

Puntland Post Monthly

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A SOUND COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY CAN FOIL TERRORIST ATTACKS IN PUNTLAND

Garowe (PPM) —Al-shabaab claimed the suicide bombing that cost the life of the former Governor of Nugaal region. Al-shabaab planned the attack carefully to avoid searches. Where bombs had been prepared and where the car travelled from remains a puzzle. If the attack vehicle passed through checkpoints, lax security is partly to blame for the attack. If Al-shabaab assembled the bomb in Garowe, it must have been prepared by people who stayed in Garowe.

The Administration of former President Abdirahman Farole instituted a policy to register new tenants in Garowe to prevent Al-shabaab cells from making a secret base in Garowe. The assassination of Sheikh Abdukadir Ga'amey exposed how Al-shabaab recruits assassins and enablers and whom they liaise with before carrying out suicide bombing or targeted assassinations.

Duplication of security forces makes Puntland vulnerable to Al-Shabaab and ISIS attacks. In 2002 the former Puntland Intelligence Service was established without consultations. It was a time Puntland was undergoing a power struggle caused by the unconstitutional election of Jama Ali Jama as Puntland President. The new intelligence service has had the duty to help Western countries target Somali and foreign returnees from Afghanistan. It was a part of the War on Terror agenda.

The local intelligence agency metamorphosed into a quasi-independent organisation whose activities are not overseen by Puntland Government. In 2009 President Abdirahman Farole attempted to reform Puntland Intelligence Service. PIS funders persuaded President Farole to create a separate security force. PIS had been founded to collaborate with foreign funders to gather intelligence and arrest suspects and hand them over to sponsors. PIS has changed the name but organizationally remains the same. It is accountable to its sponsors.

The externally-funded intelligence service is better resourced than the domestic security service whose head is appointed by each new administration of Puntland. The perception that Puntland intelligence services operate outside the law dissuades people from sharing information with Puntland Government.

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Sound Counter-terrorism Policy...

From page 1

President Said Abdullahi Deni's administration has launched security reforms that do not affect rival intelligence agencies in Puntland.



Will President Deni merge rival intelligence services in Puntland?

Puntland State Government intelligence service cannot foil terrorist attacks if it leaves the counter-terrorism operations to its secret, a foreign-funded rival based in Bosaso. President Deni has an opportunity to merge the two intelligence services to lay formulate a sound counter-terrorism strategy.

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TPEC UNVEILS NAMES OF 17 POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Garowe (PPM) — Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission unveiled in March the names of 17 political associations after careful screening of applications. It is the second time Puntland State introduced local political associations after the failure of the first attempt in 2013 when the stakeholders described the initiative as non-consultative and opted out of the “democratisation process” spearheaded by the former Puntland

President Abdirahman Farole. UDAD and Horseed, two of 2013 political associations are not in the new cohort of political associations registered with TPEC. In December 2019 the electoral commission [published](#)

[guidelines](#) for registering a political association. The registration of political parties lasted three months. Each political association submitted a constitution, details about founders and deposit of US\$ 3,500.

A key requirement is that a political association must have at least 300 supporters in each of the six Puntland regions and that it should be civilian and not in possession of a paramilitary

or militias. Some articles in the guidelines have left obligations of the central committee of a political association open to different interpretations. In translation Article 6 of guidelines reads: “ The central committee is required (sic) the first congress of the political association.”



Guled Salah: “Registered political associations must meet the rest of the criteria.”

Guled Salah, TPEC Chairman, said the registered “political associations met preliminary requirements. They are required to meet the rest of the criteria by 20 April 2020.”

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SOMALIA: The Required Response to Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to an article published by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the number of cases caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has now surpassed 100,000, while the death toll has increased to about 3,500. The summary highlights that Covid-19 is now at least 12 times as infectious and has killed more than four times as many people as the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak, and is continuing to spread at an alarming rate.

This pandemic is no longer being experienced by China alone, where the first cases were reported, but is also being felt globally/ Countries such as Italy, United States of America, South Korea and Iran are among some of the countries that have been affected ...this disease.

In Africa several countries have ... [reported cases of Covid-19]. Many countries put a lock down on movement and ... [introduced] social distancing and called for citizens to stay at home. Those strategies have a huge impact on the economic and social developments of these countries.



Impact of Covid-19 on emerging markets' economies cannot be underestimated

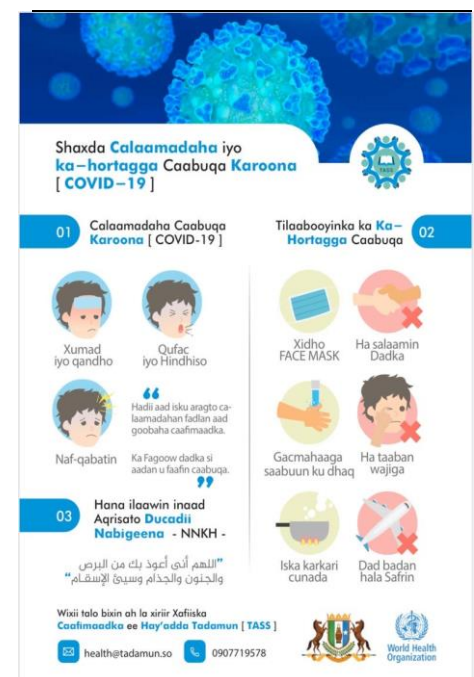
The healthcare systems are also being tested as governments have to cater for the large number of patients contracting the disease. The need to create isolation areas where the affected can be quarantined so as to reduce the number of individuals contracting the disease is having a huge impact on the [already] weak health infrastructures.

Here in Somalia our first case has been reported and the need to heighten our surveillance and put health systems [prepared for the pandemic] is ...urgent.

COVID 19 is likely to affect the socio-economic status in Somalia if strategic measures are not put in place.

© The Federal Government of Somalia

-5.3%
Impact on GDP annual growth rate
\$196.5
Decline in domestic revenue
\$301.5
Required fiscal support
\$200m
Health emergency response
© The Federal Government of Somalia



A health promotion on Covid-19 in Somali

WHO KILLED SOMALILAND INTELLIGENCE COMMANDER IN LASANOD?

LASANOD (PPM) – In February and March 2020 the city of Lasanod witnessed two assassinations that rocked confidence people have in Somaliland security forces. The first assassination involved an improvised explosive device (IED) attached to the car of the former Chairman of Sool Regional Court. The second assassination cost the life of Abdighani Guhad Hassan, the former regional commander of Somaliland Intelligence Agency in Sool.

Assassins in three separate *tuktuks* ambushed, shot Guhad dead and escaped the scene. No group has so far claimed the assassination. Authorities in Lasnaod arrested suspects belonging to one subclan in Lasanod.

Somaliland Government has not succeeded to professionalise security forces in Lasanod. In October 2007 when Somaliland Administration captured Lasanod from Puntland, it had briefly relied on forces loyal to Ahmed Abdi Habsade, the former Puntland Interior

Minister who defected to Hargeisa before re-defecting to Puntland in 2014.

Deployment of forces loyal to Somaliland from Yagoori reduced reliance on Habsade's ragtag militias and gradually boosted dependency on forces commanded by Mahad Anbashe. With this organisational change began a political rivalry that pits two constituencies in Lasanod against each other. One constituency feels politically marginalised in its hometown, whereas another constituency's unconditional loyalty to Somaliland Administration gives it what many locals view as "an unfair advantage" over the rest of the population.

COMPROMISED SECURITY FORCES

Between 2009 and 2013 unknown gunmen assassinated people working for Somaliland regional government in Lasanod. No one has so far been put on trial for murders that forced Somaliland government to reduce its security and court staff before employing staff locally to make it more diverse. Some locals point a finger at Somaliland's reliance upon one subclan to which the slain intelligence commander belonged. Guhad sent reports to

Hargeisa about alleged "Al-shabaab cells" without liaising with the regional governor, who complained to the Somaliland Government about bias in reports Guhad had filed to Hargeisa.

Somaliland Interior Minister Mohamed Kahin doubted the veracity of intelligence reports he had received from Lasanod. "Minister Kahin knows that officers of the intelligence force in Lasanod belong to the same clan as the Foreign Minister's. He took confidential despatches from Guhad with a pinch of salt and asked late intelligence officer to identify subclan identity of 'suspects'" says a Lasanod-based member of the regional court staff.

Somaliland Government has shelved efforts to make local security forces in Lasnaod more inclusive for fear of alienating General Mahad Anbashe. This fear also affected President Bihi's response to the agreement his predecessor had signed with a wing of Khatumo "administration" led by Dr Ali Khalif Galaydh in 2017.

The security puzzle in Lasanod grows more complicated. Somaliland drags its feet on finding a political solution to a political problem. "This reluctance makes Somaliland government less of an

administration but a force hired by opposing groups in Sool” said Farah Dayib, a local businessman.

“ What is farcical about the whole saga is the description of the officer as an intelligence commander when what he was supervising can hardly be called a regional intelligence office. The murder of Somaliland security force members

will continue as long as the majority of locals views security forces as a lop-sided organisation unjustly empowering militias of one subclan” says South Lasanod resident.

The criticism that partial recruitment policy tilts security forces towards one local group is similar to criticisms levelled against Somaliland government nearly two years ago when Ga’an Libah Conference was concluded.

Somaliland senior officers, the regional governor and Lasanod Mayor attended the funeral of Guhad. Many locals view the low turn-out for the funeral as an indication that people fear being identified as sympathisers.

POLITICAL RIVALS

The renewed insecurity is Lasanod results from political antagonism between

Somaliland Parliamentary Speaker Bashe Mohamed Farah and Somaliland Minister for Foreign Affairs Yasin Haji Mohamud . Bashe has long believed that the security problem in Lasanod requires a political solution. His line of argument has gained salience after the agreement between Khatumo “administration” and Somaliland Government. President Muse Bihi Abdi spurned calls for a political solution based on bringing together Lasanod stakeholders. His administration sees the security problems as an opportunity to raise funds from the International Community to boost the anti-terrorism budget.



Bashe Mohamed Farah: He views Lasanaod security forces as militia-based and unprofessional.



Yasin Haji Mohamoud: Will he support “diversifying” and professionalising of security forces in Sool?

President Bihi and Minister Kahin were career officers of the Somali Army before joining Somali National Movement. The policy to delay necessary security reforms and political reconciliation for people in Sool damages the credibility of the Somaliland political class. It makes Somaliland Government come across as an entity with a vested in the destabilisation of Sool, a situation that can delay impending parliamentary elections in Somaliland, and become a pretext to extend the presidential term of President Muse Bihi Abdi.

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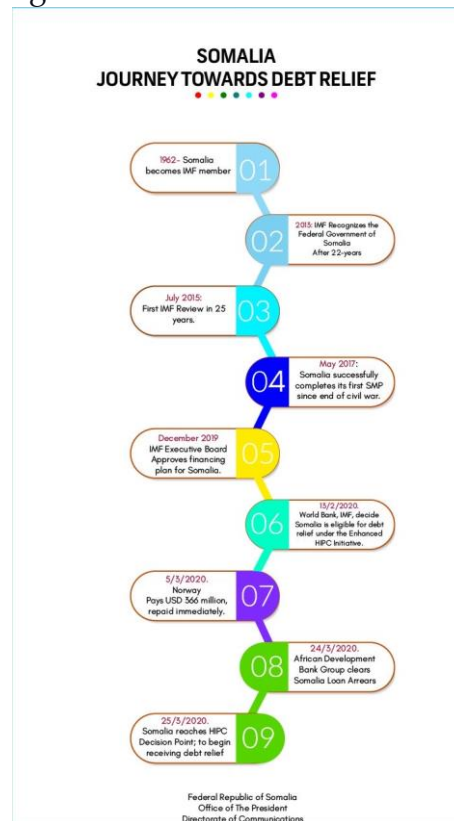
DEBT RELIEF FOR SOMALIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Somalia can benefit from debt relief thanks to the effort of successive Somali Federal Governments, and countries that helped Somalia with a bridging loan and funds to clear arrears with the African Development Bank. Debt relief will constitute a remarkable economic milestone for Somalia.

Somalia ranks high in the list of countries bedevilled by corruption. A study conducted by Western Virginia University researchers concluded: [“...countries with lower corruption and better rule of law complete the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries \(HIPC\) process faster.”](#) What are obligations on Somalia to attain debt relief goal? According to the IMF “If Somalia sustains its commitment to reform, it is expected to reach the HIPC Completion Point in three years, when its debt will be significantly further reduced to US\$557 million in net present value terms (NPV).”

Successful debt relief will spare Somalia servicing debts incurred by the pre-1991 governments. Somalia received

loans from both Western countries and former USSR. Unaccountable leaders can play havoc with the economy of a poor country and saddle future generations with a debt. Which brings us to ask the question: Will debt relief for Somalia predispose its leaders to borrow money and make Somalia a heavily indebted country again?



There is no guarantee that that a future Somali Federal Government will not borrow money from countries or multilateral agencies. Political recognition that the Federal Government of Somalia enjoys may come in handy when door fatigue compels foreign countries to reduce their

contributions to AMISOM budget. Somalia could be forced to subsidise the peace mission through loans. This scenario will sound less absurd if one takes into account the failure of the Somali political class to wean the Horn of Africa country off dependency on AMISOM since September 2012, when a new President was elected to head a permanent government.



IMF @IMFNews · 31m
#Somalia achieved a historic milestone today: the IMF and WorldBank approved the country's eligibility for debt relief. [ow.ly/wpSD50yVBWp](https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/05/05/200505somalia)



The other possible scenario is the possible commitment to funding white elephants or reintroduce lop-sided economic development initiatives that left more than half of Somalia in a state of underdevelopment. Debt relief might empower a less accountable Somali Federal Government to adopt statist policies in the interest of creditor countries. Without sound institutions, the debt relief for Somalia will turn out to become false dawn.

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Somaliland: the Looming Crisis of Covid-19 and Risk Factor of KHAT

By Khadar Mariano Hargeysa (PPM) — Since China has alerted World Health Organisation (WHO) to cases of an unusual pneumonia on the 31st of December 2019, the world has seen a rapid rise of the number of infected people in over 150 countries. WHO named the new virus Covid-19 and, after careful study of pattern of infections, described it as pandemic.

The pace of the spread of the is observable in the increasing number of people affected in the six continents it has affected within three months.

It has disrupted the way of life globally, with many countries first imposing restrictions and lockdowns to contain the spread of Covid-19. As the situation got worse, schools around the world have been closed, work-from-home approach has been adopted in several countries, events and other social gatherings have been cancelled, and self-isolation came to be enforced in many countries. There was little information on how Covid-19 began to affect Africa has due to a fewer documented cases of Covid-19

patients. Many have attributed the low number of patients to the fact that the majority of African countries do not have direct flights from epicenter of the Coronavirus epidemic; others have cited other reasons including the truth that many of these countries do not even have the kits to test people thought to have symptoms of Covid-19. Others pointed to the inadequate health infrastructure of many countries coupled with delay in introducing measures deemed to be necessary in the fight against the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Somalia is said to be the worst prepared country to deal with Covid-19 according to the infectious disease vulnerability index (IDVI) created by RAND Corporation. "If this virus has killed thousands in developed countries like China, Italy, Spain, and in Iran, you can imagine what the death toll will be in Somalia could be if preventive measures are taken in due course," Mohamed Mohamud Ali, Chairman of Somali Medical Association (SMA), told Al Jazeera.

Somaliland government, like Somalia' Federal Government, has taken several preventive steps to prepare for the looming crisis of Covid-19. President Muse Bihi Abdi has formed the National Preparedness

Committee for the Prevention of Covid-19. The committee has issued several instructions including a four-week closure of educational institutions, air travel restrictions, land border closures, the suspension of Berbera port activities except importing or delivery of necessary items such as food and medicines. These measures have not all taken immediate effect; for example, even though the schools have closed, other traders are conducting business as usual without following mandatory preventive guidelines .



Khat imported from Ethiopia

Despite the efforts of the Government and Committee, there is one big elephant in the room: Khat. Dr. Sa'ad Ali Shire, the Minister of Finance, has said that Somaliland had spent approximately US\$ 190 Million dollars on Khat in the first six months of last year.

Continued on page 8, column 1

This makes the Khat trade the government's second source of revenues after livestock exports.

Closure of the border has not affected Khat imported from neighbouring Ethiopia. There is no sign that the fast-moving trucks that deliver Khat in every town and village in the country are going to stop anytime soon. This situation remains unaddressed despite number of Ethiopians infected with Covid-19 going up. This complacency and lack of political will to enforce preventive measures masks the risk of Covid-19 catching Somaliland unprepared despite efforts of health professionals.

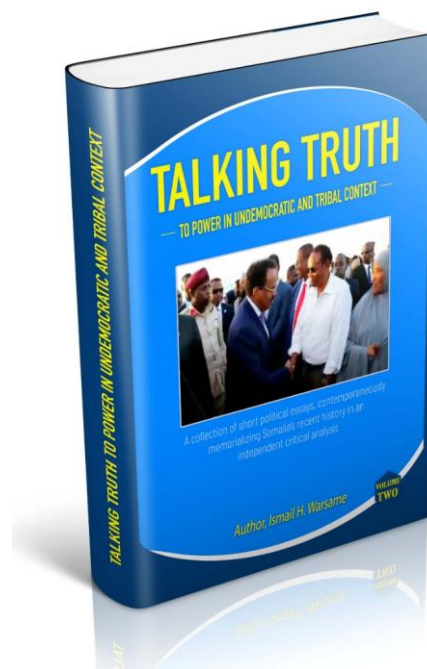
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TALKING TRUTH TO POWER IN UNDEMOCRATIC AND TRIBAL CONTEXT



This book by a veteran Somali political writer Ismail Haji Warsame can be bought at the Modern Printing Press located in front of Garowe Municipality, Puntland. It is in two volumes, each costing \$11.99. The books are excellent sources of information on contemporary Somali political history. It could be used as a learning tool in essay and English composition writing for students in high schools, colleges and universities. This book could be useful for Somali politicians and foreign diplomats as well as researchers on Somalia.

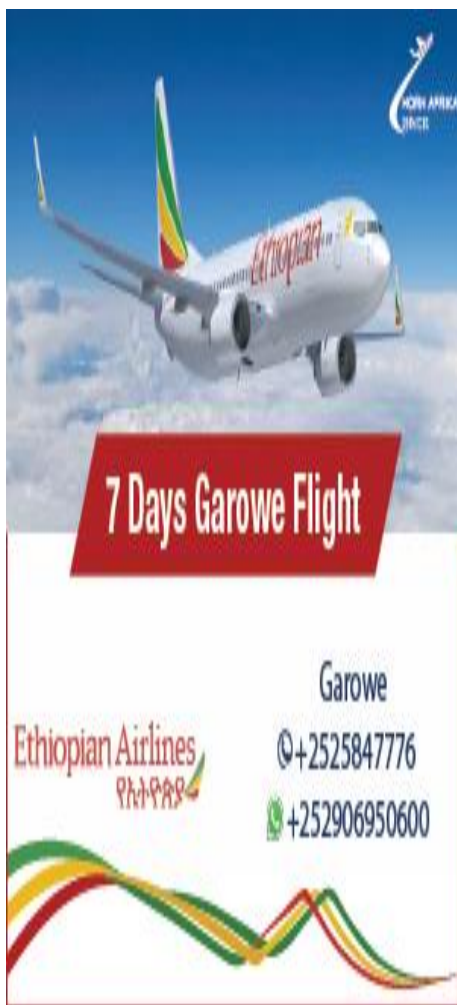


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DEVELOPMENTAL STATE VERSUS ECONOMIC LIBERALISM IN ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA (PPM) — Spectacular economic growth in Ethiopia resulted from developmental state introduced by the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi under the former EPRDF.

During 1990s the Ethiopian government rejected calls by Bretton Woods duo to open up markets to foreign competition. Government control of forces of production deepened control of political processes. Between 2005 and 2017 EPRDF, the dissolved party, became the only party to win more than 95% of votes cast. There was no a rival ideology against developmental state.

Things began to gradually change in 2018 when EPRDF appointed Dr Abiy Ahmed the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. *Financial Times* urged Abiy Ahmed [“to finish the liberal reform he has started.”](#)

Since then the Ethiopian government has adopted an economic policy to facilitate privatisation of key industries. Developmental state has come

to be associated with suppression of Ethiopians’ entrepreneurial drive. To buy one SIM card an Ethiopian citizen had to queue in the morning before a shop with the possibility of going home without buying a SIM card. Ethiopia has one telecommunications agency that makes registration of mobile phone users mandatory. Privatisation could loosen the government’s grip on the body politic but risks creating cartel. A select group of people with deep pockets could buy shares of privatised agencies. If foreign countries bid for the sale of major, government-owned industries, the policy to woo the Ethiopian diaspora could backfire.

Was it too early for Abiy Ahmed to write off developmental state for inefficiencies? Until 2008 Ethiopia was one of the least indebted African countries. Between 2008 and 2018 Ethiopia’s external debt “increased by 25.5%” according to a paper by the Ethiopian Economic Association.

IMF rates Ethiopian debt as high risk due to: “increased non concessional and government guaranteed borrowing; delays in completing key export-oriented projects; maturing of non-concessional borrowing contracted in the last decade;

Low export performance; erratic growth in FDI and other Foreign currency sources; low-return projects prioritization; a and absence of strict debt management guideline and legal framework.”

Ethiopia: Debt Accumulation, Its Sustainability and Impact on the Economy Now and In The Future
Panel Discussion
25th General Assembly of Ethiopian Economic Association

Fantahun Belew
Addis Ababa
17/11/2018

This trend has impact on the ability to borrow money from multilateral organisations or countries. It can discourage investors from taking advantage of potential business ventures in Ethiopia, and can lead to “high debt financing and a weak economy,”

Ethiopia’s debt stock substantially increased after the death of Meles Zenawi in 2012, a sign that fiscal discipline had disappeared. Less investment in public services or a policy to boost export and service industry to earn hard currency are two remedies that can lessen the impact of debt accumulation on the Ethiopian economy.

Against this backdrop how can the Ethiopian government justify a new borrowing from the World Bank given the assessment of IMF that

“Ethiopia continues to be at high risk of external debt distress, and consequently is at high risk of debt distress overall...”?

Abiy Ahmed might be paying a lip service to economic liberalism while keeping the EPRDF playbook to make the Prosperity Party the top dog in Ethiopian politics. He seems eager to stick to the fiscal indiscipline he had repudiated before the dissolution of EPRDF last year.

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ESCAPING FROM AL-SHABAAB'S CONSCRIPTION OFFICERS

Dhadhaab Refugee Camp, North East Kenya (PPM) — Al-shabaab, the Somalia-based extremist organisation, does not run out of recruits, so goes the story. Its failed attempt to launch a surprise attack against Puntland in 2016 betrayed its one-time secret recruitment strategies. Almost 30% of Al-shabaab fighters taken prisoners by Puntland Defence Forces were children under 15 years of age. Some of the children interviewed shared harrowing experiences about how Al-shabaab persuaded them to join religiously justified punitive expedition against Puntland State. Children were recruited in Lower Shabelle, Upper Jubba, Middle Jubba, Bay and Bakool regions. Their parents reported them missing. An interrogator asked one emaciated child POW how he managed to carry an AK-47 assault rifle and walk more than 200 KM.

Some parents who came to Puntland to have their “abducted” children reunited with them had expressed a wish to bring up their children in an environment where Al-shabaab conscription officers cannot

breathe down on families' necks. Al-shabaab senior leaders are not young men in the conventional sense of the word. The use of the word *youth* in the organisation's name conveys more than ideological commitment. It is a means to recruit young fighters regardless of their age. In Lower Jubba, where Al-shabaab controls Bu'aale, the administrative capital of the region, and Jilib, the group has put in a place a policy that compelled many parents to cross the border between Somalia and Kenya and start life in refugee camps such as Dhadhaab and Dhagahley.

Al-shabaab obliges a family with three sons to send one to Al-shabaab barracks (mu'askar) to train to become a fighter or an intelligence operative (amniyat) after screening (tarshih).

Luqman (not his real name) told *Puntland Post* stringer in Dhadhaab that he "was forced to flee a hamlet in Middle Jubba after Al-shabaab gave me an ultimatum to allow one of my sons to join the group." Luqman said he would be accused of espionage had he not fled the hamlet to seek asylum in Kenya. "I told them that both my sons are adults and that it is their decision, not mine,

to join Al-shabaab" Luqman told *Puntland Post* stringer. If three sons are under 15 years of age, parents will have to give one of the sons up for adoption by Al-shabaab. "Al-shabaab has shed any pretence of good conduct towards families and children. Families in Al-shabaab-controlled areas live in constant fear of having their sons conscripted for suicide bombing, intelligence gathering or aiding and abetting assassins" says Mukhtar Dala'an, a former coordinator of Somali Red Crescent Office in Baidoa, who is now in Dhadhaab refugee camp.

Al-shabaab leaders worry about the dwindling population in districts the group controls. It does not restrict travelling to and from districts under its control. Such a decision will limit its ability to launch suicide bombing missions in Mogadishu, Kismayo and Lower Shabelle. For parents fearing the gaze of conscription officers, relocating to another part of Somalia or seeking asylum in neighbouring Kenya are two appealing options.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST MARS A RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION IN PUNTLAND

Garowe (PPM) — A research partly commissioned by *Kaalo*, a Garowe-based NGO, and [published in February issue of *Journal of Financial Crime*](#), brings to light corruption in humanitarian aid. The paper by Abdinur Abdirisak Sofe, discusses the extent to which some Puntland line ministries facilitate embezzlement of humanitarian aid – "corruption in project granting" – and implicated "project managers and support staff in addition to line ministries, parliament and community representatives."

Founded in 1991, *Kaalo Aid and Development* "is involved in relief aid, rehabilitation and development programs in various sectors: Education, Health, Rural Development, Agriculture and livelihood and Governance (Peace, Human Rights, Gender Development, and Democracy and Psycho social issues)."

The researcher used interviews – known as qualitative method in the social parlance – to gather

data on corruption in the humanitarian sector in Puntland. Reluctance of people and government workers to be interviewed about the prevalence of corruption is one limitation of the study.

Conflict of interest affects the rationale and conclusions of the paper. *Kaalo* is an NGOs that delivered many tender-based humanitarian projects. It has received funds from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) “to enrich the governance knowledge in the country and help the fight against corruption.”

“ If a consortium of NGOs commissioned the report a conflict of interest would not crop up” says Jama Dahir, a former civil servant in Bosaso. “ The research will raise the profile of the organisation that commissioned the researcher to carry out the research. That is the main takeaway from the paper.”

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Can the New European Commission Deliver on Its Promises to Africa?

Familiar promises of equal partnership must be backed by bolder action, including an expanded budget, internal reform and a rethink of its approach to trade negotiations.

By [Fergus Kell](#) Projects Assistant, Africa Programme and [Damir Kurtagic](#) Former Academy Robert Bosch Fellow, Africa Programme

The new European Commission, headed by Ursula von der Leyen, assumed office on 1 December, and there are early signs that Africa will begin near the top of their foreign policy priorities. Policy towards Africa under the new EU administration is yet to be fully defined, but its contours are already visible in the selection of commissioners and assignment of portfolios.

Although rumours of a dedicated commissioner for Africa were unfounded, the appointment of Jutta Urpilainen to the new role of commissioner for international partnerships – replacing the

former post of development commissioner – is a strong signal of ongoing change in EU development thinking, away from bilateral aid towards trade and investment, including by the private sector.

This may have significant consequences for the EU’s relationship with Africa. In her [mission letter](#) (opens in new window) to Urpilainen in September, von der Leyen listed the first objective as a new ‘comprehensive strategy for Africa’. Urpilainen, Finland’s finance minister before being posted to Ethiopia as special representative on mediation, has also described her appointment as an opportunity to move on from traditional measures of aid delivery.

Ambition or incoherence?

However, this ambition may be at odds with other EU priorities and practices, notably managing migration and institutions and instruments for governing EU–Africa relations that remain rooted in a ‘traditional’ model of North–South development cooperation rather than equitable partnership.

Another newly created post will see Margaritis Schinas assume the role of vice-president for

promoting the European way of life – formerly ‘protecting our European way of life’ before a backlash saw it changed – a reminder that migration will remain high on the EU’s foreign policy agenda. The new high representative for foreign and security policy and chief EU diplomat, Josep Borrell, has highlighted the need for bilateral partnership with countries of origin and transit, mainly in Africa.

Negotiations also continue to stall on a replacement to the Cotonou Agreement, the 20-year partnership framework between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states, which now looks certain to be extended for at least 12 months beyond its expiry in February 2020.

Ambiguities in the EU’s negotiating approach have certainly contributed to the delay: having pushed initially for a separate regional pillar for Africa that would be opened to the North African countries (who are not ACP members) and include a loosely defined role for the African Union, this would later be abandoned in favour of a dual-track process on separate new agreements with the AU and ACP respectively.

The EU also continues to pursue controversial economic partnership agreements under the aegis of Cotonou, despite their increasing appearance of incompatibility with the pathbreaking African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) – one of the clearest expressions to date of [African agency](#).

The EU has so far attempted to gloss over this incoherence, claiming that EPAs can somehow act as the ‘building blocks’ for Africa-wide economic integration. But tensions are appearing between EU departments and within the commission, with the European External Action Service inclined to prioritize a more strategic continental relationship with the AU, while the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development remains committed to the ACP as the conduit for financial support and aid delivery.

And it is unlikely to get away with such incoherence for much longer. Change is now urgent, as numerous countries in sub-Saharan Africa continue to attract the strategic and commercial interests of the EU’s competitors: from established players such as China and potentially in future the UK, which is intent on remodelling

its Africa ties post-Brexit, to emerging actors such as Turkey or Russia, which held its first Africa summit in October.

The need for delivery

If the EU is serious about its rhetoric on equal partnership, it must therefore move beyond convoluted hybrid proposals. Delivering on the Juncker administration’s proposal to increase funding for external action by 30 per cent for 2021–27 would mark an important first step, particularly as this involves streamlining that would see the European Development Fund – the financial instrument for EU-ACP relations – incorporated into the main EU budget.

The new commission should therefore continue to exert pressure on the European Council and European Parliament to adopt this proposal, as negotiations on this financial framework have been repeatedly subject to delay and may not be resolved before the end of the year.

Beyond this, proactive support for the AfCFTA and for structural transformation more broadly must be prioritized ahead of vague promises for a continent-to-continent free trade agreement, as held out by

Juncker in his final State of the Union address in 2018.

The significance of internal EU reforms for Africa should also not be discounted. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy, for instance, has placed the African sector at a particular disadvantage and has made it harder to compete even in domestic markets, let alone in the distant EU export markets. EU efforts to stimulate inflows of private investments into the African agricultural sector, abolish import tariffs and offer technical support for African producers to satisfy EU health and safety regulations will be of little use if they are undermined by heavy subsidies across Europe.

Ultimately, changes to job titles alone will be insufficient. The new commission's rhetoric, while ambitious, differs little from that of the previous decade – Africa has heard the promise of a 'partnership of equals' and of 'shared ownership' since before the advent of the Joint Africa–EU Strategy in 2007. Now is the time for truly bold steps to implement this vision.

Source: [Chatham House](#)

PRESIDENT DENI SHOULD NOT WASTE POLITICAL CAPITAL

Garowe (PPM) – The three-day consultative conference concluded in Garowe yesterday had produced a result that may help President Said Abdullahi Deni to strike a deal with the Federal Government of Somalia. He accepted invitation from the Federal Government to visit Mogadishu. In the communique read out at the end of the conference a mention was made of a plan of President Said Deni's to visit administrative capitals of Federal members States.

This plan is all the more discouraging. It smacks of a return to haphazard policy-making that characterised Deni administration during the first year of his tenure. In the first interview upon winning Garowe Presidency Deni vouched for the significance of Council of Interstate Cooperation formed by his predecessor to exert political pressure on the Federal Government. The Council faltered after Hirshabele and South West State showed less interest in supporting an agenda of a different Federal Member state aimed at making Puntland State stand out as preeminent Member State. One of the weaknesses in the consultative conference turned out to be the failure to address the myriad challenges – the status of Bosaso Port Agreement with DP World, the failure to rein in runaway corruption still being perpetrated by people associated with the previous administration for example – in Puntland.

The consultative conference has taken a leaf from the posturing of the former Puntland President Abdiweli M. Ali, who in 2016 refused to sign up to the electoral plan of the Federal Government but then signed the notorious 4.5-based plan used to conduct the 2017 elections in Mogadishu.

The contrast between the strongly worded communique and the sudden change of Puntland State government policy to compromise in favour of close relations with the Federal Government might help Deni to retain the privilege to select the new cohort of Puntland MPs and Senators for 2021 elections and have input into the federal cabinet appointments. It is not clear if the Federal Government will accept such a proposal. Puntland may invoke the 1998 Charter again to claim federal representation privileges of constituencies in the Disputed Territories. The new electoral law passed in December empowers a committee to resolve disputes on parliamentary and Senate seats.

Puntland can no longer promote itself as the Spokesperson of Federalism in Somalia when the Garowe-based administration opposes decentralisation and political accountability at the local level. Puntlanders understand that one form of centralisation is not better than another. The credibility gap in pro-federalism claims predisposes every Puntland administration to waste political capital too early. President Said Deni should not be repeating that political misjudgement.

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