

High stakes for Somaliland's presidential elections

Omar S Mahmood and Mohamed Farah



The stakes are high for Somaliland's presidential elections scheduled for 13 November 2017. After more than two years of delays, voters will finally have the chance to be heard. Given that President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud 'Silanyo' is stepping down, the contest will result in fresh leadership. This report sheds light on some of the pivotal political and security issues facing Somaliland at the time of these crucial elections, providing a background on the process and raising some key concerns.

Key points

- ▶ The stakes for the 2017 presidential elections are high, and the vote is likely to be close.
- ▶ While some concerns exist regarding the electoral campaign and acceptance of its outcome by all sides, the successful completion of a voter register is likely to mean that the vote will be the cleanest in Somaliland's history. All three parties have expressed confidence in the National Electoral Commission as a competent and neutral body.
- ▶ Clan politics remain an important feature of electoral cycles. Certain sections of Somaliland's east are also voting for the first time, but it remains to be seen if overall turnout will increase.
- ▶ The incoming administration has a chance to affect a number of key political, economic and international initiatives that will influence Somaliland's trajectory.

Introduction

The stakes are high for Somaliland's presidential elections scheduled for 13 November 2017. After more than two years of delays, voters will finally have the chance to make their voices heard. Given that President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud 'Silanyo' is not standing for re-election, the contest will result in fresh leadership regardless of the outcome. This report aims to shed light on some of the pivotal political and security issues facing Somaliland at the time of these crucial elections, providing a background on the process and raising some key concerns going forward.

This report was written in partnership by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Academy for Peace and Development (APD), a think tank based in Hargeisa. The findings are based on fieldwork conducted in Hargeisa and Berbera in late July-early August 2017, and again in Hargeisa in mid-September, combined with extensive desktop research. More than 30 interviews were conducted with a range of actors, including government ministers, opposition politicians, civil society members and other activists and observers.

The 2017 presidential elections

Background to Somaliland's political system

Somaliland occupies an ambiguous position on the international stage. For the past 26 years it has been a self-declared independent nation replete with effective governing structures, yet has not received recognition from any other nation.¹ This lack of international recognition complicates many aspects of its political and security situation, most notably its relationship with the internationally recognised Somali Federal Government (SFG) in Mogadishu, which still lays claim to the territory.

Given that President 'Silanyo' is not standing for re-election, the contest will result in fresh leadership

Somaliland's history has engendered a unique political system incorporating traditional leadership aspects with modern constructs. Parliament consists of two houses – a Lower House (House of Representatives) of 82 elected parliamentarians, and an Upper House or Guurti of 82 clan elders, originally appointed during clan conferences in 1993 and 1997.

The Guurti institutionalises traditional governance dynamics and the clan system in the Somaliland arena, giving rise to its hybrid nature. The Guurti, discussed in more detail below, has played an important role in Somaliland's history, settling disputes on the basis of consensus and serving as a neutral arbiter.

Outgoing President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud, more popularly known as ‘Silanyo’, currently leads the executive. His Kulmiye party won the 2010 elections, defeating incumbent Dahir Rayale Kahin of the United Democratic People’s Party (UDUB). That election, combined with Silanyo’s acceptance of defeat to Rayale by a mere 80 votes during the 2003 contest, solidified Somaliland’s democratic credentials, and contributed to its tradition of peaceful transfers of power.²

The Somaliland constitution, overwhelmingly approved via popular referendum in 2001, allows for only three political parties to exist. Qualified political organisations compete in local council elections, with the top three transitioning to become political parties.³ The last local council elections occurred in 2012, with the ruling Kulmiye party retaining its status alongside the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) and newcomer Waddani. These are consequently the three parties contesting the 2017 presidential elections.

Electoral delays

Somaliland’s political history is filled with missed deadlines. Nonetheless five different elections and one referendum have occurred since 2001, an impressive democratic record unparalleled in its neighbourhood (Table 1).

The November 2017 presidential elections were originally scheduled for June 2015, following the end of Silanyo’s

five-year mandate. In March 2015, Somaliland’s National Electoral Commission (NEC) announced a nine-month poll delay based on technical considerations, including a lack of time to complete voter registration and scarce election funding.⁴ The NEC submitted the delay request to the president for review, and subsequent approval by the Guurti.

The November 2017 presidential elections were originally scheduled for June 2015

At the same time, some members of the ruling party broke with Silanyo and called for the outstanding parliamentary elections to be held concurrently with the presidential contest. This was influenced by concerns that Silanyo sought to hold parliamentary elections first, delaying the presidential contest until later.⁵ Based on this, the Lower House issued a resolution in 2015 calling for the elections to be combined.

A Guurti ruling on 14 May 2015, however, extended the mandate of the executive by nearly two years, well beyond the NEC’s nine-month proposal. Article 83 of Somaliland’s constitution gives the Guurti the power to extend the term of the executive due to security considerations, and the controversial decision was

Table 1: Somaliland’s electoral processes

Year	Event	Result
2001	Constitutional referendum	Somaliland constitution approved by 97% of the vote
2002	Local council elections	Local councillors chosen; UDUB, Kulmiye and UCID emerge as political parties
2003	Presidential elections	Dahir Rayale Kahin (UDUB) narrowly defeats Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo (Kulmiye), Faysal Ali Warabe (UCID) places third
2005	Parliamentary elections	82 Lower House members elected; UDUB receives 33 seats, followed by Kulmiye’s 28, and 21 for UCID
2010	Presidential elections	Silanyo (Kulmiye) defeats Rayale (UDUB), Warabe (UCID) again places third
2012	Local council elections	Local councillors chosen; Kulmiye and UCID retain political party status, while Waddani becomes an official party

Source: M Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, Indiana University Press, 2008; local news reports.

justified by invoking the situation in Somaliland's east, among other concerns. Nonetheless, many viewed the Guurti as partial in this respect, and bending to the will of the executive.⁶

The opposition Waddani party argued that the NEC's original proposal should be respected, while President Silanyo requested the Constitutional Court's intervention. On 18 August 2015, the court ruled in favour of the Guurti's decision, extending Silanyo's mandate until March 2017. The ruling also called for the parliamentary elections to be held concurrently. Grudgingly, the opposition accepted the decision.⁷

All of Somaliland's elected national figures have overstayed their constitutionally mandated term limits

In January 2017, two months before the poll was scheduled, the election was delayed a further six months. This time the NEC was technically prepared to hold the elections on time. But the three political parties agreed to postpone the contest given the ongoing drought conditions in Somaliland's east, which had led to much displacement and would thus complicate voter card distribution.⁸ The Supreme Court confirmed the need for ratification by the Guurti, which determined that the election would be held after a slightly longer delay than the political parties had agreed to.⁹

But the Guurti decision also mandated a distinct process for parliamentary elections.¹⁰ This gave legal weight to a presidential decree from Silanyo in September 2016 that split the parliamentary elections to allow for more time to enact reforms that would provide under-represented regions a greater voice in Parliament.¹¹ The decision of the Guurti did not justify why the parliamentary elections were further delayed, but the ruling extended the Guurti's tenure in power, a decision ostensibly in the interests of its members. Additionally, others noted it was necessary to have a government in place while the parliamentary elections were held.¹²

In March 2017, the NEC established 13 November 2017 as the new presidential poll date. At the same time, the timeline for elections for the Lower House was set at 29 April 2019, and for the Guurti 28 April 2020.

In this sense, all of Somaliland's elected national figures have overstayed their constitutionally mandated term limits. Silanyo's administration will end two and a half years behind schedule, while the last election for the Lower House took place in 2005, meaning that its members will have served 14 years between elections. In addition, members of the Guurti have not undergone a selection process since 1997, a span of more than 20 years.

Donor reaction

The consistent poll delays have sparked criticism externally, with international donors taking a strong stand against what had been considered a beacon of

\$10 617 500

TOTAL BUDGET FOR
2017 ELECTIONS

democracy in an undemocratic region. A joint statement in September 2016 urged against further delays, criticised the decision to separate the parliamentary elections and warned that international funding for the polls would not be possible given the new time frames.¹³ A further statement in January 2017 advocated against the drought-induced delay, and advised that the patience of the international community was wearing thin.¹⁴

Due to the delays, donors were reluctant to fund the upcoming voter card distribution. Nonetheless, Somaliland shook off the criticism, and moved forward to complete the process amid reduced external support. In past elections, donors funded 75% of costs, leaving 25% for Somaliland. The total budget for the 2017 polls was \$10 617 500, with Somaliland's share increasing to 35%.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the government transferred \$2 million to the NEC in July, following two other payments for a total of \$5.2 million, probably a higher share given the need to make up for reduced external support (Table 2).¹⁶

Table 2: Breakdown of funding by process¹⁷

Funding contribution	Voter registration	Card distribution	Election materials
Donors	63%	18%	19%
Somaliland	37%	82%	81%

Source: Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC).

Voter registration and card distribution

Somaliland overhauled its voter registration record and system for the upcoming polls. The 2010 presidential contest relied on a voter registration conducted in 2008-9, which proved problematic. That process, which used fingerprint records and facial recognition as a basis for registration, was riddled with inconsistencies to the point where the registration was discarded afterwards.¹⁸ A full review undertaken by Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS) concluded that, 'The biometric data collected during the registration was not good enough to allow the biometric filters to detect the duplicates, leaving a large number on the register.'¹⁹

In November 2011, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to nullify the 2008 Voter Registration Law

and throw out the voter list that had been used in the 2010 presidential elections. The 2012 local elections were not preceded by a new registration process, and thus similarly suffered from irregularities, especially in terms of multiple voting. The nullification of the voter registration negatively affected the credibility of those elections, and a report from the international observer mission concluded that they could not be considered free and fair due to the prevalence of irregularities.²⁰ The report also recommended that a new voter registration be undertaken before the next election.²¹

Determined to avoid similar problems, a new NEC leadership was inaugurated in December 2014.²² Their main task was to undertake a countrywide voter registration that would build the confidence of the electoral stakeholders and prevent fraud.²³ In June 2014, the NEC conducted a field test of a new iris-capture biometric voter registration system, to determine its suitability to the Somaliland context, a first for Africa.²⁴ Passing the test, voter registration via the iris scanner began on 16 January 2016, and was concluded on 26 September 2016. Twenty-one of the 23 districts across Somaliland's six regions were covered, with some areas of the east inaccessible (see the section on page 14).

The process seemingly worked well, eliminating the problem of multiple registration. The iris system was championed for being a stronger recognition process than relying on fingerprints, and all three political parties expressed confidence in its application.²⁵ Abdifatah Ibrahim Warsame, a member of the NEC, noted, 'The technical process of the voter registration was very credible, transparent and is trusted by all key political actors.'²⁶

Somaliland overhauled its voter registration record and system for the upcoming polls

In a survey conducted by the APD, more than 84% considered the voter registration to be credible and positive.²⁷ This has played into favourable reviews of the NEC's performance, considered by national and international stakeholders to be a competent, efficient and most importantly neutral actor.

Total registration came to 873 331, down from the 1 069 914 who voted in 2010, an indication that the safeguards against multiple registration were working.²⁸ Nonetheless, some youth reportedly expressed scepticism regarding the new system, centring around concerns that personal data would be captured and sent off to European countries, hindering future migration prospects.²⁹ Some low voter registration among youth may be explained by this fear, but the NEC assured that this was a minor complication.³⁰

Voter card distribution followed the conclusion of the registration, occurring in shifts starting on 29 April 2017 in the Awdal and Sahil regions, and concluding in Sool and Sanaag on 3 September 2017.³¹ Registered voters had five days to visit their local polling stations to pick up their cards, or another two weeks to make it to their district headquarters; those who missed the deadline will not participate in November.³² Approximately 80% of registered voters picked up their cards (Table 3).³³

Table 3: Voter registration and card distribution

Region	Registered voters	Cards distributed	Percentage
Maroodi Jeex	312 634	249 229	79,72%
Sahil	78 842	60 817	77,14%
Awdal	147 031	102 571	69,76%
Togdheer	178 506	147 440	82,60%
Sool	71 096	63 698	89,59%
Sanaag	85 222	80 334	94,26%
Total	873 331	704 089	80,62%

Source: Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC).

Overall, the process for both voter registration and card distribution proceeded smoothly, and there is a high degree of confidence that the level of electoral manipulation or irregularity come election day will be minimal.³⁴

Contestants

For reasons discussed below, the 2017 presidential elections carry high stakes for Somaliland. While the three

political parties are taking part, the contest essentially boils down to the ruling Kulmiye versus the opposition Waddani, with UCID probably coming a distant third. The official campaign period will begin on 21 October, and run up to two days before the election on 13 November.³⁵

Kulmiye

Muse Bihi Abdi is the candidate for the Kulmiye party, securing the nomination in 2015 amid an internal debate regarding Silanyo's successor. Bihi served in Somalia's air force under Siad Barre, and was a Somali National Movement (SNM) commanding officer during the armed struggle in the 1980s. He also led the post-war demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants while serving as interior minister in the 1990s. Nonetheless, his selection proved problematic, with several key figures leaving the Kulmiye party in opposition to Bihi's candidacy.³⁶

The process for both voter registration and card distribution proceeded smoothly

Bihi was challenged by the former finance and foreign affairs ministers Abdiaziz Mohamed Samale and Mohamed Bihi Yonis, both of whom come from the same clan constituency as Bihi. These two ministers received political support from former presidency minister Hirsi Ali Hassan, who was at the time considered the most influential cabinet member in the Silanyo government. The three formed a political alliance to remove Bihi from the chairmanship of Kulmiye, and challenge the party's candidacy selection.³⁷

Bihi in turn negotiated with the business elite and his own clan constituency, in addition to the presidency. He won the support of Silanyo and influential family members like Silanyo's son-in-law and Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Bashe Omar, and First Lady Amina Jirde. When Silanyo declared his support for Bihi's candidacy, those who had challenged him resigned. Many later joined the Waddani party after months of negotiation, although only Hirsi secured a key position as party leader.³⁸

Kulmiye also retains support from some influential Somaliland businessmen who hail from Silanyo's Habar Jeclo sub-clan, and Bihi's Habar Awal clan.³⁹

Waddani

The chairman of the Waddani party, Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, known as Irro, is the party's contestant. Irro served as Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament for 12 years until he resigned in August 2017, in order to facilitate his presidential campaign. Irro had previously been close to the chair of the UCID party, Faysal Ali Warabe, as the two knew each other while living abroad in Finland. A dispute over leadership of the party in 2011 facilitated Irro's departure and the creation of Waddani, leading to bad blood between the two former allies.⁴⁰

UCID

Warabe serves as the long-time leader of the UCID party, projected to finish third. Having been an opposition leader since the early 2000s, he previously ran for president in 2003 and 2010, placing third both times. Warabe maintains tight control over the party, evidenced by the departure of Irro and other members to form Waddani. A social democrat, he differs from other candidates in advocating for a welfare state in Somaliland.⁴¹ He is also staunchly anti-tribalist and populist, a position no doubt based on the fact that his Idigale clan is one of the smaller Isaaq sub-clans compared with the Habar Awal, Habar Jeclo and Habar Yunis, and thus needs to draw outside support for any realistic chance of victory.

Clan prospects for the 2017 vote

Intra-Isaaq

Despite instituting a three-party system to avoid clan-based politics, the influence of the clan remains an important determinant of Somaliland's political processes. Given that the majority of Somaliland, especially outside its eastern and western fringes, hail from the Isaaq clan, intra-Isaaq politics are a crucial aspect in deciding any election. All three presidential candidates are Isaaq, but allegiances within the sub-clan structure are subject to change. This ensures that while the clan retains an influential impact on any electoral outcome, its role in this process is fluid (see chart on page 9).

The influence of the clan remains an important determinant of Somaliland's political processes

The Kulmiye victory of 2010 owed itself in large part to an alliance between the Habar Jeclo, Arab and Habar Awal (particularly the Sa'ad Muse sub-clan). President Silanyo hails from the Habar Jeclo, and ensured his clan retained a dominant position under his tenure. However, critics to this argument insist that the Habar Awal/Sa'ad Muse took most of the power and resources during

Table 4: Outlining the candidates' positions on some key issues

	Bihi (Kulmiye) ⁴²	Irro (Waddani) ⁴³	Warabe (UCID) ⁴⁴
Political reform	Elections for Parliament must occur soon	Will review the election process, but hold them on time	Limit Guurti to 41 seats selected by both clans and government, restrict authority to traditional and religious issues
Economy	Supports a free market system with limited government role	Supports a free market system with limited government role	Seeks state-controlled market policies, advocates for a welfare state
Dialogue with Somalia	Seeks international mediation, opposes Turkish involvement	Previous government made little progress, seeks new and friendly mediator	Seeks mediation, views Turkey as partial
Berbera port and military base deals	Respects both agreements, but will review if needed	Criticises implementation of the port deal, claims base deal not valid	Supportive of both deals, but may require some review

Source: ISS interviews with each of the candidates and other party officials.

Silanyo's tenure.⁴⁵ Regardless, several key positions have gone to both Habar Jeclo and Sa'ad Muse members, generating accusations of clan-based nepotism.⁴⁶

Given the alliance and Silanyo's victory in 2010, the Sa'ad Muse are now pushing for their turn to rule.⁴⁷ Considering that these are among the two largest clans in Somaliland, a close adherence to this alliance would give Kulmiye a significant chance of victory.

The Waddani party's base lies within the Habar Yunis sub-clan, from which its candidate Irro hails. Waddani is trying to crack the Habar Jeclo-Habar Awal alliance, as its electoral prospects are dependent on it. A key example of this was the appointment of former presidency minister Hirsi Ali Hassan (Habar Jeclo) as Waddani party leader after he left Kulmiye. As one observer put it, Waddani has avoided overtly attacking Silanyo as part of an outreach strategy to the Habar Jeclo, emphasising that even within their alliance the Habar Awal are likely to dominate if victorious, isolating them from their current position.⁴⁸

Waddani is trying to crack the Habar Jeclo-Habar Awal alliance, as its electoral prospects are dependent on it

The Sa'ad Muse, along with the Isse Muse, make up the Habar Awal clan. The Isse Muse are another target of Waddani's outreach, given that Irro was elected from the Sahil region, where they predominate. First Lady Amina Mohamed Jirde is Isse Muse, providing support to Kulmiye under Silanyo's administration. Nonetheless, the Isse Muse may be susceptible to Waddani outreach. First Lady Jirde, who has played a big role in the Silanyo administration despite lacking an official position, reportedly doesn't hold significant popularity within her clan. One episode supporting this dynamic was her steadfast determination to ignore local opposition to the signing of both the port and military base deals with the UAE in Berbera, where the Isse Muse are predominately found (see below).⁴⁹

In this sense, Waddani may sense an opportunity to shore up support in a traditional Kulmiye stronghold.⁵⁰ Waddani has also been courting the Arab clan, reportedly by promising clan member Abdiqadir Jirde the party leadership if victorious. This would provide a potential path for the Arab clan to the presidency in the future.⁵¹ Traditionally the Arab clan has been one of the more unified in Somaliland, but it is unclear who the clan will ultimately support, and this election will test its historical unity.⁵²

The Idigale are another of the major Isaaq sub-clans, and tend to be associated with the UCID party given Warabe's leadership. Warabe has, however, advocated for a non-tribalist agenda, and the Idigale may be divided. Muse Bihi's mother is also from that clan, while others may view voting for UCID as a lost cause given its third straight projected last-place

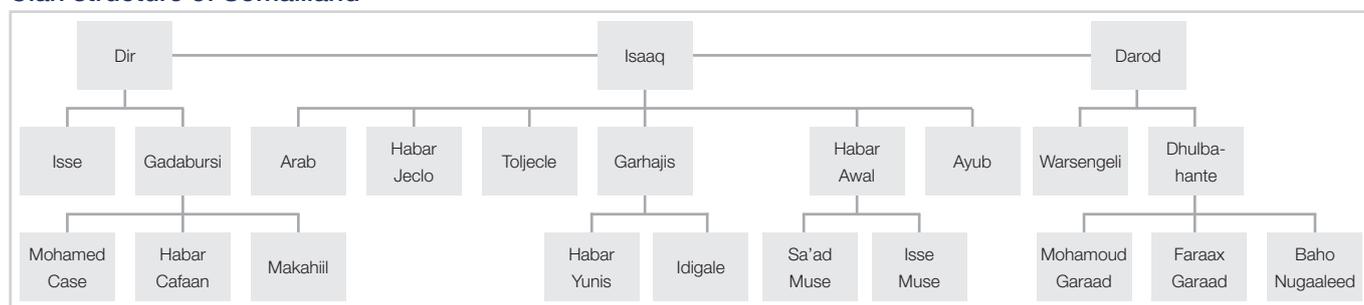
873 331

TOTAL NUMBER OF
VOTERS REGISTERED

finish.⁵³ Although most of the clan's votes are still likely to go to UCID, some of the clan's political elites have sided with Waddani – to create a strong political alliance that could either contend with, or defeat, the Habar Jeclo-Habar Awal alliance.⁵⁴

Thus while many have criticised the Silanyo administration for pandering to clan dynamics, the current electoral outcome will probably be decided on a similar basis. A key question is whether Waddani can peel away enough members to disrupt the Habar Jeclo-Habar Awal alliance. The divisions within the other Isaaq sub-clans imply that an unbroken Habar Jeclo-Habar Awal alliance has a good chance of emerging victorious.

Clan structure of Somaliland



Source: ISS.

Note: This chart only includes clans mentioned in the report.

Non-Isaaq

The west and east of Somaliland correspond to different clan dynamics, with the Gadabursi most dominant in the west, and Darod/Harti sub-clans (Dhulbahante and Warsengeli) in the east.

The Gadabursi have played a prominent role for a non-Isaaq clan in Somaliland, and since 1997 have occupied the office of the vice-president. Former president Rayale hailed from the Gadabursi, and his ascent to the top office from his vice-presidential role after Mohamed Egal died in 2002, followed by his re-election in 2003, demonstrated that a non-Isaaq could govern Somaliland's highest position.

Politically and socially, the Gadabursi are divided into three main sub-clans, which will probably be reflected in the upcoming vote: the Makahiil, Mohamed Case and Habar Cafaan. The running mates of Waddani (Ambassador Mohamed Ali) and Kulmiye (Abdirahman Saylici) are from the Makahiil and Mohamed Case respectively. The Habar Cafaan do not have a candidate, as former Waddani vice-chairman Ahmed Mumin Seed competed for the post of Irro's running mate, but was defeated. In return, Mumin left Waddani, joining Kulmiye.

The Habar Cafaan have now forged an alliance for the first time with the Mohamed Case to challenge the domination of the Makahiil, considered to be the largest Gadabursi sub-clan, demonstrating the effect the elections are having on localised clan politics.⁵⁵

84%

RESPONDENTS WHO TOLD APD SURVEY THAT VOTER REGISTRATION WAS CREDIBLE AND POSITIVE

The Issa are also found in the west of Somaliland and in Djibouti, where they play a prominent role.⁵⁶ Historically, the Issa were not considered a game changer for electoral vote calculations. However all three parties are trying to mobilise support from them. Kulmiye retains the best relations with Djibouti, which may serve them well come election time; but it remains to be seen what degree of political influence Djibouti will have on the Issa vote.⁵⁷

Out east, some will be voting in a Somaliland election for the first time. None of the three candidates have deep ties with the eastern clans, and thus all are courting new voters. This is intertwined with the ongoing political dialogue with Khatumo, a Dhulbahante entity whose leadership declared its independence from Somaliland in 2012.

None of the three candidates have deep ties with the eastern clans, and thus all are courting new voters

UCID chairman Warabe was involved in the Khatumo negotiations, and has nominated a vice-president, Ahmed Abdi Muse Abyaan, from the Dhulbahante/Mohamoud Garaad/Jama Siyad clan. This would be the first Dhulbahante vice-presidential candidate in Somaliland's history, and should ensure support for UCID.

Yet not all Dhulbahante are supportive of Khatumo. Kulmiye and Waddani both have other important political elites from the east, allowing them some support as well. In this sense, the Dhulbahante vote will probably be divided among the three parties, with UCID getting a significant share.

The Warsengeli, the other main clan in Somaliland's east, are also difficult to predict, but are not as numerous as the Dhulbahante. For more on the political dynamics of this region, see the section below: The east votes.

Why these elections are so important

Criticism of the Silanyo government

The Silanyo government has been widely criticised for presiding over an administration more corrupt and tribal than any seen in Somaliland.⁵⁸ Silanyo himself has been in poor health for much of his tenure, ushering into prominence his family in a manner previously not apparent in Somaliland politics.⁵⁹

The performance of the administration can be seen in the context of the controversial UAE deals. Both appeared to be family affairs.⁶⁰ There has also been a worrying lack of transparency, as the full terms, especially for the military base, have not been revealed.

For example on 12 February 2017, Parliament approved a military base deal with the UAE in a process many decried as unconstitutional. Silanyo called

30 months

AMOUNT OF TIME ADDED TO
SILANYO'S ADMINISTRATION
DUE TO CONSISTENT
ELECTORAL DELAYS

for both Houses of Parliament to be present, an unusual procedure typically reserved for a State of the Union address, or approval of the chairman of the Supreme Court.⁶¹ Lower House Speaker Irro decried the vote, while a few opposing members were physically removed from Parliament.⁶²

The furore over this process, the heavy-handed nature in which it was considered and the role of the president's family members are an indication, many believe, of how the Silanyo administration has performed since 2010.

The deals so late in the administration's tenure brought up another key point – that it is living on borrowed time. The consistent electoral delays have added nearly 30 months to the Silanyo administration.⁶³ While there is precedent in Somaliland's political history to adjust electoral timelines, there is also a feeling that such large developments, like the port and base deal which have the potential to alter the outlook of Somaliland both in terms of economy and foreign policy for years to come, should be an issue for a new administration with a new mandate.⁶⁴ In this sense, Waddani has promised to review the military base deal in particular, raising the stakes given the impact this type of agreement can have on Somaliland's trajectory.⁶⁵

In any case, the change in leadership after a divisive administration increases the stakes of contestation given the lengthy delay for those waiting for their chance to take power, and the opportunity to change recent dynamics. In this sense, the stakes are also high for Silanyo administration officials, who will probably want to retain as much prestige as possible in any incoming administration.⁶⁶

New leadership amid a close vote

With Silanyo stepping down after seven years in power, Somaliland will have a new president regardless of the outcome. The election also features two first-time candidates in Bihi and Irro, breaking the repetitive cycle in 2003 and 2010 between Rayale, Silanyo and Warabe. The main question hinges on whether Kulmiye will continue its rule, or if power will shift to the opposition Waddani or UCID.

Nevertheless, none of the current candidates carry the political gravitas of previous Somaliland presidents, despite Irro's 12-year term as House of Representatives

Speaker.⁶⁷ Somaliland's first president, Egal, served as prime minister of Somalia in the 1960s, and was considered a giant of African politics. Rayale did not carry as high a profile, but had been vice-president for five years in addition to serving briefly as president upon Egal's death, and came from a key non-Isaaq clan (Gadabursi).

Silanyo himself played a major role in Somaliland's liberation as chairman of the SNM for six years, and then the main opposition leader prior to his ascension to top office. His acceptance of electoral defeat in 2003 was an important turning point in Somaliland's political history, and generated significant praise for placing larger interests ahead of personal initiatives.

In this sense, Bihi, Irro and Warabe will be a bit untested in terms of the office of the presidency, compared to past leadership. This also makes the current process much harder to predict with no obvious frontrunner, despite some advantages for Kulmiye. Most estimate Kulmiye and Waddani to be neck and neck, leading to the prospect of another narrow vote like 2003. This raises the stakes as both parties see a viable path to power.

The election also features two first-time candidates in Bihi and Irro, breaking the repetitive cycle in 2003 and 2010

Given the heated rhetoric and the prospect of a close vote, concerns have increased around the acceptance of the outcome on all sides.⁶⁸ However, all three contestants have expressed confidence in the NEC as a neutral body, decreasing the opportunities for contestation.

The August 2017 vote to replace Irro as Speaker of the Lower House could provide a harbinger for the national contest. After Irro resigned, Kulmiye put forth Bashe Mohamed Farah, while Waddani supported Abdirahman Mohamed Talyanle. The election on 5 August in the Lower House was close, with Bashe triumphing by just one vote. Talyanle initially accepted the results, then backtracked the next day, claiming that a recount showed he had won by one vote.⁶⁹ This dragged on for a few days, with a brawl in Parliament.⁷⁰ Ultimately Talyanle,

with the support of party chairman Irro, announced on 26 August that he and his party had accepted the results in the name of national stability, despite still insisting on his victory.⁷¹

This episode highlights a number of lessons and concerns. First it demonstrates the heated nature of contestation between the two parties, along with the narrow margins of victory, an aspect that could be replayed at a national level. Secondly, it shows the likelihood of contestation when the results are close, along with the potential for violence. Ultimately, however, Talyanle's decision to moderate his stance revealed a positive trend in Somaliland politics – that of subordinating individual desires to national interests.⁷²

There is a level of insulation in Somaliland from the type of violence and contestation that has marked electoral cycles elsewhere

While the event foreshadows the concerns that could mark the November 2017 vote, it is this last theme that provides a degree of optimism. In this sense, there is a level of insulation in Somaliland from the type of violence and contestation that has marked electoral cycles elsewhere across the continent.

This is more so given the overriding desire for international recognition, which has been intertwined with the practice of peaceful democracy. Egal first made that connection, stating in 1999 that recognition for Somaliland would be dependent on a credible democratic system.⁷³ Given that a transfer of power will occur in 2017 regardless of the winner, this will be the third time the presidency has been decided by popular vote in Somaliland over the past 14 years, nurturing a tradition of peaceful change. It is this sense that the future of Somaliland hinges on such an outcome that may eventually keep all parties in check, despite the high level of contestation and likely close contest.

Institutional decay

Among interviewees, there was consensus that despite its electoral record, Somaliland's political system has suffered from serious decay, undermining the very institutions that were once considered a symbol of success.

The Lower House of Parliament has served since 2005 without facing re-election. The consistent delays and the decision to separate the Lower House selection from that of the president means that members will have served 14 years without a referendum on their performance by the time the next election is scheduled for 2019.

Some interviewees noted that the length of time has also reduced the influence of political parties, given the changes in Somaliland's official



SOMALILAND'S POLITICAL
SYSTEM HAS SUFFERED
SERIOUS DECAY

parties since the initial election in 2005, and the consistent realignment of individuals within the current trio of Kulmiye, Waddani and UCID.

In this sense, loyalty to a party centring around a specific set of programmes or a platform is limited, which combined with the lack of performance reviews for the office reinforces allegiances along clan lines or around an individualised notion of benefit.⁷⁴

The Guurti has been a particular source of consternation, given both its historic role in resolving Somaliland's crises and the lack of clarity over its selection/election process. Members were initially appointed either during the 1993 Borama conference or a 1997 selection process. The lack of evaluation for over 20 years has reduced the overall effectiveness of the body as an independent and impartial arbiter. This has been compounded by the common practice of hereditary secession upon the death of original Guurti members, rather than a new process involving clan input.

Loyalty to a party centring around a specific set of programmes or a platform is limited

Thus in practice, approximately 90% of the seats have passed to the sons of original Guurti members, who often do not have similar experience in peacebuilding, nor command the respect of the clan they purportedly represent.⁷⁵ In turn, some newer members have been accused of viewing the position more as a family business or moneymaking opportunity, reducing the overall competence and integrity of the institution.⁷⁶

Interviewees also complained about the qualifications of the Guurti in other respects, such as rampant illiteracy among members. This reduces its ability to serve as a check on the executive, as laws proposed cannot be internalised.⁷⁷ In addition, the institution is male-dominated, given the preferential position of men as leaders within their respective clans.

In this sense, many interviewees concurred that the role of the Guurti as a collection of elders safeguarding the peace and security of Somaliland has been degraded, with the institution no longer comprising respected elders

chosen to represent society – a major fault predicated by the lack of clear directives over its selection.

While 28 April 2020 has been chosen as the date for a new Guurti selection, the details have yet to be worked out. The Somaliland constitution is short on specifics, and the Guurti in 2007 rejected an electoral law put forth by the Lower House, leaving their selection process undefined. One of the underlying reasons for this rejection was the threat to its position, given that the law would cause some to lose their seats. In this sense, the current Guurti will still have to decide how the next Guurti is selected, giving them a continued stake in the process ahead of an impending deadline. The rejection of the electoral law, combined with the extended term limits, symbolises the Guurti's resistance to reform – a flaw in the process given that they must regulate themselves, and a major challenge to overcome.

In this sense, the next presidential administration will oversee a long overdue selection process for both Houses of Parliament. It will also be involved in setting the agenda around a new law governing the Guurti, providing another chance to have a lasting impact on Somaliland politics.⁷⁸ This increases the importance of the 2017 presidential election, given the role it could play in influencing the future rules for parliamentary selection and make-up.

Increasing stakes

The rising costs of Somaliland's elections have been well documented.⁷⁹ Contestants in 2005 noted that a successful campaign for local elections required \$30 000, an investment on which candidates (and their clan supporters) clearly expected to seek a return once in office.⁸⁰ This demonstrates the value of political positions, which goes hand in hand with the allegations of augmented corruption.⁸¹ The value of such positions may continue to rise, as Somaliland enters into a new age of international agreements, not only augmenting the overall pie but also increasing contestation given the greater benefits at stake.

The aforementioned Berbera port and military base deals with the UAE brought an unprecedented level of investment to Somaliland. The Berbera port was leased for \$442 million for the next 30 years, with a 35% stake for Somaliland.⁸² In addition to or in concert with the

military base, the UAE will also invest \$250 million to rebuild Berbera airport and develop the Berbera corridor highway to Ethiopia.⁸³ The monetary compensation of these deals, the level of investment they bring and the potential for future earnings are unprecedented in Somaliland's history. Any new government will have a chance to oversee these developments, charting a course for Somaliland's future, but also increasing the overall share of potential benefits up for discussion.

The incoming administration would potentially preside over a new era in Somaliland foreign policy, further raising the stakes of victory in 2017

In addition, the deals with the UAE put Somaliland on the geopolitical map, and could be a springboard for future investment and international dealings.⁸⁴ Thus the incoming administration would potentially preside over a new era in Somaliland foreign policy, further raising the stakes of victory in 2017.

There is also the prospect for natural resource development in Somaliland, though this remains a distant opportunity. While the outlook on oil is unclear, Genel Energy is expected to start drilling in its Oodweyne block concession in 2019.⁸⁵ Although potential findings are still probably years away from materialising, this may also increase contestation to control the prospect of any income.

The east votes

Parts of the eastern region, in dispute with Somalia's Puntland state and historically a marginalised area characterised by little sustained loyalty to any power centre, will be participating in the Somaliland political process for the first time in 2017. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen if overall turnout among the Dhulbahante and Warsengeli clans in the east will be higher than in previous contests.

Regardless, the deepening of territorial integrity is an important aspect that strengthens Somaliland's hopes of international recognition, by laying effective claim to areas within its boundaries. The situation remains fluid, however, and Puntland's continuing claims to territory with a Darod clan majority, encompassing parts of the Sool and Sanaag regions, raise the possibility of conflict surrounding Somaliland's electoral participation.

Despite these dynamics, voter registration in Somaliland's east increased to cover 21 of Somaliland's 23 districts, up from 19 in 2008/9.⁸⁶ Parts of the east remained off limits due to the security situation, however, with no registration occurring in Las Qoray, Dhahar, parts of Badhan and a few limited areas of Sool.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, registration in Taleh occurred for the first time – a symbol of Somaliland's deepening authority in its eastern borderlands.⁸⁸

Some Puntland leaders have made threatening comments regarding Somaliland's election process, but officials in Hargeisa downplayed this threat,



VALUE OF UAE DEALS
ARE UNPRECEDENTED IN
SOMALILAND'S HISTORY

expressing confidence that the elections would not exacerbate tensions in a violent manner.⁸⁹

However, Puntland has a history of stymieing Somaliland voting processes near its border, and small-scale violence occurred during both the voter registration and card distribution process.⁹⁰ Clashes occurred 15 km from Taleh in August 2016 during voter registration in the area, and violence halted the process in Dhahar a month earlier.⁹¹ An unknown militia also attacked a voter registration centre in Xudun district in August 2016.⁹² A year later during the voter card distribution, two were killed in Las Anod, while Puntland was accused of sending in troops to disrupt the process.⁹³

Puntland has a vested interest in ensuring Somaliland's east doesn't participate in the elections, but it is hard to pin each incident on Puntland. Clans in the east have historically been divided with shifting positions regarding support for integration with Somaliland, Puntland, the Federal Government in Mogadishu, and even independence. Puntland allegiance to a Darod clan homeland does not automatically translate into loyalty, while Somaliland has undertaken recent steps to entice some eastern clans to participate in its state-building project.

Puntland has a history of stymieing Somaliland voting processes near its border

For example the vote comes at a time of division within the Dhulbahante clan, and after multiple rounds of discussions between the Silanyo administration and the self-declared Dhulbahante entity Khatumo state.

Starting in late 2016, a five-point agreement was reached in June 2017 in which the Silanyo government agreed to consider altering Somaliland's constitution, to provide a more 'ideal power-sharing' agreement.⁹⁴ A follow-up meeting scheduled for July has not yet taken place, while it is clear Khatumo suffers from internal division and doesn't represent the entire Dhulbahante.⁹⁵ The most visible indication of this is that voting will not occur in the Khatumo capital of Buhoodle, but rather in the areas surrounding it, while clashes occurred in the town in

August 2017 ahead of a planned conference protesting against the agreement with Somaliland.⁹⁶

In addition to the Khatumo negotiations, Somaliland has made other strides to entice eastern clans into the system. While all three presidential candidates hail from Isaaq clans (centre of the country), and the vice-presidency typically goes to a Gadabursi candidate (west of the country), the vote for Speaker of the Lower House to replace Irro occurred between two members of the Dhulbahante. This ensured a top position for the clan, although a reach for the vice-presidency was ultimately denied.⁹⁷ In addition, a cabinet shake-up in August 2016 appointed Dhulbahante members into key Silanyo cabinet positions, such as Yasin Haji Mohamud Hiir (Faratoon), who became the first Dhulbahante interior minister.

In short, while the incorporation of new areas of Somaliland's eastern region in the 2017 vote is a positive sign for territorial consolidation, local-level clan dynamics demonstrate that this is far from a unified or irreversible development. Indeed, voting planned for Dhahar in the 2012 local elections had to be suspended after Puntland forces moved into the town the night of the election.⁹⁸ Recent incidents indicate that the prospect of localised violence surrounding a contentious process like the elections is a real possibility, pitting Somaliland and Puntland on opposite sides as each attempt to gain the upper hand in the ongoing territorial dispute.

Voter discontent

There are also concerns regarding low voter turnout. While overall registration is lower than in 2010 due to the elimination of multiple registration, turnout in the 2010 presidential elections stood at just 50%.⁹⁹ Despite optimistic indications elsewhere, some interviewees expressed concern that segments of the population had become disillusioned by the electoral process.¹⁰⁰ This has largely been accompanied by frustration surrounding unmet expectations, and resentment towards the increasing costs and clan politicisation of elections, combined with a pessimistic attitude that little will change regardless of who wins.¹⁰¹

While turnout in 2017 remains to be seen, the larger concern is for Somaliland's population to fall out of favour with the democratic process, rather than seeing it as a vehicle for change. The importance of a democratic

Somaliland in terms of its recognition bid remains a key overriding factor, but continued unmet expectations could be damaging to the maintenance of localised support for democratic ideals and traditions.

In this sense, the turnout of the elections may serve as an important barometer as to the degree of discontent with the democratic process, as Somaliland struggles to meet the needs and expectations of its entire populace.¹⁰²

Other concerns

Dialogue with Somalia

The Silanyo government has made significant overtures to the Somali Federal Government in Mogadishu. Despite regular meetings in Turkey between 2013 and 2015, talks stumbled in March 2015 after the SFG delegation included members originally from Somaliland, a red line for Somaliland that had not been violated in previous rounds.

Talks stumbled in March 2015 after the Somali government delegation included members originally from Somaliland

While that provided the impetus for the suspension of talks, additional issues contributed to a lack of progress. Turkey in particular is not viewed in Somaliland as a neutral party. Much of Turkey's assistance and efforts in Somalia since 2011 have been concentrated in Mogadishu, to the chagrin of Somaliland.¹⁰³ In addition, some interviewees complained that Turkey was not an appropriate venue given the problems it faced with its own separatist Kurdish region, indicating that sympathy for the Somaliland cause was lacking.¹⁰⁴

Others complained that Turkey did little mediation during the process, merely organising the meetings and leaving the parties to their own devices. Waddani candidate Iirro in particular has called for future talks to include a mediation element by a friendly government, suggesting that the United Kingdom fill that role.¹⁰⁵ In any case, it appears the Turkish initiative has lost the confidence of Somaliland.

Nonetheless, the willingness to engage in dialogue has not necessarily been diminished. The outgoing Silanyo administration appointed the highly respected Edna Adan Ismail as its Special Representative for future discussions in July 2017. The timing of the decision was puzzling, as no new talks have been scheduled despite some public statements on both sides in favour of such a development, while the SFG in Mogadishu has not nominated a counterpart. In addition, given that the development occurred a few months before the election, it is curious why Adan was appointed now, rather than waiting for a new administration to make a decision, as they will be the ones involved in the prospective discussions.



AL-SHABAAB ACTIVITY IN PUNTLAND IS A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Furthermore, some interviewees commented that the appointment of Edna Adan sends a strong signal regarding Somaliland's refusal to entertain any thoughts on lowering its independence demands, given her reputation as a passionate and tireless advocate of Somaliland sovereignty.¹⁰⁶ In this sense, the Silanyo administration has nominated one of the most effective and committed communicators of Somaliland's independence desires, but it remains to be seen if she retains her role after the November elections.

2017 was a year of stalled progress, given electoral cycles in both Somalia and Somaliland. The selection of Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (aka Farmajo) in Mogadishu as the new president of the SFG in February 2017 also adds a complicating factor. Farmajo hails from the Marehan clan of the Darod, the same clan of former Somali dictator Siad Barre. Barre is vividly remembered in Somaliland as the man who unrelentingly bombed Hargeisa to the ground and ensured the destruction of Somaliland during his struggle against the SNM in the late 1980s. While on an official level Farmajo's clan make-up shouldn't hinder the prospect of discussions, on a personal level any new round of talks overtly involving Farmajo may engender diminished support within Somaliland.¹⁰⁷

In this sense, the elections could affect future discussions with Somalia in that any new administration would have to decide whether to retain Edna Adan in her position, in addition to seeking a new venue, style, and perhaps even partner for any future entreaties with Somalia.

Recognition prospects

The 2017 election can help strengthen Somaliland's bid for recognition in several ways. Another peaceful transfer of leadership by popular vote would solidify the nation's democratic credentials, but international partners will want to see the oft-delayed parliamentary elections occur before proclaiming this a success. The extended delays also had diminished support.

Nonetheless, a successful vote with a cleaner voter registration would provide Somaliland with three successive leadership changes by the ballot box in 14 years. This is in line with Egal's vision of leveraging Somaliland's democratic credentials to support its bid for recognition, which stands out as all the more impressive given the neighbourhood in which it sits.

Also, the previously mentioned incorporation of new areas of Somaliland's east into the voting process strengthens territorial claims that conform to the 1960 boundaries of its short-lived days as a republic, prior to voluntary union with Italian Somalia. Nonetheless, the vote also highlights the inability of all areas to fully come under Somaliland's peaceful control, and the continued prospect of violence along its contested border with Puntland.

In this sense, the consolidation of the east is a step in the right direction, but the sustained stalemate over the Puntland border threatens recognition prospects, and probably serves as a key issue to resolve before consideration by external actors.

The sustained stalemate over the Puntland border threatens recognition prospects

So while the election can serve as another positive step in Somaliland's bid for international recognition, it is unlikely to alter the balance of such dynamics. International actors continue to insist that Somaliland and Somalia work out the issue themselves first. Thus, without a breakthrough on that end, the 2017 election and its aftermath alone is unlikely to increase prospects on this front.¹⁰⁸

Violent extremism

Somaliland has largely been able to steer clear of al-Shabaab violence, despite a series of incidents in October 2008, and some key leaders of the movement coming from Somaliland.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the recent uptick of al-Shabaab activity in neighbouring Puntland, along with the advent of a militant cell aligned to the Islamic State in the Bari region, are a cause for concern. Spillover from these dynamics has been limited, despite unproven allegations from Puntland that al-Shabaab maintains training camps on Somaliland soil.¹¹⁰

Al-Shabaab capabilities in Puntland have increased over the past year, emerging from a group responsible mainly for small-scale harassment to one capable of direct confrontation, even if infrequently. This was most pertinently demonstrated in early June 2017, when al-Shabaab militants overran a military base at Af Urur, killing at least five dozen soldiers, its deadliest attack in Puntland to date. Incidents such as this have led to

criticism of Puntland President Abdiweli Gaas's security policies, for failing to rein in al-Shabaab's presence.¹¹¹

In addition, a cell of militants led by former al-Shabaab cleric Abdulkadir Mumin pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in October 2015, and is present in the Golis Mountains of the Bari region, areas where Mumin maintains an allegiance through his Majerteen/Ali Salebaan clan.

The seizure of the seaside town of Qandala in late 2016, while ultimately short-lived, has been the most visible demonstration of this group's presence, and a worrying indication of its ability to take advantage of lapses in Puntland's security. Militants scattered into the nearby mountains rather than stay to fight invading Puntland security forces in December 2016, and the high-water mark of the group seemed to have passed. Nonetheless, Mumin and his cell were not completely eliminated, continuing small-scale violence and efforts probably aimed at recruitment within his clan base.

In this sense, given Mumin's previous demonstration of his ability to expand his group from a few dozen to a few hundred members, his sustained presence in the region is a continued security risk for Puntland, and due to its proximity, Somaliland as well.

Al-Shabaab's capacity in Puntland has increased over the past year; the group is now capable of direct confrontation

Nonetheless, neither group has set their sights on Somaliland at this point, as the violence remains localised in Puntland. Moreover, Mumin has not demonstrated a capability to operate outside the confines of his clan homeland, while the al-Shabaab presence in Puntland has long since morphed from a Darod/Warsengeli initiative, reducing the incentive of Warsengeli from Somaliland to become involved on a clan basis.¹¹²

The presence of two militant groups close to the Somaliland border, however, combined with the general disputed nature of the area, is a concern for Somaliland.¹¹³ None of the candidates have spoken much about the issue, making it unclear if any drastic changes in policy would be forthcoming.

At the same time, Somaliland has had to deal with an increasingly conservative view of Islam practised in its own boundaries, as reported elsewhere.¹¹⁴ The arrest of prominent cleric Sheikh Adan Abdi Warsame (Adan Sunne) in Hargeisa along with 24 others in September 2017, under suspicion that he was part of a ring planning violence ahead of the elections, demonstrate that such threats should not be confined to al-Shabaab and the Islamic State alone.¹¹⁵

Nonetheless, conservative preachers have held considerable influence in parts of Somaliland for some time, with a limited political agenda or violent outputs. The risk would be for a heavy-handed security response to the preaching of



CORRUPTION AND
TRIBALISM HAVE INCREASED
IN SOMALILAND

clerics like Warsame to inflame tensions, a pattern that has spurred the outbreak of Islamist-inspired violence elsewhere on the continent.

Where can Somaliland improve?

Despite its impressive electoral record, Somaliland can improve in a number of areas, which can help reverse decay and further strengthen the unity of the nation – and thus its international recognition prospects.

Institutional decay

The bypassing of term limits in both Houses of Parliament has been a key factor that has eroded its effectiveness over time, and reduced its potential to serve as a check on the executive and ensure good governance. The lack of transparency over the UAE port and military deals, in addition to their heavy-handed passage through Parliament, demonstrates the twin failures on this front.

Many challenges remain given that the election of both houses is still more than a year away, and that the Guurti will eventually have to pass a law that ensures its own reform and thus impinges on the status of its members – a key flaw in the system. But a strong adherence to term limits for both the executive and legislative is a start to help ensure elected representatives are more responsive to the needs of the constituents they are supposed to represent.

In addition, Parliament lacks female representation, while minority clans often don't receive sufficient representation in the Lower House of Parliament.¹¹⁶ The Guurti can still play a key role in safeguarding the voices of those bypassed by the electoral process, but a new selection process is desperately needed.

Challenge of clan in the political system

The role of clan in Somaliland's politics is a complex one. The intertwining of politics and clan was considered undesirable during Somaliland's infancy, but has increased since then.¹¹⁷

Parts of Somaliland's political system, such as the limit to three parties, were aimed at keeping clan politics at bay. Yet the winner of this election will probably be determined by the clan balance they strike, rather than a focus on the key issues at hand.

Identity politics can be a natural recourse, but Somaliland has struggled to limit the pernicious aspects of this

development, and must give serious thought to how reform could resurrect and sustain those gains.

Transparency

The lack of transparency in Somaliland's international agreements has been stunning. The Dubai-based DP World took over management of Berbera port in March 2017. Parliament voted on a draft version of the agreement in August 2016, but has not been presented the completed concession agreement. Although the three candidates express varying levels of support given the expected benefits for Somaliland, concerns have emerged regarding the agreement and its implementation.

Despite its impressive electoral record, Somaliland can improve in a number of areas

On the other hand, the Silanyo administration also granted the UAE a 25-year concession for a military base in Berbera. Parliament was not presented with the full agreement when it held a vote in February 2017, and Waddani leader Irro has promised to fully review, if not cancel, the deal.

Both the port and military base are among the first major international agreements Somaliland has entered. Any new leadership will need to examine them in a more transparent manner than they were agreed, in order to ensure the public is fully aware of the terms and the potential benefits they can wield for Somaliland. Failure to do so would establish a dangerous precedent in terms of how Somaliland engages the international community.

Conclusion

On the surface, Somaliland has an impressive record of democracy and governance in a troubled region. A deeper look however reveals that in between electoral cycles, corruption and tribalism have increased, threatening hard-earned gains. The stakes of the 2017 election are thus high, given the lengthy electoral delay, close race between the two biggest parties, and chance to make a major imprint on Somaliland's trajectory. Despite the high stakes, all involved must ensure the election outcome and its aftermath remain as smooth as

possible, to guarantee that Somaliland's reputation as a beacon of democracy is not threatened.

Recommendations

- Ensure all actors adhere to the guidelines regulating campaign behaviour, defined by agreements such as the Electoral Code of Conduct. In the case of contestation, impress on all parties to pursue challenges in a legal and responsible manner, underlining that the democratic credentials of Somaliland are at stake.
- Pressure the Guurti to pass a fair election law in a timely manner that ensures better clan representation and female participation, and maintains the body's status as a neutral arbiter above the fray of politics. No further electoral delays should be tolerated for the Lower House of Parliament.
- Continue outreach to the east in a non-confrontational manner, and open up a dialogue with Puntland to ensure that election-related violence or disruption remains minimal.
- Review and reform the constitution of Somaliland to remove contradictions and ambiguity around areas like judicial independence and the system of checks and balances. In addition, engage in further research and dialogue over serious reform that would reduce the overriding influence of clan in the political system.

Notes

The authors of this report would like to thank Abdishakur Hassan-kayd for his invaluable assistance while conducting field research in Somaliland. In addition, Mark Bradbury and another anonymous reviewer commented on an earlier draft of this report. Their suggestions and critiques greatly strengthened its substance.

- 1 Modern Somaliland emerged following an almost decade-long struggle by the Somali National Movement (SNM) and the collapse of dictator Siad Barre's regime in Mogadishu in 1991, declaring its independence around the same time. Previously it had been a separate British colony, joining into a union with its southern Italian-colonised counterpart upon decolonisation in 1960. For a quick overview of Somaliland's history, see Simon Allison, *Somaliland at the crossroads*, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), October 2015; for a more detailed account covering the SNM struggle and the impact it has had on Somaliland today, see Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, Indiana University Press, 2008.
- 2 This tradition can be traced back to foundations laid by the SNM itself, which had five different chairs during its decade-long struggle. Silanyo, a civilian, served in this capacity from 1984 to 1990, the longest of any of the chairmen; Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, Indiana University Press, 2008, 68.
- 3 This selection procedure is outlined in the Regulation of the Political Associations and Parties Law (Law No: 14/2000). Article 6 of the law stipulates the selection requirements of the three national parties, noting

that the three parties/associations that gain 20% of votes cast in each of Somaliland's regions will become national political parties. If no parties/associations gain 20%, the three parties with the highest percentage of votes will be chosen.

- 4 There was no voter registration at the time, and thus the NEC needed more time to complete one; Garowe Online, *Somaliland Elections Postponed for Nine Months*, 9 March 2015, <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-somaliland-elections-postponed-for-nine-months>; Kulmiye initially wanted to hold elections on time, believing they could take advantage of weaknesses in the opposition. Waddani, considered to be the main opposition party, had only been in existence for less than three years, while UCID was still suffering from the departure of many key members to Waddani; Skype interview with local researcher, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
- 5 In addition, the business community supported the call to combine the polls, given the negative impact the electoral processes can have on the economy. Some lobbied Parliament to hold them together to save time, money and reduce the risk of clan-based violence; Skype interview with local researcher, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
- 6 Cedric Barnes and Claire Elder, *Somaliland's Guurti Sparks a Crisis*, International Crisis Group, 21 May 2015, <http://blog.crisisgroup.org/africa/somalia/2015/05/21/somalilands-guurti-sparks-a-crisis/>.
- 7 Mo Ahmed Jama, *Constitutional Court pronounces House of Elders proposed extension term legal*, Wargane, <http://wargane.com/2015/08/18/somaliland-constitutional-court-pronounces-house-of-elders-proposed-extension-term-legal.html>.
- 8 Kulmiye initially argued that the drought could be managed and the elections held on time; Skype interview with local researcher, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017; *Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17*, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF), 65.
- 9 Somaliland's Upper House appoints team to review poll dates as pressure mounts over delay, *Goobjoog News*, 4 March 2017, <http://goobjoog.com/english/somalilands-upper-house-appoints-team-review-poll-dates-pressure-mounts-delay/>.
- 10 Somaliland's House of Elders postpone Presidential elections, *The National*, 6 March 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/03/06/somalilands-house-elders-postpone-presidential-elections/>.
- 11 *Accept Separation of Presidential and Parliamentary Elections*, Somaliland Sun, 24 September 2016, <http://www.somalilandsun.com/politics/19549-somaliland-accept-separation-of-presidential-and-parliamentary-elections>.
- 12 Interview with former Somaliland politician, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 13 No funds for poll delay overheads – International Community warns Somaliland, *Goobjoog News*, 17 September 2016, <http://goobjoog.com/english/no-funds-for-poll-delay-overheads-international-community-warns-somaliland/>.
- 14 The statement was signed by the EU, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States; *Statement by international partners to Somaliland on the postponement of the Presidential and Local elections*, 26 January 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final_statement_by_the_international_partners_to_somaliland_2017.01.26.pdf.
- 15 *Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17*, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF), 10.
- 16 Finance Ministry transfers final \$2 million payment to National Electoral Commission, *The National*, 27 July 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/07/27/finance-ministry-transfers-final-2-million-payment-national-electoral-commission/>.
- 17 Chart based on data provided by the NEC, Hargeisa, 25 September 2017.
- 18 Both registration conditions were relaxed in practice, with nearly half of 1.3 million registrants not providing a readable fingerprint; Michael Walls,

- Somaliland: Democracy Threatened, Chatham House, September 2009, 9.
- 19 Confronting the future of Somaliland's democracy, Interpeace and the Academy for Peace and Development, May 2015, 30.
 - 20 Confronting the future of Somaliland's democracy, Interpeace and the Academy for Peace and Development, May 2015, 30, 10-11; Progressio, Swerves on the Road, Report by the International Observers on the 2012 Local Elections in Somaliland, Steve Kibble and Michael Wall, June 2013.
 - 21 Progressio, Swerves on the Road, Report by the International Observers on the 2012 Local Elections in Somaliland, Steve Kibble and Michael Wall, June 2013.
 - 22 The NEC leadership is made up of seven representatives – six were new appointees, while one was re-appointed.
 - 23 The Ministry of Interior planned to conduct a civil registration process at the same time, causing some confusion with the NEC's voter registration, and leading to suspicions that it was an attempt by the government to interrupt the election process. Eventually it was decided to maintain complete independence between the two processes; Creative Associates International, Civil and Voter Registration Assessment, 2013-15, Somaliland.
 - 24 Voter registration in Somaliland: What to Watch in the Run-Up to Elections, Horizon Institute, 20 November 2014.
 - 25 Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF), 71.
 - 26 Interview with Abdifatah Ibrahim Warsame, Hargeisa, 25 September 2017.
 - 27 APD and Interpeace, Voter Behaviour in Somaliland, December 2016.
 - 28 Interview with Abdifatah Ibrahim Warsame, Hargeisa, 25 September 2017; this number may be further reduced, as much of the Sool region was offline during registration, thus the detection and elimination of multiple registrants will occur afterwards; interview with international electoral observer, Addis Ababa, 22 September 2017.
 - 29 This sentiment emerged during the 2008-9 voter registration process as well; Marie-Luise Schueller and Michael Walls, Voter Registration Process in Somaliland, Progressio, March 2017, 13; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with international electoral observer, Addis Ababa, 22 September 2017.
 - 30 Interview with NEC official, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
 - 31 Distribution for Maroodi Jeex and Togdheer occurred in July 2017.
 - 32 Interview with NEC official, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
 - 33 Closing ceremony of the voter registration held at Ambassador Hotel in Hargeisa on 12 September 2017.
 - 34 There is still a possibility some voter cards could be bought from registrants. Reports of this activity have occurred in Saylac district of Awdal region, Somaliland voter card distribution, Center for Policy Analysis, 2 August 2017, 2.
 - 35 Each party is given specific days on which they are allowed to campaign, to avoid clashing. Nonetheless, there have been accusations of 'pre-campaigning' outside the allowed bounds. The NEC fined both Waddani and Kulmiye in July 2017 for hosting rallies during the voter card distribution period; NEC fines Waddani and Kulmiye for campaigning during voter ID distribution process, The National, 24 Jul 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/07/24/nec-fines-waddani-kulmiye-campaigning-voter-id-distribution-process/>.
 - 36 Interview with former Somaliland politician, Addis Ababa, 25 July 2017; interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017; interview with Somaliland-based civil society activist, Addis Ababa, 10 August 2017.
 - 37 Skype interview with local researcher who has intimate knowledge of Somaliland's political dynamics, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
 - 38 Skype interview with local researcher who has intimate knowledge of Somaliland's political dynamics, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
 - 39 For example, many respondents noted that Dahabshiil CEO Abdirashid Duale (Habar Jecllo), SOMCABLE CEO Mohamed Aw-Saeed and Omaar Company owner Jama Omar have all been stronger supporters of Kulmiye; Skype interview with Somaliland observer, Addis Ababa/Nairobi, 19 July 2017; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; Skype interview with local researcher who has intimate knowledge of Somaliland's political dynamics, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
 - 40 Warabe recently stated that victory by the 'incapable' Waddani would lead to the destruction of Somaliland; UCID leader vows to leave Somaliland if Abdirahman Irro becomes President, The National, 8 September 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/09/08/ucid-leader-vows-leave-somaliland-abdirahman-irro-becomes-president/>.
 - 41 Interview with Faysal Ali Warabe, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
 - 42 Interview with Muse Bihi Abdi, Hargeisa, 29 September 2017.
 - 43 Interview with Abdirahman Irro, Hargeisa, 1 August 2017. Interview with Waddani Party Secretary, Hargeisa, 19 October 2017.
 - 44 Interview with Faysal Ali Warabe, Hargeisa, 28 September 2017.
 - 45 Interview with university professor, Hargeisa, 20 September 2017.
 - 46 As an example, Nasir Ali, director of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at Hargeisa University, demonstrated how of 23 key officials dismissed upon Silanyo's ascension to power, only one hailed from his own clan; Nasir M Ali, Somaliland: The Cost of Silanyo Election, Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 3:2, 2015, 64; clan-based nepotism in Somaliland did not begin with the Silanyo administration, although many have noted its increase. Former president Dahir Rayale Kahin was also accused of appointing many ministers from his clan, in a manner that Somaliland's first president Mohamed Egal did not; Mark Bradbury, Becoming Somaliland, Indiana University Press, 2008, 222.
 - 47 Somaliland: The Strains of Success, International Crisis Group, 5 October 2015, 5.
 - 48 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
 - 49 The role of the first lady is a widely discussed topic in Somaliland. She was reportedly a key proponent of the controversial deals with the UAE, and has been accused of being behind a series of land grabs around Berbera itself; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; Tom Gardner, Multi-million dollar deal for Somaliland's historic port sparks land rush, Reuters, 6 April 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-somaliland-landrights-port/multi-million-dollar-deal-for-somalilands-historic-port-sparks-land-rush-idUSKBN1781LD>.
 - 50 One Waddani youth official in Berbera expressed that his party's goal was to capture 45% in the Sahil region, both an expression of optimism given the unpopularity surrounding the recent developments with the UAE, and an acknowledgement of the supremacy of clan dynamics; interview with Waddani youth official, Berbera, 5 August 2017.
 - 51 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
 - 52 Interview with traditional elder, Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
 - 53 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
 - 54 Interview with politician, Hargeisa, 22 September 2017.
 - 55 Interview with former politician, Hargeisa, 23 September 2017.
 - 56 Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh hails from the Issa clan, which has run the country since independence.
 - 57 Skype interview with local researcher who has intimate knowledge of Somaliland's clan make-up, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 21 September 2017.
 - 58 General sentiment from multiple interviews; for a persuasive argument outlining these concerns, see Nasir M Ali, Somaliland: The Cost of Silanyo Election, Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 3:2, 2015.
 - 59 Silanyo has taken frequent private trips abroad, often for medical purposes. For example, he spent nearly a month in the UAE between mid-June and mid-July this year, followed by another two-week visit during

- the second half of August, in which his appendix was removed. Many interviewed for this report noted that his health condition has prevented him from managing the day-to-day affairs of his presidency, to the point where he may not even be fully aware of what is happening; President Silanyo returns from private UAE visit, *The National*, 4 September 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/09/04/president-silanyo-returns-private-uae-visit/>; Eng Hussein Deyr, *Somaliland: President Fit as a Fiddle*, *Somaliland Sun*, 15 July 2017, <http://www.somalilandsun.com/politics1/government/10634-somaliland-president-fit-as-a-fiddle%E2%80%9D-eng-hussein-deyr/>; interview with former Somaliland politician, Addis Ababa, 25 July 2017; interview with Somaliland diplomatic official, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
- 60 Interview with former Somaliland politician, Addis Ababa, 25 July 2017.
- 61 Article 38:6 of the Somaliland constitution specifies the reasons for a joint session of Parliament, which includes the ratification of international treaties, or 'any other matters considered by the two houses as meriting joint sittings'. Despite this and the fact that 144 of the 151 lawmakers present voted for the deal, those opposed have continued to decry its constitutional validity, in large part due to the manner in which the vote occurred and the lack of a full-terms sheet presented prior to the vote. Bringing both houses together was probably a measure to hasten this aspect of the legal process.
- 62 Somaliland Approves Naval, Air Base Deal with UAE, *Voice of America*, 12 February 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/somaliland-approves-naval-air-base-deal-with-uae/3720287.html>; Somaliland Parliament endorses UAE naval base pact, *Mareeg*, 12 February 2017, <http://mareeg.com/somaliland-parliament-endorses-uae-naval-base-pact/>.
- 63 Silanyo himself reportedly eschewed further delays, eager to avoid the appearance of overstepping his bounds; Michael Walls, *Somaliland – Expert Briefing*, *Africa Research Institute*, accessed 15 September 2017, <https://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/somaliland-expert-briefing/>.
- 64 Interview with civil society members, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
- 65 Interview with Waddani candidate Abdirahman Irro, Hargeisa, 1 August 2017.
- 66 For instance, the position of Silanyo's son-in-law as the Ambassador to the UAE will surely come under scrutiny and be contested by the vested interest groups that will emerge as a result of the new leadership.
- 67 Interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
- 68 Interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
- 69 The vote was done by a show of hands, and Waddani showed a video replay to demonstrate that the votes were incorrectly tallied; *Brawl over Disputed Speakers Election Turns Physical in Parliament*, *Somaliland Sun*, 9 August 2017, <http://www.somalilandsun.com/politics1/10732-somaliland-brawl-over-disputed-speakers-election-turns-physical-in-parliament>.
- 70 House Speaker escapes assassination attempt outside parliament building, *The National*, 9 August 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/08/09/house-speaker-escapes-assassination-attempt-outside-parliament-building/>.
- 71 Wadani Party Facilitates End to Contested Parliament Speakership, *Somaliland Sun*, 26 August 2017, <http://www.somalilandsun.com/politics1/10798-somaliland-wadani-party-facilitates-end-to-contested-parliament-speakership>; Talyanle passed away in India a month later; *Nation Mourns The Demise Of MP Talyanle*, *Somaliland Sun*, 27 September 2017, <http://www.somalilandsun.com/community/10899-somaliland-nation-mourns-the-demise-of-mp-talyanle>.
- 72 It also serves another purpose for Waddani, presenting itself as a party of reconciliation ahead of the elections, rather than one of crisis; Skype interview with civil society activist, Addis Ababa/Hargeisa, 19 September 2017.
- 73 Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, *Indiana University Press*, 2008, 131.
- 74 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
- 75 Only eight of the original Guurti are still alive, with five reportedly in poor health; interview with former Somaliland politician, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with Somaliland academic, Hargeisa, 3 August 2017.
- 76 As one interviewee put it, 'all Parliamentarians have to do is just raise their hand and they get money', interview with Somaliland academic, Hargeisa, 3 August 2017; it is widely alleged that the votes for both the UAE port and military base deals in Parliament were preceded by the transfer of cash, with respondents' estimates ranging from \$10 000 to \$15 000 per vote; interview with former Somaliland politician, Addis Ababa, 25 July 2017; interview with journalist, Addis Ababa, 25 April 2017; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017; interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
- 77 Interview with Somaliland politician, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 78 Interview with civil society activist, Hargeisa, 2 August 2017.
- 79 For more on this topic, see *The Economics of Elections in Somaliland*, *Rift Valley Institute*, 2015, <http://riftvalley.net/publication/economics-elections-somaliland#.WdVFwfmCzIU>.
- 80 Ragnhild Hollekim, Stig Jarle Hansen and Geir Moe Sørensen, *Somaliland: Elections for the Lower House of Parliament September 2005*, *Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights*, 2006, 7.
- 81 *The Economics of Elections in Somaliland*, *Rift Valley Institute*, 2015, 8.
- 82 The stake in the port is subject to change – Ethiopia may take a 19% share as well, which would drop Somaliland's portion to 30%; Nizar Manek, *Ethiopia Eyes Role in DP World-Managed Port in Somaliland*, *Bloomberg*, 9 June 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-08/landlocked-ethiopia-eyes-role-in-dp-world-managed-somali-port>.
- 83 With the full terms of the military base deal not disclosed, it has been rumoured that these investments are in lieu of rent. It can also be seen in the context of the UAE protecting the DP World investment in Berbera port, given that the vast majority of traffic is designed to flow to Ethiopia.
- 84 At least this is the hope of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to use the Berbera port deal to kick-start international investment in Somaliland's economy; interview with Somaliland Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Saad Ali Shire, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
- 85 Drilling in Oodweyne block not expected till 2019, *The National*, 19 January 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/01/17/reports-drilling-oodweyne-block-not-expected-till-2019/>.
- 86 This is also an increase on the 2005 Parliamentary vote, in which seven districts near Puntland were unable to participate; Ragnhild Hollekim, Stig Jarle Hansen and Geir Moe Sørensen, *Somaliland: Elections for the Lower House of Parliament September 2005*, *Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights*, 2006, 18.
- 87 *Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17*, *Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF)*, 68.
- 88 Interview with NEC official, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
- 89 Interior Ministry says Somaliland is not worried about threats from Somalia's Puntland region, *The National*, 13 August 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/08/13/interior-ministry-says-somaliland-not-worried-threats-somalias-puntland-region/>; Puntland has also denied claims from Somaliland suggesting an agreement has been reached over the election; The biggest threat of Somaliland election process is the violation of election rules and regulations, *Center for Policy Analysis*, 12 August 2017, 3; additionally another sentiment is that Puntland would do what it could to disrupt the process but stop short of instigating violence, in part because Ethiopia would not support such interference, interview

- with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with Somaliland defence official, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
- 90 Puntland's activities regarding the contested area with Somaliland are often related to internal dynamics and politics within Puntland itself as well, or even Somalia; email exchange with Somaliland observer, Addis Ababa/Nairobi, 1 October 2017.
- 91 Clashes erupt as Somaliland presses ahead with voter registration in Sool, Garowe Online, 26 August 2016, <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somaliland/somalia-clashes-erupt-as-somaliland-presses-ahead-with-voter-registration-in-sool>; Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF), 61-2.
- 92 Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF), 62.
- 93 Two police officers shot dead outside polling station in Las Anod, The National, 18 August 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/08/18/two-police-officers-shot-dead-outside-polling-station-las-anod/>; email exchange with Somali journalist, Addis Ababa/Mogadishu, 14 September 2017.
- 94 Somaliland and Khatumo agree on Five Articles, Goobjoog News, 17 June 2017, <http://goobjoog.com/english/somaliland-and-khatumo-agree-on-five-articles/>.
- 95 This meeting was scheduled for 10 July 2017, but delayed to focus on the elections; Dhulbahante politicians currently serving in the government have also voiced opposition to the deal, as it threatens their position by bringing in more competition; Khatumo leader accuses Ministers hailing from Sool and Sanaag of being against national unity, The National, 13 August 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/08/13/khatumo-leader-accuses-ministers-hailing-sool-sanaag-somaliland-unity/>; interview with former Somaliland politician, Addis Ababa, 25 July 2017; Khatumo has also seen a leadership dispute between its president, Ali Khalif Galaydh, and his vice-president, Abdalla Mohamoud Ali, who both claimed to have impeached the other in August 2017; The biggest threat of Somaliland election process is the violation of election rules and regulations, Center for Policy Analysis, 12 August 2017, 3; interview with NEC official, Hargeisa, 31 July 2017.
- 96 At least three civilians killed in Buuhoodle fighting, Baydhabo, 19 August 2017, <http://baydhabo.com/2017/08/19/at-least-three-civilians-killed-in-buuhoodle-fighting/>; Khatumo leaders denounce conference opposing Somaliland unity agreement, The National, 12 July 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/07/12/khatumo-leaders-denounce-conference-opposing-somaliland-unity-agreement/>; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 97 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 98 Steve Kibble and Michael Walls, Swerves on the Road, Progressio, June 2013, 30.
- 99 Somaliland Pre-Election Report 2016-17, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF), 70; interview with international observer, Addis Ababa, 22 September 2017.
- 100 For example, an APD survey of 3 289 individuals in early 2017 found that 88% of the sample set were planning on voting; Voter Behaviour in Somaliland, Academy for Peace and Development, December 2016, 9.
- 101 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with Somaliland diplomatic official, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 102 Nonetheless, turnout will also probably be lowered due to the drought; interview with an electoral observer, Addis Ababa, 22 September 2017.
- 103 Despite opening up a consulate in Hargeisa, one of the few countries to maintain such a presence, the reputation of Turkey in Somaliland has not improved. Many interviewees dismissed Turkey's presence, believing it still concentrates on Mogadishu, with the consulate serving as a mere distraction; interview with Somaliland official, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 104 Interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 105 Interview with Waddani candidate Abdurahman Iirro; Hargeisa; 1 August 2017.
- 106 Indeed, Edna Adan told an author of this report shortly after her appointment that she would 'have the easiest job in the world if the jury is clean', and that Somaliland's case for independence is even stronger now than when she served as foreign minister in the mid-2000s; interview with Edna Adan, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 107 A common refrain dismissively referred to Farmajo as 'Barre's nephew', outlining his clan connections to the despised former dictator; interview with researcher, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017; interview with Somaliland Armed Forces generals, Hargeisa, 1 August 2017.
- 108 As a member of the Somaliland International Recognition Committee told one of the authors, 'nothing will change with regards to independence until there is a major geopolitical shift', implying that the decision is largely out of Somaliland's hands; interview with Somaliland diplomatic official, Hargeisa, 30 July 2017.
- 109 On 29 October 2008, three coordinated suicide attacks occurred at the Presidential Palace, UNDP compound and Ethiopian consulate in Hargeisa, killing 28. Al-Shabaab never officially claimed responsibility, but is widely suspected. In 2003-4, three incidents targeting foreigners in Somaliland killed four individuals in various areas, the other major instance of such violence. The level of activity has thus been extremely limited compared to other areas of Somalia, but ex-al-Shabaab leader Amir Ahmed Abdi Godane, along with key founding member Ibrahim al-Afghani, were both Isaaq clan members from Somaliland.
- 110 Puntland accuses Somaliland of supporting Alshabab, Goobjoog News, 29 June 2017, <http://goobjoog.com/english/puntland-accuses-somaliland-of-supporting-alshabab/>.
- 111 Abdi Hassan Hussein, Puntland and the struggle to contain Al shabaab Attacks, Garowe Online, 12 September 2017, <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/puntland-and-the-struggle-to-contain-al-shabaab-attacks>.
- 112 Markus Hoehne, Between Somaliland and Puntland, Rift Valley Institute, 2015, 145.
- 113 Interview with Somaliland army generals, Hargeisa, 1 August 2017.
- 114 For example, see Somaliland: The Strains of Success, International Crisis Group, 5 October 2015.
- 115 Interview with Somaliland intelligence official, Hargeisa, 26 September 2017; Hargeisa cleric arrested, accused of leading terrorist group, The National, 6 September 2017, <http://www.thenational-somaliland.com/2017/09/06/hargeisa-cleric-arrested-accused-leading-terrorist-group/>.
- 116 There are no women in the Guurti, and just one female representative in the Lower House.
- 117 Somaliland: The Strains of Success, International Crisis Group, 5 October 2015, 4.

About ISS East Africa Reports

East Africa Reports provide the results of in-depth research on the latest human security challenges in the region. Some analyse broad conflict trends and threats to peace and security in specific East African countries. Others focus on challenges in the region such as terrorism, migration or intra-state violence.

About the authors

Omar S Mahmood is a researcher in the Institute for Security Studies' Addis Ababa office. He has an MA degree in Security Studies and Conflict Resolution from the Fletcher School at Tufts University in Boston.

Mohamed Farah is the director of the Academy for Peace and Development in Somaliland. He was educated in Somaliland and at the University of Pretoria, and is currently pursuing his doctoral degree at the University for Peace, Costa Rica.

About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. The ISS is an African non-profit with offices in South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal. Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible research, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society.

About the APD

The Academy for Peace and Development (APD) is a policy-oriented research institution in Somaliland. The APD is committed to promoting democracy and consensus decision-making at a policy level by encouraging and supporting participation of citizens in the affairs of their lives. The academy strives to empower communities to adopt peaceful changes by providing a neutral venue to identify their issues and set policy priorities.

Acknowledgements

The ISS is grateful for support from the members of the ISS Partnership Forum: the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

© 2017, Institute for Security Studies

Copyright in the volume as a whole is vested in the Institute for Security Studies and the authors, and no part may be reproduced in whole or in part without the express permission, in writing, of both the authors and the publishers.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the ISS, its trustees, members of the Advisory Council or donors. Authors contribute to ISS publications in their personal capacity.

Photo Credit: Omar S Mahmood

