



The Specter Somali Premiers

“Standing in Farmaj’s way to govern are six influential Federal Member States, their mighty Presidents—who wrought the system and discern their way inside-out, and their regional and international allies.”





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Legacy Center for Peace and Transparency (LCPT) is a research and empowerment center whose mission is to promote peace, good governance, democracy and sustainable development. LCPT was established in Minnesota, United States, with core operations in Somalia but also with foot print in the North Eastern Kenya region. Our aim is to conduct high quality research that culminates in innovative practical recommendations for policy, capacity building and practice in the following thematic areas:

- **Good Governance**
- **Peace, equality and democratic values and practices**
- **Sustainable development (in particular, livelihoods)**

The LCPT conducts extensive research across Somalia, using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. In addition to household surveys using mobile phones and Interviews with key community figures and other stakeholders, LCPT also analyzes publicly available data to complete its secondary research.

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Purpose - The purpose of this report is to provide a short summary of the political situation in Somalia, particularly given the recent elections in 2016 and 2017. The report is based on knowledge gathered by LCPT through news articles and personal conversations with people in Somalia.

The report begins by discussing the structure of government in Somalia. It then discusses the leadership styles of the six leaders of the regional states.

As of 2017, Somalia is officially divided into six regional states. In the north, is the autonomous state **Somaliland** - a self-declared state but internationally recognized as an autonomous region of Somalia. The northeast region of Somalia is the **Puntland State**. **Galmudug State** is an autonomous region in central Somalia that emerged just south of Puntland in July 2015. Encompassing Middle Shabelle and Hiraa regions, the formation of **Hirshabelle State** was concluded in late 2016 to become the latest addition to Somalia's Federal Member States (FMS). Instituted in 2012, the **Jubaland State** in the far south is the fifth autonomous region within the federation and in November 2014, a new **Southwest State** was likewise established in Baidoa.

None of these aforesaid states arose out of the constitutionally mandated process, but rather formed because of a need within; and in fact, present a challenge to the Provisional Constitution

itself and to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). Article 49(1) of the Provisional Constitution tasks the Federal Parliament with determining the number and boundaries of Federal Member States [FMS]. Article 49(6) states that ‘two or more regions may merge to form a Federal Member State.’ To this end, the legislature in December 2014 passed a law establishing the Boundary and Federalization Commission. The body is mandated with determining the boundaries of the country's constituent FMS, as well as arbitrating between these regional states on their respective jurisdiction. However, the Boundary and Federalization Commission has been nothing but a desk-bound and ineffective from the get go.

The formation of the Boundary and Federalization commission has met rigid resistant from FMS. The FMS denounced the commission, its embodiment and objected to consenting them access to their respective states. Although Somalia has long been portrayed as ‘a nation in search of a state’, obtaining social cohesion has been a historical challenge. In today’s Somalia, centrifugal tendencies persist, as well as questions surrounding the nature of federalism and the resource sharing formulas. More importantly, the role of state leaders in the FGS, their level of foreign engagements, as well as their title as state leaders remain the point of contention.

A history was made on February 8, 2017 as the mainstream elite Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo was declared the winner of Somalia’s presidential election. Nevertheless, standing in his way to govern are six influential FMS and their mighty presidents who twist the system, and work inside and out to have their way and their own regional and international allies. The National Leadership Forum (NLF) was created during the process leading up to the parliamentary elections in 2016. The NLF is comprised of five State Presidents along with the former President and the Prime Minister of FGS. This forum allowed members of NLF to select their preferred parliamentarians and to solidify power. To make their intention reality, the NLF overtook the powers of the Federal Parliament and designed a road-map in which each state was allocated certain number of parliamentary seats for the 2016 elections. This step was described as an attempt to democratize the process and to conduct a transparent and broadly participated election.

It worked other way around. While broader participation than prior elections was achieved, the process was anything but a transparent. During the elections, State Presidents singlehandedly selected those loyal to their leadership and the least threat to their seats.



Everyone who followed Somali politics expected some sort of corruption to occur during this process, but not to the extent witnessed. Substantial cases of corruption and voter intimidation have marred the parliamentary elections. and so called ‘135 signatories’ aided by The ‘State Presidents’ abused their powers to favor their allies. In some areas, these Presidents were witnessed running shadow campaigns for their preferred candidates.

The governmental elections took place in two parts. First, in late 2016, 329 members of the Somali Federal Parliament were elected by 14,025 clan delegates. Then in 2017, these 329 members of the Parliament voted for a new president of Somalia. The Parliament in Somalia consists of a lower house (275 Members of Parliament (MP’s) and an upper house (54 senators). For each of the 275 seats in the lower house of parliament, 51 clan delegates voted to determine who would be the parliamentary representative for a particular area. However, the democratic outcome of the 51 clan delegates’ votes, was not the ultimate factor in electing a person to the Parliament.

If a parliamentary candidate exhibited disloyalty to one of the powerful regional Presidents, he/she was simply undercut by a process known as ‘replace’. Replace occurred through handpicking and/or bribery. Some of the bribe money came from federal government resources. Many traditional clan elders succumbed to bribes and replaced parliamentary candidates elected, and broadly favored by their constituents, with candidates who supported the State Presidents.

So, what do these so called ‘State Presidents’ in this tiny nation of Somalia have all in common?

First, they’re all power hungry; dictatorial leadership is their epitome; they’re insecure in their roles and strategically engage preemptive war on any person(s) deemed to be hazard to their powers; finally, they single-mindedly rule their respective states while biting the public against one another so they can remain in power.

This is the case whether they are educated like Dr. Gaas of Puntland [a former Teaching Fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Harvard Institute for International Development] or Sharif Hassan Sheik Adan of the Southwest State who is known for his lack of education but his ruthlessness and his tactful political choreographies.

LEADERSHIP PATTERN

Somaliland: In Somaliland, you have an administration that openly promotes secession and independence. However, behind the scenes heavily involves in political and security influences of Somalia—including the last election. Somaliland leaders actively engaged in Somalia’s 2016-2017 elections and at one point sent delegates to actively influence the outcome of both the parliamentarian and the presidential elections. People



*Ahmed Mohamed Silanyo: Somaliland
President*

from the ruling party, as well as opposition leaders, were continuously on the phone to sway votes from one candidate to another. Likewise, Somaliland is actively lobbying for specific individuals for cabinet appointments who are believed to be loyal to their policies. Ingrained in Somali politics, the Somaliland administration lobbies to control the Justice department of the FGS. Indeed, it has become the norm to have individuals from Somaliland and the greater Dir clan to lead the Supreme Court as well as other Justice Department units. Many in the south believe that in an attempt to prolong the endless instability in the south and to win a recognition as an independent country apart from Somalia, Somaliland continues to destabilize the South Somalia. In that regard, there is much spoken concerning the relationship between Al-Shabab and Somaliland amongst the Somali public. Notably, Somaliland continues to be the only horn of Africa region inhabited by ethnic Somalis that has yet to suffer frequent attacks from Al-Shabab.

Puntland: “A US-trained economist has been elected the new president of Somalia's semi-autonomous region of Puntland on January 2014 after defeating the incumbent by one vote. The outgoing President, Abdirahman Farole obtained the vote of 32 MPs, compared with the 33 of his rival, Abdiweli Ali Gas,” (read the BBC report published on January 8, 2014.)



This headline from the BBC vividly recalls an exuberance and optimism of real democracy and genuine hope for change. Abdiweli Ali Gas is a seasoned politician (formerly a Prime Minister, as well Minister of Planning and International Relations for the FGS), a well-educated professor, and above all, an expatriate who lived and breathed in democracy with freedom of speech.

People expected he would bring American style democracy to Puntland and that his political experience, aided by his educational background, would stabilize and prosper the state. His election triumph was followed by the selection of highly qualified (at least on paper) cabinet members. After three years in office, the public revoltingly questions Dr. Gaas's achievements. True, infrastructural improvements (mainly road constructions and well-publicized Bosaso Airport) have been seen, but the state continues to realize instability and lack of meaningful political progress.

Almost nonstop combats continued between Puntland and Galmudug states, endless hostility and disagreements with the FGS overshadow his tenure, and communal domestic revolt from Puntlanders (who are otherwise known for their docility of governance and love for stability and peace) has become the norm. While a relatively stable State compared to the rest of Somalia, the frequency of Al-Shabab and Da'ish terrorizing of the region is unacceptable. So the question

remains, is Puntland a better state under Dr. Gaas's leadership then it was prior to him? While Dr. Gaas was actively lobbying for the former Prime Minister (Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke) of FGS to become the president of the FGS during the 2017 presidential elections, he was behind the scenes undermining his campaign and was determined to ensure Mr. Sharmarke's campaign ends with nothing, but a failure. Presently, Dr. Gaas is vigorously lobbying to have a hand in the soon to be formed cabinet members for the FGS from Puntland.

Southwest: In Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, you have an exceptional individual with so little educational and professional background prior to joining politics, who yet achieved so much personally in Somali politics.



He is a former Finance Minister of Somalia, former Speaker of the Transitional Federal Parliament, and current President of Southwest State. He hails from the Adan Mirifle Ashraf sub-clan of the Rahanweyn major clan. He put up a brutal political fight against his fellow Rahanweyn co-leader, the current Speaker of the FGS parliament Professor Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawaari. Professor Jawaari [opposed the recognition of the outcome of the Baidoa](#) Conference, in which, Sharif Hassan was elected as the President of the Southwest State consisting of Bay, Bakool, and Lower Shabelle regions.

In Sharif Hassan, not much was expected of him as the President of the Southwest State. He got the job primarily because the former President of FGS and some neighboring countries were backing him. He used enormous financial power and political connections to aid his election victory on 17 November 2014. He unswervingly commands the political stakes of the Digil-and-Mirifle clan. After leaving the parliament, his son replaced him for the parliamentary post and in an attempt to recruit his support to the former President Hassan Sheik Mohamud's re-election campaign, his brother Mohamed Abdinur (Madeer) became the Minister of Health replacing another Digil-and-Mirifle female Minister.



Mohamed Abdinur (a.k.a. 'Madeer') Former Minister of Health & a Brother to Sharif Hassan Sh. Adan

Apart from prospering himself and his family, there is no known infrastructural and political development in the state resulting from his position. The constitution of the Southwest State, among other things, stipulates a Vice President(s) position, which yet has to be appointed since

2014. Sharif Hassan is believed to have sent as many as 50 loyal MPs to the Federal Parliament and is expected to use them to hold Farmajo and his government hostage for his political and personal attainments. He spends much of his time in Mogadishu where he still resides in the same palace within the presidential palace that he occupied during his speakership tenure.

Southwest State is one of the hardest hit drought areas in Somalia and one barely hears him address that. The terror group Al-Shabab still controls much of the state. Southwest State is an agriculturally important State, where the unemployment is extremely high, which makes residents more prone to al-Shabab recruitment. Clan fighting continues in the Lower Shabelle region; and public political standoff is still to be resolved between the Bakol-Sare State (a part of Bakool region that to some extent abstained from becoming part of the Southwest State and declared itself as an autonomous state).

Notwithstanding his political stronghold, wealth, and clan expertise, observers seem to grasp the reality that Sharif Hassan's days might be indeed numbered. A revolt movement is currently evident to recall him, as locals seem to understand his 'do nothing, gain all' politics. Famous politician and well-respected household names in the Digil-and-Mirifle clan are seen openly disowning him. This has never been the case. There are increasing voices to ditch him and find a suitable person for the job that can lead the state and reconcile communities drifting apart and requiring a leader to hold them together. However, until it happens, it will all remain to be seen, if any changes will materialize from this new political voice and phenomenon.

Jubbaland: Based in the port city of Kismayu, Jubaland has been one of the most heavily fought over regions of Somali. With its perennial river, fertile soils and the port city of Kismayu, it has the potential to be one of Somalia's most productive regions. The social bonds that bind and divide populations across the borders of Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia, give this region a particularly important geopolitical regional significance. This has been made abundantly clear by the presence of Kenyan and Ethiopian military forces in the region.

Ahmed Mohamed Islam (a.k.a. Ahmed Madobe) became the leader of Kismayu Interim Administration and later was elected as Jubaland President in a huge convention, which brought together 500 delegates on 15 May 2013 in Kismayu. Jubaland gained its recognition from Mogadishu-based Federal Government after the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) brokered bilateral talks in August 2013 in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa.

The spirits and expectations ran high as Mr. Madobe took office. However, no concrete progress has been made during his tenure of the last five years. Most of Jubaland is still under the control of the notorious Al-Shabab terror group. Confined within Kismayu city limits, Jubaland administration does not function outside of Kismayu.



Ahmed Mohamed Islam: President of Jubaland

Mr. Madobe surrounded himself lesser-educated cabinet members and advisors and openly acknowledges his underachievement. However, his recipe to staying in power is to eliminate plausible and perceived opposition by using the term “Divide and Rule” dividing clans into sub clans and building circumstantial political allies. To ensure this strategy yields fruit, he summons loyal politicians and confidants and turns them into puppets, susceptible to manipulation, and traps them with the promise of hope, money, and power. Can this be maintained as a longtime strategy?

Due to the array of competing internal and external interest groups and the lack of clear grand strategy or capacity to assert direction and policies, “Jubbaland State” under his leadership is highly volatile.

Galmudug: Galmudug has put its consciousness on the map, as its parliament became the first of its kind to oust a dysfunctional president. A close ally and a friend to the former FGS president, many in the Somali mainstream viewed Abdikarim Guled unstoppable. His departure, in addition to the electing Farmajo has brought hope to the powers of the public. Now there is soon to be held election to replace Mr. Guled. This will be a test for the Galmudug and its inhabitants. Will they elect a money machine and a power hungry and greed driven president, or a thoughtful and visionary leader who desires to invest in infrastructure, security, and public policies that will benefit the public and have the public collect its dividends? That will remain to be seen.

Hir-Shabelle: as the newest addition to the Federal Member States, Hir-shabelle is less than a year old. The parliament of the Hir-Shabelle State elected Ali Abdulahi Osoble as its first president in October of 2016. It was widely known that Mr. Osoble was backed by the Somali Federal leaders in his election. It was for this reason that he barely stayed in his state. Instead, he was fully engaged in the election activities of his close friend Mr. Mohamud. As a result of his lack of performance and aided by the distaste of his currently assembled cabinet, he is said to be facing a domestic political crisis.

Among other things, the famous and very powerful Ugaas Khaliif Ugaas Xasan is believed to be still resisting his government. As a permanent figure in the state, the Ugaas was fierce opponent of the process in which was adopted for the state formation.

Conclusion

Farmajo, 55, has portrayed himself as an anti-corruption and a patriotic figure during the short time he served as the prime minister of FGS six years ago. When he was asked to step down in 2011, [Hundreds of people](#) took to the streets of the capital, Mogadishu, demanding that he stays on. “This victory represents the interest of the Somali people. This victory belongs to the Somali people, and this is the beginning of the era of the unity, the democracy of Somalia and the beginning of the fight against corruption,” Farmajo said after taking the oath of office.

Farmajo will now face off against endemic official corruption and al-Shabab's continued control of large swaths of the countryside. Analysts expressed wariness that Farmajo could mold a functioning government out of what is often considered a “failed state.” Similar to his predecessor, Farmajo’s mandate is to unite the country, defeat al-Shabab, and lead the country to a one person one vote by the end of 2020.

Formajo will face the mammoth task of uniting a country composed of disparate FMS, each of which has a distinct clan composition. In each of those states, strongmen have emerged who are seen locally as more important and more powerful than the FGS President. Formajo's success may rely on his approach to govern and build a broad alliance of clans without succumbing to horse-trading of government funds. If he is to make difference, he must stand up to the interest groups and resist the arm-twisting state presidents. He must use his overwhelming support from the public to steer his agendas and vision for the country. The first test will be whom he selects for his cabinet. Is he going to select corrupt figures with known ties with state presidents and other foreign nations with deep interests in the Somali affairs, or is he going to appoint clean technocratic professionals with proven expertise in their fields to help him take this nation to a higher place? Will he be seen as caving in to the powers of those state presidents, who have corrupted the system? The Somali people have lost faith and patience in their government leaders. For Farmajo to be successful, he will need to restore faith in government. One way that Farmajo can do this is by incorporating transparency, anti-corruption and good governance practices into how he executes his presidential authority.



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