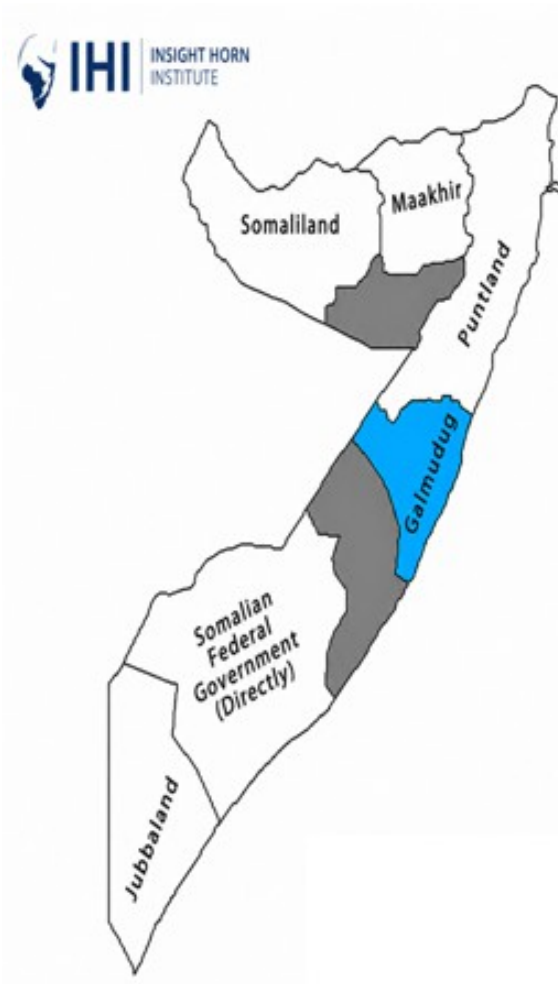




From Elections to Democratic Governance: Strengthening Political Stability and Electoral Integrity in Galmudug

Key Findings

- Galmudug's democratic transition has progressed steadily since 2015, evolving from a newly established Federal Member State into a more institutionalized administration with stronger executive structures, improved administrative capacity, and more orderly political transitions. However, institutional effectiveness remains uneven, particularly at the local level, requiring continued investment in administrative capacity and accountable public institutions.
- Cooperation between the Federal Government of Somalia and Galmudug has strengthened institution-building, security coordination, and administrative development. Nevertheless, perceptions of excessive federal involvement during political transitions continue to affect regional autonomy and democratic legitimacy, underscoring the need for clearer constitutional roles and stronger intergovernmental coordination.
- Electoral reforms have gradually expanded political participation, but governance continues to be shaped by clan-based political settlements and elite negotiations. Women, youth, minority communities, and internally displaced persons remain underrepresented in political decision-making, highlighting the need for more inclusive governance and broader political participation.
- Security improvements have expanded government authority across parts of Galmudug, yet military gains alone have not produced sustainable stability. Lasting

Figure 1. Framework for Democratic Consolidation in Galmudug



peace requires integrating electoral reforms with local governance, reconciliation, justice, effective civilian administration, and improved public service delivery in both established and recently liberated areas.

- Democratic legitimacy depends not only on credible elections but also on the ability of public institutions to govern effectively after elections. Strengthening the independence, professionalism, and credibility of electoral and state institutions, while promoting transparency, accountability, and peaceful political competition, is essential for sustaining public confidence in democratic governance.
- Long-term democratic consolidation requires coordinated action by the Galmudug Government, the Federal Government of Somalia, political parties, traditional leaders, civil society, and international partners. Future support should prioritize institution-building, strengthen local administrative capacity, respect constitutional federal-state relations, and ensure that electoral reforms are integrated into broader state-building and stabilization efforts.

1. Introduction

Why the 2026 Galmudug Election Matters

The 2026 electoral transition in Galmudug is significant because it reflects one of the largest transitional moments in Somalia's federal state building as well as its ongoing democratic process. Galmudug is one of the most important states in the Federal Government of Somalia, both politically

and administratively. This state sits at the crossroads of northern and southern Somalia. Because of this location, Galmudug is becoming increasingly relevant to the development of federal government, combating violent extremist groups, promoting political reconciliation and testing new electoral systems. Therefore, what happens in Galmudug is having increasing effects on not just the governance of the region but also the overall path of Somalia's democratization.

In contrast to all prior electoral processes, the 2026 transition will occur in a completely different political environment than before. In 2024, Somalia began implementing various electoral reforms designed to allow for one person, one vote elections; and to build a strong multi-party system. As part of this larger national effort at electoral reform, The 2026 election cycle is an opportunity for Galmudug to transition to a system of direct voter participation as part of its overall process of electoral reform in Somalia. The experience gained in conducting direct local elections at other sites in Somalia — notably in Puntland — will serve as a benchmark in determining if increased voter participation can be successfully implemented through institutionalization in a political setting that has been affected by lack of administrative capacity, security challenges and/or both. To support this transitional period, NIEBC's work in implementing this new voting process includes registering voters, establishing polling stations, providing civic/voter education, deploying all necessary voting equipment/materials and coordinating efforts with relevant authorities at the federal/state levels; each of these areas represent significant institutional investments to accomplish the goal of transitioning from an indirect method of selecting leaders to one-man/one-vote elections.

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Therefore, the significance of the 2026 election goes far beyond simply electing a new set of politicians. Instead, the election represents a fundamental test of whether competitive elections can increase institutional legitimacy, enhance collaboration between levels of government; increase citizen engagement; and support long term political stability. The transition is taking place however, in a difficult-to-navigate environment. A number of challenges such as continued violence, complex clan relationships; changing federal-government/state relationships; and varying degrees of institutional capacity are shaping the conditions under which the electoral process will take place.

Purpose of the Policy Brief

This paper looks at the development of the electoral processes of Galmudug from when it was established in 2015 until the next electoral cycle in 2026. The paper is based upon an analytical comparison of all four election cycles. It analyzes how each round of elections has impacted the developmental potential of Galmudug's institutions; federal-state relations; political inclusivity; security governance; and democratic legitimacy.

As opposed to merely analyzing the role of elections as individual political events, this paper seeks to assess what the long term implications are for both state building and democratic consolidation through the lens of elections.

Rather than simply looking at the overall performance of Galmudug in regards to the transitional democratic process (i.e.

the ability to hold free and fair elections), the paper posits that the success of Galmudug's transitional democracy can also be assessed through other metrics. For example: do elections contribute to strengthening institutions; does election-driven competition create opportunities for more inclusive forms of governance; does election participation increase citizen trust in government; and do elections support enduring forms of political stability?

In order to provide guidance to the Galmudug Government, the Federal Government of Somalia, political actors, and international donors/development agencies regarding actions they may take to enhance democratic governance in Galmudug beyond just the electoral process, the paper will draw upon lessons learned from past rounds of elections.

2. Galmudug's Democratic Transition: Four Electoral Cycles

A comparison of the four electoral cycles reveals both the substantial institutional progress made since 2015 and the ways in which such progress cannot be reduced to a simple or linear trajectory of democratic electoral development. Galmudug's establishment was based on negotiations intended to produce an inclusive regional administration for Galgaduud and southern Mudug, including federal institutions, clan leaders, other traditional leaders, and various political figures. As such, this first electoral cycle was fundamentally about establishing a functional regional administration, and less about competitive elections. In the end, after these negotiations were completed, a

new regional assembly chose Abdikarim Hussein Guled as the president of Galmudug. Thus viewed from the vantage point of democratic governance, the major achievement of 2015 was institutional creation. In providing Galmudug with an executive, legislative and administrative framework through which authority would increasingly be exercised by government officials, it illustrated how negotiated inclusion was essential in building institutions in environments where there are many different political players. However, these same arrangements had some long term consequences. Political representation remained largely mediated through clans, elder councils, delegate selection processes and elite bargains rather than direct citizen participation. Additionally, ASWJ contested the legitimacy of Galmudug's newly formed institutions and maintained separate administrations within their controlled territories. This illustrates that while establishing formal governmental institutions does not necessarily mean that one will also establish uncontested political authority.

Therefore, the major lesson learned from Galmudug's experience in 2015 is that accommodation was needed in order to form the state, however it is not sufficient to develop democratic legitimacy.

The 2017 transition exposed the fragility of the institutional arrangements established two years earlier. Following President Abdikarim Hussein Guled's resignation, Ahmed Duale Gelle "Haaf" was elected president in May 2017. His administration inherited unresolved disputes over political authority, power-sharing and the relationship between Galmudug's formal institutions and ASWJ.

The significance of this period lies less in the electoral outcome than in what followed. The transition demonstrated that electoral institutions could select political leadership without necessarily resolving underlying political fragmentation. Formal governmental structures continued to operate alongside influential informal institutions, clan-based negotiations and competing political centres.

At the same time, the period demonstrated the continuing importance of reconciliation as part of democratic state-building. The new administration initiated negotiations with ASWJ, reflecting recognition that political legitimacy could not be secured through formal electoral procedures alone.

In terms of democratic governance, 2017 thus marked both a setback for Galmudug and a very important institutional lesson. As a transitional process, Galmudug had at least established a mechanism for political succession. Nevertheless, the fact that Galmudug continued to fragment meant that there was little authority (or effectiveness) in its institutions. Thus, the experience of these two years demonstrated that elections cannot create political stability if they take place outside of a broadly-based political settlement. In other words, institutionally legitimate governments need not only constitutional processes (such as elections), but ongoing political accommodations, as well as the capacity of those same institutions to exercise authority throughout multiple competing constituencies.

The 2020 electoral cycle therefore represented a shift from maintaining institutional viability to consolidating them. On February 8th, 2020, Ahmed Abdi Kariye "Qoorqoor" was

elected president, beginning an administration that would have access to more developed state structures than those that were available during the transitions of 2015 and 2017. However, the 2020 election itself revealed many of the remaining shortcomings in Galmudug's political settlement. While opposition actors challenged the election, it took place against the backdrop of competing claims to political legitimacy. Therefore, the increased institutional capacity of Galmudug did nothing to diminish the contention regarding the credibility of electoral outcomes, the level of federal intervention into electoral affairs, or the distribution of power among various political entities.

While Galmudug's post-transition evolution ultimately represented a more significant democratic development than did its pre-transition experiences, the state's institutions began to develop an ability to coordinate more effectively with the Federal Government, administer state functions and contribute to broader national security and stabilization efforts. Moreover, Galmudug's institutions also began to assume an increasing role in national politics, particularly with respect to discussions regarding relations between states and the federal government. Those discussions took place in Dhuusamareeb during 2020.

From a governance perspective, therefore, the outcome of Galmudug's electoral cycle in 2020 constituted a mixed but significant result. It demonstrated that institutional consolidation could occur even when electoral procedures themselves were highly contested. Compared to 2015, Galmudug entered the new period with functional state institutions. Compared to 2017, however, Galmudug experienced a more pronounced increase in the consolidation

of political authority. Nevertheless, citizen participation in government remained mostly indirect and elite-led.

Ultimately, the larger lesson is that institutional stability constitutes a necessary foundation upon which democratic reform may be built. However, it is equally important to recognize that institutional consolidation does not constitute democratic consolidation. Only when executive and administrative capacities are accompanied by mechanisms for holding officials accountable; providing opportunities for political pluralism; extending citizenship rights to include all members of society; and establishing credible mechanisms for competitive politics will stronger executive and administrative capacities achieve their full potential as democratic assets.

As such, the 2026 transition presents a qualitatively different phase in Galmudug's democratic development. While 2015 was primarily concerned with building institutions; 2017 identified some of the key limitations in their performance; and 2020 significantly enhanced their capabilities, the central question facing Galmudug in 2026 is whether those institutions possess the capability to enable and sustain broader and more credible forms of democratic participation.

The distinction is important. At one point in time, Galmudug faced challenges related only to developing a viable regional administration. Today, however, the focus has shifted toward strengthening the legitimacy of those same institutions, enabling greater levels of citizen engagement with public institutions; facilitating multi-party competition; and converting electoral victories into actual governmental accountability.

Therefore, as Galmudug moves toward more inclusive forms of democratic participation through direct elections, expectations will grow while the burden placed on institutions will grow. More inclusive forms of democratic participation can potentially weaken reliance on limited elites who bargain away their constituent interests in exchange for short-term gains, and enhance relationships between citizens and public institutions. Nonetheless, direct elections do not inherently establish democracy. Rather, they require effective and credible electoral administration; pluralistic politics; effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts arising out of elections; secure elections; high degrees of confidence among citizens concerning public institutions; and acceptance by competing political actors regarding the basic rules governing elections.

Recent events reinforce the importance of this transition. The electoral process leading up to Galmudug's 2026 local elections has now progressed far enough to involve direct citizen participation for the first time since previous electoral cycles involved predominantly indirect methods for selecting candidates. As such, Galmudug has evolved into a vital case study for understanding Somalia's wider ambitions to transform its electoral practices into more participatory forms of democratic governance.

Consequently, it follows logically that the democratic implications of Galmudug's elections in 2026 should not be evaluated solely based on whether voting takes place and/or which political actors emerge victorious. Ultimately, the more fundamental issues relate to whether voters perceive competition for elective office as being credible enough to elicit acceptance; whether citizens have a genuine opportunity to shape the course of public policy through interactions with

public institutions; whether marginalized groups have an opportunity to engage in the electoral process; and whether newly-elected offices remain accountable once the electoral process is completed.

Thusly summarized across the four electoral cycles in Galmudug, its trajectory can be described accordingly: State-building in 2015; Institutional vulnerability in 2017; Consolidation of institutional capacity subsequent to 2020; And finally testing participatory forms of democratic governance in 2026. The progress has been considerable; nonetheless, it remains incomplete. Successive electoral cycles have resulted in increasingly formalized electoral systems. However, clan-based negotiations; federal-state rivalries; security-related constraints; and lack of representation for certain segments of society continue to affect how decisions are made.

Therefore, the central policy lesson is similarly unambiguous: In order for Galmudug's democratic transition to be successful, reforms implemented in conjunction with electoral reform must improve the nature of governance (not just provide alternatives for how leaders are chosen). Ultimately, however, the true test of Galmudug's transition in 2026 will come after votes are cast — by assessing inclusivity surrounding governmental formation; the autonomy and operational functionality of institutions; resolution of inter-party disputes; and ultimately whether those same institutions can translate electoral legitimacy into tangible security measures; accessible services; and accountable government.

Libaan Ahmed Hassan's candidacy for president of the Galmudug state represents a new level of engagement from

organized party politics during the state's transitional elections. National party endorsements can potentially give candidates access to national political organizations, greater organizational capacity, and greater political visibility. This potential advantage can help enhance campaign coordination; however, it could also lead to issues of balance when considering the degree to which federal political organizations are able to support local ownership of the electoral process. In addition to seeking to increase its influence in the presidential election, JSP seeks to establish itself as a major player within the developing parliamentary structure. Therefore, JSP will be attempting to gain representation across both the executive and legislative branches of government. Greater synchronization of policies and actions between the legislature and the executive branch would likely lead to better policy coordination, reduced institutional gridlock, and a more effective execution of the program developed by the incoming administration. However, having one party controlling both branches of government would likely create significant risks associated with excessive political concentration. Whether this situation contributes positively to democracy depends upon the extent to which institutional coordination is combined with parliamentary independence.

3. Key Findings: What Have We Learned?

A review of the four electoral cycles of Galmudug clearly shows a progression from state building toward the democratization of the state. Overall there has been

considerable growth in the strength of the state's institutions over the last five years. There has been increasing formalization of political institutions and greater administrative continuity. However, the state's institutions still need to address the security, political and governance issues that are currently constraining the country's democratic development.

It can be concluded that elections have become increasingly institutionalized in Galmudug. Nonetheless, democratic governance in Galmudug is still heavily influenced by three elements; namely constitutional institutions, the level of consensus among the various stakeholders, the overall security situation, and the efficiency of public administration.

Five main conclusions emerge from this evaluation:

Institutional Development

Galmudug's electoral development has been characterized by the progressive development of state institutions. The 2015 electoral cycle provided the foundational institutional basis for Galmudug as a federal member state. Successive electoral cycles have progressively developed the executive branch of government, legislative branch of government, and administrative branches of government responsible for governing. Generally speaking compared to Galmudug at its inception, there is now more order in leadership changes, increased experience in administering government, and better coordination between regional authorities. It is however necessary to note that the development of institutions in Galmudug is far from uniform. Galmudug is still largely reliant on elite negotiation to govern rather than a functional public



administration. Furthermore, there is vast differences in terms of levels of administrative capacity across different districts. For example, many areas that were recently liberated from Al-Shabaab control lack sufficient representation of the state. Therefore, the current institutional resilience in Galmudug is primarily based on political accommodation rather than institutional authority as outlined in the constitution.

Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that institution building takes place over a longer period than just electoral cycles. To achieve sustainable democratic governance, continuous investment in administrative capacity and professional public institutions, independent judiciary and effective local government is required rather than relying solely on electoral reform.

Federal-State Relations

Throughout all four electoral cycles, the relationship between Galmudug and the Federal Government of Somalia has undoubtedly been a factor in shaping political stability. The federal government has supported the establishment of institutions in Galmudug, facilitated dialogue among political actors, enhanced security coordination, and assisted administrations in times of political transition. At the same time, successive elections illustrate that maintaining a balance between federal support and regional autonomy continues to be highly politicized. While beneficial federal engagement has enhanced governance and stabilization efforts in several cases, perceptions of overbearing federal influence during electoral processes have generated tensions and concerns

Figure 2. Why the 2026 Election Matters

A simple flow diagram.



The 2026 election is the turning point from transitional politics to sustainable, accountable, and inclusive governance.

about regional ownership of political decisions. Comparative evidence illustrates that effective federalism is less contingent on the extent of federal engagement than on how such engagement occurs. Legitimacy is strengthened when federal institutions assist in constitutional processes without appearing to determine political outcomes. Mechanisms for intergovernmental coordination, consultation, and conflict resolution are thus crucial for strengthening Somalia's federal system and democracy in Galmudug.

Political Representation and Clan Politics

Clan-based politics has been the defining feature of Galmudug's political system since its inception. During each electoral cycle, political legitimacy was achieved through negotiated agreements among dominant clans, elder councils and prominent politicians. Such arrangements have helped establish mechanisms to manage conflicts and reach consensual decisions during moments of institutional weakness.

However, these negotiated arrangements have restricted broader participatory democracy. Established political elites and powerful clan networks continue to dominate electoral competitions. Opportunities for meaningful participation by women, young people, minorities and internally displaced populations are extremely limited. Despite some recent improvements due to electoral reform initiatives, these structural barriers continue to exist.

This decade-long experience demonstrates that democratic consolidation in Galmudug cannot entail replacement of traditional political institutions. Instead, integration of customary methods for reaching agreement with modern

constitutional institutions open to transparency, inclusiveness, representativeness and accountability are needed. Thus, inclusive governance should be considered as a democratic goal and as an indispensable condition for long-lasting peace in Galmudug.

Security Situation and Electoral Process

Security conditions have influenced electoral processes in Galmudug throughout the entire political history of the region. Each electoral cycle has taken place under the shadow of insurgency activities, localized violence and intense electoral competition. Security developments have created new opportunities for governance and for participation in the political sphere. On the other hand, unresolved security problems have severely constrained electoral processes in certain regions.

Combined operations conducted by federal government agencies such as the Somali National Army, regional authorities, such as those in Galmudug, community defense units and clan militias or self-defense committees (Macwisleey) and international organizations have greatly reinforced the capacity of Galmudug to exert governmental authority. However, gains in security have never ensured the complete stability of the political climate. Repeatedly demonstrated over time is that communities that lack functioning administrations, public services and legitimate local governments remain exposed to renewed instability and renewed political contestations.

Consequently, credible elections require not only safe polling stations but also stable communities, neutral security

institutions, impartial electoral administration bodies and mechanisms to resolve political disputes fairly. As such, electoral security should be incorporated into comprehensive stabilization and governance strategies rather than be treated solely as a function of law enforcement.

Legitimacy Beyond Elections

One of the primary lessons learned from Galmudug's electoral development is that elections are insufficient for establishing democratic legitimacy. Elections contribute to reinforcing political institutions. However, democratic legitimacy is built upon post-election governance performance including inclusive decision-making practices by governments, transparency in administration, responsive public services provision.

Citizen confidence in democratic institutions is determined equally by election results and by institutional performance. If a government fails to provide citizens with security, justice, basic services and inclusive governance options then it risks losing legitimacy irrespective of high-quality electoral processes. Conversely, if a government demonstrates accountability to citizens through responsiveness to their needs and provides effective administration then confidence in democratic institutions will be maintained beyond election periods.

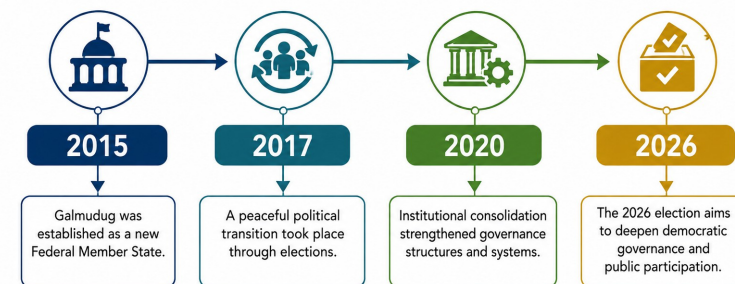
Ultimately, democratic consolidation represents a continuous process rather than merely sequential electoral events. Elections create opportunities for renewal of political mandates; nevertheless sustainable democratic governance depends on institutional effectiveness and accountability,

inclusive governance processes and responses to citizen needs by public institutions.

When evaluating Galmudug's four electoral cycles collectively they show a political system that has advanced from negotiated state-formation to developing greater institutional maturity but has not yet completed its democratization process. Progress has occurred in enhancing formal institutional capacities (i.e., the executive branch of government), improving cooperation between the federal government and the states of Somalia (federal-state relations), and expanding voter participation (political inclusion). The fundamental limitations to democratic governance in Galmudug include limited institutional capabilities; ongoing dependency on informal negotiations to make policy decisions; disparate access to democratic participation; and persistent security threats.



Figure 3. Timeline



4. Policy Challenges

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY

The first problem area is building the legitimacy of public institutions that exist beyond the electoral period. While elections have increased their level of institutionalization in Galmudug; public trust in government is primarily based on institutional performance and not electoral results alone. Political legitimacy increases when government provides security, justice, public services and fair decision making with respect to citizen needs and expectations.

Governing experiences from previous electoral cycles show that even though governments are elected through legally recognized electoral processes they can lack broad political legitimacy because of their governance being viewed as exclusive, ineffectual or too reliant on informal political arrangements. Therefore, the primary way to build institutional legitimacy is to increase the professionalism, accountability and efficiency of public institutions during the entire electoral cycle instead of just focusing on the electoral period.

MANAGING FEDERAL STATE RELATIONS

Constructive relationships between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Galmudug administration remain critical to Galmudug's future political stability. Support from the Federal Government was instrumental in strengthening institutions, coordinating security operations and facilitating political dialogues. Additionally, every electoral period has shown how perceiving too much federal influence can erode confidence in regional autonomy and the democratic legitimacy of the State.

Therefore, the primary policy challenge is to develop a stable and rule-based relationship between federal and state institutions. Engagement from the Federal Government should contribute to developing the constitutional framework for governance, support institution building and promote cooperation while also respecting the autonomous nature of each Federal Member State. Mechanisms that promote communication, coordination and resolving disputes are needed to minimize political instability and provide additional confidence in Somalia's evolving federal system.

STRENGTHENING ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

As Galmudug begins to broaden electoral participation the credibility of electoral institutions will begin to matter. Previous political transitions were significantly facilitated by negotiated political agreements and indirect electoral arrangements. As Galmudug continues toward expanded participation there are increasing demands placed on electoral management bodies, laws and other governmental agencies that administer competitive politics.

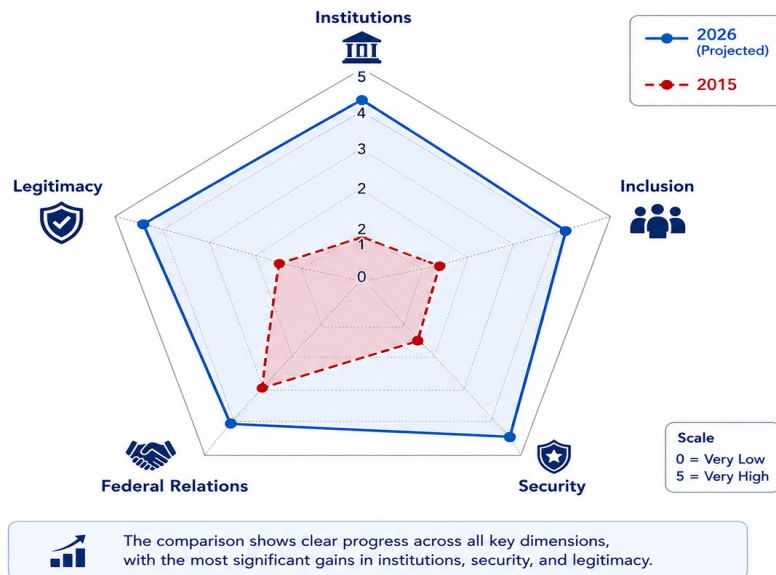
While the major challenge is not merely holding elections but having credible electoral institutions that are seen as impartial, professional and transparent; public confidence depends on efficient voter registration systems, credibly nominated candidates, transparent election administration systems, accessible mechanisms to resolve disputes regarding elections and neutral security arrangements. Strengthening these institutions should be considered long-term investments in democratic governance rather than a short-term electoral exercise.

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

Although Galmudug has made some incremental progress, inclusiveness in governance represents perhaps the greatest challenge confronting Galmudug's democratic transition. Representation within Galmudug continues to be determined by negotiated clan arrangements that have provided stability politically but have also limited opportunities for participation by women, youth, minorities and internally displaced people.



**Figure 4. Comparative Progress:
2015 vs 2026**



Therefore, future democratic reforms should attempt to expand electoral participation while at the same time ensuring that public institutions reflect the diversity of Galmudug society. This is not necessarily to abandon customary forms of governance which continue to play a crucial role in conflict resolution and achieving consensus. Rather, it means strengthening constitutional institutions so that they can complement customary forms of governance through enhanced transparency, accountability and equal opportunities for political participation. The benefits of more inclusive governance include enhancing public confidence, reducing political grievances and providing additional legitimacy for democratic institutions.

POST ELECTION STABILIZATION

Finally, addressing post-election stabilization represents the last challenge confronting transitional democracies. Elections generate legitimacy only if the newly elected government is able to transform the electoral mandate into effective governance. Given both Galmudug's fragile security environment and the need to establish effective government presence in recently recovered areas, post-election stabilization is a particular concern. Previous electoral cycle experiences demonstrate that military victories do not endure unless accompanied by effective civilian administration, local reconciliation programs, delivery of public services and accountable governance. Therefore, the newly elected institutions will face the dual challenge of sustaining stability while establishing effective governance among those who have been

affected by conflict. Thus, future electoral reforms should be part of broader strategies of stabilization incorporating elements related to security, local governance, justice, economic recovery and community reconciliation.

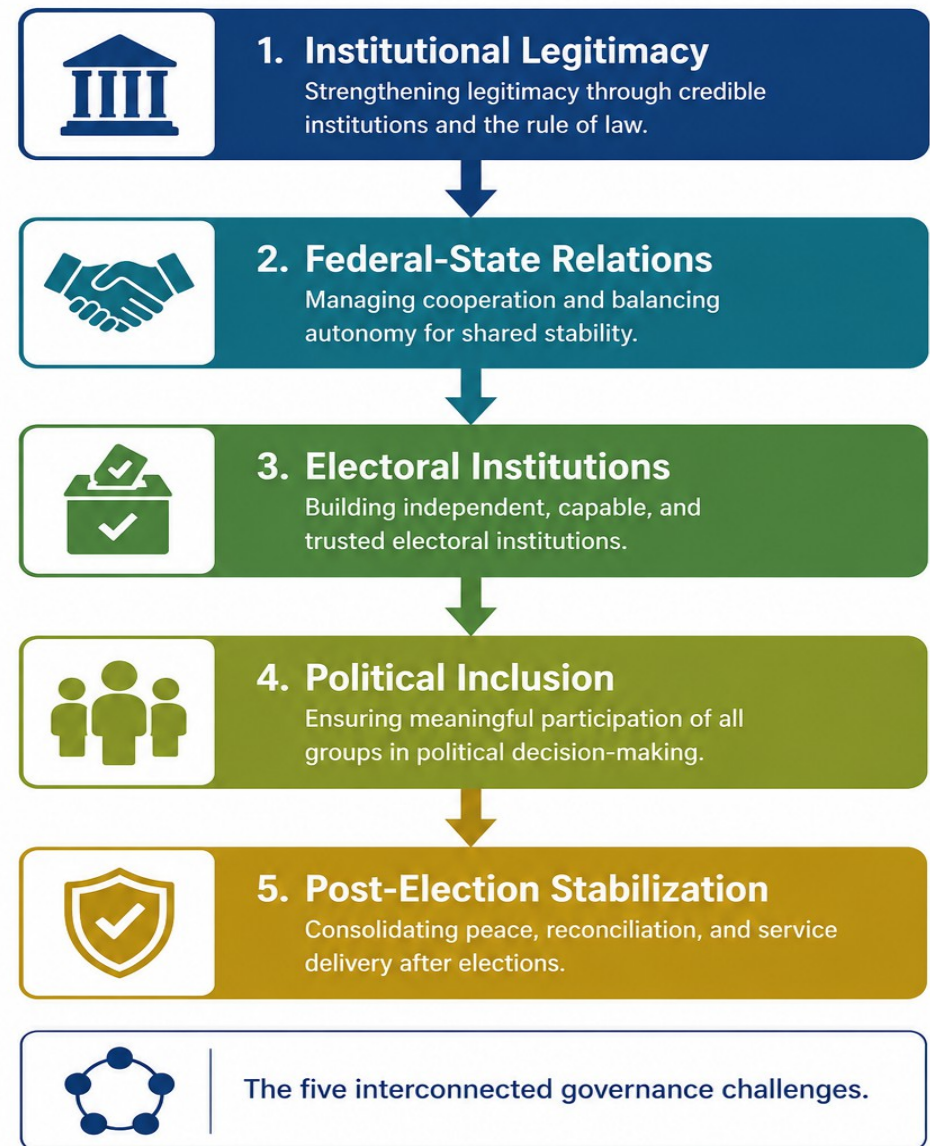
MOVING FROM ELECTIONS TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Collectively these five challenges clearly indicate that Galmudug's democratic transition has moved into a new stage. It is no longer sufficient to discuss whether successful elections can take place in Galmudug but rather what role election competition can play in creating institutions capable of effective governance after an election. Meeting these challenges requires collective actions by the Galmudug Government, Federal Government of Somalia (FGOS), political parties, traditional leadership groups, civil society organizations and international supporters. Below are specific suggestions for policies that can help enhance democratic governance and ensure that the 2026 electoral transition will result in long term political stability in Galmudug.

5. Policy Recommendations

To strengthen democracy in Galmudug, we need to improve how we run elections. This can be done by creating independent and professional electoral management bodies that are accountable and have resources to do their jobs effectively. Additionally, after an election has taken place, we need to develop strong

Figure 5. Policy Challenge Framework



public administration systems, hold people accountable for actions they take, create good laws and enforce them fairly throughout Galmudug, and make sure all citizens receive fair services from the government.

We also want to increase the level of participation of groups who have been historically marginalized in politics such as women, young people, minorities, and those who were forced to leave their homes due to violence. In addition, we need to create local governments that function well in new regions that have just become free from Al-Shabaab control. We need to respect the constitution of Somalia which outlines a system of federalism. Therefore, we will provide financial and other forms of support to regional administrations but this needs to happen in a way that is transparent and predictable so that states know what they are getting.

Furthermore, we want to establish an ongoing mechanism for communication and collaboration between different levels of

government on issues related to election governance, security, implementing the constitution, and stabilizing the country after an election. Additionally, we want to promote a competitive and peaceful democratic process by supporting efforts by political parties, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, and the media to resolve disputes using constitutional and legal means; while at the same time developing programs that help build citizen confidence in democracy and educate citizens about the democratic process.

Finally, we believe that linking electoral reforms to building a stable and functioning state is key. As such, our approach will focus on integrating electoral reforms into broader state-building initiatives including governance reforms, reconciliation processes, developing the security sector, and enhancing the ability of the government to deliver public services.

6. Conclusion

Galmudug's progression through its electoral processes since 2015 parallels Somalia's development of a federal state and democratization. During the last four rounds of elections, the country moved from a negotiated state formation toward developing a consolidated form of government with increased administrative capacity; improved coordination among federal and regional governments; and gradual expansion of citizen participation in the democratic process. However, there remain many obstacles. There are still substantial limitations in terms of the inclusion of Somali citizens in political decision-making due to structural inequalities. In addition, the relationship between the federal and member states continues to require close attention. Security advances have been made across Somalia, however, the distribution of these improvements remains uneven. Public trust in government institutions is contingent upon how well government performs as much as how credible it was during the electoral process.

Therefore, the 2026 transitional electoral cycle is not merely another routine election. This is an opportunity for Galmudug to show that electoral reform can lead to better institutions, more inclusive forms of governance, and greater political stability in one of Somalia's most strategic Federal Member States. Whether or not this opportunity is capitalized on will depend on the

Figure 6. Governance Partnership Model



credibility of the electoral process itself, along with the

commitment of political leadership and institutions to govern in ways that include all citizens, adhere to their constitutionally mandated responsibilities, and meet the demands of citizens post-election.

In conclusion, Galmudug's experiences over the last ten years provide an important lesson regarding Somalia's overall democratic transition. Elections are necessary to renew political mandates, enhance democratic accountability; however, elections alone cannot ensure long-term peace nor effective governance. Democratic consolidation requires credible institutions; good relationships between federal and member states; inclusive forms of political participation; accountable public administration; and long term investments in local governance and stabilization. Therefore, electoral reforms must be part of a larger strategy of building strong public institutions where the public perceives them as legitimate and performative.

Overall, the success of Galmudug's transition to democracy will not be determined by whether or not elections are successful, but rather if they foster more robust institutions, better governance, and more sustainable political legitimacy. If Galmudug is able to transform the momentum created by the 2026 electoral transition into meaningful institutional reform and inclusive governance, then it may emerge not only as a more stable Federal Member State, but as an example of how democratic governance can function in Somalia's evolving federal structure.

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