

FRAGMENTED SOVEREIGNTY:

Federalism, Security and the Crisis of State Formation in Somalia



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KEY MESSAGES

- 1** Somalia's Crisis is marked by divided political authority rather than state weakness.

Today, the main challenge in Somalia is the deepening division of authority. This is characterized by the emergence of numerous competing political centers, as opposed to weak state institutions and limited administrative capacity. These centers compete to define and control constitutionality, legitimacy in elections, state security and the sovereignty of the state.

- 4** Somalia's political and security crises are linked and inseparable.

There are divisions within the Federal system of Somalia, deep constitutional and political crises that are evident in the fragmented, politicized and uncoordinated security system.

- 7** The persistence of piracy is an indicator of the increasing fragmentation of security in a number of domains.

The resurgence of piracy in Somalia is indicative of the broader challenges of governance at sea, the fragmentation of security along Somalia's coastal borders and the shifting focus of geopolitical interests in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Somalia's fragmentation is no longer limited to the coupled problems of insurgency and civil war, but includes broader implications of instability for regional maritime and international trade security.

- 10** Somalia risks entering a stage of competitive fragmentation of an institutionalised nature.

If current trends continue, Somalia will likely become a permanently fragmented political order, with semi-autonomous governance systems, decentralized security authorities, recurring constitutional crises and a lack of coherent institutional integration, resulting only in fragmented political order negotiations.

- 2** Federalism has become an avenue for contestation as opposed to a framework to address conflict.

As a form of federalism to decentralize and share power, the post-conflict governance arrangement of 2012 aimed to bring stability to the newly formed state. However, the lack of resolution to the ambiguity of the Constitution has resulted in a federalism that has become the contestation of federal and regional entities, as they vie for power, legitimacy and the means to coerce.

- 5** The transition from ATMIS to AUSSOM shows the structural gaps in Somalia's security system.

The shift toward AUSSOM is taking place during a period of ongoing disputes in intergovernmental relations in Somalia and with fragmented security institutions in Somalia. In the absence of greater political cohesion, the shift toward AUSSOM may strengthen the decentralised insecurity of the country rather than consolidating the national security command.

- 8** There is a contrast between Somalia's increasing geopolitical integration and the fragmentation of its domestic polity.

Somalia's extensive engagement within security forums at the regional and global levels presents a welcome increase in diplomatic confidence and geopolitical relevance. However, Somalia's external visibility contrasts sharply with the deepening internal fragmentation and eroded state authority.

- 11** Somalia's fate will be determined by the ability of the rival political entities to maintain at the very least a minimally cooperative federal framework.

The primary concern is no longer the question of the actual existence of a Somali state, but rather the ability of both federal and regional actors to maintain a minimally cooperative political order in the absence of continuous fragmentation of institutions and organized violence.

- 3** Political fragmentation has been accelerated by the 2024 Constitution reform.

With the 2024 Constitution, deep divisions and mistrust now exist within the Federal framework. Puntland's suspension of recognition of the Federal Government, the escalation of borders and tension with Jubaland and the growing opposition activities have shown that there is no constitutional framework that has the potential to uphold a federal system.

- 6** Hybrid security system and decentralised coercive authority structures are dominant.

Somalia does not exhibit a system which has a unified monopoly of the use of legitimate force. Rather, it has a system that incorporates and coexists federal security forces, regional security forces, security forces allied to clans, local security forces and insurgent entities within security environments that are overlapping and negotiated.

- 9** There is fragmentation that reinforces political incentives.

Federal institutions, regional administrations, political elites, security actors and external partners all derive varying strategic benefits from fragmented authority systems. Therefore, fragmentation persists not simply because reform is difficult, but because the current political equilibrium distributes power and leverage across competing actors.

- 12** Federalism is no longer a governance concern but rather a security concern.

The argument being advanced in this paper is that federalism is an integral part of guaranteeing Somalia's longer term security. In the absence of a minimally acceptable federal order, the better chances of stabilizing security, improving governance and bolstering national institutions will be elusive.

Somalia's future depends on building a minimally cooperative federal order that can manage diversity, reduce insecurity and lay the foundation for state consolidation and long-term stability.

1. Introduction: A Fragmented State, Not Just a Fragile One

Somalia has been an object of global attention for over a decade since the adoption of the 2012 Provisional Constitution. Somalia is associated with weak institutions, high insecurity and inadequate post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Focused international policy debates are around the State's capacity, counter terrorism, humanitarian needs and economic insecurity. Although the stated issues reflect the existing challenges, recent developments within Somalia suggest that the issues are more complex.

Currently, Somalia's most pressing issue is no longer the absence of State structures, but the fragmentation of the authority of political governance within the State.

Since 2012, Somalia's federal system has not developed a stable framework for power sharing, but rather an enduring framework for contestations about legitimacy, constitutional mandates, territorial control, economic resources and the monopoly of violence within the system. A fragmentation of federalism, initially designed to control the losses following the collapse of the State, has become one of the main mechanisms through which fragmentation is reproduced.

Fragmentation has accelerated since 2024. The March 2024 constitutional amendments by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), marked the end of Somalia's post transitional politics. The federal leadership framed the amendments as essential reforms towards completing the Constitution and the political transition. Several Federal Member States (FMS) and opposition actors perceived the

amendments as a consolidation of power by the federal leadership with no consideration for political consensus.

The aftermath of the events was swift and brutal. Puntland officially retracted its recognition of the federal government, asserting that the constitutional process had become illegitimate and that the federal structure no longer represented a framework of a consensual political order. The FGS and Jubaland also experienced deteriorating relations as disputes over elections grew, along with competing authorities over security and federal encroachments on regional politics. Tensions went beyond disputes over institutions and were fully securitized, with confrontations of a political nature affecting the coordination of both federal and regional security actors.

At the same time, Somaliland's continuing struggle for independence has continued to exacerbate the Somalia fragmentation crisis. Somaliland's separation was established prior to the federal period and Somaliland's assertion of independence fully outside Somalia's federal system during a federal period continues to deepen the fragmentation crisis. The persistent lack of resolution on the issues of state sovereignty reflects the state of Somalia's politics.

These are beyond the immediate and obvious consequences of the events. Saying that Somalia's fragmentation crisis is due to the lack of sufficient institutions is no longer justifiable. Somalia's fragmentation crisis has morphed into a form of federalism where multiple authorities undermine the structure and where the democracy, the authority and the entire state itself are contested.

Constitutional ambiguity has become more incensed within this environment. Legislative practices of incomplete or unclear constitutional provisions are no longer seen as transitional mechanisms to foster gradual consensus but rather as instruments for political bargaining and strategic competition. The reform of electoral laws, constitutional interpretation and the reconstitution of federal and regional relations, including the organization of the security sector, has become closely related to the politics of survival and the politics of state capture.

Somalia's security environment has not escaped the influence of these trends. The fragmentation of political authority has meant the further fragmentation of the security sector. Federal and regional forces compete for political control and, as a result, command will be fragmented across the security sector. The control of security will be determined by a politically motivated command rather than the rational control of security. Operational decisions in security matters directed to respond to an insurgency or social unrest will be determined by the politically motivated control of security rather than an integrated command of the security forces.

Somalia's security environment is especially vulnerable to these threats. The ongoing withdrawal of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and a shift to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) will occur against the backdrop of a controversial and uncertain position of Somalia's federal-security relations. Possible integration of security forces, control of strategic national territory, funding for security operations and control of security forces over long-term and

flexible command remain contentious. The absence of these elements of a rational and well integrated security environment will result in the security transition reinforcing fragmentation instead of consolidating national security.

Somalia is currently facing a unique type of security pressure. The resurgence of piracy along the coast of Somalia is a clear indication of the lack of control the central government has along the waters. This resurgence of piracy is the result of the increased instability along the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and the lack of control the government has along its own waters. This increased piracy is a clear example of the extended coastal insecurity and lack of control the government has over its own territory.

The extreme lack of control and the internal security challenges have been developing during a time when Somalia established itself as a state along the international diplomatic and security arenas. The lack of control the central government has along its borders has been developing along with the increased participation Somalia has within the international security systems. Somalia has been placing itself on the international stage as a country that can help secure the peace along with other countries who have provided stabilizing countries. This increased participation has cemented Somalia's position and importance along the international diplomatic and security stages.

This paper will demonstrate how Somalia's fragmented federal political order must be considered in tandem with Somalia's myriad security issues, as neither can be fully understood independently of the other. Somalia's security issues are not solely a

function of multiple insurgencies, a lack of national institutions, or external state or non-state actors. Increasingly, Somalia's insecurity is a consequence of the many unresolved struggles over dominant control of the state's constitutional structures, political control, the monopoly of state-sanctioned force and control of the state's security and military apparatus.

Consequently, this paper goes beyond the conventional analysis of the multiple dimensions of Somalia's instability and insecurity and draws from the theory of competitive federal fragmentation. It seeks to analyze insecurity in Somalia in the context of the uneven impact and cumulative effects of constitutional and institutional exclusion, rapid and unilateral centralization, electoral conflicts, fragmented security, patronage systems among international and local actors and a hybrid system of coercive control.

This paper will contend that the main question no longer is whether Somalia has a federal government and system; rather the question is whether the contending political agents are capable of sustaining the political order that enables governance of the state and provision of social order and security, while regulating political and security contests through agreed and established institutional frameworks.

In the absence of such a political framework, security, governance and state-building efforts will be chaotic and unsustainable.

2. Somalia's Inconclusive Federal Settlement

2.1 The 2012 Provisional Constitution and Postponed State Formation

The 2012 Provisional Constitution marked a major step during Somalia's post-conflict period. The country endured more than twenty years of state-collapsing civil wars and fragmented governance. The Constitution created the legal framework for Somalia's reconstitution under a federal system. By establishing a legal framework for Somalia's political order, the Constitution focused on ending the extended transitional period.

Despite these efforts, the provisional character of the Constitution remained clear. The Constitution did not answer many of the questions that are essential to Somalia's state formation and are still unanswered today. This was especially true for the transitional period's political landscape. It was expected that there would be little to no consensus on many issues, including the distribution of power between the federal and the regional governments, the formation and boundaries of Federal Member States, the distribution of resources and the formation of governing legal and political order.

Federalism in Somalia was therefore more of a negotiated political compromise to bring fragmentation to an end, rather than a complete constitutional settlement.

The idea behind this arrangement was that political trust would deepen when institutions matured, allowing the constitutional questions that have thus far gone unanswered to be addressed and subsequently, the constitutional ratification would follow. Though, in actuality, the consolidation of institutions was far slower

than the development of political competition. Instead of closing the gaps in the federal framework, the provisional nature of the framework created opportunities for actors to pursue political gain through constitutional loopholes.

As federal institutions expanded and international resources became available to the Somali political system, the Somali constitutional ambiguity would eventually be normalized and would be inseparably linked to the struggle for authority, legitimacy and control over the state. The unresolved state of the federal arrangement would make constitutional interpretation a partisan political tool rather than a disinterested legal one.

The provisional constitution therefore presents a paradox. On one hand, the provisional constitution permits the establishment of a federal system, while on the other hand, it embeds within the very system unresolved structural disparities.

2.2 Constitutional Ambiguity and Competing Authority

The lack of clarity regarding the distribution of powers within the Somali federal system directly contributes to the continued instability of the Somali political system. Over a decade after the Somali government declared a federal system, key aspects of the Somali constitution remain unresolved, are subject to inconsistent interpretations, or are politically contested.

One of the most significant areas of ambiguity is the division of powers between the Federal Government and the Federal Member States. Although the Somali constitution makes provisions for the federal

structure, it does not specify state formation, regional divisions, or the federal government's powers and authority in a binding and clear manner. Consequently, the constitution does not provide for the federal government's powers in, or the governance of, the security of the country, federal taxes, the federal electoral system, the country's natural resources and the relations between the various levels of government.

As a result of the ambiguities of the constitution, there are competing claims to governance in different areas. The federal government interprets the constitution to expand its central powers and the member states, in turn, assert their regional powers. In the absence of rational, institutional consensus, interpretations of the constitution are the result of political interests.

The lack of clarity of the constitution and the absence of a legal framework for resource sharing have resulted in a highly politicized environment. In the absence of legal frameworks, resource control is linked to power and authority and trust is eroded in the highly politicized environment. Control of revenue sources, especially customs, is linked to political control and the legitimacy of the state. Control of the customs monopoly, the funding provided by foreign donor states and the state's resources is highly politicized. In the absence of a legal framework, resource control is linked to power and authority. The politicized environment and control of the state's resources erodes trust between the regional states and the federal government.

Likewise, the ongoing debate regarding the constitutional status of Mogadishu and the Banaadir region continues to create

discussions surrounding political representation and the distribution of power within the state. As the administrative and economic center of the country, Mogadishu's position within the federal arrangement is both unique and contentious. The lack of a constitutional clarity regarding Mogadishu's status creates uncertainty around representation, governance and the control of state resources.

However, the lack of constitutional clarity has reshaped Somalia's security system. The constitution does not provide clarity regarding the relationship between federal and regional security, the command authority and other issues concerning the integration of forces and the coordination of operations.

Consequently, Somalia's security system has developed through a combination of political deals, donor negotiations, local power balances and informal security arrangements, as opposed to a consolidation of security institutions. This has resulted in fragmented security across federal, regional, clan, local and politically commodified security forces.

This fragmentation of security systems is not only the result of limited capacity to institute a range of security systems. It also demonstrates the absence of a constitutional consensus on the nature of sovereignty and authority within the Somali state.

2.3 Federalism as Competitive State Formation

Federalism in Somalia has moved beyond the original design of a decentralised governance system focused on balancing power at the national and regional levels.

Federalism has transformed into the main system through which political elites in Somalia contest legitimacy, territory and access to and control over resources and external actors, as well as the means of coercion.

The federal system has resulted in the merging of the federal system and the processes of state formation. Changes to the constitution, structures of the state, the electoral system and the organization of the security sector, as well as the reform of the security sector, are not simple administrative tasks. They are processes through which the state of affairs is created and the actors involved in the process try to construct the political system according to their preferences.

For the Federal Government, the pursuit of centralisation is the more rational choice. The federal government in a fragmented system is more powerful and the Federal Government in a fragmented system has more control over the processes of external and internal security, the control and regulation of state resources and state personnel and the control and regulation of diplomatic relations and international funding. Centralising control over the federal system provides the Federal Government with legitimisation and resources, external security and funding in a fragmented and hostile international environment. This situation improves the position of the federal government.

In the same vein, Federal Member States have strong reasons to oppose excessive centralisation. Regional governments sustain their relevance, negotiating power and institutional autonomy from their ability to control local governance, their security, the

economy and the alliances of different clans. Regional leaders, therefore, are increasingly viewing the monopolisation of the federal government as state building in the true sense of the term and as a direct threat to regional autonomy and political power.

As a result of these mixed incentives, a continuous cycle of bargaining and strategic interactions has been established. Conditional cooperation between federal and regional actors is usually short-lived and motivated by immediate calculations rather than by permanent commitments.

Clan dynamics exacerbate the situation. While federalism was designed, in part, to decentralize authority and reduce conflict among the clans, federal institutions also operate within clan-influenced politics. Alliances, conflicts over leadership and disputes over boundaries are further clan-focused considerations that reinforce fragmentation.

The relationships among foreign countries are also influenced by these dynamics. Many countries are concerned with the effectiveness of regional administrations and prefer to operate with local authorities and specialized security frameworks. Many of these relationships focus on practical objectives and give rise to a governance system that operates alongside formal federal institutions.

The situation within the country has evolved to characterize the situation between the different countries. It has become an organized system of managing conflicts in which many political powers are legitimizing and controlling resources and structures.

2.4. Constitutional Amendments and the Intensification of Political Crises

Constitutional amendments have, instead of closing the gaps, intensified Somalia's political fragmentation.

March 2024 marked a critical point in the post-2012 political order for all federal relationships in the country. The Federal Government proposed a series of amendments to the Constitution and considered them as steps to conclude the review of the Constitution and complete the political transition. In the amendment's proposals, opposition actors and some Federal Member States perceived the amendments as measures to consolidate end of the federal system and expand the federal executive power.

Puntland's later withdrawal of recognition of the federal government represented the first break of the federal system. The withdrawal was a sign of protest against some of the constitutional amendments of the executive and a deliberate act to delegitimise the process and actions of the constitutional amendments.

As the federal government also started to implement the one person, one vote electoral system, the tensions created by the constitutional amendments intensified. Several regional and opposition actors began to consider the amendments as a way to consolidate power in the federal centre to the detriment of the regional federal states.

Gradual shifts in the balance of power in the federal system was as a result of dynamic relations between the federal government and regional states. In the absence of a viable solution to the tensions caused by the

constitutional amendments, the dynamic relations between the federal government and regional states created a contested federal system whereby various actors began to define the boundaries and exercise the power of the state.

Somalia's security context has been simultaneously transformed. As central authority weakens and constitutional legitimacy is challenged, security institutions increasingly embody and amplify such divisions. The subsequent section will analyze the operational fragmentation within Somalia's security architecture owing to political fragmentation.

3. Shifts in Federal Design and Political Break

3.1 Constitutional Exclusion and the Collapse of Federal Consensus

The post-2024 federal crisis deepened due to the gradual effects of decades of unresolved constitutional disputes, contested political processes and eroding trust among federal and regional actors. However, the March 2024 amendments hastened the expansion of these tensions beyond the federal order.

What began as a mechanism for negotiation and consensus during the constitutional review process began to focus more on centralization, with an increase in executive authority. Federal Member States and opposition actors argued that substantial constitutional resolutions were being advanced through federal institutions in Mogadishu with little or no political consultation or consensus. This perception

significantly undermined the legitimacy of the constitutional process.

In federal systems, constitutional legitimacy is grounded in the assurance of legal framework and political participation. When important political actors perceive themselves to have been excluded, large segments of the state's population begin to contest the constitutional authority of the state. This dynamic became apparent in Somalia after the 2024 contentious award.

The most prevalent example was Puntland's withdrawal of recognition of the Federal Government. Puntland characterized its decision as a response to what it deemed to be an unconstitutional and an arbitrarily imposed order on the federations. The loss of confidence was the most significant feature of the decision. It signaled the collapse of faith in the capacity of the existing federal order to politically arbitrate through negotiated settlements.

Puntland's position carries additional significance outside the context of the dispute in question. Puntland is seen as one of the most established regional governments in Somalia. Puntland has defended the federal principles in the Somali political system. Puntland's withdrawal, therefore, signified the federal system's principles of federalism.

Albawaba has reported that several opposition groups and coalitions opposed the process of constitutional reforms and argued that the reforms have insufficient participation and centralize too much power. An increasing number of coalitions formed in opposition to the reforms and politics in Somalia became increasingly hostile. The disputes and struggles to define the political

order and settle governance issues became more framed struggles for power and control of the state.

The failure of consensus politics to unify the difference of the parties has meant the failure of the parties to respect the principles of consensus. In the absence of consensus, politics becomes the exclusive domain of the practitioners. In the Somali context, the absence of consensus politics has meant the fragmentation of Somalia.

3.2 Unilateral centralization and the Concentration of Executive Power

The absence and failure of federal consensus has meant the Federal Government has continued to pursue policies to centralize in its control.

Yet, many area actors interpreted these initiatives differently. Constitutional reform, electoral restructuring, security integration and the federal government's engagement in regional politics were seen as deliberate attempts to convert the current federal system of Somalia into a more centralized political system.

This view was only made stronger by the frequent disputes regarding the federal government's role in regional political activities. The leadership and the federal government's role in the federal member states' electoral processes and the resultant disputes over the federal government's control of regional activities in the context of negotiated federalism led to fears that the federal government was overriding the spirit of negotiated federalism.

The expansive powers of the executive were also closely linked to debates regarding the

political system and the holding of future elections. The planned shift to direct elections was viewed by some opposition and regional stakeholders as giving the central government more power to control the electoral process and the political outcomes.

As mistrust deepened, political competition increasingly shifted from institutional negotiation to strategic positioning. Regional administrations responded by strengthening their autonomous political and security structures, limiting cooperation with the central government and increasing their reliance on local political networks and external partnerships.

This scenario created a self-reinforcing cycle. Attempts at federal centralization met with regional resistance and regional resistance further justified the case for central consolidation. Attempts to centralize authority frequently escalated the fragmentation they were intended to overcome, rather than reducing fragmentation.

3.3 Electoral Reform and the Politicization of Political Transition

Electoral reform is at the center of the political contention in Somalia's federal crisis. Starting in 2012, Somalia's political system relied on indirect methods of political representation and forms of clan-based governance and negotiated settlements. It was widely perceived that these methods were temporary arrangements to manage the governance of a country emerging from the post-conflict state. The shift in focus and the introduction of competitive political uncertainty were evident in the attempts to

formally initiate a transition to one-person-one-vote in the country.

There was a consensus in the political discourse on the principle of direct elections. However, it was coupled with significant divergence on the readiness of political institutions, sequencing, constitutional authority, management of the electoral process and what the political transition will mean.

Within the Federal Government, direct elections were perceived to be prerequisites of state building, political modernization and democratic legitimacy. For many of the regional actors and from the opposition perspective, the anticipation of direct elections was accompanied by the fears of executive consolidation and political marginalization.

There was a fear that the design of the electoral process would redistribute and, in effect, alter the balance of power within the federal structure and, in the process, enhance the Federal Government's control over political arrangements that were customarily negotiated. In the Federal structure, the sequencing of the electoral process, voter registration and control of electoral process became contentious issues.

Federal tensions and electoral politics began to overlap. In Jubaland, disputes that erupted over elections were not only about voting, but about jurisdiction, legitimacy and federal political authority.

As electoral competition became more pronounced, political actors began the process of securitising political transition. Politics became the game that determined the future of the Somali state, shifting the

lens through which the state considered elections from representation to competition. Politics became the game, shifting the lens through which the state considered elections from representation to future competition.

This resulted in an increase in political instability. Electoral disputes began to have direct association to the control of security, the determination of the constitution and the provision of regional self-rule, which worsened the relationships between the federal and regional actors.

3.4 Federal Member State Resistance and the Emergence of Parallel Authority

In response to perceived centralization and the exclusion of some Federal Member States, resistance took differing forms. Puntland, through a more independent political strategy, suspended its recognition of the Federal Government. Puntland subsequently departed from the previously observed, more diplomatic, conditional participation within the federal system. Puntland was selective in its cooperation with the federal system.

This was also evident with Jubaland, where disputes pertaining to regional self-rule and security setup brought about the destabilization of the relationships within the federal system. The relationships between the federal government and Jubaland were indicative of the struggles for control of the federal system, rather than political differences.

In other instances, resistance was more indirect. Some regions resisted through the selective enforcement of federal laws, stronger autonomous regional governance,

self-security and increased external relations, bypassing the federal coordination.

These developments resulted in multiple overlapping systems of governance and authority within the Somali state. While the federal institutions maintained their claims of national governance, the regional actors were consolidating semi-autonomous political and security systems tailored to the respective regional political contexts.

In some regions, this fragmentation did not necessarily mean formal secessionism. However, it indicated that the shared institutional framework was eroding, one that previously allowed for the management of political contests with the agreement of rules and coordinated systems of authority.

Simultaneously, Somaliland was able to remove itself entirely from the federal system and was able to continue developing its own political and diplomatic systems. The continued existence of Somaliland in this separated state highlighted that the process of state formation for Somalia, in its entirety, was still ongoing and posed larger issues and concerns about sovereignty, legitimacy and control and governance over territories.

These different elements have, in combination, created a situation in Somalia where its federal system is now fragmented and a competitive political system, dominated by governance and coercive power that is disparate in its systems and structures, is fully established.

The different elements have shaped the Somali security administration. As the political systems of the state continue to fragment, security systems will continue to

reflect the same divisions. The next section analyzes how the political system has impacted the fragmented security systems within Somalia.

4. Security Fragmentation: Mechanisms and Pathways

4.1 Fragmented Authority and Competing Chains of Command

The fragmentation of Somalia's political landscape has been met with increasing fragmentation within the country's security sector. The absence of a coherent and mutually accepted federal settlement has inhibited the national security framework from being established.

Somalia's security systems endure the presence of many competing systems of physical control across the federal, regional, local and informal levels.

The Federal Government, in principle, assumes total responsibility over the security of the country through the Somali National Army (SNA), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and the Somali Police Force, among other federal security institutions. In practice, the Federal Member States, at the same time, control their own regional security forces, police structures and intelligence networks, as well as local armed forces, which operate with varying degrees of autonomy from federal command.

In practice, the relationships of command and control of the country's security forces are the outcome of political negotiations.

Federal and regional forces frequently operate under separate political authorities that have different operational, political and loyalty agendas. In many cases, the absence of a formal security doctrine determines how the different forces consolidate security operations. In the face of the poor relations among the competing leadership, the military forces will likely operate in a coordinated manner.

This results in an unavoidable level of confusion regarding the limits of operational authority, scope of territorial responsibility, deployment of forces and coordination of intelligence. Security personnel receive contradictory orders from political authorities at various levels of the federal system. In context specific to the political situation, commanders will often focus on the regional level of political situation or local alliances, rather than coordinating with the rest of the country.

The situation is more than just the result of internal bureaucratic inefficiency; it is also the result of a liberalized and fragmented system of repression in which multiple authorities are in a position to legitimize the monopolization of violence.

This fragmentation of the system results in a significant loss of the effectiveness of Somalia's counterinsurgency system. The political structure of Somalia is fragmented and as a result is incapable of sustaining these elements.

4.2 Coordination Failures and Operational Incoherence

The fragmentation of command structures results in a failure to coordinate across the entire security system of Somalia. Joint

operations between federal and regional forces rely on temporary political agreements, rather than stable, institutional arrangements. Most operational collaboration is vulnerable to deteriorating relations between the federal and regional authorities. When political relations worsen, the sharing of information, logistics coordination and operational planning are virtually nonexistent.

This situation results in a high degree of operational incoherence. At various levels of the security system, the federal and regional authorities pursue similar security objectives on the basis of their separate, uncoordinated command systems. In other places, conflicting political objectives cause delays in the launching of operations. The insurgent organizations, especially Al-Shabaab, have successfully exploited these gaps in the security system.

Insurgents maneuver well in areas with fragmented command structures. This allows them to take advantage of the absence and delay of state action in response to insurgent attacks. Command fragmentation restricts the amount of pressure that can be sustained by the state in various operational theaters and increases the number of insurgents' adaptive and recovery opportunities.

The situation worsens as a result of the disparity of force integration, development and command across federal and regional levels. Often, due to the political affiliations and external support of security actors, the levels of training, equipment and support, as well as the operational doctrine and the logistics available to them, are different.

As a result, Somalia's security architecture is a system of partially integrated forces, resembling an increasingly fragmented security structure, as opposed to a consolidated national security framework.

4.3. Politicisation of Security Institutions

In Somalia, security institutions function in fragmented, deeply politicised systems, where allegiance to political authorities usurps institutional loyalty. For both federal and regional politicians, their security structures serve as a means to conduct counterinsurgency, defend their political authority and serve as a bargaining tool to negotiate their position in the shifting contest for power.

The politicization of coercive power within the federal system progresses at an alarming pace. The configuration of security forces, their deployment and the execution of their functions are influenced heavily by the politics of constitutional disputes, electoral rivalries, regional power struggles and the need for the political elite to preserve their position. Consequently, the security forces become embroiled in the struggle for control of the state and, by extension, the legitimisation of the political authority.

In some instances, during politically confrontational or election tense periods, both federal and local agencies have activated their security structures. This scenario heightens the concern that these security structures may become actively engaged in the elements of political contestation.

The politicization of security structures creates a complicated dilemma between the

operational effectiveness of the structures and the integrity of the State.

Within the context of contested spaces, security actors that are perceived to have supported particular political factions, regional authorities or clan interests, may further diminish their legitimacy. Integration of security structures is complicated by the general mistrust among the competing political authorities, who believe that consolidated structures may further erode their political standing or leave them susceptible to the dominant authority of the other competing structures.

Thus, the politicization of security exacerbates the fragmentation of security structures, as it reinforces the perception of competing actors that the integration of security structures is a politically risky undertaking.

4.4 Clan Dynamics and Hybrid Security Orders

Somalia's post-2012 federal system aimed at clan fragmentation through decentralised governance. However, even today, clan dynamics shape the setting and functioning of security authorities countrywide. Institutions formalised by the state continue to coexist with clan-based militias, local defence forces, community-armed actors and informal protection in politically hybrid environments. The coexistence of state's formal institutions and local politics and clan structures in regulating security and authority drives the dynamics of these hybrid security orders.

Local security arrangements are mainly the outcome of negotiated settlements among the formal and informal players. Clan

networks are crucial in determining the federal and regional security structures in recruitment, operation, control of areas and resolution of conflicts.

This results in a multi-layered and complex structure of authority and control, where formal structures have no monopoly over the means of control. Many centralisation and security integration efforts are met with strong opposition, especially when local political equilibrium, clan domination and regional autonomy are threatened. Thus, the security integration process becomes both a technical issue and a politically sensitive one, as it affects the equilibrium of local power and elite negotiations.

Although hybrid security arrangements can provide some degree of stability in local systems where formal structures are weak, they also make it difficult to create unified command structures at the national level and enhance decentralised control systems. The continued existence of hybrid security orders indicates the fragmentation of the political system of Somalia as a whole.

4.5 External Security Assistance and Donor-Enabled Fragmentation

Somalia's security system continues to be deeply influenced by the international presence. Since 2012, assistance from external partners for the financing, training, equipping and coordination of Somali security institutions has been substantial. However, engagement from external partners has contributed to fragmentation as much as it has reduced it.

International security assistance occurs through numerous bilateral and multilateral arrangements. Some of these arrangements

involve federal security institutions, regional administrations, specialized units, international contractors and operational frameworks that are supported externally. Donors, contractors and political actors define and shape the assistance that these actors receive. In turn, the assistance that these actors receive defines the aid that they provide. This framework of assistance results in the development of security forces and operational systems that are fragmented.

In the absence of effective federal coordination, or in politically contested environments, a number of external partners have opted to work directly with Federal Member States and in some cases, local security frameworks. Although these strategies can achieve some tactical effectiveness, they can also entrench efforts that are outside the Integrated National Security Framework.

In the absence of an effective federal security strategy, donor countries use their own resources for parallel security strategies, thereby entrenching a fragmented security system. Prioritization of short-term counterterrorism operational strategies creates a paradox in the thinking of donor countries. In this instance, donor countries see the engagement of external partners as a stabilizing influence. However, external engagement drives the fragmentation of the security system. Thus, the external partners' engagement in the Somali security system has simultaneously been a stabilizing influence and a fragmentation of the security system.

4.6 The ATMIS Drawdown, AUSSOM Transition and Security Diagnoses

Somalia's already vulnerable security situation becomes increasingly dangerous with the ATMIS drawdown and the AUSSOM transition. The first phase of the ATMIS transition framed the transfer of security responsibilities as a gradual empowerment of Somali security institutions. During this transition, the situation is characterized by a lack of federal security and the fragmentation of institutions across multiple operational theaters.

This brings multiple risks.

The first concern is the fragmented and unsustainable security. Somali security institutions remain largely dependent on external funding and support. The lack of contingent funding is a cause for worrying loss of funding and the forces become short and operationally porous and are unable to defend the country.

The second concern is the absence of integrated federal and regional security command structures. The breach of the integrated structure of security forces endangers Somalia's security structures.

The third concern is the increasing polarization of the remaining security challenges. Barriers to the unification of post-ATMIS security arrangements include disputes over jurisdiction and exercising control in regions.

Moreover, the transition threatens the consolidation of security functions at the national level and Somalia will have to adjust to the new reality of fragmentation. In essence, the ATMIS–AUSSOM transition is unlikely to result in a rational transfer of responsibilities from international to Somali authorities. Instead, the transition may

deepen reliance on fragmented and politically contested local security systems.

4.7 Maritime Fragmentation and the Return of Piracy

Parts of Somalia's coastline are once again seeing piracy. It is returning in accordance with increasing levels of political and security fragmentation within the Somali state. The successful international counter-piracy efforts and coordinated international operations at sea saw a rapid decline in piracy along parts of the Somali coastline. However, incidents of piracy are increasing once again. This is symptomatic of more than the criminal opportunism that piracy represents. It is due to fragmented governance, a lack of capacity for consistent control of the coast, economic factors and changing international priorities regarding security.

The state of maritime security in Somalia continues to be fragmented. Control of the coast is largely a responsibility of the Federal Government, regional governments, local governments, clan-based 'coastal defense' forces and maritime security actors from other countries. The lack of a coherent maritime security system means that Somalia is unable to implement consistent control of the coast and governance at sea.

The lack of control of the coast is compounded by political fragmentation. The Puntland region of Somalia, which previously played a key role in anti-piracy operations, is now in a more adversarial position with the Federal Government as a key result of the 2024 constitutional changes. The significant decline in federal and regional relations weakens trust in unified maritime security at

a time when the region is experiencing growing maritime security issues.

Additional factors also impact this situation.

International counter-piracy operations have been increasingly focused on the growing instability in the Red Sea and the overall escalation of security issues in the Middle East. The shift in focus of international security operations has reduced the deterrence capacity of the international community along parts of the Somali coastline. As a result, space has been provided for international criminal networks to reorganize.

The return of piracy to the Somali coastline is the result of various elements of structural weakness and fragmentation in Somali politics, as well as the security situation. It shows that unresolved federal fragmentation increasingly impacts the security of land, sea and global trade in multiple domains.

4.8 Insurgent Adaptation and the Reproduction of Insecurity

Al-Shabaab has been strategically flexible in dealing with fragmented political and security spaces. Understanding the group's durability needs to factor in its ability to respond proactively to the fragmented structures of Somalia's political order.

Fragmented political spaces characterized by contestation suffer from the combination of governance and legitimacy crises and where patron-client linkages of security are absent, insurgents capitalize on fragmentations and exploit the absences of operational consensus. Where political actors are preoccupied with turf wars, fragmentations

provide insurgents an opportunity to exploit the diversion of state resources.

Al-Shabaab has been strategic at adapting to the political and security shifts, including the exploitation of the gaps in the political structures and the spatial integration of clan grievances in the control of territory. A persistent insurgency is the interplay between fragmented political, security control gaps and incomplete state building. While the negative aspects of political fragmentation may manifest in different forms, security fragmentation is the form that most significantly sustains the instable situation. The following section examines several regional examples in Somalia's fragmented federal landscape to better understand the interplay among structural dynamics, insurgent adaptations and insecure situations.

5. Case Studies of Federal Breakdown and Security Impact

5.1 Puntland and the Collapse of Federal Consensus

Puntland stands as the clearest example of how unresolved constitutional controversies can trigger direct political breaks in the federalism of the Somali state.

Puntland has historically been in a unique position across the various Somali federal designs. Unlike many of the Federal Member States established during post-2012 Somali federalization, Puntland existed before the federal arrangement and, in many instances, defined itself as a founding member and a custodian of the federalism of Somalia. Puntland's political leadership has proposed

a more decentralized framework of federalism across the regions, combined with a negotiated distribution of power and a collaborative approach to the constitution.

The Puntland-federal center relationship has always been characterized by contention. Since 2012, many challenges emerged concerning the federalism in Somalia, including the interpretation of the constitution, the electoral process, the sharing of resources and the exercise of federal authority. The constitutional amendments of March 2024 made these challenges more severe, intensifying a crisis of legitimacy for the federal government.

Puntland claimed that the amendments were made in a unilateral fashion and lacked a basis in a consensual federal negotiation. For Puntland, the constitutional review was no longer a means to finish the federal project, but rather a way to expand the executive's power and fully concentrate control.

Following this, Puntland's withdrawal of recognition of the Federal Government was one of the most important breaks in Somalia's federalism since the collapse of the transitional administration. The significance of this break was larger than a disagreement in politics. Puntland's withdrawal resulted in the breaking of the federal initiative and cooperation in multiple domains, such as security, coordination of intelligence and political engagement.

The rupture demonstrated an additional risk to Somalia's federal structure. Once a political settlement is reached, there is no provision in the constitution to deal with the breakdown of trust among the federal and state governments. Devoid of a viable

institutional framework, constitutional disputes devolve into political disputes.

From a security perspective, the situation in Puntland is indicative of what happens when you have a breakdown of the constitution. You have the fragmentation of the security structures of the state.

Puntland has some of the most advanced regional security forces in the country. Because of this, they have had a number of successful campaigns against insurgent and extremist groups. However, the security forces have increasingly been operating in a politically semi-detached environment.

From this point of view, it can be said that, in comparison to the other regions, Puntland holds a degree of control over the situation. This means that when compared to other regions of the country, Puntland has a more effective and organized governance in regard to security. However, the lack of a federal and regional partnership contrasts the security governance system as a whole. This means that the system as a whole operates in an inefficient and incoherent manner.

The return of piracy along Puntland's coastline underlines the fragmented coastal governance situation. Puntland has always played a crucial role in the region in counter-piracy operations. However, through the decentralization of federal relations and fragmented coastal security, it has become increasingly difficult to manage.

Puntland's case demonstrates the inherent paradox in Somalia's federal system. Puntland has an advanced regional governance in comparison to other regions in the country; yet, comparatively, it

promotes the fragmentation of governance on a national scale.

5.2 Jubaland, the Political and Security Authority Conflicts

While Puntland represents disengagement from the federal system, Jubaland represents how the failure to resolve conflicts related to elections, territorial control and security coordination leads to the breakdown of the federal system and prolonged conflicts.

Without a doubt, relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and Jubaland have been tense for most of the years following 2012. This was due to conflicting views on federal powers, regional political autonomy and the organization and management of security personnel in the regions with the most strategic value.

Jubaland is an important region for the entire country when it comes to security. This region is where Somalia and Kenya meet and it has a vital trade and transport corridor. It is also a significant front in the ongoing fight against Al-Shabaab. Because of all of this, securing security and political control of this region is important to the entire country.

Conflict between Jubaland and the central government also grew as Jubaland held elections.

While the central government would complain that elections in Jubaland were carried out too chaotically and needed to be conducted with greater federal control, the Jubaland government would view such complaints and actions as federal control intention to reduce regional autonomy and shift the local balance of power in favor of the central government.

These disputes have been thoroughly securitized.

Tensions have impacted the ability of federal and regional forces to work together. Concerns on how and where forces will operate, who will be in command and what orders will be given have now become political issues. In such a situation, cooperation on security would be negotiated and mediated in a purely political context. It would not be guaranteed by a security institution. Jubaland is also a prime example of how external security involvement has caused other divisions to become entrenched in Somalia's federal security landscape. The development of operational relations along Kenya's borders, separated from federally coordinated mechanisms, was a direct result of Kenya's Regional Security Cooperation, the conduct of cross-border operations and partnership with other states for external security. Although these dealings were most often based on a need for security, they reinforced a decentralized domain of security authority within the region. The outcome is an operational capability turf war, a situation where federal and regional players will be in a position to pursue the same security priorities, yet will work within somewhat conflicting political and institutional setups.

Al-Shabaab has effectively exploited these security disparities.

The group takes advantage of the lack of command and control, territorial and fragmented systems that cause political and the concentrate fight to control counterinsurgency activities. In many regional conflicts, the resilience of a decisive and well-organized insurgency is a direct

result of the inability of the competing political powers to efficiently control and implement a unified strategy.

Jubaland illustrates that the fragmented political competition in the federal system creates a vacuum that is detrimental to long-term security strategies.

5.3 Southwest State and Politicized State Formation

Southwest State's politicized state formation offers another example of Somalia's fragmentation. Unlike Puntland, which emerged before the post 2012 federal order, Southwest State was built during the federalization process backed by the Federal Government and international actors. Therefore, the construction and consolidation of Southwest's political institutions were entangled with instrumental struggles over federal control, regional legitimacy and political alignment.

The Federal Government's involvement in the processes of leadership and regional political consolidation sparked apprehensive views that Southwest's political institutions had been crafted with central political designs. Thus, Southwest's political institutions were considered by opposition actors and competing political actors to be federal institutions. The politicization of state formation led to the conclusion that the federal state was not operating on what could be considered neutral federal principles, but rather through a politically motivated process of selective consolidation.

The politicization of state formation also had consequences on the governance of security. The security setting of Southwest was highly politicized and was aligned with the local

power relations and the political struggles of Southwest. Issues of the integration of security forces, the incorporation of armed groups, the control of territory and the administration of local and regional governance were intermingled with the politics of federal power and the politics of legitimacy.

The Southwest State also illustrates the persistence of a hybrid security system.

Formal security systems are juxtaposed with clan-based militias, local defense systems and informal, highly structured systems of governance that operate in rural and urban areas. In certain places, the control of security and governance is based on a negotiated relations between formal and informal actors rather than a comprehensive unification of structures.

This leads to a highly fragmented system of governance at the territorial level. The marked administrative and security presence of federal and regional institutions in some districts contrasts with the fragmented state of affairs in others, where the local population, clans, local security forces and various groups and networks associated with and supporting the insurgents, operate simultaneously.

The persistence of these hybrid arrangements slows down the consolidation of institutions. Where local actors, including state security forces, perceive reforms as threats to the established balance of power and local autonomy, centralisation of security is resisted. Also, in the absence of unitary security arrangements, insurgents find opportunities to exploit the state of governance and territorial fragmentation. Southwest illustrates how fragmented and

politically driven state formation results in operational and governance fragmentation.

5.4 Somaliland and the Boundaries of the Federal Framework

Although Somaliland is altogether outside of the Federal system, its continued isolation indicates both the boundaries and the contradictions of Somalia's state building. Ever since declaring independence in 1991, Somaliland has developed its own political institutions, security and administrative systems and countrywide frameworks (including the first modern system of governance and elections) independent of the central government in Mogadishu. Although it has not been internationally accepted as independent and a sovereign state, Somaliland has a political order that is stable and functioning unlike Mogadishu and many other parts of Somalia.

The Somaliland agitation to be recognized is not just a demand for territorial boundaries but demand of the lack of consensus on a political system that incorporates state legitimization and the governing mechanisms in the country.

The goal of restructuring the federal system after 2012 was to begin consolidating national political unity and address historical fragmentation. Although the system's intention was to address these issues in Somaliland, the situation has become progressively more difficult due to continued fragmentation, impaired federal relations and constitutional disputes.

The course of the federal fragmentation, combined with political integration and cohesion within the federal government, has increased Somaliland's political position.

This situation has complicated the balance of power.

Somalia still claims Somaliland as part of its territory and denies Somaliland's right to self-determination. Due to multiple and persistent challenges to cohesion and integration within the federal system, Somali authorities have been unable to maintain control over their national territory. Thus, Somaliland has both a historical and a modern element of the Somali State's political integration challenges. Somaliland's secession reinforces the main argument of the document; Somalia's main challenge is the fragmentation of structures, not the absence of a political system that can create and guarantee governance, order and control across the country.

5.5 Fragmentation of the Security Sector

These cases share a number of similar characteristics.

First, political fragmentation results in operational fragmentation, especially in the security sector. Fragmentation and disputes in the constitution, elections and other elements of political control affect overall command and control and the organization and management of territorial governance.

Second, security fragmentation increasingly demonstrates the struggles to establish a state rather than isolated institutional weaknesses. Competing entities utilize political power, institutional security and the interpretation of law to contend for legitimacy and control.

Third, the political-security landscape of Somalia remains embedded with hybrid

governance structures. Within overlapping and negotiated environments, formal institutions exist alongside clan systems, regional administrations, militias, local authorities and insurgent systems. Fourth, external engagements often interact with these fragmented structures in ways that stabilise and reinforce decentralised systems of authority.

Finally, fragmented structures of authority have proven beneficial for insurgent actors. Al-Shabaab's resilience is sustained not only due to its military efficacy, but also due to the incomplete control and inconsistent systems of governance. The case studies therefore show that the fragmentation of Somalia's political order is a key factor in the country's security crisis. The separation of political order and the security crisis in the country is therefore impossible. Constitutional fragmentation, hybrid authority structures and insecurity sustain and reproduce themselves through these mechanisms.

6. The Incentive Problem: Why Fragmentation Persists

6.1 Beyond Institutional Weakness: Fragmentation as Political Strategy

Somalia's fragmentation persists beyond weak institutions because fragmentation offers political benefits for various actors within the system.

Much of the international state-building approach toward Somalia has viewed fragmentation as a governance failure that can gradually be corrected with institutional improvements, technical reforms and capacity-building. Yet, this view overlooks the degree to which political incentives

within the federal system are responsible for Somalia's fragmented order. Political actors operate in a landscape of competitive frameworks. Decentralized power, fragmented security and the reliance of foreign assistance create a context where political actors can strategically position themselves for advantageous outcomes. Fragmentation is strategically beneficial for competing actors and is no longer viewed primarily as an indication of instability.

Federal institutions, regional administrations, political elites, clan networks, business actors and external partners derive strategic benefits from the fragmentation and, while publicly supporting the processes of national unity and state-building, often frustrate institutional consolidation. This creates paradox in Somalia's federal order: there is vocal support for federalism and the consolidation of the state among the various actors; however, many pursue politically fragmented systems. It is important to analyze this incentive structure, as it illustrates why multiple failed attempts at reforms, constitutional changes and security-sector reforms continue to yield the same weak institutions.

The problem goes beyond the lack of reform initiatives. The absence of significant reform also comes from the current political equilibrium distributing power, leverage and resources among fragmented structures in ways that many actors feel are more strategically advantageous when compared to complete consolidation.

6.2 Incentives for Federal Government Centralization

In the context of an otherwise fragmented environment, centralization creates significant political, institutional and strategic advantages for the Federal Government. When the Federal Government controls fragmented institutions, the Federal Government's political leaders can craft the processes of constitutional reform, determine the framework of electoral processes and control the points of international and external financing and security aid. In an environment of political uncertainty and fragmented control of power, having control of the center of government is one of the most important sources of political power.

In the context of institutional fragmentation, there are significant incentives for the centralization of institutional power. For the Federal Government, too much decentralization can undermine the state's cohesion, lead to a lack of coordination of policies and ultimately limit the ability of the federal institutions to function. Federal leaders often use Somalia's prolonged state of fragmentation as an example of the perils of insufficient central authority and the importance of more robust and capable national institutions to control and manage the affairs of the state with a stronger and more holistic approach to managing the security, the conduct of elections and the governance of the state.

However, there are significant political advantages of centralization for the incumbent leadership as well. Greater centralization of executive power creates more control over the sequencing of elections, the interpretation of the Constitution, the coordination of the nation's security and the centralization of the negotiations of the nation's politics. In

addition, it strengthens the position of the center of the Federal Government with respect to international actors, thereby providing the Federal Government more diplomatic legitimacy and resources that are external and aid it in its endeavors. The 2024 constitutional amendments are examples of these dynamics.

The so-called reforms purportedly aimed at completing the Constitution and transitioning the country to democracy. Regional players and the opposition interpreted them as attempts to politically strengthen the center at the expense of the federated states. It does not matter whether the center was fully intended to monopolize power. In politically fragmented systems, perceived exclusion and consolidation are as important as the actual constitutional order.

Thus, the Federal Government's attempts to empower states generate opposition, which in turn consolidates the center. This creates a new conundrum, where fragmentation and consolidation are in equilibrium. Federal Member State Incentives for Autonomy Federal Member States operate within a different set of political realities.

From this perspective, autonomy is necessary for political survival, bargaining power and the control of local power. Regional authorities are legitimized by their ability to protect local interests, manage and control local security, political and social relations and to negotiate with and/or lobby external actors from within a position of relative independence.

Regional leaders, from this perspective, argue that greater centralization will enable the weakening of local control over security,

the loss of regional bargaining power and the probable exposure of regional politics to Federal-to-Federal Government control. Thus, in these circumstances, greater centralization will enable the loss of regional self-control and the probable exposure of regional politics to Federal Government control. Thus, maintaining the current level of institutional ambiguity is a better policy option than accepting an equally uncertain and rigid constitutional order Autonomy.

The regional political authority becomes enhanced through the control of ports and customs revenue as well as trade routes, local taxation systems and relationships with donors. Several regional administrations have emerged with their own direct relationships with external actors, security partners and the business community, independently from federal coordination mechanisms.

This is particularly important in the context of security. Regional authorities often depend on local security forces for counterinsurgency and for the protection of the regime, territorial control and security of political deals. Therefore, integration into centralized command control systems of the national security forces is witnessed by many regional authorities as a major threat to their political survival. This is one of the many reasons why security sector integration is often eagerly sponsored and supported by many of the regional governments, despite the well-known rhetorical position of national cohesion.

The case is not so much about the ability of the disparate elements to work together. It is the political cost of relinquishing control over an armed element in the context of a potentially precarious federal system. As the

mistrust between the federal center and the regional administrations grows, the reasons for maintaining structures that are the most likely to be in competition with the federal system also grow.

6.4 Clan Networks, Political Elites and Fragmented Patronage Systems

Clan systems are an important part of the dynamics of the Somali political economy and continue to shape the incentive structures that maintain fragmentation. Although decentralising political contests and reducing clan violence were key goals of the Somali federal system, clan networks remain dominant in political mobilisation, elite bargaining, electoral pacts and the organisation of security. Political elites operate through a mix of formal and informal dominant systems involving clans, business and regional networks. As a result, Institutional authority is often patronage politics and balancing politics.

In such a system, fragmentation can have an advantage. Decentralised systems of control permit political elites to retain local authority, make patronage decisions and keep their bargaining options open in a fragmented political system. Uncertain constitutional frameworks also enable the renegotiation of political authority, encouraging actors to operate outside the framework of formal institutions and extending the limits of political authority. This reinforces a fragmented political system. Political competition is rarely about the strengthening of formal, impersonal institutions. Instead, it is about negotiating terms among elite networks that span federal, regional and clan structures. As a result, political settlements tend to be fragmented.

The persistence of hybrid authority systems further reinforces such systems. In Somali society, formal institutions are combined with informal governance, clan structures, local defence networks and systems of economic patronage. These combined systems make local contexts more sustainable, although they complicate national institutions policies. Fragmentation persists because it integrates with the existing political and social structures where power is distributed and negotiated.

6.5 Donor Incentives and the Internationalisation of Fragmentation

International actors cannot be viewed as the detached external observers of Somalia's fractured politics; they are absorbed in it. Since 2012, Somalia's governance and security systems have had to rely on international money, external security support, donor-led coordination and stabilisation aid. External investment has consequently become a core element of Somalia's political economy. However, donor incentives often put greater value on rapid operational results instead of long-term political consolidation.

International actors are under pressure to prove results in counter terrorism, stabilisation and other operational areas such as the humanitarian sector, migration and building institutions. The need to achieve results in these operational areas encourages dealings with the actors that can provide the results, even if these results are achieved in a fragmented manner. In effect, the result is fragmented engagements. Funding may be provided to Federal Member States, specific security units, local governments, international companies providing services, humanitarian networks,

or community actors, all in a fragmented manner and without integrating these activities to create a cohesive and coherent national systems. While these approaches often achieve short-term operational results, they strengthen decentralised systems of governance and structures of authority that stand outside the legal framework.

This is donor-induced fragmentation. In a complimentary manner, external aid reallocates resources to competing actors in a partially disconnected political environment, which serves to reinforce highly fragmented politics and security structures. This is particularly evident in security assistance. Different security actors receive a wide variety of training, funding, equipment and operational support through various bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, which helps to create and sustain fragmentation in security systems and operations.

Simultaneously, foreign actors frequently sidestep comprehensive engagement with the root political disputes in Somalia, as this piques political sensitivities, lengthens timelines and complicates operational engagement.

Consequently, the architecture of stabilisation prioritises the management of operational security, while the political fragmentation that contributes to the insecurity of the system remains largely unaddressed.

Fragmentation as a Stable but Unsustainable Equilibrium

The combination of federal incentives, regional autonomy, clan structures, elite bargaining and how donors engage, results in a politically fragmented equilibrium. It is a system that is simultaneously unstable, in an

operational sense, but relatively stable, in a political sense.

No single entity is able to dominate the structures of the Somali state. However, many unaffiliated entities are able to derive significant benefits from the absence of consolidation.

This results in a system in which:

- the Federal Government is able to slowly dominate the centre,
- Federal Member States defend their regional autonomy,
- political elites protect their bargaining flexibility,
- security actors retain their decentralised control of violence,
- and foreign actors implement immediate operational strategies.

Structurally, fragmentation reproduces itself.

While this equilibrium is able to adapt to the immediate political and competitive needs of the actors concerned, it is strategically unviable in the long term. The continued proliferation of fragmented structures diminishes the legitimacy of institutions, the ability to consolidate security and hinders the management of the economy while creating persistent and recurring opportunities for insurgent activity. The increasing impact of this equilibrium is now being felt outside of Somalia. As Somalia aims to increase its role within the regional and global security frameworks, the persistent internal fragmentation of the country will undermine its ability to

effectively and credibly assert its National sovereignty. The existing balance of power possesses an internal contradiction; fragmentation persists as it provides political benefits to rival groups and yet the cumulative damage of fragmentation ultimately undermines the long-term sustainability of the state.

The contradiction summarizes present-day Somalia's political crisis. The next section will look into policy and institutional options that may begin to address this particular fragmentation without further exacerbating the existing fragmentation in the state.

7. Policy Options: Resetting Federal–Security Relations

7.1 Moving Beyond Technical State-Building

The techniques used for the stabilization of Somalia have relied heavily on technical state-building that includes training security personnel, reinforcing ministries, enhancing the capacity for administration and bolstering the coordination of institutions. Such intervention has yielded significant improvements in some areas. However, they have retained the underlying political fragmentation that drives instability.

The main drawback for many of the reform efforts has been the assessment of Somalia's crisis primarily as an issue of the capability of institutions. Somalia's fragmentation is underpinned by the unfinished battles of control over the constitution, the legitimacy of politics, the security of the country and the distribution of resources. Technical reforms will inevitably improve the capacity of institutions. However, until these disputes are addressed, the reforms will not be able

to produce the cohesion of institutions that are durable.

Therefore, policy strategies should be directed beyond the narrow frameworks of capacity building toward reconstruction of the basic political agreement that will be able to support and sustain the governance and security arrangements. Immediate full constitutional settlements are not required. Somalia's political divisions are both deep and structurally embedded and therefore, they cannot be rapidly settled in a comprehensive manner. However, they do require the creation of means for harnessing and managing the political competition within agreed institutional frameworks. The immediate aim should not be wholly consolidated federalism. Rather, it should be the prevention of further fragmentation while gradually advancing the restoration of active political coordination.

7.2 Immediate Political De-escalation and Stabilisation

The overriding priority is to minimize the immediate danger of further federal disintegration. Relational frictions between the Federal Government and major regional players have resulted in a confrontational political environment where disputes, tensions and failures are intertwined. Without political de-escalation, institutions will not reform. Political stabilization, therefore, is an immediate priority. Institutions provide political predictability and the potential to avoid infringement of regional autonomy in the future. The goal is to achieve a temporary suspension of constitutional restructuring, a moratorium on politically escalatory federal–regional actions and finally to create a Somali-led, inter-regional government dialogue.

The focus will not be on constitutional settlements. The framework is intended to restore a minimal level of political predictability and to avoid the further unraveling of institutions. An emphasis on political inclusion after many engagements was the main point of contact for many of the key players who were perceived to have been excluded. For the new engagements to be successful, the new engagement framework must engage the Federal government, Federal Member States, opposition and to the extent that it is politically practicable, the civil society and technical experts. The aim will be to achieve a set of procedures and rules to address political rivalry. Without restoring the essential elements of political order, the substantive reform of institutions will remain an impossible task.

7.3. Rebuilding Federal-Regional Security Coordination

Bareforce attempts to fill the gaps or rely on foreign military interventions will not address the issues of Security fragmentation. Somalia's security crisis is increasingly the result of an absence of fragmented control of political authority rather than a fragmented control of security.

A key objective should be the phased rebuilding of the mechanisms for federal-regional security collaboration.

This entails clarifying the operational frameworks for:

- geographical domains,
- collection and distribution of intelligence,

- the deployment of forces,
- combined ventures,
- and the management of emergencies.

The key goal should not be the total decentralization of all security management. This would probably deepen the opposition from the regional entities who regard the regional security structures as critical to their political survival.

Rather, what is necessary is a more sophisticated and carefully constructed security regime which balances regional operational needs against the wider national coordination demands.

Thus, a Federal Security Coordination Compact needs to be developed.

The Compact would not result in the elimination of regional security arrangements, but would outline the minimum norms and standards for regional and federal collaboration. The focus of the framework should be:

- enabled interoperability,
- aligned operational frameworks,
- coordinated intelligence efforts,
- and harmonized communications.

Ensuring continuity in fragmented command elements in operational environments should be prioritized. This has been a major

obstacle in the overall effort to organize a comprehensive counter-insurgency effort.

The coordination of security in the maritime domain should be of primary focus.

The return of piracy illustrates the degree to which fragmented governance of the coast worsens regional security deficits. Somalia requires a comprehensive maritime security governance framework that integrates the federal coast, the Federal Member States' coast, the maritime police and the international maritime security framework.

If an emphasis on the integration and coordination of maritime security is not placed, fragmented governance of the coast will be exploited by piracy and coastal criminal syndicates.

7.4 Managing the ATMIS–AUSSOM Transition

The transition from ATMIS to AUSSOM is one of the most strategically sensitive processes for Somalia's post conflict phase.

Poor transition management risks exposing and deepening the already existing gaps in the fragile security system in Somalia. Fast and financially unsupported transfers of responsibilities have the potential to accelerate decentralized insecurity and increase multinational operational risks.

More attention is needed to the AUSSOM transition than a drawdown of peacekeeping forces; it calls for a reconfiguration of the political-security framework through coordinated federal-regional planning.

The three main issues are as follows:

The first issue is the unpredictability of operational financing. The sustainability of the Somali security system is reliant on external finances for salary payments, logistics, sustaining forces and operational support. Financial sustainability mechanisms for security sectors must be established to avoid fragmentation, demoralization and defections.

The second challenge is the need to rapidly strengthen command mechanisms. The external forces of stabilization will be removed and that will create additional pressure on the Somali security command to maintain command coordination across the territory. The absence of command integration and crisis coordination will result in the command structures of the Somali security forces becoming increasingly visible and fragmented.

The third challenge is the reinforcement of parallel security systems must be avoided. The overreliance of external actors on fragmented local arrangements in the absence of coherent national arrangements is the temptation of operational drawdowns. While local arrangements may be tactically successful, the overreliance of external actors on fragmented local arrangements may strategically withdraw the long-term consolidation of local arrangements. The ATMIS–AUSSOM transition calls for a consolidated federal-regional security system and the framework for managing the replacement of peacekeeping forces.

7.5 Constitutional Sequencing and Political Realism

One of the major fallacies in previous attempts at reform has been the belief that completing the constitution would

ultimately lead to the stabilization of Somalia's political order. In actuality, the successful completion of the constitution is not feasible within a fragmented political order. This requires an approach that is more politically realistic in the sequencing of constitutional amendments. Instead of attempting major restructuring of the constitution during times of politically induced social chaos, the focus should be directed towards items that can be relatively easily agreed upon and that will allow for step-by-step progress of the restructuring.

The following areas can be viewed as potential starting points for stability:

- coordination of security at the federal and regional levels,
- fiscal management,
- conflict resolution,
- guaranteed pathways for the electoral process.

The advancement of these areas is likely to promote the gradual confidence rebuilding needed to allow for broader negotiations and discussions related to constitutional amendments and restructurings. Political leaders must recognize that reforming Somalia's fragmented political structures cannot be achieved through unilateral flexible mechanisms of the constitution and by vertically integrating the institutions. The driven centralization of authority within Somalia's political structures has resulted in deepening resistance, while rapidly undermining the legitimacy of Somalia's Federal system.

This does not imply that the centralization of the State's Consolidation is to be wholly abandoned. It is the understanding that centralization of the State in the long run is possible only through a consolidated Reform of Legislative Institutional Control.

7.6 Recalibrating International Engagements

In the absence of International Actors, Somalia's internal political and security conditions will be impacted adversely. However, international diplomatic efforts that focus on Somalia's internal political and security conditions tend to promote fragmented governance.

A significant realignment of international policy is a necessity.

Firstly, external actors must understand that the politically fragmented nature of Somalia's current situation is as a result of the absence of politically oriented, as opposed to security-focused, external interventions.

Second, donors should work to avoid engagement patterns that continually reproduce parallel authority structures.

This does not mean direct regional engagement should be eliminated. In practice, many operational circumstances require adaptable local partnerships. In such situations, engagement, rather than isolated and bridging systems, should be linked to overarching federal frameworks.

Third, beyond expanding their resources and engagement for the growing 'interoperable' systems, international actors need to address the gaps.

Investment should be made to develop and integrate systems that, at all levels, organize and plan, support and provide training. This should be done to enhance systems at all levels, both federal and regional.

Fourth, international partners should avoid reinforcing zero-sum political dynamics.

Through unintentional and poorly coordinated contact, the external engager strengthens the perception to political actors that one may gain an advantage by employing external political alignments as opposed to internal political negotiations. Thus, a more balanced and coordinated strategy of engagement is required.

Finally, international actors must prepare for the possibility that Somalia's fragmentation may deepen further before meaningful consolidation happens.

Policy frameworks based on linear state-building theories become more and more disconnected from ground realities. Therefore, international engagements have a greater need to be adaptive, flexible and realistic to the political fragmentation of Somalia.

7.7 Changing Incentives, Not Just Institutions

Ultimately, Somalia's fragmentation will persist unless the underlying political incentives sustaining fragmentation begin to change.

Institutional reform alone is insufficient where political actors continue to derive strategic advantages from decentralised authority, constitutional ambiguity,

fragmented security systems and donor competition. This means future reform efforts must focus not only the institutional design but also the incentive restructuring.

Several principles are important.

First, the incentives for political cooperation should be real.

Federal-regional coordination should yield real political and material benefits for actors engaging in coordination, including access to funding, support for infrastructure, security collaboration and political support.

Second, political costs of unilateral escalation should increase. Those who pursue exclusionary constitutional processes, actions that destabilize the political order and fragmented security strategies should be subjected to greater diplomatic and political pressure from both domestic and international actors.

Third, mechanisms for political dispute management must become more credible. In the absence of reliable mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of political disputes, actors will continue to rely on unilateral bargaining and fragmented coercive arrangements.

Finally, reform must deal with the realities of Somalia's politics. Somalia will not likely have consolidated centralized state-building in the short term and a more feasible aim is the gradual development of a functioning political system that is at least minimally inclusive and shared in order to manage political competition without the continual collapse of state institutions.

This is not a low ambition. In Somalia's current context, preventing even further fragmentation and gradually rebuilding political order may, in and of itself, constitute a significant achievement.

The next section addresses the primary risks, limits and scenarios that will likely shape Somalia's fragmented federal system in the future.

8. Strategic Outlook: Risks, Constraints and Future Trajectories

8.1 Fragmentation as the New Political Normal

The increasing institutionalization of fragmentation poses one of the most critical threats to the Somali state. Following the 2012 Provisional Constitution, the construction of a federal order in Somalia was legally premised to be a progressive, evolving step toward the deliberate consolidation of the constitution and the formation of a stable state. However, since 2024, the signs are increasingly clear that fragmentation is no longer a temporary phase of a political transition.

Most federal and regional players continue to function in an environment where the authority to govern is contested, the legitimacy of institutions is obscure, the security landscape is fractal and deep-rooted constitutional disputes are ever-present. Amidst continuous crises, many political entities operate in a system that is partially responsive to the demands of the environment. Actors negotiate temporary solutions, sidestep institutional paralysis

through informal agreements and maintain minimal collaboration. Under this scenario, Somalia is likely to continue to function as a federal state, albeit one where the prevailing system is characterized by a decentralized norm with some degree of informal control. Although this scenario won't lead to an immediate decline of the state, it is important to note that some of the world's more resilient states are invariably built on fragmented systems.

8.1. Institutional Splintering and Settling for Less

Fragmentation of national planning results in the loss of public trust in the national security system and consolidation. Perhaps the biggest threat is a series of political instabilities and the loss of trust by the people in the ability of national systems to maintain order. It is important to recognize the threat posed by the normalized acceptance of fragmentation.

8.2 The Emergence of Competitive Federalism and the Threat of Heightened Political Fragmentation

In the absence of institutional cooperation, Somalia's federal system has transformed into competitive federalism, where competing political authorities engage in strategic rivalry. Both central and regional governing bodies engage in competition over:

- constitutional interpretation,
- recourse to legitimacy in elections,
- jurisdiction over violence and dominance,

- availability of external relations,
- hegemony over political resources.

This competition increasingly goes beyond institutional conflicts as it begins to define how political and coercive power is distributed in Somalia. Contrary to the 2024 constitutional amendments, the veritable threat posed by Puntland's withdrawal of recognition of the Federal Government indicated that the constitutional conflicts are a threat to the legitimacy of the federal system as a whole. Similarly, the conflict over elections and the regional controls of Jubaland were not mere conflicts over procedures, but conflicts over who controls the sovereignty and jurisdiction of violence.

Somaliland's continuing separation also adds to an already complicated federalism. Most of the time Somaliland's control over its territory without central governance of Somalia was in place prior to the federal period. However, the inability of Somalia to manage a well-organized governance of its federal system has led to the broad fragmentation of the country. The cumulative outcome is an intensively existing continuous parallel political trajectory system within and outside the federal system. This culmination could result in a system where:

- national bodies continue to use their power on a national level,
- regional bodies continue to expand their self-governing capacity,
- the systems remain disconnected and
- the legitimacy of the constitution is questioned in different political arenas.

If the current tendencies are maintained, Somalia will enter into a greater competitive fragmentation where there is a complete lack of political and institutional cohesion and where political systems are mainly focused on securing themselves.

8.3. Risks of Security Transition in Somalia After ATMIS

The shift from ATMIS to AUSSOM is one of the most critical points of the current security situation in Somalia. For over ten years, African Union's stabilization forces have had an imperative role in securing the Somali troop and supporting the local Somali forces in performing a regular function across the divided regions. The slow and gradual decrease of this outside security support is being done under a situation where Somalia's political and security situation remain fragmented.

This scenario entails many interrelated risks.

The first risk is the lack of operational sustainability. Somali security forces sustain themselves primarily on external logistics and financing, as well as on support to retain personnel, to command and control personnel and to assist them in all facets of their operations. The absence of funding to support personnel undermines cohesion and sustains the forces in theater, which will impact the operations after the ATMIS transition. The second risk is the fragmented command structures which increase incoherence in the situation in which several commands are operating.

Federal and regional forces are operating under partially overlapping systems of disconnected coordination shaped by more direct political engagement combined with

less predictable institutional integration. As external stabilisation forces withdraw, the gaps in Somalia's prioritisation of stabilisation and its fragmented security architecture will become more apparent.

Moreover, increasing reliance on peripheral security is likely. In the absence of or weak national level security, Somalia's political leadership is likely to rely on regional and zonal security forces, clan militias, local defence systems and hybrid security models. While such systems are likely to provide situational security in the short term, they will further entrench a decentralised system of coercive authority and undermine the political leadership's efforts at national integration and consolidation.

The transition is therefore likely to reveal a core contradiction in Somalia's security architecture: whilst the state strives for greater national security integration, operationally, the security system is likely to become more fragmented and integrate local security systems.

Exploiting these contradictions is likely to become Al-Shabaab's priority. The group is likely to exploit Somalia's fragmented political and operational security systems by filling governance and leadership gaps in certain territories and coordinating and guiding a fragmented post-ATMIS system.

8.4 Maritime Insecurity and Regional Spillover Risks

The resurgence of piracy along certain stretches of the Somali coastline is representative of broader systemic inadequacies in the Somali political and security framework. Piracy subsided considerably during the initial phases of international naval operations and

coordinated global efforts in maritime security. However, there is evidence that the conditions that precipitated maritime crime are re-emerging. This is the result of fragmented control over the coast, uneven capacity to deal with maritime security, economic strain and changing priorities in international security.

The Somali maritime environment continues to be one of competing authorities. Coastal security is the responsibility of federal ministries, regional administrations, maritime police, local coastal-based clans, civil society and a variety of external actors that may provide support, all of whom operate on disparate lines of control. The absence of adequate maritime governance means Somalia has the capacity to sustain coastal enforcement and provide a coordinated deterrent.

Political fragmentation of the country continues to be a challenge to coordination in the maritime domain. Puntland, which has been key to the anti-piracy initiatives, is now operating within a significantly deteriorating political relationship with the federal government following the 2024 constitutional split. Poor horizontal coordination between the centre and the regions continues to threaten effective control of security initiatives in the maritime domain.

At the same time, increased regional instability is changing the dynamics of the strategic environment of the Somali coastline. Turmoil in the Red Sea, the international maritime supply chain, Houthi-related incidents and heightened international rivalry in the Gulf of Aden have the potential to increase the strategic importance of Somali waters and

demonstrate the vulnerability of its fragmented coastal security systems.

This situation is exacerbated by the growing importance of Somaliland. International concern over the Red Sea corridor intersects with the piracy and territorial sovereignty disputes. As outside actors focus on the Red Sea corridor and with the situation in Somalia becoming more fragmented, the region's security volatility will more readily reflect the situation in Somalia.

With the recent resurgence in piracy, the internal fragmentation of Somalia's governance and the proliferation of regional and affect the security of cross-border trade and geopolitical rivalries.

8.5 International Intervention and the Fragmentation Paradox

Somalia is becoming an increasingly difficult strategic concern for countries intending to invest in the region. On the one hand, because of counter-terrorism and maritime security, Somalia is considered key in the region for international actors wanting to invest in stabilisation and control of cross-border trade. On the other hand, Somalia's fragmented political environment hinders the establishment of coherent governance and security in the country, which is necessary for the construction of stable governance. International intervention in the region has become primarily shaped by this concern. Because of this fragmented governance, Somalia at the moment has become a country in which the prioritisation of short-term military operational effectiveness over long-term political stabilisation is being practiced by most of the region's international actors. This means dealing practically with those who are most

militarily effective in a given region. While such an approach generates operational effectiveness, it very quickly becomes fragmented governance. Different international actors engage simultaneously with:

- central government and federal institutions,
- Federal Member States,
- specialised security units,
- civilian authorities/district officials,
- humanitarian networks,
- and regional political actors.

What results is a disconnected political environment within which a multitude of international actors are engaging at the same time. The result is a paradox in which international community attempts to stabilise Somalia, ultimately creates and sustains competing authority structures. Reluctance on the part of international actors to become fully engaged with Somalia's core political disputes results from the tension-filled dynamics of sovereignty, constitutional dilemmas and intrastate federal conflicts, which are politically charged and challenging to address through diplomacy.

This leads to a larger strategic dilemma.

Somalia increasingly aims for greater involvement in regional and international security arenas, while externally driven stabilization methodologies, within the context of a fragmented domestic political

order, continue to operate with a lack of consolidated institutional coherence.

The contradiction when addressed will continue to be the key challenge of the various factors that will influence the future trajectories of Somalia's politics.

Projected Future Trajectories

While the political directions of Somalia remain largely indeterminate, there are a number of scenarios emerging that are relatively clear.

Scenario 1: Managed Fragmentation

The first of these is characterized by the absence of significant state failure and the presence of fragmented governance typified by the following:

- Weak federation with regional levels of government;
- Claims of semi-autonomy by regional levels of government;
- Varied levels of security system integration; and
- Fragmented governance and inter-elite bargaining.

Fragmented governance will be the result of multiple stabilization efforts, leading to various forms of governance. Quasi-governance may emerge within this state framework and in the longer term, this scenario is unlikely to significantly support the development of integrated governance.

Scenario 2: Competitive Escalation

The second scenario suggests the continual deterioration of the constitutional framework will result in heightened levels of electoral and security ill-fragmentation, regional federal relations will collapse and the competition of fragmented governance and security systems will escalate. Moreover, the coherence and integration of the governmental and security systems will utterly collapse, while the capacity of insurgent movements will adapt and expand to gain the political legitimacy that is increasingly undermined by the growing fragmentation of authority in Somalia.

This scenario will be characterized by a high level of uncertainty and a greater likelihood of prolonged instability and increased fragmentation of state structures.

Scenario 3: Negotiated Rebalancing

A projected pathway focused on gradual political recalibration of the union through negotiated compromise falls under the less likely, but still plausible, scenarios. Political actors would value procedural legitimacy and manageable institutional cooperation more than zero-sum adversarial competition. This would result in incremental agreements on the coordination of security, sequencing of the constitution, management of the electoral process and intergovernmental relations. The trajectory would not result in the immediate reduction of fragmentation of the federation. It would, however, bring more stability to relations between the federating units and curb the politically motivated competition for state institutions.

Currently, Somalia is positioned along an axis of controlled, or, managed fragmentation and competitive escalation.

The trajectory of future events would depend on:

- federal–regional political relations,
- the management of future elections,
- the transition of ATMIS–AUSSOM,
- how the insurgents adapt,
- the external actors’ involvement in the fragmented state of politics in Somalia.

The essence of the challenge for Somalia is no longer whether the Federal Institutions are in place or not, but whether the rival political actors are able to create and sustain a sufficient degree of shared political space in order to avoid the rival, fragmented polity from becoming a structurally permanent situation.

9. Conclusion: Federalism as a Security Imperative

The enduring crisis in contemporary Somalia can no longer be explained using the traditional analysis of state fragility and insurgencies or the weakness of state institutions. These phenomena are important, but they are not, by themselves, sufficient. The more systemic challenge lies in the fragmentation of political power within the Somali state. More than a decade after the promulgation of the 2012 Provisional Constitution, the federal arrangement of Somalia remains incomplete, contested and ever more politicized. Ambiguities in the Constitution, unresolved questions on the locus of state

sovereignty, electoral tensions, fragmented and politicized security systems and competing centers of power have transformed federalism from a mechanism to manage conflict and division into one of the dominant mechanisms to reproduce conflict and division in Somalia.

The 2024 constitutional amendments further worsen this situation. The withdrawal of recognition by Puntland of the Federal Government, the rising tensions between Puntland and Jubaland, the ongoing separation of Somaliland and the increasing militarization of political competition all illustrate the lack of a minimal political consensus within Somalia's federal framework.

These scenarios are shaping Somalia's security environment. The fragmentation of security is not merely a consequence of the fragmentation of the political order. It is a manifestation of a fragmented political order. Numerous, competing and politicized command structures; fragmented and politicized security systems; fragmented and politicized governance of the sea; multiple and uneven coercive systems; and fragmented and uneven systems of territorial control reflect the dysfunction and deeper structural of states within Somalia's unresolved federalism.

The contradictions and structural dysfunction become further evident with the change from ATMIS to AUSSOM. Somalia has entered a new phase in which external stabilization forces begin to withdraw operational support, while domestic political and security structures remain fractured. This causes an uncertain environment for operational sustainability, force coordination and territorial governance, which remain

open to significant contestation. Somalia is also motivated to participate in security governance within the global arena beyond the African continent, moving beyond being a passive recipient to becoming an active participant. In this light, Somalia's increasing diplomatic activity is an expression of its expanding geopolitical relevance.

However, it is important to note that Somalia's positive shift in international relations happens in an environment of deepening domestic fragmentation. Thus, Somalia's main strategic dilemma is that it is unclear how Somalia seeks to gain greater geopolitical relevance to the external world, while simultaneously trying to centralize formal political order for the internal governance, security and legitimacy. This contradiction has consequences that go beyond Somalia.

Increasingly fragmented governance affects maritime security in the Gulf of Aden, regional trade routes, the stability of the Red Sea, the coordination of counter-terrorism efforts and the geopolitical rivalry across the Horn of Africa. Consequently, Somalia's internal fragmentation is no longer solely a concern of domestic governance; it has become a regional strategic priority.

The study argues that fragmentation in Somalia is not only a result of weak institutions; rather, it is the result of embedded fragmentation in large, complex systems of political incentives, elite bargaining processes, fragmented coercive capacity and dispersed international presence.

This results in a political order that is unstable in operation, yet robust in design. Federal and regional actors continue competing for control over the Constitution,

political legitimacy, security and the means of political survival, while external actors try to impose order on Somalia and accommodate the fragmented situation. This creates opportunities for insurgents to operate.

In these circumstances, fragmentation is likely to be accepted as the new status quo. Somalia's central problem is no longer the existence of a formally established federal state. Rather, it is the ability of politically competing authorities to retain sufficient political commonality to avoid fragmentation becoming a permanent feature of Afghanistan's political landscape. The ability of the federal state of Somalia to evolve from a context of disordered and competing state making to a context of minimally ordered state making will define Somalia's future.

Without something to manage this fragmentation, initiatives to build up governance capacity, increase security operations, stabilise territory and enhance international engagement will be continuously undermined by the fragmentation of the political order itself. In this context, federalism cannot be conceived as a secondary issue in governance and the political order, to be addressed after security concerns have been sorted out. It is one of the core issues that will determine the extent to which sustainable security will be realized.

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