

## About the results of elections in Somalia

On the night of May 15-16, 2022, the national elections ended in Somalia. Initially, they were supposed to take place almost a year and a half ago. The reason for the repeated postponements and slow conduct of the electoral process, as before in the modern history of the country, was the fierce struggle that unfolded between various political groups and clans for power in the country.

As a result, instead of November 2020, the election process started only on July 29, 2021, with the election of the first four deputies of the upper chamber (Senate) of the Somali Parliament in Kismayo. Recall that according to the Interim Constitution and the decisions of the National Consultative Council (NCC) dated 17.9.20 and 27.5.21 on the procedure for holding elections, 54 deputies were elected to the Senate: 8 representatives from the federal regions (FR) of Jubaland, South-Western Region, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, and 11 representatives each from FR Puntland and "Somaliland" (the latter represent mainly Isak, Samaron and Issa's people living in Mogadishu, and not the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland). The new senators were elected by the regional parliaments in the respective FR capitals. Following the election of deputies of the upper chamber of the federal parliament of Somalia, 275 deputies of the lower chamber were elected by 275 electoral commissions. Deputies to the People's Assembly were to be elected in 11 Somali cities: Mogadishu (from the capital province of Benadir and "Somaliland"), Garowe and Bosaso (from Puntland), Dusamarebe and Galkayo (from Galmudug), Jowhar and Beledweyn (from Hirshabelle), Baidoa and Baraue (from SWR) and Kismayo and Gharbahaarrey (from Jubaland).

After graduating in April this year, elections to the People's Assembly on May 15, the deputies of both chambers finally elected the new president of Somalia, who became one of the leaders of the united opposition, the head of the Union for Peace and Development Party Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud, who held the presidential post from 2012 to 2017. In the third round of elections, when two out of 36 candidates remained, he confidently outran his main rival, outgoing President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo, gaining twice as many votes. The latter admitted his defeat in the elections, congratulated the winner, and the new president was immediately sworn in.

The success of Hassan Sheikh as a whole was a natural consequence of the victory won by the opposition in the parliamentary elections, where its representatives won the majority of seats and took all the leading positions in both chambers. Abdi Khashi Abdullahi was re-elected Chairman of the Federation Council, and Aden Mohamed Nur "Madobe", who held this post from 2007-2010, was re-elected Chairman of the People's Assembly. Representatives of the opposition were also elected as their deputies.

After in December 2021, Mohamed "Farmaajo" was removed from real power in the country by Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who even earlier openly sided with the opposition, the outcome of the parliamentary, and therefore presidential, elections in Somalia was a foregone conclusion. Using the unlimited powers appropriated to himself, M. Kh. Roble arbitrarily changed the composition and leadership of the Central Election Commission, including people loyal to him in the CEC. Subsequently, the CEC obediently followed the instructions of the prime minister, facilitating the election of opposition candidates to parliament and preventing candidates from the pro-presidential For Peaceful Life party from getting there. At the same time, the CEC often simply ignored the decisions of the regional election commissions and the Dispute Resolution Commission if they were taken in favor of candidates from the ruling party. Among the gross violations of the law committed during the election campaign in Somalia, the most obvious were the following:- overt interference in the election process by the heads of federal

regions (many deputies were actually appointed from above, and their elections were fictitious, often without alternatives);

- refusal to register objectionable candidates under far-fetched pretexts;
- the composition of many electoral commissions did not meet the established requirements, and the elders and electors continually received threats, both from the local authorities and from the Salafi group Al-Shabaab, and several electors were killed by terrorists;
- the electoral process was repeatedly interrupted due to political and armed provocations and blackmail by opposition forces, primarily representatives of the "Union of Candidates for the Presidency" (natives of the Hawiye tribe), who exerted powerful pressure on the CEC and legitimate authorities;
- in violation of the Agreement on the procedure for holding elections of 17.9.20, approved by the Parliament of Somalia, the elections of 16 deputies of the People's Assembly from the province of Gedo (Jubaland) were arbitrarily transferred from the administrative center to the city of Garbaharrey, in the village. El-Wak, located on the border with Kenya, ensured the uncontested "election" of candidates appointed by the President of Jubaland.

In addition, Marhati, a Somali anti-corruption public organization, estimated that presidential candidates spent a total of about \$50 million on bribing members of the new parliament, a rather impressive sum for Somalia. According to Marhati, most of these funds came from the UAE and other Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

At the same time, neither the representative of the UN Secretary-General in Somalia nor the diplomats of the EU and Western states, who observed the election process and constantly warned the Somali authorities against obstructing the electoral process and free expression of will, did not react in any way to the obvious violations of the Electoral Agreement committed by the Prime Minister. They turned a blind eye to these violations and thus tacitly supported the opposition forces to President Farmaajo. Meanwhile, the massive and systematic nature of violations of the procedure for holding elections in Somalia calls into question the very legitimacy of their results. However, these results seem to suit both the Western "friends of Somalia" and the neighboring states and most of the Arab countries, for whom Farmaajo, with his course of restoring national sovereignty and strengthening the central government, was generally inconvenient and intractable partner.

Another issue is Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud. Indeed, during the years of his last presidency, it was easier for foreign companies to conduct their legal and not quite legal business, both in Mogadishu and in the federal regions. True, to conclude contracts, it was necessary to allocate funds for 10% "kickbacks" to the government and the presidential apparatus, but these costs were more than covered by fabulous income from the supply of khat from Kenya, the resale of weapons, and military equipment, the burial of industrial waste from Europe in Somalia, obtaining exclusive rights to manage seaports and airports, explore oil and gas fields and from other transactions. Recall that it was Fed President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud who secretly gave his consent to the conclusion in 2016 of an agreement between Somaliland and the Emirates company DP World on the transfer of the port of Berbera under its management. Many of the contracts concluded by foreign companies before 2017 were declared illegal with the coming to power of Farmaajo, but now there is hope for the restoration of previous corruption schemes and the renewal of contracts. It is only necessary, as before, to include in the number of subcontractors firms owned by the president or his relatives, such as Al-Kheyrad or AMECO. After all, in his election speeches,

Hassan Sheikh advocated encouraging foreign investment in the national economy, granting greater economic rights and freedoms to the federal regions, and further reforming the state financial system. But if by financial reform he means a return to the previous practice of uncontrolled spending of the budget and the issuance of funds from the Central Bank based on notes from the president, then such reform is unlikely to find understanding on the part of international financial institutions and donor countries.

Of course, to attract foreign investment to the country, political stability and security are needed, which the newly elected president also promised to provide for the Somali people. However, if we recall that during the years of his last reign, the power structures of Somalia were left without any funding for months, and significant funds were allegedly allocated to pay salaries to non-existent units, then doubts creep in about the sincerity of the election promises of the new president.

However, since Hassan Sheikh comes from the Abgal tribe of the Mudulod/Hawiye tribe, he can undoubtedly count on the support of his fellow tribesmen, who make up the majority of the population of Mogadishu and neighboring provinces. (In any case, the people of the capital enthusiastically greeted the announcement of the election of Hassan Sheikh as president of the country, arranging mass jublations in the streets, despite the curfew introduced on the elections). For the same reason, it will be easier for the new president to resume negotiations with the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, which practically ceased under Mohamed Farmaajo. Surely, the new president will fully restore political and economic ties with the United Arab Emirates and Kenya, where his second wife and children live. However, military-political cooperation with Ethiopia will probably be more difficult to maintain at the same level due to the traditional distrust and even hostility of the majority of the Hawiye tribes towards the Ethiopian authorities. Of course, much of this matter will depend on who will be appointed as the new prime minister of Somalia. Most likely, this will be a representative of either Majerten or Ogaden. It is not in vain that the deputies from these tribes cast their votes for Hassan Sheikh in the third round of the presidential elections.

In general, the completion of the parliamentary and presidential elections in Somalia allows us to hope for a certain stabilization of the political situation in this country shortly. In any case, the new president can count on the resumption of international and foreign financial and economic assistance, which at this stage seems vital for Somali society.

The election of Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud as the new president of Somalia is unlikely to significantly affect Somali-Russian relations, which have remained at a relatively low level of development over the past three decades. Since the civil war in Somalia, Russia, unlike several Western and Arab states, has not resumed the work of its embassy in Mogadishu (these functions are entrusted to the Russian embassy in Djibouti) and is currently limited to discussing Somali issues in the UN Security Council. Since the new political leadership of Somalia is focused on the priority development of relations with the United States, the EU, Turkey, the GCC countries, and neighboring states, at the current stage it will be difficult for Russia to restore its former influence in Somalia. Nevertheless, our country could make proposals to the UN to strengthen the fight against international terrorism and extremism in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, including lifting the embargo on the supply of heavy weapons to Somalia to strengthen the national army and other law enforcement agencies.

*Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud was born in 1955 in the mountains Jalalaksi, belongs to the genus Waaysle (Abgal/Mudulod/Hawiye). He received his higher education at the universities of Mogadishu, Bhopal (India), and the department of Oxford University in Virginia (USA). He has*

*worked in education for UNDP, UNICEF, and the Interim Federal Government of Somalia. In 1999, he founded SIMAD University in Mogadishu. Since 2005, he has headed the Somali Civil Forum, and since 2011, the Peace and Development Party. Expresses the interests of the Islamist clan "Dam-ul-Jadid", although he denies his belonging to it. For the first time, he was elected President of Somalia on September 10, 2012. Has an authoritarian leadership style. An experienced, cunning, and hypocritical politician. Has two wives.*

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