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No One Man, One Vote Yet? He Holds All the Aces — Hassan's Plan B Gains Power

In Somalia's last two indirect presidential elections, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud secured victory despite the absence of a formal party-based electoral system. Paradoxically, his wins were largely built on the political parties he forged behind the scenes. How did these parties become pivotal in a political environment not designed to accommodate party competition? At a time when Somalis were weary of warlord rule and religious leaders had failed to deliver effective governance, Hassan Sheikh united intellectuals, civil society actors, and progressive religious groups to establish the Peace and Development Party (PDP) in 2011. This alliance laid the groundwork for his successful 2012 presidential bid.

During the turbulent political fragmentation under President Farmaajo's administration, when politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals found themselves divided and concerned about their survival, Hassan once again consolidated opposition parliamentarians, vulnerable federal member states, and his remaining political allies under the Union for Peace and Development Party (UPD) in 2018. This strategic realignment is widely credited with enabling his political comeback to Villa Somalia in 2022.

It is important to note that neither of Hassan's victories occurred within a fully institutionalized party system. The forthcoming election also shows little sign of competitive multi-party participation. Yet Hassan's guiding principle—"Politics is organization"—exposes a truth often overlooked by his rivals.



His decades of expertise in administration, institution-building, organization, and conflict resolution have allowed him to embed himself in a political framework that aligns his ambitions with those around him, cultivating loyalty and shared success.

Four fundamental reasons highlight the critical role of party structure in an indirect election context:

- Formal party membership binds politicians to their commitments, reducing defections and divided loyalties.
- Parties unify diverse and sometimes conflicting factions under a single leadership.
- They create institutional frameworks that streamline election campaign management, including budgeting and coordination.
- Parties attract and mobilize politically engaged youth, whose energy and grassroots support shape public perception.

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*The Justice and Solidarity Party (JSP) exemplifies this with its slogan, “**Unity is the Way.**” This message signals that cabinet members, federal MPs, and leaders of three federal member states, alongside representatives from Benadir and Somaliland, can secure another term by standing united in an indirect election. This translates into roughly 231 out of 330 parliamentary votes (about 70%)—a commanding majority compared to the combined 99 votes from Puntland and Jubaland.*

*This dominance recalls the confidence once voiced by Farmaajo’s deputy prime minister, Mahdi Guled, who famously declared, “**We will win in the first round.**”*”

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Hassan's recent approach—accommodating federal member state leaders by extending their terms and endorsing their re-elections—may cement his position as the favored candidate, especially when compared to external contenders unfamiliar with Villa Somalia's complex political landscape.

Strategically including influential figures such as Guudlaawe, Laftagareen, and Qoor Qoor within the party further solidifies this setup by legally ensuring MPs from these states emerge from within the party. This guarantees Hassan a dependable parliamentary base, governed by party discipline and internal rules.

While PDP, UPD, and JSP differ in name and symbolism, they share a practical purpose: delivering structured solutions to Somalia's political challenges through institutionalized mechanisms.

International pressure, ongoing security concerns, and resistance from Puntland and Jubaland to fully cooperate create a political environment ripe for an indirect election. The pressing question is: Is the opposition prepared to confront Hassan's united front—"Unity is the Way"? Can they effectively challenge a coalition that blends Farmaajo's ambitions, Deni's electoral strategy, and Hassan's matured political organization?

Ultimately, Somalia's political trajectory may depend on whether opposition forces can match the organizational discipline and coalition-building skills that have repeatedly propelled Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to power.

