



TALO Center for Governance and Public Policy Studies

Promoting better policies through evidence based policy Research

Issue Brief 03



SOOMAALI
HESHIIS AH



DUNIDANE
HESHIIS LA AH

The Next Chapter: Assessing President Hassan's Policy Agenda, Potential Challenges, and Opportunities



The Next Chapter: Assessing
President Hassan's Policy Agenda,
Potential Challenges, and Opportunities
Ahmed Mohamoud Mohamed & Mustaf
Abshir Ali

1. Background

After the long and disputed election which took more than one year, on May 15, 2022, Somalia's Federal Parliament, which consists of the House of the People and the Upper House, elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as Somalia's next president through an indirect election in which delegates selected by the clan elders elected the 275 members of the House of People, while the 54 members of the Upper House elected by state legislatures.

Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud is the first Somalia president who has ever been elected twice in the country since he served the country from 2012–to 2017, this will allow him to rectify his previous mistakes.

This brief issue assesses the Five pillars of his political agenda, as well as opportunities, and potential challenges.

An Overview of the 10th President's Political agenda

The newly elected president, his excellence Sheikh Mohamed themed his election manifesto with the phrase "Somali at peace with itself and the world", which outlines his political agenda and policy priorities for the coming four years. Although many

politicians and political analysts might argue that the use of this slogan is driven by the aim of restoring the deteriorated relationship between the Federal government of Somalia and the federal member states and some neighboring countries and in the world, the 10th president, his excellence, Hassan Sheikh considers inclusive politics and foreign relations are the core building pillars in his policy landscape for his second term.

Before the election day, in his presidential candidacy speech at a joint meeting of the two houses, Hassan Sheikh delivered his talk by citing details of his political agenda that he would like to lead the country for the next four years if he gets elected. According to his policy agenda, he outlined five key areas as his policy priorities: national security, the justice system, humanitarian affairs, reconciliation, democratization, economic development, and foreign policy. Finally, he promised that the parliament would hold him accountable for all of this. Under the president's policy program, his policy agenda comprised these five core pillars

1. Security, justice, and humanitarian issues

Somalia is now facing the biggest security threat. The overall security situation remains very fragile, Al Shabab remains a major security threat to the country, collecting monthly 15 million of all taxes in



Mogadishu and other regions (Hiraal Institute, 2020). Even though there is enormous support from international counter-insurgency efforts to fight the insurgency activities, the Islamic insurgent group still controls some areas in the country, attacks government institutions, and conducts deadly attacks and explosions in the city. Additionally, with the existence of these security problems, the people are facing extreme hunger, malnutrition, and famine in most regions of the country, resulting from severe droughts induced by consecutive seasons of poor rainfall. This led to a massive displacement crisis. Nearly 1.4 million people have been forced to flee their homes and require immediate humanitarian assistance. As a result, the President prioritized government policies for security and response to the humanitarian crisis.

2. Reconciliation and conflict resolution

The second core pillar of the policy agenda of the 10th president is reconciliation and addressing grievances among Somalis. With the slogan of his policy program, "Somali peace with itself," The President stated that Somalia needs to have an inclusive government based on the constitution and rule of law. He further promised to complete the provisional constitution and emphasized that domestic policy is so crucial for his policy agenda. Likewise, the president also promised to

foster dialogues with Somaliland as it is part of his reconciliation program.

3. Democratization

Although Somalia had adopted a federal governance system, the citizens did not get their constitutional rights to elect their representatives in parliament, the country had not yet implemented one man-one-vote election due to the security problems, lack of political will of the top leaders, and the absence of national consensus on key aspects of federalism. As a result, the indirect election still appeared a viable and implementable option. Under the president's policy agenda, the third pillar of his program, the president highlighted the importance of implementing a democratic government system. He promised to give the citizens their constitutional right to elect and get elected. The president pledged that his administration will implement a multi-party system and a one-man-one-vote election. The president stated that all these could be reached through implementing consensus politics and political strategy based on co-chairing, respect, and national consensus among all stakeholders.

4. Economic development

Despite numerous efforts to re-establish the country's economic governance institutions, the country is still facing macroeconomic problems ranging from high unemployment, a decline in economic growth, and an excess inflation rate.



Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate shocks such as droughts have even made the country's economy more fragile. Somalia's main exports are from livestock, which has been severely affected by recent droughts that hit the country.

Moreover, the country's budget is largely dependent on foreign aid, according to the 2021 national budget, almost 68 percent of the revenue comes from donor support programs.

Although Somalia has untapped natural resources and other economic resources, including blue ocean economy resources and the agriculture sector, the country is still fiscally fragile, and the country's growth domestic production is very low.

Additionally, there is no census of resource sharing between the federal government and federal member states; the fiscal federalism frame is not initiated. Hence, the president's primary agenda is to foster economic development by building rebuts and a resilient economic system. Through this, Somalia will be able to finance its development agenda and become more self-reliant.

5. Foreign Policy

Somalia's foreign policy is criticized for not being guided by clear policies and national interests. Although there has been a lot of praise for the federal government's neutral diplomatic decision toward the rift Gulf states, there are also critics of

Somalia's diplomacy over the last five years toward the decisions taken by some neighboring countries. Consequently, the fifth policy program of the 10th president is to build a sound foreign policy based on political interest and economic, trade exchange, and mutual benefit.

2. Potential Challenges

The new president of Somalia faces numerous challenges, including insecurity and political instability, Macro-economic Uncertainty, draughts and famine, The Completion of the Constitution Review Process, holding universal suffrages, social service delivery, and formulation of sound foreign policy.

1. Insecurity and Political instability:

For nearly two decades, Somalia has been facing a bloody conflict with the terrorist group al-Shabab, which claims thousands of Somali civilians. In addition, the Al-Shabaab group still poses a security threat to Somalia's peace and security, even though, some limited progress in the formation of Somalia's national forces(Williams, 2020). Furthermore, social polarization, division among political elites, particularly Federal government and federal state members, and lack of integration and corporation among Somalia forces make the country's security remains fragile.



Since 2000, political instability has been the main challenge facing the government due to the overlap of articles 90 and 100 of Somalia's provisional constitution and the hybrid system (Talo Center Institution, 2020). Additionally, the other news of political instability between the federal government and federal member states has been recently growing.

2. Macro-economic Instability

Somalia's economic system is traditional and is dependent on agriculture, livestock, remittances, and small business. Although economic shocks such as floods, locust invasion, and COVID-19 had hampered economic recovery, private investment remains stable (African Development Bank Group, 2020). Furthermore, inflation is very high due to the food supply shock, increasing energy prices, and low production. The inflation rate increased annually to 6.45 percent (Statistics, 2022). Equally, the unemployment rate has risen by 70% (The Ministry of Planning Investment and Economic Development, 2020).

3. Draughts and Famine

Somalia had been hit by draughts and famine every four years due to poor rainfall, a dry Shabelle river, lack of state capacity in remote regions and rural areas, and low delivery of public service. According to the UN OCHA report, 6.1 million Somali people are affected by the drought (UN

OCHA, 2022). And they need emergency assistance from the government and resilience projects.

4. Social service delivery

Somalia has been suffering a lack of public service in the past 30 years due to the fragile state, lack of state capacity, and inter-clan conflict that caused extreme poverty (Mohamed, 2021). In the past two decades, successive governments have failed to provide service to citizens.

Even though the provision of public service is indispensable for economic growth and development and for improving living standards, there is no public service delivery in urban and rural areas.

5. The Completion of Constitution Review Process

The completion of the federal constitution is very critical for the Somalia state-building and implementation federal system, the progress of federalism is very low due to the incompleteness of the federal constitution and lack of political willingness.

The constitution determines the federal system including federal structure such as federal, state, and local government levels as well as resource and power-sharing, inter-governmental relations, and the status of the capital city through negotiations and political concession. In addition, repeated disputes between the federal government



and federal member states attribute to the incomplete constitution.

Holding of Universal Suffrages

Somalia has not held a popular election since 1969, which ruled out the political rights of the citizens and political participation. Indirect elections marred by vote-buying, corruption, intimidation, and irregularities enrich only a small elite group while depriving the majority of citizens of their rights.

Universal suffrage is crucial for Somalia's state-building, political stability, and development, and it is a kind of government accountability that enables the citizens to vote bad leaders out of office, as well as to reward the good leaders who deliver development and stability for the citizens. Furthermore, political inclusivity leads to inclusive growth and development (Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, 2012).

6. Formulating Sound Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is a determinant of national interest, preserves territorial integrity, protects the rights of citizens, national security, and sovereignty, and promotes national unity. During the last decade, Somalia's foreign policy has been pulled apart by the Gulf States and other foreign countries to fulfill their national interests, while the interests of Somalia's leaders are to receive political and economic support to remain in power rather than uphold the national interest.

The Somali government must establish an independent national foreign policy agenda based on national interests, security, economic, and territorial integrity, which is determined by foreign policy decision-making bureaucracies including the president, foreign minister, economic and trade minister, federal parliament, and intelligence agency collaboration with field scholars, think tanks, and research centers. On the other hand, the new president has an opportunity because he is the first president to have been elected twice in the history of Somalia. He is also close to the political elite, familiar with the clan dynamics, and understands Somalia's political context. This enables him to rectify his previous mistake.

Policy Recommendation

From the analysis done, the following recommendation is made in this brief:

- The security problems are getting worse. Besides, as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) mandates expire in without extension, to successfully take over the country's security, the government should have a clear security transition plan;
- Somali has not yet held a universal suffrage election, the long hoped for one-person-one-vote elections had yet materialized, to reach this milestone,



the current government must give due attention to all prerequisite environments including the completion of the provisional constitution and other laws relating to the popular election;

- The country has been witnessing the worst macroeconomic instability with high unemployment and inflation rates with low economic growth. Likewise, the government is fiscally fragile a highly dependent on budgetary support from foreign aid, Therefore, the government must give priority to tackling all these macroeconomic problems and developing policy initiatives to implement a fiscal federalism framework to mobilize domestic revenue; and
- Somalia is suffering from uncertainty in concrete foreign policy based on individual interest which plunged the country into domestic conflict, the current administration must formulate foreign policy agenda based on national interest.

Reference:

- African Development Bank Group. (2020). *Somalia Economic Outlook*. 1–6. [https://www.afdb.org/en/countries-east-africa-somalia-economic-outlook](https://www.afdb.org/en/countries-east-africa-somalia/somalia-economic-outlook)
- Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. (2012). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. (Vol. 92, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/3426813>

Hiraal Institute. (2020). *A Losing Game: Countering Al-Shabab's Financial System*. www.hiraalinstitute.org

Mohamed, A. M. (2021). Public Management Reform and its Effectiveness on Quality Public Service Delivery in Somalia. *Somali Studies: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal for Somali Studies, Volume 6, 2021, Pp. 142-159, 6, 142–159*.

Statistics, S. N. B. of. (2022). *Consumer price index (cpi) April 2022. April*.

Talo Center Institution. (2020). *The Ceaseless Political Conflict between Somali's President and Prime Minister: Root Causes, Consequences, and Possible Remedies Background*. 81(2), 137–140.

The Ministry of Planning Investment and Economic Development. (2020). *Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024*. <http://mop.gov.so/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NDP-9-2020-2024.pdf>

Williams, P. D. (2020). *Understanding US Policy in Somalia Current Challenges and Future Options*. July, 1–26. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/understanding-us-policy-somalia-current-challenges-and-future-options>