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Electoral Crossroads

Dilemmas of future democratisation in Somalia

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Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FIEIT	Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team
FMS	Federal Member State
KII	Key Informant Interview
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NIEC	National Independent Electoral Commission
NLF	National Leaders Forum
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
SRRC	Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council
SIEIT	State Indirect Electoral Implementation Teams
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TNG	Transitional National Government
TPEC	Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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Introduction

SINCE SOMALIA'S FIRST PERMANENT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FORMED IN 2012, the country has endeavoured to democratise its political system, with a view to establishing stable and competent governance institutions that can effectively serve the population. The federal government was not able to hold one-person, one-vote elections in 2016 as it had pledged to do three years earlier. Now that Somalia has peacefully completed its 2016–17 political transition through a one-time, semi-democratic process, attention has turned to the next election cycle, anticipated to happen in 2020–21. Once again, the federal government has announced that it intends these to be one-person, one-vote elections.

Somalia faces a range of dilemmas in implementing free and fair elections, which have implications not only for the Somali federal government but also political leaderships across the federal member states (FMSs), as well as communities, civil society, and the international community. This paper seeks to explore these dilemmas in the context of Somalia's electoral background and history, present popular perceptions of elections at both the federal and FMS level, and make recommendations as to how these dilemmas should be addressed.

Key topics include the potential ramifications of one-person, one-vote elections in Somalia and the impact of 'lifting the lid' on the 4.5 clan power-sharing formula. This formula has, since its introduction in 2000, brought greater stability to Somali politics, but at the cost of full democratic accountability and legitimacy. The paper will emphasise the need to balance local versus national statebuilding with democratisation and stability, examining whether elections can serve as a conduit for peacebuilding.

In order to secure stability for electoral processes, consideration must also be given to timelines: the system requires flexibility such that sufficient time can be given to deal with potential spoilers, while not being so flexible that transitional ruling bodies continue to govern without time limits.

As international donors largely fund elections, there is also a need for careful thinking about ensuring the financial feasibility of elections, balancing investments to produce democratic results with the real financial risks of elections that do not fulfil their own objectives. Of course, these challenges are intensified by the country's ongoing state of conflict.

Methodology and approach

This paper is the product of multiple strands of research. Saferworld collected quantitative data through a large-scale public perceptions survey on elections conducted in 2015, a time when Somalia was pursuing one-person, one-vote elections for 2016.[1] This survey entailed 1006 quantitative surveys across ten locations: Bosasso, Qardho, Beletweyne, Dhusamareb, Jowhar, Baidoa, Kismayo Cel Waaq, and Mogadishu (Wadajir and Shiblis Districts). In 2015, Saferworld also collected quantitative data on linkages between federal statebuilding, governance and reconciliation in Jubaland. At the same time, Saferworld conducted an extensive literature review along with interviews and dialogue with key Somali and international policymakers, government officials, and analysts.

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1   The official decision that Somalia would renounce its ambition for one-person, one-vote elections for a clan-based formula came in late July 2015.

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Democratisation in Somalia

An overview

Somalia

ON 1 JULY 1960, SOMALIA BECAME AN INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC following the unification of the former British Somaliland (now the Republic of Somaliland)[2] and the former Italian trust territory of Somalia. Somalia experienced several systems of governance in its first three decades after independence: electoral democracy from 1960 to 1969, military dictatorship from 1969 to 1976, and one-party authoritarianism from 1976 to early 1991, when the regime of Siad Barre collapsed amid widespread rebellion, causing the country to descend into civil war and state failure.

During Somalia's pre-war period (1960–1991), it held two constitutional referendums (1961 and 1979), four parliamentary elections (1964, 1969, 1979 and 1984), and one presidential election (1986). Of these, only two could reasonably be called democratic multi-party elections: the parliamentary elections of 1964 and 1969. All other elections were held under a one-party system in which citizens could not freely choose their political leaders.

Table 1: Elections held in Somalia between 1960 and 1991.[3]

Year	Type of elections	Total votes	Electoral model
20 June 1961	Constitutional Referendum	1,943,451	Not applicable
30 March 1964	Parliamentary	914,069*	Multi-party
26 March 1969	Parliamentary	782,234*	Multi-party
25 August 1979	Constitutional Referendum	3,605,490	Not applicable
30 December 1979	Parliamentary	3,985,838**	Single party
31 December 1984	Parliamentary	4,220,466**	Single party
23 December 1986	Presidential	4,889,078*	Single party

* Total valid votes (refers to number of votes after invalid/blank votes discounted)
** Total votes

After Somalia fragmented and descended into protracted war, no central authority existed until August 2000 when the first Transitional National Government (TNG)

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2 Somaliland had attained its independence from Britain on 26 June 1960.
3 See the African Elections Database at http://africanelections.tripod.com/so.html

was formed[4] and deployed a newly agreed 4.5 model for the allocation of seats. The 4.5 formula is a clan-quota power-sharing formula developed as a tool for political accommodation and reconciliation. The formula assigns seats proportionally to each of the four major Somali clans, with an additional half seat going to the minority clans. For instance, in a theoretical governing body with 9 members, each major clan would get two seats, with the last seat going to a minority clan representative. The formula is perceived to be associated with reduced conflict in the distribution of political power.

Despite its establishment, the TNG lacked territorial control, governance capacity, and local legitimacy.[5] The following government, known as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), was appointed in 2004, with a mandate to hold popular elections in 2009.[6] The TFG made limited progress on this, and was re-appointed using a similar clan-based mechanism in 2009. Despite vague commitments to appoint the following parliament through a popular election, as per previous governments, little tangible progress was made towards this.

The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established in 2012,[7] and in 2013 it committed to direct elections in 2016, producing strategies and milestones to achieve this goal. As with its predecessors, the FGS was formed on the basis of the 4.5 model of power sharing among clans.

On 1 August 2012, the FGS adopted a provisional federal constitution, which laid the foundation for Somalia to become a federal republic. This led to the emergence of Jubaland, South West State, Galmudug, and HirShabelle as federal member states (FMSs), joining the already established Puntland and (according to the provisional constitution) Somaliland.[8] While each of the newly established FMSs has a parliament, their composition and appointment has been based upon political negotiation and clan consensus building, with the presidency determined by a parliamentary vote. The status of Benadir, including the capital city of Mogadishu, is still to be determined.

In 2013, the FGS released 'Vision 2016: Framework for Action',[9] which established three benchmarks for a successful political transition in 2016: nationwide one-person, one-vote elections; completion of the FMS formation process; and adoption of a permanent constitution. This would be achieved while the new regime fought the armed group al-Shabaab,[10] which controlled large parts of the country.

Members of the international community endorsed Vision 2016, structured their partnership strategies for Somalia around it, and invested heavily in one-person, one-vote elections, including the establishment of a National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC).[11] However, political delays and disputes greatly impeded progress, and as a result many of the necessary milestones were not achieved in time to hold elections in 2016, including district boundary demarcation and finalisation

4 "From July 1992 to 27 August 2000, the United Nations declared Somalia a country 'without a government.' An internationally recognized Transitional National Government (TNG) was convened in August 2000, but the government had little control over the nation, which was mostly controlled by rival warlords and clans. The TNG was opposed by a rival pan-Somali governmental movement, known as the Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC). Eventually the factions of the TNG and the SRRC were reconciled, and a new united movement – the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) – was formed in late 2004", from http://africanelections.tripod.com/so.html

5 Hoehne MV (2010), 'Political representation in Somalia: citizenship, clanism and territoriality', *Accord Review* **21**, available at www.c-r.org/downloads/Accord%2021_10Political%20representation%20in%20Somalia_2010_ENG.pdf.

6 Hanson S, Kaplan E (2008), 'Somalia's transitional government', (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations), available at www.cfr.org/somalia/somalias-transitional-government/p12475

7 These four processes were based on a hybrid power-sharing structure. First, the Members of Parliament were appointed using a 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula. Then MPs elected the president.

8 Although recognised in the federal constitution as a state, Somaliland continues to pursue its own, separatist agenda as an independent state with Hargeisa as the seat of government and main city. The government of Somaliland does not recognise any decisions or actions made by the federal government in respect to its territory and people.

9 Vision 2016 was a document produced in 2013 by the Office of the President. See: www.villasomalia.gov.so/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/VISION2016-_Final_COMMUNIQUE1.pdf

10 In the midst of inadequate governance and security in 2005, the Union of Islamic Courts emerged as an alternative governance system, whose overthrow by US-backed militias and whose invasion of Ethiopia led to the emergence of al-Shabaab as military insurgents with a nationalist-Islamist orientation. Since then, they have battled against the Somali government for political, military, and territorial control.

11 The 2013 Somali Compact between donors and the SFG endorsed Vision 2016. A commitment to preparing and holding credible elections was included as Priority 3 under the Compact's 'Peace building and State-building Goal' on inclusive politics.

of the constitution. The FGS established a National Leaders Forum (NLF) which comprised national and regional leaders as well as some members of the international community.[12] After consultation by the NLF, the FGS withdrew from its original plan to hold popular elections in 2016 and agreed to revert once again to the 4.5 model. In an attempt to make the selection more democratic and to mitigate corruption, the NLF expanded the electorate to 14,025 delegates, who formed 275 electoral colleges comprising 51 electors for each parliamentary seat. A 54-member Upper House would also be established through indirect elections by FMS parliaments.[13] This marked the second time that Somalia abandoned popular elections in favour of clan selection, denying the Somali people the opportunity to vote in a genuinely democratic election for the first time in nearly fifty years.[14]

> **Box 1: Snapshot of the 2016 federal elections**
>
> The 2016 elections were required by the provisional federal constitution to provide a renewed mandate to the president and federal parliament. When it became clear that conditions were not in place to allow for one-person, one-vote elections, the FGS adopted indirect selection mechanisms for the 275 members of the House of the People (Lower House) and the 54-member Upper House.
>
> Seats in the Lower House were distributed based on the 4.5 clan power-sharing formula. 135 traditional elders who represent clans across Somalia, in consultation with the heads of the sub-sub clans (*Nabaddoon*), appointed 14,025 delegates to serve in the 51-member electoral colleges that would elect the 275 members of the Lower House.[15] Electoral college delegates voted in the state capitals of the existing FMSs except for Somaliland, whose delegates voted in Mogadishu.
>
> A Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team (FIEIT) created by the NLF (without a constitutional mandate) planned and oversaw the electoral process, and ensured its uniform implementation. State Indirect Electoral Implementation Teams (SIEIT) oversaw the electoral process for the Lower House in each state, while FMSs' assemblies elected the members of the Upper House.[16]
>
> A gender quota was introduced, mandating that 30 per cent of Upper House and Lower House seats would go to female candidates. Voting for both houses took place during November– December 2016, while the speakers of the two houses and their deputies were elected in January 2017. The two houses jointly elected a new president in February 2017.

Somaliland

In May 1991, the north-western region of the Somali Republic – formerly British Somaliland – declared independence from Somalia. Ten years later, the self-declared Republic of Somaliland ratified its national constitution through a popular referendum in which nearly 1.2 million votes were cast.[17] On the basis of this constitution, Somali-land organised district council elections in 2002 and 2012, presidential elections in

12 The NLF became a *de facto* executive body on a range of issues, including the focus on the 2020 elections. The NLF is strictly a national body. It remains to be seen whether it will be disbanded in the new parliament. The NIEC, which had been created under the 2012 transitional provisional constitution, was intended to prepare the elections, and a number of milestones were to be achieved in order to do this; however, numerous disputes and inaction caused severe delays. The NLF was a forum that emerged in an extra-constitutional manner and became a *de facto* decision-making forum. See Saferworld's 2016 briefing paper on the elections, 'Democracy delayed and diminished: Risks and possibilities for Somalia's 2016 political transition', available at: www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/1084-democracy-delayed-and-dividedarisks-and-possibilities-for-somaliaas-2016-political-transition

13 The Upper House was elected first by FMS assemblies. Of the 54 seats, 48 seats were distributed equally between six FMSs while three additional seats were allocated to Puntland and Somaliland.

14 The last democratic elections were parliamentary elections held in 1969. The TFG intended to conduct popular elections to appoint parliament and a president in 2009; however, following delays and extension of the TFG mandate, this was abandoned in favour of using a 4.5 clan distribution mechanism. Most Somali governments in the aftermath of 1991 have paid lip service to the idea of popular elections however it has only been under the Hassan Sheikh presidency in the run up to 2016 political process that meaningful foundations were laid for the implementation of elections.

15 Of the 51 delegates that made up an electoral college, 16 were supposed to be women and 10 were supposed to be youth. This meant that a majority of the electors (51 per cent) were women and youth.

16 Except in Somaliland, where a group of elders elected their Upper House representatives.

17 See the African Elections Database, and also Gers M and Valentine-Selsy NM (2002), 'Phase 1 of support to Local Democratic Practices in Somalia – Local Elections in Somaliland: Final Report of the European Union/GTZ Technical Advisory Team', available at www.somalilandlaw.com/Electoral_Laws/SL_Local_Elections_EU-GTZ_Final_Report_2002.pdf

2003 and 2010, and parliamentary elections in 2005.[18] Presidential and parliamentary elections were planned for 2015, but these have been beset by delays due to technical implementation issues as well as political disputes over process and timing. The presidential election is now expected to take place in late 2017, while the parliamentary election has been delayed until late 2018.

Puntland

The Puntland State of Somalia, established as an autonomous but not independent regional administration in 1998, conducted indirect presidential and parliamentary elections in 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2014.[19] In these elections, titled traditional elders (*Isimo*) chose the Members of Parliament (MPs) through inter-clan negotiation. The new MPs then elected the president, vice president, and speaker of parliament. The first one-person, one-vote municipal and parliamentary elections were planned for 2013, but due to technical delays and political disputes, as well as outbreaks of violence on the eve of the elections, the government of Puntland cancelled them and reverted to a clan selection mechanism.[20]

Since 1991, 17 separate electoral processes (including indirect elections) have occurred in both Somalia and Somaliland.[21] Of these, seven were held in Somaliland, five in Puntland, and five at the national/federal level in Somalia, including the appointment of three transitional governments as well as the current FGS. All national-level processes have employed a two-step, indirect clan-based mechanism to appoint the president, and every national or federal parliamentary election has used the clan-based 4.5 formula.

Table 2: Elections held in Somalia/Somaliland during the post-1991 period.[22]

Date	Type of (s)election	Electoral/selection model	Electorate
Federal/national level			
26 August 2000	Presidential	Indirect	238 Members of Transitional National Parliament
	Parliamentary	Indirect (4.5 formula)	Clans
10 October 2004	Presidential	Indirect	275 Members of Transitional Federal Parliament
	Parliamentary	Indirect (4.5 formula)	Clans
30 January 2009	Presidential	Indirect	425 Members of Transitional Federal Parliament
	Parliamentary	Indirect (4.5 formula)	Clans
17 August 2012	Parliamentary	Indirect (4.5 clan formula)	135 clan elders
10 September 2012	Presidential	Indirect	271 members of the Transitional Federal Parliament
November–December 2016	Parliamentary	Lower House – indirect	14,025 electors
		Upper House – indirect	FMS Assemblies
February 2017	Presidential	Indirect	329 Members of the Upper and Lower Houses of the federal parliament

18 However, these elections were marked with protracted delays and postponements. For example, the 2010 presidential elections were scheduled for 2011 but were delayed until 2013. The local council elections were scheduled for 2011 but were delayed until 2012. Parliamentary elections are yet to be held since being delayed in 2005, with MPs overstaying their 5-year term.

19 The MPs were selected/nominated by traditional leaders, who in turn elected the president, deputy president, and house speaker. See Saferworld (2014), 'Puntland at the Polls', available at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/817-puntland-at-the-polls

20 See Saferworld (2014) 'Puntland at the Polls' *op. cit.*

21 While the term 'election' is used, it is important to recognise that not all electoral events conform to one-person, one-vote mechanisms and are often limited in other some way.

22 Data in this table is triangulated from several sources, including: the African Elections Database, available at http://africanelections.tripod.com/somaliland_detail.html; official websites; publications such as Verjee et al. (2015), 'The economics of elections in Somaliland: Financing political parties and candidates' (London: Rift Valley Institute) p.14; and insights from key informants involved in this study.

23 Indication from government representative that they are interested in elections in 2019 for the appointment of the parliament.

Date	Type of (s)election	Electoral/selection model	Electorate
Somaliland			
Mid-1991	Presidential	Consensus among clan elders	Clan elders
23 February 1997	Presidential	Indirect	National Communities Conference
15 December 2002	Local council	Direct	440,067 eligible voters
14 April 2003	Presidential	Direct	538,246 eligible voters
29 September 2005	House of Representatives	Direct	670,322 valid votes
26 June 2010	Presidential	Direct	642,694 eligible voters (Total registered voters 1,069,914)
28 November 2012	Local council	Direct	820,160 eligible voters
Puntland elections			
August 1998	Parliamentary	Indirect	Clans/sub clans
	Presidential	Indirect	65 Members of Parliament
14 November 2001	Parliamentary	Indirect	Clans/sub clans
	Presidential	Indirect	65 Members of Parliament
2004	Parliamentary	Indirect	Clans/sub clans
8 January 2005	Presidential	Indirect	65 Members of Parliament
2008	Parliamentary	Indirect	Clans/sub clans
8 January 2009	Presidential	Indirect	66 members of parliament
December 2013	Parliamentary	Indirect	Clans/sub clans
8 January 2014	Presidential	Indirect	66 members of parliament

Democratic trajectory for Somalia

The NLF's decision in 2015 to revert to a clan power-sharing formula for the 2016–17 political process was accompanied by a commitment, announced by President Hassan Sheikh, to hold one-person, one-vote elections in 2020. Given that delays to the 2016 process caused it to spill into 2017, the next political process is likely to conclude in 2021.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) indicate that other FMS administrations will also seek to democratise, and are interested in holding elections during the 2017–2020 period (see Table 3). For example, Puntland has already declared its desire to conduct popular elections in 2018 for local councils and for the Puntland parliament and president in 2019.

Table 3: Anticipated elections over the next five years.

Location	Type of election	Year
FMS elections		
Puntland	District council	2018
	Presidential and parliamentary	2019
Jubaland[23]	Presidential and parliamentary	2019
Somalia federal elections		
Somalia	Presidential and parliamentary	2020–21
Somaliland elections		
Somaliland	Presidential	2017
Somaliland	Parliamentary	2018

It is likely that all FMSs will view popular elections as a means of providing legitimacy. The attention to date has been on federal elections in 2020–21, but Puntland has already declared its interest in holding parliamentary and presidential elections in 2019 and other FMSs are expected to follow suit. Such FMS-level elections will need to address the competing demands of democratisation, statebuilding, and the political viability of FMSs. It will be essential to mitigate fears that the federalisation of Somalia will lead to balkanisation through the creation of *de facto* clan enclaves.

While commitments to democratise within a particular timeframe have not fully materialised in all FMSs, the demand for democratisation by local populations and increasingly by FMS administrations themselves is unmistakable. Historically, highly centralised government in Somalia has failed; federalisation is currently seen as the best option, and consultations have shown that it has popular support.[24] Entrenching undemocratic power-sharing arrangements at the FMS level may bring about short-term stability if done well (Jubaland is a good example of this), but they may also spur violent conflict if it is perceived that one clan or actor dominates and others are not politically accommodated. HirShabelle and Galmudug, and even Jubaland in its early stages, exemplify these risks.

Undemocratic power-sharing may also entrench a dynamic of unaccountable govern-ance, marginalise certain groups, and entrench political entitlement for certain clans, as has been seen with the use of the 4.5 system at the national level. If the federalisation project fails, it could bring about a disillusioned population that sees the creation of ever-increasing numbers of elites who benefit from government coffers at the expense of the wider population. This could lead to further state–society conflict and drive popular support towards armed non-state actors with aspirations to govern.

The types and levels of elections in Somalia are covered in the 2012 provisional federal constitution under Chapter 4 (Representation of the people) and Chapter 5 (Devolution of the powers of state in the Federal Republic of Somalia). However, these two chapters do not contain any specific provisions on FMS-level elections within the federal system. Therefore, it can be assumed that FMSs have leeway to conduct their own elections or determine their own models of selecting political representatives. Research conducted in 2015 in Jubaland found that nearly 90 per cent of surveyed respondents wanted popular elections to appoint their FMS-level parliament and president.[25] A similarly high interest in democratisation has been seen in Puntland among communities,[26] civil society, and the government, with both civil society and the government holding

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24 Saferworld (2016) 'Forging Jubaland: Community perspectives on federalisation, governance and reconciliation'.
25 *Ibid*.
26 SIDRA (2016) 'Democracy in Puntland: The people's choice'.

meetings with international donors to request technical and financial support for state-level democratisation for the 2019 elections.[27] It is likely that a similar trend will affect other FMSs seeking to legitimise their governments.

While some Somali key informants interviewed[28] felt it was possible to hold one-person, one-vote FMS elections, others saw this as an uphill task, arguing that conditions were not in place for such an exercise within a period of less than four years. This view was based on security considerations and the financial and logistical requirements to hold such elections. There were also fears that donors would not fund FMS-level elections because their focus was perceived to be on the 2020–21 federal-level elections.

Popular perceptions of elections

The overwhelming indication is that Somalis are eager to see one-person, one-vote elections deployed, not only at the national level but also to appoint FMS-level presidents and parliaments. Data drawn from a 2015 national survey on popular perceptions of elections[29] show that 83 per cent of respondents would be very or fairly likely to vote in a national election, with 71 per cent stating that they viewed it as a legitimate means to appoint a leader.

Figure 1. If an election was to take place in Somalia, would you vote? (n = 954)* %

Very likely 50%
Don't know 3%
Other 2%
Totally unlikely 2%
Fairly unlikely 10%
Fairly likely 33%
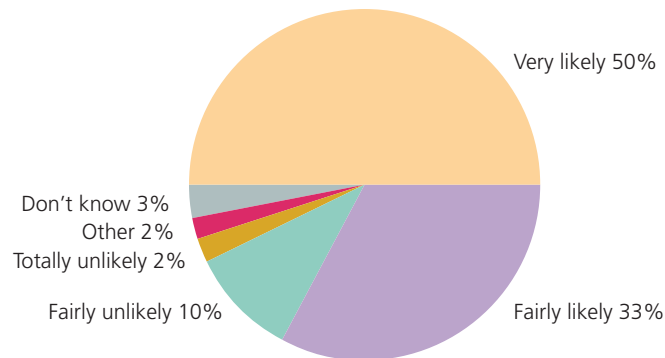
*n = number of respondents to this question

Figure 2. Are elections a legitimate way to select leaders in Somalia (n = 964) %

Don't know 7%
No 22%
Yes 71%
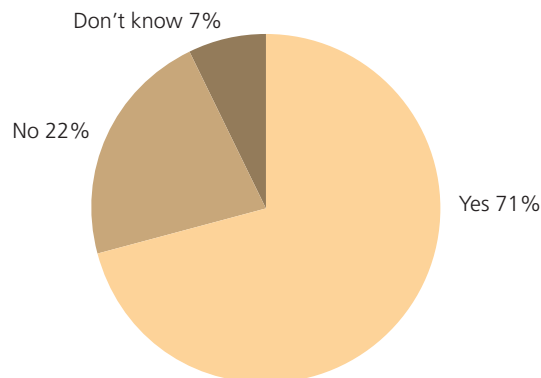
Of the 12 per cent who stated that they would not vote in such an election, the primary concern was around security. Of the 22 per cent who indicated that elections were not legitimate, the primary reasons for this centred on inadequate security, weak institutions to facilitate and oversee elections, and the limited reach of the government.

27 See PUNSAA's May 2016 position paper on Puntland democratisation, available at www.punsaa.org/Files/Position_paper_june.2016.pdf; Puntland Presidential letter May 2016 to international community to discuss elections. Letter is not in the public domain however Saferworld has a record. May 2016 joint international, civil society and Puntland government meeting to discuss elections.

28 KIIs conducted by Saferworld in Jubaland, with members of the SFG and the international community.

29 Quantitative survey conducted by Altai Consulting on behalf of Saferworld in 2015 assessing public perceptions of elections and democratisation. One-thousand-and-six surveys were conducted in nine districts in both rural and urban centres.

Small numbers of respondents felt that elections were illegitimate because they are imposed by external bodies or they are perceived as un-Islamic, while some cited elected governments being weak as a reason why elections were illegitimate tools to appoint a leader.

Figure 3. If elections are not legitimate, why? (n = 239) %
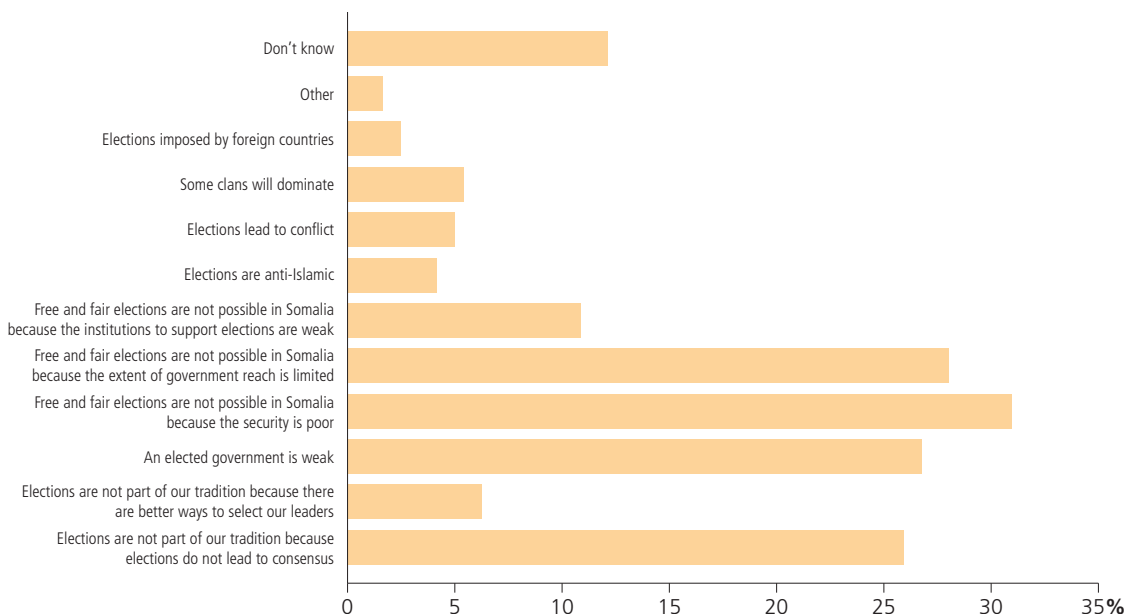
Most respondents who viewed popular elections as legitimate saw them as a means to ensure that leaders act in the interests of the people, while others felt that they would guarantee that the most suitable candidate is appointed and that leaders who perform poorly could be removed.

Figure 4. If elections are legitimate, why? (n = 717) %
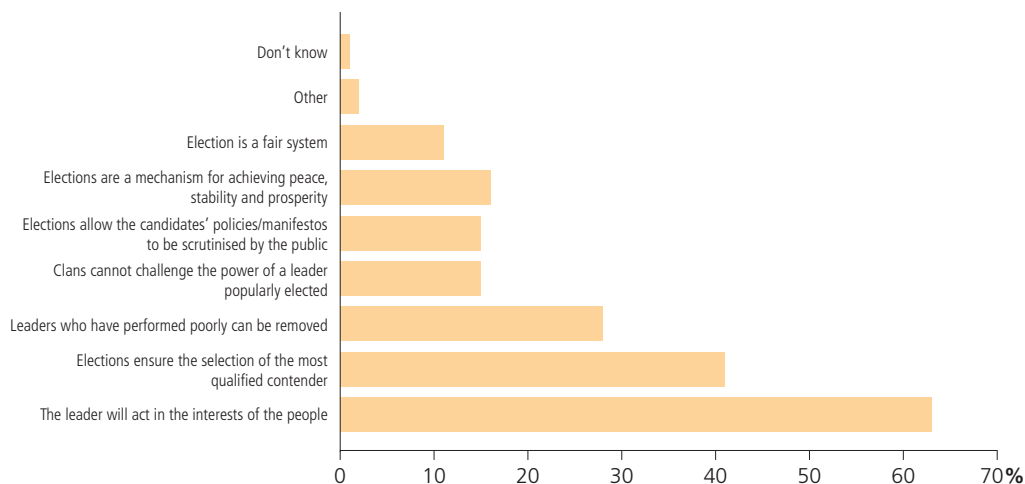
At the FMS level, according to survey data collected in Jubaland, nearly 90 per cent of respondents stated that they wanted popular elections to appoint the president. Ninety per cent of respondents also voiced support for federalisation.[30]

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30 Saferworld (2016) 'Forging Jubaland' *op. cit.*

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Dilemmas of future democratisation in Somalia

DESPITE THE HIGH LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATISATION IN SOMALIA shown by survey data, five key dilemmas will need to be addressed to move the process forward and determine the model and approach of future democratisation. The first concerns the implications of electoral models on peace and stability, specifically how to manage the shift from the existing stability of unrepresentative clan-based leadership to the uncertainties of representative democracy. The second concerns the pursuit of hard timelines, which may not be conducive to overcoming all pre-election obstacles, versus soft timelines, which could see delayed elections give way to long-term unaccountable government. The third centres around the implications of either top-down (national) or bottom-up (local) statebuilding. The fourth looks at the viability of elections when the Somali conflict has not been resolved, and the choice between instituting elections in the midst of conflict or waiting for a peace agreement. Finally, there is the dilemma of balancing the tradeoff between high investment/high risk approaches to elections versus lower investments and potentially less democratic outcomes, with the need for electoral financing to account for realistic costs.

Elections in post-conflict settings

The deployment of elections in post-conflict settings as a means to consolidate peace through democratisation has become a standard tool of Western-led, post-conflict intervention.[31] Post-conflict elections are expected to: end civil wars, build peace, instil democratic institutions and political competition, and bring international peace-keeping missions to an end.[32] For some, there is a sense that there are "few options outside of elections to aid the transition to peace", and so popular elections come to symbolise the conclusion of peace processes.[33]

It is heavily debated whether elections should be conducted swiftly to build and consolidate peace in post-conflict countries while governance institutions are weak.

31 Ndulo M, Lulo S (2010), 'Free and fair elections, violence and conflict', *Cornell Law Faculty Publications* **186**, available at http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/facpub/186
32 Lyons T (2002), 'Post-conflict elections: War termination, democratization and demilitarizing politics', Working Paper 20, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University.
33 *Ibid*.

One risk of this approach is that elections could facilitate the re-emergence of conflict, as electoral processes may be subject to fraud, leading to intense contestation of results and thus a lack of legitimacy for the new government. Widespread irregularities can threaten the credibility of elections, alienate voters, and decrease support for democratic transitions. Another risk of swift elections in post-conflict situations with a heavy international involvement is that they could be seen as a strategic exit plan for international actors: elections being implemented in short timeframes could be perceived to reflect more the desire by international actors to disengage and demonstrate their success to domestic publics.[34]

Another perspective is that the stabilisation of governance institutions should be prioritised, with an interim power-sharing government put in place until elections can be held in a context that is less prone to conflict.[35] Political competition can be counterproductive in the absence of strong institutions, which include state bureaucracies, independent justice systems, free media, and a market economy, so a temporary authority can reduce uncertainty in the short term.[36]

This second approach appears to have been deployed in Somalia, where following the 2000 creation of the TNG, a power-sharing agreement was reached among clans to mitigate further inter-clan conflict, create a modicum of stability and pursue state-building with a view to holding democratic elections to consolidate peace.

Critics of power-sharing arrangements state that they are inefficient and do not necessarily facilitate free and fair elections; to the contrary, they may import dysfunction.[37] Power-sharing can guarantee government positions for certain individuals or groups, who then have an interest in delaying elections because these could threaten their grip on power. In countries with a limited experience of democracy, no bureaucracy and no mechanisms to ensure officials' accountability, leaders appointed through power-sharing agreements may oppose the establishment of strong and transparent institutions. Such fears were manifest in the failed attempt at direct elections in Somalia in 2016 and the subsequent reversion to a 4.5 power-sharing model. This led to political delays and disputes, and a lack of progress in instituting the necessary preliminary steps towards elections, such as the finalisation of boundaries, a constitutional review, and the establishment of political parties.

Lifting the lid on 4.5: undemocratic predictability versus democratic uncertainty

A key dilemma when approaching elections in Somalia is how to manage the shift from the stable though undemocratic clan power-sharing formula of 4.5 towards the introduction of a direct, one-person, one-vote democracy which could lead to unpredictable outcomes and threaten the modicum of stability that has been created.

Since 2004, seats in Somalia's Lower House have been distributed according to a formula in which the four major clans – Hawiye, Darood, Dir/Isaaq and Rahanweyn – enjoy equal shares of political representation while a conglomeration of smaller clans receive a half-share. During the 2016–17 political process, this was complemented by an Upper House whose members were elected by the FMS-level parliaments, with representation allocated to each FMS according to the number of districts it comprised. The 4.5 formula is a predominantly patriarchal system with deep-rooted cultural values that has generally limited equal participation for women and youth in electoral processes while primarily awarding parliamentary seats to older males.

34   Caplan R (ed.) (2012), *Exit Strategies and State Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Reilly B (2015), 'Timing and sequencing in post-conflict elections', Working Paper No. 26, Centre for Research on Peace and Development, Murdoch University, Australia.

35   Snyder J (2000), *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (London: W. W. Norton & Company); Paris R, (2004), *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).

36   Jarstad A (2009), 'The prevalence of power-sharing: Exploring the patterns of post-election peace', *Africa Spectrum*, **44** (3) pp 41–62.

37   *Ibid*.; Mehler A (2009), 'Peace and power sharing in Africa: A not so obvious relationship', *African Affairs*, **108** (432) pp 453–473; Sriram C L (2008), *Peace as governance: Power-sharing, armed groups and contemporary peace negotiations* (Basingstoke, UK; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan).

However, defenders of the 4.5 formula note that it has brought much-needed stability to Somali politics, it is accepted across the four major clans, and it offers a predictable division of power in parliament. The 4.5 model also constrains the ability of any single clan to gain dominance, irrespective of the size of the constituency that it represents. It puts a lid on competition for political dominance and ensures that competition for positions is situated intra-clan as opposed to inter-clan. While it does not remove the possibility of conflict, it lessens the potential for a return to the large-scale inter-clan warfare that blighted Somalia in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Siad Barre regime.

Critics have argued that the institutionalisation of the 4.5 model has introduced inflexibility into the political arena, thus preventing the negotiation of other power-sharing agreements that could allow for political competition with or without elections.[38] Popular elections in Somalia would entail the removal of the 4.5 allocation of parliamentary seats and, irrespective of the new system deployed, would change the proportion of parliamentary seats each major clan receives, potentially creating space for inter-clan political competition to re-emerge.

Although democracy always involves an inherent element of uncertainty, if there is an adverse impact on representation, power and influence for groups that previously held an equal share, this could lead to political and social conflicts and fuel new cycles of violence, or possibly lead to political manoeuvring to prevent the introduction to democratic means of appointing political representatives.

This debate, however, may in fact be a false dilemma. Unrepresentative and undemo-cratic government is likely to be a source of conflict in the long term, as unaccountable governance can contribute to popular support for violent conflict if the needs of citizens are not met. The institution of democracy, even though it carries the risk of short-term instability, can produce long-term stability, especially if it is well managed and a state–society nexus can be built through direct representation and electoral accountability. Thus the question should not be about whether to move away from the 4.5 model or not; it should be about how to manage the conflict risks associated with lifting the lid on the existing model while transitioning to a democratic model of governance.

The prospect of electoral uncertainty – and the associated uncertainty of competing political groups not knowing how their level of political representation would be affected by democratic elections – could be mitigated if managed appropriately. Key informants indicated that an important variable determining conflict likelihood is the predictability of elections. The more unpredictable elections are – in terms of clan allocation for instance – the higher the risk of conflict. The electoral model deployed may influence how such political competition is mitigated or exacerbated.

Consociationalism versus centripetalism

Two major schools of thought exist on which electoral system should be adopted in post-conflict countries. One states that proportional voting systems have consistently proved the most appropriate for countries recovering from civil war.[39] The argument is that such electoral systems enable a more consociational approach to governance, as they allow all parties within a divided society to take part in the governance system, thereby promoting power-sharing, the establishment of multi-ethnic coalitions that incorporate minority concerns, and the deterrence of spoilers left outside the system.[40] Such a system also enhances the prospect of representation for women and minorities. Over the last twenty years, most post-conflict elections supported by the United

38 Samatar AI (2008), 'The Porcupine dilemma: Governance and transition in Somalia', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* **7** (1) Article 6, available at http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/bildhaan/vol7/iss1/6
39 Lyons T (2002), 'Post-conflict elections: War termination, democratization and demilitarizing politics', Working Paper 20, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University; Ndulo M, Lulo S (2010), 'Free and fair elections, violence and conflict', Cornell Law Faculty Publications 186, available at http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/facpub/186
40 "Consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy", from Lijphart A (1969), 'Consociational democracy', *World Politics*, **21** (2) pp 207–225.

Nations have relied on a form of proportional representation: Namibia in 1989, Nicaragua in 1990, Cambodia in 1993, Mozambique in 1994, Kosovo in 2001, and Sierra Leone in 2002, to give a few examples.

However, according to some analysts, proportional representation models may better reward political fragmentation and encourage factionalisation rather than aggregation, thus contributing towards ongoing national division. Further, where small parties are often rewarded with political representation,[41] government formation can become reliant on coalition politics. In fragile coalitions without a working majority, the ability to govern is often weighed down by the need to manage political relationships.

The other electoral approach is centripetalism, which requires candidates and political parties to encourage cooperation among rival groups. In some electoral systems, this approach demands that a certain percentage of votes for a political party to form a government must come from different regions (as in Iraq), or that a party must present mixed lists of candidates (as in Lebanon) whereby candidates must come from an array of backgrounds. This can allow for youth, gender, and cross-clan inclusion. If such a balance is not achieved, the legitimacy of government may be questioned and elections may have to be repeated, or a coalition government may form to meet the necessary level of representation. Such an arrangement in Somalia could encourage parties to go beyond clan affiliations and favour inter-clan cooperation.[42]

In Somalia, introducing elections for the federal parliament may bring about a major change in the distribution of parliamentary seats, which could elicit political competition along clan lines. In order to better analyse such a possible outcome, community perspectives around voting inclinations was obtained through quantitative surveys conducted in 2015. The survey research in Somalia indicated that when asked about selecting a president, respondents' greatest priority was selecting someone who has the relevant skills and competencies, as opposed to prioritising clan affiliation.

Figure 5. According to you, what are the most important criteria for selecting the president or parliamentarian of the federal government (n = 968) %
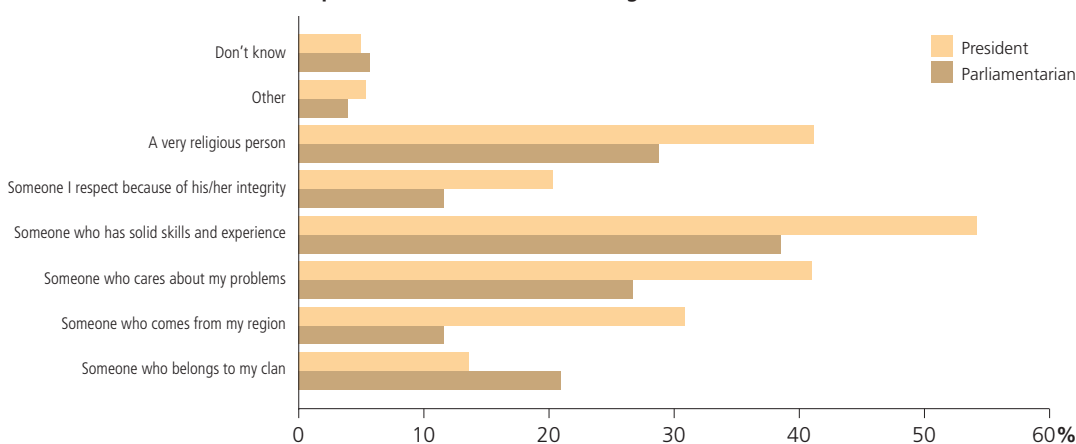

However, when asked about parliamentarians, although respondents still placed great emphasis on competence, clan concerns became more pronounced. Those who identified clan considerations were primarily of a low educational level, whereas better educated respondents were more inclined to identify integrity, skills, or concern for problems as important criteria.

41 Reilly B (2015), 'Timing and sequencing in post-conflict elections' *op. cit.*
42 Ramesh S (2007), 'Preferential voting and Indo-Fijian minority strategy', *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development* **10** (1) pp 1–19.

Figure 6. Clan as a priority when selecting a president (% distribution of respondents according to education)
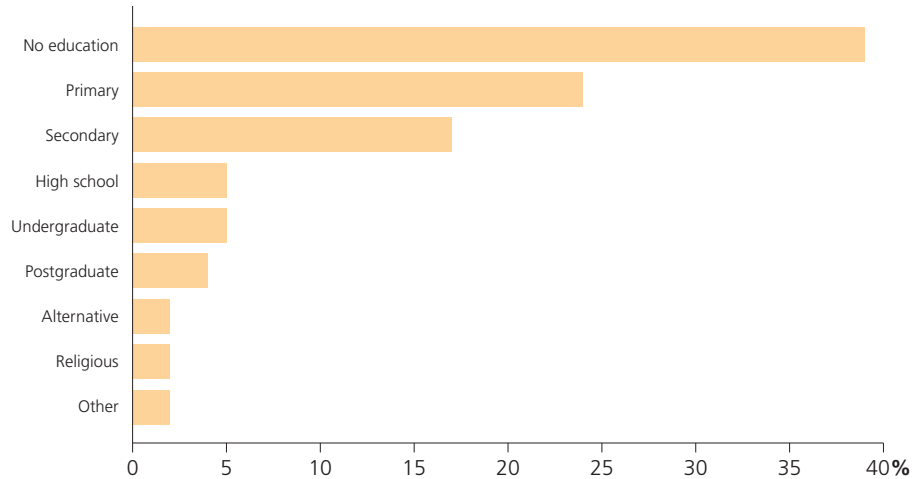
Such data indicates that although clan affiliation may not be the highest priority when citizens vote, it is still highly influential, especially for people with less education. This strongly indicates the value of investments into civic education and engagement on political processes.

There is also the possibility that theory and practice about clan-based voting may diverge when it comes to actual elections in an environment where inter-clan trust is low and politicians are perceived to act primarily in service to the interests of their clan as opposed to those of the wider society.

If voting takes on a clan dimension in an unrestricted electoral system in which proportionality directly determines representation, parliamentary seats could be dominated by a single clan or possibly two clans in coalition. A disturbance to the current clan power-sharing structure could escalate conflict, especially at key moments of the electoral process, such as during voter registration.

It is therefore necessary for Somalia to develop an electoral model that builds cooperation, instils a level of predictability, and gains consensus across political groups. Otherwise, efforts to institute one-person-one-vote elections in 2020–21 may face stiff resistance from actors and groups who fear that the new system will diminish their parliamentary representation.

Electoral outcomes may be improved by a citizen registry or voter registration that makes explicit Somalia's demographic composition and enables competing political parties to consider different systems' effects on their electoral prospects. Electoral rules such as obligatory mixed lists or requirements to secure representation across a number of regions or clan identities could also facilitate cross-clan and cross regional-cooperation.

As political actors tend to make judgements about the efficacy of elections based on their perceived prospects and the existing balance of power,[43] Somalia needs to develop an electoral model that is acceptable to all competing political groups, such that the country can avoid further reversions to the safety of the 4.5 formula and thus derailing efforts to democratise.

43 Reilly B (2015), 'Timing and sequencing in post-conflict elections' *op. cit.*

Timing: hard deadlines versus soft deadlines

Electoral timeframes and schedules are valuable tools to keep elections on track, to institute legitimacy, and to ensure that political terms are not unduly extended, paving the way for unaccountable, illegitimate governments. In post-conflict settings where the control of political power is particularly contested, abidance by timeframes can mitigate the prospect of violence against leaders or governments who overstay their terms.

How timeframes are determined and managed within the trajectory of a polity's peacebuilding, statebuilding, and reconciliation processes can have a major impact on the success of these processes. If hard deadlines are applied to parliamentary and presidential elections, there is a risk of failing to institute all the necessary preliminary steps and/or building sufficient consensus – leading to the possibility of contested election outcomes, or even the failure of popular elections. Alternatively, although softening the deadlines could facilitate consensus building around electoral models and provide greater time for the establishment of necessary electoral preliminaries, there is a risk that a government may extend its timeframe or extend its mandate indefinitely on the pretext of needing additional time to prepare the country for elections. What is clear is that both hard and soft deadlines have the ability to threaten political stability and prohibit a democratic transition of power.

The timelines dilemma has played out in other contexts. For example, Somaliland's path to democracy had no predetermined deadline or inevitable outcome, but instead the process has allowed for extended negotiations among key stakeholders and various clan/political factions to establish terms that all sides found agreeable. Ultimately, Somaliland's first direct elections were conducted only after a decade of initiatives seeking to incorporate militant groups within the state structure, accommodating various clan interests, and establishing durable governance institutions.[44] Since this transition was completed, constant political negotiations and realignments have been necessary to preserve and honour these gains. For instance, in 2008 the presidential election was postponed for two years until a credible and effective National Electoral Commission (NEC) emerged that was able to broker compromise among divided political parties.[45] This requirement for flexibility in the timing and sequencing of elections ensured that the necessary foundations for peaceful political competition were established, and procedural gaps were addressed such that the process did not fundamentally undermine past peacebuilding gains.

However, contemporary Somaliland politics also serves as a cautionary tale about interminably prolonging soft election deadlines. Somaliland's second parliamentary elections were originally slated for 2010; however, following substantive delays and mandate extensions, it was decided that they would be combined with the presidential election originally scheduled for 2015. This election was also postponed repeatedly, and now presidential elections are set for November 2017 and parliamentary elections for November 2018, two and eight years respectively after the end of the legitimate presidential and parliamentary terms.

Postponements have occurred for various reasons, including delays to voter registration, delays in the establishment of the NEC, disputes between the House of Representatives and the *Guurti*[46] over electoral timeframes, and fears that the current drought may inhibit participation. The result is that parliament, last elected in 2005, has surpassed its original mandate and stayed in office for twelve years; the president has been in office for seven years, having been elected in 2010. Accompanying these extended terms in office and increasing levels of unaccountability and illegitimacy, the inter-

44 These processes included: reconciling major differences over power-sharing; resolving underlying historical grievances between clans; enhancing consensus around an appropriate transition process; institutionalising a democratic transition process through the development of legal and procedural structures and establishment of political norms; and embedding conflict mediation institutions (such as traditional elders, the NEC, and civil society) within formal political structures.

45 Academy for Peace and Development/Interpeace (2010), 'Pillars of peace: Democracy in Somaliland – challenges and opportunities' available at http://apd-somaliland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Democracy-In-Somaliland.pdf; Academy for Peace and Development/Interpeace (2008), 'Peace in Somaliland: An indigenous approach to state-building', available at http://apd-somaliland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Peace-in-Somaliland-an-indigenous-Approach-to-State-building-.pdf.

46 The *Guurti* is the upper house of Somaliland's parliaments and is comprised of designated clan elders.

national community, which provides financial and technical support to elections, has expressed increasing frustration with the current government, which has forcefully repressed opposition party protests over the extension of the presidential mandate.[47]

By contrast, in Puntland a rigid timeframe of hard deadlines for the planned 2013 local council elections left out many key stakeholders and power brokers, either for reasons of expediency or political manipulation, thereby incentivising these actors to resort to spoiler tactics to influence proceedings.[48] This suggests that holding premature elections can destabilise fragile political agreements and social cohesion, undermining consensus on electoral approaches and rules.

Hard electoral timelines in Puntland also elicited other challenges. Fundamentally, preparations for elections, in large part dictated by international benchmarks and demands, put too much emphasis on timeframes and technical aspects. As a result, Puntland did not address an underlying socio-political context that was unfavourable to elections. Indigenous processes for managing competing clan interests and societal tensions, which had previously proved successful at creating consensus, were side-lined.[49] These dispute resolution mechanisms were not replaced with viable alternatives (for instance, the proposed constitutional court was never established) and stakeholders did not have time to adapt to the new form of electoral politics.

The rushed development of a constitution and electoral legislation that seemed to favour the incumbent regime, as well as unresolved district and other boundary demarcation, spurred clan sentiments and regional biases. The result was violence and unrest in traditionally marginalised areas and among communities who lacked any formal means to express their grievances.[50] Strictly imposed electoral deadlines effectively forced parties to cut corners and left many political disagreements unaddressed. The institutional and social setting was unprepared to absorb the shock of a move to electoral competition at the local level, and not all stakeholders and power brokers bought into the design and principles of a new system before it was rolled out. Ultimately, the elections were cancelled after violence broke out in a number of locations on the eve of the elections.

In Somalia, while hard timeframes have yet to be set, the FGS and the international community are anticipating federal elections in 2020–21. Even with the head start they gained by embarking on planning before the 2016 process was completed, this timeframe still appears tight. Major political agreements, such as those establishing FMSs, have advanced but will require extensive periods of consultation, mediation, and bargaining before elite-level arrangements are accepted and institutionalised by political stakeholders at the local level.[51] It is unclear whether this, let alone the formal processes which depend on political resolution to move forward, will occur before the slated election date.

As noted by others in reference to the original 2016 plans, "limited progress has been made in addressing the underlying dynamics that drive conflict and fragility",[52] and until these dynamics are addressed through the establishment of political stability, the enhancement of government-led service delivery, and cooperation and trust between the government and the citizenry, as well as other foundational measures, it would be

47 International Crisis Group (2015), 'Somaliland's Guurti sparks a crisis', available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somaliland/somaliland-s-guurti-sparks-crisis; Hiiraan Online (2015), 'Despite arrests, Somaliland opposition challenges president's term extension', available at https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2015/May/99552/despite_arrests_somaliland_opposition_challenges_president_s_term_extension.aspx

48 Saferworld (2014), 'Puntland at the polls', available at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/817-puntland-at-the-polls

49 Walls M (2014), 'Meeting summary: Towards Somali federalism? Insights from Puntland's presidential elections' Chatham House, available at https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Meetings/Meeting%20Transcripts/120214Somali.pdf

50 International Crisis Group (2013), 'Puntland's punted polls', available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/somalia-puntland-s-punted-polls; Saferworld (2014), 'Puntland at the polls', available at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/817-puntland-at-the-polls

51 Morland A (2014), 'The state of state-building in Somalia', Irin News, available at www.irinnews.org/report/100745/analysis-the-state-of-state-building-in-somalia

52 Balthasar D (2014), 'Thinking beyond roadmaps in Somalia: Expanding policy options for state building', Center for Strategic and International Studies, available at https://www.csis.org/analysis/thinking-beyond-roadmaps-somalia

prudent to introduce flexibility into timeframes. Targets and timeframes are still needed to ensure guidance and management of the process, but it is worth questioning whether elections should be time-bound at all costs.

Protracted delays in post-conflict elections are not unique to Somalia and Somaliland. For example, the first local (commune) elections in Cambodia were delayed from 1998 until 2002.[53] Experiences in post-conflict countries such as Liberia indicate that "delaying elections to build a sufficiently stable environment in which to hold the elections has a better shot at sustainable peace and can set the basis for future successful democratic development."[54] Similarly, academics have concluded that "ill-timed, badly designed or poorly-run elections have often served to undermine peace processes in fragile post conflict environments."[55]

With all this in mind, there is a need to introduce flexibility into the system, have contingency plans for delays, identify why delays occur, and seek to use the causes of delay to serve consensus building. Constructive engagement in the disputes that arise and facilitation of consensus building could mitigate post-electoral violence.

Local versus national

Within peacebuilding literature there are competing perspectives on the most appropriate manner to introduce democracy in post-conflict contexts, and the approach taken can have major implications for building democratic practices and norms as well as for peace and stability.

Top-down approaches, beginning with national-level elections, are often perceived as beneficial for maintaining national unity and the development of national as opposed to regional political parties and issue-based contestation.[56] In post-conflict contexts where violence has deeply affected a country across political and social lines, fostering national unity can help reduce the likelihood of further conflict.

Alternatively, some literature suggests that bottom-up approaches to democratisation, in which local elections provide a foundation for later national elections, are better for long-term consolidation of democracy. These approaches aim to promote a democratic culture and familiarise the populace with electoral processes and party politics before embarking on national-level elections, which can be highly contentious.

Starting with local elections also enables a two-step approach towards democratisation that first stimulates representational governance directly at the community level, where it is most immediately experienced by the population. This dimension is particularly important in post-conflict settings where the state government is weak and communities have taken over many service delivery and conflict mediation functions.[57] This was widely viewed as one of the key lessons of early failures at building democracy in Iraq. National elections were heavily prioritised, even though local elections could have promoted the emergence of new political actors with legitimacy and roots within local communities, thus mitigating the intensity of nationally divisive issues and diffusing national politics across a number of more manageable localised concerns.[58]

53 ANFREL and Forum-Asia (2003), 'Report of International Observation Missions on the Cambodia General Elections of 2003'.
54 Signé L, Kpohazounde G (2014) 'Where delaying elections can build peace', *The Washington Post*, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/09/15/where-delaying-elections-can-build-peace/.
55 Reilly B (2003), 'International electoral assistance: A review of donor activities and lessons learned', Working Paper 17, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, available at www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20030600_cru_working_paper_17.pdf
56 Linz J J, Stepan A (1996), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press) pp 98–107.
57 Reilly B (2004), 'Electoral assistance and post-conflict peacebuilding: What lessons have been learned?', ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, available at https://aceproject.org/ero-en/topics/elections-security/Reilly-2505.pdf.
58 Diamond L (2006), 'Iraq and democracy: The lessons learned', available at http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/rdenever/InternationalSecurity/Diamond.pdf

However, negative repercussions are also possible, with local elections strengthening separatist groups or ethnic enclaves, as happened prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia.[59] According to a 2009 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, in many cases, especially where divisions take on a localised character and competition over localised resources and political authority is especially high, "access to government power at the municipal level is a strong driver of election-related conflict." [60] The prioritisation of elections at the local level can raise the stakes of these conflicts, which could be transcended by holding national elections first.

Some have suggested a hybrid approach, with regional and national elections held simultaneously. Such an approach, as deployed in the 1999 Indonesian elections following the end of Suharto's 30-year reign, can build mutual dependence between regional and national leaders.[61] This could produce unity in a divided nation while devolving governance to state-level institutions that can meet the nuanced needs of local populations.

In Somaliland, local council elections were the first stage in a three-part electoral cycle (local, presidential, parliamentary). Somaliland began with local elections in part to make good on its commitment to move away from the centralised state of the Siad Barre regime, but also to allow for the emergence of three officially-sanctioned political parties to set the stage for elections at the national level.[62] Because the local elections were conducted with a view to national elections, local concerns were mostly absent from the campaign agenda, which largely focused on Somaliland-wide politics.[63] One positive outcome was that, for the elites jockeying to control Somaliland's central leadership, the local elections provided an opportunity to test election-related issues at the local level before the real contest over national leadership began.

Somaliland's local-first approach enabled new electoral practices (such as popular voting) and institutions (such as the NEC) to be pilot-tested and refined. Practices for interaction and mediation among political parties were institutionalised, mostly at the informal level. Finally, these elections exhibited the commitment of both political elites and the general populace to conduct electoral competition in a peaceful manner, thereby building trust for future elections.[64] As part of a larger transition to national politics, the local elections allowed a political community that had undergone a great deal of reconciliation and consensus-building to transition to multi-party elections in stages, instead of all at once.

In Somalia, the overwhelming focus to date has been on elections for the federal parliament and presidency. However, it is worth considering whether FMS-level elections are feasible and could serve to build democratic culture, norms, and institutions, acting as a precursor to national elections. FMS-level elections could take place first (by 2019), with federal elections to follow in 2020–21, or a more extended timeframe could be introduced to ensure that this bottom-up process is not rushed and mismanaged.

Such approaches could simultaneously test electoral systems, promote political party development, and contribute to FMSs' institutionalisation and democratisation. Given concerns around the conflict risks associated with a national parliamentary election

59 Brancanti D (2008), *Peace by Design: Managing Intrastate Conflict Through Decentralization*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Reilly B (2015), 'Timing and sequencing in post-conflict elections', Working Paper No. 26, Centre for Research on Peace and Development, Murdoch University, Australia.

60 UNDP (2009), 'Elections and conflict prevention: A guide to analysis, planning and programming', available at http://content-ext.undp.org/aplaws_publications/2431678/Elections-Conflict-Prevention.pdf

61 Diamond L (1999) *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (158), (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press).

62 Ibrahim M H (2010), *Somaliland's Investment in Peace: Analysing the Diaspora's Economic Engagement in Peace Building* Diaspeace Working Paper No. 4.

63 Progressio (2005), 'Further steps to democracy: The Somaliland parliamentary elections', available at www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/Further-steps-to-democracy.pdf. However, during the 2012 district council elections, competition in individual districts with divided communities experienced the surfacing of underlying clan tensions that, while eventually peacefully resolved, threatened to spark localised conflict; see Walls M and S Kibble (2013) *Swerves on the Road: Report by International Election Observers on the 2012 local elections in Somaliland* (Progressio). The reason for this shift is not clear, but it does point to the fact that, in certain situations, local elections in such a context can exacerbate inter-communal divisions at the local level.

64 Academy for Peace and Development/Interpeace, (2008) 'Peace in Somaliland: An indigenous approach to state-building', available at http://apd-somaliland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Peace-in-Somaliland-an-indigenous-Approach-to-State-building-.pdf Progressio (2005), 'Further steps to democracy: The Somaliland parliamentary elections'.

that lifts the lid on the 4.5 formula, it may be necessary to consider an alternative approach to elections as a means to introduce democracy and build the legitimacy of the state apparatus while mitigating national tensions.

Another approach may be to consider hybrid models that allow for both local and national elections. A two-prong process could identify major cleavages and issues before their emergence at the national level. FMS elections could strengthen Somalia's young federal system by enabling the building of popular regional administrations. In addition, when elections are conducted at the local level (for example, for district or local councils), they could increase the participation of hitherto excluded groups, such as women, youth, and minority clans, both as candidates for elective seats and as voters.

Generally, arguments against the bottom-up approach focus on the likelihood of elections being held in all FMSs due to security, financial and political challenges. However, it should be noted that such challenges are common in post-conflict elections, and do not necessarily hinder prospects for holding democratic elections. The first democratic presidential elections in Afghanistan in 2004 also faced internal security challenges from armed groups to security, voter registration, election administration, training of elections officials, and public awareness.[65] Nevertheless, they were planned and successfully implemented.

One risk is that FMS-level institutions may not be sufficiently stable to manage elections. At the local level, where institutions are developing – with FMSs at varying levels of institutional capacity and power sharing, and where political representation is still heavily contested – local elections could increase conflict.

Finally, as the governance and services that most affect Somalis' lives are increasingly delivered via FMSs, democratisation at the national level may only provide a veneer of democracy, obscuring undemocratic and unaccountable governance at the state level.

Creating a harmonised approach to elections could assist in avoiding future disputes and ensuring that regional-level elections meaningfully advance democratisation and peace at the national level. While timeframes for democratisation may not be uniform, deploying shared systems across FMSs and at the federal level could ensure coherence and reduce costs. If FMSs approach their own democratisation wholly independent of the need to develop national political parties and electoral systems, it could set regional and national-level democratisation at cross-purposes. It may be necessary to encourage the formation of nationwide political parties to avoid inter-FMS or inter-regional competition or the creation of parties representing the interests of a single constituency or clan background. This could support the emergence of centripetal approaches that encourage cross-regional or cross-clan cooperation. The development of harmonised approaches could also reduce electoral costs, whereby the same equipment, approaches, and technical skills could be shared across FMSs and at the national level.

Bottom-up institution-building and local ownership are necessary for sustainable electoral transitions, as they enable elections to meaningfully engage the population in national unity and peacebuilding. The outcomes of Somaliland and Puntland's divergent electoral transitions were largely determined by elite-level politics. However, the groundwork was forged through local-level legitimacy and the inclusion of a broad base of civil society – primarily elders, but also the business community, women, youth groups, amongst others.[66] The incorporation of these actors through a building-block approach of reconciliation and bottom-up institution-building enabled a commitment to values of democracy and peace, and a strengthened sense of 'national' unity.[67] Efforts must be taken to promote popular and stakeholder trust in the legitimacy

65 See, for example, ANFREL (2004), 'Report of International Observation Mission on the Afghanistan Presidential Election of 2004'.

66 Saferworld (2015), 'Literature review on elections in Somalia' produced by Altai – not in the public domain. Bradbury M (2008), *Becoming Somaliland* (Oxford: James Currey).

67 Saferworld (2015), 'Literature review on elections in Somalia' produced by Altai – not in the public domain.

of elections, including a credible voter registration, robust public awareness-raising measures, extensive consultations with civil society stakeholders, and the establishment of an independent and respected electoral commission. The differing levels of success between Somaliland and Puntland in avoiding conflict around elections were largely determined by the institutionalisation of these measures.[68]

Elections in an ongoing conflict setting

Much of the literature on post-conflict elections views democratisation as a means of consolidating peace. One glaring challenge in Somalia is that while there have been many attempts to address the conflict, the country still continues to be in a state of conflict, with large sections of the country under al-Shabaab control. The conflict cuts across three dimensions. First, there is inter-clan competition over formal government structures, especially at the FMS level. Second, there is inter-clan competition and conflict over local resources such as grazing land. Third, there is the conflict between the government and al-Shabaab. While inter-clan conflict poses a threat to security in elections, it is the conflict with al-Shabaab that is the greatest threat to enabling elections to take place, both in terms of political participation by the public as well as threats to electoral management bodies, candidates and institutions overall.

The dilemma is thus whether to hold elections in the midst of unreconciled conflict in a bid to build peace, even though large sections of the population will be unlikely to participate, and a major conflict actor remains extant and active. Or to delay elections until a solution to the conflict can be reached. The latter option would use elections to consolidate peace at a time when all communities can participate freely, even though such a situation may take many more years to achieve.

Elections may serve to consolidate peace and legitimise the federal government in the eyes of the community, enhancing its political currency in the fight against al-Shabaab. However, no endeavour to legitimise the federal government will hold genuine validity unless it includes the entire population. The greatest challenge to national, one-person-one-vote elections is that much of the country is inaccessible and al-Shabaab continues to pose a violent obstacle.

The mainstream counter terror approach focuses on the use of military and security forces to defeat al-Shabaab and build effective states as a bulwark against it. By contrast, the newer countering violent extremism (CVE) approach[69] acknowledges the importance of addressing deficiencies in development, employment, governance, justice, policing, service delivery, and other issues that may incentivise communities to support insurgent groups. The ultimate aim is to shift support from al-Shabaab to the government. While successes have been achieved through counter terror and CVE approaches, including the expansion of government control and investments into Somali security, justice, and development infrastructure, these approaches are insufficient to reach an end state in which al-Shabaab ceases to exist or to employ violence. Nor are they sufficient to address the various grievances underpinning the emergence and support for the group among sections of the Somali population, which pose a threat to the long-term sustainability of peace efforts in Somalia.

There is evidence that Somalis view elections as a legitimate means to select political representatives (see figure 2). However, election planning needs to meet citizen expectations in a manner that is contextually appropriate. Valuable lessons can be learnt from Somaliland as well as from other countries' experience of using elections to resolve conflict. In Somaliland, President Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal (1993–2002) outmanoeuvred spoilers and won over key allies by incorporating stakeholders in political positions and granting reluctant clans significant administrative

68 Saferworld (2014), 'Puntland at the polls', available at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/817-puntland-at-the-polls
69 Keen D and L Attree (2015) 'Dilemmas of counter terror, stabilisation and statebuilding' (Saferworld) accessible at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/875-dilemmas-of-counter-terror-stabilisation-and-statebuilding

responsibilities.[70] These appointments prior to elections helped transform relations among opponents, and prepared the ground for non-violent interaction and eventually transition. It is important to note that such appointments were made directly by Egal, and did not result from a comprehensive consultation of stakeholders or a power-sharing agreement. It can be argued that these nominations also served Egal's interests and helped him maintain his grip on power.

During Somaliland's initial period of democratisation, its transitional government faced opposition and suspicion towards its handling of electoral preparations. It addressed this through continual adjustment of political structures and negotiation between elders and political parties over electoral laws, allowing constitutional and democratic foundations to be shaped by social realities and innovative approaches to be explored.[71]

Election processes can also facilitate the transformation of violent conflict actors and insurgent groups into nonviolent political entities. Sierra Leone instituted its first post-conflict elections in 2002, allowing the Revolutionary United Front, a military insurgent that had committed grave human rights abuses, to transform itself into a political party and participate in parliamentary and presidential elections. In Colombia, the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia specified conditions around political resolution of the conflict, one of the longest in recent times, including a commitment to democratic participation. The potential to bring al-Shabaab into democratic processes is uncertain, and its public statements are not encouraging. Nonetheless, such an avenue should not be closed off; rather, appropriate efforts should be taken to engage the group, which has endured a decade of armed action to destroy it, and to pursue a long-term political solution.

The drive for elections in Somalia could be harnessed for the pursuit and consolidation of peace. At the same time, caution is required. Pursuing elections while conflict is ongoing can have negative financial, governance, and security implications. The 2009 elections in Afghanistan were widely perceived as immensely expensive and fraught with legitimacy, logistical, and security issues. The ongoing conflict with the Taliban rendered much of the country inaccessible, and areas that were accessible suffered from fraud and security threats. Elections in Iraq faced similar challenges, as conflict continued and the necessary consensus for elections was absent, leading to widespread credibility issues.

The cost of post-conflict elections

Elections in any post-conflict country carry a high financial cost; the prospective cost in Somalia is high because of the substantial logistical, preparatory, and security needs. Both the Somali government and the international community will have to decide how best to financially approach elections. Higher investment has the potential of eliciting a result that better meets standards of legitimacy and transparency, with the potential use of a one-person-one-vote electoral model that could be conflict sensitive, introduce political parties and engage civil society organisations in oversight roles. Lower investment may result in poor outcomes or worse, negatively impact the trust between state and society that is indispensable to democratic politics. According to one international actor, the elections in Somalia "will be the ones that can be afforded".[72] While this is pragmatic and true, at the same time, it is necessary to consider how cost intersects with quality and how this relates to the objectives of elections in Somalia.

70 Balthasar D (2013), 'Somaliland's best kept secret: shrewd politics and war projects as means of state-making', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, **7** (2) pp 218–238; Balthasar D (2014), Thinking beyond roadmaps in Somalia: Expanding policy options for statebuilding

71 Tshabalala K (2013), 'Somaliland elections: Steps to democracy and state recognition', available at www.polity.org.za/article/somaliland-elections-steps-to-democracy-and-state-recognition-2013-08-14

72 Dialogue with senior technical adviser for a multilateral organisation (2017).

In light of this, there is a need for Somali and international actors to develop realistic expectations regarding the financing of future elections and determine how best to manage the high cost while attempting to ensure a successful result.

Gaining a full picture of the costs of past elections in Somalia and Somaliland has been complicated by difficulties in identifying and consolidating financial commitments and contributions. Analyses of electoral costs have been limited by a lack of publicly available information on budgets and donor contributions, or reliable data on population size. Nevertheless, there is some information available on past electoral processes in Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland that can provide Somali administrations and the international community with a picture of the financial trajectory.

Somaliland, which has carried out the greatest number of elections, has experienced a steady rise in the cost of elections, from US$2.49 per vote for the 2002 local council elections to $13.44 per vote for the 2012 local council elections. The failed 2013 Puntland local council elections appear comparatively expensive at a cost of $21.50 per vote. However, it is important to note that these were to be Puntland's first one-person, one-vote elections, and required the establishment of the necessary electoral structures. The cost of the Somali 2016–17 parliamentary and presidential indirect elections is not entirely comparable; the cost per vote was estimated at $6.10, but this is does not take into consideration the small size of the electorate and uses the predicted number of voters if there had been a popular election.

Table 4: Costs of Somaliland elections by source (2002–2012).[73]

Source of funding	2002 local council elections (US$) % of total cost	2005 parliamentary elections (US$) % of total cost	2010 presidential elections (US$) % of total cost	2012 local council elections (US$) % of total cost
Donors/ international community	750,000 (68%)	1,672,705 (77%)	3,070,113 (73%)	8,826,480 (80%)
Government/ domestic sources	346,982 (32%)	500,000 (23%)	1,145,000 (27%)	2,200,000 (20%)
Total	**1,096,982**	**2,172,705**	**4,215,113**	**11,026,480**
Total votes[74]	440,067	670,328	538,246	820,160
Cost per vote (US$)	2.49	3.24	7.83	13.44

73 Data in this table is largely drawn from various sources, notably Verjee et al. (2015), 'The economics of elections in Somaliland: Financing political parties and candidates' (London: Rift Valley Institute) p 14, the African Database, other secondary sources, and key informants involved in this study. The information about elections is based on information from various sources, including EMBs budgets, the African Elections Database, available at http://africanelections.tripod.com/ somaliland_detail.html, and other publications on elections in Somalia/Somaliland.

74 Unless where stated otherwise, total votes refer to all votes cast in an election. This comprises valid and invalid votes. Total registered votes include 'total votes' as defined here and registered voters who nonetheless do not cast their vote during an election day.

Table 5: Costs of the failed 2013 Puntland local council elections by source.[75]

Source of funding	Cost (US$) % of total cost
Donors/international community	3,791,667[76] (65%)
Government /domestic sources	2,008,333[77] (35%)
Total	**5,800,000**
Total votes	270,000[78]
Cost per vote (US$)	21.50

Table 6: Costs for 2016–17 Somalia federal elections by source.[79]

Source of funding	Cost (US$) % of total cost
Donors/international community	14,000,000 (70%)
Government /domestic sources	6,000,000[80] (30%)
Total	**20,000,000**
Total votes	3,266,748[81]
Cost per vote (US$)	6.10

Table 7: Anticipated costs for the Somaliland presidential elections in 2017

Anticipated cost	10,800,000[82]
Anticipated votes	873,331[83]
Cost per vote (US$)	12.36

75　The data in this table are based largely from the donor budget developed by Interpeace totalling $5.8 million.

76　Of this amount the European Union provided $2.5 million, while the rest was provided by others donors: SIDA ($400,000), Denmark ($500,000), Norway ($291,667), and Switzerland ($100,000).

77　This amount was captured as a funding gap, that is, total budget less donors' contribution. It was not clear whether the government was able to raise this money.

78　The number of total votes and cost per voter has been calculated using Somaliland's 2012 district elections as a benchmark. In the Somaliland elections, 820,160 people voted which translate to about 25 per cent of the national population, estimated at about 3,300,000 people at that time. Thus, 25 per cent of Puntland's estimated population of 1,080,000 by 2013 brings the total number of voters to 270,000. The population of Puntland in 2013 is estimated from the population survey carried out by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2014, which estimated the population of two main regions under Puntland (Nugaal and Bari) to be 1,112,210. Using a population growth rate of 3 per cent, it is estimated that Puntland's population was 1,080,000 by 2013.

79　Data presented in this table are estimates of budget and costs based on KIIs as official budget and actual expenditure were not yet clear at the time writing this report, largely because the elections only ended in mid-February after the election of the president. Different members of the international community involved in this study gave varied estimates, ranging between $8 million and $20 million. This is compared to FGS's (Office of the Prime Minister) projection of $20 million (see http://newafricanmagazine.com/delayed-democracy-12-things-need-know-somalia-elections/). The budget presented by FIET had an estimate of $13 million, which excluded UN/international community's expenses. In addition, the security costs were estimated at $2 million. International partners – including the European Union (provided $5 million), Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States – were to provide approximately 60 per cent of the required total budget/costs of these elections, which was to be supplemented by funding generated through candidate registration fees and resources from the federal budget (see http://unsom.unmissions.org/international-community-reiterates-support-timely-and-credible-somali-electoral-process-confirms). International assistance was channelled through the UNDP Trust Fund.

80　This amount includes a government pledge of $1.5 million while the rest is assumed to be contributions from candidate fees. Further, the government was to provide for security costs estimated at $2 million. It is not clear whether or not this amount was raised.

81　It is estimated that 25 per cent of Somalia's population of 13,066,993 in 2016 would likely have been eligible voters if a universal electoral model had been applied.

82　This amount has been determined after considering costs provided by different sources. The available electoral budget from NEC estimates the cost at $6.8 million. KIIs with members of the international community gave varying figures ranging from $8–9.1 million. The final figure includes the additional $4 million the Somaliland government verbally committed on the 28 March 2017. The budget comprises the cost of both the Somaliland voter registration as well as the election component.

83　This is the total number of registered voters following the Somaliland voter registration that was conducted over 2016 as per the recent announcements by Somaliland's NEC.

A crude estimation of the cost of Somali federal elections in 2020–21 can be made by using the cost of the Somaliland 2017 presidential elections as a base and modifying this according to the size of each FMS. Given that there are currently no (or very limited in the case of Puntland) electoral institutions and no voter registration in any of the FMSs, all of these would need to be financed. Where the Somaliland 2017 elections costs include the cost of voter registration and education as well as costs for the NEC, civic education and engagement, travel costs, equipment and all other supplies, it would be prudent to assume that such costs would be required in each of the FMSs and in Benadir.

Whilst elections at the federal level would assume only one National Independent Electoral Commission to oversee elections, given the previous practice during the 2016–17 elections of having a national body to implement elections with the Federal Independent Electoral Implementation Team (FIEIT) and corresponding FMS level bodies, the State level Independent Electoral implementation Teams (SEIET), it is likely FMSs would push for electoral management bodies at the FMS level as opposed to national alone.

Table 8: Estimated costs for future elections (direct electoral model)[84]

State/region	Estimated cost of elections (US$)
Puntland	11,000,000[85]
Jubaland	11,000,000[86]
South West	11,000,000[87]
Total votes	3,266,748[81]
HirShabelle	8,300,000[88]
Galmudug	8,300,000[89]
Benadir	8,300,000[90]
Somaliland[91]	4,223,671[92]
Total	**$ 61,523,671**
Estimated Population	12,316,895[93]
Estimated no. voters	4,435,082[94]
Estimated cost per voter	**$13.87**

While discussions on the costs and financial commitments for the 2020–21 federal elections have not yet started, these elections will mark the first time Somalia has held direct and universal suffrage elections in more than 50 years. Costs for establishing the physical and institutional infrastructure and logistics are likely to be enormous.

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84 Population figures have been estimated using the UNFPA's 2014 population survey for Somalia.
85 Based on the anticipated cost of Somaliland local council elections.
86 *Ibid*.
87 *Ibid*.
88 Based on two thirds of Somaliland local council elections to account for reduced size of the region.
89 *Ibid*.
90 *Ibid*.
91 Saferworld makes no comment on the status of Somaliland but acknowledges it here on the basis that under the Somali provisional federal constitution it is deemed an FMS.
92 Cost based on Somaliland NEC budget for the election component of 2017 elections, excluding voter registration.
93 UNFPA population survey estimate inclusive of Somaliland. Saferworld has no position on the independence of Somaliland, rather that on the basis of the technical inclusion of the provisional constitution, Somaliland has been included in the population estimate.
94 UNFPA survey indicates that around 36 per cent would be aged 20 and over. Twenty is a crude estimate on minimum voting age.

Comparative analysis with other countries

Comparatively, elections in stable democracies tend to cost between US$0.50–3.20 per voter, in transitional democracies $3–8 per voter, and in countries with longer-lasting peacekeeping missions $8–45 per voter.[95] Somalia largely falls within the last category, although its case is more complex given that it is still facing active conflict.

Although the cost of past elections in Somalia, Puntland, and Somaliland is relatively high, it is not excessive in comparison with other post-conflict countries. As countries undergo democratic consolidation, core costs for elections actually increase.[96] This primarily stems from the expansion and institutionalisation of governance institutions and EMBs. The current post-2010 period marks a time when Somalia and Somaliland have made substantial efforts to democratise and institute relevant governance frameworks. There is also a correlation between high investment into post-conflict elections and longer-term stability. While costs are often high in early post-conflict elections, these come down as countries transition into more stable democracies. For instance, in Mozambique the cost reduced from $10.2 per vote in 1994 to $6.46 per vote a decade later.

Many of these high costs, in Somalia and elsewhere, are due to security,[97] human resources (elections staff and EMB secretariats), voter registration, civic education/ voter information, and election materials and equipment. Other major electoral costs include institutional capacity building (mostly for the EMBs),[98] election observation,[99] and party nominations and campaigns. Similar scenarios have been noted in post-conflict elections in Afghanistan, Angola, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, and Mozambique.[100] Thus, Somali electoral expectations seem in line with the normal costs of post-conflict elections. While initial costs during the democratic consolidation period will be high in Somalia, as it builds states and institutions, such costs will likely drop substantially with the consolidation of peace.

One particular issue in analysing the cost of democratisation in Somalia is that the post-conflict countries with which it is being compared have predominantly conducted elections in the aftermath of peace agreements that address the grievances of armed actors. In Somalia, elections are taking place while armed conflict persists. Afghanistan could be perceived as a relevant comparative example, with elections taking place in a context of persistent conflict and inadequate governance institutions. In that country, electoral costs rose from $20 per vote in 2004[101] to $65 per vote in 2009,[102] which was widely perceived to be a result of intimidation by armed actors together with massive security costs and voter fraud. At the same time, subsequent elections in 2014 dropped substantially to $9 per vote.[103]

95 Getting to the CORE – Global Survey on the Cost of Registration and Elections. UNDP Bureau for Development Policy and IFES Center for Transitional and Post Conflict Governance, www.undp.org/CORE or www.ifes.org/CORE. See also the ACE Project, http://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/core/crb/crb03

96 See the ACE Project, http://aceproject.org

97 This appears to be the single major electoral cost. In the 2016 federal electoral process, it was estimated that half of the electoral budget would go to security arrangements. See New African Magazine (2016), ' Delayed democracy: 12 things you need to know about the Somalia elections', available at http://newafricanmagazine.com/delayed-democracy-12-things-need-know-somalia-elections/

98 Traditionally, international electoral support has been 'event-driven', focusing on a single electoral process, leading to questions about whether such electoral assistance made much difference in the long run. Advocates of electoral cycle process argue for the strengthening of electoral management bodies and other electoral institutions as core to advancing democratic practice in supported countries. For a discussion on this, see European Union (2006), 'Methodological guide on electoral assistance'; Ellis A, Guerin P, Ayoub A (2006), 'Effective electoral assistance: Moving from event-based support to process support – Conference report and conclusions' IDEA; and Reilly B (2003), 'International electoral assistance: A review of donor activities and lessons learned', Working Paper 17, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, available at www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20030600_cru_working_paper_17.pdf in their discussions on electoral assistance.

99 Elections observations in Somalia have attracted both international and domestic observation teams, whose collective costs take a significant share of electoral costs. For example, there were 78 international observers in Somaliland's 2010 presidential elections, in addition to domestic observers by local civil society organisations. For details on international observers' mission for this election, see Walls M, Kibble S (2011), 'Somaliland: change and continuity – Report by International Election Observers on the June 2010 presidential elections in Somaliland' (London: Progressio) and Reilly B (2015), 'Timing and sequencing in post-conflict elections' op. cit.

100 For further details, see the ACE Project at http://aceproject.org.

101 Ibid.

102 Figure is estimated based on electoral cost estimation of $300 million; see the Afghan independent electoral commission data and Galbraith P (2009), 'Karzai was hellbent on victory. Afghans will pay the price', The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/nov/02/afghanistan-karzai-election-un-west.

103 Figures drawn from the Independent Electoral Commission.[95] of Afghanistan, www.iec.org.af/pdf/2014E-day-facts-en.pdf.

Managing the cost of elections in Somalia

As can be seen, national elections in Somalia alone are anticipated to have a hefty price tag, and conducting FMS-level elections in addition could send the cost spiralling without strategic efficiency efforts. Such costs would be daunting, and investments into any of these elections will need to be underpinned by a sense that the elections are likely to take place. History shows multiple failed attempts at democratisation in Somalia. Electoral financing will need to balance the need for ensuring all the appropriate mechanisms are in place to enable elections with agreed models and mechanisms that ensure trust in the results. But in order to ensure that these high costs are not wasted, it will be essential that the conditions in Somalia are created such that elections will actually take place and the results will be accepted by all parties. Given the considerable costs, there needs to be a sense that a high investment would generate the necessary returns and that the Somali population themselves would take ownership.

As the drive for democratisation entails high election costs in Somalia, there must be attempts to mitigate costs by harmonising electoral approaches. Multiple conflicting electoral mechanisms should be avoided, timelines should be mutually supportive, and approaches should be systemised to prevent FMSs and the federal government from taking uncoordinated actions on elections rather than maintaining national unity. However, such detailed interlinking could make national elections beholden to individual FMSs' internal political challenges; for example, if one state cannot hold elections on time, other states will suffer. Building national unity and coherence though national dialogue and consensus building will therefore be essential, with the constitutional review process central to this pursuit.

Given the strong popular desire to democratise and take part in elections, there is a need to identify approaches that meet the competing needs of conflict mitigation, democratisation, and stability. The tools needed to achieve these objectives should be financially feasible and cost effective. Measures for cost efficiency may include holding presidential, parliamentary, and local council elections within the same electoral cycle, possibly even on the same day and using similar materials.

4

Conclusions and recommendations

FOR SOMALIA TO HOLD SUCCESSFUL ELECTIONS, a variety of issues must be tackled. First and foremost, the main purpose behind elections must be clear – is it good governance, legitimising the federal government and the FMS authorities, or consolidating peace? Understanding this overarching objective will help to direct approaches.

It is essential for all actors to prioritise the needs and concerns of Somalis first and foremost. They should avoid a complacent view of elections as a good in and of themselves to be pursued solely because this is accepted as best practice for consolidating peace or transitioning from conflict. It is necessary to ensure that preparatory work, timing, approaches and models all serve Somalis' needs in a meaningful way and that elections are not conducted simply for their own sake. Moreover, elections should not be pursued primarily as a marker for international donors and agencies to demonstrate success with a view to withdrawing from Somalia or forcing a transition from peacebuilding and stabilisation to a good governance and development agenda.

Lifting the lid on the 4.5 clan power-sharing model will require careful conflict analysis of the implications of different electoral models' effects on the distribution of representation and how this may affect political stability. Electoral models must be found that can facilitate cross-regional and cross-clan unity as well as support the inclusion of youth and women. It is necessary for Somali and international stakeholders to diffuse fears that a substantial change in power distribution will negatively affect particular clans to the extent that they make themselves spoilers.

It is also important to recognise that the Somali government's ongoing conflict with al-Shabaab, which controls large swathes of territory and poses a violent threat to state structures and the population, constitutes a major obstacle to democratisation.

Somaliland, where time was taken to reach consensus on elections rather than setting hard deadlines, has experienced less post-electoral disputation of results, and each of its successive administrations has moved ahead with a sense of legitimacy. Hard deadlines may be ideal for preventing governments or presidents from overstaying their terms in office, but they can also be detrimental to the time-consuming but crucial pursuit of consensus and to ensuring that all necessary milestones are appropriately met, including border demarcation, finalisation of the constitution, voter registration, political party formation, and civic education and engagement. Where these are inadequately addressed, as in Puntland in 2013, electoral failure and even violence can ensue. As great a danger as this poses at the FMS level, on the federal stage there are

even more serious risks to the progress that has been made in reducing inter-clan competition and violent conflict.

Research shows that education levels correspond with how competencies and integrity are prioritised when selecting leaders – the more educated the voter, the more likely that these attributes play a significant role in his or her candidate selection. Deepening civic engagement with democratic processes, supporting voters' awareness of democracy, good governance, and accountability, and carrying out civic education and engagement can support the election of candidates who meet the people's needs and move Somalia from clan-based politics to the representation of broader interests.

Whether democratisation is introduced first at the national or at the local level may deeply affect the unity and stability of Somalia and a hybrid approach could help to respond to local level concerns whilst building national unity. Should there be a singular pursuit of national level elections, with FMSs' becoming increasingly the main conduit of governance and service delivery, with their own parliaments, ministries and presidents, caution should be exercised to avoid national level elections creating a veneer of democracy, obscuring undemocratic and unaccountable governance at the state level.

Democratisation in Somalia has immense potential to enhance peace. It requires deep consultations with both state structures and communities to identify a model that brings meaningful benefits to voters. It also requires financial commitments by the international community, the FGS, and the FMSs to put the requisite institutions, legal frameworks, and structures in place. Without all this, the progress and stability cultivated to date could be jeopardised.

Recommendations

- Somalia's constitutional review process needs to be finalised, and with it the model that should be deployed in future elections. The federal government must conduct consultations with FMSs, civil society, communities, and the international community and solicit feedback to ensure that the electoral model meets the needs of the population while maintaining stability and unity.

- While it is difficult to hold coherent electoral cycles given the widely varying capacity of state institutions across Somalia, it is necessary for there to be a level of harmonisation such that FMS democratisation links into federal elections and the two systems do not work at cross purposes. This is particularly essential with regard to district demarcation, voter registration, citizen registration, and political party formation.

- Civic education and engagement is essential in enabling meaningful public engagement in and support for elections and democratic processes. Public legitimacy can help to stymie disputes at the political level. Targeting civic education initiatives at citizens with lower education levels is a strategic use of limited funds available for such activities. It is necessary to consider how people with lower education levels can best be engaged by civic education, and which approaches and tools are most appropriate. For example, community level dialogues and radio programmes may be more effective than leaflets or written materials.

- Resolving the conflict with al-Shabaab is necessary to build an environment in which elections can take place, and elections can support such a resolution if deployed strategically. Identifying long-term means of resolution that go beyond military and CVE approaches is essential to democracy, peace, and development.

- Objectives for elections in Somalia should be clarified. This can add direction to the process and deepen linkages between the pursuit of elections and other governance and peacebuilding imperatives. This requires dialogue between Somalis and the international community, which can provide technical support to build consensus

and determine appropriate approaches. Reducing elections to a means of legitimising government can undermine the positive impact democratisation can have on peace and stability, especially if the drive for elections is not integrated with these overall ambitions.

- The Somali government, FMSs, and the international community need to pre-emptively consider electoral financing budgets and management. There must be transparency and strong accountability mechanisms for financial management in EMBs to mitigate against disputes over expenditures and avoid delays to implementation.

- Elections in Somalia and Somaliland have been conducted as one-off events as opposed to an electoral cycle approach. EMBs need to be sustained through non-election periods and elections need to be planned in relation to the electoral cycle approach.

- Border demarcation is essential for the creation of constituencies and governance units, both as a conflict mitigation and a governance tool. With changes in demographics, migration, and leadership, there is a need to demarcate borders that realistically reflect the population. Border demarcation must be conducted sensitively and in a politically neutral way to avoid gerrymandering and the institutionalisation of conflict. Consensus building, mediation, and community engagement are essential.

- Citizen and voter registration will provide a realistic assessment of demographics and eligible voters, enabling the consideration of electoral models that support democracy while facilitating peace and national unity.

- While the international community should work together with the Somali government and FMSs to identify milestones and timeframes for elections, hard deadlines may be counterproductive. Introducing a level of flexibility is beneficial to cultivating consensus. Although open-ended governance mandates should be avoided, applying pressure to comply with hard deadlines can negatively impact both elections and the pursuit of peace.

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

COVER PHOTO: Electoral officials count votes during Somaliland's ongoing electoral process in Mogadishu, Somalia, on 19 December 2016. © UN PHOTO/ILYAS AHMED