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The Politics of Security in Somalia

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Executive summary

Starting from a very low base, Somalia is making slow but definite, if reversible, progress towards becoming a capable, peaceful, and fully sovereign state. Central to success will be greater security and the emergence of institutions that are politically acceptable to all Somalis, accountable, affordable, and capable of addressing both the causes and characteristics of insecurity.

In the last decade, efforts by international actors—United Nations, African Union (AU), and bilateral—to address security, while achieving some significant successes, have failed to address the political dimensions of insecurity, have focused largely on the military and operational aspects of security, and have not been coherent or coordinated. A singular focus on militia integration into a centralized National Security Architecture met with significant political and institutional resistance, and in fact ran counter to a parallel, relatively successful process of negotiated federalism that resulted in the emergence of Federal Member States (FMS), the formation of an upper house of parliament, and a 2016–17 electoral process. Furthermore, investments in extending governance and state authority did not keep up with or were overtaken by military operations, meaning military gains were rarely consolidated outside of a few key towns.

Over the last year, an ambitious and unprecedented set of arrangements have been put in place to develop a common Somali vision of federal and state level security institutions that are shared, trusted and capable. A May 2017 political agreement around the National Security Architecture, and an international Security Pact also endorsed in May 2017, represent major steps forward; the challenge will now be to implement them. These arrangements stem from the recognition, propelled in part by the prospect of the departure of the AU Mission in Somalia, both among Somalis and the international community, that Somalia's chronic instability can only be addressed through a more comprehensive approach to security, and that managing the politics of security is a prerequisite for success in building security institutions, including the police, army, and intelligence services. Indeed, the articulation of a National Security Architecture treads on the most sensitive fault line of Somali politics—the balance of power between the center and the peripheries.

Obstacles to be overcome include domestic Somali opposition particularly from those groups whose patronage and power will be negatively affected; an ongoing fractious political landscape with competition between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and emerging and existing FMS whereby the FGS insists that partners (both troop contributing countries as well as security donors) align their support to nationally agreed priorities and plans; urgent security timelines that deny real space and time for Somali politico-security negotiations; the dilemma emanating from restructuring security forces while actively fighting a war; and international approaches to security driven by domestic/homeland (rather than Somali) security priorities or by imperatives relating to other agendas and rivalries in the region.

Success in strengthening nationally owned security institutions would benefit from progress in conflict resolution and reconciliation and in reviewing the provisional constitution not least to stabilize relationships between the FGS and FMS, upon which implementing a national security strategy will depend. Attention to issues of injustice, impunity, and corruption are also important as part of a political approach to security that goes beyond purely technical interventions. Here, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—in particular SDG16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies—offer concrete guideposts around which action could coalesce. Given the pervasive threat posed by violent extremists to all Somalis, prioritizing the politics of security could help drive a broader statebuilding agenda, including to generate revenues and build trust between FGS and FMS. The unanswered question is whether Somali leaders are able to manage the many conflicting pressures upon them and converge around a common security agenda which by necessity will involve a degree of resource and power sharing. This is a necessary basis for addressing a related challenge, namely a more coherent and aligned approach by international actors, both troop contributing countries and donors.

The Politics of Security in Somalia

By Michael Keating and Sagal Abshir

At the May 2017 London Conference on Somalia, the Somali authorities and the international community set out and adopted a Security Pact, representing a new partnership for Somali security sector development. This has not been the first international conference on Somalia that sought to galvanize the security sector in Somalia, but it was different in that it was built upon a nascent Somali political settlement related directly to security institutions.

The linchpin of the Security Pact was a May 2017 agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS) on a National Security Architecture. Ambitious and unprecedented, this agreement represents an initial outline of a common Somali vision of federal and state level security institutions that are shared, trusted and capable. This shared vision had been missing in the past decade of attempts to strengthen and rebuild the Somali security sector.

The timing of the Security Pact and the underlying National Security Architecture agreement reflects a growing urgency around the need to have effective Somali security institutions capable enough to provide security for the population without substantial reliance on external partners, and in particular, capable enough gradually to take over the role currently being played by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

First deployed to Somalia in 2007 to support the Somali government and to assist in the fight against Al-Shabaab, AMISOM is still on the ground eleven years later, having grown from 1,600 Ugandan soldiers in Mogadishu, to 22,126 military and police personnel from nine contributing nations spread across south and central Somalia. In 2015–16, all AMISOM contingents suffered heavy losses from Al-Shabaab attacks on their camps. Citing reduced funding, inadequate logistical support from international partners, and the Somali authorities' lack of commitment to build and sustain their own forces to take over from AMISOM, some troop contributing countries started to express an intention to withdraw their troops as some key international donors (e.g., the European Union) expressed an intention to lessen their funding.

The most recent UN Security Council resolution 2372 (2017) of August 30, 2017, for the first time ever, reduces the number of AMISOM personnel by a net total of 1,500 by October 31, 2018, welcoming a recommendation by a joint AU-UN Review for a "gradual and phased" reduction and reorganization of the

mission and paving the way for a transition of security responsibilities to Somali forces.[1]

However, the security situation in Somalia remains dire. Somali authorities and AMISOM are still striving to maintain control of key towns around the country, and struggling to extend control over the vast rural areas and road networks connecting towns and villages in the south and central regions. In more than half of the country, government officials and international actors are strictly limited to small areas in the main cities guarded by AMISOM; key ports and airports are secured by AMISOM. Somali security institutions continue to be weak and fragmented despite years of capacity building efforts by both Somali and international actors, and Al-Shabaab continues to be devastatingly resilient, as evidenced by an October 2017 Mogadishu truck bomb that killed over 500 people.

Faced with the prospect of a potential AMISOM withdrawal before the establishment of a functional Somali security sector, and the potential erosion of the modest political and statebuilding achievements of the past decade, Somali authorities and international partners have recognized the urgent necessity of dealing with the key political barriers to security sector development in Somalia.

This paper will trace the outline of these political barriers, focusing on three specific challenges of the Somali security landscape, the way the recent National Security Architecture agreement attempts to politically unlock some of these challenges, and the potential obstacles on the road ahead.

The political challenges of the Somali security landscape

Fighting vs. building: The urgency of supporting soldiers to get into the fight against Al-Shabaab has meant that reestablishment of strong security organs (supported by international efforts to help Somalia) risks overtaking or moving faster than the broader Somali political settlement.

Security institutions that are shared, trusted, and capable are critical to peacebuilding—whether local, state or national. The 1991 civil war and the years that followed saw the full disintegration of all national institutions, including army, police and justice. With varying degrees of effectiveness, provision of security and justice for civilians devolved to the community level, with local militias and traditional courts stepping in where the state had disappeared.

1 In line with this new reality, in February 2018 the FGS has launched the planning process for an eventual transition of security responsibility from AMISOM to Somali security forces, with the plan to emphasize the importance of identifying the right security and political conditions to permit safe withdrawal of AMISOM contingents, and outlining how such conditions will be met (including how security institutions will be strengthened and towns and villages stabilized prior to transition).

Consequently, rebuilding security institutions is part and parcel of rebuilding the Somali state, and this broader project has been the principal focus of Somali political actors and external interventions over the past two decades.

Somalia formally adopted a federal system as the template to rebuild the state with the 2004 adoption of the Transitional Federal Charter. Remarkable progress has been made on statebuilding in the last decade, including progress on a transitional roadmap (2009–2012), the adoption of a new provisional federal constitution (2012), the formation of four new FMS to bring the total to five[2] (2013–16), and the negotiation and implementation of two national electoral processes (2012, 2017). However, the actual dynamics, institutions, and processes of the federal state remain to be clarified, and in particular, the big political question of how roles, responsibilities and resources will be shared between and among the federal center and the FMS.

In practice, the ongoing fight against Al-Shabaab dominates the security landscape and often takes precedence over established best practice for rebuilding a security sector in a post-conflict fragile state.

The backdrop to these political achievements has been a security landscape that has been dominated since 2006 by the ongoing existential fight of successive Somali governments against Al-Shabaab insurgents, compounded by a number of long standing clan and resource based disputes that Al-Shabaab exploits, often by offering to support the weaker parties to the conflict. Despite substantial support from international partners – in the form of troop and financial contributions to AMISOM as well as Somali security sector reform efforts – Al-Shabaab have continued to be capable of planning and executing repeated attacks on civilians, security actors and government sites. Al-Shabaab has also effectively exploited the capacity deficits of Somali authorities, particularly in the delivery of justice, education and youth employment.

In theory, therefore, Somalia is engaged in a tricky balancing act – rebuilding the institutions of the state, and in particular the security sector institutions, while simultaneously fighting a war. In practice, the ongoing fight against Al-Shabaab dominates the security landscape and often takes precedence over established best practice for rebuilding a security sector in a post-conflict fragile state. So, for example, training, equipping and paying soldiers to get into the fight takes precedence over answering constitutional questions regarding the respective roles of security institutions, or over lengthy and complicated efforts to ensure representation and inclusivity, or fair sharing of training opportunities, or tackling negative political economy developments.

The result of this imbalance is summarized succinctly in a recent IPI briefing: “To date, international security assistance has predominantly followed a

2 The four emerging FMS are Jubbaland (2013), Southwest (2014), Galmudug (2015), and Hirshabelle (2016); the pre-existing FMS is Puntland (1998). Somaliland, in the northwest of the country, has declared itself an independent country and is seeking international recognition. Accordingly, the Somaliland government does not formally participate in any negotiation of the federal arrangements of the Somali state, nor in any security-related discussions with Somali government authorities. The politics of security in Somaliland, and the politics of Somaliland’s secession from or reconciliation with the Somali state, will not be directly addressed in this paper.

Mogadishu-based centralized approach in developing the army. But this has generated a force that is widely perceived to be lacking a genuinely national character, skewed in favor of certain clans, and lacking either discipline or cohesion. As a result, in many areas the population places greater confidence in local forces."[3]

The Somali National Army vs. other fighting forces: The extended illusion of a national army ignores the political reality of multiple fighting forces in the country and hinders the necessary political work required to genuinely integrate forces.

The centralized approach of international security assistance described above has been focused to date on the rebuilding of the Somali National Army (SNA), Somalia's official national military institution. The problems of lack of discipline and cohesion and the perceived bias towards certain clans can be partly explained by the way the current SNA was reestablished. Starting in 2008 (after the Djibouti reconciliation agreement that brought in a new federal leadership), attempts to reconstruct the SNA started through a process of bringing together "officers of the former national Army, which remained in Mogadishu, former Islamic Courts Union, and clan and warlord militias."[4] While there was some degree of success in integrating the militias in and around Mogadishu, this did not extend to integration of forces from further afield.

As a consequence, multiple regional and local forces continue to exist alongside the SNA, and in some cases, are better established and more effective than the SNA units; in others, there are no SNA forces present at all (e.g., Somaliland, Puntland, and significant parts of some of the emerging FMS). Some of these regional and local forces have always been aligned with the existing/emerging FMS (e.g., Puntland Defence Forces, Jubbaland Forces, South West Special Police) and some have only recently been brought into the fold (e.g., Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a in Galmudug). To get a sense of the numbers, the World Bank and the United Nations estimate in a 2017 World Bank/United Nations Somalia Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review that there are 40–45,000 armed Somali personnel in the army, police, and security service or

3 Ilya Gridneff & Brian O'Sullivan, IPI Global Observatory, A New Path Emerges for Troubled Somali Security, November 8, 2016

4 Colin Robinson (2016) Revisiting the rise and fall of the Somali Armed Forces, 1960–2012, Defense & Security Analysis, 32:3, 237-252, DOI: 10.1080/14751798.2016.1199122, p.242

paramilitary paid by the FGS or FMS, and approximately 17,000 of these are SNA soldiers.[5,6]

In some areas, local forces and the SNA coordinate in their common fight against Al-Shabaab; in others they do not. With the exception of Somaliland and Puntland (where there is no AMISOM presence), these local forces fight alongside AMISOM. Many international donors are unable under their own laws to fund local forces given their unclear legal status. Kenya and Ethiopia have bilaterally taken the most forward-leaning stances vis-à-vis working with the local forces adjacent to their borders, in some cases even providing training, equipment and funding.

The integration of these various local or regional forces into the SNA continues to be the stated goal of both the FGS and SNA leadership.[7] This process, however, has been overtaken by the ongoing federalization process and the emergence of the new FMS. The World Bank/United Nations Somalia Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review attributes this to a security dilemma—"The regions do not wish to give up their means of self-defense and survival via respective clan militias, while trust and confidence in the federal political process remains fragile. If the 'national' army, the SNA, remains perceived as essentially a clan-based organization then the FMS, and other groups, will be reluctant to relinquish the command and control of their own militia forces."[8]

Moving forward with integration is therefore inextricably linked to the overall federal statebuilding project. Progress will remain superficial unless confidence is actively built in the broader federalization process (and the associated resource sharing conversation) and joint answers are sought to difficult questions such as: How many local forces will be integrated? What will be the status of the remaining unintegrated forces? Who will choose who is integrated and who is not? What assurances will there be that once integrated, they will be adequately equipped and paid? And so on.

5 Somalia Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review (SJPER), United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the World Bank, January 2017, p. 29. A disclaimer on all numbers: "The total number of uniformed personnel is unclear, particularly as many are believed to wear multiple hats and vetting remains limited. Estimates suggest that the number of uniformed personnel are possibly as high as 95,000, of which approximately 40–45,000 are armed forces, not including AMISOM forces. The numbers are, however, extremely fluid and based on differing definitions, intermittent record keeping and shifting loyalties."

6 Furthermore, the FGS reports that it has 25–30,000 SNA personnel on the payroll. The uncertainty about these figures stem from weak command and control structures, poor financial management systems, and the inclusion of the retired, injured and the families of the deceased in some pay lists.

7 Integration of local forces into federal institutions was one of the key priorities within the second Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goal (PSG2) of the Somalia New Deal Compact 2013–16 – the overall strategic objective of PSG2 was to "establish unified, capable, accountable and rights based Somali federal security institutions providing basic safety and security for its citizens".

8 Somalia Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review (SJPER), United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the World Bank, January 2017, p. 18

Fighting forces vs. law & order: Equipping and training soldiers to engage in successful military offensives is not going to be sufficient; there will need to be equal thought and resources given to the promotion of good governance and the rule of law.

The twin focus on building security institutions and fighting a war against Al-Shabaab, as difficult as these two goals are to balance, overlooks a third: the importance of consolidating security gains after a military offensive with the restoration of basic law and order, some governance institutions, and the provision of basic services. The most critical one, and the foundation for the rest, is the restoration of basic law and order—and is closely linked to successful navigation of local level political dynamics and reconciliation.

The importance of competent and non-predatory security forces, legitimate local governance arrangements, and the trust and confidence of the people is widely acknowledged, but has proven difficult to get right.

While purely military forces can certainly play an important role in recovering territories from Al-Shabaab, they may not always be well suited to handling the local-level political dynamics, and, more practically, they may need to move on to further military operations elsewhere. One of AMISOM's persistent complaints has been the absence of effective and legitimate Somali "holding" forces to whom they can hand over recovered territory after offensive military operations, and legitimate local authorities to build and deliver services in these areas. Often SNA forces are either not trained, or not present, or in some cases, because of their composition, are not suitable to be "holding" forces in a particular area. This can also happen with local forces, depending on the situation.

To play a positive role in the restoration of basic law and order, any security and law enforcement forces need to gain the trust of the local communities—usually gaining legitimacy through some connection to local governance arrangements, and curbing predatory behavior such as illegal roadblocks—otherwise, they alienate the local communities and ultimately strengthen Al-Shabaab. Recent research done into popular perceptions of insecurity are critical of the current security services. A 2014 Mogadishu study found "a pervasive negativity about the institutions tasked with providing law and order," with perhaps the most damaging finding being: "At times citizens have difficulty differentiating government security agencies from private security firms and armed gangs."[9]

The importance of competent and non-predatory security forces, legitimate local governance arrangements, and the trust and confidence of the people is widely acknowledged, but has proven difficult to get right. Recent recommendations and efforts to rebalance international support for security sector development towards policing functions and institutions have

9 "Perceptions of Security and Justice in Mogadishu: Interpreting results of the OCVP Conflict and Security Assessment," September 2014 Policy Brief from the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, interpreting the results of an extensive study conducted in Mogadishu between 26 February and 24 March 2014 by the Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention (OCVP).

acknowledged that a focus on military institutions will not be sufficient—Al-Shabaab is not the only source of insecurity in the country, and the most effective long term approach to all the insecurity in Somalia, including counterinsurgency, is to build and strengthen governance and rule of law institutions able to address the pervasive issues of injustice, impunity and corruption.

Unpacking the National Security Architecture agreement

Acknowledging the political challenges above, it has become more and more clear that simply continuing to pay, equip and train soldiers would not result in genuine security results; a political discussion needs to be convened between Somali stakeholders on some of the questions above, and specifically how security sector development relates to the unfolding federal arrangements. These conversations took place in early 2017, soon after the federal elections, leading to a preliminary National Security Architecture agreement in May 2017.

The agreement itself and the discussions leading up to it represent a paradigm shift, moving the conversation around security sector development from the technical and operational efforts of building capacity, and the provision of stipends and rations and equipment and training (with its necessary emphasis on the role of international partners), to the critical political settlement among the Somali stakeholders to allow international partners' assistance to support a shared vision.

Also notable, however, is the incompleteness of the National Security Architecture agreement. It represents only an initial step—more negotiations are required to flesh out a full architecture. The discussions leading up to this agreement and the text of the agreement itself tackle only the Somali army and police institutions, and in particular, four specific questions: their size, distribution/composition, command and control arrangements, and resourcing arrangements. Still outstanding are agreements related to maritime security, intelligence, and corrections institutions, as well as the ongoing search for joint answers to the thorny underlying questions such as: Which security responsibilities are federal vs. state? In what ways can rebuilding national armed forces help restore national unity and avoid the errors of the Siad Barre era and the experience of the two decades of post-war chaos? Is there a difference between the forces needed today and those required as the threat of Al-Shabaab lessens? Ultimately, all of these political decisions will need to be turned into legislation for discussion and approval by the parliament.

That said, the agreement was an important first step. By bringing together the FGS and the FMS, the discussions surfaced genuine concerns on all sides, and sought to find a way to bridge the gap between, on the one hand, a preference for a strongly centralized national security sector modeled on the pre-1991, pre-

civil war Somali reality, and on the other, a much looser perspective based on the federated political realities of the present and acknowledging the existence of sizeable unintegrated fighting forces around the country.

The final agreement managed to toe a useful middle line, acknowledging the new federal reality of Somalia in several key ways:

- The agreement affirmed the importance of a unified national army—a national institution with a single commander in chief—existing alongside dual-level federal and state police institutions with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities. State level police institutions will come solely under the command and control of FMS authorities, and will include a paramilitary or militarized police component to handle the fight against terrorism and armed insurgency within the respective state (and they can also be called up as reserves into the SNA). The SNA itself will be re-sectorized along the lines of the new federal map, to allow greater coordination with the FMS police institutions. This arrangement serves to maintain the unity of a national army, while also giving state authorities some control over local level security issues through a police force. More needs to be done to lay the groundwork for successful integration of regional forces into the army, but this represents a start.
- The agreement affirmed that the national security forces will be representative and inclusive. This is important to address some of the concerns around representation of all groups in the national army and federal police. A pre-existing National Integration Commission is tasked with ensuring this happens, offering up an opportunity for all parties to get comfortable with representation and inclusivity, and an opening for successful integration of regional forces into either the SNA or the police institutions.
- The agreement expands the National Security Council, previously made up solely of the Federal leadership, to include the FMS presidents. This might be the most meaningful part of the agreement because until now, there has been limited engagement between the federal and state levels on security matters and security sector reform. While a 2015/2016 National Leadership Forum had been successful in bringing together Somali leaders to resolve deadlocks in the political process, there has not been a similar forum in the security arena. In addition to more effective and better coordinated operations against Al-Shabaab across the country, an expanded National Security Council will also set the stage for further negotiations and articulation of the architecture, and successful implementation of the trickier parts of this agreement.
- Finally, the agreement touches on the issue of resources for the security sector – another sensitive topic given that the larger constitutional question of resource sharing has not yet been resolved. The agreement

affirmed that that Federal institutions (the SNA and the Federal Police) will be the financial responsibility of the FGS, while state level police will be paid from FMS budgets – although there are significant variations within different FMS budgets and their ability to raise revenues. International security sector reform resources, that have hitherto been heavily focused on Mogadishu and the Federal level, have been agreed to be distributed equitably (not equally) across the country.

The challenges going forward

The articulation of a National Security Architecture treads on the most sensitive fault line of Somali politics—the balance of power between the center and the peripheries. The adoption of federalism as a model of governance in Somalia was and continues to be a highly contested choice, and the contours of the federal system are still in the process of being negotiated on many fronts (constitutional, financial, political). While it had many shortcomings, the coming into existence of the 2015/2016 National Leadership Forum as well as the recent expansion of the National Security Council to include FMS representation, was an illustration of the fact that Somali national politics are a politics of consensus-building and power-sharing. Experience has shown that very little can move forward on the national level without buy-in from the majority of Somali political stakeholders, today mostly embedded in the existing and emerging FMS. However, there is still an active political struggle around how much power needs to be shared and how much can be retained at the center or the state level. This National Security Architecture agreement brings the security sector squarely into this political tussle, and provides all parties an opportunity to secure real gains in jointly defining and building security institutions that are shared, trusted and capable. However, this will require complex negotiations, time, and trust-building.

A significant challenge will therefore be readjusting expectations around timelines and process. In addition to moving forward at a much slower rate, the discussions around the security institutions will likely become enmeshed with the broader discussions on resource and power sharing that are necessary for the entire federal statebuilding project to move forward. This has started to happen with the recently expanded National Security Council (which met six times in the nine months up to February 2018) becoming the forum for discussions beyond just further articulation and negotiation of the National Security Architecture, but extending to topics such as the future electoral model and preliminary agreements on sharing of fishing resources between the FGS and FMS. While a valid and pressing question is whether the National Security Council is the right forum, the key takeaway is that a constitutionally acceptable pan-executive forum bringing together the FGS and FMS leadership to build

consensus around the political way forward in Somalia is necessary, and furthermore, security will be a key part of this discussion.

Implementation of the National Security Architecture agreement will be difficult, and limited resources will make tough trade-offs necessary. It will not be affordable for every single militia and armed fighter to be integrated into the army and various police institutions. This makes an already complex process even more difficult, as potential losers will actively resist the reform efforts. These will include those who might be benefiting economically from the status quo (e.g., rations/procurement rackets, illegal checkpoint soldiers, private security providers) as well as those groups or clans that may feel their presence is being lessened or diluted. Systemic resistance will come from a historically strongly centralized Cold War–style military culture that will resist any attempts to engage or interact with an emerging federal system.

Implementation of the National Security Architecture agreement will be difficult, and limited resources will make tough trade-offs necessary.

Increasing government revenues is a pressing priority for the FGS, and the needs of the security sector make it even more so. The United Nations and World Bank express concern about the affordability and sustainability of Somalia's current and future security sector, pointing out that "including and excluding donor grants, Somalia spends more on the security sector as a percentage of budget than any other fragile state, except for Afghanistan (during the major combat operations in 2010 Afghanistan)"—in particular, 37 percent of domestically raised revenues and 60 percent of donor raised resources.[10] Furthermore, "security expenditure commands a large share of total public resources"—resources that are already limited.[11]

Implementation will also be further complicated by the fact that an ongoing battle against Al-Shabaab still rages, as well as the impending pressure of a potential AMISOM drawdown starting in 2018. For international partners, driven by their own domestic agendas, it may be difficult to generate the necessary patience or financial support for the space and time required by Somali political processes to fully negotiate a new security architecture in line with a new federal power structure. The desire (from many different stakeholders) to rush the process forward to see gains on the battlefield will be an ongoing challenge, despite the oft-repeated desire to take a comprehensive and more political approach to security. On the Somali side, while a greater assertiveness on the part of the FGS about Somalia's security priorities is changing the contours of the security conversation, there will still be some challenges in ensuring behavior and policy changes from international partners, especially when there is such a heavy dependence on international funding in this sector.

10 Somalia Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review (SJPER), United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the World Bank, January 2017, p.55
11 Somalia Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review (SJPER), United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the World Bank, January 2017, p.55-56

Finally, the most profound security and political challenge for the FGS will be the question of whether the FGS will or should or can seek political dialogue with Al-Shabaab. While the FGS has policies around the use of amnesties for junior defectors, defector programs for rehabilitation, strategies to counter violent extremism, as well as targeted conflict resolution programs to address communal grievances that provide fuel for Al-Shabaab recruitment, the FGS has not been explicit about the topic of political dialogue. This is understandable given the sensitivity of the issue, the lack of national, let alone international, consensus on the acceptability of 'talking to terrorists', and given Al-Shabaab's repeated use of violence including against civilians to advance its agenda.

Concluding insights and recommendations

- Although the picture can seem bleak, with dramatic setbacks from time to time, there has been incremental progress on the security front in Somalia, and there is currently an opportunity to deepen that progress by tackling some of the persistent political challenges that are currently obstructing security sector development. This opportunity has simultaneously opened up on the Somali political landscape with the FGS and FMS willing to engage on security sector reform, and with international partners willing to reconsider the way they provide security support to Somalia.
- Somali political actors, including the legislature, need to prioritize resolution of the broader constitutional question of how the Somali federal system will function, and how rights, responsibilities and powers will be shared between the center and the peripheries. This will provide clarity in the relationship between the FGS and the FMS, and clear the path for a more productive working relationship on all the pressing issues involved in restoring an effective Somali state, including the security sector.
- Similarly, international partners need to work in Somalia in a genuinely more coherent manner, despite the demands of their own domestic priorities. Security sector development sits squarely within the broader statebuilding and peacebuilding agenda and, as such, requires external actors to strike the right balance between constructive pressure and giving the process the appropriate space and time. Strategic patience is required on all fronts, as well as the flexibility to seize opportunities as they arise. (These opportunities can range from deeper political settlements within FMS opening up new political space for integration of local forces; or major military offensives opening up new towns and villages that again provide space for political and military integration of new groups and communities into the FMS and FGS structures. Similarly, scheduled AMISOM withdrawals from strategic towns can

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mobilize political engagement to again permit forward progress in implementing and unlocking different puzzles in a National Security Architecture.)

- While there are well developed multilateral institutions and best practices in developing coherent approaches to development or humanitarian interventions in fragile states, these mechanisms do not yet exist or if they do (such as the New Deal framework), have not worked well in the security space—especially one as complex as Somalia, which involves simultaneous international support to active operations, to security sector capacity building and reform, to stabilization and countering violent extremism efforts, and to governance, rule of law, and socio-economic recovery. A major question to be considered is whether it is realistic or pie-in-the-sky to expect a diverse set of international partners to submerge (at least some of) their national and domestic priorities in favor of a coherent approach? And related to this, what needs to be done to increase the chances of success, whether in terms of beefing up multilateral/UN capacities to play this role? In Somalia, for the new National Security Architecture to provide a reliable basis for a more coherent and coordinated international approach to security sector reform, the FGS and FMS will need to strengthen capacity to use the architecture, while AMISOM, the troop contributing countries and security donors will need to do the same and align their contributions and support accordingly.
- Similarly, an additional way forward for both Somali and external supporters, is to keep striving to encourage a more comprehensive and political approach to security. Here, the SDGs can be of further help, in particular the guideposts offered by SDG16 targets on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Going beyond a purely technical and operational effort to train and equip soldiers and clear territory, and broadening the focus to include political, economic, and governance considerations will require bringing together different stakeholders and constituents who are not used to working together. It will also emphasize that strengthening security in Somalia is not just about fighting Al-Shabaab, but about addressing the pervasive issues of injustice, impunity and corruption that Al-Shabaab exploits to its benefit.

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