

## 30<sup>TH</sup> PDRCTALKS:

# GOVERNANCE BY REMOTE CONTROL OF SOMALIA'S THIRD REPUBLIC

**Source:** Public Commentary by Prof. Hassan Keynan

# BACKGROUND: PDRC TALKS AND THE 30TH SESSION

Launched in March 2019 by Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), PDRCTalks is a flagship monthly public dialogue platform that promotes constructive discourse on Somalia's most pressing issues. This initiative supports PDRC's broader mission to advance governance, democratization, peace, and development, the core pillars of the organization's research and policy engagement work.

Each session features distinguished Somali scholars, veteran politicians, and retired civil servants who deliver expert presentations on uniquely themed topics. These forums are interactive and inclusive, aiming to spark informed conversation among community members, intellectuals, policymakers, and the Somali public. Through in-person dialogue and digital outreach—including livestreams and active engagement on social media—PDRC Talks reaches audiences across Somalia and the global Somali diaspora, as well as other interested communities.

Since its inception, the series has gained broad recognition for its ability to unpack the complex political, social, economic, and cultural challenges facing Somalia today. It has hosted many prominent figures in Somali society, fostering shared understanding and encouraging critical reflection on national priorities.

The 30th session of PDRCTalks, held in Garowe, brought together 200 participants, including intellectuals, government officials, university students, and civil society actors, to reflect on the state of Somalia's political institutions and governance.

The keynote speaker, Professor Keynan, a respected academic and outspoken critic of Somalia's post-transition governance model, returned to the platform for the second time to deliver a powerful critique of the "Third Republic." His remarks captured the essence of the PDRC Talks attitude: to challenge the status quo, foster transformative thinking, and inspire Somalis to reimagine the future of their statehood and citizenship.

As a value-added component of PDRC's mission, PDRC Talks continues to serve as a trusted solutions-oriented dialogue space, contributing to peaceful coexistence, inclusive politics, and sustainable development across Somalia.

## 30TH PDRCTALKS

The thirtieth PDRC Talks themed " Underlying State-building Issues in Somalia and Managing the Political Transition in the 2020/2021 Elections" took place at PDRC on the 5th Feb.2025, with Prof. Keynan's Research on Somali governance. In his lecture titled "Governance by Remote Control of Somalia's Third Republic," Keynan critically examined the current state of governance in Somalia.

He explored this governance model through the lens of modern state theory, drawing on its historical evolution—particularly the emergence of centralized authority, territorial sovereignty, and institutional capacity in Western Europe. By comparing these foundational elements of the modern state with Somalia's fragmented, externally influenced governance structures, Keynan highlighted the disconnect between the ideals envisioned after the collapse and the country's lived political realities.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT

The 30th PDRCTalks event was held on Feb. 5, 2025, at the PDRC compound in Garowe, Puntland State, Somalia. The event included a lecture by the keynote speaker, the author of *Somalia*:

- The event was attended by more than 200 participants, drawn from the government, civil society groups, human rights and advocacy groups, local government, women, youth politicians, and senior citizens.
- The event was streamed live on Facebook with live updates on Twitter to reach a cross-section of audiences all over the world. PDRCTalks prides itself on giving ample time to the guest speaker, panelists, and contributors, and, most importantly, the audience to exchange ideas, learn from each other, and further to deepen their understanding of meant governance by remote control discussions.

## INTRODUCTORY AND OPENING REMARKS

The Executive Director of the Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), **Mr. Ali Farah Ali**, formally opened the session by welcoming both the audience and the distinguished guest speaker. He stated:

*"Welcome to #PDRCTalks. Tonight, we are joined once again by Prof. Keynan. We commemorate the 30th edition of PDRC Talks—an interactive platform launched in 2019 that hosts prominent Somali scholars, seasoned politicians, and experienced civil servants to share insights on pressing national issues through uniquely themed discussions. These talks aim to foster informed dialogue within Somali society and to inspire transformative thinking."*

Switching briefly to Somali, Mr. Ali underscored the broader purpose of the forum: *"Tonight, we are gathered for the 30th session of PDRC Talks. This platform consistently explores critical issues of society, humanity, education, and governance."*

**Tribute and Acknowledgment of Ongoing Conflict:** In a solemn moment, **Hon. Mohamed Abdirahman Farole**, Puntland's Minister of Environment, opened his brief remarks with a tribute to the soldiers who recently lost their lives in the ongoing conflict in the Cal-Miskaad region:

*"First, I send my condolences to the martyrs who lost their lives in the Cal-Miskaad conflict. It is thanks to them that we can gather here peacefully today."*

To address the sensitive timing of the event in light of the conflict, **Mr. Abdinasir Mohamed Yusuf** offered clarification:

- *"This event was planned in advance, and though we recognize the gravity of the conflict, this gathering should not be interpreted as indifference or neglect."*

# KEYNOTE REFLECTIONS BY PROF. KEYNAN

Returning for his second appearance at PDRC Talks, **Prof. Keynan** delivered a critical and thought-provoking analysis of Somalia's contemporary political landscape. Framing his presentation as "**Governance by Remote Control of Somalia's Third Republic**," he traced the trajectory of Somalia's post-conflict governance, particularly the political order established following the 2000 Arta Conference in Djibouti. He emphasized the disconnect between state-building efforts and the lived realities of Somali citizens:

"The so-called Third Republic refers to the post-Arta political settlement initiated in the year 2000 under the auspices of the Djibouti government. However, the Somali citizen remains a legal construct—only a functioning state can confer genuine citizenship. Neither ethnicity nor religion can do that."

Prof. Keynan's remarks set the tone for a rigorous and honest engagement with the challenges of governance, legitimacy, and state formation in Somalia.

## GENESIS OF THE MODERN STATE AND THE GLOBAL ORDER

### 1. Africa and the Modern State in the late 19th century via the scramble

In contrast, Africa's encounter with the modern state occurred much later, and under radically different circumstances. The late 19th-century "Scramble for Africa" imposed the contemporary state model through arbitrary and often violent colonial demarcation.

#### 1. Somalia and the modern state via a mini scramble:

Somalia's experience was particularly unique, a microcosmic version of the wider continental scramble, with external powers dividing the Somali Peninsula among themselves. This externally imposed, fragmented process represented a distorted inversion of the organic evolution of the state observed in Europe.

#### 1.1 Africa and the Modern State in the late 19th century via the scramble

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## SOMALIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN 1960

Somalia's independence in 1960 came not through a gradual national consolidation but rather as part of a broader, hastily executed decolonization process, driven by European exhaustion and geopolitical realignments in the mid-20th century. These dynamics laid a fragile foundation for postcolonial statehood.

## 1.3 The making of the global order, 1920, 1945, 1990 –

Concurrently, the global order was being reshaped through key historical moments:

- The formation of the League of Nations (1920),
- The establishment of the United Nations (1945),
- And the post-Cold War reconfiguration of global power relations (1990). Each phase contributed to the institutionalization of international norms around sovereignty, statehood, and global governance.

## MEANING AND BUSINESS MODEL OF THE MODERN STATE

The modern state is defined as a political organization that exercises a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a defined territory—a concept famously articulated by Max Weber. At its core lies the principle of sovereignty, which denotes supreme authority within a given jurisdiction. While the state represents permanent authority and coercive power, the government represents its administrative and regulatory apparatus, responsible for executing laws and managing public affairs. The modern state is both an exceptional and inherently coercive form of political power—capable of transforming societies but requiring careful legal and institutional constraints to remain just and accountable. The guest speaker, Mr. Keynan, presented that the Law, in this framework, functions not only as a means of legitimizing power but also as a tool for constraining and impersonalizing it. When power operates outside the bounds of law—or when law becomes a mere extension of brute force—tyranny and authoritarianism emerge.

Professor Keynan started his lecture to explain what he called the Somali Equation, which consists of core traditions, authority, sovereignty, government, political status, territory, law, and types of mobilization used by the implementers of each equation.

After that, Professor Hassan Keynan locates the evolution of the modern state within the broader sweep of global history. The modern state, as a political and legal institution, first took root in 16th-century Western Europe. This marked a shift from feudal, religious, and tribal authorities to centralized nation-states governed by codified laws and monopolized force. Over the centuries, this model expanded globally, especially through colonization.

Africa, however, encountered this model in a distorted and violent form during the 19th-century Scramble for Africa. European powers drew arbitrary borders, imposed alien administrative systems, and suppressed indigenous governance, development, and traditions.

Somalia's encounter was additionally particularly fragmented, a 'mini-scramble' shaped by colonial divisions among Britain, Italy, and France, who divided the country into five, and further affected by Ethiopia and Kenya; rather than emerging from internal dynamics, the Somali state was stitched together by external actors. Its independence in 1960 was not the culmination of a unified national movement but the result of a hurried and disorderly European withdrawal, which Keynan calls 'another European conundrum.' He also points to major global inflection points (1920, 1945, 1990) as periods that recalibrated the global order, further shaping fragile post-colonial states like Somalia.

## MEANING AND BUSINESS MODEL OF THE MODERN STATE

Keynan explores again what makes the modern state unique. At its core, it is a political entity that holds a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a defined territory. Its power is institutionalized through laws, and its authority legitimized by its ability to maintain order and serve public interests. The government functions as the state's administrative and regulatory engine.

He argues that the state's extraordinary influence comes from its relationship with law, not just in enforcement, but in shaping legitimacy. Laws are designed not only to govern but to restrain power and protect citizens. When power operates outside or above the law, tyrannic government arises. Therefore, the essence of a functioning modern state lies in the balance between coercive power and legal limits. Professor Keynan argues that the key characteristics, such as a defined territory, recognized sovereignty, political organization, legitimate authority, and an empowered citizenry, are fundamental to this model. Where these elements are absent or corrupted, a state cannot function effectively.

**Finally, Prof. Keynan stated:** understanding the business model of the modern state requires grappling with this complex relationship between law, coercion, legitimacy, and institutional designs that continue to define political life in both established and fragile states.

## THE MAKING OF THE 3RD REPUBLIC

**State, Constitution, Citizen (already existed as of 1960):** Somali independence in 1960 came not through a well-prepared national project, but as a result of what Keynan calls "another European conundrum": the chaotic and hurried withdrawal of colonial powers from Africa thus lacking adequate preparation, institutional infrastructure, and national cohesion; the newly formed Somali Republic was fragile from its inception.

The early promise of Pan-Somali unity quickly gave way to internal strife, weak governance, and cyclical power struggles. The central government failed to reconcile the deeply entrenched clan system with the demands of a modern nation-state.

- Eerily similarity with the scramble for Somalia, even worse

## THE THIRD SOMALI REPUBLIC: FROM RESCUE TO RUIN

**Arta and 3rd Republic: Basically, transferred sovereignty from state and citizens to another formation:** Keynan analyses the post-civil war reconstruction efforts under what is sometimes called the *“Third Somali Republic”*, which was established in the early 2000s with international support expedited by the Djibouti president H.E. Ismail Omar Gelle. This system was designed to prevent further collapse and guide the country toward stability.

Consequently, the Somali Third Republic was born outside the country, and it lacks constitutional legitimacy. Because “States must emerge from within the territory they seek to govern. “Measured by modern governance standards, the Third Somali Republic fails to have the required conditions. It was meant to save Somalia from state collapse but instead became a system contributing to its fragmentation.” Due to the establishment of 4.5.quotas as clan power sharing.

“The Cabinet and the Prime Minister were effectively sidelined during the constitutional amendment process. Powers intended for the Council of Ministers have been transferred directly to the presidency. There’s no independent Constitutional Court—appointments are subject to presidential discretion.” All these show the concentration of power in the hands of one person (the president).

However, in Professor Keynan’s assessment, “if measured by the standards of the current government, it is nowhere near adequate.” Rather than fulfilling its mission to rebuild the state, the current system has, in his words, “become a system to destroy Somalis further.”

He suggests that the political architecture has been hijacked by elite interests, fragmented by clan-based federalism, and undermined by chronic corruption and external dependency—factors that have perpetuated rather than resolved Somalia’s governance crisis.

Keynan argues that rather than restoring sovereignty to the Somali people, the 3rd Republic transferred control to a structure heavily influenced by external interests and donor-driven frameworks. It bore a troubling resemblance to the colonial scramble—fragmented, externally engineered, and detached from Somali realities.

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## THE 3RD REPUBLIC AND THE MODERN STATE

**State, Constitution, Citizen (already existed as of 1960):** Somali independence in 1960 came not through a well-prepared national project, but as a result of what Keynan calls “another European conundrum”: the chaotic and hurried withdrawal of colonial powers from Africa. Lacking adequate preparation, institutional infrastructure, and national cohesion, the newly formed Somali Republic was fragile from its inception. The early promise of Pan-Somali unity quickly gave way to internal strife, weak governance, and cyclical power struggles. The central government failed to reconcile the deeply entrenched clan system with the demands of a modern nation-state.

Therefore, rather than aligning with the principles of a modern state, the 3rd Republic has deviated significantly from them. Intended initially to rescue Somalia from prolonged state failure, it has instead institutionalized dysfunction. Keynan notes that it lacks the essential features of modern statehood: legitimate sovereignty, functioning governance, rule of law, and citizen representation.

Instead of building durable institutions, the 3rd Republic has facilitated elite capture, corruption, and administrative paralysis. This divergence has left Somalia more fragile, with weakened authority and continued political fragmentation.

## THE 3RD REPUBLIC AND FEDERALISM

The federal constitution adopted as part of the 3rd Republic was meant to decentralize power and accommodate Somalia’s complex clan-based society. However, Keynan observes that this framework has been systematically undermined. Federalism has transformed into a centralized, one-party system used to rig political outcomes and concentrate authority.

Accordingly, Power is now exercised through institutions such as the Prime Minister’s Office, the Council of Ministers, and Parliament, while real sovereignty continues to reside with clan entities. The last three years have seen worsening abuse fueled by:

- international debt relief, which removed fiscal accountability pressures.
- The lifting of the arms embargo and a culture of impunity enabling further militarization.
- A pervasive culture of impunity, emboldening predatory elites.
- The fragile federal constitutional order has been savagely gutted and reconfigured into a one-party formation designed to rig upcoming elections.
- The coup and the making of the king in a country of sovereign clans (PM, CoM, FPS)

## THE 3RD REPUBLIC AND AL-SHABAAB:

One of the modern state's defining traits is the monopoly on legitimate violence. The 3rd Republic, however, has failed to reclaim this authority. Al-Shabaab continues to control vast rural areas and challenge state legitimacy. Keynan sharply notes that while the government has lost control on the ground, it maintains dominance in the air—metaphorically holding a 'Monopoly of Aviation' rather than a monopoly of security control of the land.

The 3rd Republic and the phenomenon known as Al-Shabaab (AS) are wedded to a relationship deeper, more complex, and more consequential than previously estimated. In this inherently familial connection, the two cohabit and function as one, forge separately, and fight each other in elaborate, entrenched formations and networks with international dimensions, according to Prof. Keynan's presentations. Peace effectively puts both of them and their associated networks out of power and out of business.

## THE 3RD REPUBLIC AND ZERO-SUM POLITICS

Politics under the 3rd Republic has increasingly devolved into a zero-sum game, where one group's gain is perceived as another's loss. Exclusionary practices, deep-seated mistrust, and personalized rivalries among political elites fuel this dynamic. Professor Keynan characterizes this political culture as a "toxic algorithm" built on blood ties, cycles of vengeance, and transactional forms of loyalty. In this system, political power is not earned through policy merit or democratic legitimacy but rather through the manipulation of kinship networks—what he refers to as "blood power"—and the strategic use of wealth—"blood money." Clan interests routinely override national concerns, and decisions are often made to serve narrow allegiances rather than the broader public good. This entrenched system of patronage and vendetta sustains itself by marginalizing dissenting voices and resisting inclusive or issue-based governance, making structural reform both urgent and difficult.

## THE 3RD REPUBLIC AND FOREIGN AID

Foreign aid has contributed to creating a dangerous system with several negative outcomes:

- **A monstrous progeny of state failure:** Rather than rebuilding state institutions and improving governance, foreign aid has often fueled the very conditions that perpetuate state collapse. It has enabled a dysfunctional system to survive without real reform, giving rise to a deeply entrenched and self-sustaining culture of failure, dependency, and corruption.

- **Profiteering (\$4 billion in, \$4 billion out):** Although large sums of aid money—such as \$4 billion—are poured into the country, much of it is immediately extracted by foreign contractors, consultants, and local elites. The aid cycle becomes a profit-making enterprise where little of the money truly benefits the public or contributes to long-term development.
- **Plunder on an industrial scale:** Resources meant for the public good are looted systematically and at a massive scale. Government officials, business elites, and intermediaries exploit aid flows for personal enrichment, turning public service into a mechanism for organized theft.
- **Cartels and monopolies:** Aid and economic opportunities have often empowered a few politically connected actors to control key sectors of the economy. These groups form cartels and monopolies, stifling competition, excluding ordinary citizens, and maintaining dominance through corruption and political influence.
- **Afghanistan and Somalia (\$100 for the \$30 value):** Just like in Afghanistan, Somalia has seen inflated aid spending where \$100 worth of aid is spent to deliver what is effectively only \$30 in real value. The remaining \$70 is lost to bureaucracy, corruption, overhead, and waste—highlighting the inefficiency and exploitation within the international aid system.

Thus, Foreign aid, rather than enabling Somalia's recovery, has in many cases entrenched corruption and state failure. Keynan argues that aid has created a political economy of dependency, where elites enrich themselves while state-building stagnates. He draws comparisons with Afghanistan, where billions in aid yielded minimal value. Somalia has seen similar outcomes: inflated budgets, donor-driven agendas, and minimal service delivery.

In the case of AMISOM, European funds were allocated generously, yet actual deployment was limited, and benefits were unequally distributed. Aid, instead of rebuilding institutions, has often led to destructive systems.

### 1. EU's single largest development project in Africa.

- 2007 – AMISOM 8,000 troops actual Deployment 1,600
- 700,000 Euros per month \$500 per soldier
- 2009 - \$750 per month per soldier. By July 2009, \$1028 P/S P/M
- 2016 - 22,000 at 20M Euros per month
- 2007-2016 1.05B Euros
- 2009-2016 : \$350M to \$900M
- Uganda and Burundi: \$200
- Djibouti: \$328
- Ethiopia: \$515 (split between Government and Army Foundation)

During the presentation on the 3rd Republic's challenges, Prof. Keynan presented a table summarizing foreign aid to Somalia in support of peacekeeping forces from 2007 to 2016. He is concluding that Aid has failed to rebuild Somalia. Instead, it has enabled profiteering and institutionalized plunder. Somalia mirrors Afghanistan in inefficiency and corruption.



## THE 3RD REPUBLIC AND THE SPECTER OF MASS SLAUGHTER

- The country is awash with weapons
- Over 20 conflicts raging across the country
- Claims of fake jurisdiction and duplicitous schemes to extend state failure and create strife in the peaceful federal member states.
- Government-sponsored hate speech and incitement to violence times over SNTV
- Countries that are pouring lethal weapons into Mogadishu ought to think carefully and exercise extreme caution.
- The specter of uncontrollable mass violence is real

Considering the above key notes, Prof. Keynan issues a stark warning: the unchecked proliferation of weapons, combined with unresolved conflicts and political manipulation, is pushing Somalia toward large-scale violence. Over 20 localized conflicts rage across the country, exacerbated by government-sponsored hate speech and incitement—sometimes broadcast on national media.

The central government's increasing attempts to assert jurisdiction over relatively peaceful federal member states—often through coercive or deceptive tactics—threaten to destabilize regions that have thus far maintained stability, rather than fostering cooperation and cohesion within the federal system. These interventions risk inflaming tensions, undermining local autonomy, and triggering new cycles of conflict. Professor Keynan warns that such behavior not only erodes trust between the federal center and member states but also sets a dangerous precedent that could unravel the fragile gains made in state-building. He calls on international actors, particularly those providing arms and security assistance to Mogadishu, to urgently reassess their policies. Without stringent oversight and a clear commitment to federal principles, continued support may inadvertently fuel internal repression or ignite widespread, uncontrollable violence.

### THE DEMISE OF THE 3RD REPUBLIC

- If it's not already dead, it's in a terminal comatose state.
- It's time to establish a new political order for Somalia. One based on reality, NOT fiction.

In conclusion, Professor Keynan asserts that the 3rd Republic is either dead or in a terminal state. It no longer functions as a vehicle for governance or state-building. He calls for the establishment of a new political order—one grounded in Somali realities, not external blueprints or elite fictions. This new order must be inclusive, legally grounded, and responsive to the aspirations of the Somali people. Without such a transformation, Somalia's political future will remain trapped in cycles of failure and crisis.

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# PANEL DISCUSSIONS :

## DISCUSSION ON THE COLLAPSE OF SOMALIA'S THIRD REPUBLIC AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS BACKGROUND CONTEXT

After the conclusion of Prof. Keynan's keynote speech, a panel of three professionals was assembled, including the Puntland Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs, a Researcher from PDRC, and the guest speaker, Mr. Keynan, to answer participants' questions. But before the questions were asked, the Minister of Justice summarized the speech of the Professor, saying that: "The Third Republic was founded on two key pillars:



- a) The first was the legal framework initiated in the Arta/Djibouti reconciliation conference process, which was later developed at the Embakasi conference, and endorsed by over 3,000 Somali delegates. This legal framework culminated in the provisional constitution, ratified in 2012 by 825 Somali representatives after the federal transition government returned to the country.
- b) A power-sharing formula was agreed upon, which distributed leadership positions among clans: the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the House of the People, along with establishing a bicameral legislature system for mutual oversight.

However, both agreements ultimately failed in practice, with full power consolidated in the President's hands (Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's first term). As a result, the Third Republic collapsed, and Puntland withdrew its confidence in the central government.

Other key points raised were that the goal was to achieve political stability and win public trust in the country. Additionally, the aim was also to liberate the country from Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups. However, the country remains fragmented, and Al-Shabaab continues to claim territory—travel between southern regions is mainly by air. For example, Mogadishu has 38 daily flights, none of which serve the Puntland or Somaliland regions.

A further goal was to build legitimate state institutions capable of delivering necessary public services and conducting "one person, one vote" elections. None of these objectives were realized.

# QUESTION AND ANSWERS HIGHLIGHTS



Participants questions were similar so this writing considers the most matching and relevant questions to the keynote speech.

## 1. Link Between the Third Republic and Al-Shabaab Abdinur Jama (PDRC Researcher):

The discussion suggested a close connection between the Third Republic and Al-Shabaab, and it is likely that once the Third Republic period collapses, Al-Shabaab will seize control of the entire country together and present themselves as its legitimate rulers.

**Question:** You compared Somalia to Afghanistan. Are we truly like Afghanistan, or are there other comparable failed states?

**Answer:** There are other failed states, but Somalia and Afghanistan are uniquely comparable. Similarities include:

**Al-Shabaab and the Taliban:** Al-Shabaab's ideology was inspired by the Taliban, originally formed during the fight against the Soviet Union. While their doctrines differ, many founders of Al-Shabaab had Taliban connections.

**Foreign Aid:** Both countries received massive inflows of international funding for conflict prevention and state-building.

- **Foreign Aid:** Both countries received massive inflows of international funding for conflict prevention and state-building.
- **Integration of Al-Shabaab with the State:** The current Somali government and Al-Shabaab are intertwined to the point that it is plausible the group could take over entirely. Actually, the Third Republic and Al-Shabaab are now one person with two faces, so one cannot exist without the other.
- Al-Shabaab is not merely a “terrorist organization” as it is often portrayed, but also:
- A business enterprise
- A financial network
- A real estate operation

They represent a generational threat aiming to reshape Somalia's geography and culture. In the north, they resemble militants entrenched in the Al-Miskad mountains. The situation also shows the impossibility of building a unified national army. Each president dismantles the forces established by his predecessor, rebranding them as militias and creating new ones for personal use.

## 2. Historical Accountability and Corruption - Nawal Shariif's Comment:

The Djibouti conference brought together warlords seeking to escape accountability for their past crimes. This has led to today's Somalia being ranked as the most corrupt country in the world, a status the political elite seems content with. Somalia is not alive—let us pray and say: “Somalia Ha noolaato (long live Somalia)”.

**Response:** I agree with Nawal. The Third Republic was indeed born in Djibouti, and it is effectively dead.

## 3. Clan-Based Power Sharing (4.5 Formula) Abdi Ahmed Ibrahim's Question:

- The 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula has negatively entrenched clan divisions. How can Somalia move away from it?

**Answer:** The 4.5 system is like a chain placed around the neck of the Third Republic—it was part of its foundation, and no alternative formula has been developed. It has created a mindset in which some clans treat it as sacred, claiming that any change would trigger conflict.

For comparison, Djibouti hosted the conference and restructured its governance by dividing power equally between the Afar and Issa communities. Similarly, 4.5 is like the colonial-era 1884 territorial divisions, except this time, Somalis themselves are doing the scrambling.

## 4. Role of External Actors Question: Do external actors negatively affect Somalia?

**Answer:** Yes. Foreigners created the Third Republic, so their influence is inherent.

## 5. Alternatives to Centralized or Federal Models Question: Is there a system other than a centralized presidency or the flawed federal model?

**Answer:** Before the Djibouti (Arta) process, both Puntland and Somaliland had functioning systems of governance. The Arta conference was conceived and held “in the air” (without a territorial base), and Puntland was the only Somali entity that genuinely believed in federalism. No other Somali region supported it.

## **6. Puntland's Position on Secession Abduqadir Kulumbe's Question: If, as you say, the Third Republic is in its coffin, what stops Puntland from declaring independence?**

Puntland Justice Minister's Answer: We have experienced a centralized government before and witnessed the destruction it caused. Puntland believes that the only viable option is the federal system. We cannot simply split apart—we must share responsibilities and resources. Puntland has advanced the federal agenda, and invested in it, but the current president, Hassan Mohamud) derailed it during his first term.

The priority now is defending federalism and working toward a three-tier Somali government, with the first level being traditional elders/leaders.

A man with a shaved head and a goatee is speaking into a handheld microphone. He is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt over a patterned scarf. The background is a dark, out-of-focus indoor setting.

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