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## The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Region of Somalia From 1947 to 1960 (Independence)

by  
Mohamed H. Mukhtar

Somalia has enjoyed a unique role in the history of African nationalism. As the only country in Africa whose population is virtually homogeneous, most speak a common language, all are Muslims and claim to be related to a common (or several common) distant ancestors. One might therefore expect that its independence movement would have been more unified than those of other African territories where tribal and regional differences came to be reflected in political party groupings after World War II. Also Somalia was the only country to be partitioned several times: once at the end of the 19th century during the scramble for Africa and again in the 1940's following the break-up of the Italian East African Empire. This would seem to have been another factor that unified Somalis in a sense of common nationalism.

However, the drive for Somali independence gave rise to not just one but several political parties. Were these parties based on regional or "tribal" differences of a particular Somali sort? Did they have different views of Somali nationalism and self-government? These questions are difficult to answer, not only because source materials are limited but also because one Somali party, the Somali Youth League (SYL), came to dominate the political scene in the 1950's and was the majority party at the time of Somali independence in 1960. As a result of the SYL's success most of the literature on Somali nationalism has focused on its organization, its leaders and its political platform.<sup>1</sup> Scholars who have written on Somali parties in the pre-independence period have mentioned the existence of other parties and briefly described them<sup>2</sup> but very little is known of their leadership, their supporters, and their goals.

This article examines the emergence and history of one of these other parties the (HDMS),<sup>3</sup> which was the most important opposition party to the dominant SYL through most of the 1950's in the trust territory of Somaliland, in the 1960's after independence and unification, and can be considered an important political movement in itself. Very little has been written on the HDMS, in part because those who come in second rarely attract much scholarly attention. Hence the importance of examining the role of the HDMS in this chapter of Somali political development.

### Background

When the U.N. General Assembly adopted its Resolution 289 on November 21, 1949 placing Italian Somaliland under the international trusteeship system with Italy as the administering authority, it ended a period of great agitation among Somali political parties and began an era in which various parties and cliques jockeyed for power under the new trusteeship government. A little background is necessary to understand both the attitude of the different groups toward the return of Italian rule and the role of the colonial powers in supporting certain Somali factions as a way of furthering their interests.

Between 1946 and 1948 the British Military Administration (BMA)<sup>4</sup> in Somalia supported the SYL<sup>5</sup> and gave it valuable assistance.<sup>6</sup> One of the ways it did this was by providing SYL members with jobs and administrative experience. The majority of Somalis who were employed in the BMA, whether in military service or civilian administration, came from SYL. The Four Power Commission<sup>7</sup> which was sent to investigate the political conditions of former Italian colonies stated in its reports: "the SYL is active and aggressive . . . the League abuses the predominance of its members in technical and secondary posts in the administration by exerting pressure on its rivals through the Administration. The League is accused of terrorism and other methods having nothing in common with normal democratic principles. The League adopts large measures of oral and written propaganda, and does not permit other parties and organizations to do the same, using threats and other measures . . ."8 The party's identification with government was so close that by 1948 an SYL card was practically a prerequisite to government employment.<sup>9</sup>

In the course of the commission's hearing on parties and of representatives of the people, it became clear that the League was considered a state within a state.<sup>10</sup> Many of those interviewed expressed fear of the Somali Youth League, and its many members in the police and Gendarmerie were said to bring pressure on its enemies (the other parties and organizations) and even to bring about their arrest.<sup>11</sup> The FPC report says: "certain people interviewed by the commission also accused the League of instigating the riots of Oct. 1947<sup>12</sup> and Jan. 1948<sup>13</sup> and of being supported by the British Administration . . . the League was also accused by other parties of interfering with their activities, removing their badges and tearing down their flags . . ."14

The BMA policy of favoring SYL members as employees naturally created antagonism among members of other political parties and factions. As early as 1941-43 when the BMA formed the Somali

Gendarmerie first to disarm the population of the ex-Italian Somaliland and then to maintain general order, they tended to recruit English-speaking Somalis, many of whom were members of the Darood clan. This naturally produced resentment among Italian-speaking Somalis, particularly among former members of "Banda", the militia of ex Italian Somaliland, and those who had served in the Italian Civil Administration. After the formation of parties this policy seems to have been continued and, when the BMA supported the establishment of SYL branches in the inter-river region, southern tribesmen naturally viewed the party as a "northern" organization.

#### The Emergence of Hizbia Dighil Mirifle (HDM)

Before 1947 the Somali organization had limited political objectives, and were principally concerned with cultural and social questions. Only when the arrival of the Four Power Commission was imminent did parties and organizations begin to formulate more explicit economic and political demands. The HDM constituted on March 26, 1947 (preceding SYL which became a political organization from April 1, 1947). At that time the HDM claimed a membership of 60,871 and 300,000 supporters. The party aimed at practical measures for improving the general welfare of the country, which included the encouragement of agriculture and trade, raising the standard of education and guaranteeing the peace. Its emergence can also be understood as a reaction to the appearance of the SYL on the scene, which antagonized the local people, though under the guise of nationalism.<sup>15</sup>

To Hizbia the country of Somaliland was divided into two major regions: north of the Shabelle river and south of it, speaking two noticeably different dialects "Maai" in the south, "Mahaatiri" in the north. The people of the southern portion identify themselves as Reewin/Rahanweyn, a group made up of the Dighil and Mirifle clan confederations, the two confederations into which the southern people of Somalia are divided. They practice mixed farming and pastoralism. Thus there are important economic, cultural, and linguistic differences between the southern population and the predominantly nomadic Somalis of the north.

Hizbia's program was based on the interests of Dighil and Mirifle first, in other words regional rather than national. Because of the remarkable expansion of the northern tribes supported by the European colonial powers, HDM thought regionalism could best achieve a better life for all Somalis. In the Four Power Commission report the Hizbia said of their area of influence: "we live in that part of Italian Somaliland which is more comfortable and fruitful than the rest,

and we can produce all sorts of food in this place such as maize and bananas".<sup>16</sup> The combination of local pride and concern for fair representation was well expressed in the testimony of Sheikh Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamad (Bogodi) the founder of Hizbia to the Commission: "My people are those who behave themselves better than others. We always prevent other people from making trouble or robbing".<sup>17</sup> About conditions in our country, I wish to request three things, first we wish to have peace and security and secondly we want the country in which we live to always be regarded as belonging to us, and if the government who live with us wish anything from us we want it to be discussed with us. The other people who are not Dighil and Mirifle people think they may live and stay with us, but we want them behind us recognizing the land as belonging to us and not to them."<sup>18</sup>

The Hizbia Dighil Mirifle initially supported the Somalia conference,<sup>19</sup> but soon denounced it and requested the Trusteeship of any government chosen by the Four Powers except Ethiopia or South Africa. Though we cannot exclude Hizbia from the pro-Italian tendency, it never advocated the return of the Italians.

#### The Trusteeship Administration

During the first stages of the transfer of political authority to the Italian Trusteeship in 1950, the BMA intentionally adopted a policy of moving those Somali employees who originally came from northern tribes (e.g. Issak, or Darood) to Kenya and to British Somaliland. They claimed to be doing this to ensure the security of the employees and of the region. But their actions only aggravated mistrust between northern and southern Somalis and lent credence to the suspicion of many Southerners that the British had deliberately favored Northerners during the BMA. Many other members of the administration's Civilian and Military staffs began to resign their positions at the start of the Italian Trusteeship because of the general insecurity.<sup>20</sup> It was in this climate of mutual suspicion that individual and group confrontations occurred.

On March 6, 1950, some members of the Somalia Conference party attacked two prominent members of the SYL,<sup>21</sup> Haji Musa Bogor and Haji Diirre Hirsi, for pursuing the interests of the Darood clan before those of the Somali nation. The Somalia Conference members were of the Hawiya clan.

On the eve of AFIS administration, the First Chief Administrator, Giovanni Fornari (1950-1953), organized ceremonies to greet prominent Somali political, religious, and tribal personalities. While the two SYL Leaders named above did not attend the ceremonies for party leaders on April 15, 1950, they did lead their delegation to the tribal celebrations two days later. "His Excellency The Administrator

received the tribal chiefs, the city council and other notable figures . . . Sharif Ali Zeno, . . . Herzi Farah, . . . Haji Muse Bogor, . . . Haji Dirie Hersi".<sup>22</sup> This may mean that the party (SYL) was not in a position to welcome the Italian return, which it had advocated since its foundation, and had submitted to both the Four Power Conference and the United Nations. It is probable that the Darood elements in the party feared they might lose what they had gained under the British.

#### Baidoa Incident, April 17, 1950

The roots of this incident go back to the policies of the BMA which we outlined above. Baidoa is situated in the heart of the inter-river region of Southern Somalia; and considered its capital, its geographic location as the center of the region helped it to remain far from northern influence. The socio-economic life of this region is quite different from the north. However, as we have already pointed out, to assume that these cultural/regional differences can serve as the main explanation for the hostilities which broke out in Baidoa overlooks the influence of Colonial policies and practices in this region, and also the tensions and insecurities that prevailed at the time of the transfer to the Italian Administration.

On April 17th, there was a clash between Northerners and Southerners in which three Southerners and two Northerners were killed, and many others injured. The new Italian Administrations arrested many people but the confrontation continued, and on April 23rd the authorities reported that casualties were occurring in a series of incidents throughout the city of Baidoa. Some sixty families were forced to flee to Mogadishu for safety.<sup>23</sup>

SYL party headquarters interpreted the events in Baidoa as an attack by members of the HDM party on SYL partisans in cooperation with the Italian Authorities. In fact, correspondence and petitions from SYL representatives make it clear that they believed that the Italian Administration was seeking to close certain SYL branches and trying to coerce others to change to HDM membership.<sup>24</sup> A massive investigation by both the Italian authorities and representatives of the United Nations Advisory Council led to a final settlement of the case on January 27, 1951.

It appears that the SYL used the Baidoa incident to gain publicity for itself and to pressure the Italian authorities to regard the party more favorably. Had the party sought only to defend the interests of the sixty threatened families and to secure the return of their property and possessions, it could have done so through customary legal procedures. Instead, they referred the problem to the Italian authorities, whom they already mistrusted, and saw to it that the Baidoa "massacre" and the

Baidoa "refugees" were displayed prominently in the local and international press. While representatives of the SYL complained publicly that they were being persecuted in the South, the reality was that the SYL had more branches in the inter-river area than any other party, with more than 80% of all SYL branches being concentrated in this region.<sup>25</sup> In fact, party organization was so effective in the South that the British provincial commissioner of Upper Juba reported on March 13, 1950 (scarcely a month before the Baidoa incident): "one must pay tribute to the amazing discipline of the SYL members and to the efficiency of their organization whereby the party line as decided in Mogadishu was communicated to the outlying branches and implicitly obeyed."<sup>26</sup>

The implication of the foregoing is that the Baidoa Incident cannot be automatically interpreted as an expression of southern hostility toward the SYL as a whole, as part of a plot by HDM members to injure SYL partisans. Clearly there were particular local reasons for the incident, otherwise why did only sixty families flee to Mogadishu? And the SYL public charge that the Italian authorities had somehow collaborated in instigating the attacks on the SYL members in Baidoa also has little evidence to support it. Had it not been for the vigorous intervention of Italian officials probably more Northerners would have been killed.

#### Party Formation in the Early Trusteeship Period

The problem which Italy faced at the beginning of its administration clearly influenced policy in later years. Whether or not she opposed the influence of the SYL in the early days of Trusteeship--and the evidence on this is ambiguous, as we saw in our discussion on the Baidoa incident--it is apparent that by the mid-1950's the Italian government had achieved a rapprochement with the SYL. At the same time, during the years 1951-53, the SYL appears to have softened its attitude toward Italian authority and even established a positive working relationship with it. How can we account for this seemingly dramatic reversal of SYL policies, from an uncompromising anti-colonial, anti-Italian stance to a friendly working alliance with the Italian governments? Was the new pro-Italian policy of the SYL simply political? Or did it reflect a new perception that the Italian Trusteeship government was committed to goals shared by the SYL, and what was the effect of the new cooperative attitude with Italy on first the proliferation of parties--and later their eventual disappearance during the Trusteeship period?

It could be argued that the policy of rapprochement with Italy was the only way SYL leaders perceived they could maintain the party's

dominant position in the country. Having seen how the support of the BMA had contributed to their influence in the 1940's, SYL leaders might have recognized that Italian support for another party or political faction could easily undermine the SYL position. On the other hand, if the SYL genuinely represented the sentiments and aspiration of the majority of the Somali people, then it is difficult to see how compromise with the Italian authorities could have added significantly either to their prestige or influence in the country. Ironically it was at this same time that the HDM party, which is often seen as the most pro-Italian organization in the period of party formation, became the leading opposition to the SYL and to the Italian Trusteeship', as the numerous other parties began to dissolve. A report of the U.N. Advisory Council commenting on HDM sentiments stated: "The Administration had interfered in the operation of the party, and stated that ... they originally favored the administering authority to promote the progress of the territory towards independence."<sup>27</sup> The council however, found considerable cooperation between the leaders of SYL and the Administration pointed out in the same report "The party has taken a more conciliatory attitude towards the Trusteeship Administration, and is less concerned with the past. . ." <sup>28</sup>

The relationship of the SYL and HDM to the Italian government and to each other is reflected in the results of the various local and territorial elections that were held to promote Somali self government during the Trusteeship years. In the early days of the Trusteeship, Somali representation was provided through a series of territorial, residency and municipal councils established by the administering authority.

#### Municipal Elections, March 1954

By March 1954 when the first municipal elections based on direct male suffrage were held, there were more than 20 parties competing for 281 seats on municipal councils in over 35 municipalities. The HDM won 57 seats in 15 municipalities, coming second to the SYL which won 141 seats. (The SYL won absolute majorities in 15 municipalities and shared seats in the remaining 20). Thus, parties which won seats were as follows:

<u>Party</u>	<u>Seats</u>
SYL	141
HDM	57
SAU	28
SPL	22
SNU	9

Gruppo Shidle	8
BUC	5
SPU	4
Palama	3
Abgalia	3
Ancora	1

Although the census figures on the basis of which the seats were apportioned were probably inaccurate, the tribal or regional appeal of all the parties was apparent. The HDM won virtually all its support in the inter-river municipalities, while the SYL won the majority of its supporters from the northern regions; the SPL was an exclusively Osman Mahmud tribe party;<sup>29</sup> the SAU was a confederation of the Eir, Habrgedir and Murusade tribes, and the SNU of Galja'al and Hawadle tribes to name only those that won the most seats. Ironically, most of these "tribal" parties took very nationalistic names, while the HDM (Hisbia Dighil Mirifle)--with the most particularistic name--really represented a confederation of clans and tribes that was more regionally and culturally distinctive than tribally so.<sup>30</sup>

The Dighil and Mirifle groups which the party presumably represented were not tribes in the strict sense like Osman Mahmud, Hawadle, Abgaal, Habargeder etc., they were composed rather of the many Somali peoples who inhabit the inter-river region, who spoke a common dialect (Maai) and who generally believed that Dighil and Mirifle were brothers, sons of Mahamed "Reewin", who introduced into the region the communal and confederacy traditions which established the common interests they sought to defend. It is noteworthy that "Abtirsiinyo" disappears the further south you go in Somalia, and weakens as a linkage factor among the Dighil and Mirifle. In the inter-river area the bond is more related to the land which they cultivate or use as pasture or other forms of common pursuits or interests.<sup>31</sup>

These municipal elections marked the beginning of a period of considerable progress in the political field. It was clear that Somalis were rapidly gaining greater political maturity. An example of this was the close and more fruitful collaboration among a number of Somali political parties. A Somali National Front was formed to ensure unity of action among the parties. The Front consisted of four principal committees which dealt respectively with political, economic, educational, and administrative questions. It appeared that leaders of most of the parties were beginning to understand that they could gain more by pooling their talents and presenting a single strong political platform.

This brief move toward a single unified political movement was symbolized during the meeting of the Fourteenth Session of the

Trusteeship Council. Each year from 1951, Somali political parties had been invited to send representatives to the yearly debate of the Council on matters pertaining to the Trust territories. In previous years each party had presented its own summary of the issues. However, in 1955 the Somali parties spoke as one, presenting their views and their petitions through a single spokesman. That spokesman was Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden (Zobe), the leader of HDM, who spoke to the Trusteeship Council "on behalf of all Somali parties as well as all Somali people".<sup>32</sup>

This very positive step in the history of the Somali national movement was, unfortunately, shortlived. The 1956 general elections and the 1958 municipal elections both witnessed a return to tribal and regional appeals, even though only four parties won seats in the general elections and six parties in the 1958 municipal elections. Why was there a return to regional and tribal politics?

One explanation may lie in the rapid Somalization of the administrative service begun in 1955, and the efforts by Somalis of different parties to ensure access of their members to have these new positions. Italy naturally had its own aims, one of which was to ensure her continued influence following Somali Independence. In her efforts to guarantee that a pro-Italian government (and administration) would inherit power in 1960, the Administration of Italy hastened the Somalization process which had begun with police posts in 1954. Thus, one has to see the replacement of Italian staff with Somalis not simply as an administrative action, but also as a maneuver with political implications.

To summarize, what we have seen in the events from 1945 to 1955 is the continuing involvement of the big powers first the BMA, and then the Italian Trusteeship Administration in the rise and development of political party activity. The platforms of the various parties and their rivalries cannot be divorced from the maneuvers of the governing powers to ensure their influence would be maintained.

#### Party Politics, 1950-60: the Question of Decentralization

While there is a common and deeply-rooted belief in Somali society that all Somalis are descended from a single ancestor, there is little doubt that geography and history have created several distinct sub-cultures within Somalia. Somalis in different parts of the country have adopted different ways of life leading to certain sets of values and outlooks on politics. The attitudes of those Somalis who practice nomadic pastoralism in the arid northern and central regions of the country are quite distinct from the attitudes of those who practice farming and mixed agro-pastoralism in the better-watered regions to the

south. I.M. Lewis and Virginia Luling have shown how the deep-seated clan and lineage system of the northern pastoralists has been modified to include loyalties based on territorial proximity in the more settled communities of the inter-river plateau.<sup>33</sup>

Along with these real differences in social organization were local prejudices which one finds in every society of the world. The northern nomads showed a scarcely disguised contempt for any occupation other than pastoralism, and they have traditionally looked down upon the southern cultivators as inferior. The Southerners in their turn regarded the nomads as hot-headed and undisciplined, incapable of managing affairs other than their herds.

It is obvious that these social and regional stereotypes have played an important role in the formation of Somali political parties even though the most prominent Somali political leaders of all parties made efforts to eliminate tribalism and the preoccupation of the people with it. These leaders felt that they could never create a national consciousness and a truly national government without putting an end to the phenomenon of tribalism. However, such deeply-rooted loyalties could not be ended easily and those elites who sought to abolish tribalism had also to contend with a handful of Somali political opportunists who saw it in their interest to further the awareness of tribal distinctions.

As an example of the persistence of tribal sentiments we can look at the aftermath of the political elections of 1956. Four parties won seats in those elections: SYL, HDM, SDP, and Marehan Union, with 43, 13, 3, and 1 seat respectively. Of the four, one of them had a distinctly regional following (HDM), one was distinctly tribal (Marehan Union), and one had just recently changed its name from the Mijertein Progressive League to the Somali Democratic Party. The fourth, of course, was the SYL, which never made strictly tribal or regional appeal but which in the minds of many Somalis, it can be argued, represented tribal alliance of sorts under the banner of patriotism and national unity.

In addition, the distribution of positions in the newly elected government reveals the broad gap between northern and southern regions mentioned above. The formation of the first Somali cabinet by the victorious SYL showed that the leaders were extremely conscious of ethnic-group composition, but almost totally ignorant of the Dighil-Mierifle portion of the population.<sup>33</sup> The Prime Minister (Hawiye) formed a cabinet consisting of three Hawiye ministers, two Darod, and one Dir; the HDM, representing the inter-river area, received not a single ministerial portfolio. Moreover, when parliamentary groups were formed, the three deputies of the SDP and the one of Marehan Union crossed the aisle to join the SYL as a gesture of group solidarity, leaving the HDM as the sole opposition in parliament. This confirmed the "northern" orientation of the first government.

These actions prompted the HDM to undertake a major campaign of criticism against both the SYL and the Italian Administration. At the same time the party produced a new programme reflecting its future policy and changed its name to Hizbia Dastur Mustaqil al-Somal (HDMS). This kept the party's initials for the sake of regional solidarity while presenting a public name more indicative of national interests.

The HDMS's campaigns and its more aggressive attitude to the governing party contributed to growing misunderstanding between the Administration and the SYL on the one hand and HDMS members on the other. The latter alleged discrimination against Dighil-Meirifle citizens in the Somalization process and in the allocations of educational scholarships for study abroad. Tension increased to the point where bloody confrontations occurred in various southern towns and villages inhabited by HDMS supporters following Government attempts to impose heavy taxes on their farms.

In October 1956, the Somali police killed 17 farmers in the Upper Juba region and injured 12 others,<sup>35</sup> and on February 17th, 1957, five farmers were killed and eight injured at "Oflo", a well-known (grain-producing) center about 80 miles from Baidao. In the same area a clash on September 1, 1957, led to the deaths of two policemen. Finally, on January 12th, 1958, the Somali police force attacked the village of Mubarak and destroyed several shops while killing five local residents.<sup>36</sup>

All these incidents contributed to a call from the HDMS for the decentralization of administration. Party spokesmen claimed that this was the only way to overcome the social and economic discrimination against inter-river inhabitants that they saw being practiced by the Government. Equally important, though were the results of the first Somali census of 1957. While the census failed to obtain accurate results in the largely nomadic regions of Mijertinia, Mudug, and Lower Juba, it had considerable success in estimating the population of the Benadir, Hiran and Upper Juba regions. The results suggested that the population of these last three regions was greater than the other three, with obvious implications for representation in Parliament.<sup>37</sup> However, both the Administration and the Government refused to conduct another census before the coming General Elections, even though this course of action had been recommended by the Legislative Assembly.

It is also highly probable that HDMS was encouraged to advocate a policy of decentralization by the inclusion in the Technical Committee for the elaboration of the Somali Constitution 1957 of a sub-committee assigned to study the possibilities of a decentralized federal structure for Somalia. Thus the party declared its intention to establish a

Somali Federal Government, believing that a federal system was the only way to lead the entire Somali people.<sup>38</sup>

The call for decentralization received some support from the Somali Liberal party and from the Benadir Union. The latter in fact advocated the postponement of the General Election for the Constituent Assembly until 1960 and, in the event that such a postponement were not granted, they requested that a new Constitution be prepared by the U.N. itself as a temporary framework for the elections.<sup>39</sup>

The HDMS position on the decentralization issue increased its influence beyond its original Dighil-Merifle constituency, suggesting that the idea of a federal system had at least tacit support among other segments of the Somali population. In addition, HDMS articulation of the need of decentralization contributed to the formation within the SYL of a "moderate" wing devoted to opposing the constitutional attitudes both of the Government and of the Italian Administration. This wing was headed by Haji Mohamed Hussein, who had recently returned to the country following his studies in Cairo. He had been elected president of the SYL in 1957, a position he had filled on several earlier occasions in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Perhaps fearing that these developments might damage its dominant position in the pre-independence political scene, particularly in the face of the forthcoming municipal and general elections scheduled for 1958 and 1959 respectively, the SYL took drastic action. In September 1958, the SYL's Central Committee expelled Haji Muhamed Hussein from the party, and he immediately formed a new party known as the Greater Somali League (GSL).<sup>40</sup> In addition, the SYL began to woo more sympathetic elements from other parties and clans such as Haji Muuse Samatar and Abdi Nuur Mohamed Hussein. However the continued strength of GSL was demonstrated in the succeeding campaigns: only a month after its formation the GSL won the third position in the second municipal elections of 1958; gaining 36 out of 663 seats, while the SYL gained 416 seats winning the first position, and the HDMS won 175 seats,<sup>41</sup> remaining in its usual second position.

The seats which the GSL gained were very few in contrast to the impressive number of seats SYL and the significant number of HDMS had obtained. However, considering the very short existence of the GSL on the political scene, and bearing in mind that SYL won more than half of its seats (226) by "Tazkiya", that is, unchallenged by any other party (which means that SYL won only 190 seats by competition),<sup>42</sup> the GSL seemed a dangerous challenge to the SYL as to other parties in the coming political election.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the SYL, even in the other districts where it competed with more than one party, could not gain any considerable majority, whereas the HDMS, for

instance, received a notable majority in most areas shared with other parties.<sup>44</sup>

### The General Elections of 1959

The very short period between the Municipal Elections of October 1958 and the General Elections of March 1959 was one of the most difficult periods in Somali political history. The Government presented to the Legislative Assembly an electoral law which provided for 90 seats to be distributed on the basis of population estimates, but it was defeated because the law was not felt appropriate to a people in the process of organizing a democratic society, given the lack of a census and, therefore, a basis for forming constituencies and a constitution. The HDMS, leading the opposition parliamentary group, and feeling insecure about the future implications of the election, insisted on opposing the electoral law until the Constitution was completed and a new census of the population undertaken. But after massive negotiations and compromises between the government and the Legislative Assembly and some slight changes to the law, the Assembly confirmed it in a secret ballot by a vote of 32 to 20.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, the date of the election was fixed as March, 1959.

During the electoral campaigns, as a result of the strong criticism from the opposition to both the government and the Italian Administration, crises and confrontations occurred in many parts of the territory between the government and the opposition parties. On February 23, 1959 a bomb was thrown in front of "Bar Azan" and another in the "Italian Tennis Club" where an Italian was injured. The Italian Administration allowed the Somali government to use emergency measures. Accordingly, thousands of members of opposition parties were imprisoned. On February 25, 1959, there were violent disorders in Mogadishu, where one person was killed and seven civilians left injured. The Commissioner of Mogadishu was stabbed and among the police force three officers were seriously injured, in addition to four "Askaris". As a result, the police incarcerated 280 persons including 112 women. The Presidents of the opposition parties were arrested, and all their headquarters were closed.<sup>46</sup>

As a consequence, the HDMS and other opposition parties boycotted the election<sup>47</sup> and the SYL obtained an absolute majority, winning 83 seats out of 90. The HDMS won 5 and the Liberal Party the remaining 2 seats. So once again the SYL formed the second Somali Government under the premiership of Abdullahi Issa.<sup>48</sup>

The boycott of the opposition clearly benefited the SYL, but the puzzle is how the HDMS managed to gain 5 seats out of 90. How could they gain seats if they didn't participate in the election? When

they officially boycotted the election and announced this to the public on January 19, 1959.<sup>49</sup> Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed the representative of HDMS declared in front of the United Nations Trusteeships Council that "What happened in Somalia was completely contradictory to Somali wishes, as well as in contravention of the United Nations' Charter and the obligation of the Trusteeship agreement."<sup>50</sup> The HDMS representative in confirming that his party boycotted the 1959 General Election said: "The five deputies who said that they represented HDMS in the Somali Parliament were not elected from party candidates, but in fact had been expelled from the party on January 29, 1959."<sup>51</sup> Assuming that the party had participated in the election, would the above mentioned seat total correspond to the power of the party? We already know that HDMS was the most important opposition party. They had undertaken serious steps towards improving their program in order to achieve wider goals for the entire Somali territory, and had attracted new adherents. They achieved significant results in both the first General Election (1956) and the second Municipal Elections (1958). Considering the above evidence, it is unlikely that the party would win only 5 seats out of 90.

These events happened according to a careful plan coordinated by the Italian administration and the SYL. The Administration was required to submit the Trusteeship Council, at least 18 months before the expiration of the Trusteeship period, a plan for the orderly transfer of all the functions of government to a duly constituted independent government of the territory.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, Italy worked to guarantee its existence even after the termination of the Trusteeship period and from the beginning attempted to keep Somalia linked politically and economically to Italy.

The administration persuaded SYL to conclude many agreements with Italian and other western companies,<sup>52</sup> and the Somali Government by a decree in 1958 safeguarded the interests of Italy and its allies.<sup>53</sup> Italy pledged that it would cover the deficit of the Somali budget, offered up to 100 scholarships yearly, and promised to continue buying Somali bananas. It was anxious to have a pro-western government in the territory.<sup>54</sup>

It is also evident that the SYL restricted candidates for the 1959 election to those who would support the government and paid most attention to the reelection of former deputies who had already supported the government. Moreover, the SYL encouraged sympathizers from different clans and parties, including some from the opposition parties, to join it from 1957. This increased after the break-up of SYL and the emergence of the GSL. All of these developments had a direct impact on the 1959 election.

### Conclusion

The aim of the paper has not been to discuss the development of Somali political movements as a whole, but rather to point out the unstudied political history of the southern inter-river population. It also makes a preliminary attempt to examine the emergence and history of HDMS party.

The paper tries to reveal the neglected role of the inter-river societies in the development of Somali political maturity. They shared in the formation of the important Somali political parties. Abdulkadir Sakhaweddin,<sup>55</sup> the founding father of SYC (The Somali Youth Club in 1943) which later became the SYL, was from the inter-river region. Also more than half the original thirteen founders of SYL were from the area.<sup>56</sup> Sheikh Abdullahi Bogodi, the founder of HDM later Hizb al-Dastuur Mustaqil al-Sumal, was from the inter-river area. Haji Muhamed Hussein, the founder of GSL (Greater Somali League), was also from there.

The paper discusses the attitudes of the SYL towards the inter-river population under the banner of nationalism. Though HDMS was accused of being a tribal party, they, in fact, represented for more than 20 years (1947-1969) the sole opposition party in the territory, especially in the period preceding independence. They raised important issues in Somali political development, such as: the necessity of undertaking a census of the Somali population as a basic step of development, the vitality of "al-Dastuur" (the Constitution) as the sole way to a democratic political entity, the economic importance of agriculture and animal husbandry using proper methods and technology, and the adoption of a federal system of government, which they thought was the only way that Somaliland could be developed economically as well as socially, but the climate of the 1950's led other parties to interpret these ideas as "regional" or "parochial".

Finally it was the aim of the paper also to highlight the manipulation of the foreign powers particularly the two retreating colonial administrations of Great Britain and Italy and their influence on the political development of the region.

### NOTES

I would like to thank Lee V Casanelli, Jan H. Sevilla and Peter Ryan whose advice and assistance I benefited much in writing this article.

1. The bulk of Somali political parties appeared in the late 1940s, especially during the British Military Administration of 1941-1949. Most of the official records on the parties have been restricted up to now in the colonial Archives. The Somali Youth League (SYL) being the most nationalistic party and maintaining the leading position in the Somali political arena, and also becoming the ruling party, gained the most attention. In 1969 when the Somali army seized power from the civilian administration, the military regime suspended parliamentary life and the constitution and banned all political parties. The records of the Somali parties eventually became highly secret in the hands of the Somali supreme Revolutionary Council first, and then with the Somali Socialist Party (Hisbiga Hantiwadaaga Kacaanka Soomaaliyeed).
2. A number of Scholars have written on the issue; Castagno A.A. "Somali Republic" in James S. Colman and Carl G. Rosberg (eds.) Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa. Berkley, University of California Press, 1964 pp. 519-59. Lewis I.M. "Modern Political Movements in Somaliland I & II" Africa. Journal of the International African Institute, Oxford University Press, July, 1958, No.3 pp. 244-261, and October, 1958, No.4 pp.344-363. S. Touval. Somali Nationalism. Howard University Press, 1963. Punkhurst E.S. Ex-Italian Somaliland. London: 1951. Antonia Bullotta. La Somalia Sotto Due Bandiere. Milano: 1949.
3. Hizb al-Dastuur Mustaqil' al-Somal (Somalia Independent Constitutional Party) locally known as Hasbia", emerged first as Hasbia Dighil Mirifle,(HDM) the party of Dighil Mirifle. For further details on the formation of Somali Political Parties and nature of Dighil and Mirifle people see Mohamed H. Mukhtar "Italian Somaliland From U.N. Trusteeship To Independence." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Al'Azhar, Cairo: 1983, pp.87-106
4. After the collapse of Italian East African Empire in 1941, by the allied forces, Britain eventually succeeded to occupy the region with exception of French Somaliland (Rep. of Jibuti) under what was then known as the British military Administration of occupied enemy territories in East Africa which lasted until 1950.
5. To be precise, the SYL was known before April 1, 1947 as the SYC (Somali Youth Club)
6. During the Fascist regime political associations and activities were completely banned, the sole political institution allowed was the Fascist Party. When the British came, similar conditions emerged, under what they called "war conditions" political activities again were not allowed unless they supported British policies and interests in the region.
7. The Four Power Commission of investigation (FPC) was a product of long discussions between the Allies under what was known as the Council of Foreign

Ministers Conferences (CFM) designed to set up new policies during the post World War II period. When they could not agree on the future of the former Italian Colonies they decided to send a commission composed of the four powers: U.K., U.S.A., U.S.S.R and France. This was done in 1947, after they had signed a peace agreement with Italy.

8. Four Power Commission of investigation of the former Italian colonies, Vol. II. "Report on ex-Italian Somaliland" 1948. p.21.

9. Castagno Alphonso A. "Somali Republic" in James S. Colman and, Carl G. Rosberg (eds.). Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa. Berkley, University of California Press, 1964. p.525.

10. FPC, Ibid, p.107.'

11. Ibid, p.. 107.

12. Details on the Somali Arab Clash see. FPC, section II. Chapter IV. Appendix C. p.107.

13. Regarding the details of this incident in which 51 Italians were killed and more than 52 injured, see. "Findings of Court of Inquiry" which assembled at Mogadishu on January 22, 1948 to investigate the Mogadishu disturbances of January 11, 1948. Also, see Gianpaolo Calchi Novati. "Gli Incidenti di Mogadiscio deI Gennaio 1948, Rapporti Italo Inglesi e Nazionalismo Somalo". Africa. rivista trimestrale dei studi e documentazioni dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa, Anno XXXV. No. 3-4, September-December 1980.

14. FPC, Ibid, p. 107.

15. SYL made certain branches accept certain figures as secretaries of their local committees even against the will of the committee and the local members of the party. Sheikh Umur Jis, Baidoa 1978.

16. FPC, Chapter IV. Appendix N. 15th hearing in Italian Somaliland, hearing of representatives of HDM, p.I.

17. FPC, Ibid, p.1.

18. Ibid.

19. The Somalia Conference was founded September 18, 1947, at a meeting of representatives of the Somali tribal organizations.

20. Mukhtar Italian Somaliland, Ibid. pp. 200-202.

21. FO 371/80886 , telg. from Mr. Gamble, the Chief British Administrator of Somalia to Foreign Office, March 6, 1950.

22. Corriere della Somalia issues 1710, 1711 of 17, 18 April 1950.

23. Ibid, "Hundreds of families completely deprived of all their possessions and without means of subsistence, abandoned, many of them" fleeing to this town (Mogadishu) to live on charity".

24. See letter from the President of SYL to the Italian Administrator on July 25, 1950. The SYL claimed that this establishes, or at least suggests, that a program was arranged in advance between the local authorities and the attackers whereby it was impossible for the SYL partisans either to defend themselves or to take refuge. FO 371/80887, Appendix No.2.

25. The Four Power Commission of investigation reported that SYL had 79 branches outside the headquarters in Mogadishu, and found that only 18 out of the 79 were located outside the inter-river region. See FPC, Ibid, annex Bi, Appendix P, under SYL branches outside Mogadishu, p.16, and also Mukhtar Ibid, p.207.

26. Wo 230 291, BMA Somalia, and see a letter from SYL to FPC dated January 6, 1948 describing the average of their supporters;

Benadir Region	overwhelming majority
Mijurtinia	solidly behind SYL
Mudug	solidly behind SYL
Upper Juba	solidly behind SYL

FPC Ibid, section II, Chapter IV, Appendix P.

27. United Nations Advisory Council, document T/947 and Cor. I, 1952 p. 13, and also United Nations Visiting Mission Report on the Trust Territory of Somaliland, document T/1143. 1954.

28. Ibid. p. 4. Useful information about Italo/SYL rapprochement are in. Martino, Enrico: Due Anni in Somalia. Mogadiscio, Stabilimento Tipografico dell'Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiano della Somalia, 1955.

29. In its first formation this party tried to regroup all Mijerteen factions under its banner, and appeared as the Mijerteen progressive League (MPL) in 1947.

30. I.M. Lewis in his classification of Somali Political Parties put Hizbia Dighil Mirifle under regional parties, at the same time observing that "... in classing the Hizbia Dighil Mirifle with the regional parties, I have been guided by the fact that,

although their name refers to the eponymous ancestors of the Dighil and Rahanweyn clan families , their organization as a political party is not based on linkage affiliation. As was shown above , it is in this region that tribes founded on territorial ties is taking the place of clanship , and it is the common culture , economic and territorial interests of the Dighil and Rahanweyn inhabiting the most fertile region of Somalia that their party represents. . . see Lewis, I M. "Modern Political Movement in Somaliland I", Ibid p.259.

31 Mukhtar, Ibid. pp.99-102

32. United Nations Trusteeship Council , official records , XVI session, hearing of Mr. Abdulcadir Mohamed Aden representative of HDM, meetings 627-30 , June 6-7, 1955. pp. 147-56.

33. Lewis I.M. Ibid , p. 253 , and Virginia Luling. The Social Structure of Southern Somali Tribes. Ph D. Thesis, University of London, 1971.

34. It was suggested to form a multi-party cabinet so that other parties could gain experience in executive responsibility. See A. Castogno. Ibid p.532.

35. More details about these incidents are well documented in United Nations Advisory Council, Report AC T 1311 1957, p.21, and also UNTC, 20th Session. 795th Meeting 20 5 57, P.7. And also AC T 1372 1958, 1.15.

36. Ibid.

37" . . . in three regions (Benadir, Upper Juba , and Hiran there was a considerable degree of success, in the other three (Midjertain, Mudug, and Lower Juba) there was a failure to obtain accurate results. . ."See UNAC T 1372, 1957, Ibid, p. 29.

38. The party declared its intention to establish a Somali Federal Government , and it believed that the federal system is the only way that could lead the whole Somali people in different portions to progress and prosperity. Moreover, the party demanded that the Somali Constitution should be based on decentralization of Administration. For more of this issue see the inaugural speech of the party for its 11th anniversary, March 25 , 1958. See UN Doc T pet. II 583 and UN Advisory Council Doc. T 1372, 1957-58 par. 61 and also S. Touval Ibid, pp.36-97.

39. See T 1344, 1958, Ibid. pp.6-7.

40. The GSL first appeared on June 25, 1958 , and the second municipal election took place on Oct. 20, 1958.

41. The rest of the seats were shared between the Liberal Party, the Somali National Union, and the Somali Fiqarini Youth; 27, 6 and 3 seats respectively. For more

details about this election see UNTCOR.24th Session. Examination of Annual Report of the Administering Authority 1958, T 1454. pp.337-341.

42. The SYL won without competition 226 seats over the following electoral districts; 21 seats in Bossasso, 15 in Bender Meyrano, 21 in Belet weyn, 15 in Buulo Burti, and 11 seats in each of the following areas: Alula Bereceda, Eil, Garoe, Bender Beila, Kandala, Skushuban, Baargaal, Hobyoy, Harar Dheere, Eel Dheere, Eel Buur, Jalalaqsi, and Adale See T 1454, Ibid, p.340.

43. Bearing in mind that a sizeable number of Mijerteen (Darood) followed Haji Mohamed to form the party.

44. The HDMS won in competition the majority in the following allocations : Afgoi, Marka, Awdheegle, Braawa, Wanla Weeyn, Isha Baidoa, Dujuma, Saako, Luug, Huddur, Tiyeeglo, Buur Hakaba, Diinsor, Margerita (Jammame), and Baardheere. See Un Doc T 1444, Annex 1, and also Mukhtar, Ibid, p. 259.

45. UNTC, Official Records, 24th, Session, 1013th Meeting. 15 7 1959, pp. 338-339.

46. More details about these disturbances and their consequences see T 1444, 1958, Ibid pp.25-27.

47. United Nations Advisory Council, document 1/1444. 1958-1959 pp.25-27.

48. Issa's government was composed of Abdullahi Issa, Prime Minister; Salah Omar Shego, Minister without portfolio for government and parliament relation, Mohamud Mohamed Farah, Minister of Justice, Osman Ahmed Roble, Minister of Finance; Haji Farah Ali Omar, Minister of Industry and Commerce; Mohamud Abdi Nuur, Minister of Public Works and Communications, Salad Abdi Mohamud, Minister of Agriculture and Animal husbandry; Mohamud Adan Yusuf (Muro), Minister of Education; Sheikh Ali Jimale Barale, Minister of Health, Veterinary Medicine and Labor, and Abdi Nur Mohamed Hussein, Minister of Public Affairs

49. UNTC, official records 24th session, Ibid. pp 344-345.

50. Ibid. p.307.

51. Ibid. p.345

52. See article 25 of the Trusteeship Agreement.

53. Mukhtar, Ibid. p.310.

54. Ibid. p.310.

55. Born in Tiyeeglo, 1919, today in Bakool region, died in 1945.

56. The following 5 are from the inter-river region: Abdulkadir Sakhaw-eddin, Haji Mohamed Hussein , Dhere Haji Dhere , Hudow Máallin Abdalla and Mohamed Osman Barba. Considering that a significant number of Hawiya inhabit the region, and that they also made up 5 of the founders; Mohamed Hirsi Nur, Osman Ghedi Rage, Mohamed Ali Nur, Mohamed Farah Hilowle , Haji Mohamed Abdulla "Hayeesi". Then the Majority of the founders of SYL are from the region.