

## **Sultanism in Somalia**

High hope sparked the world-widely reported jubilations for the electoral victory of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo on February 8, 2017. The jubilant masses expected from president Farmajo honesty, integrity, patriotism, and compassion, respect of the constitution and rule of law, fulfillment of political campaign promises, improved security and living standards, and in general exceptional leadership. Unfortunately, after 2 1/2 years in office, President Farmajo not only unrepentantly reneged on all his political campaign promises for building a democratic government of the people, by the people, for the people of Somalia, but he deliberately rejected the constitutional democratic system of governance and embarked on establishing a **Sultanism system of governance**, worse than the authoritarian system of governance overthrown by popular uprising in 1991.

*By definition, Sultanism, term coined by sociologist Max Weber, is a type of extreme authoritarian regime in which political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a ruler who is unbound, unconstrained by ideological, political, legal, and traditional rules. It elicits loyalty through favoritism and nepotism from its cronies, and inflicts swift and brutal reprisals against its opponents, and applies draconian suppression on free media and civil society. It's highly personalistic authority*

*exercising discretionary power. The administration and military forces are purely personal instruments of the ruler. Government positions are personal properties of the ruler aspiring to rule for life.*

In the past 2 1/2 years, contempt to peace and state building Principles and goals, disregard of the federal constitution and rule of law, brazen corruption, public financial mismanagement, clientalism, illegitimate use of security forces for killings, arrests, and intimidation, abuse of judicial system, complete elimination of parliamentary oversight and government accountability and responsiveness, *abolition of separation of powers and checks and balances*, propaganda and disinformation, false nationalistic narratives, are the hallmarks and methods of control and domination employed by the federal government of President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo. Needlessly, time passed by fomenting domestic and international crisis that not only halted progress towards peace and state building but eroded national reconciliation and public confidence in federal government.

President Farmajo and his cronies are determined at all costs to establish Sultanism in Somalia. But, the Somali people share the powerful sentiment to resist and defeat Sultanism in Somalia.

The federal government proclaims accomplishments not related to its stated constitutional mission of advancing a

nation building agenda and goals. The policy priorities agreed with international donors have been cast aside. All energies, resources, and attentions of the federal government have been directed to the recruitment and mobilization of large force of sycophants to praise President Farmajo; antagonism, marginalization, and smear campaign against certain clans; the ousting of former respected experienced speaker of the federal parliament Mr. Jawari; disabling the federal parliament to eliminate government accountability, transparency, and responsiveness; dismissal of independent ministers from the cabinet; campaign to oust all Presidents of the federal member states through corruption, local divisions, and collusion with Ethiopia; the purge of the security forces from mistrusted elements to secure allegiance to the ruler; and quarrel with international partners. The security forces operates under the whims of the President, the commander in chief.

Ironically, Somali people suffer the misfortune of being subject to the unconscionable abuses of Sultan regime under the tutelage of African Union Forces (AMISOM) authorized by the United Nations Security Council invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Western donors foot the AMISOM bill. This arrangement is betrayal of democracy, good governance, and international laws.

The concern of the international partners of Somalia about the protection of gender and minority rights in Somalia is

futile because almost all citizens live in violence, insecurity, oppression, and poverty for the failure of the Somali state to respect the rule of law and to serve effectively, efficiently, justly, and fairly to all Somali citizens. Sultanism breeds insecurity, terrorism, armed rebellions, and poverty. Despotism system of governance caused the collapse of the Somali state, civil conflict, and statelessness that afflicted Somalia for a long period of its history.

While US President Donald Trump referenced “*Somalia*” as totally a broken and crime infested place governed by most corrupt and inept government in the world, in a different light, on July 17, 2019, the US Ambassador to Somalia, Donald Y. Yamamoto, published a self-absolution and compassion **article** highlighting the US support for alleviating the immense problems vexing Somalia. In the article, the Ambassador emphasized good governance as key to peace and prosperity in Somalia and said:

*The United States is supporting the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States **as they work together, along with Somalia’s vibrant civil society to rebuild communities and establish credible governance** (emphasis added). Federal and state officials still have much work to do to determine how to share resources and authorities to better deliver services to Somalia’s citizens, including security, and follow through with their shared commitment to hold one-person, one-vote elections on schedule next year.*

Unfortunately, President Mohamed Farmajo has doggedly refused to work with federal member states, with civil society, and with many stakeholders for reconciliation and for important political agreements critical for the completion of the federal constitution and for building the institutional structures of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Instead, he chose populist politics based on social division, youth manipulation, political exclusion and marginalization, corruption, and clientalism, and destabilization of federal member states, all to create subservient loyalists, acolytes rather than **stakeholders**. Thus, the prolonged stalemate that halted the progress towards peace, security, and democratization, has forced some members of the international partners to express their frustrations and self-absolution positions publicly and directly to the Somali people and to withhold their financial support.

The 2017 UNSOM and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) report on “**Protection of Civilians: Building the Foundation for peace, security and human rights in Somalia**” for the promotion of human rights and protection of civilians as *foundational elements for legitimate state* did not produce the desired impact. Regrettably, the outlook for democratic state in Somalia is bleak. Emerging Sultanism propel Somalia back to violence and lawlessness.

President Farmajo and his coterie failed to appreciate the mammoth work required to perform in order to transition Somalia from failed state situation to full-fledged functioning sovereign state capable of providing state functions of peace, security and prosperity. In 2018 and 2019, many international organizations published several evaluation reports on Somalia's post-conflict progress. The common conclusion of all reports is the failure of decades of international support efforts in Somalia.

The UK government sponsored a report on “**Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Somalia Case Study**,” prepared by Professor Ken Menkhaus for period 2000-2018. The report argues that the Somali political elite bargain – peace and political agreements signed between participants of peace and reconciliation conferences - collapses if the presence of AMISOM forces and the international aid are withdrawn today and consequently disintegration of Somali society is inevitable. The report also contends that the political elite in power became a political cartel interested in personal gains (division of spoils) and if that doesn't change immediately, the failure of the Somali state will persist.

The Elliot School of International Affairs at the George Washington University supported the report on “**Building the Somali National Army: Anatomy of a failure, 2008-2018**,” written by Professor Paul D. Williams. The report states that “*over a decade of security*

*force assistance initiatives to build an effective Somali National Army (SNA) failed because of interrelated effects of political, contextual, and operational challenges.”* That indisputable failure makes unthinkable the departure of AMISOM forces from Somalia in 2021 or in another decade to avoid quick collapse.

The Swedish International Development Agency has sponsored a report on “**Evaluation of Sida’s support to peacebuilding in conflict and post conflict contexts - Somalia Country Report,**” prepared by a team led by Erik Bryld and published January 8, 2019. Most of the 2018 key progress indicators like governance effectiveness, political stability and absence of violence, voice of accountability, freedom of press, control of corruption, internally displaced people, and refugee, all show negative, unchanged or negligible positive change compare to 1990 base. That’s a big blow.

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in Sydney, Australia issued in June 2019, “**the Global Peace Index 2019 report**” in which Somalia due to small improvement in internal conflicts ranks at 158 place out of 163 countries. Somalia is the sixth least peaceful countries in the world. The other five countries are Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, and Afghanistan. The report uses 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create, support, and sustain peace in each country.

Finally, **Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) 2018 Somalia country report** evaluates the political, economic, and democratic governance performance of Somalia as part of 129 countries. Its conclusion on Somalia is not far from the conclusions of other reports. Based on the scale of 1 to 10, the overall status index of Somalia is **1.34**. Breaking down in its components, the governance index is **2.25**; the political transformation is **1.43**; and the economic transformation is **1.25**. Important issues considered under those indexes include political and social integration, stability of democratic institutions, rule of law, political participation, sustainability, economic performance, private property and market organization, international cooperation, consensus building, resource efficiency, and steering capability. Somalia is at lower end of the scale.

The reports guide the public and private policy and decision makers of the developed countries and international organizations for security, cooperation, investment, business and political interests in all countries. I quoted the above-mentioned assessment reports to remind the Somali leaders what type of country they are exploiting and to reflect on the gap between what they are focused on and what they are supposed to work on in order to establish a Somali state able to serve its people effectively, efficiently, and reliably.

Some hyperbolic statements of the international donors to justify the billions of taxpayers' dollars allocated to Somalia for decades obscure the paltry or regressive performance of the Somali leaders and the deepening of public dissatisfaction. The direct cooperation between international donors and executive branch of government contributes to the avoidance of accountability and transparency of the federal government.

Somali leaders have fallen far short of serving their people and country with honesty, integrity, patriotism, competency, and determination. President Farmajo is the final nail in the coffin for the failure of rebuilding a democratic State of Somalia.

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