SOMALI
DIALOGUE
PLATFORM

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Revisiting the 2017 National Security Architecture

Key options and considerations

Introduction

Over the past decade, there have been several important gains made with Somalia's state-building process, notably the establishment of a Federal Government following the endorsement of the Provisional Constitution in 2012. This was followed by the formation of Federal Member States (FMS) from 2013 onwards, as well as a range of significant institutional reforms. Key weaknesses remain, however, in Somalia's overall political settlement — the underlying agreement on 'the rules of the game' — which have made sustaining progress increasingly challenging.

One notable weakness is the absence of a strong security settlement defining the overarching structure and division of authorities and responsibilities in the security sector within a federal framework. Some limited progress has been made, most notably with the preliminary agreement in early 2017 between Federal and Federal Member State (FMS) leaders on a National Security Architecture (NSArch). This went some way to clarify issues such as the size and distribution of security forces and the command and control structures within and between them. The process for preparing the NSArch was, however, criticized for lacking Somali ownership and space for meaningful negotiation to build buy-in. Following attempts by the newly established Federal Administration to re-centralize authority in elements of the NSArch in mid-2017, the framework was largely abandoned. Instead, greater reference was made by the Federal Administration to a Somali Transition Plan (STP). The STP offered an ambitious operational strategy for the defeat of Al-Shabaab and the recapture of territory but did not provide an alternative framework for addressing the more fundamental elements of the security settlement.

This has allowed an ambiguous status quo to persist, and arguably worsen, in the security sector. Security forces are extremely fragmented between different levels of government, and with varying degrees of affiliations to different political and clan factions. The struggle for control over the security forces between different groups is one of the biggest flaws of the current political settlement and has had serious implications for Somalia's post-conflict trajectory. One result is that it has considerably reduced the effectiveness of Somali security forces in combating Al-Shabaab. For example in Jubaland, the combined strength of the state and federal-aligned forces in recent years has likely outnumbered that of Al-Shabaab, but due to different political alignments it has not been possible to conduct an effective campaign against the group in the state. The politicisation and fragmentation of security forces have also often led to clashes between units, most notably in April 2021 as different contingents of the Somali National Army (SNA) took different sides during the election crisis. This state of affairs is of particular concern given the intention for the newly mandated African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to begin drawing down in the next three years and to exit in five. Unless a sustainable security settlement can be established, the departure of African Union forces would likely contribute to a significant deterioration in security throughout much of the country.

Going forward, an inclusive national dialogue — involving Somali's leaders and public — must establish a settlement through which security forces are capacitated to maintain security in the country. Given the progress already made in establishing it, the existing NSArch still serves as a valuable starting point for dialogue but will likely require intensive re-negotiation, with attention being paid to lessons learned since its endorsement, to gain real political buy-in. If this can be successfully achieved, a revised operational strategic plan/STP, to address the threat posed by Al-Shabaab would subsequently need to be discussed and harmonized with the NSArch. Approaching dialogue on these

issues as part of wider efforts towards political reconciliation in the country will improve the chances of success.

In support of informed and effective dialogue around this issue, this paper provides an analysis of the contentious issues in the NSArch that need to be addressed to establish consensus in the security settlement, offering some possible solutions to these issues. The product has been developed in consultation with a range of technical experts and political influencers as part of the Platform's "F20" initiative, which has been designed to collaboratively explore solutions to contentious issues in Somalia's political settlement. The options presented in this paper are not intended to be exhaustive, finite, or mutually exclusive, and are intended primarily as a starting point for dialogue and negotiation. It is accompanied by a series of other options papers on other contentious aspects of Somalia's political settlement, including the distribution of powers and the status of Mogadishu.

Addressing contentious issues of the 2017 National Security Architecture

Among the most contentious issues of the 2017 NSArch are those falling under the 'Distribution and Composition' and 'Command and Control' headings. Decisions regarding the other two sections — "Figures/Numbers" and "Resources/Finance" — will necessarily be affected by the conclusions reached on distribution and composition, and effective implementation of any plan will be contingent on reaching consensus on command and control. Command and control options and considerations are therefore discussed first before moving to distribution and composition, and finally resources and financing. Figures and numbers fare discussed throughout.

Before analysing these contentious issues, it is important to note that there is a dearth of reliable data regarding the strength, composition, capabilities and levels of training, mobility, equipping, and distribution of forces across Somalia's security spectrum — i.e., from uniformed Police to Darwish, to SNA, to special forces and dedicated/independent units, to intelligence services — and across the country. Among the first priorities, is a comprehensive mapping and needs assessment exercise to be conducted across the country. This should be led by a federally mandated body with the support and participation of FMS authorities and, if necessary, with international support. Such an exercise should also consider the current status of political institutions engaging in the security sector, including regional security councils, parliamentary committees and donor liaison groups.

Command and Control

There is little contention among political and security actors over the first principle of command and control, that '[t]he Somali National Army is a national force and the President of the Federal Government of Somalia is the Commander in Chief.' There is also little significant disagreement about the existence of the National Security Council (NSC) as a high-level fora for decision-making around the security sector, although efforts to re-establish and institutionalize such a body should be prioritized to ensure it serves as the recognized, legitimate authority on all further matters with regards to the implementation of a revitalized NSArch.

As outlined in the NSArch, the SNA shall number at least 18,000 excluding specially trained Danab forces, whilst the Federal and State Police — including Federal and State-level Darwish — will number 32,000. Darwish forces, both Federal and State, are likely to remain militarized to the extent that they serve as paramilitary forces often engaged in offensive and defensive operations as well as maintaining law and order. Ensuring effective command and control across the continuum of federal-led military/paramilitary forces and state-led paramilitary forces will likely prove critical in reducing the threat from Al-Shabaab and establishing the rule of law throughout the country. Once this has been achieved, it can be maintained by police. How this is achieved in the context of the NSArch will depend in part on two key factors: the role, if any, of Regional Security Councils (RSCs) vis-à-vis the NSC; and the appointment of SNA sector commanders.

Regional Security Councils

Each of the states now has an institution similar to that conceived in the 2017 NSArch. However, their composition, capacity, and the extent to which they interact and coordinate with national authorities varies. This will require consideration if RSCs are to assume primary responsibility for security in their states. An assessment of the current status of RSCs needs to be conducted before considering options for their future role that might include:

1. Prioritizing the consolidation of RSCs as effective institutions in each state and strengthening coordination mechanisms with the NSC. This would require careful consideration with regards to the individuals and entities tasked with leading coordination between the RSCs and NSC, ensuring the confidence of the political and security leadership of each state.

2. Incorporating more senior RSC members — including, for example, Darwish and Police commanders, State Ministers of Security, etc. — into an expanded NSC, at least as an interim measure. The significant expansion of the NSC, however, may hamper its efficacy unless careful consideration is given to the role and hierarchy of its members.

3. Establishing state-level sub-committees comprised of senior regional security officials serving under and reporting directly to the NSC. The sub-committees could be mandated to represent the political and security leadership of each state and potentially also fulfil a technical role in the implementation of NSC decisions alongside other state-sub-committees.

Appointment of SNA Sector Commanders

The criteria for the appointment of SNA sector commanders were altered after the signing of the Security Pact. Ostensibly, this took into consideration the recommendations of the defence and security committees of the House of the People following consultations with the Office of the Prime Minister and then Ministers of Defence and Security. Whereas the original (April 2017) NSArch stipulated that the Chief of the Defence Forces (CDF) would consult with state presidents on the appointment of sector commanders before making proposals for the approval of the Minister of Defence, the revised version (June 2017) removed the role of the State President and empowered the CDF to make appointments directly in consultation with the Minister of Defence. This was a contentious change without buy-in from state leaders. In July 2018, an unsuccessful attempt to enforce this decision in Jubaland further destabilized already strained relations between the Federal Administration and Jubaland State administration, indicating the importance of consensus on these issues between the FGS and FMS executives . The options for addressing this issue are clear:

1. Re-involve FMS presidents in consultations regarding the appointment of the sector commander of their region — possibly with the CDF proposing options from which the state leader can choose, and strengthen state buy-in to the NSArch. State presidents would need to acknowledge that sector commanders are subordinate to the CDF, though concerns may be allayed if state presidents serve as chair of their respective RSCs. Such an approach will require a significantly more conciliatory approach from the federal political and security leadership than has been adopted over the past five years.

2. Retain authority and autonomy of the CDF and federal political leadership in the appointment of sector commanders. Such an approach may arguably adhere to the principle of Article 54 of the 2012 Provisional Constitution with regards to the allocation of powers. However, this risks straining relations with state leaders and undermining the implementation of the NSArch.

Distribution and Composition

According to the Figures/Numbers sub-section of the 2017 NSArch, the SNA shall number at least 18,000 excluding Danab forces, whilst the Federal and State Police — including Federal and State-level Darwish — will number 32,000. Darwish forces, both Federal and State, are likely to remain militarized to the extent that they often serve as operational paramilitary forces (despite the fact that the SNA are also likely to principally conduct operations within the country against internal, rather than external, threats). It is also highly likely that most Somali Police (both federal and state) will be armed for the foreseeable future. If such figures are to be maintained, following the departure of AU peace-keeping forces Somalia's security will depend on the effective distribution of and coordination of 50,000+ armed personnel (not including special forces, a future Air Force, Navy, etc.). Achieving this will require finding consensus on key areas including the distribution of forces across states; the composition and distribution of 32,000 Federal and State-level Police/Darwish; the role and proportions of the Darwish elements within the Federal and State-level Police; and the role of recently established specially-trained forces.

Distribution of SNA forces across sectors/states

The reassignment of SNA sectors to correspond with FMS boundaries was largely completed by 2018 and does not require urgent revisiting. The distribution of forces across the FMS/sectors is, however, among the most contentious issues to be considered, with a historic concentration of 'national' forces deployed in and around Mogadishu and relatively fewer permanently deployed units in the states furthest from the capital (particularly Puntland and Jubaland). In the original (April 2017) version of the NSArch, it was agreed that the 'SNA and FMS leadership will participate in any necessary redistribution of forces'.[1] In the revised (June 2017) version issued following consultations led by former prime minister Hassan Ali Khaire, the role of the state leadership was removed, undermining relations between the federal and state leadership and contributing to the practical abandonment of the NSArch.

Reaching an agreement on the means of distribution of SNA forces is one of the most critical tasks for reviving the NSArch and realizing its implementation. It is also one of the most challenging tasks, particularly given the formation of various new, seemingly independent units of the SNA over the past five years and the recent confirmation that a further 5,000 trainees based in Eritrea are due to be repatriated. There are, however, still multiple potential mechanisms for approaching the distribution of SNA personnel while retaining the buy-in of state presidents in the NSArch. These may include:

1. Returning to the original (April 2017) version of the NSArch giving the SNA and FMS leadership a significant role in the distribution of forces alongside other federal-level security officials. Given the zero-sum calculus involved in distributing a fixed number of national security personnel, the NSC leadership would need to collectively approve a holistic distribution plan to safeguard buy-in, rather than adopting a state-by-state approach. Special consideration would also need to be given to Benadir.

2. Transferring responsibility for the distribution of forces to the NSC or relevant sub-committee, a newly established National Integration Commission (NIC), or a newly established National Security Commission (NSCom), ensuring a more holistic approach to force distribution. The NSC would need to collectively approve a holistic distribution plan to safeguard buy-in.

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1. Somalia Dialogue Platform (2022), *'Policy Options for agreeing a model for fiscal federalism in Somalia'*, (Policy brief …)

3. Roughly equal distribution of forces across the five consolidated States after assigning an agreed and appropriate force strength to Mogadishu/ Benadir. This would represent the most straightforward approach to the distribution of forces, but would also ignore population variations across sectors, comparative threat assessments, and comparative strengths of existing State Police/Darwish forces.

4. Preparing provisional calculations based on a consistent ratio to population estimates prepared by the UNFPA in 2014 (with careful consideration given to the estimated population of disputed regions including Mudug, Sool, and Sanaag, and to Mogadishu/Benadir region). This approach may also be considered equitable, though would, in the absence of a new population survey, depend on the acceptance of UNFPA 2014 figures by all state leaders. It would involve the same challenges as Option 3 with regards to threat assessments and existing Police/Darwish strengths in each state.

5. Preparing provisional calculations based on population estimates prepared by the UNFPA in 2014 (or a new survey). These would need to be weighted according to assessments of current security threats and/or existing capabilities of regional forces prepared by the NSC or relevant sub-committee, NIC, or NSCom (in cooperation with state security officials). This approach could be considered one of several potential hybrid approaches using population estimates as a baseline with redistributions then collectively agreed and approved by the NSC based on the presentation of relevant state-level assessments.

The composition and distribution of 32,000 federal and state-level Police/Darwish

Neither the 2017 NSArch nor the 2016 New Policing Model (NPM), which was also endorsed with the signing of the Security Pact, address questions regarding the composition and distribution of 32,000 Federal and State-level Police/ Darwish. Article 13 of the NPM on 'cooperation and coordination between the Federal and State Police' refers principally to the frequency with which various coordination bodies would meet but offers no guidance on how decisions are made. Police Plans were drafted for each state and intended to provide preliminary operational readiness assessments of state security forces along with development plans for the State Police forces running through to 2027, though only the Puntland State Police Plan provides a relatively comprehensive overview of existing forces.

Separate operational readiness assessments due to be led by the Federal Ministry of Internal Security were planned in 2018, but only partially implemented (by AMISOM) and are likely provisional. Through the Joint Police Program (JPP), established to coordinate donor funding to the police, USD 50 million has been targeted at the recruitment and training of 2,500 police officers in Galmudug (700), Hirshabelle (800), Jubaland (600), and South West (400). Little is known, however, about plans for the intended composition and distribution of the remaining 29,500 police anticipated under the 2017 NSArch.

Redistribution of State-level Police/Darwish from one state to another would likely prove extremely difficult given that the vast majority were recruited by and serve state authorities directly. Though available assessments of regional force strengths differ, it is also likely that some states are already served by significantly more Police/Darwish than they could expect to be allocated from within a 32,000 country-wide target. Bearing in mind, therefore, that there are likely already more than 32,000 Federal and State-level Police/Darwish personnel, options regarding their future composition and distribution may include:

1. Maintaining the 32,000 target and establishing consensus within the NSC on the appropriate distribution and upper limits of federal and state-specif-

ic units. This would also involve attempting to enforce the demobilisation of excess personnel or integrating them into the SNA or other security forces.

2. Abandoning the 32,000 target and enabling each state to establish Police/Darwish units autonomously, limited only by each state's ability to afford and sustain their desired personnel. National policies would be prepared with the buy-in of state leaders to manage how Federal Police/Darwish interact and cooperate with state-level forces with special consideration given to the Benadir region.

3. Revisiting the 32,000 target with the NSC agreeing upon minimum, sustainable, and affordable thresholds for Federal Police/Darwish and Police/Darwish for each state. National policies and programmes will be prepared to ensure common standards in training, equipment, renumeration, etc. for all personnel within the thresholds. Federal and state authorities may potentially then have autonomy (and full financial responsibility) over all personnel exceeding the thresholds with special consideration given to Benadir region

The role and composition of the Darwish elements of the Federal and State-level Police

The practical distinction between the SNA, Darwish forces, and police forces beyond Mogadishu and other major cities is not always clear. Historically, Darwish forces were intended to serve as mobile paramilitary police forces operating beyond urban centres and major supply routes and deployed as, where and when needed. Establishing a common practical distinction between State-level Police and Darwish forces, and between Darwish forces and the SNA, and then determining how Darwish forces cooperate with both State-level Police, the SNA remains a priority in the pursuit of consensus on the distribution and composition of Somalia's security forces. Given that a draft policy for the federal level Darwish Police was planned but never prepared, it also remains important to clarify the role, purpose, and value, if any, of having Federal Darwish forces as well as Federal Police and the SNA. Options for strengthening the distinction of the role and composition of Darwish forces vis-à-vis State-level Police and the SNA may include:

1. Reasserting and institutionalizing the mobile and/or rural paramilitary role (and potentially, in time, reserve status) of Darwish forces involved in offensive and defensive operations against major threats such as Al-Shabaab and other non-state armed groups. This is in contrast to the more static, urban civilian law enforcement role of State-level Police.

2. Transferring the roles intended for Federal Darwish to the SNA and/or State Darwish, or asserting and institutionalizing the role of Federal Darwish as, inter-alia, national border guards and peacekeepers in the event of state-on-state conflicts.

3. Requiring Darwish forces' (both Federal and State) uniforms to be easily distinguishable from both SNA and (both Federal and State) Police uniforms.

4. Establishing static ratio mechanisms of State Darwish to Police based on estimates of urban to rural/pastoral populations in each state according to the 2014 UNFPA population estimates with proportionately more Darwish in states with proportionately higher rural/pastoral populations.

5. Establishing dynamic ratio mechanisms of State Darwish to Police based on periodic regional threat assessments and corresponding needs for distributions of Police/Darwish to urban/rural areas. Such an approach would

require clear mechanisms for transitioning personnel from State Darwish to Police and vice versa.

The current blurring of the distinction between Police, Darwish, and SNA also provides an opportunity with regards to the composition and structure of the Federal and State security forces. This can be used both to address perceptions of the predominance of particular clans in the SNA, and to address varying ratios of SNA to Police/Darwish across states. It is understood, for example, that Hirshabelle State is proportionately well served by the SNA but lacks significant State-level Police/Darwish forces. In such circumstances, a proportion of the SNA serving in Hirshabelle could be 're-hatted' as Darwish to ensure a more consistent ratio of SNA to Police/Darwish. Conversely, Puntland is well served by Police/Darwish forces and yet under-represented in the SNA, suggesting the need to 're-hat' Darwish as SNA to achieve relative consistency.

The failed attempt to integrate 2,400 Puntland Darwish into the SNA in 2017/2018 demonstrates the complexity of the challenge of integration and redistribution of existing forces, even if formal agreements are struck. The relative stabilisation of relations between the federal and state leaders would likely represent a prerequisite for such initiatives being more successful in the future. Adopting a comprehensive approach, following thorough mapping, readiness, and needs assessments, in which consensus is reached on re-distributions in all states and then implemented concurrently would be more conducive to strengthening trust and resolve among state leaders than a sequential state-by-state approach.

The role of specially-trained forces

The 2017 NSArch calls for a 500-strong contingent of Danab specially-trained forces to be established in each state/sector, reporting to the Danab Brigade Headquarters in Baledogle. As of 2017, the Danab units were the only specially-trained forces operating in southern and central Somalia. Since then, however, new specially trained forces including the Turkish-trained Gorgor military units and Haram'ad Police Units have been established. The role of units that have been reporting directly to NISA, and the broader role and legal basis of NISA in the security architecture, also needs to be clarified.

The use of such foreign/specially trained units for political purposes since 2017 has grown increasingly contentious and contributed to the breakdown of relations between the federal and some state leaders. Similarly, in Puntland the recent conflict between State Darwish forces and the US-trained Puntland Security Force further demonstrates the need to reach consensus among federal and state leaders on the status, strength, whereabouts, command and control structures, and concept of operations for specially trained units. Potential options for addressing these challenges may include:

1. Clarifying the distinction between the purpose, mandates, and chain of command for Danab and Gorgor forces.

2. Consolidating Danab and Gorgor units and returning to or adapting the 2017 proposal of posting 500-strong special contingents in each state with the support of state leaders and sector commanders.

3. Redeployment of Danab or Gorgor personnel to support the training of existing contingents of the SNA and regional Darwish forces.

4. An agreement on the need for consensus between the FGS and relevant state leaders on the deployment of such units within any given state.

5. Clarifying the role and purpose of Haram'ad, with the potential for it to serve as a mobile, tactical (i.e. Darwish) unit of the Federal Police.

6. An agreement at the NSC level on the concept of operations for Special Forces and the barring of such forces during contestations between the FGS and State administrations, or between one State and another.

National Integration/Security Commission

The 2017 NSArch called for the establishment of a National Integration Commission (NIC) to 'ensure the realisation of Somali national security forces which represent the entire Federal Republic of Somalia'. The commission was officially established in 2015 though was subsequently abandoned. The 2020-2024 National Development Plan developed by the FGS Ministry of Planning, Investment, and Economic Development calls for the re-establishment of the NIC under 'priority interventions' for the Ministry of Defence, though a functioning commission is yet to be established. The 2012 Provisional Constitution separately called for the formation of a NSCom which is also yet to be established. The proposed mandate of the NSCom is to develop an integrated security framework to address the present and future needs of the country, then support implementation of that framework and ensure civilian oversight, including with regards to security related expenditures. Options for strengthening implementation of an NSArch and supporting the work of the NSC and potentially RSCs include:

1. Establishing an inclusive, sufficiently resourced NIC with a clearly defined and time-limited mandate to help facilitate the fair redistribution of forces. It would serve as a technical secretariat/sub-committee function to the NSC which would make any final decisions.

2. Establishing a NSCom in accordance with the 2012 Provisional Constitution and expanding its mandate to include the tasks assigned to the NIC in the 2017 NSArch, and also providing support to the NSC.

3. Establishing both a NIC and NSCom, each with clearly distinct mandates, with the NIC serving as a time-limited independent advisory body and NSCom providing on-going support to the NSC.

4. Tasking a NIC or NSCom to conduct a comprehensive, current mapping, readiness, and needs assessment upon establishment.

Resource/Finance

The principle that the FGS bears responsibility for financing and resourcing the SNA and Federal Police, while the states bear responsibility for financing and resourcing State-level Police and Darwish is sound and broadly accepted. Those states that have functioning state-level security forces (and relatively greater independent access to financial resources) — particularly Jubaland and Puntland — have long-assumed that responsibility, whereas others — particularly Hirshabelle — have struggled to sustain state-level security forces. Addressing such gaps comprehensively and sustainably requires consensus among the states on the broader issue of fiscal federalism. Importantly, Somalia's model for fiscal federalism will need to reflect the final shape of the security architecture to ensure the affordability of the security forces.

It is also important to note that despite the dearth of reliable data, the current total number of security sector personnel across the spectrum is likely significantly greater than that envisaged and will prove unsustainable and unaffordable without significant external support, at least for the foreseeable future. Given developments since the World Bank completed its Security and Justice Public Expenditure Review in January 2017, a reassessment of the affordability of the Somali security sector, involving both the Federal Ministries of Finance, Defence, and Internal Security would likely strengthen the chances of successful implementation of a new NSArch, though such an exercise may also result

in some politically uncomfortable findings. It may also be valuable to return to discussions regarding the endorsement and effective implementation of Law No. 6 of 31 December 1969 governing Pension and Gratuities for Members of the Armed Forces and Security Services passed by the House of the People on 30 December 2018 with a focus on affordability. Further consideration may also need to be given to effective disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) policies.

Donor support

With regards to donor support, there remain opportunities to significantly strengthen coordination and better facilitate equitable and balanced distribution across both the federal and state levels, as called for in the 2017 NSArch. International support to the security sector in Somalia, including training programmes, has remained disjointed since 2017, despite commitments among donors to improve coordination. This can, at least in part, be explained by the effective abandonment of their commitments to the NSArch by federal and state leaders. Both versions of the NSArch called on Somali authorities to prepare a comprehensive security budget and plan for restructuring of the security forces and development, salaries, equipment, healthcare, training, and infrastructure — the completion of which should be considered a priority if federal and state leaders intend to request more coordinated support to the security sector.

Beyond specific bilateral interventions and support programs, the current primary finance mechanism for supporting Somali security services is the UN Trust Fund managed and delivered by UNSOS. Initially established as a UN support office for the AU peacekeeping mission, and limited by various stipulations on the support it can and cannot provide, the UN Trust Fund is ill-equipped to provide comprehensive support to the Somali security services as the AU peacekeeping force prepares for withdrawal. Options for revisiting external support to the Somali security sector therefore may include:

1. The establishment of a Somali-managed security trust fund, with the continuation of donations contingent on timely and tangible achievements against criteria agreed with donors — including, for example, the institutionalisation and regular meetings of the NSC; the formation of the NIC and/or NSCom; the completion of necessary mapping, readiness, and needs assessments; the implementation of redistribution plans; the completion of a revised strategic plan, sustained regular payments of salaries; the strengthening of transparency and accountability measures; the completion and sharing of regular audits; the establishment of effective civilian oversight bodies, etc. — to serve as a strong incentive for federal and state leaders to renew their commitment to the realization of a comprehensive NSArch.

2. The use of such a security trust fund to cover a proportion of all costs incurred in sustaining both Federal Military and State Police/Darwish forces. This is on the basis that neither the federal nor any state administration use their own resources to further bolster the strength of their forces beyond an upper limit agreed by both the NSC and external partners contributing to such a fund.

3. Encouraging partners currently financing the continuation of the African Union peacekeeping force to commit to contributing a proportion of savings incurred by its drawdown to the Somali security trust fund. This should incentivize federal and state leaders to prepare to assume full responsibility for security in the country and ensure it is maintained and further strengthened following full withdrawal.

4. An agreement on the parameters for use of further bilateral security sector assistance bypassing a Somali-managed security trust fund to ensure the equitable distribution of resources between the Federal Government and state administrations.

Considerations for the way forward

Agreeing and implementing solutions to these contentious issues is both urgent and likely to be time consuming. Any progress will probably be incremental. It will no doubt be essential to revitalize and institutionalize the NSC or a similar body that brings together political leadership to address contentious security-related issues as part of a broader process of political reconciliation. Ideally its role should be codified in legislation to clarify its purpose and relationship with other bodies, such as line ministries and parliament. Such a body will need to be connected to relevant technical-level fora, such as an NIC or NSCom that can provide further and more detailed informed options on contentious issues. This process is likely to be most effective when informed by a comprehensive mapping, operational readiness, and needs assessment exercise to provide valuable data on the existing strength, composition, and distribution of security forces and status of other security-related institutions that can inform collective decision-making.

Both high-level and technical discussions will need to be carefully sequenced with dialogue on related settlement issues such as fiscal federalism, the status of Mogadishu and power allocation. They will also need to consider implications of current intra-state dynamics, ensuring that the empowerment of state security forces contributes to stability throughout the country and does not entrench existing sub-regional conflict dynamics. Immediate attention should be given to particularly sensitive inter-state fault lines including those between the Jubaland administration and the communities of Gedo, the Hirshabelle administration and the communities of Hiran, and the Galmudug administration and Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaa.

Throughout discussions regarding the NSArch, it will be important to recognize the challenges outlined here, and that an approach that looks to establish incremental gains through consensus, rather than rapid, sudden transformation, will likely ultimately prove more successful. Where relevant, agreements will need to be codified, through relevant legislation, making connections between political processes and relevant parliamentary committees essential. Ensuring Somali-ownership of the process, and engaging with the wider public on the issues under discussion will also be critical to strengthening the legitimacy of the resulting security arrangements.

Credits