

Stewarding Strong Nations

Reflections on Leadership,
Governance and
Nation-Building

Author
Khalif Sadiki
Governance and Public Administration Expert

INTRODUCTION

The *Strong Nations for Africa Programme (SNFAP)* has been developed for senior executive leaders in the African public sector to help them build strong nations for the coming generations. The programme aims to create a community of African public sector leaders dedicated to enhancing governance standards in their countries and providing a platform for exchanging best governance practices in Africa and the rest of the world. As participants of the programme, we had the chance to create peer networks with other leaders in the public sector of the continent. Moreover, we have experienced firsthand knowledge of good practices in policies and public services gained during the different learning journeys. The programme was an opportunity to consider the leadership, governance systems, and institutional foundations that underlie national development.

I was attracted by the concept and the platform it has created for public sector leaders from various regions of Africa who want to build the high - performance government – a value that is similar and familiar to my own. The program brought together participants from different nationalities and professions and included trainers from academia and practices in the public sector. Through the program, I discovered new ways for countries to improve their public institutions, foster social cohesion, develop their human capital, and make the national aspirations turn into action. The experience made me think of how the lessons I learned could be applied within the context of Somalia.

This article offers my personal reflections concerning the programme while discussing certain lessons that could be useful in the process of state building and development in Somalia. It does not mean that the experience of the countries can be applied without efforts to Somalia but demonstrates how certain essential principles such as visionary and accountable leadership, meritocratic public sector, institutional discipline, inclusive nation building and effective delivery can be utilized in particular conditions.

The conclusion provides a short outlook on what Somalia can do in order to strengthen its institutions, build public confidence, and start moving toward peaceful and wealthy future. Finally, the benefactors of the event Chandler Academy of Governance, Singapore (CAG) and African Association of Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) are worthy of my appreciation for their significant effort in this programme.

THE ARUSHA SEGMENT – UNDERSTANDING AND STEWARDING STRONG NATIONS

The journey toward transformative public leadership began in Arusha, Tanzania, at the launch of the third edition of the Strong Nations for Africa Programme 4th – 8th August 2025. Bringing together senior public sector professionals from 12 countries across the continent, this initial segment, titled "*Understanding and Stewarding Strong Nations*," was a profound academic and diagnostic exercise. As public administrators, we are often consumed by the daily firefighting of immediate policy crises. Arusha segment forced us to step back and confront a much larger, historical questions: Why do nations rise, and why do they fail? What can we learn from history

on the rise and fall of nations and empires? Through this we have reflected on what “strong nations” means, and the role of government leaders in building strong nations.



Group Photo: 2025 Cohort, Segment one in Arusha Dare Salaam, Tanzania

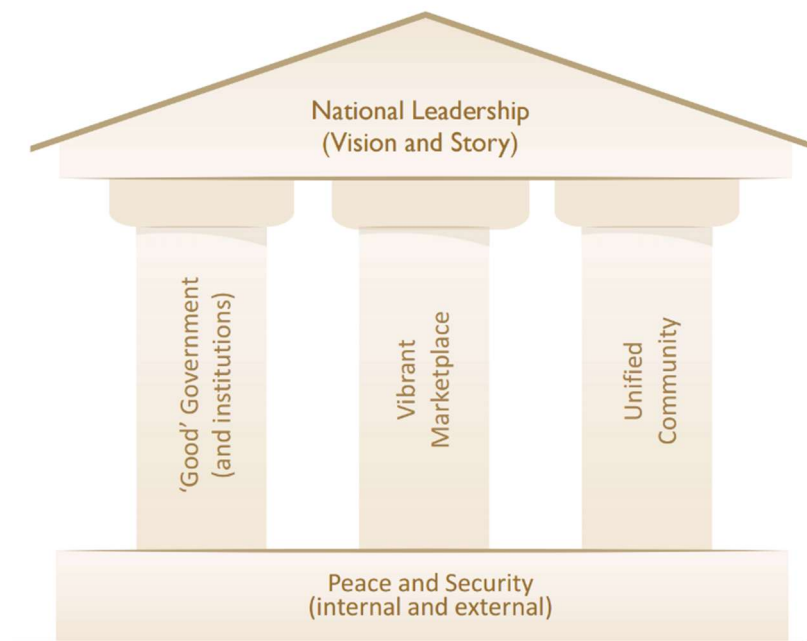
My big takeaway from the session was that history is essential in understanding why some nations flourish while some collapse. During our discussions and reflections, I realized that the historical trends can be beneficial for learning from our past experiences. In one of our reflections, we discussed the rise and fall of Songhai Empire (West Africa), Ming Dynasty (China), and Yugoslavia. Songhai Empire (West Africa) was one of the greatest and most powerful empires in the history of Africa. It started with its prosperity as a trading empire across the Niger River and was able to enrich itself through the trans-Saharan trade by selling gold, salt, and other commodities. Great emperors including Sonni Ali and Askia Muhammad were able to make the empire grow, and good management of trade routes made the state even more powerful. However, internal conflicts within the political elite of the empire resulted in the gradual decline of the empire, along with internal conflicts within political elite that could serve as a hindrance to good leadership. However, in 1591 some troops from Morocco invaded with guns which Songhai were unable to defeat from military perspective and consequently it ceased to exist. The Ming Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China that was governed by the Han people (which means the Mongols). The Ming Empire initially emerged under the restored stability after the Mongol-ruled Yuan Dynasty fell. Ming formed an effective bureaucratic and state system, set up centralized government, promoted trade and agriculture and invested generously into public works. The Ming Dynasty started decline as the corruption became widespread in government

institutions, taxes became unbearable for people, and natural disasters occurred.

Our reflective analysis of the three nations were considered different examples of strong nations. It is important to mention that strong nations do not need only capable and responsible leadership but also strong institutions, economic opportunities, national unity, readiness to adapt to changes. Similarly, the reasons for the countries to rise include having strong military as well as economy. On the other hand, the fall of countries usually results from having problems related to identity or clan-based conflicts.

Through intensive frameworks, we were able to explore the importance of analyzing the structural problems that cause institutional collapse along the lines of the lack of common national identity or weak economic policy. However, we did not study only failures. It was here that we were first introduced to a model for strong nation.

A Model for Strong Nation



Source: Chandler Governance Group

The model for a strong nation was a valuable insight for me. The strong and rich nations have a strong foundation, as well as pillars that are interrelated and work together on top of this foundation. We see in the model above that **Peace and Security** (internal and external) form the crucial foundation for everything else; without them, there can be no real development. Three major pillars rise from this foundation: **Good Governance and Institutions** provide a foundation for the rule of law, accountability, and effective public administration; a **Vibrant Marketplace** contributes to economic development, entrepreneurship, and shared prosperity; and a **United Community** creates social cohesion and a shared identity among the citizens. Together, these

three pillars create the roof of National Leadership that is visionary and credible and connects everything into a single system. Whenever one of these elements weakens or the basis of the system suffers, the whole structure is in danger of collapsing. The given model shows that nation-building is the task of not only governments but also a joint effort that entails robust institutions, an active private sector, and engaged citizens, as well as leadership with a clear and compelling national vision.

The National Story as a Foundation of Identity

The national story is a vital part of any country's identity. It is important to note that stories are narratives that establish a framework through which people learn about the world around them and which also shape their attitude and actions. Since ancient times and in different cultures, stories have served as a key method of transferring knowledge, values, and cultural experience among people. Through stories, people form bonds which create a common identity and allow them to cooperate. In the context of nation-building, history, heroes, and cultural values form the foundation of the national story, and effective leaders act as stewards of this story.

What Makes a Good National Story?

Not all national stories are equal. A good national story is factually accurate, coherent, and responsive to change. It is not self-serving to any particular person or group, and it communicates a positive vision of the future that is emotionally relatable to the people it serves. Above all, it is true to itself and true to the people it represents. When a national story possesses these qualities, it becomes a powerful instrument for unity, legitimacy, and progress.

Leaders as Stewards of the National Story

Understanding the role of national leaders in stewarding the national story is very crucial in building a strong nation. Government leaders play a critical role as stewards of the national story, particularly in how they approach policy design. By aligning government policies with a country's national narrative, leaders can enhance the legitimacy and impact of those policies — making them resonate more deeply with citizens. Policies may either build upon or intentionally depart from the national story, but in either case, the relationship between policy and narrative is consequential.

An illustrative example of the importance of stewardship is among the traditions of the passing along of messages of vital national importance from outgoing heads of state. When President Barack Obama was leaving his presidential post in 2017, he wrote a letter to President Donald Trump in which he stated: *"We are just temporary occupants of this office. That makes us guardians of those democratic institutions and traditions — like rule of law, separation of powers, equal protection and civil liberties — that our forebears fought and bled for. Regardless of the push and pull of daily politics, it's up to us to leave those instruments of our democracy at least as strong as we found them."* (CNN.com, 2022). The above quote illustrates the true essence of responsible stewardship, which is to understand that leaders are not the owners of the national story.

Nonetheless, Mr. Kenneth Sim pointed out the possible danger of manipulating national stories that often leads to exclusion of certain groups of people, and thus underlined the idea that stewardship must be responsible.

The Singapore Experience

It was here that we were first introduced to the theoretical underpinnings of the Singapore governance model. We learned how a resource-scarce island transitioned from third world to first by treating governance as an intentional, long-term science. This theoretical foundation set up a powerful hypothesis that we would test throughout the program: a strong nation-state is not an accident of geography or history, but the result of deliberate, multi-generational stewardship.

The example of Singapore provided a compelling case of how a national story can be intentionally and consistently stewarded through policy. Singapore's core narrative focuses on openness to the world, equality of races and religions, and meritocracy. This story has been integrated in the main policies and institutions since the very beginning. With the help of trade policies, which created the basis of the country as a global center, and laws that promote social cohesion and meritocratic system in public service, the nation has succeeded in its undertaking.

Being a small country without any important natural resources, Singapore has successfully tackled the disadvantages associated with its geographical position in one of the most unstable countries in Southeast Asia. After gaining independence in 1965, Singapore emerged in an unfavorable neighborhood. Once Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore said, "Through exceptional political leadership and good governance, Singapore has made the best of the bad hand it was dealt." What determined the success of Singapore was the foresight of the pioneer leaders that contributed to its good governance and their ability to keep it for the subsequent generations.

Keeping Singapore "Open to the World"

Singapore provides developing nations with a vital blueprint for building a strong nation. It illustrates how to shape a bold national story and align core policies with the global economy. The government took a strategic and bold step to ensure Singapore remained "Open to the World." But what made this possible? It was not merely talk; they established strong, specialized institutions to execute this vision. For instance, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) secured an extensive network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with other countries and multinational organizations to ensure local businesses seamless access to international markets, enhancing its global trade. In light of the limited availability of local capital and expertise, Singapore strategically opted to attract multinational corporations to set up operations in the country. The Economic Development Board (EDB) served as a one-stop investment promotion agency that facilitated global investment in industrial projects, establishing Singapore as an attractive hub for advanced manufacturing and innovation. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS)

stepped in as a proactive central bank and regulator, creating the regulations and framework required to position Singapore as a global financial hub.

Racial and religious equality and harmony

Singapore's commitment to racial and religious harmony is built directly into its daily infrastructure. At the time of Singapore's independence, children attended schools where lessons were taught entirely in their mother tongue, typically was Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil, excavating ethnic segregation in society. Singapore's deliberate approach to managing its diverse society played a vital role in establishing the social stability necessary for development. With a population comprising roughly 75% Chinese, 15% Malay, 8% Indian, and other communities, Singapore was — and remains — a highly ethnically diverse nation.

Following the racial tensions and riots of the 1960s, the foresight of Singapore's founding generation embraced a policy of multiracialism, anchored on the principle that all ethnic groups are equal before the law, with no tolerance for discrimination or the formation of racially segregated communities. Beyond representation, the government responded with active policies to prevent residential segregation. The Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) introduced in 1989, provides quotas for flats owned by different races in any residential area, enabling community integration instead of segregation. The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA) enforces the tenets of religious tolerance and reasonableness, enabling the prosecution of any intentional racist comments or remarks about other religions made by anyone. These two observations have given me better insight into the connection between coherence in the national narrative and policy in the country and building of unity, legitimacy, and progress. In relation to developing countries and future generations, the important lesson is that, national unity must be organized on purpose and designed properly.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is another pillar of Singapore's model that offers critical insights for Somalia and other developing countries. Rather than relying on nepotism or ethnic favoritism, Singapore structured its society around a simple rule: advancement must be earned. This plays out in three key areas. First, it starts with a school's system where every child is given an equal opportunity to succeed regardless of their background. Second, it extends to merit-based employment practices in the private sectors. Finally, it culminates in the public sector, where appointments and rewards are strictly tied to competence and performance.

Singapore developed a highly competent and professional civil service, deliberately shielded from political patronage and corrupt practices. Entry and advancement within the public service were determined strictly by merit, supported by competitive scholarship programmes designed to attract the brightest graduates into government roles. In an effort to attract and maintain talented personnel while ensuring the integrity of the institution, salaries of both public servants working in public administration and politicians were aligned with the private sector salaries which was considered by Lee Kuan Yew a bold and extraordinary manner which is necessary to

reduce corruption and to attract people with talents into politics. The results included an indisputably competent and effective bureaucracy. The process of policy formulation and execution was also extremely fast, since all bureaucratic barriers had actually put to minimum levels. By 2023, Singapore worked its way up to the prestigious status of being ranked the most stable and efficient government in the world. For Somalia and other nations, the key finding here is that building a strong nation requires a national discipline that shift from the system based on clientelism to one based on identification, education and rewarding of real talents.

Africa's Evolving Public Policy Frameworks

One of the most valuable insights I received from the Arusha segment was the understanding that policy is fundamentally intertwined with power dynamics. The determination of what constitutes a "problem" and its prioritization on the policy agenda is not only determined by objective assessment of needs and evidence but is substantially shaped by the agendas of political elites, business sector, and ideologists. This is indicative of how policymaking is political, with the manner of framing issues and the way in which resources are allocated usually being determined by power relations rather than public good.

Dr. Caiphas Chekwoti points out that the majority of countries on the African continent continue to face the problems of donor-led reforms, which have no sustainability, lack their enforcement, and are fragile. Moreover, there is also an important idea that a policy does not exist if it is not implemented. Many stakeholders are involved in the policy realization process, including MDAs, political parties, civil society organizations, and representatives of the private sector. But not everyone is interested in achieving the goal of implementation: while politicians are interested in short-term benefits, donor-oriented CSOs often contribute to the emergence of incompatible priorities. Meanwhile, powerful business leaders could influence the process beneficially for them but harm the interests of the public.

The other important takeaway from the sessions in Arusha was the key role of public sector accountability in creating developed, stable, and rich countries in Africa. Public sector accountability ensures sound use of resources. That is why it influences development outcomes; moreover, it strengthens governance through creating trust in public administration. Whenever people feel that public officials are accountable for their behavior, it fosters a sense of legitimacy and openness in government activities. In addition, while politicians frequently make emphatic comments about the need for reforms, in many cases, there is a gap between their words and their actions due to lack of genuine political will. The weaknesses of the institutions, mainly the lack of modern infrastructure for detecting and dealing with modern forms of corruption, only add obstacles to accountability efforts, highlight the need for more robust systems, greater civic awareness, and meaningful political commitment to drive lasting change.

LOOKING INWARD – THE VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP SEGMENT

Before we had the chance to visit and observe these models in operation, the program shifted focus to its second segment, "Developing the Leader in You." This phase took place virtually and functioned as a leadership laboratory. It redirected our attention from managing outside systems to enhancing our own internal capabilities. During intimate group discussions, we interacted directly with prominent figures in global governance who challenged us to rethink our views on policy, strategy, and ethics. Three unique perspectives influenced my understanding of internal leadership:

Regarding Self-Leadership: Professor Rodney Scott, former Chief Policy Advisor and Deputy Chief Executive of Strategy, Policy, and Integrity for the Public Service Commission of New Zealand, conducted an invaluable session titled "Leading from Within: The Importance of Self-Leadership." His insights underscored the truth that genuine national reform is only possible with personal integrity and inner alignment. For a public servant to effectively govern a nation justly, they must first manage themselves.

On Strategic Foresight: Ms. Sara Hamouda, Senior Continental Governance Officer for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), directed our attention towards the future with her presentation, "Future-Ready Governance: Utilizing Forecasting as a Strategy for Sustainable Development." She enlightened us that a strong nation does not simply respond to current circumstances; instead, it employs strategic foresight to predict demographic, economic, and environmental changes. This methodology guarantees that present policies safeguard rather than jeopardize the well-being of future generations.

On the Political-Administrative Interface: In our "Dialogue with National Leader" session, Ms. Yoliswa Makhasi, Former Director-General of the Department of Public Service and Administration for the Republic of South Africa, delivered an insightful lesson on implementation. She shared a candid and experienced viewpoint on managing the intricate relationship between political directives and administrative execution. Achieving this balance is essential for ensuring stability and continuity in any evolving democracy. By the end of this online segment, the key takeaway was clear: strong institutions require strong leaders who possess the internal values to withstand political pressures, bureaucratic issues, and the strategic foresight to build for tomorrow.

THEORY IN ACTION – BUILDING WISE, PROSPEROUS, AND UNIFIED NATIONS



Group Photo: 2025 Cohort, Segment 3 in Singapore

The third segment of the program, "Building Wise, Prosperous and Unified Nations," took us from the lecture halls of Arusha and the digital screens of our virtual segment directly onto the streets of Singapore. This was the moment where academic frameworks met living, breathing reality. It allowed us to observe firsthand how long-term policies, strategic forecasting, and institutional integrity manifest in practice. A highlight of the experience was gaining firsthand insights into Singapore's public sector reforms.

"While at HDB, looking at the shell casing fired at the funeral of Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, I understood that Nation-building is not about policies but about consistent and deliberate leadership." Khalif Sadiki.

First-Hand Insights into Public Housing Policy

Nowhere was this more profoundly evident than during our visit to the Singapore's Housing & Development Board (HDB). Upon entering the headquarters, I was attracted deeply to the symbolic object on display, an authentic artillery shell casing from the 21-gun salute held during the state funeral of founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on March 29, 2015. Alongside the casing was a letter from the Prime Minister addressing HDB, officially presenting the artifact in acknowledgment of the board's unique, foundational roles in nation-building. I have come to understand that nation-building encompasses not just policy, but also continuity and deliberate leadership. As I stood in front of that casing, the insights from Professor Rodney Scott regarding self-leadership and public integrity came to life. This artifact is not only a historical curiosity; it means so much more. The artifact is actually a physical representation of the values that a leader has lived by all his life. It is a reminder that in Singapore the issue of housing has never just been about real estate, it was fundamentally about providing every citizen a tangible stake in the nation's future.



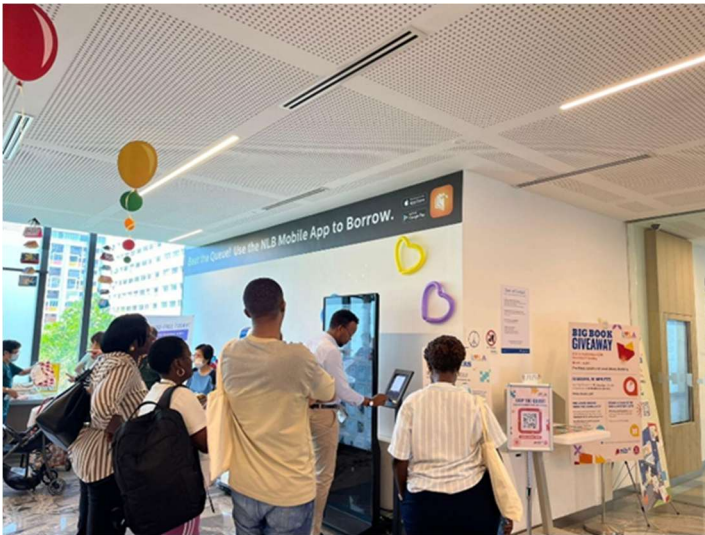
Visit to Housing and Development Board (HDB) headquarters in Singapore

Singapore's Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP), which has been put into action, exemplifies this philosophy. The EIP, which was introduced in 1989 with the aim of eliminating the establishment of ethnic enclaves, places stringent, yet equal quotas on every HDB block and neighborhood. The foresight of Singapore's leaders several decades ago—hence, showcasing the value of the strategic forecasting methods and ideas presented in the lectures of Ms. Sara Hamouda proved that the uncontrolled urban migration will disrupt the social harmony. The birth of multicultural neighborhoods was a successful step toward creating an environment where members of diverse ethnic groups share places for living, shopping, and growing up.

The Heartlands and Community Design – My Tampines Hub

The practical validation of this unified approach came alive when I had the privilege of leading our peer group through the Singapore heartlands to visit Our Tampines Hub. As Africa's senior public administrators, we frequently debate how to distribute public services equitably. Our Tampines Hub answered that debate by completely redefining public infrastructure.

Opened as Singapore's first integrated community and lifestyle hub, this massive facility clusters a diverse array of public services under a single roof. In one walk through the hub, our group witnessed a regional sports stadium, a public library, community art spaces, fitness center, a medical clinic, service center, and a hawker food center operating seamlessly together.



*Experiencing Digital feedback at Public Library,
Tampines Heartland, Singapore*

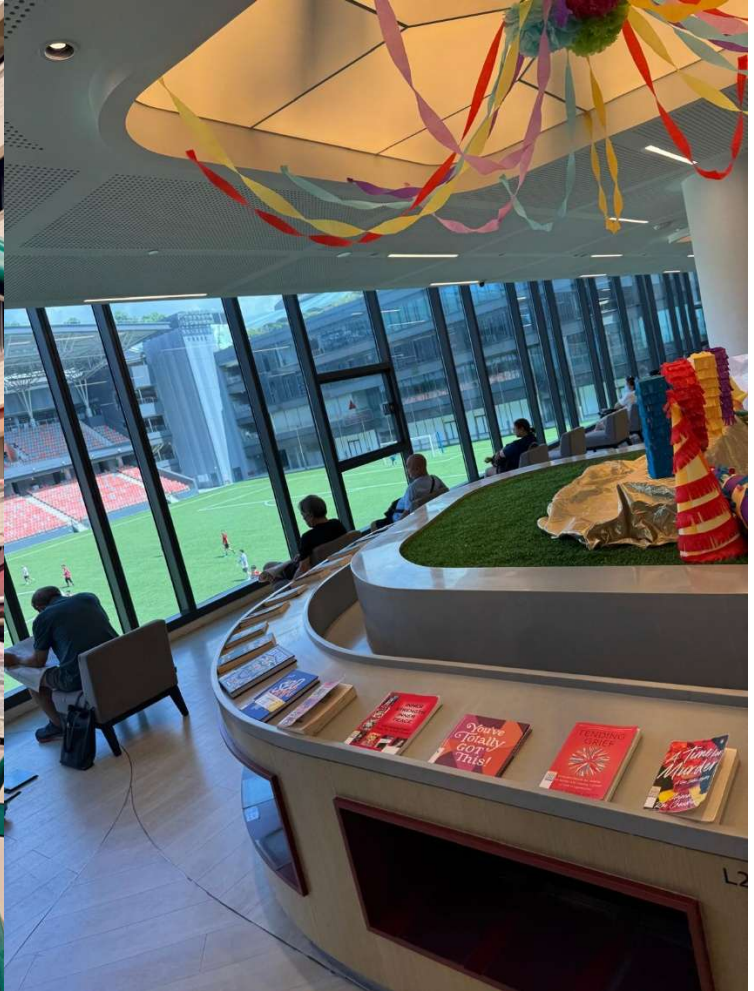


*Visit to Service Center that bring together more than
26 Government Agencies: Tampines Heartland,
Singapore*

Leading our group through this space, I realized that this hub is the architectural execution of the "Future Generations" promise. It does not segregate society by income or age. A grandmother visiting the medical facility walks through the same walkway as a teenager on his way to the sports center or for a child who is going to the library. By designing shared spaces in a thoughtful manner, the state encourages many little interactions every day. It proved to us that a prosperous nation does not just build infrastructure for economic efficiency; it designs social infrastructure to cultivate equity, community pride, and civic harmony. Walking through Singapore's heartlands offered valuable lessons on how policy translates into daily life. It provided a deep appreciation of community-centric policy approaches that foster national unity and social cohesion across diverse residential communities.



Spotted Community Fitness Center at Tampines Heartland, Singapore



Sporting view inside the Public Library: Tampines Heartland, Singapore

Learning Journey to Changi Airport

One of the most remarkable lessons that I learned from Singapore was the learning journey to the Changi Airport, where we explored strategic planning and innovation, which formed the basis of one of the best airports in the world. At Changi Airport and through listening to top managers of the airport group, I managed to acquire an important roadmap for understanding how visionary planning and innovation can influence the development of the nation as a whole. In addition, this was a living example of how governments can facilitate entrepreneurship and excellence in infrastructure while fostering development, which is in line with the modern world.

This educational trip generated useful experience in terms of the processes of making decisions and putting them into practice, which was useful for understanding the different principles and discoveries that can be applied to national development in general. Reflecting on the case of Singapore, there are many lessons from Changi airport that could be of great use for creating a strong, highly developed country able to meet the demands of future generations. Changi does not merely respond to current demands; it focuses on the future. The investment of \$3.8 million in the construction and development of Terminal 5 demonstrates that Singapore anticipates the future challenges of its population. The modern technologies, ranging from biometrics (using facial features instead of documents) to AI and autonomous transport means, help Changi be at the forefront of the industry while minimizing labor costs. In the end, creating a prosperous state for the next generation is not the result of luck. It needs comprehensive foresight, the strategic use of technology, a commitment to sustainability, and real confidence in the nation's ability to face future challenges.



Learning Journey to Changi Airport, Singapore

BUILDING A FUTURE-READY STATE: STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE LESSONS FOR SOMALIA

“ Nations do not rise or fall by chance. The ultimate prerequisite for a strong nation-state is a continuous, unyielding line of intentional leadership and Strong Institutions” Khalif Sadiki.

The transformative journey through the Strong Nations for Africa Programme has provided a profound paradigm shift for public sector leadership. By connecting the diagnostic frameworks in Arusha to the virtual leadership, and finally to the living reality of Singapore's visionary leadership, sound governance, and strategic policy-making in public sector reform and social infrastructure, the program laid bare a fundamental truth: the ultimate prerequisite for a strong nation-state is a continuous, unyielding line of intentional leadership and strong institutions. Nations do not rise or fall by chance. Nations rise when their leaders have the internal cohesion to govern with integrity, the foresight to predict upcoming vulnerabilities, and the courage to implement prolonged social agendas. History reveals that nations fall not solely due to military defeats. Rather, most of the time, they are destroyed from within due to political divisions, tribal conflict, corruption, bad governance, and bad leadership. However, each nation has its unique circumstances, Somalia's current challenges resonates with the same history. Today Somalia is grappling with deep state fragility, insecurity, due to ongoing conflict (including an insurgency by Al-Shabaab), deep clan-based social divisions, and weak government institutions. Basic services and infrastructure are in disrepair after decades of civil war. The country has the physical and institutional structures but lacks genuine shared values and national story that binds its citizens together which is a foundation for building a strong nation. Citizens must be active stewards of their collective future with purpose, strategy and discipline.

Somalia also has some potential advantages and opportunities. It has a youthful and entrepreneurial population which can serve as driving forces for economic resilience and future development. A strong and prosperous nation rests on a solid foundation and is sustained by interconnected pillars working in harmony. Below, I will outline the lessons from Singapore's model of a strong nation that Somalia can adapt.

Peace and Security

Peace and Security both (internal and external) form the indispensable foundation on which all other things rely in a nation; without them, it will be impossible to achieve any meaningful development. Basic security and rule of law play a key role in the life of any nation. Singapore managed to achieve remarkable development in the atmosphere of internal peace and law and order (after the turbulent period in the 60s). Thus, both citizens and investors were sure about their safety and contract enforcement. Somalia, on the other hand, is suffering from insecurity in some parts (militant attacks, barricades, etc.) as well as from very weak rule of law (in many cases disputes are being settled with the help of clan power or custom rather than court).

This implies that Somalia has to become stable and establish rule of law in order to attract investments and permit economic activities through building strong national army and police, uniting fighters from all Somali clans into one army, and gradually expanding the state power over the regions still controlled by insurrectionists. Rebuilding the judicial system by providing judges with training, reconstructing the courts, and probably building mobile courts in the countryside is also very important, so that people will start using the services of the judicial authorities instead of executing clan revenge. The main lesson from Singapore and other developed countries is that investors and entrepreneurs come to the places where they feel safe and where contracts are fair. In the absence of this condition, Somalia's other advantages, including its strategic location and untapped natural resources, will not provide long-term growth. The larger lesson here is that peace, security, and justice are prerequisites for prosperity.

Good Government and Institutions

Singapore's transformation from a resource-poor, conflict-prone city-state into one of the world's most prosperous and well-governed nations was not built on natural wealth or geographic advantage. It was built on the deliberate, uncompromising commitment of its leadership to honest government, meritocracy, and national development. Lee Kuan Yew famously said "*We need good men to have good government*" emphasizing that leadership quality trumps even system design.

The central lesson for Somalia is both simple and demanding: governance reform is not one priority among many — it is the prerequisite for all others. No economic policy, service delivery programme, or institutional reform can take root in an environment where structural integrity issues are present, tribalism is the norms, public trust is absent, and the law enforcement remains uneven. Somalia's path to prosperity begins not with a new development plan or an infrastructure project, but with the political decision made by those at the very top that honest, competent, and accountable governance is the foundation upon which everything else will be built. Somalia must be governed by rule-based order where real authority comes from just institutions, not from those in power. Max Weber once described that legal-rational authority as the ideal type of political leadership where institutions persist beyond individuals and person in authority are also subjected to impersonal order.

The experience of Singapore shows that effective sustainable national development requires a system in place to replace patronage, nepotism, and ethnicity with a system that identifies and nurture talent regularly, granting it rewards based on merit, qualifications, and performance. For Somalia and other countries facing similar challenges, the main lesson is to provide equal chances for education, employment, and public service development through the creation of a professional, politically neutral public service trained in competitive ways. At the same time, the case of Singapore demonstrates that in order to attract and keep qualified civil servants, it is essential to give investments in talent, offer competitive performance-based bonuses, and protect institutions from political influence and corruption in the processes of recruitment and advancement.

Taken together, these measures can help Somalia build a public administration that is more competent, efficient, and accountable, and better able to turn government policies into practical results and respond to the country's wider challenges.

Vibrant Marketplace

A prosperous marketplace encourages economic progress, entrepreneurship, and shared prosperity. The Singapore "Open to the World" Strategy provides Somalia and many developing nations with the vital foundation for developing a strong state. It indicates the way in which a bold national narrative can be constructed and core policies brought in line with the world economy. The authorities took a bold and calculated decision to keep Singapore "Open to the World." But how could they accomplish this? It is not just an empty phrase and Singapore has established powerful and specialized agencies that realize this idea. For example, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) secured a vast network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with other states and multinational organizations to guarantee local business seamless access to international markets, expanding its global trade. Given the shortage of local capital and expertise, Singapore made a strategic decision to court multinational corporations to set up operations in the country. Economic Development Board (EDB) acted as one-stop investment promotion agency supporting global investment for industrial projects, making Singapore a magnet for high-tech manufacturing and innovation. Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) stepped in as a proactive central bank and regulator, establishing the rules and infrastructure needed promoting Singapore as an international financial centre.

The main conclusion for Somalia is the fact that it should facilitate the process of doing business for local entrepreneurs by establishing networks for free trade agreements with other governments and multinational corporations and thus improving the process of entering the global market. Moreover, the establishment and operationalization of the Somalia Investment Promotion Agency should also be done, to enable foreign investments in industries to be attracted and to use local potentials and resources for the achievements of the high technology and innovations. Nevertheless, essential prerequisites for investment promotion like law and order, government stability, fair justice, road systems, and skilled workforce will pose major challenges to investment initiatives.

Unified Community

The nation-building process and social cohesion in Singapore provide crucial learning lessons for Somalia. Singapore accomplished the creation of shared national identity that allows people to unify behind the national aspiration and above narrow aspects of identity tied to their respective groups. In Somalia, clan identity has been of greater importance than national identity since the collapse of the central government. It is thus essential that shared Somali identity be established to ensure that there is stability and development in the future. That said, Somalia possesses certain key features to build on, among them a common language, a common religion, cultural characteristics, and rich history of liberation and struggle for independence. Many of

these features can be enhanced through curriculum development with materials that speak about the national history, national symbols, as well as through national events and special programs encouraging people from different communities and regions to come together. Nevertheless, national unity cannot exist without fair principles. Equal treatment of all regions and groups is necessary to prevent some groups from feeling isolated. For instance, after the riots and ethnic conflicts in the 1960s Singapore leaders started to pursue a policy of multiracialism based on the principle of equal treatment of all ethnic groups. In addition to ensuring that citizens of various ethnic groups live together, Singapore establishment took measures aimed at preventing residential segregation. Ethnic integration policy (EIP) initiated in 1989 provides for ethnic quotas in HDB developments thus ensuring that ethnic groups live together, which proves that creating a healthy society needs deliberate efforts on the part of the government. These examples of Singapore provide valuable insights for Somalia and other developing countries with respect to the importance of coherence between history and policies in establishing unity, legitimacy and progress. The lesson for developing countries is that no unity occurs without design.

National Leadership

The quality of leadership and governance model was fundamental to the success of Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew, who was Prime Minister from 1959 until 1990, is generally described as the principal architect of contemporary Singapore in the public perception. His style of leadership is identified as pragmatic; his approach is based on long-term interests with the emphasis being put on results. During the period of his ruling, together with the People's Action Party, Lee Kuan Yew was able to implement ideals of stability, meritocracy, and clean governance.

" A nation is great not by its size alone. It is the will, the cohesion, the stamina, the discipline of its people and the quality of their leaders which ensure it an honourable place in history." Lee Kuan Yew, 1963.

Somalia needs leadership with a clear and compelling national vision that clearly describes the functioning of the state and the objectives it pursues. Should one of the pillars of the model weaken, the integrity of the whole structure is at risk. Therefore, the model emphasizes that nation-building is not an activity of the government only; rather, it is a joint effort involving strong institutions, an active business sector, and a mobilized public but, above all, a clear-cut vision about what needs to be achieved. There are situations in which visionary and practical leadership is necessary in governance. An example of such a leader is Lee Kuan Yew, who believed that "governance is mainly about achieving results" and that effectiveness of leadership is much more important than the type of government. As he stated, "it does not matter how good the political system is — if the leaders are incompetent, the people will suffer; while, on the contrary,

competent and strong leaders will make it work in spite of their poor political systems.” With this thinking in mind, the PAP government became oriented on being efficient and put forward ultimate goals (such as job creation, housing construction, GDP growth), which were organized through the functioning of the bureaucracy, with some modifications introduced in the process. Governance was seen as an ongoing process of solving different problems. When the first strategy, merging with Malaysia, failed, Lee’s government managed to implement a new strategy very quickly instead of stubborn adherence to the earlier one.

The experiences of Singapore demonstrates that national advancement must be coupled with leadership that has a clear long-term vision combined with practical, results-oriented decision making. Thus, it is essential for Somalia to come up with a national agenda that establishes the role of state institutions, sets out the realistic development objectives, and transforms political commitment into real results.

Somali leaders should be ready to respond to changing environments, periodically review the effectiveness of the national policies, and take the needed steps to accommodate changing conditions, instead of sticking to practices that no longer benefit the national interest. It is essential, therefore, that leadership is evaluated not only on the basis of political authority and statements made in public, but also on the effectiveness of executing policies and delivering results on the ground such as security, institution building, job creation, public services provision, and providing benefits to citizens. In addition, the practice of Singapore shows that it is impossible to achieve nation-building by the government alone.

The progress of Singapore was made possible by the fact that it had a professional and disciplined public service, strong institutions, effective private sector, and citizens willing to work in cooperation during the nation-building processes. Therefore, it is important for Somalia to learn from this experience by strengthening merit recruitment, fighting corruption, and safeguarding public institutions from political and personal interests. At the same time, the government should make the necessary arrangements to allow business sector, civil society, traditional leaders and citizens to participate in national development as well.

CONCLUSION

The insights gained from the Strong Nations for Africa Programme affirm that achieving tangible results in Somalia will require determined leadership, accountable institutions, national unity and political and administrative commitment to turning policies into real achievements. The experience of Singapore provides valuable lessons, although it must be adapted to local realities. Somalia's road towards stronger nationhood entails a firm commitment to peace and security, good governance, merit-based public administration, economic opportunity and inclusive human development. By strengthening strong institutions, involving citizens and private sector in the process and pursuing a common national vision in a disciplined way, Somalia is able to rebuild public confidence in the authorities and lay the foundations for a stable, prosperous, and united future.