



Puntland: What went off the kilter since the investiture ceremony

By Abdiqani Ahmed Farah (Dala'aan) PhD
January 3, 20108

“The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones”
John Maynard Keynes

Thabo Mbeki got unsettled by the trek of the debate on a scheduled gathering by African leaders, current and former, deliberating on the “*kind of Africa we want and the leadership you produce to get that result*”. He, in the spur of the moment, bluntly lanced the boil that the **impediment** for Africa to come out of the poverty cycle, be free of war, driven by women’s emancipation, prosperous and equitable to everyone is “**wicked leaders**” who are steeling the public resources, accessed power in order to put money in their pockets and get rich here and now. The sad thing is, in a gathering like this, we peers are not critically telling the truth to each other and unless we do that, we would need a century to figure out the kind of Africa we want, he concluded.



Measuring where Puntland state of Somalia fits in the above debate, after five years of the presidency in Abdiweli Gas, it appears the protagonists vying for the role are not clearly setting out, on the tips of their fingers, what distinguishes them from the incumbent. Different in the sense of **policies** that succinctly foist them over their predecessors. This is because undeniably, twenty years in existence, Puntland has been teetering from one administration to another, and for the plebeians persisted all along hoping for, when forthcoming leadership features, this time round they shake their unenviable past off and new dawn will have broken.

What does it mean by new dawn; Its, in simple terms, a one delivers the *bread and butter*. By and large, the political entities hopelessly misconstrued what is it the priority of each Jama & Jawahir living under their prerogative.

You don't have to perform difficult mental gymnastics to inference the connotation of bread and butter as a fulcrum for every government policy in this day and age: its healthcare, education, food, clean water, cheap energy, justice, environment upon which the livelihood of pastoral lives is dependent and other basic amenities without which human beings couldn't exist. The question offers itself is *how*, and that is where the argument of this short essay staggers along in a long and hard slog fashion.

How can whichever executive branch shaped in Puntland ascertain the delivery of the bread and butter, since there has never been a modality for the citizens of this part of Somalia elect their representatives in the legislature to which the executive branch is accountable. Paradoxically, so far it pivots around a *leader who holds himself on a high moral ground*, spiritual practice is not entertained in here as any Somali individual entrusted with managing the public coffers so far, more often than not, has little or no respect for the tenets of his religious obligations that refrain him from pillaging, *practically eschew from the meager resources collected in the name of taxation and the amount the international community donates over humanitarian assistance to Puntlanders*. Unless and until this community gets the aforesaid leader, it's a mere selection exercise of resuscitating untenably *existing state of affairs* whereby the faces and the names of pernickety leader reshuffles like a deck of cards. The *status quo* is the order of the day: anyone comes along as a new president, since answerable to nobody, repeats his predecessor's political and social style, only touch worse. Two attributes stand tall on the myriads of bad traits they all share; to get liberal on the public fund and to eat his words on the democratization agenda. History of Puntland leaders' political record tells they lack that rear visionary leadership quality of predicting the future and take their fellow citizens into it. That means, they kept the existed state of affairs. In other words, "stay in the comfort zone"; *The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones*,

This is not a figment of imagination being fabricated out of vanity, it's the *modus operandi* that has been mellowing over the past twenty years: *the president rules the roust*. One thing noticeable in a major color of the presidents' extreme power is the patrician and plebeian alike continence the wish of the top man come hell or high ways. Hence, the government token budget (revenues and spending) for a standard financial year that is repeatedly passed by the legislature, with the blessing of the president and obtainable to the nation has been unpretentiously nebulous exercise by the Finance Ministry and parliament.

In regard to the current candidates for the 2019 presidential election, most Puntlanders sincerely believe they are no different from their predecessors: to seek the top executive office in order to win that *elixir for live* if you like. The thrust of the speeches, mawkishly sentimental as they always are, of the contenders for the top job, has been a fulmination in which they put all the blames of what went wrong for the past five years fully and squarely upon the incumbent: that he squandered an opportunity to rectify the mistakes and bad historic policies since the inception of

Puntland state. Now, what was it he got wrong and subsequently failed to remedy is the expectation of the public from the couple of dozens of individuals vying for the role to set out. As a matter of fact, it should have been an element, to scrutinize the contenders thrown their hats in the ring, of deliberation and great concern for Puntlanders. Engaging with the 0.95 lower tier of the community, they almost gave up with aghast and angry to see in the foreseeable future a responsible leader who wants to leave a legacy for himself and transcend persisted over the years culture of generating great deal of wealth for himself or use Puntland project as a springboard intended for the federal government top jobs. But then again, you don't have to rustle with your mind to gauge why this proverbial man in the name of president gets away with it: clannism-cum-nepotism got at the public into a swoon and warranted him to swagger with alacrity answerable to no one.

Indeed, it became institutionalized in the level of all and sundry dare to utter an iota about presidents' unabated power liken themselves with dire consequences. In essence, the repercussion one bears if dared to bring into account the delegated politicians who are doing compromised secondhand job is negative. Furthermore, the populace, represented in here by clan leaders, force their respective parliament representatives to vote for their fellow clansman presidential candidate simply because he belongs to the same agnate instead of his integrity, trustworthiness and other principal leadership qualities, first of which is to refrain oneself from the delegated tax payers fund. Frankly, these attributes should have been obligatory to everybody striving for both the presidency and representative seats.



Additional facet that has been gaining ground to select a president in Puntland is the *money issues*. It dangerously sets this already adverse elements of both man-made and natural disasters-stricken people into another layer of futility. You don't have to think twice in grasping how detrimental is when potential president for the next five-year term bought his way to the office from a chiefly corrupt parliament: they are consigned as fawningly sycophants there for his bidding. This removes the sole legislative oversight, since there is neither constitutional court nor self-governing accountant general the president couldn't sack, entity existed right from the get-go.

Intrinsically, *how* and *who* puts the presidents' unabated power in check is the big conundrum the rest of Puntlanders, "the parliament, traditional leaders and the public", to mull about and come up with a solution at least attenuates it. Strangely enough, the latter two, community-cum-chieftains, developed a unique habit of "*let him finish his term*" concept that subscribes the guy unrestrained authority to do pretty much what he wants without fear of repercussion. To sum up, this entity (the president) with the above-stated attributes need be checked if in any shape or form Puntlanders are critically series about the *kind of Puntland they want and the leadership you produce to get that result: channeling the public resources into the deserved services.*

What are The Pressing Priorities for Puntland Citizens?

Coming back to the thrust of this particular desultory, until recently, the security of Puntland has been relatively good, and the urgency should have long ago laid in the healthcare, education, justice, clean water, affordable energy, environmental rehabilitation, jobs and other fundamentally vital facilities aimed at Puntland to become conducive for everyone in the immediate future. Anybody traveling outside Puntland could easily notice ninety percent of the passengers boarding on a plane are extremely sick women, children and man seeking for HEALTHCARE from further afield. Apparently, they are spending huge amount of unaffordable money, mainly collected in a charitable fashion by families and friends. Obviously, it's a matter of urgency to bring missing healthcare facilities home and revisit the state of our public hospitals. In a quick flick through, without further ado the precedence of our healthcare scheme lies in the *clinical* site of the trade: good surgeons, medical facilities such as renal dialysis, medical imaging, operating theatres/suite, emergency system and conducive convalescence wards, to list a few. The ministry of health ought to revisit its priorities in here and engage international donors such as WHO in training the new and young doctors into specialized clinical practices. This will enable them to get conveniently and satisfactorily cheaper healthcare for Puntlanders locally. Now days it became an accepted habit for the foreign doctors to come and fill the vacuum. One more time, the question springs to mind is, what has got at the healthcare arrangement of Puntland for the last twenty years?

Further correspondingly noteworthy topic is EDUCATION as there will never be a realization of even good living standard without qualified and highly educated cadres. The primary education is very expensive and the majority of average Puntland families, as there are no public and free education, couldn't afford to send all their children in the household to the tuition funded private schools. It should be in the agenda of the executive branch of the government to reinstitute public schools (Public schools is meant in here as education funded through taxation or charitable organizations rather than *tuition* money) owned by pre-civil war administrations. No one knows the statistics regarding number of children go to those private schools in a typical family of seven, but can be confidently approximated that some don't go to school at all not knowing what the future holds for them, aside from the psychological effect. This in turn clearly impacts the future of Puntland workforce and progress in a multifaceted manner.

Regarding post-secondary education, there are dozen or so higher education institutions in Puntland deserved to have been commended in filling the gap gave rise to the disappearance of national University and creating hope for school leavers. In the course of time, the number of Universities on the land has been swelling, and ensuing question of excellence looms large. Hence, Its high time for the authority to get series on the quality of our universities. Its common place, even for the highly advanced western world, effective post-secondary education couldn't be solely sustained through private funding, and government grant hitherto is an essential pillar in making these institutions deliver quality education.

There are four, among other equally important features, sectors the universities require to improve: effective higher education management, qualified and competent lectures, up to the standard educational facilities and relevant programs central in producing graduates fill up the desperately needed skills in the civil service as well as private sector. Featuring Puntland authority ought to take its crucial role on immediately beefing up the quality of existing higher education institutions. This higher education question should be at the vanguard of the pending executive primacies to produce vastly qualified personnel that can deliver for the aforementioned basic amenities. As a result, the government, through the Commission for Higher Education, should put in place a budget (earmarked endowments if you like) and eligibility criteria, a minimum admissibility, things like the relevance of the degrees they offer, for the current post-secondary education institutions to qualify.

Another similarly significant theme aimed at those striving for the office is the question of ENERGY. The household electricity and gas are astronomically and unsustainably very expensive. Costlier than any other region of Somalia. Taking some stocks from Mogadishu and Hargeisa, Puntland price is unbelievably and comparatively very expensive. The average price disparity is 1:4 in proportion. Once more, this item takes primacy for a responsible leader who cares for the development and wellbeing of his people. Cheap electricity is such an important factor not only for the small industry economy to get its feet on the ground, but also for jobs and better standard of living. Observations has been made on why the energy is four-fold more expensive in Puntland than to comparably other parts of Somalia, and the answer was clear and simple: the energy market in Puntland is monopoly one exclusively locked for only sole company. That provoked in one's mind the economic term; vertical monopoly

“An economic advantage held by one or more persons or companies deriving from the exclusive power to carry on a particular business or trade or to manufacture and sell a particular item, thereby suppressing competition and allowing such persons or companies to raise the price of a product or service substantially above the price that would be established by a free market, the free dictionary, <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Vertical+monopoly>”

in which the customer has no room for maneuver to buy those goods and services. Why didn't the government, since the inception of Puntland state, do something on such a central subject and every other aforesaid likewise noteworthy concern is yet again an open question.

In relation to SECURITY, the settled notion remains that Puntland state only requires efficient and manageable force capable of guarding her borders. fielding some fact-finding in realization of well-organized force at the same time accountable to the administration from top military experts concluded that they all are lock stock and parallel in agreement and as long as the executive branch of the government, tacitly the president, is series and honest about it, its doable in a fairly short space of time”. As a mater of fact, they had been commissioned by the outgoing administration for the job and done the first round of the enterprise. Its only a question of the coming executives to take it from there. The defense force available at present are clan-militia (*maleeshiya beeleed*) answerable to their fellow agnatic chiefs. This puts the president as the commander in chief, on his prerogative, in an awkward position that he couldn’t commission military operation in place come what may.

The saga of *Tukaraq* is a glaring testament on the above thesis. notwithstanding, the top finance officials confirmed the largest budget for a normal fiscal year goes to so called phantom security force.

For the coming presidency, lean and efficient military force should be of great significance and in the top agenda, so that unnecessary great deal of resources hemorrhaging into a nebulously futile force could be curtailed in a very short space of time. That money could easily go to the bread and butter. This will make Puntland territory a place its citizens enjoy convenient public services and never forced them to seek those facilities far and away with a precipitous cost.

The JUSTICE SYSTEM requires revisiting and complete overhaul. It appears the judicial sector of the state seems to have been in the government, but not in power, quoting the famous phrase Geoffrey Howe coined in his resignation speech from Margret thatcher’s government. The new dispensation should make an urgency in overhauling the judiciary system of the land in order for the citizens under the administration’s jurisdiction enjoy the benefits of justice they longed for. The criminal side, which is the biggest undertakings of the magistrates, almost falls upon the traditional leaders under the contractual principle (*xeer*) modalities existed over the millennia. Solving the whole host of perpetuating and expensive criminal cases through traditional legal scheme is taking its tall for the cultural entities concerned and is under enormous strain to snap. The enforcement of the law and order of the land falls upon the police department and they must be doing this with efficacy. By training and giving the constabularies facilities necessary in well-organized release of their duties is required. Therefore, it’s a topic of insistence for the featuring government to attend the judiciary system and its reinforcement bell-mell. This gut-wrenching and the rest of themes heartened in this short shrift essay for the presidential contenders, if they are in any way, shape or form series in bringing this country around, to mull about.

Unbidden Advice to The Victor for The Top Job

Penultimately, the above livelihood potentials hinge upon the rightful appropriation of tax payer’s money and international community funding towards public services by a visionary leader whose primary aim is not for personal one, but to leave an indelible legacy pivoted around the well-being of Puntlanders: healthcare, education, justice, clean water, cheap utilities, jobs and sustainable environment. Even the security is dependent upon money, and if pillaging of the

public coffers lingers with impunity, its like running into small circles for the political elites and protracted torment for the citizens.

Finally, the respective *ministers of the state* must have an office in the statehouse catering for the day to day operations at the office of the president. He, the president, must make the executive court one reflects his seriousness of delivering the job, not a solace ensconced by his lily-livered, dinnae haver blamages whispering what a timid leader's ears enjoy to hear: that all is hunky dory. People who are highly skilled and qualified for the job of advising the president should feature. The departments of the state house are intended to be a mirror image of the executive branch of the government and should look like one.

Furthermore, its no secret the 4.5 acuity has been gaining ground since Arte and became hard to escape ubiquitous leviathan haunting each president, with the exception of Abdullahi Yusuf, to rationalize the council of ministry. Its the believe of every single Puntlander that the scale of the cabinet is unacceptable and should be restructured into a manageable set of core ministries, twelve or so, with a sound budget. Mr president, on this one the public are with you to drastically cut the number of ministers in your cabinet. So, "**go for it**" is the message. Now, the selection of the council of ministers usually stimulates a great deal of discourse in the community, and the steady view has all along been that the president should be appointing those ministerial posts to an able and thoroughly merited, according to his or her integrity, ability and credentials, individuals that can perhaps deliver the bread and butter.

Twenty years in existence, Puntland must turn a page and do away with frivolously idiosyncratic sermons respective presidents kept repeating over and over again: to pretend that he cares for Puntland without discerning Puntlander's livelihoods. For the government to make a den on the livings of Puntlanders, an efficacious civil service restructuring is so fundamental in the executive branch. One requires an overhaul reform process rather than minor tunings round the edges. implementation of the reorganization requires more extreme political will by a leadership that can stave off any hostilities reform strategy stimulates. As a final force for accountability, the president will bear the brunt and leaves himself extremely vulnerable to criticism even makes the guy unelectable once more if he fails to implement his campaign pledges.

Noteworthy is the technical incapability of most director generals (DGs) of the existing ministries. Puntland blunders to make use of projects international donors supposed to implement in the land due to compromised professional and technical capabilities, with the exception of few, of the sitting DGs for respective ministries. The impending administration should make across the board reform in the existing civil service in general and sitting DGs in particular.

Food for thought, every president, once wins the office, the opening valedictory speech is one vehemently reassures his subjects that the first thing in the agenda is to kick-start democratization processes, that he quickly appoints the constitutional court, the electoral commission and holds the local government elections afterwards. When his eminence is at the ebb tide of tenure, *suyo* eats humble pie. Here is the white elephant in china town: how can someone believe in a candidate repeats the same white equivocation.

Note: all along, the essayist referenced the participant of the discourse in president by “he” not “her” with caution as prospect of a feminine to fit in harmony with the other opposite is remote due to religious or other cultural motives. Also, each and every bread and butter issue touched in here merits an essay of its own. Lastly, the kind of president fledgelled in Puntland State the essay took some stocks is not tacitly taking potshot on the current one only, but anyone held the office since its inception. Each one has been maintaining his predecessors’ legacy and further consolidated the ascendancy of the president.

Abdiqani Ahmed Farah (Dala’aan) PhD

Email: abdiqanidalaaan@hotmail.com

Synopsis of the essayist

Abdiqani Ahmed Farah (Dala’aan) did his PhD at the University of Glasgow. His work focuses on, inter alia, higher education management-cum-quality assurance, curriculum development and environmental issues. Prior to that he was Head of the Faculty of Life Sciences (Environmental & Medical Sciences Departments), Coordinator of a two-year programme on Environmental Sciences Diploma jointly implemented by the East Africa University (Garowe branch) and EU through CARE. He was also Chair of examination of the World Bank functional review programme. He taught several universities and colleges including Somali National University, Technical University of Kenya, Camden College, East Africa University and Puntland State University. Guest lecturer: University of Helsinki, Michigan State University, Hormud Scholar, African Studies Associations and Mogadishu University.

