

Deni's Re-Election: Balancing Villa Somalia's Scot-Free Politics

January 8th, 2024 Said Abdullahi Deni was re-elected as the president of the Puntland State of Somalia in a fiercely contested election. In addition to criticism from Puntland, the besieged Deni also faced opposition from the federal administration in Mogadishu. Although Deni has a reputation for being a dictator in Puntland from his previous reign, his opposition to Somalia's federal government has given him an edge over his rivals in the election. Said Abdullahi Deni has also run at least four elections, both in Puntland and at the federal level, giving him unmatched experience in campaigning.

Deni, why once more?

Deni's reelection was motivated by a number of issues, including but not limited to

- A. **Thinking Federally, Acting Locally:** Following his defeat in the most recent presidential election for the federal government in May 2022, Deni turned to politics of retaliation against the Hassan-Hamza administration in Mogadishu. Among his strategies are concentrating on the Puntland State election and paying comparatively close attention to the Hassan-Hamza administration. He now has more time to maneuver, play the political game in Puntland, and get to know his opponents there.
- B. **The weak candidates from the Federal Government:** Since Deni lost the federal presidential election, President Hassan's administration has detested the possible threat he posed. Consequently, the administration in Mogadishu has not supported worthy and competitive candidates. One of Villa Somalia's preferred candidates was Huruuse, the former foreign minister of Somalia. Huruse may come across as a courteous politician, but a lot of people think that his time in the ministry of foreign affairs speaks highly of his leadership abilities. Villa Somalia's intervention restricted Huruse's authority within the ministry. Puntland politicians, particularly those in the Puntland State Legislative, were therefore unable to take a chance on Huruse being elected president. They perceived him as a pawn of the federal administration that was in power. Rather, they would have rather to re-elect someone who is a fierce adversary of the government in Mogadishu.

- C. **Closing the Gap:** Since the establishment of the Art government in 2000, Somalia's politics have been governed by 4.5 clan-based calculations, in which one of **Darod** or **Hawiye** wins the position of president and the other the position of prime minister. There have been arguments and confrontations between the presidents and prime ministers of Somalia because of the controversial and contradictory provisional constitution, but there has also been a balance between them. The historical equilibrium was upset by President Hassan's appointment of Hamza Abdi Barre, a youthful, dynamic, and crucial member of his **Damuljadiid** political movement. PM Hamza has grown to be a certified obedient to his master, which is a good thing. Hamza has performed flawlessly in administrative tasks, but he harbored an infelicitous hatred for the "**Representation**" aspect. In light of this, Deni has argued in favor of the Darod clan's lost representation, which has helped him in his campaign for reelection. Deni appeared to be the sole Darod politician capable of opposing Villa Somalia.
- D. **Relentlessly Resilient:** Deni persevered through all the hardships and learned from his two losses in the federal elections in 2017 and 2022. At last, his perseverance has paid off.
- E. **The Step-stone to Federal Leadership:** Deni has made a variety of political promises as part of his reelection campaign, one of which was to enter the federal race in 2026. His ploy has won him the support of some well-known and seasoned politicians as well as the Puntland State Legislative MPs. They thought Deni could overthrow the Hassan-Hamza administration, particularly with regard to their unilateral "**Constitutional Amendment**" campaign and efforts to depose the Prime Minister and replace the Vice-President. Somalia's provisional constitution states in **Article 1** that the country is federal. The federal government and the federal member states should make national decisions. It appears that the rights provided by the constitution are being willfully disregarded by Hassan's administration. It is not simple to move from a "**Parliamentary**" to a "**Presidential**" system. Parliamentary system was interpreted as a warning sign for a possible "**Authoritarian**" regime.

Said Abdullahi Deni has defeated the opposition headquartered in Puntland and the federally sponsored opponents with all of these concerns, including the "**Pincer Attack**."

Even if his extreme conceit may put his long-term political goals in jeopardy, he is a skilled operator.

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