a_Traditional_Society.pdf. Accessed February 20, 2024.

- ³⁵ Abdurahman Abdullahi, *Tribalism, Nationalism, and Islam: The Crisis of Political Loyalty in Somalia* (Master's thesis, Islamic Institute, McGill University, 1992), 94.
- ³⁶ de Oliveira, Márcio S B S. "Modernity and Modernization." Available from [Modernità%20S.%20Eisenstadt%20Modernity%20and%20Modernization%20\(1\).pdf](#). Accessed on February 20, 2024.
- ³⁷ Badie, Bertrand. *The Imported State: The Westernization of the Political Order*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000. Southall, Aidan. "State Formation in Africa." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (October 1974): 153–165.
- ³⁸ Abdurahman Abdullahi and Ibrahim Farah, "Reconciling the State and Society: Reordering Islamic Work and Clan System," accessed April 4, 2024, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/15327358/Reconciling-the-State-and-Society-in-Somalia>.
- ³⁹ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. "Theorizing Stability of the Somali State: In the Light of the Comprehensive Perspective of Somali Studies." *Somali Studies: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal for Somali Studies* 8 (2023): 11-55, 22.
- ⁴⁰ See SYL Oath: "*I swear by Almighty God that I will not take any action against any Somali. In trouble, I promise to help the Somali. I will become the brother of all other members. I will not reveal the name of my tribe. In matters of Mariage, I will not discriminate between the Somali tribes and Midgan, Yibirh, Yahar, and Tumal.*" See Abdi Samatar, 40. Mohamed Trunji observed the absence of highly discriminated groups of "Bantu descent" in the Oath. See Trunji, *Somalia: The Told History*, p. 17.
- ⁴¹ M. J. Fox criticized this quote as only about one clan family; however, it was generalized to all Somalis. See M. J. Fox, *The Roots of Somali Political Culture* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015), p. 34, footnote 19.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁴³ Laitin, David, and Samatar, Samatar. *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), p. 30.

- ⁴⁴ Laitin and Samatar, Somalia: Nation in Search, pp. 30-31.
- ⁴⁵ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. "Revisiting Somali Historiography: Critique and Idea of Comprehensive Perspective." *Journal of Somali Studies: Research on Somalia and the Greater Horn of African Countries* 5, no. 1-2 (2018), pp. 48. Adonis & Abbey.
- ⁴⁶ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. "Tribalism and Islam: Variations on the Basics of Somaliness." *Proceedings of EASS/SSIA*, Turku, Finland, 1998.
- ⁴⁷ Abdullahi, Revisiting Somali historiography, p. 48.
- ⁴⁸ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. *Making Sense of Somali History, Volume One*. Adonis & Abbey, 2017, pp. 59-63.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.85-89.
- ⁵⁰ Abdullahi, *Somali Elite Political Culture*, pp. 68-70
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- ⁵² Lukes, Steven, and Andrew Scull. *Durkheim and the Law*. 2013, p. 1.
- ⁵³ Lewis, I.M. "The Politics of the 1969 Somali Coup." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 10, no. 3 (1972): 385.
- ⁵⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History - Volume 1*, 2020, p. 309.
- ⁵⁵ Abdullahi, Abdurahman. "The Conception of Islam in Somalia: Consensus and Controversy." *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 21 (2021), Article 9. Also, Abdurahman Abdullahi, *The Islamic Movement in Somalia: A Study of the Islah Movement, 1950-2000* (London: Adonis & Abbey, 2015).
- ⁵⁶ Abdullahi, *The Conception of Islam*. p. 48.
- ⁵⁷ Ginsborg, Paul. "The Italian Political Culture in Historical Perspective." *Modern Italy* 1, no. 1 (1995): 3-17.
- ⁵⁸ Cavalli, Alessandro. "Reflections on Political Culture and the 'Italian National Character'." *Daedalus* 130, no. 3 (Summer, 2001): 119-137.
- ⁵⁹ Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, p. 50.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁶¹ Abdullahi, *Making Sense of Somali History*, vol.1, p.140.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 82.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁶⁵ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁶⁷ Trunji, *Somalia: The Untold History*, pp. 330-334. Also, Lewis, I. M. *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*. Westview Press, 1965, p. 160. According to Samatar, GSL was closed as a result of successive incidents in Gardo, Mogadishu, and Jama, in which members of GSL were involved in throwing a bomb and preparing to intimidate the Italians, stabbed the governor of Banadir Ahmed Shuqul. See Samatar, *Africa's First Democrat*, p. 66.

⁶⁸ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 417.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Samatar, *Africa's First Democrat*, p. 141.

⁷¹ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 121.

⁷² Ibid., p. 72.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 77

⁷⁴ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 78.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. xlv.

⁷⁶ *Sahih Muslim* 1652 (book 33, Hadith 15)

⁷⁷ See the Quranic verse in which Allah says: "Joseph proposed, *"Put me in charge of the storehouses of the land, for I am truly reliable and adept."* [Quran, 12:55]

⁷⁸ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 120.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

⁸⁰ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, p. 3.

- ⁸¹ After the formation of the SYL government in 1959, lessons learned from the 1956 government formation were incorporated, leading to the implementation of a balanced clan power-sharing system. However, a group of parliamentarians, including Abdirashid, Abdirizak, and Mohamed Sheikh Gabyow, criticized the government for rigging elections, forming a large government, and the lack of professional qualifications. Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, p. 65.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 59.
- ⁸³ Ibid., p. 78.
- ⁸⁴ Isse Mudulood is the uncle of Abgal Osman Mudulood, who originally resided in the Hiiraan region. Mudulood settles in Banadir, Hirshabeelle, and the eastern part of Galmudug.
- ⁸⁵ Most Darood politicians, particularly Majeerteen, looked to President Adan as a brother-in-law since he was married to a wife from their clan. In Somali culture, the brother-in-law (*Seedi*) enjoys mutual special respect. They were called Abti (maternal uncle) of the president's children, who are respected most.
- ⁸⁶ Sheikh Ali Jumale expressed the testament of these accusations in the election list of the SYL parliamentary candidates in Beledweyne in 1959, where he placed his name at the top of the list as the chairman of the party and the Speaker of the parliament's second in this list. "*Sheik Ali and friends accused Osman and Haji Farah Ali Omar of not favoring their kin groups in the party dispute.*" Samatar, Africa's First Democrat, p. 66.
- ⁸⁷ Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, p. 60.
- ⁸⁸ Trunji, President Adan Abdulle, pp. 80-81.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 56-60.
- ⁹⁰ Trunji, Somalia: the Told History, p. 304.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 409-413.
- ⁹² I.M. Lewis. A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa (Westview Press, 1965) p.176.
- ⁹³ Trunji, Somalia: the Told History, p. 471.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 417.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 495-500.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Metz, Helen Chapin, ed. *Somalia: A Country Study*. Fourth Edition. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 1992, p. 36.

⁹⁸ Ingriis, *The Suicidal State in Somalia*, p. 48.

⁹⁹ The Interior Minister Yasin Nur was the mastermind of the Abdirashid/Egal reconciliation and forming a coalition against Adan/Abdirizak in the election of 1967. Even though he was one of the early members of SYL, he was famous for insubordination to the party policies. He was expelled from the party three times (1959, 64, 66) and readmitted after clan-based reconciliation. He managed the highly rigged election of 1969. See Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, pp. 420-21.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Trunji, *President Adan Abdulle*, pp. 159, and Samatar, *Africa's First Democrat*, p. 204.

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