

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre's Historic Visit to Laascaanood: Implications in a Politically Polarized Region:

In the past few days, the majority of Somali media—both digital and print—have been circulating reports of Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre's anticipated visit to Laascaanood, the capital of SSC-Khaatumo State.

Friends and foes, enemies and allies, neutral political commentators—almost every politically conscious Somali—have voiced opinions about the visit. Some have responded with hysterical denial; others are overwhelmingly supportive.

But what does this visit mean for a region so deeply polarized, both politically and militarily? How will it affect the region's political dynamics? Can SSC-Khaatumo capitalize on this momentum to advance its state-building efforts? Will the current administration—despite its shortcomings—leverage this moment to score a political win during the upcoming election campaign?

SSC-Khaatumo: The Sweat and Tears of a Nation:

The disastrous collapse of the Somali Republic in 1991 kickstarted what can only be described as the Balkanization of a once-unified nation. Clan-based militias declared themselves overlords in every corner of the star-shaped republic.

Among them was the Somali National Movement (SNM)—a predominantly Isaaq militia that emerged late in the conflict. It engaged in minor, though often exaggerated, skirmishes against the Somali National Army in Hargeisa and Burco before the central government in Mogadishu was overrun by the Hawiye-dominated United Somali Congress (USC) and its allies in 1991.

Amidst the anarchy, chaos, and widespread human rights violations, a dormant secessionist agenda within the SNM was reawakened. In a swift and unilateral move, they declared independence from Somalia, claiming to restore the borders of British Somaliland prior to unification.

The unionist population of SSC-Khaatumo categorically rejected this secession, deeming it a betrayal of Somalia's sovereignty. While much of the country descended into tribal warfare and lawlessness, the people of SSC waged a fierce ideological struggle to protect the nation's territorial integrity from what they viewed as a brutal and illegitimate foe: Somaliland.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, despite atrocities committed by Somaliland forces in Sool and Sanaag, the struggle between the two sides remained primarily ideological—fought through propaganda, intelligence, and political maneuvering.

The turning point came in 2007 when Somaliland forces seized Laascaanood in what many consider one of the most treacherous acts of political espionage in Somali history—allegedly facilitated by Puntland under Ethiopian pressure.

That occupation ended in 2023 when SSC unionists successfully expelled Somaliland's military in one of the bloodiest conflicts in modern Somali history.

Wasting no time, the resilient people of SSC-Khaatumo—drawing on years of hard-earned state-building experience—declared the formation of their long-awaited political entity: SSC-Khaatumo State.

The impact was immediate and far-reaching. Somaliland's 30-year dream of secession was dealt a devastating blow as SSC-Khaatumo's new administration demonstrated an unshakable commitment to Somalia's unity—undermining the long-held narratives propagated from the qat-filled tea circles of Hargeisa.

What the Visit Means in Today's Political Landscape The Prime Minister's visit—accompanied by cabinet ministers, MPs, and influential figures—will undoubtedly dismantle several long-standing misconceptions:

Rebutting Secessionist Claims:

The visit nullifies Somaliland's claim that Sool, Sanaag, and Togdheer are under its jurisdiction. The presence of Somalia's highest government official in Laascaanood is a symbolic and strategic affirmation of Somali sovereignty over these regions.

Challenging the 'Security Risk' Narrative:

For years, Somaliland, successive Puntland administrations, and other actors have painted SSC regions as unstable and unfit for development aid. This false narrative has blocked billions in humanitarian and development assistance. The Prime Minister's visit underscores the region's stability and exposes the harmful intent behind that campaign.

A New Model of Governance:

SSC-Khaatumo represents a grassroots, bottom-up state-building initiative—driven by the will of the people. Unlike other fragile federal member states imposed from above, such as Jubaland, Galmudug, and Hirshabelle, SSC-Khaatumo stands as a prototype for a new political paradigm: where citizens—not corrupt elites in Mogadishu or elsewhere—shape their own political future.

The Prime Minister's move will embolden this new phenomenon, encouraging other regions that are politically marginalized by the old federal framework to seek a way out, thus; opening up a new, brave and daring socio-political rearrangements.

The current SSC-Khatumo administration led by President Abdulqadir Firdhiye will unquestionably try to leverage this visit and milk it for their election campaign, but, after two years in power, the SSC-Khaatumo citizens are craving for a political change, and the demands for a new faces in the highest office of the state have being deafening.

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre's visit to Laascaanood marks a historic milestone—he will be the highest-ranking official to set foot in Somalia's northern regions since President Siad Barre's infamous visit 41 years ago.

As he waves the sky-blue flag of Somalia in the heart of a city known for its patriotism and nationalism, the Prime Minister will not only honor the sacrifices of SSC's people—but also symbolically bury, once and for all, the childish and incoherent secessionist ambitions of Hargeisa.