Federalism and Somalia's State Building and Nation Building Process
Challenges and Prospects

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INSIDE

Abstract

This article examines the opportunities and obstacles of federalism in Somalia's state and nation-building efforts. Federalism was adopted as a governance framework to address Somalia's historical clan-based divisions, political instability, and fragile statehood. The article examines the role of federalism in promoting decentralization, fostering inclusivity, and enhancing governance structures while also highlighting its limitations, including weak institutions, resource disputes, and inter-clan rivalries. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as federalism, state-building, and nation-building theories, the study analyzes the complexities of implementing federalism in Somalia's unique socio-political context. Findings indicate that while federalism

has potential to support state- and nation-building, significant reforms in institutional capacity, constitutional clarity, and intergovernmental collaboration are critical to its success.

Introduction

The adoption of federalism in Somalia was a response to the collapse of the central government in 1991, which plunged the country into decades of civil war, lawlessness, and fragmented governance. This political framework was introduced as a means to accommodate Somalia's deeply entrenched clan-based divisions, granting regions greater autonomy to manage their affairs while still remaining part of a unified state (Menkhaus, 2018). The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was formally established in 2012 under the Provisional Constitution, with the aim of fostering decentralization, promoting inclusivity and trusts building among the societies, and addressing the historical grievances of power abuse of military regime. Regions such as Puntland and Jubaland became early adopters of federalism, signaling its potential to bring governance closer to the people and improve service delivery.

Somalia's path to federalism was shaped by a complex history of colonial fragmentation and post-independence governance challenges. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonial power Britain, Italy, and France divided Somali territories, creating British Somaliland, Italian Somalia, and French Djibouti, which disrupted traditional clan-based governance and sowed regional divisions. The 1960 unification of British Somaliland and Italian Somalia into the Somali Republic sparked nationalist aspirations, but colonial borders left ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia and Kenya, fueling irredentist tensions. The early democratic period (1960–1969) saw fragile governance under a centralized parliamentary system, undermined by clan rivalries and political instability (Lewis, 2002). Siad Barre's 1969 coup introduced a centralized socialist military regime, which initially stabilized the country but later marginalized clans, suppressed dissent, and exacerbated grievances through authoritarian policies, culminating in its collapse in 1991 (Samatar, 1997).

The 1991 collapse unleashed clan-based militias, warlordism, and territorial fragmentation, with regions like Puntland declaring autonomy and Somaliland seeking independence. Failed centralized governance

A young woman holds the Somali flag during a demonstration by a local militia that formed to provide security in Marka, Somalia, April 2014 (Photo Credit: ACCORD)

models, including UN-backed transitional governments in the 1990s and 2000s, highlighted the unsuitability of unitary systems for Somalia's diverse clan structure (Hesse, 2010). These historical failures underscored the need for a federal model to balance local autonomy with national unity, addressing clan grievances and fostering inclusive governance. However, the legacy of colonial divisions and centralized oppression continues to challenge federalism's implementation, as competing clan interests and weak institutional frameworks persist (International Crisis Group, 2006).

Despite its promising intent, federalism has faced criticism for exacerbating clan-based conflicts and political rivalries. Disputes over resource control, boundary delineation, and power-sharing have often led to tensions between the federal government and regional administrations (Elmi, 2021). These disagreements have stalled critical aspects of state-building, including the finalization of Somalia's constitution. While federalism is widely recognized as a tool for achieving reconciliation and governance, its implementation has been inconsistent and frequently contested by political elites with vested interests, further complicating the nation's fragile recovery.

Prospects of Federalism in State-Building

Federalism offers a framework for addressing Somalia's governance challenges, particularly in regions historically neglected by centralized administrations. By decentralizing power, federalism empowers regional states to take charge of their development priorities, fostering economic growth and political inclusivity (Farah & Abdi, 2020). This localized governance structure can also help mitigate clan-based conflicts by creating avenues for dialogue and power-sharing among diverse groups. Moreover, federalism aligns with international best practices for post-conflict recovery, with global donors and stakeholders supporting its role in fostering stability and improving service delivery.

In terms of nation-building, federalism can enhance trust between the government and its citizens by ensuring that resources and services are distributed equitably. This participatory governance model has the potential to bridge the gap between the central government and federal member states, promoting collaboration and unity. However, realizing these prospects requires sustained political will, robust institutions, and adherence to constitutional principles. Without these safeguards, federalism may risk entrenching division and undermining

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national cohesion, thus complicating Somalia's long-term recovery and development (International Crisis Group, 2022).

Challenges to Nation-Building under Federalism

While federalism has created opportunities for localized governance, it has also amplified Somalia's historical challenges, including clan rivalries and resource disputes. Resource-sharing is critical challenge in Somalia's federalism journey. Disputes over natural resources, taxation, and international aid allocation have fueled mistrust and competition between federal and regional governments. These conflicts have been exacerbated by the absence of transparent mechanisms for revenue sharing, creating a climate of suspicion and undermining cooperative governance (Bryden, 2020). Additionally, uneven development of regional states has created disparities in governance capacity, with some states struggling to provide basic services and maintain security.

Another key challenge lies in the institutional weakness of both federal and regional administrations. Clan-based rivalries continue to dominate Somali politics, often undermining efforts to build a unified national identity (Hussein & Ismail, 2021). Regional leaders frequently prioritize local interests over national objectives, leading to tensions between federal and state governments. This lack of alignment has hampered efforts to finalize Somalia's constitution and establish clear guidelines for federal-state relations (Elmi, 2021).

External interference further complicates Somalia's federalism process. Neighboring countries and international actors often pursue their interests, influencing Somalia's internal politics and exacerbating divisions. The proliferation of armed groups and weak

security structures also pose significant challenges to nation-building, as they threaten the stability and legitimacy of both federal and state governments (Hassan, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes dialogue, reconciliation, and institution-building while safeguarding Somalia's sovereignty.

Research Problem

Somalia's adoption of federalism was intended to serve as a unifying framework for state-building and nation-building following decades of civil war, political instability, and the collapse of central governance. However, the implementation of federalism has been fraught with challenges that undermine its potential to promote stability and development. Key issues include persistent disputes between the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states over power-sharing, resource allocation, and security responsibilities (Bryden, 2020). These disagreements are further exacerbated by clan rivalries, which often prioritize local interests over national cohesion, leading to fragmentation rather than unity (Hussein & Ismail, 2021). Moreover, the absence of a finalized and comprehensive constitutional framework has created legal ambiguities, delaying critical governance reforms and weakening institutional capacities (Elmi, 2021). External actors with competing geopolitical interests have also influenced Somalia's federalism process, complicating domestic efforts to address internal challenges (International Crisis Group, 2022). These issues collectively hinder Somalia's ability to build an inclusive and stable state, highlighting a significant gap in understanding how federalism can effectively contribute to nation-building in a deeply divided society.

Study Objective

The study examined the prospects and challenges of federalism in shaping Somalia's state-building and nation-building processes, with a focus on its impact on governance, resource-sharing, national unity, and conflict resolution.

Significance of the Study

This study may be significant in several ways as it contributes to understanding the complex dynamics of federalism in Somalia and its implications for state-building and nation-building.

First, the study may provide policymakers and stakeholders with valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges federalism presents in post-conflict reconstruction. By analyzing the prospects of federalism, the study may help identify strategies to strengthen governance structures, promote inclusivity, and foster reconciliation among Somalia's diverse clans and regions.

Second, the study may serve as a resource for scholars and researchers interested in federalism as a tool for conflict resolution and governance in fragile states. The findings are expected to enrich existing literature by offering a case study of Somalia, highlighting both the successes and shortcomings of federalism in the context of state and nation-building.

Third, international development partners and donors are expected to benefit from the study's recommendations, as it may inform their engagement with Somalia's federal and regional governments. The study are expected to highlight areas where targeted interventions and capacity-building efforts may be most effective in supporting sustainable development and institutional strengthening.

Finally, this study is expected to contribute to the broader discourse on the role of federalism in divided societies, offering lessons that may be applied to other countries grappling with similar challenges. By addressing the gaps in constitutional frameworks, power-sharing arrangements, and resource allocation mechanisms, the study is expected to provide practical solutions to enhance Somalia's prospects for long-term stability and unity.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

The theory of federalism emphasizes the division of power between central and regional governments, allowing autonomy at various levels while maintaining national unity. Federalism is seen as a mechanism for managing diversity in societies with ethnic, linguistic, or regional divisions (Riker, 1964). In Somalia, federalism has been adopted to accommodate its fragmented clan-based society, where power-sharing and decentralization are necessary to mitigate conflict and promote inclusivity. However, the application of federalism theory in Somalia faces challenges, as its implementation is hampered by weak institutions, clan rivalries, and a lack of political will.

This theory underscores the importance of constitutional clarity, intergovernmental cooperation, and equitable resource distribution for federalism to succeed in Somalia's context.

State-building theory focuses on the processes and institutions necessary for establishing governance structures, stability, and legitimacy in post-conflict societies (Fukuyama, 2004). The theory asserts that effective state-building requires a combination of strong institutions, functional governance, and social cohesion. In Somalia, federalism is viewed as a strategy for rebuilding the state by empowering regional administrations, addressing local grievances, and fostering national integration. However, state-building in Somalia is complicated by fragile institutions, lack of security, and conflicting interests between federal and regional authorities. The theory also highlights the role of external actors, such as international organizations, in providing support for institutional development and conflict resolution.

Institutional theory highlights the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping political, economic, and social outcomes (North, 1990). In Somalia, the effectiveness of federalism depends on the strength of institutions at both the federal and regional levels. Institutional theory underscores the importance of constitutional clarity, accountability, and resource-sharing mechanisms for fostering collaboration and preventing conflict between the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states. Weak institutions in Somalia exacerbate governance challenges, impede service delivery, and fuel disputes over jurisdiction and resources. This theory provides a framework for understanding the institutional reforms necessary for successful state- and nation-building under federalism.

Federalism as a Governance Model

Federalism is a political system that divides power between central and regional governments, designed to balance unity with regional autonomy (Riker, 1964). Federalism is often considered in post-conflict contexts as a solution for managing diversity, resolving complaints, and promoting inclusiveness (Elazar 1987). Somalia embraced federalism in 2004 as a major foundation for rebuilding government systems after decades of civil conflict and state breakdown. According to scholars, federalism allows for equal power-sharing across Somalia's many clans and regions, reducing the historical dominance of centralized authority (Hessebon, 2019). However, detractors argue that the federal model is still challenged owing to ambiguous constitutional provisions, inadequate institutions, and rivalry between the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States. These obstacles have impeded the efficient implementation of federalism, resulting in periodic confrontations over resource distribution and territorial sovereignty.

State-Building and Federalism in Post-Conflict Somalia

State-building involves creating governance systems that provide security, legitimacy, and public services, which are critical in post-conflict societies (Fukuyama, 2004). In Somalia, federalism is seen as a cornerstone of state-building, with the goal of decentralizing power and allowing regional administrations to respond to local needs. However, the research identifies significant impediments to Somalia's state-building efforts under federalism.

Weak institutional frameworks, low financial resources, and security risks from Al-Shabaab terrorists have all damaged governance institutions (Hagmann & Hoehne, 2009). Furthermore, the lack of a finished federal constitution has exacerbated disagreements between the FGS and FMS, hindering progress on critical state-building measures like as income sharing and the formation of a united security force (Menkhaus, 2018). These problems indicate that although federalism has promise, its success in state-building is dependent on

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developing institutions, guaranteeing intergovernmental collaboration, and resolving security risks.

Nation-Building in Somalia's Federal Context

Nation-building refers to the process of fostering a shared sense of identity and unity among a country's population (Smith, 1991). In Somalia, federalism has been offered as a way to reconcile the deeply entrenched clan-based tensions that have traditionally hampered nation-building. The federal model allows for regional autonomy while encouraging national integration, which has the potential to increase inclusion and trust among Somalia's varied populations (Elmi, 2010). Scholars, however, argue that clan conflicts and regional elite supremacy have often obscured the greater aspirations of nation-building (Hessebon, 2019). Furthermore, a lack of a unified national identity and rivalry for resources have resulted in fragmentation, with some areas, such as Somaliland, claiming complete independence. The literature highlights that effective nation-building in Somalia involves political leadership, open discussion, and a balance between regional autonomy and national integration.

Federalism in Comparative Perspective

The experiences of other post-conflict nations provide useful insights into Somalia's federalism potential and problems. For example, federal systems were used in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina to handle ethnic tensions and enhance stability (Ottaway, 2002). While these models had various degrees of success, they also highlighted the dangers of entrenched regionalism and the need of strong institutions to manage interstate relations. Somalia's federalism has particular hurdles because of

the country's clan-based social structure and long history of violence. The research shows that taking lessons from these comparable instances may help Somalia manage its federal transition more efficiently.
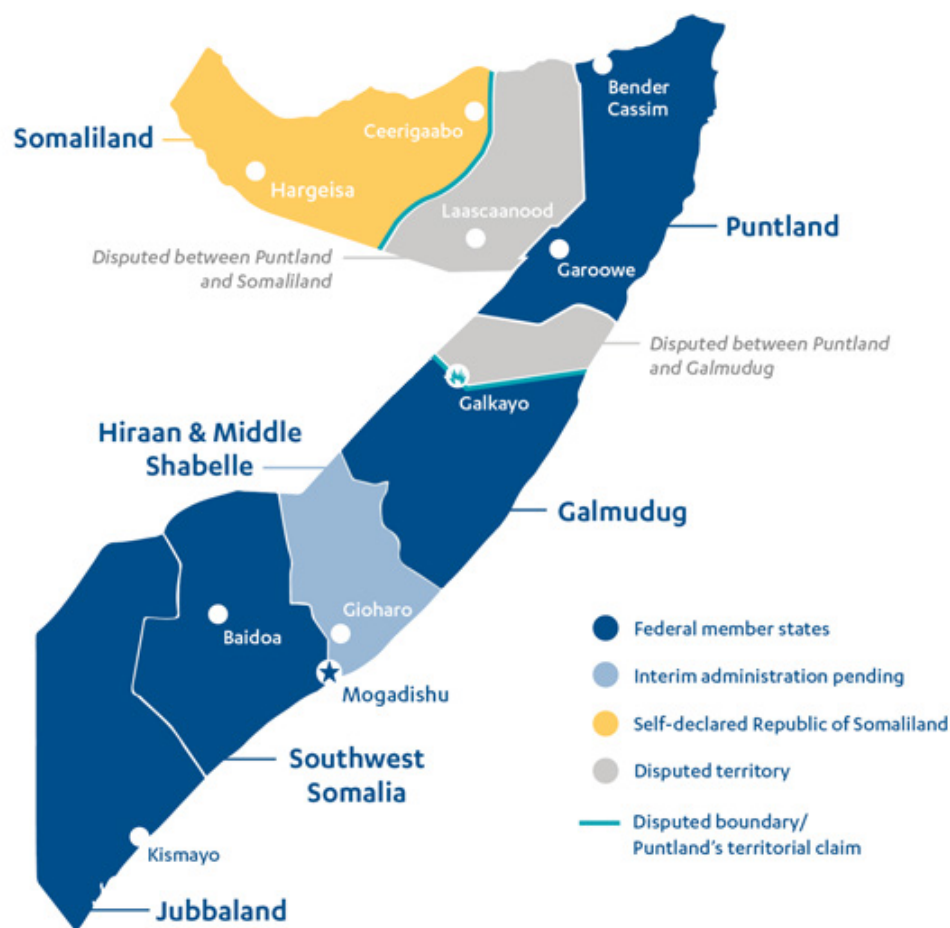
Research Methodology

This article employed descriptive research design to investigate federalism's impact on Somalia's state-building and nation-building process, focusing on its prospects and challenges. The framework proved ideal for comprehending complicated sociopolitical events, allowing for a thorough examination of federalism's function in post-conflict government and social integration. A complete analysis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative data gathering approaches. Primary data was gathered via organized interviews and questionnaires administered to important stakeholders such as government officials, regional leaders, and civil society members. Secondary data was obtained from scholarly publications, government papers, and international agency records, providing historical and contextual insights on Somalia's federalism path.

Purposive sampling was utilized to choose volunteers with extensive knowledge and expertise in governance and federalism. Qualitative data was thematically examined to find repeating patterns and narratives about the efficacy of federalism in Somalia, and quantitative data was studied statistically to quantify characteristics like intergovernmental cooperation and resource allocation. Ethical factors such as informed consent and confidentiality are rigorously followed throughout the study procedure. This mixed-method approach guarantees a comprehensive knowledge of how federalism effects Somalia's efforts in state and nation-building, emphasizing its successes and limitations.

Findings and Analysis

Governance Structures: Opportunities and Weaknesses

The federal system in Somalia has provided a framework for decentralization, enabling regional administrations to exercise autonomy over local governance. This has fostered localized solutions to governance challenges, particularly in regions like Puntland and Somaliland, where stability has been relatively maintained. However, the study reveals several weaknesses:

Overview map of the Federal states of Somalia as of 2017 (Photo Credit: ICAI)

Institutional Fragility: Federal institutions, including the judiciary and legislature, lack capacity and resources, impeding effective coordination and governance.

Ambiguity in Constitutional Roles: The provisional federal constitution lacks clarity on the division of powers between the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states, leading to frequent disputes over authority and jurisdiction.

Resource Allocation Conflicts: Competition for natural resource revenues has intensified tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states, undermining cooperation

Intergovernmental Relations and Power Dynamics

The relationship between the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states remains strained, characterized by mistrust and political rivalries. Key findings include:

Centralized Tendencies: The Federal Government of Somalia often exerts excessive control over regions, prompting resistance from federal member states that seek greater autonomy.

Weak Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: There is no effective framework to mediate disputes between federal and regional governments, perpetuating cycles of mistrust.

External Influences: Foreign powers and international organizations play a significant role in shaping intergovernmental dynamics, often complicating local decision-making processes.

Societal Cohesion and Nation-Building

The study highlights that federalism has both facilitated and hindered efforts at nation-building:

Promoting Inclusivity: Federalism provides an avenue for marginalized clans and regions to participate in governance, fostering a sense of inclusion.

Exacerbating Fragmentation: Clan-based politics dominate regional administrations, perpetuating divisions and undermining national unity.

Lack of a Shared Identity: Efforts to build a cohesive national identity are hampered by historical grievances, competing loyalties to clans, and limited civic education.

> "Withdrawal from the WHO requires a one-year notice period. Trump's initial attempt to withdraw the U.S. was halted after his defeat in the 2020 elections, when President Joe Biden reversed the process. However, now in his first year of a new term, the withdrawal is likely to proceed, thereby actualizing the earlier threats

Conclusion

The absence of a unified national political agenda has significantly hindered Somalia's efforts at state-building and nation-building. The lack of a clear, inclusive framework that prioritizes national unity, justice, and public trust has resulted in a fragmented political landscape, where clan interests often overshadow national goals. Federalism, while offering a framework for regional autonomy, has been ineffective in creating a cohesive national ideology or fostering national integration. For Somalia to overcome these challenges and move forward, it must develop and embrace a comprehensive national political agenda that transcends clan divisions and articulates a shared vision for the future. Only through such a framework can Somalia hope to achieve lasting peace, stability, and prosperity.

The study on federalism and Somalia's state-building and nation-building processes elucidates a complex interaction of opportunities and challenges. Federalism provides a framework to address Somalia's entrenched clan divisions, promote inclusivity, and decentralize governance to enhance regional autonomy. Nonetheless, this process is impeded by fragile institutions, conflicting interests between the federal government and member states, and the absence of a cohesive national identity. Effective federalism in Somalia necessitates substantial institutional reforms, equitable resource allocation, and the political resolve to bolster intergovernmental cooperation. Furthermore, nation-building initiatives must prioritize the reconciliation of diverse communities and the cultivation of a shared national vision. Tackling these challenges through a strategic, inclusive, and context-sensitive approach is crucial for achieving enduring peace, stability, and development in Somalia.

Recommendations

To address the prospects and challenges of federalism in Somalia's state-building and nation-building process, several policy measures are essential. First, Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States must establish a clear and inclusive constitutional framework that defines roles, responsibilities, and resource-sharing mechanisms to minimize disputes. Second, strengthening institutional capacity at both federal and regional levels through targeted investments in governance, accountability, and transparency is crucial. Third, fostering inclusive dialogue among clans, political elites, and civil society can promote trust and reconciliation, enhancing social cohesion. Fourth, international actors should align their support with Somalia's federalism goals by providing technical assistance, capacity building, and funding for critical infrastructure and governance reforms. Finally, the government should prioritize creating a unified national identity by investing in education, cultural integration programs, and equitable service delivery to reduce regional disparities and foster collective belonging. These policies can collectively promote stability and sustainable development in Somalia.

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From Past to Present: How Leader Personality Shapes Politics and Conflict in the Horn of Africa

By Madighan Ryan

Abstract

Leader personality is overlooked in geopolitical analysis of the Horn of Africa. Leaders uniquely interpret conditions and react to situations, so understanding their personalities may shed light on some state behavior and seemingly irrational decision making. Margaret Hermann's (1987) Personality at a Distance (PAD) Assessment allows for empirical analysis of leaders' characteristics, and the results can be linked to state behavior by applying the conclusions of leader psychology research. To demonstrate the potential importance of leader personality, the personality of Eritrean President Isias Afwerki is analyzed with regard to the question of why Eritrea and Ethiopia went to war in 1998. Afwerki is found to be very high in distrust and self-confidence. These results suggest he has a hawkish military orientation and would have been inclined towards the use of diversionary force. By exploring the previously unresearched link between Afwerki's personality and the 1998-2000 border war, a conflict with ongoing, extremely relevant, consequences for the security of the Horn of Africa today, this article aims to demonstrate the value in analysis of non-structural determinants to understand geopolitics. Further, given present-day devolving tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia, these insights regarding Afwerki's personality will be applied to considerations for future conflict resolution and mediation between the two nations.

Introduction

While leaders are widely acknowledged as important, their personalities are often overlooked in analyses of state behavior, which tend to favor measurable, impersonal forces. A survey by Dyson and Briggs (2017) found that fewer than 3% of articles in major international politics journals focus on leaders. This gap stems from a dominant structuralist tradition that emphasizes systemic pressures and constraints. Even classical realism, which considers human nature, reduces personality to assumptions about rational self-interest, neglecting the diversity of leader traits and their policy implications (Schuett, 2010; Freyberg-Inan, 2004).

This omission limits our understanding and predictive capacity, despite strong empirical evidence that individual leaders often significantly shape state behavior (Dyson & Briggs, 2017; Jervis, 2013; Dyson, 2006; Keller, 2005; Hagan, 2001; Holsti, 1977). The oversight is especially critical in non-Western contexts like the Horn of Africa, where authoritarian leadership has historically amplified the role of personality in governance. Khadigala (1999) calls this the "rule of personality in Africa since the 1960s" (p. 46). These legacies continue to influence regional geopolitics and enduring interstate tensions (Agbai, 2024, p. 25; Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

What is Political Leader Personality?

Personality refers to enduring characteristics patterns of thought, emotion, and psychological mechanisms that shape how individuals behave and react (Post, 2005; Millon, 1986; Lazarus, 1963). It is distinct from temporary emotional states; being angry in a moment differs from being consistently angry. In political contexts, personality specifically refers to traits relevant to a leader's geopolitical role and decision-making.

The "Person-Situation Nexus" suggests that while personality remains relatively stable across contexts, behavior is shaped by how personality interacts with situational variables (Furr & Funder, 2021; Alker, 1972). For example, under normal conditions, someone may always choose to exit a room through a door. In a crisis like a fire

Eritrea's President, Isias Afwerki, has been in power for the last three decades (Photo Credits: Khalil Senosi/AP Photo/Picture Alliance)

the same person might react differently, jumping out a window instead. In politics, routine decisions may follow institutional norms, but crises often expose the deeper influence of personality.

Certain scenarios may also trigger heightened personality influence, especially if they evoke past traumas or formative experiences (Vertzberger, 1998; Birt, 1993). Cultural upbringing further shapes how leaders manage conflict, negotiate, or respond to crises (Post, 2005, p. 71; Stone & Schaffner, 1988). As such, empirical assessments of leader personality should be complemented by biographical and cultural context.

Why is Understanding President Isaias Afwerki's Personality Important?

A leader's personality shapes how they interpret events, what they perceive as possible, and what priorities they pursue (Hermann et al., 2001). For example, Hitler's extreme ambitions went far beyond the German public's general desire for national revival (Dyson, 2014; Byman & Pollack, 2001), and Donald Trump's foreign policy defied traditional constraints even among Republicans and populists (Kaarbo, Oppermann, & Beasley, 2023; Kaarbo & Turner, 2023; Thiers & Wehner, 2022). Likewise, why did Isaias Afwerki choose war over peaceful options during a territorial dispute? While similar questions have been

extensively explored in the West, the role of individual leaders in the Horn of Africa remains underexamined.

This article demonstrates that leader personality is a valuable analytical lens, particularly in understanding how Afwerki's traits may have influenced the 1998–2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia border war. Structural explanations such as territorial disputes and economic strain fail to explain why Eritrea responded militarily. The war profoundly shaped Eritrean-Ethiopian relations, from economic dynamics to enduring distrust. Despite the 2018 peace summit, tensions are resurfacing, making it crucial to revisit the root causes of conflict and how personality may inform future peacebuilding.

This paper analyses Afwerki's personality and its possible connection to his decision to use force. It also illustrates how personality-based analysis can inform conflict resolution, including considerations for diplomacy and mediation today.

While leader personality is empirically grounded, definitive links between Afwerki's traits and Eritrea's actions remain limited by opaque decision making processes and the difficulty of assessing agency in authoritarian contexts. Nonetheless, decades of psychological research show that leaders' personalities can be systematically assessed

and meaningfully connected to state behaviour. Focusing on Afwerki does not exclude the role of Ethiopia's then Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in escalating the conflict.

Methodology

A leader's political personality can be broken down into traits, which refer to the characteristics of an individual which affect how they manage and manifest their behaviour. In 1987, Margaret Hermann pioneered a trait-based Personality-At-A-Distance Assessment (PAD) which measures six psychological traits: In-Group Bias, Belief in Ability to Control Events, Self-Confidence, Task Motivation, Conceptual Complexity, and Need for Power. These traits, which translate into leadership styles, inform leaders' reasons for taking their positions, how they respond to potential domestic and international constraints, and how selectively they vet information or allow conflicting information to influence their decision-making process (Hermann, 2005).

The traits are measured through textual analysis of spoken content, including interviews, spontaneous comments, and occasionally speeches (see *Table 1.* for a more detailed explanation of how these traits are measured). This study draws on measurements from the Textual Assessment of Leaders Individual Differences (TALID) Archive (Young, 2024). The TALID archive is a dataset of individual personality differences, including traits as one

of the measured variables, of over 750 leaders coded through the Profiler Plus automated coding scheme, and by Margaret Hermann and a variety of other corroborated research projects (Young, 2024; Levine and Young, 2014). Afwerki's trait results are derived from 31,590 coded words. As is the case with most leaders, and in particular African leaders of smaller nations, like Eritrea, Afwerki's commentary only began to be transcribed and digitized in the 2000s. Therefore, the documents used to measure their personality traits are from 2002 onwards; ideally, textual analysis would be of documents collected from before the event in question (the 1998-2000 border war), but there is significant evidence to demonstrate that personality generally remains consistent over time (Bleidorn, et al., 2022; Renshon, 2008).

For example, the measurement of a leader's self-confidence is equal to the percentage of personal pronouns (me, myself, I) which are associated with proactive activity, authority, or positive feedback, that the leader uses in the entirety of their documents collected and analysed (Hermann, 1987). Then, the leader's trait results are compared to the results of a reference group that is the average of that particular trait for over 200 leaders. If the leader in question's result is higher or lower for a given trait by a statistically significant amount, that trait is considered significant to their personality and can be used to infer political behaviour.

Table 1. Personality Traits and how they are Interpreted and Coded

Trait	Interpretation	Coding
Belief in Ability to Control Events (BACE)	The degree to which the leader perceives the international system as having the capacity to be influenced by the leader or the leader's state.	Percentage of verbs that indicate action by the leader or leader's group
Cognitive Complexity (CC)	Ability to perceive nuance	Percentage of words which reflect nuance (like "somewhat," "approximately," or "possibly") compared to absolutist terminology (like "certainly" or "irreversible")
Distrust (DIS)	Suspicion of the intentions of others	Percentage of nouns that indicate suspicion as to an Other's harmful intentions towards the leader or leader's group
In-Group Bias (IGB)	Perceived centrality of one's group	Percentage of positive references to the leader's group and assertions in the need to maintain group identity

Trait	Interpretation	Coding
Need for Power (PWR)	Degree of emphasis placed on gaining and maintaining power over others	Percentage of verbs that indicate attack or a concern for reputation and influence
Self-Confidence (SC)	Personal perception of one's own importance and capacity to handle environmental factors	Percentage of personal pronouns (me, myself, I, etc.) that are positively associated with authority, reward, or instigation of action
Task-Motivation (TASK)	Relative focus on instrumental accomplishment and problem-solving compared to relationships	Percentage of words relating to action ("accomplishment," "plan," etc.) compared to concern for others ("appreciation," "collaboration," etc.)

(Hermann, 1987).

CASE STUDY
Eritrea-Ethiopia 1998-2000 Border War

Background

Eritrea was an Italian colony from the late 1800s until the defeat of Italy in World War II, at which point Eritrea became a British protectorate (Guazzini, 2021, p. 131). Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1952, and when the federation was later dissolved, the then Ethiopian Emperor illegally annexed Eritrea (Arbab, 2004, p. 166). In 1993, Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia after an anti-dictator and secessionist war waged by multiple groups including the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Khadiagala, 1999, p. 41). The EPLF transformed into the Eritrean government, led by Afwerki, and the TPLF transformed into the core of the Ethiopian government, led by Zenawi.

The two nations enjoyed an alliance in the immediate aftermath of their independence, predicated on the camaraderie between the two revolutionary groups during war time. Eritrea and Ethiopia were economically cooperative, which was necessary given that Eritrea has port access while Ethiopia is landlocked, and Ethiopia provided a trade surplus of food and resources to Eritrea (Kahdigala, 1999, p. 43). There had only ever been a provisional border in colonial times, so there was no clear border demarcation between the two nations (Zewde, 2021, p. 24; Arbab, 2004, p. 165). A joint border commission mediated this issue in the aftermath of Eritrea's secession, and there is documented communication between Afwerki and Zenawi which evidence more-than-symbolic use of this commission (Arbab, 2004, p. 165). In 1997, Eritrea had a shortage of currency reserves and so introduced its own national currency. This resulted in economic hardship for both nations: for Ethiopia, this translated into higher costs at Eritrean ports, while for Eritrea, this meant higher costs of Ethiopian food and resources (Khadiagala, 1999, p. 43).

On May 6, 1998, the Eritrean military moved into Badme, a small border region in the Tigray region of Ethiopia with no clear demarcation. Eritrea later assumed responsibility for beginning the war (Boundary Commission, 2006). Ethiopia immediately mobilized in Badme, and at other points along the border (Khadigala, 1999, p. 44). The relatively small conflict expanded rapidly into a conventional war that lasted over two years with tens of thousands of battle deaths and many more Eritreans displaced. This came as a relative shock to much of the world given Eritrea and Ethiopia's constant statements of friendship and the apparent lack of resource value in Badme (Zedwe, 2021, p. 26; Guazzini, 2021, p. 128). The conflict came to be recognized as a very personal battle, or even a "family feud" (Khadigala, 1999, p. 45-6), between Afwerki and Zenawi that spiraled into a war between the nations that neither seemed willing to back down from in mediation efforts, for fear of having invested too much.
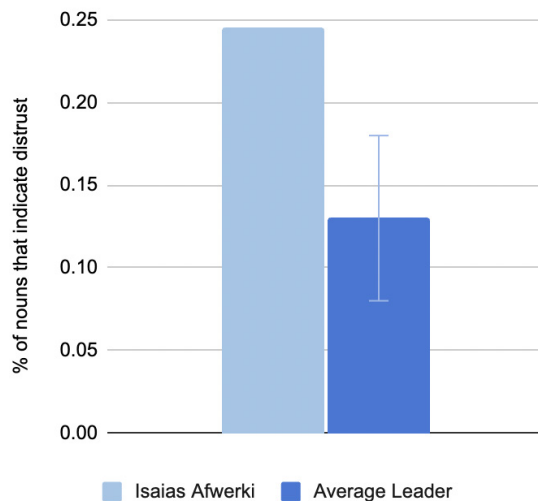
Leader Profile of Isaias Afwerki

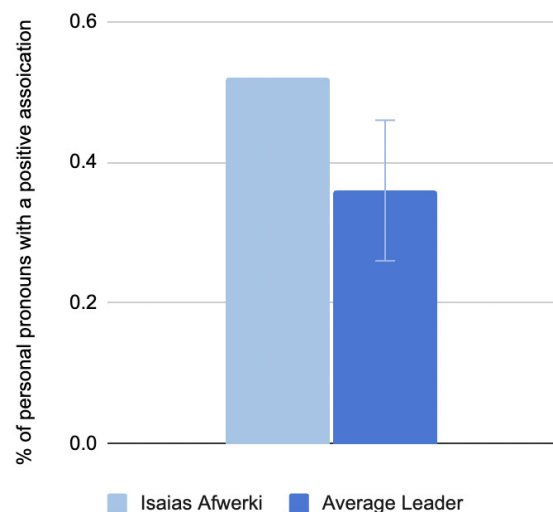**Table 2.** Leader Trait Analysis of Isaias Afwerki

Leader	Nation	BACE	CC	DIS	IGB	PWR	SC	TASK
Isias Afwerki	Eritrea	0.3478	0.6246	0.2452	0.1448	0.2767	0.5473	0.6677

(Young, 2024)

Distrust Trait Comparison

Self-Confidence Trait Comparison

Figure 1. Afwerki's Distrust and Self-Confidence Trait Scores Compared to the Average Leader

The majority of Afwerki's traits are average, which indicates that these aspects of his personality are moderate or may fluctuate between being higher or lower depending on the situation. However, Afwerki is very high in distrust and self-confidence. The average leader measures at 0.13 for distrust (with a standard deviation of 0.06), and 0.36 for self-confidence (with a standard deviation of 0.10). Afwerki is nearly two standard deviations above the norm on both distrust and self-confidence.

High distrust indicates a general suspicion of the intentions and potential actions of those one is around, particularly those who are in competition for domestic power, international rivals, or any possible challengers to the leader or the leader's nation (Brummer, 2022, pp. 240-1; Fouquet and Brummer, 2020, pp. 9-10). Even peaceful interactions with these challengers are loaded, and are presumed to have ulterior motives (Hermann, 2005, p. 203; Stuart and Starr 1982). For example, whether this was true, Afwerki believed that Zenawi had made an attempt on his life when the plane that Zenawi had arranged for Afwerki caught on fire in 1996 (Maasho, 2010). While some

distrust may be necessary in politics, moderate to low distrust leaders look at a situation more realistically and use context clues as to the severity of the situation, while leaders high in distrust believe the worst of those around them (Hermann, 2005, p. 203). High distrust comes with a high degree of vigilance and a perception of threats as more significant than they are, so a high distrust leader is more willing to go to extreme lengths to neutralize those threats (Foster and Keller, 2014; Keller and Yang, 2008; Driver 1977).

High self-confidence is reflective of one's elevated perception of self and own importance in relation to being able to cope with new or challenging situations (Fouquet and Brummer, 2020, p. 9; Hermann, 2005, pp. 194-195). It affects how one processes new information; given that processing new information generally tends to be relative to other people, self-confidence often refers to an evaluation of self against others, so high self-confidence may manifest as a superiority complex (Ziller, 1974). New information is ignored or transformed to eliminate cognitive dissonance (Fouquet and Brummer, 2020, p. 9; Ziller, 1974, p. 197). Given his high self-confidence,

Afwerki was likely relatively closed to new information and certain in his causes and actions; he would then likely make other people adapt to his actions and would not himself be sensitive to their environment (Zahowrik, 2014; Hermann, 2005, pp. 192-193). A manifestation of this is seen in the degree of non-negotiable fervour with which Afwerki approached his Second Vision for Eritrea, which emphasised national unity above all else. According to Hermann (2005), high self-confidence leaders may use coercive methods to ensure that their cause or beliefs are adopted by the wider group (pp. 192-193).

Linking Personality to the Border War: The Use of Diversionary Force

Researchers have questioned, and disagreed on, why the border war occurred. Border disputes had occurred before between Eritrea and Ethiopia without military mobilization. Territory, while the evident surface-level cause, has been demonstrated as a relatively insignificant factor (Sarbo, 2013; Steves, 2010; Lata, 2003). Instead, it has been proposed that the war was a product of domestic politics and a manifestation of the theory of diversionary force (Butcher and Maru, 2017; Steves, 2010; Khadigala,

1999). Diversionary force is a logic of externalisation in which an external enemy is created through conflict to foster internal cohesion through the rally-around-the-flag effect. The construction of an external Other defines group boundaries, forces moderates or domestic opposition to side, and makes that which they are fighting over (i.e. territory, national identity, or history) the only politically relevant factor (Blankenship, 2018, p. 381; Lichbach, 1998, p. 255; Bowen, 1996, p. 154; Gagnon, 1994, p. 132 Coser, 1964, pp. 87, 92). Afwerki led a nation facing economic stagnation and ethnic divisions in 1998, with the new Nakfa currency struggling and ELF-EPLF rivalries threatening national unity (Butcher and Maru, 2017). Therefore, war was possibly an instrumental means of consolidating national unity and power.

However, a question remains: why did Afwerki decided to use the relatively localized border dispute to employ violent diversionary tactics, instead of less violent, similarly "diversionary" instruments like discretionary spending, aggressive trade policies, or stumping, to deflect from the economic suffering occurring domestically. Some authors link the likelihood of using diversionary force,

Eritrean soldiers marching towards Afabet for the final decisive battle for independence (Photo Credit: da Vincenzo Meleca)

> ... Afwerki is very high in distrust and self-confidence. The average leader measures at 0.13 for distrust (with a standard deviation of 0.06), and 0.36 for self-confidence (with a standard deviation of 0.10)

as opposed to other diversionary tactics, to the regime type (democracies being less likely to be able to employ diversionary tactics given political pressure), while others link diversionary force to the predicted real cost of the conflict, amongst other variables (Butcher and Muru, 2017, p. 71). This does not solve the empirical issue that the evidence tying diversionary force to structural conditions is simply inconclusive and nonuniform (Foster and Keller, 2014, p. 205; Levy, 1989). These theoretical conditions assume that leaders' cognitive processes are stable and predictable; this is not true as personality is not constant. According to Foster and Keller (2014, 2012, 2010), diversionary force is not intuitive nor rational, but at least in part, a product of leader personality traits which affect how a leader perceives risk and incentive.

First, diversionary force is inherently a risk taking venture, so a more situationally risk-tolerant individual will be more inclined to employ this tactic. Military losses, collateral damage, and economic losses can all be exploited by the very domestic adversaries that are perceived as a threat. Escalation may also result in a failure to 'win' the conflict, and subsequent humiliation or consequences from the international system (Khadigala, 1999, p. 46; Foster and Keller, 2012, p. 584). However, leaders with an internal locus of control, that is the belief that they can shape political outcomes and have the necessary abilities to tackle potential challenges, do not perceive these as significant risks, and may even welcome the challenge (Vertzberger, 1998; March and Shapira, 1987). An internal locus of control is indicated by both a high Belief in Ability to Control Events (Afwerki's is moderate/situation dependent) and high Self-Confidence (Afwerki's is high).

According to Vertzberger (1998), risk-acceptance and the cost-benefit analysis associated with risk perception is not only a matter of personality, but also a matter of the choice itself. For example, familiarity with the nature of the choice may increase risk disposition as it bolsters

one's confidence in their ability to cope (Vertzberger, 1998, pp. 6, 11). Afwerki gained power through military engagement. He was involved in the ELF and then became a leader of the EPLF; he gained his initial political power through violent means. The employment of military force would remind his audience of his security credentials and of vigilance toward threats (Fouquet and Brummer, 2022, p. 20; Foster and Keller, 2014, p. 209). As military action is also a familiar experience to Afwerki, he would be more risk-acceptant of the use of diversionary force than of other risky non-military foreign policy because war was familiar to him and carried a positive connotation. Therefore, with regards to military assertion, Afwerki likely has an internal locus of control, and would be more inclined to perceive diversionary force as a viable option (Keller and Yang, 2008, p. 693). There is evidence that Afwerki did not even believe Ethiopia would respond and engage in a war, revealing an, at least retrospectively, irrational risk-perception (Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut, 2005).

Distrust also amplifies the perception of diversionary force as an effective option to deal with domestic issues relative to alternative options. Leader personality research demonstrates that of all the traits, distrust is the most significant indicator of a hardline, hawkish leader orientation inclined towards more aggressive policy (Foster and Keller, 2014, p. 209; Keller and Yang, 2008, p. 693). Domestic opposition may seem more threatening or powerful than it actually is because the leader's threat perception is magnified, so force, not other, more peaceful, "diversionary" alternatives, would feel justified or even necessary.

Moreover, there are strong grounds for a hypothesis that, regarding Eritrea's militarization in response to the border dispute in Badme, Afwerki's personality may have been linked to the use of diversionary force, and that had another leader been in power, the outcome may have been different. Empirically demonstrating the possibility that Afwerki's personality was a significant determinant of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border war is an essential departure from overly structuralist analysis of conflict.

Limitations and Methodological Troubleshooting

This bulletin is intended to stimulate a lesser applied kind of empirical research and acknowledgment of personal forces in analysis of geopolitics in the Horn of

Africa. The hypothesis presented as to how Afwerki's personality related to the use of diversionary force in the beginning of the 1998-2000 border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is exactly that – a hypothesis. There is not enough documented evidence to reveal whether Afwerki's personality had the most significant role in decision making, in comparison to domestic institutions, other members of his administration, or even structural effects. That Afwerki is an authoritarian leader and has been stated to inject highly personal forces into the administration and structures around him indicates he probably does have a disproportionate degree of control over domestic institutions and decision making, but this cannot be confirmed for this specific case study (Khadigala, 1999, p. 42).

The trait scores themselves are more concrete. This section will address two potential objections regarding the methodology and falsifiability of empirically measuring leader traits. First, while Afwerki's texts are in English, there are concerns as to how reliable automated PAD textual analysis is across cultural contexts. This is a valid query as the PAD Assessment, as well as Profiler Plus, was designed by Western scholars; it is worth questioning whether their interpretation of what constitutes self-confidence, for instance, is universal or simply a product of their cultural context.

However, the 'Coding in Tongues' Project empirically demonstrates that there is no significant variability in results across multiple languages, which also happen to represent different cultural contexts, when coded based on the original untranslated sources (none of the languages tested were representative of the cultural context of any African nation) (Brummer, et al., 2020; Rabini, et al., 2020). Second, critics may raise concerns about deceit in the analysed tests. Politicians have a vested interest in manipulating their audience to suit their needs. However, over time, this type of analysis has generally demonstrated strong predictive validity: when profiles are tested against case studies, leaders tend to

act in the way in which their profiles and trait analyses suggest, regardless of whether they are telling the truth or attempting to project a different image of themselves. This is likely because PAD Assessments do not analyse the content of the text, but the way in which the leaders speak.

Strategic Considerations for Today's Policymakers

This kind of leader personality research can and should also be applied to shaping current government and international organization policy. Leader personality assessments have been successfully employed by presidents, prime ministers, and other leaders worldwide to understand the leaders with whom they are negotiating (Post, 2005). A profile of Afwerki, as well as those of other leaders in the Horn of Africa, is vital to determining the ways in which security and sustainable peace in the region can be approached and established. Afwerki remains the President of Eritrea and has stated that he intends to remain in power until his death. Therefore, understanding his personality, particularly when navigating a historically tumultuous relationship between two nations that is currently devolving, is essential to current considerations for security within the Horn of Africa. Specifically, the 2018 peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea is under strain, and proposed resolutions or interventions should employ personality analysis or at the very least, factor in the baseline knowledge of how some of his more extreme traits interact with militarized interstate tension.

The Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia, signed in 2018 by Afwerki and current Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed agreed to a commitment to respect the 2000 Algiers Agreement and the 2002 Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision which awarded Badme, among other non-demarcated border territories, to Eritrea. The neighbours also restarted trade and economic and diplomatic relations. However, the relationship has devolved once more. The Pretoria Agreement, which in 2022 ended the

The Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia, signed in 2018 by Afwerki and current Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed agreed to a commitment to respect the 2000 Algiers Agreement and the 2002 Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision ...

intrastate war in Tigray, was negotiated by Ahmed and foreign mediators, and excluded Afwerki; given what personality analysis reveals about Afwerki's baseline suspicion of others' ulterior motives, it is not surprising that the lack of even superficial consultation with Afwerki soured relations significantly (Čok, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2025). Tigray's interim President, Getachew Reda, has accused Eritrea of retaliating by interfering in Tigray and supporting rebel organizations (Bekit, 2025). Further, Ethiopia has very publicly stated that Red Sea access is its historical and legal right – incentivized by the 1.6 billion it would save annually on port access fees (Tekle, 2023). This would infringe on Eritrean sovereignty and inevitably restart a bloody territorial conflict. These factors combined set the stage for a collective fear that without change by either nation, or external involvement, Eritrea and Ethiopia could be heading towards war again. While there are many structural factors at play, as well as the personality of Ahmed, the personality analysis of Afwerki should be used to consider what peace strategies may be effective.

Navigating Current Tensions Between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Understanding how a specific leader's personality links to their behaviour helps international organisations or other nations tailor diplomacy and negotiation and understand what resolution efforts will be pacifying and which will be triggering. Personality uniquely interacts with context and thus, this methodology can never absolutely predict the future, but understanding the traits of current leaders can somewhat help forecast behaviour that would otherwise seem irrational in the context of structural factors.

First, punitive measures will likely not change Afwerki's resolve on a given military policy. Altering the incentive structure of the use of force for Eritrea (by increasing risk/consequence) would likely not be a useful strategy in reining in Eritrea's potential wartime policies, assuming Afwerki's personality has significant agency. One common method of adjusting the risk-reward structure is by enforcing sanctions. Not only have sanctions been placed on Eritrea, to very little avail, Afwerki's interpretation of this punitive measure would likely simply affirm his suspicion of others being out to hurt him or Eritrea, reducing the possibility of dialogue between his administration and the parties or international organizations enforcing the sanctions or other consequences. Leaders high in self confidence, like Afwerki, may see these consequences for the use of force as a challenge or obstacle they are sure they can overcome and use to affirm their belief in self (Hermann, 2005, p. 195).

Second, mediation efforts should endeavour to make Afwerki feel involved in the outcome and be spearheaded by countries with which Eritrea already has good relations and that cannot be perceived as regional competition. Many foreign policy think tanks and politicians have called for international mediation from parties such as the EU, Qatar, Turkey, the US, and the UK; this will likely not lead to a long term sustainable peace unless Afwerki feels very personally involved in shaping the outcome (Čok, 2025; Demisse, 2025). This is evidenced by his feeling of personal exclusion from the Pretoria Agreement. Suggestions of mediation efforts enacted with the purpose of "plac[ing] pressure on the parties" (Čok, 2025) do not take into consideration that even if a pressure-heavy intervention process is meant to produce a win-win situation, to a high distrust individual, top-down pressure in negotiating efforts will likely be perceived as external parties acting in their own interest. It could also prompt Afwerki to reject an idea that he did not feel privy to coming up with to resolve cognitive dissonance regarding his perception of self. Alternatively, if mediation involves all parties, affirms their feeling of importance, and simply steers mediation in a certain direction, rather than mandating it, it is more likely to produce a sustainable peace in the region. Contrary to suggestions that dialogue should be mediated or negotiated by regional parties, this may increase Afwerki's suspicion that these parties have a more personal or national stake in the outcome. Negotiation should instead involve nations not perceived to be in competition with Eritrea, and with whom Eritrea already has positive relations with, like Qatar or China (Demisse, 2025).

In navigating the current challenges to the 2018 Peace Agreement, policymakers must consider both Afwerki and Ahmed's personalities. While this discussion has only considered Afwerki's personality, policymakers should weigh up the extent they wish to cater to one personality or another, and how they may or may not clash or agree on certain negotiating styles.

Conclusion

Leaders matter. Whether it be to probe why historical events occurred, or to perceive nuance in how to approach present and future issues, leader personality should not be an afterthought and should be considered in conjunction with external and structural forces. In an increasingly complex and conflictual global geopolitical climate, it will be essential for regional peace, security, and prosperity in the Horn of Africa going forward to more thoroughly understand the leaders on every side of the negotiating table.

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AUSSOM and the Future of Somalia:
Navigating Challenges Towards Stability

By: Bravin Onditi

Abstract

This article examines the strategic evolution of African Union peace operations in Somalia, focusing on the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), launched in January 2025 as the successor to AMISOM and ATMIS. Authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 2767, AUSSOM shifts from a military-centric counterinsurgency model to a multidimensional framework integrating security, governance, and development. Its mandate emphasizes joint operations with Somali forces, infrastructure protection, and institution-building to achieve a full security transition by 2029. The study analyzes AUSSOM's unified command structure, sector-based deployments, and integration of military, police, and civilian components, including police embedded in Somali units and locally-driven quick-impact projects. By coordinating with Somali institutions, UN entities, and donors, AUSSOM aligns external support with national priorities. Situating AUSSOM within African peacebuilding paradigms, the paper highlights its role as a model for hybrid stabilization in fragile contexts, contributing to scholarly discourse on sustainable sovereignty and regional security.

Introduction

Somalia's descent into instability began with the collapse of its central government in 1991, triggering a prolonged civil war characterized by clan-based conflicts and the emergence of extremist groups, most prominently Al-Shabaab (Menkhaus, 2016). This state failure not only shattered Somalia's socio-economic framework but also created a security vacuum that threatened the stability of the Horn of Africa. In response, the African Union (AU) launched the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007, tasked with supporting the Transitional Federal Government, countering Al-Shabaab, and enabling humanitarian efforts (Williams, 2018). Despite notable achievements, such as reclaiming Mogadishu and other key territories, AMISOM faced significant obstacles, including inconsistent funding, logistical challenges, and criticism over human rights violations (Africa, 2022). These issues prompted a strategic shift, culminating in the transition to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in April 2022, which aimed to transfer security responsibilities to Somali forces by December 2024 (UNSC, 2022). However, persistent Al-Shabaab attacks and delays in building the Somali National Army's capacity necessitated further evolution in the AU's approach (Group, 2024).

On January 1, 2025, the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) was established, marking a new chapter in the AU's stabilization efforts (Union, 2025). Authorized by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2767, AUSSOM operates as a streamlined mission with a mandate to assist the Somali Federal Government (SFG) in combating terrorism, securing critical infrastructure, and mentoring the Somali National Army, targeting full security handover by December 2029 (UNSC, 2024). AUSSOM's importance transcends Somalia, playing a critical role in regional security, counterterrorism, and the stability of the Horn of Africa. Al-Shabaab's resurgence, demonstrated by attacks in April 2025, underscores its enduring threat to Somalia and neighboring states.

Historical Evolution of AU Missions in Somalia

The African Union's engagement in Somalia emerged from a complex interplay of regional security concerns and international diplomacy. In late 2006, Ethiopia, alarmed by the rise of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and its challenge to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), launched a military intervention to restore the latter's authority. As insurgent attacks and humanitarian concerns mounted, Ethiopia sought an organized exit strategy. Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1744 (January 2007), the AU rapidly established the African Union Mission in

Somalia (AMISOM), initially mandated to protect TFG institutions, secure key supply routes and ports, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Backed by regular financial pledges from the European Union and logistical support from the United Nations, AMISOM deployed roughly 8,000 troops drawn from Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia—all under the political and strategic oversight of the AU Peace and Security Council (Paul D. Williams, 2007)

AMISOM's early years were marked by severe operational constraints. Logistics chains struggled under inadequate airlift capacity and funding shortfalls, leading to shortages of critical equipment and medical supplies (Lotze, 2016). Al-Shabaab exploited these gaps, drawing strength from local clan divisions and porous borders. Intense urban combat in Mogadishu—most notably the 2010–2011 offensive in which Ugandan and Burundian contingents cleared the city's historic districts—demonstrated both AMISOM's resolve and its overreliance on conventional tactics ill-suited for asymmetrical insurgency. Moreover, coordination challenges among troop-contributing countries and limited intelligence-sharing hampered a cohesive strategic response, prompting calls for stronger civil–military cooperation and deeper engagement with Somali diaspora networks to bolster early warning systems (Studies, 2018).

Despite these hurdles, AMISOM achieved significant milestones between 2012 and 2020. Through operations such as Eagle (2014) and the Juba Corridor offensive (2015), the mission liberated strategic towns including Kismayo and Baidoa and cut off key Al-Shabaab supply lines, reducing the group's territorial control by an estimated 70 percent. Concurrently, AMISOM supported the establishment of federal member states—Jubaland and Galmudug among them—helping transition Somalia from the ad hoc TFG to a constitutional Federal Government in 2012. It conducted extensive capacity-building programs, training more than 30,000 Somali security personnel and gradually transferring responsibility for 17 forward operating bases (FOBs) (Nations, 2019). Humanitarian corridors opened under AMISOM escort enabled aid agencies to reach over 2.7 million people during the drought-induced famine, while gender-mainstreaming initiatives integrated women

AUSSOM troop-contributing countries: Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Burundi heads of state and government, along with Somali President Sheikh Mohamud, in Kampala, Uganda, on April 25, 2025 (Photo Credit: Somali Guardian)

into both the mission's civilian planning cells and Somali police mentoring teams (Carter, 2015).

By 2022, persistent Al-Shabaab resilience and uneven Somali security force readiness spurred a strategic reconfiguration. Under the Somali Transition Plan (STP) endorsed in 2018, AMISOM was rolled into the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in April 2022 (UNSC, 2022). ATMIS sharpened its focus on asymmetric warfare, counter-IED operations, joint patrols, and mentoring of Somali units shifting away from static peacekeeping toward more flexible rapid-reaction forces. Yet funding gaps particularly delayed EU stipends for troop allowances and political friction between Mogadishu and semi-autonomous regions like Puntland and Jubaland continued to undermine seamless handovers and reforms (UNSC, 2024).

In January 2025 the African Union formally reconfigured its Somalia mission: the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) was succeeded by the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) (Union, 2024). This change endorsed by the AU Peace and Security Council and authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 2767 signalled a strategic shift from predominantly military counterinsurgency towards an integrated stabilisation and governance support phase. AUSSOM's mandate explicitly blends military, police and civilian tasks: in addition to joint patrols with Somali forces, it undertakes "quick-impact" infrastructure and service projects (e.g. drilling boreholes, rehabilitating schools and clinics) to address local needs (African, 2025). These projects often EU- and UK-funded reflect a doctrine of civil–military cooperation aimed at protecting civilians and building public support, consistent with UN peacekeeping doctrine on human security. Likewise, AUSSOM mentors and advises the Somali Police Force in community policing and institutional reform, and coordinates with humanitarian and development actors to stimulate local markets and youth employment measures designed to undercut radicalization by tackling poverty, unemployment and political marginalisation.

Under the new configuration, AUSSOM is a multidimensional AU-led peace support operation with clear command structures. It is headed by an AU Special Representative of the Commission's Chairperson, with a Force Commander drawn from the largest troop contributing country exercising unified command over military contingents. In March 2025 a joint AU–FGS

> "Despite notable achievements, such as reclaiming Mogadishu and other key territories, AMISOM faced significant obstacles, including inconsistent funding, logistical challenges, and criticism over human rights violations

planning session finalized AUSSOM's force composition and The Concept of Operations (CONOPS). The agreed plan (PSC Communiqué 1225, Aug. 2024) calls for an agile deployment – including Quick Reaction Forces, intelligence, surveillance and aviation enablers, and police units – concentrated in four phases. Phase One, now underway, realigns sectors and reorients forces for area domination while building liaison with the Somali National Army (SNA) and police. In practice AUSSOM's troops help secure population centres capitals, ports, airports and chokepoints against al-Shabaab, whilst Somali forces take on increasing combat roles. The mission's mandate as per Res. 2767 also prioritises capacity-building: it supports Somalia's Security Sector Development Plan (SSDP) and National Security Architecture so that the Somali security forces can assume full security responsibilities by 2029 (Council, 2024).

AUSSOM is intended to be fully integrated with Somali state-building efforts and international frameworks (Marangio, 2025). It works under clear AU command-and-control rules as mandated by the AUPSC and UNSC and is coordinated with the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), UNSOM (the UN political mission), EU training missions and donor programmes. For example, UN Resolution 2767 authorizes 11,826 AU personnel including 680 police in Somalia through 2025, and recommends using the hybrid funding mechanism of Resolution 2719 (UN 75 per cent, AU 25 per cent to sustain the mission (Africa, 2024). By design, AUSSOM's actions are expected to have long-term peacebuilding and governance impact. Its security operations aim to consolidate gains of AMISOM/ATMIS (stabilising key towns, protecting the Federal Government, and enabling safer elections) while hand-in-hand promoting civilian recovery. Training and mentoring Somali security forces contributes to a self-sustaining national security architecture, fulfilling

AUSSOM Force Commander Lt. Gen. Sam Kavuma during his visit to Beldamin, Janaale, Buufow, and KM 67 to assess troops readiness and morale (Photo Credit: AUSSOM)

AU transition timelines. Meanwhile, infrastructure and governance projects (often in collaboration with the Somali ministries and UN programmes) are intended to bolster legitimacy and economic revival. This integrated approach – combining counter-terrorism with socio-economic development – reflects contemporary AU-UN peace support doctrine and AU Agenda 2063 objectives.

Current State of AUSSOM

In its current configuration, the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) operates under a unified command structure designed to integrate military, police, and civilian elements in a coherent "peace support" architecture. At the apex sits the AU Special Representative to Somalia, who chairs the Mission's Steering Committee and liaises directly with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), regional administrations, and key international stakeholders. AUSSOM's operational framework is strategically structured to address the multifaceted security and governance challenges in Somalia, with particular focus on countering the persistent threat posed by Al-Shabaab. The mission is composed of approximately 11,900 personnel, encompassing military, police, and civilian components, and is supported by troop and police contributions from key African Union member states. As of the latest deployment structure, Uganda provides 4,500 troops, followed by Ethiopia (2,500),

Djibouti (1,520), Kenya (1,410), and Egypt (1,091). This multinational force is integrated into a robust command-and-control framework that ensures flexibility and rapid responsiveness to evolving threats.

Militarily, AUSSOM is organized into four geographically defined sectors: Mogadishu, Lower Shabelle, Middle Juba and Gedo, and the Central Regions, including the Galmudug–Puntland interface. Each sector operates under the leadership of a Force Commander, typically drawn from the largest troop-contributing country, and oversees regional infantry, aviation, and special operations units. The force structure includes Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs), Tactical Battle Groups (TBGs), Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, and aviation enablers, forming the backbone of AUSSOM's kinetic response capabilities.

Complementing the military footprint are approximately 900 African Union Police Officers (AUPOL) who are embedded within Somali Police Force (SPF) units. These officers provide critical mentoring in community policing, forensics, and crowd management, contributing to the professionalization and civilianization of Somalia's law enforcement institutions. Meanwhile, AUSSOM's civilian component, comprising around 200 specialists, plays a pivotal role in advancing state-building. This cohort includes rule-of-law advisers, governance and

development planners, and gender-protection experts, who operate through Civil–Military Cooperation (CIMIC) desks to ensure alignment between security operations and broader reconstruction efforts.

The mission's deployment and coordination strategies are anchored in the Concept of Operations (CONOPS), formally adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) at its 1225th meeting on August 1, 2024. The first phase of CONOPS implementation focuses on sector realignment, force reorientation, and synchronization with Somali Security Forces (SSF). A key milestone within this phase has been the finalization of the Statement of Unit Requirements (SUR), which outlines the operational capabilities required from each contributing nation and ensures compatibility across components. Taken together, AUSSOM's operational framework reflects a comprehensive and adaptive approach to stabilization integrating hard security, policing reform, and civil governance under a unified mission structure. This multi-dimensional setup positions AUSSOM not just as a peacekeeping force, but as a critical enabler of Somalia's long-term transition toward sovereignty, resilience, and rule-based governance.

AUSSOM's mandate derives primarily from UN Security Council Resolution 2767 (December 2024) and successive African Union Peace and Security Council communiqués. It is framed in the language of comprehensive stabilization and post-conflict governance, emphasizing (a) the protection of civilians, (b) enabling of legitimate government authority, and (c) facilitation of socio-economic recovery. Doctrinally, AUSSOM adheres to the AU's Concept of Operations for Peace Support Operations (PSO) as well as the UN's "capstone" doctrine on protection of civilians and the "integrated mission" model. This hybrid approach requires mission leadership to balance kinetic "clear-hold-build" operations—aimed at denying al-Shabaab freedom of movement—with "soft power" measures such as local governance support, dispute resolution training, and facilitation of public-private partnerships for infrastructure.

Building upon ATMIS's limited civil affairs footprint, AUSSOM significantly scaled up "quick-impact projects" (QIPs) in 2025. Between January and July 2025 it implemented over 85 infrastructure interventions worth USD 22 million, including 45 borehole-drilling sites, six primary school rehabilitations, three rural health clinics, and six police posts. These projects are funded through a combination of the AU's Peace Fund, UN-assessed contributions, and bilateral pledges (notably from the EU, UK, USAID, and GCC states). Project selection is conducted via a participatory needs-assessment process in coordination with district councils, humanitarian actors (OCHA, UNICEF), and development agencies (UNDP, World Bank), ensuring alignment with the FGS's New Somali Compact and sectoral recovery plans.

AUSSOM convenes a weekly Joint Planning Committee (JPC) bringing together AU, FGS, UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the EU Training Mission (EUTM), and major donors. Under the Somalia Operations Coordination Committee (SOCC), these actors synchronize force deployments and civilian programming to avoid duplication and close operational gaps. To bolster Somali ownership, AUSSOM provides secretariat support to the FGS's Security Sector Reform Working Group, which oversees the Security Sector Development Plan (SSDP) and principles of civilian oversight, parliamentary accountability, and transitional justice. Technical advisers facilitate training curricula for the Somali National Army (SNA) non-commissioned troops and assist the FGS in drafting a unified Police Act to codify a professional, community-oriented policing ethos.

Key Challenges Facing AUSSOM

1. Financial Instability and Donor Fatigue

Despite a formal 75/25 per cent cost-sharing arrangement between UN and AU budgets, AUSSOM has endured irregular cash flows. The AU Peace Fund is undercapitalized—receiving only 12 percent of pledged contributions and UN-assessed givings have been delayed due to competing global crises. The African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) is facing a deepening financial crisis that threatens to undermine its operational viability. According to the United Nations Secretary-General's report to the Security Council dated 7 May 2025, the projected budgetary requirement for AUSSOM from July 2025 to June 2026 stands at an estimated USD 66.5 million, based on a standardized troop reimbursement rate of $828 per soldier per month. However, this figure only partially reflects the true extent of the financial challenge. AUSSOM inherits not only the responsibilities but also the substantial liabilities of its predecessor mission, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), further compounding its fiscal stress.

A critical concern is the persistent leadership deficit within the Somali security apparatus. Currently, fewer than 30 percent of SNA battalions are equipped with adequately trained and qualified non-commissioned officers (NCOs) capable of leading platoon-level operations

A pressing financial obligation stems from legacy debts accrued by ATMIS. The immediate cash requirement to clear outstanding ATMIS liabilities for the six-month period from January to June 2025 is reported at $92 million. This includes unpaid reimbursements for troop-contributing countries (TCCs), logistical shortfalls, and unpaid allowances for uniformed personnel. Moreover, long-standing arrears owed to TCCs for the period spanning 2022 to 2024 amount to a further $93.9 million. The breakdown of these arrears includes: Uganda: $34.5 million, Kenya: $15.7 million, Ethiopia: $17.2 million, Djibouti: $8.3 million and Burundi: $18.1 million. This cumulative financial burden, nearing $185.9 million in total liabilities, places AUSSOM in a precarious position, especially as it seeks to maintain morale among TCCs, sustain field operations, and roll out critical stabilization projects. To date, only $16.7 million in committed funding has been secured. These contributions include: China: $1 million, Japan: $3 million, Republic of Korea: $1.6 million, AU Peace Fund (Crisis Reserve Facility): $10 million (Africa, 2025). This limited inflow represents a small fraction of what is required, exposing a severe financing gap that could jeopardize the mission's capacity to fulfill its mandate.

Compounding the challenge, UN Security Council Resolution 2719, which was previously considered a potential avenue for securing sustainable financing through assessed contributions, has now been taken off the table. This significantly narrows the range of viable financial mechanisms available to the African Union and necessitates the urgent exploration of alternative funding strategies. The European Union (EU), historically the largest and most consistent financial supporter of African Union (AU) peace operations in Somalia having provided nearlyEuro 2.7 billion since 2007 has signaled a recalibration of its priorities. In light of evolving geopolitical dynamics, including security imperatives in Ukraine and the Sahel, the EU appears increasingly reluctant to sustain prior levels of commitment. While some ad hoc funding may still be forthcoming, the EU

is unlikely to underwrite the lion's share of AUSSOM's future financial needs, as it once did under AMISOM and ATMIS.

Moreover, efforts to diversify the donor base by courting non-traditional partners have yielded only modest results. The pledges from China, Japan, and South Korea, while symbolically important, are not commensurate with the scale of the shortfall. Traditional Western donors remain preoccupied with other crises, while rising powers appear hesitant to significantly expand their peace operations footprint in Somalia. This precarious fiscal outlook not only threatens operational continuity but also risks eroding the trust of Somali stakeholders and international partners.

2. Capacity and Readiness of Somali Security Forces

Despite sustained mentorship and training initiatives delivered through African Union and international partners, the Somali National Army (SNA) and the Somali Police Force (SPF) continue to face significant structural and operational challenges that impede their readiness to assume full responsibility for national security. While progress has been made in certain areas particularly in tactical proficiency and basic interoperability these improvements remain incremental and unevenly distributed across units.

A critical concern is the persistent leadership deficit within the Somali security apparatus. Currently, fewer than 30 percent of SNA battalions are equipped with adequately trained and qualified non-commissioned officers (NCOs) capable of leading platoon-level operations. This shortage of mid-level leadership severely undermines command effectiveness, mission planning, and the ability to maintain discipline and cohesion in the field. The lack of a robust leadership pipeline also hampers efforts to institutionalize best practices and sustain operational gains. Compounding this issue are serious logistical shortcomings. Somali security forces frequently suffer

from inadequate supply chains for essential resources such as fuel, ammunition, and field rations, which in turn constrains their operational tempo and limits their capacity to sustain deployments beyond garrison locations. These logistical bottlenecks often force reliance on external support for even routine operations, undermining the goal of establishing an autonomous, self-reliant security architecture.

Equally concerning is the issue of morale and personnel retention. Somali soldiers and police officers routinely experience irregular salary disbursements, delays in benefits, and a lack of clear career advancement pathways. These systemic deficiencies contribute to high attrition rates, diminish esprit de corps, and deter new recruits, particularly in rural and high-risk areas. The absence of a coherent human resource management strategy has made it difficult to professionalize the force and build long-term institutional capacity. As a result of these enduring gaps, many so-called "secure" districts still require African Union support for joint patrols and area stabilization, highlighting the slow pace of transition toward a Somali-led security framework. The continued dependence on AU augmentation not only

strains AUSSOM's limited resources but also signals that Somalia's security institutions are not yet fully prepared to assume sovereign control over national defense and law enforcement duties. Until these internal capacity issues are resolved through targeted investment in leadership development, logistics modernization, and personnel welfare, the vision of a sustainable, locally driven security solution will remain elusive.

3. Political Cohesion and Governance Fault Lines

Somalia's political landscape remains fragmented and volatile, posing a significant impediment to stabilization and the successful implementation of AUSSOM's mandate. The country's federal-member state (FMS) architecture, designed to balance centralized authority with regional autonomy, is still evolving and fraught with contentious power dynamics. Ongoing disputes between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its constituent states particularly over revenue-sharing arrangements, electoral procedures, and jurisdictional authority continue to undermine the establishment of a coherent national governance framework.

The African Union military equipment donated to Somalia to strengthen its security infrastructure and contribute to regional stability (Photo Credit: Military Africa)

A primary source of friction has been the delayed implementation of the "one person, one vote" electoral model, which is seen as a cornerstone for democratization and political legitimacy. Prolonged negotiations over this law have stalled the national budget approval process, disrupting fiscal flows to key ministries responsible for security and development. This has resulted in irregular funding for security sector reform, infrastructure development, and public service delivery, further eroding citizen confidence in the government's capacity to govern effectively.

At the regional level, the situation is equally complex. States such as Puntland and Jubaland have occasionally entered into bilateral security and development agreements with neighboring countries, particularly Ethiopia and Kenya, without prior coordination with the FGS. These autonomous actions, while often motivated by legitimate security concerns, complicate efforts to establish a unified chain of command and raise concerns about national sovereignty and coherence in defense policy. The fragmentation of security cooperation not only weakens the collective counter-insurgency effort against Al-Shabaab but also risks inflaming inter-state rivalries and deepening the trust deficit between Mogadishu and the FMSs.

Furthermore, institutional weaknesses and elite-driven politics at both federal and state levels exacerbate the lack of political cohesion. Patronage networks, clan allegiances, and transactional political arrangements continue to dominate decision-making, hindering the development of inclusive governance and long-term strategic planning. These dynamics also constrain the effectiveness of external support, including that provided by AUSSOM, as technical assistance and stabilization programs are often politicized or unevenly implemented.

In this fragmented environment, AUSSOM must operate not only as a security partner but also as a diplomatic actor, delicately navigating intra-Somali political rivalries to promote consensus and inclusivity. This requires robust engagement with both federal and state authorities, civil society actors, and traditional leaders to mediate tensions and encourage adherence to national frameworks. Without meaningful progress toward political cohesion, power-sharing consensus, and institutional capacity-building, Somalia's governance structure will remain brittle, undermining the broader objectives of peacebuilding and sustainable development.

Ultimately, addressing the governance fault lines in Somalia is not just a political imperative it is a prerequisite for a successful security transition. The absence of a unified national vision, backed by credible and functioning institutions, will continue to present a serious obstacle to AUSSOM's ability to support stabilization, reconciliation, and long-term resilience.

4. Geopolitical Context and Regional Dynamics

AUSSOM operates within a highly intricate and sensitive geopolitical environment, where regional rivalries and national interests shape both the composition and operational efficacy of the mission. One of the most prominent sources of tension stems from Ethiopia's role as a major troop contributing country, deploying 2,500 personnel. While Ethiopia has historically been a key player in regional security architectures, its participation in AUSSOM was initially contested by the Federal Government of Somalia. This friction was triggered by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland in January 2024, which was widely perceived by Mogadishu as a breach of Somalia's territorial sovereignty. The MoU granted Ethiopia access to Red Sea port facilities in exchange for diplomatic recognition of Somaliland, a move that directly challenged Somalia's unity and triggered a diplomatic standoff.

The resulting impasse temporarily delayed Ethiopia's deployment under AUSSOM, but intensive diplomatic negotiations facilitated by the African Union and regional stakeholders eventually led to a compromise, allowing Ethiopia's continued participation. However, the episode underscored the fragility of regional consensus and exposed the underlying vulnerabilities in coalition-

> The absence of a unified national vision, backed by credible and functioning institutions, will continue to present a serious obstacle to AUSSOM's ability to support stabilization, reconciliation, and long-term resilience

Kenyan troops serving with the AUSSOM welcome Brigadier Edward Banda as their new Commander, replacing Brigadier Seif Salim Rashid on May 18, 2025 (Photo Credits: AUSSOM)

building, especially when troop contributors pursue parallel bilateral agendas that may contradict collective mission objectives.

The entry of Egypt as a new troop contributor, with 1,091 deployed personnel, has added another layer of geopolitical complexity. While Egypt's involvement is framed as a commitment to pan-African solidarity and regional stabilization, it also reflects its broader strategic calculus, particularly its enduring dispute with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the contested management of Nile River waters. The juxtaposition of both countries within AUSSOM has raised concerns among analysts and diplomats about the potential for these tensions to spill over into the operational theater, undermining unity of command and mission coherence.
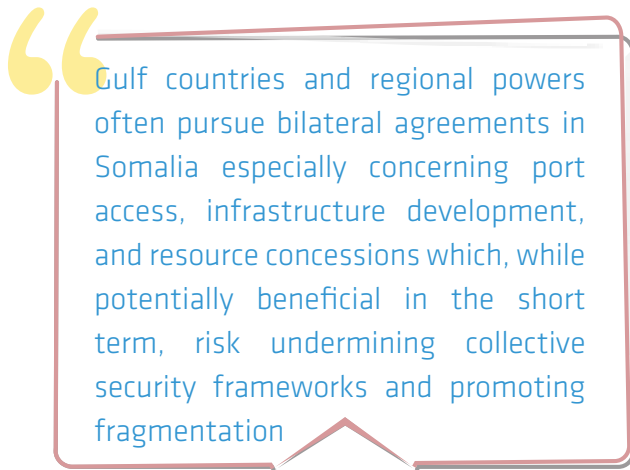
Other longstanding contributors Uganda, Djibouti, and Kenya bring their own historical legacies and regional interests to bear. Uganda remains one of the most committed partners, with a long-standing role dating back to AMISOM, often taking on high-risk operations in volatile zones. Kenya's involvement, especially in southern Somalia, is partly shaped by its national security concerns regarding Al-Shabaab spillover and its economic interests in border regions such as Jubaland. Djibouti,

although contributing a smaller contingent, plays a unique diplomatic role due to its strategic position and hosting of multiple foreign military bases, including those of the United States, China, and France. These dynamics introduce complex interoperability challenges and at times competing national agendas, requiring continuous coordination and confidence-building measures.

Conclusion: Future Outlook and Strategic Implications

The future trajectory of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) will be shaped by a complex interplay of financial sustainability, operational effectiveness, political cohesion, and regional and international dynamics. While AUSSOM builds on the lessons of its predecessors AMISOM and ATMIS it must confront and overcome several enduring and emerging challenges to succeed where earlier missions have delivered only incremental gains.

A primary determinant of AUSSOM's success lies in securing predictable, multi-year funding. The persistent issue of financial uncertainty, including inherited debts and arrears from ATMIS, poses significant threats to operational continuity, morale among personnel, and the mission's credibility. Although Somalia's recent election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security

> Gulf countries and regional powers often pursue bilateral agreements in Somalia especially concerning port access, infrastructure development, and resource concessions which, while potentially beneficial in the short term, risk undermining collective security frameworks and promoting fragmentation

Council (UNSC) presents a valuable diplomatic platform to advocate for sustained international support, this must be leveraged strategically. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to push for donor diversification and enhanced coordination, particularly from Gulf states, the United States, the European Union, and other emerging partners.

However, the current geopolitical landscape is increasingly characterized by competition, bilateralism, and shifting donor priorities. Gulf countries and regional powers often pursue bilateral agreements in Somalia especially concerning port access, infrastructure development, and resource concessions which, while potentially beneficial in the short term, risk undermining collective security frameworks and promoting fragmentation. Although bilateral engagements can complement multilateral efforts such as the EU's support for Somali civilian security forces they must not displace the African Union's central coordinating role. AUSSOM's mandate requires strategic coherence, which only a multilateral framework can sustainably deliver.

In parallel, Somalia's internal political dynamics remain a critical variable. Persistent tensions between the Federal Government and Federal Member States (notably Puntland and Jubaland) continue to hinder consensus on national security, electoral reforms, and fiscal distribution. These divisions can delay the necessary reforms and complicate the handover of responsibilities to Somali national forces. Therefore, Somali leadership must take a more assertive role in fostering internal cohesion, aligning security priorities, and supporting institutional development, especially in governance and rule of law.

Operationally, the capacity of Somali security forces to assume increased responsibility remains a central challenge. AUSSOM must continue to strengthen the Somali National Army (SNA) and Somali Police Force (SPF) through mentoring, logistical support, and institutional reforms. Simultaneously, a renewed emphasis on community engagement, gender inclusion, youth empowerment, and economic reintegration programs is essential to address the root causes of radicalization and build long-term resilience against Al-Shabaab and similar groups. Integrating such socio-political dimensions into security planning will mark a shift from tactical containment to strategic stabilization.

Looking further ahead, several scenarios are possible depending on how these issues evolve. A best-case scenario envisions a gradual, Somali-led security transition underpinned by consistent donor support, improved local governance, and reduced insurgent influence. A more challenging scenario could involve a regression into fragmented authority and donor fatigue, especially if external and internal political frictions are not managed effectively. In the worst case, Somalia could see a resurgence of violence and parallel security architectures, rendering AUSSOM's efforts unsustainable.

Policy recommendations

1. Institutionalize predictable funding mechanisms through the UN and AU frameworks while broadening the donor base to include emerging partners and private sector actors.

2. Enhance Somali political dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms to bridge divides between federal and state-level authorities.

3. Strengthen AU-EU-UN trilateral coordination mechanisms to align security operations with development and governance priorities.

4. Embed advanced surveillance, data analytics, and early-warning systems to respond more dynamically to asymmetric threats, potentially tapping into diaspora expertise.

5. Prioritize inclusive peacebuilding, ensuring that youth, women, and marginalized communities have formal roles in shaping local stabilization initiatives.

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The Role of Regional Economic Communities in integration and Cooperation: A case study of COMESA - Prospects and Constraints

By Paul Chayuga

Abstract

This study examines the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)'s strategy of balancing membership expansion with deeper integration. Using qualitative analysis of COMESA's policies, agreements, and initiatives, supported by official data and literature, it assesses membership growth, intra-regional trade, and collaborative projects. COMESA pursues both widening, with new members like Somalia and Tunisia, and deepening, via the Free Trade Area and infrastructure initiatives. Recommendations include adopting a balanced approach, strengthening institutions, improving agreement implementation, and fostering dialogue to enhance economic growth and cooperation. The study offers insights for policymakers on COMESA's role in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Map showing COMESA member states

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa | COMESA

21 MEMBERS

TUNISIA
LIBYA
EYGPT
SUDAN
ERITREA
DJIBOUTI
ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA
KENYA
SEYCHELLES
UGANDA
RWANDA
BURUNDI
DR CONGO
(Host) ZAMBIA
MALAWI
MADAGASCAR
COMOROS
ZIMBABWE
MAURITIUS
ESWATINI

Size: **12 Million sq km**
Population: **583 Million**
Combined GDP: **$805 Billion**
Global Import/Export in Goods:
$US 324 Billion

Introduction

The dynamism in the International System has witnessed a tendency towards the emergence of regional economic blocs. This has been witnessed in Europe, America and Asia (Buelens, 1992). Moreover, Africa as a continent is not an exception in this trajectory. The continent has had several regional economic blocs being formed in order to steer political, economic and social development among the African States. These economic blocs have most at times been based on the geographical contiguity of States that form them. The formation of these economic blocs has promoted regionalism in the continent.

Over the past six decades, regionalism has become a vital element in International Relations. Regionalism is the connection of separate political, economic, social and cultural entities via different interactions and interdependencies (Soderbaum, 2011). The first studies of regionalism emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, regionalism was immediately concerned with economics but more fundamentally it was concerned with peace and security. The study of regionalism tended to see the State as the problem rather than a solution.

In contemporary Africa, regionalism (re-) emerged as a consequence of the struggle against colonialism. However, the regional arrangements were often a reconstruction of colonial and pre-colonial regional constructs (Soderbaum, 2011). In an era marked by globalization and interconnectedness, fostering integration and cooperation among nations is essential for sustainable development and prosperity. Regional Economic Blocs play a vital role in integration and cooperation among states. These organizations aim to enhance economic growth, improve political stability, and promote social development through collective action and shared policies.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) serves as a prominent example of how Regional Economic Blocs can drive regional integration and cooperation. This is evident in COMESA, where diverse countries with unique cultures, economies, and political landscapes seek to harness the power of collaboration to address common challenges and unlock shared opportunities. Through the lens of international relations and diplomacy, COMESA member states can navigate complex geopolitical dynamics, build mutual trust, and forge enduring partnerships to advance the region's integration agenda.

> As the multilateral system faces increasing challenges, regionalism emerges as a significant alternative for international cooperation and restructuring. States view regional economic blocs as platforms for political, economic, and socio-cultural advancement

Regions have existed for a long time in our history. The Study of regionalism during the 1950s and 1960s gave birth to the rationalist approach. The relevant theories under this approach were Federalism and Functionalism. Federalism inspired the pioneers of European integration. It was not really a theory but a political program. It was skeptical to the Nation-State, although what was to be created was rather a new kind of State.

On the other hand, David Mitrany's Functionalism was an approach to peace building and unification. The question for functionalists was on which political level various human needs could be best met. Usually, the best way was found to be going beyond the Nation-State, but not necessarily going regional (Mansfield, 1999). Both Federalism and Functionalism wanted the Nation State to go but through different routes and by different means.

However, since the mid-1980s as the phenomenon of regionalism continued to gain momentum, a Reflectivist theoretical framework emerged; the New Regionalism Approach (NRA). The new regionalism referred to a number of new trends and developments; the rapid increase in the number of regional agreements; an externally oriented and less protectionist type of regionalism; an anti-hegemonic type of regionalism; the rise of a more multi-dimensional and pluralistic type of regionalism; and the increasing importance of an array of business and civil society actors in regionalization (Zajontz, 2013).

This approach claims that there are no 'natural' regions, but these are made, remade and unmade intentionally or non-intentionally in the process of global transformation, by collective human action and identity formation (Soderbaum, 2011). As the study of regionalism continues to grow in the International Relations field, the phenomenon continues to challenge the centrality

of States within the international System. The relevance of regionalism has gained momentum since the mid-1980s both theoretically and empirically. Regionalism is premised on the understanding that such efforts inter alia, enhance economic growth, lessen border conflicts and reduce competition among countries.

As the multilateral system faces increasing challenges, regionalism emerges as a significant alternative for international cooperation and restructuring. States view regional economic blocs as platforms for political, economic, and socio-cultural advancement. However, participation in these blocs requires states to accept certain trade-offs to align with the goals and structures of their respective regional organizations.

Since Karl W. Deutsch and Ernest B. Haas explored regionalism in the 1950s, it has become a significant area of study within International Relations. Their research primarily aimed to understand why states pursue regionalism. Realist theory, particularly articulated by Hans J. Morgenthau and later scholars such as Mansfield (1999), argues that states view regionalism as both a tool and a platform for achieving their foreign policy objectives, with international organizations serving as key instruments in this pursuit.

Regionalism has changed the scope of the study of international relations. State actors are no longer the only referent object in the explanation of international phenomena; rather, international and regional institutions have been given more emphasis. Regionalism has been used by States to further their development (Hettne, 1994). Kenneth Waltz refused to accept the role of International Organizations as independent actors in the international system. This is because they were gaining autonomy over the States that created them where he argued that states should have full control over these organizations.

Regional economic blocs are groups of states with distinct roles and structures, aimed at fostering regional economic integration (Foxley, 2010). Since the 1960s, developing economies have pursued this goal to achieve relative and absolute gains, leveraging geographical proximity to expand markets.

he Berlin Conference's legacy persists in Africa through ongoing balkanization, exemplified by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Founded in 1975 to advance economic and social development (Bossuyt, 2016), ECOWAS adopted the 1979 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, ratified by all members, allowing citizens to enter, reside, and establish themselves in member states. This led to revised national policies eliminating visa and entry requirements for intra-ECOWAS travel (Clottey, 2017). Similarly, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) pursues regional integration through neoliberal trade and economic policies, targeting goals in trade, gender, peace and security, services, democracy, and governance (Wright, 2017). In Africa, regional integration is viewed as a strategy to boost trade and achieve economies of scale.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), established in 1994 as a successor to the Preferential Trade Area, is one of Africa's largest and most geographically diverse Regional Economic Communities (RECs), comprising 21 member states. This study examines COMESA as a case study to explore the opportunities and challenges RECs face as building blocks for African economic integration. COMESA's vision is to create a fully integrated, competitive regional economic community through cooperation in trade, investment promotion, and development, as outlined in Article 3(d) of the COMESA Treaty. Its objectives include fostering peace and security, establishing a unified market to facilitate trade and investment, enhancing political, economic, and social cooperation, and promoting sustainable growth to improve living standards. A key aspect of COMESA's strategy, akin to other RECs, is 'regionalization,' which involves constructing a positive political narrative around the benefits of regional cooperation (Bach D, 2016) This article evaluates COMESA's role in advancing these goals within the broader context of African regional integration.

Expansion of Membership

COMESA has expanded its membership over the years, growing from its original nine members to the current 21 namely; Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This expansion reflects a strategy of widening its regional influence and integrating more countries into its economic framework. For example, the recent inclusion of countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia demonstrates COMESA's commitment to broadening its regional reach.

COMESA has also widened its relations by engaging with external partners and organizations. It collaborates with other regional economic communities (RECs) and international organizations to promote regional integration and development. For instance, COMESA works with the African Union, the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to harmonize policies and enhance regional cooperation.

International relations and diplomacy serve as the cornerstone of COMESA's integration efforts, providing a framework for member states to engage with each other and the broader international community. Through diplomatic channels, COMESA member states can foster dialogue, resolve disputes, and negotiate agreements that promote regional cooperation and harmonization. Moreover, by leveraging diplomatic relations with external partners, including other regional blocs, multilateral institutions, and donor agencies, COMESA can access technical expertise, financial resources, and political support to bolster its integration agenda. It is

through such relations that COMESA has been able to deepen its relations among member states.

Diplomacy also plays a pivotal role in building bridges between nations, fostering trust, and nurturing mutual understanding. Within the COMESA region, diplomatic initiatives such as high-level summits, ministerial meetings, and joint commissions provide platforms for dialogue and consensus-building on key integration priorities. Through diplomatic engagements, member states can address contentious issues, negotiate trade agreements, and forge alliances that advance the collective interests of the region.

Beyond government-to-government relations, diplomacy also encompasses people-to-people connections, cultural exchanges, and grassroots initiatives that promote solidarity and cooperation among COMESA citizens. By facilitating cultural events, educational exchanges, and youth programs, COMESA member states can foster a sense of shared identity and belonging, transcending national boundaries and fostering a spirit of

The 23rd Summit of COMESA Heads of State and Government in Bujumbura, Burundi, on October 31, 2024. (Photo Crerdits: STR/AFP)

COMESA's integration agenda aims to establish a common market, enabling the free movement of goods, persons, services, labor, and rights of establishment and residence, as outlined in Chapter 28, Article 164 of the COMESA Treaty

Pan-Africanism within the region. This people-to-people relations then impact on deepened engagements.

Diplomacy provides COMESA member states with tools to address trade disputes, border tensions, and political differences, fostering consensus and advancing regional integration. COMESA's integration agenda aims to establish a common market, enabling the free movement of goods, persons, services, labor, and rights of establishment and residence, as outlined in Chapter 28, Article 164 of the COMESA Treaty (1994). Currently operating as a Free Trade Area (FTA), COMESA encourages member states to adopt measures at national, bilateral, and regional levels to progressively achieve these objectives, navigating geopolitical complexities to promote mutual benefits and regional cooperation.

COMESA has advanced economic integration through initiatives like the Free Trade Area (FTA), established in 2000, which eliminated tariffs on regionally produced goods, and the planned Customs Union. Countries such as Kenya and Uganda have experienced increased trade volumes and economic growth due to reduced tariffs. However, only two-thirds of COMESA's 21 member states participate in the FTA, highlighting challenges of 'multi-speed' cooperation that may persist in future integration efforts (COMESA, 2012). A study on the Customs Union and Common External Tariff (CET) showed mixed outcomes. Despite these challenges, COMESA has achieved GDP growth of 5–6% annually in recent years and significant increases in both intra-regional and external trade (COMESA, 2019).

COMESA's strategic plan targets a continent-wide Free Trade Area (FTA) and Customs Union by 2019, an African Common Market by 2023, and an Economic and Monetary Union with an African Parliament by 2028 (latest 2034) (Ibrahim, 2014) The planned Customs Union aims to standardize customs duties and regulations across member states, streamlining trade processes, reducing transaction costs, and enhancing regional competitiveness. By harmonizing trade policies and reducing barriers, the Customs Union will deepen economic integration, facilitating the free movement of goods, services, and people. These efforts are expected to boost intra-regional trade, spur economic growth, and improve livelihoods, marking a significant milestone in strengthening COMESA's regional integration.

COMESA is advancing regional integration through infrastructure development and policy harmonization. Key projects, such as the Northern Corridor, connecting Mombasa to landlocked countries like Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya (ZTK) Power Interconnection Project, enhance transport and logistics networks, facilitating efficient movement of goods and people to boost intra-regional trade. Additionally, COMESA aligns national policies in trade, investment, agriculture, and industry to ensure consistency and foster cooperation. Policies like the VISA Protocol and Free Movement Protocol aim to gradually eliminate visa requirements, enabling free movement of people and labor, with several member states already implementing these frameworks to support seamless regional integration.

To attract foreign direct investment (FDI), COMESA has implemented policies that create a conducive environment for investors. The organization provides a platform for member states to harmonize investment regulations, ensuring consistency and predictability for investors. For instance, countries like Ethiopia and Zambia have seen increased FDI inflows due to the stable investment climate promoted by COMESA.

Having in mind that security is a prerequisite for development it has put in place various mechanisms to ensure peace and security among the member states. The organization has established mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution among member states. Through initiatives such as the COMESA Early Warning System (COMWARN), the organization monitors potential conflicts and coordinates responses to maintain regional stability. These mechanisms help in

promoting regional peace and security hence deepening relations among the member states.

To deepen its relations, COMESA provides capacity-building and technical support to member states. These initiatives help enhance the capabilities of member states in various sectors. Through training programs, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing platforms, the organization empowers countries to effectively implement regional policies and initiatives. For example, COMESA has conducted workshops on trade facilitation, customs modernization, and regulatory reforms, helping member states improve their trade practices.

Challenges and Future Prospects

COMESA has made significant strides in promoting regional integration and cooperation among its member states. However, it still faces several challenges that hinder its effectiveness, the achievement of its objectives and the realization of its full potential. Political instability, infrastructure deficits, economic diversity, trade barriers, limited institutional capacity, and slow implementation of agreements are significant hurdles. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts, increased investment, and strong political commitment from member states.

Political Instability

Political instability in certain COMESA member states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and South Sudan, poses significant challenges to regional integration. Conflicts, governance issues, and unrest disrupt trade, investment, and the implementation of regional policies, undermining economic growth and cooperation. These fragile states hinder coordinated policy efforts, limiting COMESA's ability to achieve cohesive regional development.

Lack of political goodwill

The success of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa is often hindered by insufficient political will among heads of state, leading to slow or stunted growth. Many African leaders prioritize political goals over economic actions, resulting in suboptimal economic outcomes (Eduard, 2015) As state- and elite-driven entities, RECs face uneven commitment from member states to implement policies for deep economic and political integration, which limits intra-African trade (Wright, 2017) .The effectiveness of RECs depends on the leadership quality and prevailing political and economic conditions within member states. Reluctance to cooperate or domesticate regional policies, combined with challenges like poor transportation networks, constrains REC administrations' ability to achieve robust integration.

Infrastructure Gaps

Despite progress, COMESA faces significant infrastructure gaps in transport, energy, and communication networks, which impede the efficient movement of goods and people, reducing regional competitiveness (COMESA, 2015). These deficits, exacerbated by inadequate investment, skills shortages, and inappropriate policy reforms, hinder socio-economic development (COMESA, 2016). Fragmented regional infrastructure, with development often prioritized at the national rather than regional level, underscores the lack of cohesive road and railway networks connecting member states. Addressing these challenges requires substantial investment and coordinated efforts, as outlined in COMESA's Medium Term Strategic Plan, to enhance regional connectivity and integration.

Diverse Economies

The economic diversity among COMESA member states, characterized by varying stages of development, priorities, and capacities, poses significant challenges to policy harmonization and regional integration. Disparities in geographic circumstances, resource endowments, political systems, and national interests hinder the adoption of uniform policies and cohesive collective action. Additionally, limited economic diversification and a lack of manufacturing capacity constrain growth in intra-COMESA trade. These factors undermine COMESA's coherence as a regional entity, making the identification of common priorities a persistent obstacle to advancing its integration agenda.

Trade Barriers and Non-Tariff Barriers

While COMESA has made significant progress in reducing tariffs, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) remain a significant challenge. These include customs delays, complex regulatory requirements, and inadequate infrastructure at border crossings. NTBs hinder intra-regional trade, reducing the benefits of trade liberalization efforts. Despite the creation of a Customs Union, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) such as administrative procedures, lengthy border inspections, and varying regulations continue to impede the free movement of goods and services across the region. NTBs increase the cost of doing business,

The Chairperson of COMESA, President Évariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi, November 2024 (Photo Credits: AFP via Getty Images)

reduce trade efficiency, and create delays in cross-border trade, undermining the region's competitiveness

Limited Institutional Capacity

Many COMESA member states face limited institutional capacity to implement regional agreements and policies effectively. This includes insufficient technical expertise, inadequate resources, and weak administrative structures. This is because of low literacy levels in most of the COMESA member states. Enhancing institutional capacity is crucial for the successful implementation of regional initiatives.

Slow Implementation of Regional Agreements

The slow and inconsistent implementation of regional agreements and protocols by COMESA member states creates a significant gap between policy commitments and practice, undermining trust, cooperation, and the effectiveness of COMESA's integration efforts. Reluctance or inability to domesticate regional policies, coupled with challenges like poor transportation networks and entrenched economic structures, limits progress (Wright, 2017). Implementation rates vary widely, with no member state having executed more than half of COMESA's core programs, highlighting a critical barrier to achieving cohesive regional integration (Wright, 2017).

Language and Cultural Differences

COMESA is home to a diverse set of languages and cultures, including English, Swahili, French, Arabic among other indigenous languages. While this diversity is an asset, it can also be a barrier to seamless communication and collaboration. Language barriers can hinder effective communication in regional forums, policymaking, and cross-border business dealings, slowing down the integration process.

Conclusion

In order to foster regional economic integration between them, States have throughout regarded regional economic blocs as a means to this end. By taking advantage of geographical contiguity, developing economies have since set regional economic integration as their primary goal.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa is an important regional community, and has registered significant successes since its formation, evolving to strengthen its economic performance. Admittedly, problems remain. Some may be overcome by continuing diplomacy and international relations, others by blunt encouragement by donors, but national sovereignty and limited infrastructure appear likely to continue to limit the organization's momentum towards optimal integration.

COMESA exemplifies the potential of Regional Economic Communities to drive integration and cooperation among member states. As it is actively engaged in both widening and deepening its relations among member states, the role of international relations and diplomacy cannot be overstated. By embracing diplomacy as a catalyst for collaboration, COMESA member states can overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and chart a path towards a more integrated, prosperous, and resilient future for the region. The organization has not only expanded its membership and engaged with external partners to broaden its regional influence but also simultaneously, it is deepening integration through trade liberalization, infrastructure development, policy harmonization, and capacity building. Through sustained diplomatic efforts, guided by a commitment to shared values and mutual respect, COMESA can unlock the full potential of its diverse member states and build a brighter tomorrow for generations to come thus achieving its long-term goal of economic growth, political stability and social development.

To sum up, cognizant of the fact that regional economic blocs have negative implications and ramifications to the Member States' foreign policy formulation; it is both a logical and moral fallacy to conclude that abandoning regionalism will do no harm. This is because the positive implications outwit the negative ones.

Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from this study prompt a substantial number of recommendations. Looking forward, COMESA's prospects for deeper integration and cooperation remain promising. Continued commitment to trade liberalization, infrastructure development, and policy harmonization will be crucial. Additionally, addressing political instability and fostering inclusive development will be key to ensuring that all member states benefit from regional integration.

To deepen integration and cooperation, COMESA must address existing challenges through strategic initiatives. Strengthening political stability, investing in infrastructure, enhancing policy harmonization, reducing non-tariff barriers, building institutional capacity, and promoting private sector involvement are critical steps toward achieving deeper regional integration. By implementing these recommendations, COMESA can foster sustainable economic growth, improve living standards, and enhance regional stability.

Firstly, it advocates for a balanced approach that combines membership expansion with efforts to strengthen institutional mechanisms and foster closer ties among existing members. Secondly, it emphasizes the importance of enhancing the implementation of existing agreements and initiatives to maximize their impact on regional integration and economic development. Finally, the study underscores the need for sustained dialogue, collaboration, and political commitment among COMESA member states to overcome challenges and seize opportunities for mutual benefit.

COMESA should enhance efforts to promote political stability and good governance in member states. This is because political instability and governance issues can significantly disrupt regional integration efforts. Strengthening political stability and governance is crucial for ensuring a conducive environment for economic cooperation and development. This can be achieved through establishing and supporting mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as promoting democratic governance and the rule of law through capacity-building programs and peer reviews.

Since infrastructure plays a vital role in integration COMESA should invest in Infrastructure Development. It should increase investments in regional infrastructure projects, focusing on transport, energy, and communication networks. Adequate infrastructure is essential for facilitating trade, investment, and the movement of people. Improved infrastructure will enhance connectivity and reduce transaction costs within the region. It could do this by prioritizing key infrastructure projects such as the Northern Corridor and the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya (ZTK) Power Interconnection

COMESA should intensify efforts to identify and eliminate non-tariff barriers to trade within the region. Non-tariff barriers such as customs delays and regulatory obstacles hinder intra-regional trade. Addressing these barriers will enhance trade flows and economic integration

Project. It should also seek partnerships with international financial institutions and private sector investors to fund infrastructure development.

For any regional body to prosper its needs to align its policies thus COMESA should focus on enhancing policy harmonization and regulatory cooperation. It should continue with efforts to harmonize policies and regulations across member states in areas such as trade, investment, and industry. This is because harmonized policies and regulations create a predictable and consistent business environment, facilitating smoother cross-border trade and investment. It can do this by developing and implementing region-wide standards for goods and services. It should also establish a regional regulatory body to oversee the implementation and enforcement of harmonized policies.

Most regional bodies in Africa find challenges to cooperate because of non-tariff barriers. Thus, for COMESA to prosper it should reduce Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs). The body should intensify efforts to identify and eliminate non-tariff barriers to trade within the region. Non-tariff barriers such as customs delays and regulatory obstacles hinder intra-regional trade. Addressing these barriers will enhance trade flows and economic integration. To overcome this obstacle, it should implement an online NTB reporting and monitoring system to track and resolve trade barriers. It should also conduct regular reviews and audits of customs and border procedures to ensure efficiency. There is need to enhance trade integration by establishing a comprehensive customs union that eliminates tariffs on intra-regional trade and simplifies rules of origin to encourage local production and integration into regional value chains.

Strong institutions are essential for the successful implementation of regional policies and agreements. Building institutional capacity will ensure that member states can meet their commitments and achieve regional integration goals. COMESA should enhance the institutional capacity of member states and COMESA's secretariat to effectively implement regional initiatives. It will only achieve this by providing technical assistance and training programs to member states in areas such as trade facilitation, customs modernization, and regulatory reforms. It can also build and strengthen the capacity of COMESA's secretariat through recruitment of skilled personnel and provision of adequate resources.

Lastly, preview to the crucial role that the private sector plays in driving economic growth and development, COMESA should ensure private sector involvement in matters of regional integration. Engaging the private sector will enhance innovation, investment, and job creation within the region. It should encourage greater private sector participation in regional integration initiatives. COMESA should create platforms for public-private dialogue to identify and address barriers to business and investment. It should develop incentives and support mechanisms for private sector investment in key sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and services.

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are excited to release our 43rd bi-monthly issue of *The HORN Bulletin* (Vol. VIII, Iss. III, 2025). We bring to you well-researched articles and analysis on topical issues and developments affecting the Horn of Africa. We welcome contributions from readers who wish to have their articles included in the HORN Bulletin. At HORN, we believe ideas are the currency of progress. Feel free to contact the Editor-in-Chief for more details at communications@horninstitute.org.

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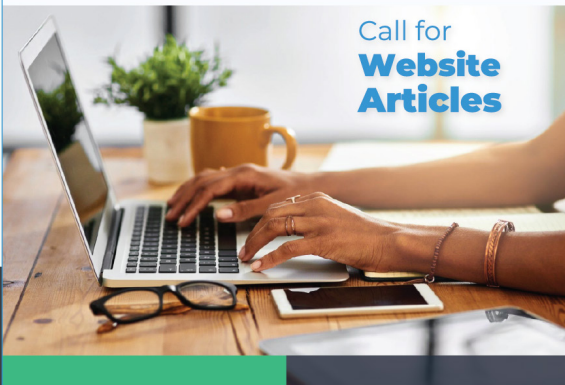**The HORN Weekly** — July 9, 2024

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