



2016 Election: Why President Hassan could lose

By Faisal Roble

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If everything goes as planned, come October 30, 2016 Somalia could accomplish a major milestone and conduct parliamentary elections since the 1960s, however imperfect that may be. Despite President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud's recent pronouncement that the election will take place as planned, there are major logistical challenges to meet this ambitious deadline. Even with good faith, it is still a gigantic task to (1) have 14,025 elders seated to elect 275 parliamentarians at multiple locations between September 24 through October 10, 2016; (2) have regional leaders (Puntland, Jubbaland, Southwest and Galmudug, Somaliland representative in Mogadishu) hand-pick 54 members for the Upper house by October 25; and (3) elect a president by October 30, 2016. All this to happen, while the entanglement on the issue of Hiraan/Middle Shabelle remains unresolved.



The current election model to be implemented, “Enhanced Hybrid,” is a Villa Somalia-produced model which was later on sold to so-called regional leaders. Puntland's fillip-flopping on its endorsement of this model (mainly the 4.5 clan-based formula part of it) signifies the proverbial case of Somali politics never having to be based on principles.

To make matters worse, the prevailing election institutions such National Leadership Forum (NLF), Federal Electoral Implementation Team (FEIT), the State Electoral Implementation Team (SEIT), the Independent Electoral Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (IEDRM), are the handiwork of Villa Somalia, in collaboration with regional leaders. No independent or opposition politicians have been given any role in setting up these institutions.

To that end, in a position paper dated August 31, 2016 the Coalition for Change said the following:

“In a manner that is not in line with the Constitution, the incumbent national administration and

regional administrations have self-appointed themselves to form the National Leadership Forum (NLF), a body that has since displaced the Federal Parliament in making decisions on the modalities for the 2016 electoral process. At its August 9, 2016, after a series of prior NLF meetings failed to reach consensus on an electoral model, the NLF had opted to adopt a compromise electoral model, the 4.5 clan-based model ... Surprisingly, the NLF has single-handedly set-up the rules of the game that would govern the administration of the 2016 electoral process.”

No doubt that President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud and his team control all the infrastructures to dominate the pre-election landscape – manipulation of election, media and money. A case in point is on the week of August 18, about \$500,000 has disappeared from the Central Bank. According to Abdelkarim Hassan, it is believed that contrary to the government’s assertion that the money was stolen, it was an orchestrated inner circle scheme by more than a lone teller. Many believe it was illegally withdrawn by the President’s handlers to use it towards his election campaign. Another facet of the illegality surrounding this money may interest the FBI; it is widely reported the money stolen was in forged US notes. Where it came from must have immense intelligence interest for the FBI. Worse, the Minister of Interior reportedly secured \$5 million from Sudan on September 3, 2016 and reported to the Central Bank no more than only \$3 million.

Despite what appears to be money laundering for the purpose of winning the election, a throwback to 2012 elections, there are more challenging factors that may limit the influence of the confluence of what I call the “triple evils of manipulation of election, media and money that are intended to corrupt the upcoming election.

Despite all that, if the election were held today the following categories will by far work against the status quo. After talking to and communicating via telephone and emails with hundreds of Somalis who closely follow Somalia’s affairs, the support base of the President has extremely contracted in the last 12 months. (In the scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest chance for re-election, the President may be out of luck in a fair and free election).

	CATEGORY	P/LAND	J/LAND	G/MUDUG	K/GALBED	H/SH	S/LAND	KHAT.
1	Clan politics	2	3	2	4	1	2	1
2	Security	2	2	2	5	1	2	1
3	Corruption	2	2	3	3	1	3	1
4	National interest	3	4	5	5	2	6	2
5	Trustworthy	3	3	4	5	1	4	1

This is based on many conversation with observers of each region’s politics

Following is a short analysis of the 10 most challenging factors that may not favor the status quo come October.

Security:

President Hassan and his government showed utter failure in pacifying Mogadishu. The dreamers who initially flocked into Mogadishu in 2012 and after are very disappointed due to unabated terrorism that has become part of a daily occurrence. Even the hitherto safe regions such as Puntland are now being threatened by a soup of terror actions whose infrastructure is still located inside Mogadishu; Somali National Army (SNA) is “in a complete disarray.” According to sources close to Villa Somalia, SNA is “in mess - still in a militia form and its rank and file doesn't receive salary regularly.” By all accounts, my source inform me, “SNA is a clan militia now limited only to the President's sub clan.”

Moreover, the internal security apparatus is even messier. For example, NISA budget assistance has been cut off by donors and they are left with their own devices – looking the other way when they know about a terror project, or selling their equipment and intelligence data to the highest bidder. Lastly, AMISOM's budget is severely curtailed and, as a result, it is losing grounds faster than before.



Mogadishu's unresolved demands:

All politics is local, said the late Tip O'Neill who presided over the US congress for more than two decades. Politics is won or lost based on your local support. Of the many factors contributing to the potential loss of election, the one factor to watch is the President's dwindling support within his base: he does not command the support of the dominant groups in Mogadishu - a huge factor in deciding the final outcome.

Initially, the President told or led the clans in Mogadishu to believe that he will give them generous seats at the upper and lower houses. That promise could not materialize, and he left them in the cold. If all things stay the same, which is what the National leadership Forum (NLF) hopes for, Mogadishu will go to the election without being represented. According to sources close to Mr. Gaas, Banadir is represented both in Galmudug and Hiiraan/Middle Shabelle. Because of past shenanigans and backdoor dealings, the President is between hard and rock. He cannot satisfy two competing parties at the same time.

Religious groups:

President Hassan Sheikh does not command the support of the highly influential moderate religious clerics in the whole country. They view his runaway corruption a blasphemy; they vehemently oppose his “kowtowing” to neighboring countries at the expense of Somalia's

territorial integrity. Moderate religious leaders finally joined the movement of “anyone but Hassan” which is getting momentum by the day.

Somaliland:

It appears that the President for the time being lost the support of Somalilanders in Mogadishu, including the Deputy Prime Minister, who was angered by the mistreatment his constituents received. This block of 60 seats, if you include what is termed the “Dir Konfureed,” was until recently in his pocket just like money in your saving account. Although they could have change of hearts any day, as it stands now they are inclined to vote for someone other than President Hassan.

Puntland:

Reliable sources inform me that Puntland has given President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud the short end of the stick. Puntland was rewarded in the final say over the selection of Khatumo candidates. In exchange, Gaas uncritically endorsed the 4.5 seats allocation. Except bruised image, Gaas got some minor concessions. In the way the President lost his core constituents. Now that he is distanced from his base, there is no guarantee that he will receive votes of those representing Puntland. In other words, he is being doped. Today, his lot is akin to the proverbial old lady who saw the celestial healthy camel and fatally discarded her reliable one over the cliff ending up with neither. Once seated, Puntland delegates may choose out of a number of candidates at their disposal, including some from the movement of “anyone but Hassan.”

Jubbaland:

Ahmed Madobe and his inner circle did not forget the war that Villa Somalia initiated against his regime in its infancy. In 2013, when President Hassan had more support with his base, he designated Jubbaland as the project to kill. He even allegedly teamed up with Alshabab to disrupt the federalization process that gave a painful birth to Jubbaland. Yet, when it comes to politics Jubbaland could go any direction.

Galmudug:

A particular pain to the President is the potential loss of the very state he created - Galmudug. Many Galmudug’s statehood supporters believe the President hurt their project by mishandling matters that eventually caused the state to be divided into Cadaado- and Duusamareed-centered mini administrations.

The talk of town in Mogadishu is that President Hassan even lost the support of Abdikarim. Not only is politics a dirty business, but it is also the art of possibilities. It is possible that Abdikarim may do the right thing and support an alternative candidate and get out of the President’s shadow. That is a high toll for Abdikarim.

Hiiran/Shabelle & Ugaas Rooble factor:

The political grave of Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud seems to be ironically dug in the very city that the ailing Hadrawi praised for being the city of love and peace. A beautiful Beerlula may have symbolized Beletweyn in the 1970s, but it could as well be today the political demise of a son that she adopted – that is President Hassan. If Beerlula conveyed the idyllic version of Beletweyn (Hiiran) – peaceful beautiful girl laying down on the river bank with her wavy hair down her waist - Ugaas Rooble may as well symbolize another fact of it; a resolute Beltweyn leader who draws guidance and resolve from one of its best known sons, Adan Abdulle Osman, who stood for principles.

Khatumo:

No matter who chooses the delegates for Khatumo residents, most observers believe that their votes will not go, or even favor, two types of candidates: they will not favor whomever Garowe is supporting. But more importantly, all indications point to their aversion to anything that smells President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud. The reason is simple. Khatumites believe that Villa Somalia, in cahoots with President Gaas, has undermined their right to establish their own state. Hiiran/Middle Shabelle and Khaatumo seem to share the same pain – the pain of being Somalia's throwaway regions.

Nepotism and corruption:

No president in Somalia has been so naked with political nepotism, cronyism and the culture of corruption than President Hassan. Political nepotism is now spewing across the spectrum. The recently exploded political division between Farah Abdulkadir and his cousin-turned-political nemesis, Fahad Yasin', who deserted the Presidents camp in favor of that of Farmajo's, is the final dagger out of multiple stubs in the heart of the President. Even the UN's Michael Keating has jumped on the fry and warned the President to stop tempering with the 135 original members of elders.

President Hassan Sheikh will fight tooth and nail and not to leave office so easily. He will strike enough temporal deals with regional leaders to win the election. Each and every stone will be left unturned. The question is what will the disparate personality-based opposition candidates do either collectively or otherwise. That is the million dollar question.

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