

## Hobyo Peace Conference

### Analysis and Implications on Statebuilding

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#### Summary

- Based on focus group discussions of 120 participants and key informant interviews with 45 individuals, this paper examines and analyses the conditions surrounding the Hobyo Peace Conference that was recently concluded in Hobyo, an ancient coastal town in Galmudug State of Somalia. While the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) is engaged in the process of running an electoral process in Dhuusamareeb, capital of Galmudug, the Hobyo forum seems to be favoring and commanding an alternative approach to sustainable peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives. The spectacular failure of the past four years of statebuilding is being attributed to the very machinations of the FGS during the state formation process in 2015, as well as the persistent standoffs in the past two years.
- The evolution of the conceptualization of statebuilding in Somalia is at its pinnacle with regards to impacting the communities and stakeholders of Galmudug State. The outcomes of recent electoral processes in Southwest, Puntland and Jubaland positioned the Habar Gidir intellectuals that lobbied for the Hobyo Conference in the awkward place to question how Galmudug future is being shaped.
- In fact, the genesis of the motivational force behind the Conference could be traced in some trending political, security, and economic issues in the region. The comparatively heavy concentration of weaponry in the hands of clans, the bleak economic conditions, and the elusive potential for the extension of public services to the communities in the region, all furthered the quest for an alternative approach to statebuilding in Galmudug.
- The paper also found that it was due to the Galmudug community's historical cynical view towards federalism<sup>1</sup> as a system of governance for Somalia that no substantial efforts have ever been exerted, from within, towards the creation and sustenance of an effective FMS. However, the Hobyo Conference aims to constitute a paradigm shift and set the sail for a new era. And for that matter, it began with the focus of the sole ownership of both the initiative and sponsorship of the process.

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<sup>1</sup> Puntland, Galmudug, ASWJ, and the Somali Government Set to Face Off over Federalism Disputes, Somali News Room, BY TRES THOMAS ON JULY 10, 2015, <https://somalianews-room.com/2015/07/10/>

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## Introduction

State building has been one of the most conspicuous subjects featured in the discourse on restoring order to Somalia since the collapse of the military government in 1991. It was also the overarching subject of both the Somali and international efforts to bring the country back to the norms of the global community of nations.<sup>2</sup> These efforts have resulted in various, uncoordinated processes that eventually crystalized to shape and form the current political and socio-political dispensation of the country. While most statebuilding bids (particularly those featured by foreign involvement of any kind) fell short of achieving desired outcomes, at best, there are exceptional instances of relative success stories.

The legal and political conceptualization of statebuilding has been evolutionary in the Somali political psyche, and somewhat perversely counter-intuitive, since the beginning of the civil war and certainly before. Despite the only couple of relative success stories of statebuilding –Somaliland and Puntland- being at a subnational level, the elite and public in the rest of the country viewed the concept only with national lens. The 2004 adoption of a Transitional Federal Charter (TFC) and subsequent creation of Transitional Federal Institutions in the Mbagathi statebuilding project fatefully altered this conceptualization equation. Subnational state formation sprints had characterized the entire transitional period of eight years. Self-proclaimed states with apparent disregard to the provisions of the TFC sprung up as many as armed sub-clans in most parts of Southcentral Somalia. But even in the more relatively stable Somaliland and Puntland, the period had an adverse impact on the more mature statebuilding missions and proved resource-exhaustive to authorities dealing with sporadic separatist movements aspiring to cleave off clan territories and form a new state.<sup>3</sup>

In 2012, Somalia ended the transitional period and adopted a provisional constitution. During its four-year

term, the government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud succeeded in the completion of the federal map through the merger of two or more of the country's 18 regions to form four Federal Member States (FMS) in Southcentral Somalia at the expense of almost all the self-proclaimed states. Ever since, the conceptual perception of statebuilding involved not only the mechanisms to build back the shattered institutions at the national level, but also those of FMS.

It is critically salient to understand that statebuilding processes in the Somalia context can, and often do, render devastating counterproductive ramifications. Although comparative studies of the factors contributing to the successes and failures of statebuilding in Somalia have not been comprehensively conducted, historical memory clearly indicate the significance of political settlement negotiations and collective local ownership of initiative and sponsorship.<sup>4</sup>

While these ingredients of statebuilding have been present in Somaliland and Puntland projects, they have received less than adequate treatment in the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the International Community (IC) heavily involved processes that formed the four latecomer FMS in the South and Central regions.<sup>5</sup>

Galmudug State of Somalia was formed in 2015 in Adado district, the contemporarily temporary base of the FMS. Four years later, at the end of the first term of the first constitutional institutions (parliament and presidency), the state barely has in place any mechanism to transition to another one but seemingly the replication of the 2015 Adado process: IC-funded and mainly FGS-implemented reconciliation conference with external pressure to meet a deadline followed by delegates of clans to select Members of Parliament who in turn elect a president. The stark similarities of the procedures of 2015 and 2019, both led by the Federal Ministry of Interior, raise the concerns that the whole process will not be a process but the sum of events to validate the same

2 The Somali Peace Process: Djibouti 1991, Addis Ababa 1993, Sana'a 1997, Cairo 1997, Arta 2000, Eldoret 2002, Nairobi 2003, Nairobi 2004, and Asmara 2007.

3 The self-proclaimed states included Gal-Mudug, Himan & Heeb, Hiiraan State & others in Southcentral and Maakhir, Khatumo State, Awdal State, in Somaliland & Puntland.

4 Ali, Mohammed, and Walls, 2008, <https://apd-somaliland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Peace-in-Somaliland-an-indigenous-Approach-to-State-building-.pdf>

5 Mosley, J. 2015, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field\\_document/20150902SomaliaFederalFutureMosley.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150902SomaliaFederalFutureMosley.pdf)

inorganic institutions that led the state exactly to the same ground they took off with nothing more than the local leverage they were provided by the forums that created them, thereby rather unbuilding the state they were created to build.

Against that background of elusive potential for statebuilding, the Habar Gidir clan-family comprising of five sub-clans have convened in Hobyo district on July 15, 2019. The timing of the conference provides a clue on the overarching objective its sponsors and participants are trying to achieve: harmonization of political capacity to influence the Galmudug transition and state building process.

This paper examines the Hobyo Peace Conference and its implications on statebuilding in Somalia at both state and national levels. It begins with a historical overview of the political dynamics that led to the formation of Galmudug State of Somalia and the progress made on statebuilding in the first four-year term. It then provides rigorous, but context-relevant, analysis on the Hobyo Conference and its implications on the future of Galmudug.

## Methodology

The combination of primary and secondary data has been collected and analyzed using qualitative methods. Primary data included focus group discussions held for delegates of the Hobyo Peace Conference and key informant interviews. The research team held four discussion group events each participated by 30 individuals. Key informant interviews have been made with 45 individuals, including Members of Parliament at both the federal and state levels, traditional elders, delegates of the 2015 Adado State Formation Conference, civil society members, officers in the security apparatus, and the private sector.

Secondary data has also been collected and analyzed in the form of desk review of literature pertaining to peacebuilding and statebuilding in Somalia and official documents on the subject matter from the FGS, GSS, and IC.

## Galmudug: A Historic Overview

The name, *Galmudug*, derives from the conflation of *Galgaduud* and *Mudug*, the two regions which merger was the constitutional basis upon which the state was built. It was the product of enormous efforts exerted by the Federal Government of Somalia, represented largely by the Ministry of Interior, Reconciliation, and Federal Affairs -MoIRFA. The state formation process also greatly benefited from the support of UNDP's Project Initiation Plan together with SSF/Finish Church Aid.<sup>6</sup>

Before the Adado process that culminated in the creation of the FMS, the region was divided into several pro-government administrations while Al-Shabaab (AS), Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, controlled significant territory. Although the state formation process attempted to uphold the principle of inclusivity by engaging elders and other relevant stakeholders of all the clans, the Ahlusunna Waljama (ASWJ) opted to boycott the entire process.

On one hand, the process attempted to adopt a bottom-up approach. Prolonged intense negotiations between clan representatives culminated in a power sharing formula. Traditional elders of all clans in the region selected delegates to ratify a provisional constitution and to pick Members of State Assembly from populations of candidates in their respective constituencies. The Assembly elected a speaker, deputy speakers, a vice president, and a president. Such approach was not the case in the two state formation projects that immediately preceded the Adado process: Jubaland and Southwest. Both began with the institution of presidency and executive preceding that of state assembly, throwing in the

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<sup>6</sup> The STEFS Joint Program Document, [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/somalia/docs/Project\\_Documents/CrossCutting/STEF%20Emerging%20States%20ProDoc%201%20April%202016%20to%2031%20Dec%202017.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/somalia/docs/Project_Documents/CrossCutting/STEF%20Emerging%20States%20ProDoc%201%20April%202016%20to%2031%20Dec%202017.pdf)

hands of respective executive leaderships the prerogative to consolidate political control at the expense of cultivating an environment and culture of democratic contestation.<sup>7</sup> In fact, in the Southwest case, even after a change of one president, the post of vice presidency is yet to be introduced. In this regard, the role of the FGS has been acclaimed. Where its fingerprints are not found in the state formation process, inclusivity of political participation tends to be quite questionable, Southwest and Jubaland being the outstanding instances.

On the other hand, rigorous analysis of Galmudug state formation process reveals deeper underlying factors and circumstances that rendered the (technically) properly planted seeds grow inorganic. The research team classified these factors and circumstances into two major categorical elements:

- Inadequate, or outright absence of, locally initiated and sponsored peacebuilding effort preceding the power sharing bargains of clans.
- Dilution of the sincere solicitation and quest of legitimacy with the FGS leadership's tendency to keep a political end in view.

#### Local Initiation & Sponsorship of Peacebuilding

Majority of the participants of the focus group discussions and interviewees, who were all involved in the 2015 state formation process, viewed the Adado deliberations as a contestation platform for rival sides in the national politics and less of an opportunity for sincere reconciliations and political settlements at the regional and communal levels. They also admitted that local initiative to cultivate genuine reconciliation and peacebuilding mechanism was absent. The respective local powerbases, administrations, and clans concentrated on the power sharing formula and distribution structures. The entire bargain was future-oriented and had

little space to address past and existing grievances and mistrust.

It is against this background that the lessons learned from the only relative success stories of statebuilding in Somalia increase in prominence. A comprehensive study conducted by the International Peacebuilding Alliance on Somaliland's approach to statebuilding revealed that the most critical ingredients it contained were local ownership of initiative and funding and negligible external pressure.<sup>8</sup> In both Somaliland and Puntland cases, the role of traditional elders has been critical to both the state formation and statebuilding processes.

The elders interviewed for this paper expressed that in the 2015 Adado process, it was the FGS's empowerment of political players as the holders of legitimacy and insensitivity to the grievances of clans that impeded public trust in the 'so-called' shared sub-national governance system. Many of the elders contended that clans are more intolerant to perceived injustices and lack of proper representation at the subnational level than the national arena. This, as contended by an interviewed elder, is perhaps because subnational 'authorities are proximate to impacting the territories clans identify with as agnatic heritage and over which battles have been fought for many years'.

The absence of local initiation in peacebuilding has been a key hindering factor to the prospect of conception of an FMS with reasonable legitimacy in Mudug and Galgaduud regions. It also contributed to the elusive potential of future leadership to devise a coherent plan to extend the governance system throughout the state.

#### Political Ends Over Legitimacy

During its entire term, the government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud maintained a full plate of strains at its disposal that were in direct competition with its ideal enhancement of political base. Since it essentially

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7 Laws, E. (2018), <https://twpcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Thinking-and-working-politically-in-Somalia.pdf>

8 Ali, Mohammed, and Walls, 2008, <https://apd-somaliland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Peace-in-Somaliland-an-indigenous-Approach-to-State-building-.pdf>

inherited little more than the juridical sovereignty of Somalia, that was the greatest leverage on which it capitalized. The FGS led the state formation process funded by international donors who set deadlines for project completions. Most of the delegates, members of the technical committee, and other participants of the process eyed for the securing of a space in the political dispensation that's rather largely viewed as an extension of the project itself than the legitimate state system of governance to be served.

The July 30, 2014, agreement<sup>9</sup> that enjoined the completion of the entire Galmudug state formation process in 60 days was too ambitious. The FGS did not have the genuine capacity threshold required to bring about legitimate subnational systems of governance widely accepted and trusted by local people. Indeed, it was driven on the basis of highly personalized, individualistic type of leadership and lacked coherent strategy to navigate through the bulk of internal and external obstacles. Moreover, internal row consumed the scarce leverage.

President Mohamud issued a presidential decree aimed at softening the ground for power sharing negotiations and giving ASWJ the designated capital city (Dhuusamareeb), Himan iyo Heeb, the state formation venue (Adado), and Regional Galmudug State, the presidential post. This arrangement was endorsed by the latter two administrations while ASWJ met it with categorical objection. The FGS and its international partners under the auspices of the SRSG, Nicholas Kay, have exerted tremendous efforts to convince all parties to attend in the run-up to the Adado conference. To that end, Mr. Kay arrived in Adado on April 15 along with President Mohamud to provide the final mediation support as the conference opening ceremony was scheduled for the following day.<sup>10</sup>

On April 16, the conference for the state formation of Galgaduud and Mudug regions of Central Somalia was launched at the *Hoolka Kafaalo* "Sponsorship Hall" in

Adado district by President Mohamud. Present at the opening were the traditional elders and the delegates they already approved, most airlifted from Mogadishu by donor money, the technical committee to manage the electoral procedures of the process, and rainbow of international dignitaries in the first row. For the following two and a half months, until July 4, when Abdikarim Hussein Guled, seen as the highly-anticipated candidate favored and funded by Villa Somalia, was elected Head of Galmudug State, actors in the Adado deliberations engaged in vigorous technical scuffles with regards to steering the process.

The participants of the discussions and interviewees of this paper unanimously agreed that the events that occurred in Adado between April 16 and July 4 were more or less political contestations between political actors in Mogadishu which, at the end, the Villa Somalia group took the largest share of power, with other political groups securing important posts such as the Speaker of Parliament. No genuine effort has been exerted towards the conception of an FMS with reasonable legitimacy in front of its citizens, indeed.

### Post-State Formation Period

President Guled hit the ground running. As anticipated by political observers in Somalia, the new president's plate was full on arrival. However, it was not filled with the plethora of necessary thinking and planning for the advancement of the nascent state. It was filled with the politics of priority to villa Somalia at the national level. One month after the election of Guled to lead Galmudug Interim Administration, President Mohamud launched the National Leadership Forum (NLF), a platform for the leaderships of FGS and FMS to agree on and facilitate the 2016 national elections, in addition to other key national level policies. As Puntland and Jubaland constantly locked horns with the FGS leadership on many key issues, Villa Somalia desperately needed the inclusion of more cooperative FMS in the NLF.

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<sup>9</sup> Central Regions State Formation Agreement (Mudug and Galgaduud), 2014, <https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/797>

<sup>10</sup> Goobjoog News, April 15, 2015, <https://goobjoog.com/english/un-envoy-to-somalia-reaches-adado/>

Up Until February 7, 2017, when President Mohamud was unseated in a spectacular victory by the current president, Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, in the presidential elections, President Guled took no significant measures to assert and extend the governance system in his state. And, on February 26, 2017, he sent his resignation letter to the Galmudug Parliament which, in turn, endorsed the president's decision and initiated the proceedings to his replacement. Three months later, Galmudug Parliament elected Ahmed Duale Gelle (XAAF) to lead the state. President Xaaf completed the remaining two years of the presidential term with an approach that is quite different from that of his predecessor. Yet, as in 2015, an approach that is different from close collaboration and commingling with the politics of Villa Somalia was not acceptable to the current FGS leadership. A former member of President Xaaf's cabinet interviewed stated that 'according to the current FGS, inscription of the political interests of Villa Somalia on the FMS's overarching agenda is a prerequisite for the occupation of state-level top leadership posts'

President Xaaf succeeded in alluring ASWJ into the Galmudug fold through substantial concessions of presidential, legislative, and other powers. This was not necessarily motivated by the extension of the governance system. Most interviewees and participants of the focus group discussions believed that president Xaaf's political fallout with Villa Somalia was his main motive to secure a deal with ASWJ in a bid to consolidate local grip to stay in power without offering wholesale loyalty and obedience to the FGS leadership. A policy-relevant research conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) revealed that the SSF played a key facilitation role in the Djibouti process that culminated in the Galmudug-ASWJ accord. The report also demonstrated that internal squabble within the ASWJ was the major trigger of their leadership's positive attitude towards the deal with Galmudug. In a nutshell, it was because of the respective leaderships' convictions that joining forces was a matter of survival that precipitated the Djibouti

Agreement, a deal that otherwise constitutes a milestone the previous FGS and its international partners failed to effect.<sup>11</sup> However, the joined forces of Galmudug and ASWJ which consolidated its base in Dhuusamareeb and moved the seat of the Administration to the official capital could not resist and endure the systemic sabotage of the FGS leadership weaponizing once and again the country's juridical sovereignty.

As the first term closed to ending, MoIFRA succeeded to evict President Xaaf from Dhuusamareeb, and from all presidential powers to lead in the transitional period for that matter, after striking a deal with ASWJ on July 2nd. On July 3rd, the President issued what seemed to mean his final exercise of presidential powers when he signed a decree voluntarily waiving his constitutional privileges, and transferring fiduciary duties, with regards to electoral procedures and conferring such duties and accompanying privileges upon MoIRFA.

### **Hoby Peace Conference: Analysis and Implications**

The coming of President Xaaf's political checkmate was perhaps not the low hanging fruit upon which the assumptions of MoIRFA's logical framework were based. Most participants of the focus group discussions as well as key informant interviewees affirmed a grand concern of an ever-increasing elusive potential for an effective governance system in Galmudug.

One of the elders of the sub-clans thoroughly explained, in one of the focus group discussion events, the necessity of ensuring the success of the conference: 'it is impossible to succeed in statebuilding until we succeed in peacebuilding. The Hoby conference is the first of a series of peace-making missions on which we intend to embark'. The elder's views, with which all the participants of the focus group discussion concurred, constitute the problem statement and theory of change package that was driving the process.

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11 Laws, E. (2018), <https://twpcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Thinking-and-working-politically-in-Somalia.pdf>

The Chairman of the technical committee also explained the inner workings that led to the July 15 Hobyo Peace Conference launching event. 'The initiative', he said seeming to be drawing a response for one of the questions he was asked from a vivid picture in mind, 'was first brought to the table by a handful of Habar Gidir intellectuals in and out of the country'. As is always the case with all grassroots peace-making missions, context and personalities indispensably matter. The handful of intellectuals that owned and, with the unexpected plethora of support of the masses, spearheaded the initiative were not from the political class, a propensity that permitted their command of both public and politicians' trust and collaboration.

Apart from total ownership of the conference, the initiative was funded through popular contribution. The finance specialist of the technical committee asserted that they 'received monetary contributions from members of the Habar Gidir sub-clans in and out of Somalia. Contribution also took more forms than cash. Residents of Hobyo district and surrounding villages provided livestock, living necessities, and other commodities. Women played an outstanding role in the fund-raising aspect of the project and also acted as a pressure group to encourage participants to maintain objectivity and not be distorted by the details of the debates. The sophistication of the fund-raising mechanism created by the sub-committee in charge of the financing is fascinating. The mechanism blends the traditional fund-raising approaches of Somali clans with modern techniques to fashion an effective, sustainable and efficient fund-raising management system that allows the conference to ensure independency of external players and factors. The technical committee in general adopted this Somali saying as their central moto of which all members are constantly reminded: *Raganimo waa adigoo waxaaga ka taga*, translating into: manhood is giving up on your own aspirations as a sacrifice to others.

This unique blending of traditional and modern methods is not confined to the fund-raising management aspect of the Hobyo project only. The forum brought together the traditional elders of the five sub-clans of Habar Gidir. The Elders sat the scene by declaring a statement of forgiveness on all 'non-personal' differences and structurally formed and mandated a Council for Habar Gidir leadership (CHGL). The delegates of the forum have passed the terms of reference of the Council and its sub-committees through the mixture of the traditional Xeer Soomaali and modern legal system technical instrumentalities. CHGL succeeded to hold a highly organized election to choose its top leadership. Professor Abdulkadir Mohamed Shirwa', a well-known name in the education sector and founder of Gaalkacyo University, won a landslide victory against highly-seasoned veteran Army Commander, General Mohamed Nur Galaal.

Throughout the 50 days that the Hobyo Peace Conference was taking place, tremendous strides have been made towards the achievement of the key objectives that the forum was aiming and longing. Nonetheless, most of the participants are convinced that the forum and the CHGL that it created are only the first steps of a long journey for statebuilding that requires more sustained effort in peacebuilding. Although the CHGL is yet to draft a work plan that clarifies their priorities, it goes without saying that Galmudug statebuilding stands out as in the very top of the list. It was the major issue that kindled the bid in the first place.

The success, and lack thereof, of the Hobyo Peace Conference, as far as statebuilding is concerned, will largely depend on the mechanisms the CHGL and the forum that created it use to engage in the other clans in the region and the amount of settlements sorted therewith. It will also depend on the sustainability of the modus operandi that guided the Hobyo process.

## Analysis of Overarching Trends

### Political

The evolution of the conceptualization of statebuilding in Somalia is at its pinnacle with regards to impacting the communities and stakeholders of Galmudug State. The recent outcomes of the electoral processes in Southwest, Puntland and Jubaland positioned the Habar Gidir intellectuals that lobbied for the Hobyo Conference in the awkward place to question how Galmudug future is being shaped.

The FMS configurational arrangements in Somalia reflect the country's clan dynamics and power bases. Traditionally, the Hawiye, mainly based in Galmudug, Hirshabelle, and Benadir, historically viewed federalism with cynical observations. That is perhaps why Galmudug and Hirshabelle were the last and final two regions to join the family of FMS. Hirshabelle was the completing piece of the federal map of Somalia. Both were formed through FGS badgering and IC funding with little initiative and desire from within.

As the federalization process evolved, and stronger FMS that stand to FGS and any other external undue influence emerged, the communities in these regions woke up to the salience of embracing subnational statebuilding efforts as part and parcel of the national statebuilding process. In other words, it is through establishing effective FMS that political stoutness and perceived share of national cake is expressed.

### Security

Galmudug was arguably both the epicenter of the resistance and struggle against the Military regime in Southcentral Somalia and the pivotal factor that precipitated the eviction of Former President Siad Barre from Mogadishu. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the military wing of the United Somali Congress (USC), the Hawiye rebel movement that ousted Barre, was led by General Mohamed Farah Aidid of Habar Gidir, and who

was later elected as the leader of the movement. Throughout the civil war, Habar Gidir clans were one of the heavily armed groups in the country with political dominion stretching from Central Regions to the far south and coastal territories. After the death of Aidid, several faction leaders emerged within Habar Gidir at the expense of clan unity under a single agenda.

After the emergence of Al-Shabaab and the adoption of federalism as the country's political system for Somalia, most Habar Gidir faction leaders retreated their heavy military equipment to the respective territories their sub-clans dominate in Galmudug. This makes the state one of the territories with the heaviest concentration of arms under the control of clans in Somalia. Galmudug is also the only FMS in Southcentral Somalia that does not depend on AMISOM for the protection of government officials, assets, and public infrastructure. With the exception of Galmudug, Puntland and Somaliland, AMISOM tends to be a security guarantor for all political establishments, including the FGS in Mogadishu. Up until 2012, Al-Shabaab waged several waves of ferocious military incursions in a bid to capture Dhuusamareeb and other key Habar Gidir dominated towns and territories, an endeavor that failed repeatedly until the group quit the ambition.

Against that background, it is obvious that statebuilding process in Galmudug requires much more than a set of events to validate elite bargains. One of the elders interviewed for this paper elaborated the security aspect of Galmudug State: 'All sub-clans in this region possess heavy arms and militias. It's the same forces and weapons used to fight Al-Shabaab and deny the relatively strong and dedicated group a foothold in these territories. If they are not united, no state can function. And they cannot be united until genuine peacebuilding is undertaken and trust of the people collected around a common vision based on statehood. This can only be done by us. Not any administration in Mogadishu, nor anyone beyond the borders'.



## Economic

Perhaps the economic conditions in Galmudug take primacy over political and security factors in the discourse on the elements stimulating the Hobyo initiative and agenda. After its formation in 1998, Puntland State of Somalia in the northeast established and maintained a relatively viable governance system that allowed it to emerge with some significant political economy to influence the national agenda more than any other FMS. Improvements in Public infrastructure such as ports and airports allowed Puntland to collect tangible domestic revenues that are reflected, in addition to donor funding, in the public expenditure and services provided to citizens. While ports are the main sources of domestic revenue throughout Somalia, with the exception of the Mogadishu port controlled by the FGS, all the other three ports in the country are in territories of non-Hawiye dominance.

In that essence, one of the overarching objectives of the Hobyo Conference is the advancement of the Hobyo Port opening ambition. This agenda has been in the making for decades. Several attempts have been made in that direction by different administrations of the country since the Trusteeship era with the common denominator of using the clan card to garner local support. None of those attempts has been adequately organic and grassroots-based. Most interviewees of this paper expressed their understanding of the core factors that contributed to the failures of successive attempts and willingness to build upon the learned lessons. A member of the economic sub-committee of the HGLC interviewed mentioned that the Hobyo Port project is at the top of their list of strategic, as well as operational, priorities. He added that the current FGS took the most significant steps towards the realization of a functioning Hobyo Port than any of its predecessors in the history. The majority of the participants share this acclamation of the efforts of the FGS towards the Hobyo Port project.

## Policy Recommendations

- All stakeholders in the Galmudug transition process should recognize the salience of grassroots-based peacebuilding missions and consider the Hobyo Initiative as a starting point for broader Galmudug reconciliation process.
- The FGS should provide the institutional support needed to effect the genuine aspirations of the Hobyo Initiative.
- The International Partners could best support by renewing their statebuilding commitments with the FGS in grassroots peacebuilding initiatives.
- The HGLC should extend reconciliatory hands to all the clans in Galmudug for genuine peacebuilding and political settlements.
- Other clans should welcome the Hobyo Initiative and engage with HGLC in addressing mutually incompatible goals through genuine peacebuilding and settlement discussions.
- Such genuine peacebuilding and settlement discussions should be locally owned and sponsored.
- The HGLC should build on the momentum of the popular support for the Hobyo Initiative while learning from the lessons drawn from the relatively success stories of Somaliland and Puntland in their respective statebuilding processes.

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