



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of
the National Academy of Public Administration,
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series: Governance Traps
Interview no.: U 17

Interviewee: Mohamed Fadal

Interviewer: Richard Bennet

Date of Interview: 25 October 2010

Location: Hargeisa
Somaliland

Innovations for Successful Societies, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice
Princeton University, 83 Prospect Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA
www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties

BENNET: Today is October 25th and I'm here in Hargeisa with Dr. Mohamed Fadal. Thank you very much sir for your time. We'd love to just get an idea of your background. We're interested, as I said, in these early years of Somaliland but also in the first elections. Perhaps you can give us an idea of some of your background and your experiences and your work with SORADI (Social Research and Development Institute) as well.

FADAL: *My name is Dr. Mohamed Fadal. I migrated to Canada in 1989 and was there only for a very short time, when I returned in the early days of Somaliland in 1992, one year after Somaliland had been taken over by SNM. From then on I was very much involved in the process of reconstruction.*

Initially I started as an aid worker running an international NGO (non-government organization). We were doing basic rehabilitation processes, caring for orphan children, supporting the ongoing peace initiatives. I participated in the first congresses of Somaliland in Borame.

By 1997, when the last major conference established peace, I became a researcher with the Centre for Peace and Development later renamed as the Academy for Peace and Development. I was one of the founders of that institution and its first research coordinator. In the first three years we covered practically all over the country with a team of six people. I was the team leader. We moved around Somaliland, dealing with actual peace building, research on policy and peace building.

Later on I was appointed by the President at that time, President (Muhammad Hajj Ibrahim) Egal as Minister of Planning. So I worked as the Minister of Planning for Somaliland for several years, then I decided to move on and subsequently joined the United Nations. I worked in the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in Sudan for another three years.

Then I came back to Somaliland and now I'm here. I'm running a research institute, the Social Research and Development Institute, SORADI. I'm also coordinating the Independent Scholars Group (ISG). I initiated bringing them together and I'm still coordinating them—it is a loose group of professionals, intellectuals, scholars, who deliberate Somaliland issues in an independent perspective, try to bring our objective analysis and recommendations. I don't know if you are familiar with our website? Our situation papers are all there.

BENNET: I've seen the website and we've actually spoken to a number of members of the group.

FADAL: *Oh, members of the group. I'm glad because it became a very successful group honestly. There was a situation whereby the professionals, the intellectuals, the people who could have contributed were not having space. I mean the civil society. But when we came together it just took off and it became extremely useful as it is.*

Now I am the director of the Social Research and Development Institute, as well as the Coordinator of the Independent Scholar Group (ISG). But I had also a bit of background in Mogadishu in Somalia before the war and therefore, can relate to the pre-war time and the post-war period developments.

BENNET: So what year did you leave for Canada?

FADAL: *I left for Canada in 1987 when the conflict was starting in Mogadishu—it was a very difficult time when about 42 intellectuals from present Somaliland were massacred in Jazira and many of them were my friends, all among the Mogadishu elite. They were just taken from their homes and killed. From then on we started to prepare to move out. So in September 1989 I arrived in Canada and after three years when I was able to get legal papers and could travel I returned to Somaliland to help with the rebuilding process. My family is still in Canada, my children, my wife and I go there at least twice a year.*

BENNET: So perhaps you could, I mean the role of the diaspora returning is incredibly important to Somaliland. Perhaps you could speak to a little bit about your motivations for returning.

FADAL: *Yes, the diaspora role is quite unusual in Somaliland. I have also been in southern Sudan and know how the diaspora is viewed there, but here the diaspora is very much integrated into the whole process of Somaliland reconstruction, rehabilitation, in all aspects of life. I call myself one of the oldest returnees of the diaspora. I have influenced many of my friends in Canada to return. The Canadian community, diaspora here are very strong. They are involved in all fields of development in Somaliland. They are in the business sector, in education and other social services sectors; they are in the government, and in the civil society organizations. Whenever I return to Canada I inform the Community about Somaliland development and the role of their members (diaspora) there. My conviction comes from the realization that people like my age and even before us, have been educated through public resources. We had free reign in all our education, from the first day of enrolment to the university, and in my case until I acquired my doctorate from Germany. Therefore, I want to give back something to the society. That is one aspect and a major one.*

BENNET: Ok.

FADAL: *The other aspect is, I believe in this place. I believe the Somaliland people, I believe they have suffered. I believe they deserve and they are capable of really building a very prosperous society. That is my belief. I believe not only the geographical aspect; where Somaliland is located is a good place for development but I believe also the people themselves have the capacity to develop, to get out of the poverty they have been in for a long time. It is responsibility of the leaders to bring out the strength of the people and the country. I believe there is an opportunity to contribute and everybody has to contribute. I want to contribute to that end.*

BENNET: So the method that you've chosen to contribute is largely through civil society. You mentioned your period as Minister of Planning. First as the civil society piece. What was the role of the civil society? Can you go back to 1992 when you returned and talk a little about the role of the civil society, some of the first steps you took and what were the initial challenges that were facing Somaliland at the time?

FADAL: *1992 was a very difficult time for Somaliland. In fact, the whole place was teeming with militia, with guns. In the night in Hargeisa clan militias traded heavy gunfire from the airport direction over the city towards the northern outskirts and vice versa. Gunfire and carjacking was commonplace within the city all perpetuated by the so-called clan militias. The place was practically, as I said, teeming with militia, crowded on converted pickups called technicals. It was the period immediately after captured the place. The SNM forces had practically disintegrated into clan militias. When they were fighting with the Barre forces they were able to manage their internal problems, but when they captured the territory, their internal factional problem blew.*

The civil society organizations' role at that time was primarily to be a conduit for international assistance in the form of relief and rehabilitation efforts. Somaliland declared itself as an independent state. Since it was not recognized by any other state, it was in a limbo. The international community was not clear on how to deal with it because in providing direct help to the government, they could be accused of encouraging secession from Somalia. People had hopes that Somalia could become something again. So in fact they were totally in limbo.

So the civil society, the NGOs and the small civil society, or organized civil society as such, became the anchor for the international community to channel assistance. They were not dealing with the government, and besides the government itself was not properly organized, it was groups of people fighting among themselves. So the role was a very critical role. Practically all the rehabilitation work, which happened in Somaliland, i.e. the schools, the urban water systems, the health systems, community development programs, all of these programmes were done through the NGOs.

That was a critical niche being filled by the NGOs and an important one for Somaliland rebuilding. Nowadays things have changed and the international community engages the Somaliland government also. The civil society was also involved in the peace and reconciliation processes. The civil society was a major facilitator of the famous conferences, the peace conferences in their own ways, either getting funds from the diaspora or supporting it or playing the role of supporting logistics or taking secretariat roles. They were also facilitating and supporting the traditional leaders, to bring together all the different factions, and individuals standing around and all vying for positions in the government.

So the civil society role at that time was a critical role. In fact it was the role, as I said, advancing the elders. For instance, you heard much about the role of the elders and traditional leaders. The civil society was their partners in that process. The SNM system broke down into two major factions. And the elders were trying to bring them together on a middle ground alliance of all factions and the civil society was their partner in terms of facilitating all that process.

BENNET: I know you weren't across the Ethiopian border in '88, '89, but just from speaking to other people—.

FADAL: *This was in '92.*

BENNET: Yes, '92, no, no, I'm just going back for a moment while you were abroad. There is this moment when the SNM relies more on the Guurti and brings in the elders.

FADAL: *Ok.*

BENNET: Can you speak a little bit, as someone who is familiar with the conditions during this transition period, who is carrying out these services to the people? I mean you mentioned the civil society and their role. Can you explain a little bit more about the relationship between the SNM and the elders and the civil society and how that coordination actually operationalized?

FADAL: *So you're talking about the pre-1991—.*

BENNET: Actually, I'm interested in the transition period. I also would like to hear your thoughts about the SNM's role in the—.

FADAL: *The SNM's role. In my perspective the SNM was kind of a mass movement—you know, it was initially organized by intellectuals in the U.K. and later on it became an armed group when it was joined by famous officers from the Somali army and then it immediately acquired a structure of armed organization. A small scale skirmish type struggle was going on for about four years, but, the watershed of full-fledged war was in 1988 through which eventually the cities of Hargeisa and Burao were totally destroyed by the government forces and their populations fled across the border with Ethiopia as refugees. Famous reconciliation agreement between Siad Barre and Mengistu Haille Mariam (President of Ethiopia) triggered the 1988 onslaught of SNM in these cities. The agreement committed Mengistu to stop SNM support. SNM found itself in a very difficult position as if overnight the carpet was pulled out from under its feet.*

They threw themselves inside the country and at a certain point some people had changed because the population joined them in mass. The government forced the population to be displaced in Ethiopia and that was tantamount to delivering it into the hands of SNM. The SNM was overwhelmed to receive close to half a million people who are supporters, but who also are displaced and destitute.

That was the time when the elders' role became necessary, for me two main reasons: one, SNM had to govern and administer this mass of displaced people. The people need some kind of leadership and governance and it could not be provided by Ethiopia. I mean masses of people are there across the border and SNM has to do something about it. Automatically the governance system became the traditional governance system.

The other thing is, the clan resource could only be efficiently tapped into through the traditional leaders. The elders are capable of organizing recruits, fighters, mobilize resources, keep the peace and establish organization within the groups. So the SNM itself became reliant on them.

BENNET: Okay.

FADAL: *Instead of pure guerilla trained movement, it became a mass movement. Whenever it is attacking or doing excursions into fighting, they may have some small original SNM people but they mobilized hundreds of people from the clans who just take their guns and come and fight when the battle finishes they go back to their homesteads. Such instantaneous recruited were dubbed as the "Gaas Dhaqole" meaning the "deaf battalion" – obviously deaf from military discipline. In the early days SNM was reliant on the support of the diaspora, but by that time displacement most of the support was coming from the local community. It has the whole population at its disposal.*

BENNET: So when the transition occurs then—?

FADAL: *At that time, in terms of civil society, I don't think it became more, the whole set up was more of tapping into what I would call it social capital. Clans can be turned into ready social capital, because this organization allows for people to get the services or what they expected from an organized central force, from a government. The clan itself can do at that time. That is when the clan is at its best, supporting people, organizing them, mobilizing relief, mobilizing resources, supporting the weak, taking care of the peace and so on and so forth. At that time, as such, organized civil society like NGOs were not existent. They only started later on in the refugee camps.*

Some small groups started in the camps, but the first real organization was SORA. SORA was organized much later by the UFO group when they were released from jail.

BENNET: So in this initial transition period as you're working, what was your role? What were some of the activities that you were doing?

FADAL: *At the local level my role started one year after SNM captured Somaliland.*

BENNET: In 1992.

FADAL: *I was in Canada—. I left Mogadishu in 1989 with my family. So we went to Canada. When I reached there, I was already an educated person who can easily integrate, so I started community work, working with the new Somali community. But I was committed to return to Somaliland. So I established an NGO in Canada, in Ottawa, called SOMAID (Somalia Aid and Development). That NGO, with support from the local community, we worked there—I worked there for at least two years, advocating for Somaliland holding meetings with the Foreign Office, with the Parliament, and trying to organize support for Somaliland including relief and rehabilitation assistance.*

There was a Horn of Africa focus—you know Canada was very much involved in Eritrea and Ethiopia, they used to call that the "Horn of Africa." So I became part of Horn of Africa relief group. So I played that role in putting Somaliland also in the Horn of Africa system in Canada, through the parliament, through NGOs. So there was a consortium of Horn of Africa Policy Group. My organization – SOMAID- became a member of that and I joined its secretariat. My main objective was keeping Somaliland in the Horn of Africa focus.

So I registered my NGO, got a charity number, and eventually I got funding from Canada for a Somaliland project, a three-year funding for civil society training and empowerment.

So I returned to implement that project. When I established SOMAID local branch here, I collected a group of intellectuals here to do three things: One, we immediately established a center for the children whose fathers were killed in the struggle—it was not an orphanage, but kind of a daycare centre. We keep kids for the day so that the mothers can sit in the market and do something and in the evening when they are coming back they take the children to their homes. What we were offering was freeing the mothers from the small children which were tying them. Two, and even more important thing was that we were training and

organizing the civil society organization: helping them form and organize to support their communities.

Thirdly, we were producing a newsletter which was also focusing on peace, on the empowerment of the civil society. SOMAID was transferring knowledge of civil society organization to Somaliland. A group of intellectuals who returned from Mogadishu were doing much of the work.

BENNET: There is a big group of Isaaq from Mogadishu that came back—.

FADAL: *Exactly, many of them professionals.*

BENNET: Did the manifesto group or something like that?

FADAL: *They were at that time the manifesto, actually, some of them were in the manifesto. These were younger intellectuals.*

BENNET: These were younger, ok.

FADAL: *They were younger, some of them are writers, and some of them are journalists. They were already organized over there producing a news journal there. When I came here I brought them together. We worked together in SOMAID organization. The focus actually was to empower the civil society, train, provide information for them, to organize them into umbrellas, because groups are coming up. So that was the major focus at that time. Things were going relatively well before our last mini-civil war started.*

BENNET: Before we talk about that, I'd love to hear about Borama and the conference. I mean, you were a participant there you said. How did you come to be there? What were your impressions of the process?

FADAL: *My role was a civil society person's role. As an organization we were also supporting the process. It was a very difficult time. Because there was so much distrust among clans, and suspicion against one another, which has often had an undertone of power struggle among SNM factions. Some of them supporting and others against the president of that time Mr. Abdirahman Ahmed Ali (Tuur). Then being against the president took also clan forms: Some clans were considered supporters of the president, while others were considered to be opposing the President and this relationship also extended to the clan militias, which made travelling through other clan territories dangerous*

So travelling from Hargeisa going to the west to Borame – the venue of the conference, one has to cross so many checkpoints, militia checkpoints of different subclans. From here to Gabiley one has to check at at least three or four checkpoints and some were manned by extremely rough militias. Then before you to cross to Awdal side, to Borame side then you cross other checkpoints. Then when we reached Borame, it was totally a different experience; one is overwhelmed with an overflow of good people from all parts of Somaliland, kind of in a different world. The hosts did a great job, it was a task for the Borama people to host these people and they did a very, very good job. It was a unique experience.

The elders/Guurti announced, the Borame Conference, while still in the earlier Sheikh conference which was held for the reconciliation of the sides of the

Berbera conflict. From there also they announced the rough composition of the clan composition of the delegates to the Borame conference. Afterwards, the Guurti started the preparation of the Conference from Hargeisa. For several months, the elders/Guurti sat in a big hall to receive people and they deliberate about the Borame Conference process, and about the selection of clan delegates. It was simply a loose process. They receive people, they talk to people. They were in no hurry and eventually moved to Borame and continued in the same tempo. The Government of ruling SNM was suspicious about the process but refrained from blocking it.

BENNET: (Abdirahman Ahmed Ali) Tuur's government?

FADAL: *The SNM president's faction was suspicious about this process because it was not under their control. The opposing SNM faction was pushing it for, to use it as an opportunity to de-seat the other group. Despite being lukewarm about it, Tuur let it progress and the elders kept the preparation loose and low profile and delegates and interested people start coming in trickles to Borame.*

The Elders seemed to be in no hurry; meetings may not happen for days, but the process continued outside meeting halls. Clan delegates started gradually coming and news goes out clan X went there, clan X arrived. The news is spreading and clans which were initially reluctant to come start preparing to participate. In the mean some local reconciliation processes were being attended to by the elders. At a certain point it reached where a critical mass of delegates arrived, but nobody was sure the Government will participate in the process. The Shir Guddoon (Conference Presidium) - were also trying to convince Tuur who was travelling in the Arabian countries to come and to join the conference. What nobody was saying loud was that SNM rule of 2 years is expiring and a change of change may take place in Borame. Tuur's Government members were rumored not to be prepared to take part in the conference. But in the end Abdirahman Ahmed Ali (Tuur) surprised everybody by coming straight to the conference in Borame from Djibouti and without passing through Hargeisa to consult with his cabinet. The rest of the Cabinet had to scramble to come to Borame.

So Tuur was at that time outside the country, he was actually in Saudi Arabia, at that time moving around and his deputy was here, Hassan Isse Jama. Tuur, people argue about, was ambivalent about what to do about the conference. Some people say he was fed up with SNM and the fractious situation and he wanted to get rid of it, just move on. Some people claimed that he spoke with Egal, because they were old friends, they were colleagues from childhood.

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: *Both of them came to the conference and they used to talk to each other outside the conference and sometimes alone. So some people say that there was a tacit understanding between them that Tuur just moves on and Egal takes over. All of a sudden Tuur came back from Saudi Arabia to Djibouti and landed in Borama and it was kind of a bombshell and shortly afterwards, he announced, "I transfer full powers to the 150 delegates who are running the conference." Then the question arose, did he resign?*

BENNET: Right, what does that mean?

FADAL: What does that mean? It really became something that nobody understood. But then and there he said, no, no, I didn't resign but they have full power to run and do what they want. I guess, he meant to rest the argument whether he was prepared for the government change, since the two-year term expired and in any he was not in control of the conference process.

BENNET: The understanding was that it was only going to be a two-year SNM administration, so the time was up at that point.

FADAL: The time was up, but it was not any two years, it was a tumultuous two years. They never had an opportunity to rule or SNM to do anything, it was just firefighting.

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: What he said, and rightly, he said, "I just kept the place together", and "I did not allow green lines to develop within Hargeisa or rest of Somaliland".

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: "I didn't allow it to split into two green lines. Hargesia could have had green lines north and south and he has that credit. He suffered, he was humiliated. At certain point they slandered him. They jacked his car while driving and made him to walk barefoot back to the presidency—. He comes from a very powerful clan, they want to fight. He comes from Habar Yunis which is one of the strongest clans. He never opted for that. Later on people respected him for that. He suffered as a President, yes, but he did not try to play clans against each other.

BENNET: When Egal came to the conference, this is something of an outsider, right?

FADAL: Yes.

BENNET: What was the impression of Egal's arrival and how did he present himself?

FADAL: Oh God, master politician, master politician. Egal has never been an SNM member and has never appreciated SNM. He even aired his—he was against it. In his writings, openly. As recently as when they were taking over. He was in Dubai, in Abu Dhabi. People believed that. He was always against SNM, he never liked it. But he arrived in Berbera— [interruption]

BENNET: Sorry, please continue.

FADAL: He arrived in Berbera, his home town. He did what was not expected from him, he supported Tuur as the President, openly. He said "It's unfair. He should have been allowed to rule properly" and he attacked the opposing side of SNM, which actually were expected to be his supporting side.

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: He attacked them. He vindicated Tuur. He said it was not—he was unfairly treated as a President. He had the right to rule. I know him, he's my friend, and he is an honest person. I mean he really played that tune which pacified 100% Tuur's clan and supporters.

BENNET: This is his art, right? This is his skill?

FADAL: *That is his skill. And then he has no opposition. Already he has half of the people supporting him, the Alanas (also known as "Red Flag" a group of prominent former SNM military commanders) and all that supporting him, so he has to pacify the other side. He is related to Tuur's side. I mean, he grew up among them, he is related to them. His mother is from that side. He has many connections in them. So he simply pacified—. That was the breaking the ice thing for him. He really made a smooth landing. From then on he is the statesman.*

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: *So he has his Berbera, the Berbera port is the strongest money source ever, in Somaliland. Always a source of funds and revenue.*

BENNET: And that is his clan's base of power, is that right?

FADAL: *His clan's base, at his disposal 100%.*

BENNET: So a lot of the initial, I think someone calls it the sheep wars, these clashes that Tuur has over the port during the initial time, this is not a problem for Egal—?

FADAL: *Oh no, he automatically owns it when he comes. The money is at his disposal, it is coming to him. Whoever is controlling it, it doesn't matter. Egal comes, it is there, it is his territory.*

BENNET: When he enters the conference—as far as the Tuur supporters are concerned—I mean Tuur had a lot of detractors as well from within the SNM conflicts, right? I mean in his early years. Then Egal, during his first administration when he is building his cabinet he appoints a lot of these individuals into his cabinet.

FADAL: *That's right.*

BENNET: How did that work, and what was—. What was the impression of people here when he did that? What was Tuur's response as well?

FADAL: *He accommodated the faction that was against Tuur, the Calan Cas.*

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: *So once he was the President, logically, sat back, recognizes that they made it difficult for Tuur to rule. They supported Egal and they adopted him against Tuur. The popular understanding was that, they have to adopt Egal on the hope that they can use him and then later on get rid of him. That's what many people said.*

Egal is another clever man. He adopted them because he wanted to have them inside his cabinet. But that angered the Garhadjis, Tuur's clan. They saw it as a betrayal, saw it as a slap in their face. Because what is underlying, why Tuur's group is not happy with that is not because Tuur has been removed, that is not the case. But there has been a formula of clan-power sharing that has been established within Borama, formalized in Borama. The Garhadjis lost on that because Tuur was the President. If a clan has the President then they had to give up and have to compromise for some of their seats. They did that already in Bali Gubadle. When SNM was being formed, because Tuur became the

President, his clan, Habar Yunis lost so many positions. When Tuur was removed they did not get any seats back. They belong to somebody else sitting there. So this was their grievance. They wanted accommodation on this issue. So that is one thing. But there is also another contention, which is the way legislative seats were divided among clans.

The power sharing formula was based on identity; it was not based on the size of population or geographic representation. It was based on that the Sheikh Isaaq patriarch had eight sons and these eight sons should almost have equitable share of the seats of the government. But that division encounters many problems in today's real world, especially when the population size is ignored.

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: *Like Habar Jaalo there is, they contain four of these and hence they claim four shares, more than the clans which are part of the—there are three major clans in Isaaq. Three major, major, major. It is Garhadjis, Awal and Habar Jaalo. These are the three major and they have to balance each other. In numbers they may be a little bit more but they have to balance. If you want the stability of this country they have to balance in some way.*

BENNET: Right.

FADAL: *Eventually the grievance from Garhadjis was not addressed and it evolved into an armed conflict.*

BENNET: Yes please.

FADAL: *That conflict in Hargeisa, the war started and became the Garhadjis against the whole government, the whole of Somaliland. It went on for two years with no clear winners, but with a lot of displacement and destruction, especially on the Garhadjis side. The only winning might have been Eal against the "Calan Cas" group.*

BENNET: From his cabinet members?

FADAL: *Yes, from his cabinet members.*

FADAL: *And he already succeeded to demobilize their militia that was absolutely a strong point for him. He succeeded, because he was the President, and he has the Guurti and the clan leaders on his side. So he demobilized their militias. He formed his army out of them and equipped it with clan-held heavy weapons.*

BENNET: So there was no consideration that they might be able to get some of these fighters back and raise—?

FADAL: *Egal consolidated his power during Garhadjis absence and therefore he needed to bring the Garhadjis back to square the circle. By distancing himself from the "Calan Cas", he gambled to have the Garhadjis on his side and it worked for him.*

BENNET: That was in '96 after the—or '97?

FADAL: *In '97.*

BENNET: That was the conclusion of the strife?

FADAL: *He made sure to complete his Hargeisa Conference and get elected as President, before he completed his reconciliation with the Garhajis. So he brought them in, and openly said, "Only now I am a President." – they supported him till his death.*

BENNET: After this, in '97, I believe it was the same conference actually, is when the constitution starts to be drafted.

FADAL: Yes.

BENNET: I know there are two different versions, the one that Egal supported was stronger on the executive.

FADAL: *That's right.*

BENNET: Can you just briefly—it doesn't need to be in too much detail, but briefly give me your impressions, or your impressions of the general public's feeling about this move for the constitution and how they viewed Egal's motives in this.

FADAL: *Yes, that was, first, let me also say that it is the legacy of Egal that is the whole constitutional process. It is his vision and his legacy, even today. He was a dictator, but he was a dictator who wanted to leave a legacy and seemingly a democratic legacy. So frankly, the steps Somaliland was taking from Borama all the way from the state building, the whole state formation process, there was nothing new for Egal. [interruption]*

It was kind of a project for him. He knew what he was doing. After 1997 Conference, he knew from then on he cannot actually call anymore a clan conference, it was going to be very cumbersome and difficult to organize.

So he has to move now to the constitutional process. He had experience with the constitutional process. He knew how to run political parties and election campaigning. He knew he would win if he went to elections. He prepared to already introduce this whole process.

This cabinet, at a certain point when he was introducing the constitutional stuff, was against it. So let me go back to the constitutional process. What he tried to do is form a constitution which was heavy on the presidential side, heavy on the executive side. But it was a general constitution, much better I guess than what we have now.

BENNET: Ok.

FADAL: *What we have now is a mishmash of two separate draft constitutions, one prepared by the Parliament and the other by a consultant*

BENNET: He was a Sudanese lawyer.

FADAL: *A Sudanese professional. Yes, he was a highly qualified professional. Actually the strength of this constitution all comes from that; it didn't come from the parliamentary one, it comes from that constitution. So it was simply the two—he*

was the President. He wanted to be a strong President. He wanted to have a free hand. But the parliament was also an institution with its own rights. There were political heavy weights in the parliament also. There was a deadlock.

To overcome the deadlock, Egal took two measures: One he has to remove the Speaker of the Parliament who was from Sool and he succeeded to do that and quell the opposition from the Parliament.

Secondly, he made sure his Guurti supporters controlled the process of reconciling the two drafts, who appointed committee to draft it and report to the 1997 Hargeisa Conference on time for Egal's re-election. He had all the strings. So he made sure it is not going to tie him in any way. So they put a lot of power on the presidential side. The Somaliland President is extremely powerful.

BENNET: What is the role—as I understand it there is a bit of an ambiguity for the role of the Guurti in civil society. You said also that you credited the Guurti with, partly with the civil society to kind of keep the country together in the early years. How as the role of the Guurti changed from those early years until now and what has been their role? How has it changed?

FADAL: *It actually changed, in the sense that the Guurti commanded the trust of the people. But that trust has been spent on forming the state and keeping the peace. The state has got a President and when the President happened to be Egal, who was what I call, when it comes to Somaliland, larger than life. He controlled everything including the Guurti. He was himself and elder and an expert on how to handle the traditional leaders. The Guurti House wielded formal power and authority. And they became close allies of the President.*

So the Guurti has evolved from having its authority through the people and the power and the trust of the people into getting formal authority from the constitution, and as an institution enshrined in the constitution. Now they are no longer neutral in their dealings—. For instance the test came during the Garhadjis conflict in 1995-6. They tried to mediate, they were considered to part of the government, which was fighting with Garhadjis, and therefore were not able to intervene meaningfully. So from then on they don't have that moral authority to be neutral, and to call the two clans together. They became part of the state system.

BENNET: So they're partisan now.

FADAL: *Yes, they're partisan, formally partisan. So they cannot—as a house they have a mandate of taking care of the peace and security. They try to mediate different conflict areas, but they are often no longer considered non-partisan party.*

BENNET: So that happened as early as '97?

FADAL: *As early as '97, it happened—it only recently, it often happens. So their role, now honestly, they have a very ambivalent role and that role needs to be revisited. That is my opinion. They have to be useful, that role has to be revisited. Either they are elected and become accountable to the people like the House of Representatives. If they are not going to be elected their powers have to be confined to the traditional religious, traditional and peace-building roles. That's already enough. They don't have to play this role of blocking or being more powerful than an elected house. They are in a very awkward position. The whole*

image of the Guurti as elders who are very knowledgeable of tradition, culture and religious affairs is changing now. But now many of them are younger people who inherited their father's or uncle's positions.

The Guurti issue is considered for many as a serious challenge which Somaliland is facing. My group, the Independent Scholars Group, sees it as a growing challenge, which needs to be addressed. Whether the members are selected or elected is a question.

BENNET: It is more representative of the difference in numbers rather than—.

BENNET: What years were you—I'm sorry, I don't want to take up too much of your time but maybe we can just—briefly—what years were you Minister of Planning?

FADAL: *That was 2001-2002.*

BENNET: So the end of Egal's—.

FADAL: *Practically the end. Just before Egal died, I resigned but I was around. I think about three, four months before he—.*

BENNET: I'd love to hear a little bit about that time in respect to looking specifically at the challenge of setting up the first elections. I know that Somaliland appoints the NEC, the Electoral Commission.

FADAL: Yes.

BENNET: Then has this enormous challenge in rapid succession, local elections and then a presidential election that is unbelievably close and then the parliamentary elections two years after that. Perhaps you could talk briefly about some of those challenges? Specifically how the country was able to come through such a difficult time of having that very close election but not resorting to violence.

FADAL: *Yes. The period before—Egal succeeded to put the constitution idea through; that was a Herculean task, absolutely. He sold it, he sugarcoated it with recognition. Otherwise it was an extremely divisive thing because it touched the fundamental disagreements among Somaliland clans and society of power sharing – whether through identity or through the ballot box or a mixture of it?*

Suleiman Gall and a group of Sultans were the major opposition. Because they wanted the power also. They formed their own circle, what you call the traditional council and they have all these powerful names of sultans from different clans. A.

BENNET: At the time what was his position?

FADAL: *Just a big opposition man. Actually he ran with Egal in 1997 and he won quite a number. He won 90-something votes. But Egal defeated him but he had a power base, which is multi-clan. Suleiman was a galvanizing force of different opposition groups against Egal, who were worried, if Egal establishes political parties and he becomes the President then he will become a dictator forever. The opposition as a force melted away after his death.*

BENNET: But there was still a momentum to carry out the agenda, of moving forward.

-
- FADAL: *There was definitely a momentum, but the momentum was kind of more of people who had no fear against anybody, power, and no dominant force to be worried about. So nobody was against going to elections.*
- BENNET: It didn't die with him, which was interesting since he was the one pushing it.
- FADAL: *Actually it got energized because he died. Some people were opposed, opposed the party. Look he initiated it all, he established the first party. And Silanyo, Suleiman and many others were claiming you'd better dismantle it because you started it before anybody else and you have undue advantage. He was the maestro always, but without him, everybody's parties, (Ahmed M. Mahamoud) Silanyo is the President. He was late for establishing his own party and the deadline had to be extended for some more time, for him, Suleiman, and even SNM who refused to register their own parties. Both Silanyo and Suleiman Adan eventually did register Kulmiye and ASAD respectively, but SNM never register itself.*
- BENNET: Interesting. So that when this presidential election does happen, as a civil society member at this point, right, because in 2003 you were out of government, what were your observations of the campaign. You had been outside the country, this was the country's first real campaign in a—?
- FADAL: *Actually I was, at the time outside the country, but was very closely following. I was in Sudan when the election was happening, but I came back every three months, for R&R; my family was still here. The outcome was also good because a non-Isaaq was elected, which was quite a surprise to many outsiders.*
- BENNET: Riyaale, yeah.
- FADAL: *It is a good feeling, Somaliland is not only an Isaaq place, look what Isaaq can do and he was good because he opted for the election.*
- Some people, some of his cabinet and all these people wanted him not to push for the elections, but to seek extension through the Guurti. But he was courageous enough to go for the elections, for the democratic process. The process made Somaliland people proud to go through these difficult steps, moving on to the democratic process. There was a euphoric hope that there would be recognition immediately after—after each election people thought that they will be recognized by the international community. Every campaign, every election has that content. Be good, do good, keep the peace, recognition is around the corner.*
- What shall I say, other than that it also created the whole atmosphere of not being divided in terms of clans but different clans are campaigning together in the same party.*
- BENNET: Because of the parties?
- FADAL: *Because of the parties, yes.*
- BENNET: There is this incredibly close result. What was your impression of the result?

FADAL: Oh my God, that was very dangerous. But honestly I was convinced no fighting would happen. I mean, the people were not ready to fight over who wins. This time there might be.

BENNET: In 2010?

FADAL: Yes. But that time the mood of the people, have even convinced Silanyo not to challenge the election but to concede. He has the credit, that's why, people respect him for that also.

BENNET: In 2005 with the parliamentary elections there is this reassertion it seems of the traditional—of the clan system, right?

FADAL: Yes.

BENNET: To a certain extent it seems to carry over, up to now in the politics. Just as we conclude here maybe you could reflect a little bit about that sort of tension between the clan-based traditional system and democracy. If you have any thoughts about this incredibly tense time in September 2009 in the lead up to—in the extension of the election and then this current result.

FADAL: Yes, this is a very interesting topic. The clan, I usually used to say that we have a modern structure but with overlay of the clan, whichever comes inside or outside, I don't remember, but it always the two things coming together, working together, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. The clan system has evolved in the millennium for a stateless society, and has performed what the state performs for a stateless society. Sometimes it competes with the state and it undermines the institutions of the state. But in difficult times it becomes also a blessing. You can easily see why is it so resilient? If you want to mobilize these people the easiest way for anybody, for a leader, for good or for bad, you can mobilize them through the clan. All you need is to go and call them, in auspices of the clan. So this is still the most effective organizational method used by politicians.

So with democracy I think it goes better, it goes better with democracy than with a dictatorship, because with democracy, there is a process of dialogue and consensus building. The Somali clan system basically accommodates dialogue, and consensus building. And democracy is consensus, so I think they go together very well in the democratic sense.

Where it hampers is the state institutional building, because the clan is an institution. So the society is ambivalent about its allegiance. The individual, the state employees have this ambivalence, the dual loyalty to the clan and to the state. One time the clan has the upper hand, and another time the state has the upper hand, but it depends on how much the state can overtake, how much the state can guarantee the security, the assurance of people's lives. The more the state can guarantee that, the less that people need to rely on the clan. Clan is functional institution for the people; it for instance ensures their security. Can the state do that?

The way the two work together could very well be seen in the Hargeisa gold and street exchange market. The gold and cash displayed in the street stall are not there only there through the protection of the police force; it is rather the two systems working together. The police, are like the fire fighters, but people are also there because of peace and security balance between local clans.

The thief is not an individual, the thief is a clan person and the whole clan is responsible for the atrocities or the theft or the injury that an individual perpetrates. The clan is responsible for that, whether in the urban, the rural area, even in the capital Hargeisa. The important thing is the state gradually gets stronger. The state will always need—it is a social, economic thing. The nomads, wherever they are in the world they have got these genealogies and the clans. It is a nomadic thing. But we know at a certain point, Siad Barre became a very strong state. He built a very, very strong state and he succeeded to minimize the clan rule to a certain point. Yes, it was latent because he himself cannot free himself of the clan use. People see him using the clan, trying to—. But he honestly succeeded to constrict the role of the people's dependence on the clan. He was able to—if the state is able, if somebody runs into the clan territory, the state is able to catch that person without involving the clan, with the police force and bring that person to court, then it can defeat the clan.

In democratic elections clan are involved. But I really give credit to the Somaliland people and I see that as maturity that with such serious competition they went through it peacefully -- In Somalia elections never happened without bloodshed. Recent Parliamentary elections were kind of a different thing. In the Somalia elections, the candidates used to be imposed on them by the party, now the candidates could come from the clan itself. So it becomes internalized. I would say that democracy is being internalized within the traditional structures.

BENNET: That's interesting. Are you bullish on Somaliland's prospects given this? I mean are you optimistic?

FADAL: *Yes, I'm very optimistic, yes, because, you see what I believe, it is a working system. I know where it started, from 1991, 1992, and I can see that. I can see the trajectory that it has taken and it is always like that. It might not be that steep but it is always like that. I don't see any institution which has regressed. It is going forward.*

Let me give you an example. We're talking about elections, how was the first parliament chosen in 1994 was so clumsy and chaotic. It had no system. There was only a group of elders who were vetting the candidates, primarily not to be a serious opposition to Egal so they were removing that, but also had to have the support and respect of his clan.

The next selection was a little bit more formal. It was after the conference of 1997 and it was more formal. We knew the clan was more involved and the person had to bring his traditional leaders to be taken in. The third cycle was election of 2005. For me that was continuous improvement. Similarly all institutions of state are going through the same process of development.

I believe the resources of this country are abundant, and Somaliland has never utilized the resources other than the grass for the livestock. They are not taking the fish. I mean livestock is the only thing that they use and the livestock rearing is not even scientific, it is just using the grass, which is diminishing. The wealth of Somaliland has oil, it has minerals, it has sea, and it is situated in the center of the world trade routes. There is no reason why Somaliland should be actually poor; it only needs international investment. We have to build a climate for investment. People are entrepreneurs, they know how to live and how to survive. If we build the right government system, to consolidate the democratization

process. To consolidate, Somaliland institutions need a few more hurdles to cross, we need to cross the multi-party system problem first. The three parties are becoming a political monopoly.

BENNET: It's the same guys.

FADAL: *The same guys, the same people and empty shells, called parties. Somaliland can still prosper without recognition. Recognition is a formal thing. What matters is the international community opens up for investments. I know so many states that are prosperous have never been recognized and it doesn't really matter.*

BENNET: Is there anything that I've left out that you'd like to add at this point?

FADAL: *Not exactly, you actually covered, we really covered most of the things. If nothing else I would add in terms of where Somaliland is heading, yes, there is a threat from what is happening in the south in Mogadishu.*

BENNET: Thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.

FADAL: *Thank you too.*