

Policy Briefing

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Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls

I. Overview

Puntland is the first of Somalia's federal units to attempt transition from clan-based representation to directly-elected government, but poor preparations and last-minute cancellation of local elections in July underline the challenges of reconciling competing clan interests with a democratic constitution. Cancellation pragmatically averted violence, but societal tensions remain unaddressed. The presidential vote by a clan-selected parliament in January 2014 will thus be fraught. Weak political and judicial institutions will struggle to mediate, risking involvement by partisan arms of the state. Direct elections are no panacea for reducing the conflict risks, but hard-won incremental progress on the constitution and local democratisation must not be abandoned. The cancelled ballot's lessons should be instructive for promised elections in the rest of Somalia. Better technical preparations matter, but Puntland's experience shows that donors and other international actors also need to be heedful of local political realities, including support of elites, robustness of institutions and viability of electoral districts.

This case is especially relevant for the projected democratic transition in the rest of Somalia by 2016, to which both the Somalia Federal Government (SFG) and donors, including the UN, are vocally committed. All four of Puntland's presidents have articulated ambition for constitutional and representative democracy, yet progress has been haphazard. It took eleven years to pass a draft state constitution, a complex, internally disputed process further delayed by the machinations of political elites torn between shoring up a stable regional base and competing for power in Mogadishu.

The clan role remains paramount, but inter- and intra-clan divisions are deep, and successive proposed reconciliation meetings have yet to take place. This reflects both the government's attempts to influence the process and fundamental disagreements between clans and sub-clans over representation. Territorial disputes with the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in the contested borderlands of Sool and Sanaag continue to affect Puntland's fragile clan-consensus, especially the representation of Dhulbahante and Warsangeli clans in the new parliament. Elections bring these complex territorial and political issues to the fore, exacerbating clan cleavages and providing opportunities for extremists, as surely will be the case in many other parts of Somalia as well.

To avoid a constitutional crisis and ensure a shift toward a more inclusive system of representation, the Puntland state government should:

- ❑ make transparent the role and internal processes of the Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Committee (CRRC) charged with reviewing parliamentary candidates, including consultations with clan elders and candidates on nomination of its members;
- ❑ issue a statement confirming that political associations that successfully registered to contest the cancelled 2013 local elections will be allowed to resubmit their registration applications the next time direct elections are scheduled without being subject to further process or fee requirements; and
- ❑ commit publicly to reinstitute the local democratisation process, once the January presidential selection is concluded.

The UN, U.S., UK, EU and other key international partners should:

- ❑ engage closely in supporting a restarted democratic transition, through both technical assistance and symbolic acts, including public statements of support; and
- ❑ promote an inclusive all-Puntland constitutional review process, involving all key stakeholders, to align the federal and Puntland constitutions equitably, emphasising the importance of supporting local election processes.

II. Instituting Democratic Politics

Puntland, established in 1998 as a Harti-Darood¹ clan-based territorial authority, has long been viewed as one of Somalia's regions of stability.² This relative stability – piracy and enclaves of Islamist militants, including Al-Shabaab, notwithstanding – has largely depended on the ability of the three major Majerten sub-clans (Osman Mohamoud, Isse Mohamoud and Omar Mohamoud) – known collectively as the Mohamoud Saleban – to accommodate each other.³ But consensual politics has been difficult to maintain as the state-building agenda has progressed in neighbouring Somaliland as well as Puntland, weakening intra-clan cohesion among those domi-

¹ The Darood, a large clan-family, live primarily in north-eastern Somalia (especially the federal state of Puntland) and the south west (the new federal state of Jubaland), as well as central Somalia and parts of the Somali Region (Ogaden) in Ethiopia and north-eastern Kenya. The Harti, a Darood division, include inter alia the Dhulbahante, Majerten, and Warsangeli clans, whose representatives participated in Puntland's 1998 formation. Smaller Darood/Harti clans also inhabit the region, including the Leelkase, Awrtable, and Dashishle. The Majerten are the largest Harti clan; their three biggest sub-clans, collectively known as the Mohamoud Saleban, each dominate one of the three "original" Puntland regions: the Omar Mohamoud (Mudug); the Isse Mohamoud (Nugal); the Osman Mohamoud (Bari). They have controlled Puntland's government, though the Dhulbahante have the numbers to exert limited influence.

² The most comprehensive (and supportive) account of the processes behind Puntland's establishment remains *Rebuilding Somalia: issues and possibilities for Puntland*, War-Torn Societies Project (no overall author or editor named) (London, 2001).

³ Consensus has depended on the triumvirate's informal presidential rotation and ability to control the main commercial centres (Boosaaso and Gaalkacyo). Roland Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia: A Tentative Social Analysis", unpublished paper, May 2010, p. 14, www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/The_Puntland_State_of_Somalia.pdf.

nant Majerten sub-clans, and especially Harti-Darood clan solidarity more generally.⁴ Presidential elections have in the past put Puntland's clan consensus under severe stress; in 2001, then-President Abdullahi Yusuf refused to step down after his term ended and he was defeated in re-arranged elections, leading to two years of low-level civil war.⁵

Domestic stability has also been affected by Puntland leaders' oscillation between asserting their (and the historic Majerten) role in national politics, including bids for the federal presidency, and retreat into the security of their semi-autonomous state. During periods of intense elite engagement in Mogadishu, local state-building was often neglected, including the aspiration to institutionalise a system of democratic representation through competitive party elections.⁶

Abdullahi Yusuf's tenure saw nullified elections, incipient civil war, institutionalised corruption and cronyism, severe drought and, finally, a drain of domestic resources to support his tenure as Transitional Federal Government (TFG) president in Mogadishu. His successor, General Mohamoud "Adde" Muse Hersi, did little to remedy the situation. He pushed through a draft constitution, but in the face of significant opposition, especially from non-Majerten clans.⁷ President Abdirahman Farole (the incumbent) came to power in January 2009 as a self-declared reformist, but he inherited a fractured and impoverished state, has attracted growing criticism and is accused in particular of hoarding power for himself and his family.⁸

⁴ In August 2009, Crisis Group wrote that the "collapse of intra-clan cohesion" would increase insecurity in the north-eastern region of Puntland, and that the introduction of "a multiparty system [would] simply formalise growing clan schisms". Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°64, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, 12 August 2009, p. 8. Despite having a vice president, Abdisamid Cali Shire, from a non-Majerten clan (the Dhulbahante), President Farole's government is perceived as disinterested in wider Harti-Darood solidarity, sometimes known as "Hartimo". Markus Hoehne, "The Somaliland-Puntland Border Zone and the Rise of the Sool-Sanaag-Cayn Group", unpublished Rift Valley Institute Research Reports 1-5 (2011), p. 17.

⁵ Ibid, p. 5; "Puntland Note: Mapping the Foundations of Peace; Challenges to Security and Rule of Law, Democratisation Process and Devolution of Power to Local Authorities", Interpeace/Puntland Development Research Center (Garowe, 2010), p. 1.

⁶ President Abdullahi Yusuf focused inwardly for much of his tenure (1998-2004), until he contested and won the Somali presidency (2004-2008). His successor, President Adde Muse (2005-2009), mostly focused on Puntland. Current President Abdirahman Farole has been torn between local and national engagement (see below). Crisis Group interviews, activists and political association leaders, Garowe, Mogadishu, March 2013. For more on Puntland's democratic transition, see Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 5-8; and "Puntland Note", op. cit., pp. 39-44.

⁷ Mohamoud Muse Hersi, aka "Adde" Muse (Osman Mohamoud), was a general, regional governor and military attaché in China and elsewhere in Siad Barre's regime (1969-1991). Insecurity was a particular problem, especially piracy, but only reached its peak during the first year of Abdirahman Farole's administration (late 2009/early 2010). Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 7-8; "Puntland Note", op. cit., pp. 12-14. Adde Muse formalised a democratisation program in December 2006, including creation of a constitutional review committee (CRC) in February 2007, followed by radio education programs and limited public consultations in Garowe in February 2008. After the latter, the council of ministers incorporated a few substantive changes, and the final draft went to parliament in June 2008. Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

⁸ Critics point to unconstitutional roles of his sons – especially Mohamed Abdullahi Farole – and influential individuals pejoratively known as "Aran Jan" (devils' prosperity) in state affairs. Crisis Group interviews, Puntland elder, Islamist-affiliated businessman, Nairobi, November 2013.

A. *Farole's Constitutional Prowess?*

While Adde Muse's controversial draft constitution was put to parliament in June 2008, it was not until well into Farole's presidency that a different version was approved. When he was elected, Farole returned the draft to cabinet for review and made changes that limited judicial independence and increased executive power. Critics argued that the push to finalise was driven by desire to further "cement Majerten dominance" – to the detriment of the wider Harti-Darood clan-consensus – and that the whole process had been non-transparent. Others saw the constitution as entrenching Puntland's autonomy within the Somali federal system and preparing it for secession.⁹

Puntland was the first post-1991 authority – Somaliland excepted – to formalise a full regional constitution, but Farole then did little to push the pace of its implementation. In his first two years, he failed to propose necessary legislation or institute arrangements for elections, neither establishing a voter register nor holding a referendum to approve the constitution. The Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) was not created until July 2011,¹⁰ and it was not until the end of that year that parliament set the terms for the constitution to be debated, adapted and ratified by the people. By then it was clear the election process could not be completed in time, since only twelve months were left for its planned three stages. The first stage was for political "associations" to put up candidates to contest local councillor elections. The constitution envisaged that the three highest polling associations would then become parties and select candidates for parliamentary elections. Once elected, deputies would choose a president before Farole's term expired on 8 January 2013.¹¹

Nevertheless, the early months of 2012 saw an increasingly heated debate about whether Farole's term would be extended. He initially proposed he be given an extra year to complete the electoral cycle, but many were sceptical he would achieve in one year what he had failed to do in three. His 11 March proclamation that the constitution retroactively confirmed his extension resulted in opposition mobilisation centred on the important cities of Qardho and Boosaaso (in the Kakaar and Bari regions respectively), drawing on clan networks and, more worryingly, affiliated militias. The day after the announcement, Farole travelled to Qardho to win support, but demonstrators outside his hotel protested the extension.¹²

⁹ Ahmed Abbas Ahmed and Ruben Zamora, "Puntland constitutional review process", in "Whose peace is it anyway? Connecting Somali and international peacemaking", Conciliation Resources, 2010, p. 92. Similar claims had been made for Adde Muse's handling of the constitutional process (see above). After approval by Farole's council of ministers, an extraordinary session of parliament adopted the document on 15 June 2009. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, civil society activist, London, April 2012; Crisis Group interview, opposition politicians, Garoowe, March 2013. Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

¹⁰ Four parliamentary appointees and five presidential nominees were confirmed as commission members on 3 July 2011. The new commission was immediately criticised, especially Farole's appointment of his relative (an ex-Siad Barre minister), Mohamed Hassan Barre, as the chair. Crisis Group interviews, Puntland civil society members, Garoowe, August 2013.

¹¹ The system was similar to Somaliland's, which also has a three-party constitutional limit. Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Nairobi, September 2013. The rationale is to prevent emergence of narrow, clan-based parties. Adde Muse challenged Farole repeatedly over the election roadmap's feasibility. Crisis Group interviews, political field officer, Garoowe, civil society senior staffer, Nairobi, August 2013.

¹² Crisis Group interviews, civil society activist, London, April 2013; civil society activists and political associations spokesmen, Garoowe, March, July 2013. That Farole's three predecessors also failed to fulfil campaign promises did little to lessen dissatisfaction with his extension, especially

After it became clear there was no time prior to the local elections for a national referendum, an elder-led constitutional convention (15-18 April) debated each article, and 472 of the 480 delegates approved the document (despite previous opposition), with a large majority also supporting and confirming Farole's one-year extension. While the convention went more smoothly than expected, it did not allay opposition suspicion the extension would entrench the incumbent rather than advance party democracy.¹³ But with all eyes – both donors' and the Puntland elite's – on the TFG transition to the Somali Federal Government (SFG) in Mogadishu, there was little appetite for engagement on this region-specific process.

B. *Preparation of Electoral Laws: The Problem of District Demarcation*

By mid-2012, with the constitution approved and the TPEC in place, planning for elections could start in earnest. Parliament passed the Puntland Local Elections Law in June 2012 and in July the Political Associations Act that opened the way for parties to contest them. On 7 August, the District Electoral Law was passed, but again only after much controversy over constituency demarcation and distribution of polling stations.¹⁴ This was an especially sensitive issue because of the relative balance of clan numbers, with resulting political consequences, in each of the 37 districts claimed by Puntland, nearly half of which are also claimed by Somaliland (and some by the self-declared Khatumo state as well).¹⁵

In an effort to find a practical compromise, the law provided that elections would take place only in the uncontested districts and those areas considered secure immediately before polling day; the other districts' boundaries would be defined later, and the government would select councillors for the districts unable to vote. However,

since he had campaigned in 2008 explicitly on the basis that he would press ahead with multiparty elections and reasserted that in February 2012. "President Farole's speech at the launching of the Puntland constitution", Radio Daljir, 8 February 2012. "Demonstrations in Gardo during the visit of Puntland President", Horseed Media, 13 March 2012.

¹³ The convention was organised with technical support from an international NGO, using the same clan representation formula as for formation of the parliament and in previous conferences. Crisis Group interviews, political advisers, NGO representatives, Garoowe, 2012-2013; "Puntland constitutional convention opens in Garowe", Garowe Online, 15 April 2012; "Puntland state constitution adopted", Garowe Online, 18 April 2012.

¹⁴ "Puntland president signs political party act into law", Garowe Online, 7 July 2012. "Puntland passes district electoral law", Garowe Online, 7 August 2012. The number, delimitation and devolved governance of regions and districts have been enduring issues in Puntland. "Puntland Note" op. cit., pp. 73-101. They will also be critical issues when local democratic processes are rolled out in the rest of Somalia (as already has occurred in Somaliland).

¹⁵ Since 21 July 2013, when parliament approved formation of Gardafui in the north east, Puntland has nine regions: Cayn (capital: Buuhoodle), Bari (Boosaaso), Karkaar (Qardho), Haylaan (Dhahar), Mudug (Gaalkacyo), Nugal (Garoowe), Sanaag (Erigavo), Sool (Laascanood), and Gardafui (Caluula). Cayn, Haylaan, Sool and Sanaag are in territory disputed with Somaliland. Though government sources recently cited 37 districts, a definitive list is not readily available. The best source is "Annex 4", in "Puntland Note", op. cit., p. 110, but published when there were seven regions and 36 districts. Khatumo declared autonomy in January 2012, driven by grievances against Puntland and Somaliland leaders. It derives its main support from the Dhulbahante, with power shared between three major sub-clans: Mohamoud Garaad, Farah Garaad and Baho Nugaaleed. It is strongest in Taleex, Xudun, Boocame and Buuhoodle town, where it has disrupted Somaliland and Puntland authorities' activity. Crisis Group Report, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., p. 10; Markus Hoehne, "The Somaliland-Puntland Border Zone", op. cit. Crisis Group interviews, civil society, London, Garoowe, July 2013.

this proved unsatisfactory, as there was considerable disagreement over which districts were sufficiently secure.¹⁶

C. Political Associations

Political association registration commenced in September 2012 with the president announcing formation of Horseed (“leader” or “commander”). Others were slower, and it quickly became apparent that the registration fee was too high.¹⁷ An amendment to the electoral laws in November – reducing the fee and the number of members required in each region – encouraged further registrations,¹⁸ and the Puntland Democratic Party (PDP) became the second political association to announce its formation. But by the end of the first week of December, only one other, UGUB (Ururka Gobolada Umadaha Bahoobay, Union of the People of the Regions), had declared intent to contest the elections, so TPEC declared a three-week registration extension, to 31 December. By then, four further associations had come forward: Horcad, Midnimo, Udad and Wadajir. TPEC announced in January that all but UGUB had successfully registered. (The PDP was subsequently disqualified.)¹⁹

While the registration fee was a barrier, the reluctance of associations to join the race also indicated unease about the elections’ feasibility and credibility, given the tight schedule. Some politicians entered, but many of Farole’s most vociferous opponents preferred to express dissatisfaction with the government and the transition to multi-party elections by remaining outside the new system.²⁰

¹⁶ Crisis Group interviews, TPEC senior staff and civil society organisations involved in the elections process, Garoowe, March 2013, August 2013.

¹⁷ Farole reportedly said, “all those in government in Puntland are now part of Horseed”. Crisis Group interview, senior politician, Garoowe, March 2013. The association, based in Garoowe, draws on Isse Mohamoud clan support but also has a wider constituency throughout central Puntland. The high fee was intended to discourage emergence of small associations based on single or very limited clan groupings (a similar logic as in Somaliland). “Registration of political associations open”: Puntland Election Commission”, Garowe Online, 12 September 2012.

¹⁸ Da’ud Omar, “Puntland after four years under President Farole”, Horseed Media, 12 December 2012; “Puntland MPs amend electoral law”, Garowe Online, 12 November 2012. The amended electoral laws halved the fee to \$7,500 and lowered the number of members in each region for registration from 500 to 300, while still requiring association offices in all nine regions. The amendments specified a closed-list, proportional representation system, to avoid the Somaliland experience, where an open-list system in 2012 local elections led to lengthy ballots and incentives for extensive multiple voting. “Swerves on the Road: Report by International Election Observers on the 2012 Local Elections in Somaliland”, Progressio, London, 2013; also, Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°67, *Somaliland: A Way out of the Electoral Crisis*, 7 December 2009.

¹⁹ “Second Puntland Political Association Announced”, Garowe Online, 23 November 2012; “Puntland Electoral Commission Extends Registration Deadline”, Garowe Online, 8 December 2012.]. Horcad, based in Boosaaso and founded by a local businessman was particularly associated with the Warsengeli clans; the name is a composite denoting “right(eous) development”. Udad (another composite meaning “peoples party” and Wadajir (“solidarity”) were both based in Garoowe and, with Horcad, were accused of being too close to the government. Only the PDP, which ultimately did not qualify for the ballot, and Midnimo were seen as sufficiently independent. Midnimo (“unity”) had a strong base in Boosaaso but was considered to have wider regional and clan support than the others, including from the university sector and (often Islamist-orientated) intellectuals and commercial elite. The association of its leader, Sadiq Enow, with the former militant Islamist organisation Al-Ittihaad Al-Islamiyya may have damaged it, however (see also Section IV.A.2 below). Crisis Group interviews, Garoowe, Nairobi, April 2013; London, June 2013. “6 Political Associations Registered in Puntland: Election Commission”, Garowe Online.

²⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Garoowe, March 2013.

III. A Mounting Crisis

On 19 September 2012, four clans of the Bari region – an historic centre for opposition against rule from Garoowe – issued a statement noting their continued opposition to the presidential-term extension, in spite of the constitutional convention's outcome five months earlier. TPEC commissioners were again met by protests in Qardho two days later.²¹ The authorities made an effort to improve relations with the Bari region clans, releasing a prominent critic from custody.²² However, protests continued in Boosaaso and by month's end had spread to Gaalkacyo (Mudug region) and all major provincial towns outside the capital and Farole's base Garoowe (Nugaal region).²³

After weeks of negotiation, the president visited Qardho on 23 November with a contingent of ministers and security but again was met by protesters. When they failed to disperse, armed forces opened fire, and he was forced to take refuge in a hotel outside town.²⁴ Even though there were clear signs at the end of 2012 that all was not well with Puntland's transition to democracy, they did not prompt closer donor engagement.

A. Party Boycotts

As the election year began, it was apparent that it was too late to institute the legal and practical measures needed to register voters before a June or July vote, even in undisputed districts.²⁵ Initially, the leaders of each of the five aspirant opposition associations had stated they would not take part in an election for which there was not a voter register accompanied by individual, personalised identity cards.²⁶ On 25 March, four parties – Midnimo, UDAD, PDP and Wadajir – delivered a letter to the TPEC and government demanding further action on six points necessary to secure

²¹ "Baaq ay siwada jir ah usoo saareen beelo dega Gobolka Bari (Sawiro)" ["A statement collectively released by communities living in the Bari region"], Horseed Media, 19 September 2012; "Demonstrations in Puntland State of Somalia", Horseed Media, 22 September 2012. The four clans were the Dashishle, Ali Jibrahil, Ugar Saleban and Siwaqron; they would argue that, because of the dominance of the Mohamoud Saleban, their voice had not been sufficiently heard in the previous convention that had agreed to the extension.

²² The critic, Bile Qabowsade, was editor of the Yool newspaper. He had also been President Abdullahi Yusuf's assistant port minister (2003-2007) and President Adde Muse's media adviser (2007-2009). He was jailed on 16 April 2012 for publicly criticising the Farole government. On the day of his release, armed forces ransacked the offices of the Bari region elders who had issued the letter condemning the extension. "Puntland authorities shut down Clan Elder's office in Bosaso", Horseed Media, 23 September 2012.

²³ Ibid. In the past, Qardho has been noted for its stability, but with elections looming, it became the epicentre for (sometimes violent) opposition. On the edge of Osman Mohamoud (ex-President Adde Muse's clan) territory it borders the Isse Mohamoud's (Farole's clan) to the south. Adde Muse has used it as a base from which to speak against Farole. Boosaaso's political volatility as an (abiding) centre of opposition to presidential incumbents can also be expressed in clan terms: it is home to more minority (non-Mohamoud Saleban) Darood-Harti lineages than any comparable area in Puntland; it is also valuable as the main port and income generator. Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia", op. cit., pp. 15, 19.

²⁴ Reports suggest that one to four people were killed and a number injured. "Puntland President's Visit to Gardo Turns Violent", Horseed Media, 23 November 2012.

²⁵ Crisis Group interviews, civil society participants, donors, Garoowe, Nairobi, March 2013.

²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, all political association leaders, Garoowe, March 2013. A number cited Somaliland's 2012 experience. "Report by International Election Observers", op. cit.

their participation in the local elections.²⁷ While senior opposition leaders maintained that four months was sufficient to complete voter registration, the TPEC disagreed, as experience from elsewhere (including Somaliland) showed that a credible process would likely take far longer to organise and implement; parliament subsequently cancelled the legal requirement for voter registration (see below).²⁸

The government did eventually agree to press ahead with one of the opposition demands, namely legislation creating a constitutional court, but that concession was insufficient.²⁹ On 4 April, Midnimo and UDAD leaders declared their intent to boycott the elections, followed two weeks later by Horcad, which accused the government of “derailing the democratisation process by forcefully amending some articles in the election law” (specifically the requirement for voter registration). In the midst of this dispute, on 15 April, the TPEC announced a 30 June election date.³⁰ While Midnimo and Horcad reaffirmed their intention to boycott, UDAD’s leader declared its satisfaction with the promised constitutional court.³¹ However, Adde Muse warned that without a voter register or the constitutional court in place, the elections would likely be violent.³²

Elders in Gaalkacyo, the stronghold of the Omar Mohamoud – due, according to precedent, for a turn in the presidency – met and declared support for another of Adde’s positions: that clans be permitted to select new candidates for parliament, bypassing local elections altogether.³³ A two-week extension, to 25 May, for the politi-

²⁷ The six points were: donor support for a voter registration process; delay elections until voter registration and identity cards distribution was complete; a conference of all political associations, the TPEC and the government to seek common ground; explore alternatives to TPEC structures; creation of a constitutional court with mandate and capacity to arbitrate electoral disputes; and should elections not take place according to the agreed roadmap – tacit acceptance of the one-year extension – a two-year interim administration be put in place with the primary mandate to further the transition to multi-party democracy. “A Joint Statement by Puntland Political Associations About the Current Democratisation Process: Resolving Local Municipality Elections Stalemate”, 25 March 2013, copy on file with Crisis Group.

²⁸ Crisis Group interviews, TPEC officials, opposition politicians, Garoowe, March 2013. Voter registration in Somaliland took about four months but was preceded by considerable planning, preparation and fundraising. David Mathieson and Robin Wager, “Somaliland National Election Commission: Report on the Preparation of the Voter Register”, Election Reform International Services/Somaliland National Election Commission, June 2010.

²⁹ The new court was to have nine judges – the five supreme court judges already in office, plus four new ones. The council of ministers promised that the draft law would be sent to parliament without delay.

³⁰ “Political parties boycott upcoming local elections in Puntland”, RaxanReeb, 4 April 2013. The reference to forceful amendment of electoral laws related to a parliamentary vote to remove the requirement for a voter register before the election. Crisis Group email correspondence, civil society participant, Garoowe, April 2013. “Puntland sets June 30th for municipal elections”, RaxanReeb, 15 April 2013.

³¹ “Urur siyaasadeedka Midnimo oo Shir wadatashi uu ku yeeshay Bossaso uga hadlaymowqifkooda doorashada” [“Midnimo party had a meeting in Bossaso and discussed their stand on the forthcoming elections”], Puntland News 24, 2 May 2013; “UDAD political association to partake in Puntland local elections”, Garowe Online, 7 May 2013.

³² Presciently, he called for clans to nominate new members to the 66-seat parliament and for it to elect a president by the end of the current (extended) mandate, 8 January 2014; “Somalia: Puntland soldiers revolt over unpaid wages and demonstrations in major towns”, Horseed Media, 11 May 2013; “Former Puntland president opposes elections, demands clan system”, Garowe Online, 10 May 2013.

³³ Crisis Group email correspondence, security expert Nairobi, May 2013; civil society participant Garoowe, May 2013; civil society activist, London, May 2013.

cal associations to nominate candidates did little to satisfy increasingly implacable opponents, but once the council of ministers announced the terms for a constitutional court on 13 May, only Midnimo maintained its decision to boycott. Four associations (PDP having in the meantime failed to meet the registration criteria) were left to contest the elections.³⁴

B. *Press Freedoms Curtailed*

Back in March 2012, following protests of Farole's proposed extension, the authorities initiated a wide media crackdown, banning journalists from covering the election campaign.³⁵ That crackdown has continued intermittently. As the end of Farole's formal term – 8 January 2013 – grew closer, critics became more outspoken, and on 24 September 2012 he threatened to take "appropriate measures" against "... failed politicians and so-called websites and media who are supporting Puntland's enemies including terrorists and pirates". In October, the government shut down the Horseed Media radio station in Boosaaso (no relation to the Horseed political association), accusing it of false reporting on its website. Puntland internet service providers were reportedly instructed to block the site, and it was unavailable in Garoowe for some time.³⁶

In response to civil society criticism the government referred a draconian media bill proposed in November 2012 to the Puntland Non-State Actors Association (PUNSAA) for review. Parliament approved a revised bill – still unsatisfactory to many – on 29 July 2013. In the first half of the year, meanwhile, the authorities reportedly interfered with broadcasts of six radio stations.³⁷

³⁴After initially claiming it would not participate, its president confirmed that Horcad would take part. Crisis Group interview, opposition politician, Garoowe, June 2013. Parties were to appear on the ballot in the following order: UDAD, Horcad, Wadajir, Horseed. Horseed magnanimously offered to take the last place (a slight polling disadvantage).

³⁵On 3 March 2012, police raided Boosaaso-based Radio Voice of Peace (Codka Nabadda Radio), confiscating equipment and preventing staff re-entry. The director, Awke Abdullahi Ali, was arrested. "Puntland police shutdown radio station, seize equipment and detain radio director in the town of Boosaaso", National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), 4 March 2012. Two days later, in Boosaaso, Deputy Security Minister Abdijamal Osman Mohamed's security detail seized equipment from Salman Jamal Said, a Universal TV reporter, Osman Ahmed Isse Turabi, a Raxan Reeb Radio reporter and Abdulkadir Dahir, an Eastern Television Network photographer. They had just reported General Abdullahi Said Samatar's announcement of his presidential candidacy. "Member Journalists and Media Bosses Protest Increased Insecurity and other Direct Violations Against the Media Community in Puntland", NUSOJ, 6 March 2012.

³⁶"Puntland President threatens the opposition and media with prosecution", Horseed Media, 25 September 2012. In the fortnight following Farole's statements, the new information minister, Mohamed Aidid, cautioned journalists against interviewing opposition leaders. Adde Muse's government had spoken similarly about critics of the constitutional process in 2008. Crisis Group Report, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., p. 9. "Puntland authorities close down radio and website", Committee to Protect Journalists, 9 October 2012; Christophe Deloire, "Open letter to Puntland's president about radio station's closure", Reporters Without Borders, 15 October 2012.

³⁷The NUSOJ denounced PUNSAA's "superficial improvements", voicing concern over the process' lack of transparency, specifically lack of consultation with independent media stakeholders. Neither draft version is publicly available. "Draft media law is still too repressive", Horseed Media, 14 October 2013. On 3 March 2013, the government banned Radio Ergo (a Nairobi-based humanitarian station supported by the UN), Radio Hirad (a Netherlands-based station supported by Free Press Unlimited) and Radio Bar-Kulan (Somali Public Radio, based in Nairobi and Mogadishu and UN supported). "Information Support Team Briefing Note 007", African Union/UN Information Support Team (<http://somalimedia.so>), April/May 2013. On 3 April, Radio Daljir, Radio One Nation

On 18 August, following increasing tensions with the Somali Federal Government (SFG) – including a 5 August declaration of non-cooperation with Mogadishu – the Puntland administration banned all Somali-affiliated journalists. Then, on 21 September, Information Minister Ahmed Sheikh Jama Yusuf ordered London-based Universal TV's local operations closed for five days for failure to broadcast Farole's address at an EU conference on Somalia in Brussels.³⁸

C. *Ballots or Bust*

Despite the limitations and concerns over conditions, many Puntlanders seemed committed to the vote. But crucially the majority of political elites and clan elders were not – revealing their fundamental ambivalence toward a party-based system – demanding instead an all-Puntland clan meeting to resolve the mounting tension.³⁹ By 8 July, it was also clear that peaceful polling was only possible in Garoowe, Boosaaso and a few other locations. Gaalkacyo was doubtful, and Qardho was potentially explosive. However, Farole was determined to carry on, including in strong opposition areas. Under cover of darkness on 13 July, the government ordered full deployment of election materials to all uncontested districts, including Qardho.⁴⁰ The materials made it as far as the Qardho police station, which was attacked by clan militias, and violent protests subsequently erupted in Gaalkacyo. In the face of the growing threat, TPEC Chairman Mohamed Hassan Barre – demonstrating independence that had been previously in doubt – reportedly gave Farole an ultimatum: “Either you call off the elections or I will”.⁴¹

and Radio Voice of Peace were closed for not complying with the “new rule” prohibiting local radios from broadcasting material from banned stations. The last three resumed operations the next day but stopped relaying banned stations' programs.

³⁸ “Puntland officials close TV station for failure to broadcast unavailable video”, *Reporters Without Borders*, 23 September 2013. The ban was subsequently lifted.

³⁹ An informal international NGO poll in Gaalkacyo, Garoowe, and Boosaaso four days before the scheduled elections, found that 56 per cent in Gaalkacyo and Boosaaso and 72 per cent in Garoowe wished them to go on. Crisis Group interview, technical expert, Nairobi, August 2013. After the elections were abandoned, the all-Puntland meeting was postponed to 21 August, then to 20 September and then to 15 October. It has still not been held. Crisis Group interviews, political adviser, Nairobi, August 2013; civil society participants, London, September 2013.

⁴⁰ A technical expert revealingly said the roll-out was designed so “it could implode, but implode safely”, suggesting that there was little confidence in the polls even by those charged with delivering them. Crisis Group interview, Nairobi, August 2013. The government sent military convoys to the TPEC to pick up ballot boxes and take them to Qardho – a provocation that undercut a strategy of the TPEC and partners to move materials only when their local acceptance was clear. Crisis Group interview, technical expert, Nairobi, August 2013.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interview, civil society member, Nairobi, August 2013.

IV. The Road Ahead

The international community welcomed the government's eleventh-hour decision to cancel the vote.⁴² Farole followed up by dissolving the political associations and TPEC, in effect suspending the transition to party-based democracy indefinitely. The government then restricted the activities of civil society groups, including the Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC), which had played an important role in socialising the democratisation process among the general population.⁴³ With local elections off, parliament passed "Annex 3" to the electoral laws on 24 July, ending its term on 31 October 2013 and allowing for clan selection of new members, as Adde Muse had proposed, but without setting a new local elections date.

For now at least, the abandoned local ballot also suspends efforts to broaden political participation to smaller clans and women. Women's political participation has been a particular donor interest.⁴⁴ On an October visit to Garoowe, the UN Secretary-General's special representative, Nicholas Kay, was joined by Puntland's women's affairs deputy minister, Asha Mohamoud Omar, in regretting the poor representation of women in the outgoing parliament. Both called on the authorities to ensure greater participation in its successor. The deputy minister expressed concern that, despite commitments to quotas, the modest gains to date would be reversed if men replaced the two outgoing women deputies.⁴⁵

⁴² The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) Nicholas Kay was in Garoowe the day before the scheduled elections to open a UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) sub-office; he played a key role in persuading Farole to call the election off. Crisis Group interviews, senior political adviser, civil society activists, Garoowe, Nairobi, August 2013; London, September 2013. UNSOM has since taken the lead in keeping the international community focus on the selection of new parliamentarians and the presidential election. "UN Envoy for Somalia concludes visit in Puntland", UNSOM press release, 22 November 2013.

⁴³ The PDRC has also played a significant role in mediating Puntland's periodic political crises, specifically organising meetings in Garoowe to discuss elements of the electoral process, the constitution and electoral codes of conduct. The government reportedly blocked a poll to gauge how Puntlanders think the electoral process should proceed after the elections were cancelled. Crisis Group interview, technical expert, Nairobi, August 2013.

⁴⁴ The level of debate and decision-making on the topic reflects donor priorities as much as domestic ones. There is a concern the elders are less motivated to adhere to international equality standards. However, along with democratisation in general, Puntland's leadership had previously shown clear commitment to women's representation, particularly since it was a key architect of the Garowe I principles. Those principles were the outcome of the first Somali National Consultative Constitutional Conference, in Garoowe, 21-23 December 2011, a series of agreements that led to the end of the previous national Transitional Federal Government and guaranteed women at least 30 per cent of parliament seats; text at <http://unpos.unmissions.org>. A significant meeting at the PDRC in May 2013, bringing together a wide spectrum of civil society organisations, agreed on three levels of quotas for women, depending on district size. Had the elections gone ahead, in districts with 27 councillors, seven or more should have been women; in districts with 21, six or more; and in districts with seventeen, five or more. "Meeting held over women's participation in Puntland elections", Garowe Online, 22 May 2013; Crisis Group interviews, civil society activists, female electoral commissioner, Garoowe, July 2013.

⁴⁵ "Women struggle for space ahead of Puntland elections", Radio Ergo, 23 October 2013; "UN envoy on visit to Puntland, discussing security ahead of elections", Garowe Online, 22 November 2013.

A. *Looking Forward*

All that remains of the now (mostly) abandoned sequential election process is the 8 January 2014 presidential election by clan-selected parliamentarians. As with the past four, the coming presidential election will continue the competition between the three dominant Mohamoud Saleban clans.⁴⁶ Tensions remain high between them. The Osman Mohamoud clan – which has historically provided the traditional Majerten leader, the *boqor* – has a history of poor relations with the Isse Mohamoud (Farole's clan), reflected in Adde Muse's opposition to Farole.⁴⁷ The Omar Mohamoud is due for a turn at the presidency under the informal clan rotation scheme that has seen the three Mohamoud Saleban clans each occupy – through their respective clansmen – the top position for one term. But the many variables involved in the formation of a new parliament mean nothing is certain.⁴⁸

The issues of most immediate concern are the neutrality of presidential appointments to the Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Committee (CRRC) that can veto nominated parliamentarians; and the effective functioning of the security committee that guarantees the safety of all candidates and their freedom to campaign.⁴⁹ These two institutions are critical to the legitimacy of the 8 January presidential election; but even then the short-term stability of Puntland will depend on the ability of the three Mohamoud Saleban sub-clans to reach consensus. In the event of a disputed result, the alternative would be for an "interim" administration, perhaps defusing immediate conflict, but still implying a period of uncertainty and political stasis.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., p. 8. The political relevance of smaller clans – the Leelkase and Awrtable in addition to the Warsangeli – is based on their ability to ally with others. The Dhulbahante control seventeen of parliament's 66 seats and should wield considerable influence if able to unite. However, meetings in Taleex, Sool, September-November 2013 signalled that a significant proportion of sub-clan groups will stay out of Puntland's political processes. Crisis Group interviews, Dhulbahante leaders (including from Khatumo state), London, Nairobi, September, November 2013.

⁴⁷ Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia", op. cit., p.12; "Qoraal kazoo baxay Gen. Cadde Muuse oo kusocda Madaxweynaha Puntland" ["Statement by Adde Muse towards Puntland's President"], Horseed Media, 19 August 2013. However, Adde Muse has recently softened his anti-Farole rhetoric and spoken of reconciliation and cooperation to achieve "peace and tranquillity in the region". Mohamoud Muse Hersi "Adde", "A Call for Unity in Puntland", press statement of the former president of Puntland state, Qardho, 22 August 2013; Crisis Group interviews, diplomat from donor state, Puntland presidential candidate, Nairobi, August 2013.

⁴⁸ The Omar Mohamoud also have grievances against the Isse Mohamoud, specifically Farole's administration, for what they perceive as anti-piracy operations that disproportionately target them – especially since the Isse Mohamoud allegedly are as significant in that activity. Marchal, "The Puntland State of Somalia", op. cit., p. 28; There are at least twenty declared candidates for the presidency from across all Puntland's regions and clans. The leaders are predominantly Majerten, from either the Isse Mohamoud or Omar Mahmoud clans. Given current polarisation and the inclination of Puntlander clan elders to avoid conflict, the emergence of a relatively low-profile compromise candidate cannot be ruled out.

⁴⁹ While not constitutionally stipulated, there is precedent for the president to appoint the CRRC. Crisis Group interview, PUNSAA leaders, Garoowe, August 2013. UNSOM has noted that the president is committed to "consult before nominating the members of the vetting committee [CRRC]". "UN Envoy for Somalia concludes visit", op. cit.; "Somalia: President Farole Nominates Vetting Committee for Puntland Elections 2014", press release, Puntland state press, 3 December 2013. While the CRRC appointments continue to cause concern, after appointment of the respected General Said Mohamed Hersi "Dheere" as its head, there seems to be growing confidence in the neutrality of the security committee. "Somalia: Puntland army general discusses security during 2014 elections", Garowe Online, 5 December 2013.

1. Farole's re-election

Farole declared his candidacy on 16 October and many anticipate his re-election.⁵⁰ However, the president remains a divisive figure. Longstanding grievances against his administration, especially the prominence of his immediate family, compounded by his handling of the election process, may hurt him. A well-connected Puntlander said, "he may win, but can he govern?"⁵¹

Nevertheless, he has capitalised on his self-styled role as the "saviour of the Darood" and "champion of federalism", as witnessed most recently by his strong stance in support of Jubaland, an aspirant federal state also dominated by Darood clans in the far south of Somalia. The widespread perception that SFG President Hassan Sheikh remains opposed to the federalist agenda may enhance Farole's credibility at home.⁵²

The re-election of a large proportion of sitting deputies might also strengthen the president, especially his apparent control over appointments to the CRRC.⁵³ Moreover, the *isimada* (the various clan elders councils), have tended to opt for stability by maintaining the status quo.⁵⁴ Yet, clan opinion can change abruptly. Even support from Farole's sub-clan, the Isse Mohamoud, is not guaranteed; if the president's re-election seems likely to cause conflict, this might consolidate opposition already voiced by some elders.⁵⁵

2. The opposition candidates

In the past, Puntland has not warmly welcomed second-term presidents.⁵⁶ The informal system in which Mohamoud Saleban clans take their turn may thus favour a candidate from the Omar Mohamoud in January 2014. It has two powerful possibilities: former TFG Prime Minister Abdiweli Ali Gas and Ali Haji Warsame "Golis". The former is widely seen as the leading opposition candidate and has been paying close attention to the members of the last parliament, many of whom may return to the new one. He is also perceived as more flexible toward the SFG – a popular position among donors and diplomats, but a critical weakness at home.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interviews, political expert, Nairobi, August 2013; "Madaxweyne Faroole oo maanta dib ugu soo laabtay magaalada Garowe" ["President Farole has returned to Garowe today"], Horseed Media, 16 October 2013.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, Puntland elder, Islamist-affiliated businessman, Nairobi, November 2013.

⁵² "Puntland welcomes agreement between federal govt and Jubaland", Horseed Media, 2 September 2013. Crisis Group interview, political adviser to ambassador, Nairobi, August 2013.

⁵³ Equally, the return of many deputies could work against him; the last parliament reportedly had only 35 core supporters of Farole; the remainder rarely attended, some in protest, others primarily because their salaries were not paid. However, even with new deputies, some speculate that Farole has the means to obtain their votes for his re-election. Crisis Group interviews, civil society activist, community leader, Garoowe, March, August 2013.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group interviews, prominent Puntland businessman and government critic, political association chairman, Garoowe, August 2013.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Isse Mohamoud elder, Garoowe; Midnimo presidential candidate, Nairobi, August 2013. The former Midnimo association chair, Mohamed Abdi Nuur (Isse Mohamoud), a well-known businessman and employer in Puntland who has previously run for president, has started to gain support. Crisis Group telephone interview, senior Somali political adviser, 29 November 2013.

⁵⁶ "[Puntlanders] want the tide to move. [They] don't want that the [president] stays long". Crisis Group interview, opposition association member, Garoowe, August 2013.

⁵⁷ As the TFG prime minister, he oversaw redrafting of the provisional federal constitution to Puntland's disadvantage, and there have been suggestions SFG President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud might publicly support him. He also has a reputation as a good technocrat but weak manager of

The other Omar Mohamoud candidate, Ali Haji Warsame, is the presidential aspirant with the strongest Islamist credentials and probably the strongest grassroots support among the population as well due to his business profile. But in common with wider Somali experience, Islamist groups have not always realised their potential to garner strong cross-clan support. Midnimo was widely-acclaimed as one of the strongest opposition associations in the run-up to the cancelled 2013 local elections, but it could not agree on a presidential candidate.⁵⁸

Ali Haji is a former member of the senior management at the Golis telecommunications company. Like many of Puntland's commercial class, he is widely believed to have had links with the defunct al-Ittihaad al-Islamiyya (AIAI), though he now downplays this. While AIAI (and its later, non-militant offshoot, al-Ictisaam) had strong support networks in Puntland, their involvement in intra-Puntland strife in Garoowe and Boosaaso in 1992 is a significant handicap to associates. There is clear Islamist engagement in business, charitable and educational sectors, but because of the history – as well as the indirect associations with some AIAI members who later emerged in Al-Shabaab – political engagement is markedly cautious.⁵⁹

3. The Harti-Darood outliers: The Dhulbahante and others

The rivalry within the Mohamoud Saleban should, in theory, give the other Harti-Darood clans, significant influence; there are even rumours that the smaller clans may favour Farole's return – despite his continued marginalisation of them – to break the rotation of Mohamoud Saleban presidents. The Dhulbahante clan are seen as particularly significant, since the formula used to determine each clan's parliamentary seats gives the Dhulbahante seventeen of 66. However, intra-clan divisions have weakened this bloc; many of the seats are filled by deputies who lack a strong sense of clan solidarity and have consequently been easily swayed by government largesse. Meanwhile, the three major sub-clans of the Dhulbahante have disagreed over the state authority – Puntland, Somaliland or the more distant SFG – to which they should give their primary loyalty; the SFG has given some support for the Dhulbahante self-proclaimed semi-autonomous "Khatumo" state, backing that deliberately undercuts both Somaliland's and Puntland's claims to their disputed borderlands.⁶⁰

Recent disunity in the Khatumo leadership has done little to clarify the situation.⁶¹ Dhulbahante sub-clans have met throughout the second half of 2013, including in the

(clan) politics. Crisis Group interviews, civil society spokesperson, Nairobi, August 2013; regional security expert, September 2013; Kenya-based diplomat, Nairobi, August 2013.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interviews, political specialist, Midnimo presidential candidate, prominent Puntland businessman and government critic, Nairobi, August 2013. Declared Midnimo presidential candidates include Dr Ahmed Mahamed Ahmed Shirwa, also known as Dr Sadiq Enow (Osman Mohamoud/Baha Dir), the association chair; and Mohamed Abdi Nuur (Isse Mohamoud). Crisis Group interviews, Midnimo officials, candidates, Garoowe, August 2013, and Nairobi, September 2013. A Garoowe-based security expert alleged that Midnimo had received funding from mainstream Somali Islamists and networks. Crisis Group email correspondence, September 2013.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group interview, Puntland elder and Islamist-affiliated businessman, Nairobi, November 2013; telephone interview, senior Somali political adviser, 29 November 2013. On political Islam in Puntland, see Marchal, "The Puntland State", *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 17-19.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interview, prominent Somali businessman and government critic, Nairobi, August 2013; see also fn. 15 above.

⁶¹ A Puntland civil society member contended that "Khatumo is broken and about to disintegrate". In his estimation two of the three-person presidential committee are ready to work with Puntland (Ahmed Kharaash and Bindo Abdi Nur), and only Mohamed Yusuf Jama "Indosheel" is still committed to an independent state. Crisis Group interview, Nairobi, August 2013.

lengthy, sometimes fractious Taleex conference.⁶² At times it has seemed possible that sufficient Dhulbahante might side with Puntland and exert strong influence on the January vote. But in October-November, there was increasing pressure from some Dhulbahante to organise a final Taleex conference (“Khatumo 3”) and secure renewed local clan support for Khatumo. Others have proposed a reconciliation conference with Puntland, in the hope either initiative might afford a last chance for a united Dhulbahante front prior to the presidential vote.⁶³ But on a return to Taleex in October, Puntland Vice President Abdisamad Ali Shire (a Dhulbahante) said, “there will be no Khatumo Conference [3] held in Taleex district”; a reaffirmation of the Farole administration’s antipathy for Khatumo and his lack of regard for Harti-Darood solidarity.⁶⁴ In late November, pro-Khatumo and pro-Puntland Dhulbahante militias clashed in Taleex.⁶⁵

Khatumo is the clearest manifestation of Harti-Darood outliers’ opposition to the Garoowe government and President Farole in particular, the grievances of others have taken a more militant and radical turn, beyond the periodic protests in Bari region and Boosaaso city. Largely frozen out of Mohamoud Saleban-controlled politics, other Harti-Darood outliers such as the Warsengeli, the Dashishle and the smaller (Majerten) Ali Saleban – like many small clans in Somalia – have become entangled with Al-Shabaab as a way of expressing discontent and seeking alternative means of political leverage. What started in 2006, during Adde Muse’s presidency, as a reaction to Garoowe granting oil exploration licences to foreign companies without local consultation had developed by 2010 into local sympathy and participation with Al-Shabaab-linked militants in the Golis mountains around Galgala village (the western borders of Bari region).⁶⁶ For the past three years, Al-Shabaab activity has in-

⁶² The Puntland government has also tried to influence Dhulbahante deliberations in Taleex. Vice President General Abdisamad Ali Shire, accompanied by militia, visited on 26 August and controversially remarked on Taleex belonging to Puntland. On 29 August protests erupted, and his militia allegedly fired into demonstrators. Crisis Group interviews, political specialists, Nairobi, August, September 2013. For a Somaliland take on this, see “Puntland vice president and his associates chased out of Taleex by residents”, *Somaliland Press*, 29 August 2013.

⁶³ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Nairobi, August 2013. If the December conference does not happen, and Dhulbahante remain divided about Puntland, it would increase the likelihood of a Farole victory and leave the issue of extended engagement between Majerten and Dhulbahante unaddressed. A spokesperson for Khatumo said “I am not sure which way things will go, but one thing is for sure ... the Harti [Darood] clan group that came together to develop Puntland are no longer together”. Crisis Group email correspondence, December 2013.

⁶⁴ “Puntland VP responds to presidential candidates’ comments over Taleh visit”, *Garowe Online*, 31 October 2013.

⁶⁵ At least ten people died during clashes between government-affiliated militias guarding the Puntland vice president and militias loyal to one of Khatumo state’s three-member presidential council, Mohamed Yusuf Jama “Indhosheel”. “Puntland VP returns to Taleh, Govt cancels unauthorized conference”, *Garowe Online*; “Maamulka Puntland oo markii u horeysey qireydagaalkii Taleex ay ku lug lahaayeen” [“The Puntland authority has for the first time admitted its involvement in the Taleex fighting”], *Horseed Media*, 30 November 2103.

⁶⁶ For the best description of the roots of this conflict, see Markus Hoehne, “Conflict in the Galgala Mountains: Implications for Somaliland and Puntland”, unpublished Rift Valley Institute Research Reports 1-5 (2011). The most detailed available account of the Al-Shabaab enclave in the Golis mountains is in “Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 2060 (2012), Somalia, S/2013/413, 13 July 2013, pp. 88-94; and “Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to the Security Council Resolution”, 2002 (2011), S/2012/544, 13 July 2012, pp. 171-174.

creased, with the bombing of an armed government convoy in Boosaaso being the latest incident.⁶⁷

A. *International Engagement*

Donors and diplomats, particularly from the U.S. and EU, have been important but arms-length supporters of Puntland, including its democratisation process.⁶⁸ Its attempted transition from clan-based politics to competitive party democracy had considerable grassroots support but was fraught with difficulties and risks, making informed, effective international engagement critical. That it should have failed so completely – including President Farole's ability to push Puntland to the brink of conflict – shows such engagement was severely lacking.⁶⁹

Despite its faults, the process was important both in its own right – not least given the fragile clan consensus – and because, as the only established federal state, Puntland should have set the pattern for future elections across Somalia. Since the July crisis, donors have followed UNSOM's lead with high-profile ambassadorial visits calling for the remaining process to be as transparent and peaceful as possible. But because of the previous neglect of the democratisation process in Puntland in favour of harder security concerns like piracy and terrorism for which Farole has been helpful in the past, they have limited leverage without appearing partisan.

All eyes are on the current president and his immediate family, but his position is just further evidence of the stranglehold dominant clans have on wider, popular participation in Puntland's (and Somalia's) politics. The January 2014 selection of the president will by no means be a democratic election. Nevertheless, the Puntland experience should prompt all international actors, including donors – particularly the UN, U.S., UK and EU – that have put such public emphasis on a democratic transition in Somalia as a whole to look hard at both the technical feasibility of elections and the risks of inadvertently engendering further conflict.

V. **Conclusion**

Puntland is no stranger to existential crises that have usually been resolved by political compromise. However, its people are still heavily armed, and despite the security committee, violence around elections, including indirect, clan-related incidents within the Dhulbahante in Taleex and in Boosaaso, remains a real possibility.⁷⁰ While Puntland's political institutions have evolved, they are still intrinsically weak, and incum-

⁶⁷ "Somalia: Deadly Suicide Bombing hits Port City of Bossaso", Garowe Online, 5 December 2013. The target appeared to be a convoy of vehicles connected to the Puntland Maritime Protection Force (PMPF). "Seven dead in car bomb attack on armed convoy in northern Somalia", Reuters, 5 December 2013. The PMPF is especially associated with President Farole and his family and is autonomous from Puntland's regular security forces. It has been deployed against militants in the Golis mountains. "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to the Security Council Resolution" 2002 (2011), op. cit., p. 236.

⁶⁸ Some Puntlanders said donor missions to Garoowe before July's crisis seemed to have limited knowledge of or at least commitment to local processes. Crisis Group interviews, donor, international NGO, civil society representatives, Garoowe, Nairobi, March, August 2013.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Puntland elders, Islamist-affiliated businessman, civil society activists, Garoowe, Nairobi, August 2013 and Nairobi, November 2013.

⁷⁰ "Somalia: Puntland President sends his loyal forces to the port town of Bosaso", Horseed Media, 11 December 2013.

bents have resorted to unconstitutional means in the past.⁷¹ Above all, the always fragile Harti-Darood consensus that underwrites Puntland is under severe strain; there is a real, though still remote, possibility of the disintegration of the regional state into its competing clan components.

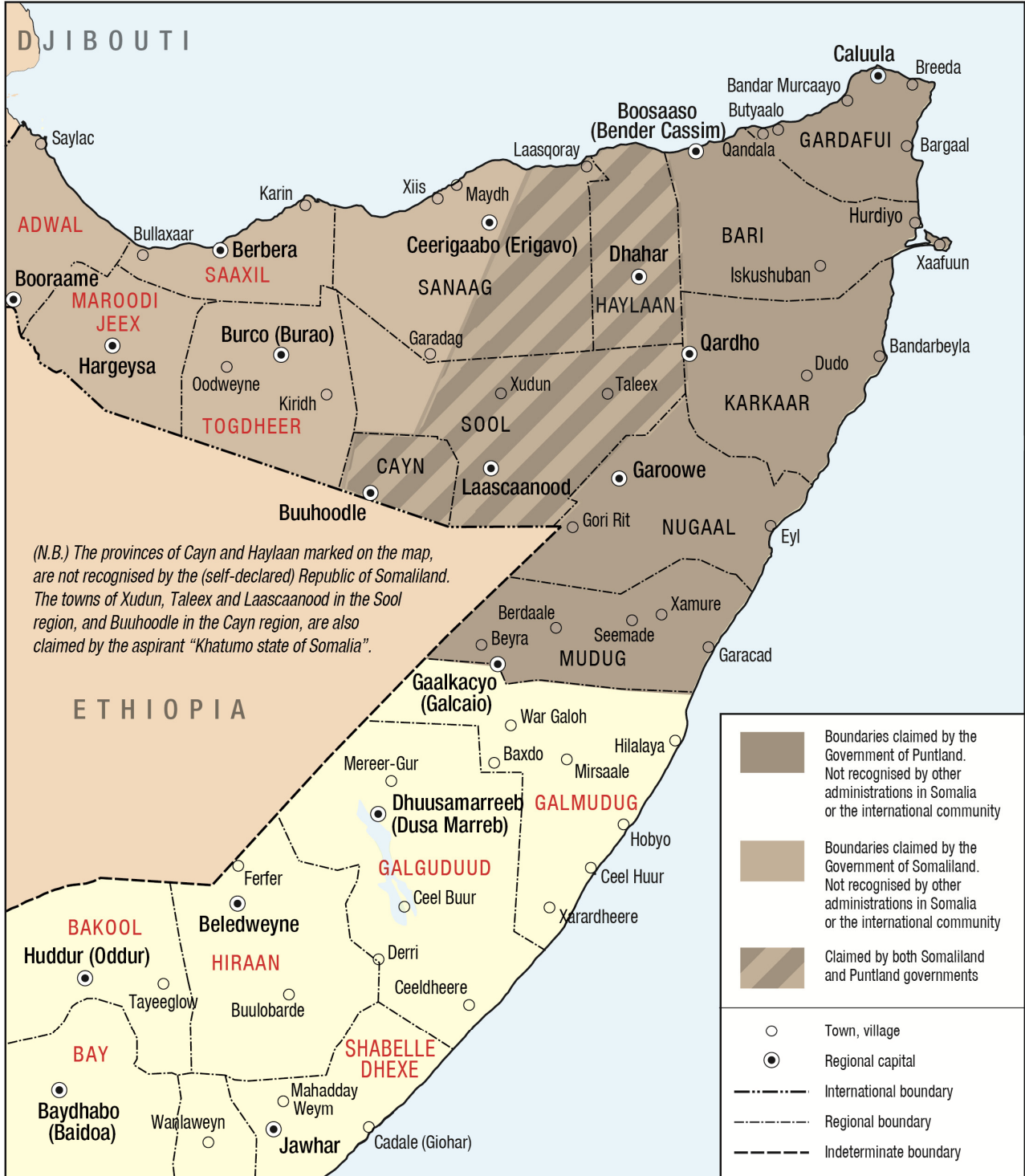
The reversion to presidential election by clan selection, along with increased international scrutiny, may reduce the advantages of and possible abuses by the incumbent, but it also halts progress toward a more inclusive system of representation. The benefits of clan elders and other agents of influence – especially powerful business interests – helping to maintain stability come at the cost of an opaque process. Despite the violence risks and weak institutional framework, calling off elections left many, especially the young, women and those from less powerful clans, feeling excluded. And it is the young, especially from less powerful clans, who are most likely to be attracted by radical Islamist groups like Al-Shabaab.

Whoever becomes the next president must weigh the costs and benefits of a return to the democratisation agenda, for which there is now a more solid constitutional and institutional basis but not yet a political consensus. The hard political work on agreement for a more representative, responsive government may become a lesser priority as the term of the Mogadishu government shortens. Puntland political elites and their international friends would then again find themselves torn between local priorities and the federal agenda – and the race for Somalia's presidency.

Nairobi/Brussels, 19 December 2013

⁷¹ Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

Appendix A: Map of Northern Somalia



This map has been produced by the International Crisis Group (revision October 2013). It is partially based on the United Nations Cartographic Section's map of Somalia (Map No. 3690 Rev. 7, January 2007).

Appendix B: Puntland's Major Clans (their regions and prominent personalities)

Shaded boxes = main clans and sub-clans mentioned in the report.

Dashed boxes = individuals

