

“SOMALILAND”: PART AND PARCEL OF SOMALIA

A Response to Dr. J. Peter Pham

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Tuesday, May 23, 2006

In my part of Somalia, which Dr. Pham calls “Somaliland”, we have a saying—an expression to dispel disbelief—“**Mana waalan mise Cadan baa laga heesayaa?**”. Roughly translated, it means: “Am I going crazy or am I hearing singing in Aden¹?” It is frequently heard as a reflection when a sudden connection appears between two unlikely things—a person and something who are supposed to have a ‘disconnect’—a state of emotional isolation and disinterest that may be voluntary or involuntary, according to one dictionary definition of the word. In other words, the Somali expression is used as an exclamation when something one least expected happens. Dr. Pham’s article, “Somalia facing the Reality”, in hiiraan.com/op/2006/may, raises the same question in most Somali minds. That is despite the advent of globalization and the knowledge that the world is so much smaller than it was ten years ago, in terms of communications, and in this information age. I bet Dr. Pham, on his part, has only come to know very recently about Somalia, and particularly, “Somaliland”, when he has only been inspired to write about the subject—by inertia from some quarters rather than by independent choice! Dr. Pham starts his article with the following promotion of “Somaliland”:

“... a country within the greater Middle East ambit that has successfully made the transition to electoral democracy with multiparty municipal, presidential, and, most recently, parliamentary polls. Moreover, imagine that despite virtually all of its citizens being Sunni Muslims, the country's national elections commission designates a progressive, foreign-based Christian non-governmental organization to coordinate the international monitoring of its parliamentary elections.”

Perhaps, as a ploy, to appeal to the Christian faith and the democratic character of the people of the United States and of the West, Dr. Pham starts his demagogic piece by his description of “Somaliland” as in the quotation above. Surely, the intention is immediately transparent. He is fishing for the xenophobic, and particularly, the Islamophobic, tendencies, if at least, of a minority, of the people of the West, who may harbor such feelings. And, for that matter, **he lies**. Somalia, although a member of the Arab League, is an African country. At least, I never heard Somalia being placed within the ambit of the Middle East. For the purpose of deception, though, he creates a new description—the “Greater Middle East”. I may already conclude that this is a cheap shot to dismember Somalia, if not a divisive insult to humanity at all levels. And, so what! **If a Christian non-governmental organization monitored** the mock election the leadership in Hargeisa had staged in only a small part of the region? That I call a piece of demagoguery that only a swindler can use to pull a fast one on those he considers gullible. I do not believe that the world is as gullible as Dr. Pham thinks of it.

And yet, he is promoting the secession of “Somaliland”, which, to the majority of the people of the Somali Republic, means a dismemberment of their beloved country—

including a significant proportion of our people of the North. If an independent thinker, or a real professional, he would have first studied the matter qualitatively at least, if not quantitatively, by way of social research, and show something for his conclusion. In the lack of any of the sort, I was reminded of the power of the above mentioned Somali expression—and I internalized its meaning in a way in which I never did before. To dispel my exclamation, I read, and read, and read the article—again, and again, and again—to see the connection between my part of Somalia and Dr. Pham’s interests in life. I could not, honestly, fathom why Dr. Pham would remotely be interested in Somalia! Is he another pseudo expert on Somalia? If he is, it is not surprising at all! We have already had some foreigners in this respect. I called them the foreign pseudos elsewhere². John Drysdale and Professor I. M. Lewis of the UK; Matt Bryden of the ICG, perhaps a national of the US; and Professor Iqbal Daood Jhazbhay of South Africa have all been somehow influenced to participate in the dismemberment of my country. Speaking of motives, as to why these individuals have made it incumbent upon themselves to help dismember the Somali Republic, there could have been a number of reasons.

They could have invariably been approached by the corrupt leadership of “Somaliland” or representatives thereof, which is prepared to spend a lot of US dollars to lure anyone to help them defend an indefensible cause! And it will be a remiss, on my part, if I pass here without underlining the exorbitant amounts of dollars forgone for the poor population of Somalia, and particularly “Somaliland”. This money—the taxes they collect from the poor masses in the name of democracy—could have been used for health services, for education, for placing people in jobs and for other social and economic goods. In some of the cases of some of these stray academicians, there have also been rumors, that there were matters of the heart involved. In other cases, it has been a colonial nostalgia, as it may have been in the case of John Drysdale and Professor I. M. Lewis, which I discussed elsewhere³. Studied a little more, one would conclude, I am sure, that Dr. Pham’s relationship with Somalia—hence, “Somaliland”—is just one of those or something superficially similar.

The other question is: why is it Dr. Pham, this time around? Why was he chosen to promote “Somaliland”? Is it because he simply can write, as indicated by his extensive CV? Is it because, since he knows a little about, for example, Liberia, as he claims, he can easily transfer that “understanding” of that country, Liberia, in Africa to another on the other side of the continent, Somalia, or for that matter, any other country in the continent? Is it just about the “F” and “S” words which is the only connection between Somalia and Liberia—both “Failed States”—that since he knows one thing of the one failed State, he knows every thing about all failed States? But, can he see that, despite the fact that the people, in Liberia, had suffered the atrocities inflicted by Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor, and despite the label, at some point, of “failed State”, Liberia remains intact under one nation? No denying here that Somalis from all parts of the country had suffered the Barre Regime’s atrocities. Or, is it just because he read the International Republican Institute’s (TRI) Report, which he links to his article, he has become an authority overnight on the subject of Somalia, and particularly on my region of the country, which he calls “Somaliland”?

I am raising these questions because I do not think that the good doctor woke up one morning to suddenly write about Somalia. I am certain he has been inspired. Hence, apart from regurgitating a little of what he read here and there, and/or recycling the same old platitudes, tirelessly and sickeningly, argued by the secessionists, over the last fifteen years, Dr. Pham does not offer any new substance to the debate. It does not look like he is very well studied in the subject matter or in the internal affairs of Somalia, either. He is just repeating the same old banal arguments of those wedded to a “Somaliland” and their foreign pseuds, to an extent you would think he was spoon-fed to the content of his article. Hence, he is **NOT** original and is, therefore, **NOT** credible. Surely, that is not expertise, nor is it an account worthy of regarding as what he describes as a “World Defense Review”.

He calls himself a Columnist on this area. Even then, he has to show more than a biased, if cursory, desk study for his column—at least an emotional attachment to the beast he calls “Somaliland”, if not an a cogent analysis to swerve minds! Otherwise, what, does he think, makes him the expert he claims to be, here? He does not even seem to be aware of the US influence in the region he is writing about! He does not—could not in a trillion years. But, neither has he presented a convincing argument, even if borrowed from the existing myths for the case. He simply, and apparently, does not even care to go that far!

Dr. Pham does not have anything to show for his blatant and conspicuous effort at dismembering Somalia. I would not be surprised, if, at least, he was attached to Somalia, **even** by marriage, like some of the other foreign pseuds calling for the secession of “Somaliland”. The question is: how is Dr. Pham related to Somalia? Why does one have to take his word for what he is preaching in his article? Therefore, is he credible enough to set the parameters of foreign policy for the US and other countries of the West, about a place so remote **to him**—by culture, religion, colonial ties, or, even, political relations—as a person, probably of immigrant origins from as wretched a country in Southeast Asia as is Somalia? What is the connection? Or, is it the wretchedness of his background that connects him to Somalia, by way of mercy killing? I say: not even the Tsunami that hit the Somali coast—together with, and unfortunately more so, many countries facing the Indian Ocean—connect him to Somalia!

I should not, therefore, lengthen my debate with a man who is neither honest enough, even to himself, nor conversant, on a subject so strange to him, and so peculiar to his past, that he can hardly say anything more than a few hearsays about it. If, however, one is interested in the political and legal argument against the case for “Somaliland”, one might wish to read my articles on the subject, the latest of which are “The Somaliland Mythology Indicted⁴” currently posted in Hiiran.com, also earlier in WardheerNews.com, and the “Somaliland⁵”: The Mythology Dispelled” in WardheerNews.com. One will find the URLs in the end notes. Funnily enough, as a preamble for his infamous argument or as a psychological self-justification for his faulty rationale, he writes:

“The point is, however, that I am not hallucinating – much less doing so under the influence of mildly narcotic qat – but summarizing the largely unheralded developments over the course of the last few years in Somaliland, a self-

declared republic in the northwestern region of the wreckage that is still labeled "Somalia" on most maps despite not having any of the recognizable accoutrements of statehood since at least 1991."

No, Dr. Pham is not hallucinating, as he wonders here, but he is, **indeed**, writing this baloney! And, it is only perfect that he is, himself, wondering why he is doing so—right there, in his own statement! I am not surprised by his mentioning of Qat, a substance generally consumed in Somalia, and most traditionally in “Somaliland”. Perhaps he wishes to subliminally intimate that he knows something special about “Somaliland”—therefore, suggesting a depth of knowledge about the culture of the people. That makes me conclude that he has tried the substance, which is offered to anyone which the Hargeisa leadership gets in touch with. Even then, to a Somali, like me, who comes from the place he calls “Somaliland”; it is not strange to chew Qat. However, his spelling of the word “Qat”, together with his tenet of the argument, give me another clue. For a foreigner to spell the word with the “Q” and NOT the “K”, as the western world knows it, is an evidence that he has been inspired by Somalis—at a minimum—and, probably, by some with the secessionist orientation, if not the very representatives of the secessionist leadership itself.

I am sure the United States is capable of considering and making its decisions on the question of Somalia, given its interests in that country, and the region of the world surrounding it, without ever considering the input from the likes of Dr. Pham. Does not the leadership in Hargeisa know that, if the US was to listen to the myth propagation from someone as sinisterly uninformed as Dr. Pham presents himself, the US would have already accepted their demands a long time ago? Again, what is so new that the good doctor presents here? Is it his publications? Is it that his face is different from that of the Somalis, the few Caucasians, or the two lost African professors—Iqbal Jhazbhay and Ali Mizrui—who have been defending the secession? Or, is the leadership in Hargeisa so desperate that, in their new gimmicks, they are claiming to have defendants from all the races of the international community? Never mind the fact that their count remains less than seven charlatans.

One hardly can, therefore, buy Dr. Pham’s defense of the secession under the umbrella of what he calls the “World Defense Review”, implying strategy, by extension, for the United States. Yes, he writes in ‘defense’ of the secession of “Somaliland”, for some reason unbeknown to me. I cannot believe he is even concerned about the “World Defense Review” or his column this time around. Generally speaking, he sounds more like another naïve academician than he is an independent expert. I do not think he even expects anyone to believe him, let alone a rebuttal. It is just that: **“Waan arkaa wuxu in ay subxaanyo tahay eh, sankaygaan in uu halaq-mareen noqdo uga baqay⁶”**. I will not translate this one; almost, sure that Dr. Pham has his own translators, from the right quarters.

¹ A Port City of the Yemen, across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia.

² See Hiran, Abdalla A. “The TFG and Politics of Disintegration in Post Embagathi Somalia”, http://www.wardheernews.com/Articles_06/march-06/21_Somali_distegration.AHiran.html

³ See Hiran, Abdalla A. “The Nostalgia of a Former British Colonial Officer”, <http://www.dhahar.com/articles/nostalgia.html>

⁴ Hiran, A. Abdalla, see: http://www.hiiraan.com/op/2006/may/Abdalla_A_Hiran070506.aspx

⁵ See: [www.wardheernews.com/Articles_06/may_06/09_Somaliland.Mythology.dispelled\(II\)_AHiran.html](http://www.wardheernews.com/Articles_06/may_06/09_Somaliland.Mythology.dispelled(II)_AHiran.html)

⁶ A quotation borrowed from Egal Shiidaad, the character of a Somali legend.