

The Success of Somaliland

I had the pleasure of travelling to Somaliland for the Twenty twenty-one election campaign. I had wanted to witness in person the seventh cycle of elections in this up and coming young nation. Thirty years of independence and Somaliland is certainly punching above its weight, to use Boxing jargon. This democratic nation, in a sea of volatility that is the Horn of Africa, has sailed such seas with admirable maturity. A maturity older nations can only hope to emulate. So what is the secret behind Somaliland's successes. In a word, Consensus.

In the distant past in Somaliland, the people used to settle their disputes through the patrilineal system where elders were the final arbiters of justice. The elders came to a decision by consensus and the oldest gentlemen announced the decision much like a modern day Supreme Court. The defendant and the plaintiff had to abide by the decision as the 'Court' would brook no dissent. Under the penalty of property confiscation the defendant and the plaintiff had to accept the decision. So was established

social cohesion and law and order. The maxim was society must flourish based on Quranic law. You might say democracy came to Somaliland about the same time the Magna Carta was introduced in England by John the Second.

I digress, The history of Somaliland in the twentieth century is peppered with many periods of grassroots consensus building. For example, when the declaration of independence was signed in London Somaliland was represented by the three major tribes of Somaliland The Isaak, Darod and Gadebursi. A nation as diverse as Somaliland had come to a consensus that all its people would be present at the historic signing.



Signing independence documents, London 1960

Left to right: Haji Ibrahim Nur (Gadebursi),
Ali Garad Jama (Darod)
Ahmed Haji Duale 'Ahmed Keyse' (Isaak)
Seated Mohamed H. Ibrahim Egal

Where does Somaliland's zeal for democracy come from. Well Somaliland has, as I have mentioned previously, practised a finely tuned mix of homegrown and internationally recognized democracy.

Even when in the bush fighting the despotic dictator Siad Barre and his apocalyptic regime, the Somali National Movement (SNM) had six different chairmen from nineteen eighty-one to nineteen ninety-one. Each Chairmen served for a two year term. So it came as no surprise to Somalilanders that the victorious SNM would hand over power to a civilian government in nineteen ninety-one.





The Six Chairmen of the Somali National Movement
1981 to 1991.

In this seventh election cycle, the government of Somaliland has taken upon itself to pay over sixty percent of the election cost. It is a solemn undertaking with the International community watching. As over a hundred observers descended upon Hargeisa to see first hand what makes Somaliland tick , the PEOPLE, and observe an election. The reader must keep in mind that Somalilanders are putting their best foot forward every time hoping a friendly nation would acknowledge the fact this young nation is here to stay.

The ten days I spent in Hargeisa during this election would not have been possible without the continued motivation provided by the Somaliland Recognition Storm (SOREST) Think Tank. SoREST is a vital organization at the forefront of Somaliland's quest for International legitimacy. I would like to acknowledge all the members and The Board of this robust organization, SOREST. I would also like to thank Mohamed Jama of Qarannews for his wonderful hospitality. At the time of writing the election results have come in and the biggest winner, as always in S/Land politics, is the PEOPLE.

As we like to say Africa's best kept secret is no longer a secret.

Somaliland now and forever.

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