

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the course of the reporting period, Puntland territories in Somalia remained stable, with no reported attacks by violent extremist organizations (VEO). Sub-national tensions between Puntland and Somaliland, its neighbor to the west, were rising during the month, with government ministers on both sides making provocative statements on the media. There was two incidents of clan conflict, with clan militias clashing in villages of Buhodle district, and in Egag town in eastern Sanaag region. Both Puntland and Somaliland sent delegations to the districts to diffuse tensions, but political tensions between the two sub-national entities continued to rise.

In the regional fault-lines, Al Shabaab bombers attacked a Somali army base in a town south of Galkayo, leading to fatalities. The attack came two weeks after joint security forces, representing the federal government, Puntland and Galmudug, conducted joint operations in Galkayo in early June, whereby one Al Shabaab suspect was killed and another arrested. Last month, Al Shabaab assassinated Puntland's Mudug regional governor in a suicide bombing attack in Galkayo.

Continuing ongoing security reforms, the Puntland government completed basic training for over 1,100 officers to join the state forces. Additionally, during the month, the state's military court executed three men convicted on terrorism crimes. Puntland has been locked in a war against insurgents since 2006.

Relations between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Puntland continued to sour. FGS and state leaders agreed to organize a consultative conference, to discuss national security and 2021 elections, among other topics. In a positive development, the FGS and Federal Member States (FMS) leaders agreed to hold a national conference in Mogadishu next month. However, even as the process of agreeing on a conference moved forward, Puntland government issued strong statements rejecting actions by the federal government. In particular, the Puntland leadership declared that the state would not recognize the outcome of FGS-Somaliland talks, which opened during the month and were being hosted by the Djiboutian government. The matter added to further disagreements between the FGS and Puntland, exerting additional pressure upon strained inter-governmental relations between the two sides.

The Puntland parliament issued a statement rejecting the federal parliament's vote to approve adding 13 senators to the Upper House, to represent Banadir region. The parliament also advised the Puntland president not to attend the scheduled FGS-FMS conference in Mogadishu in protest, to which the president agreed and the national conference was thus suspended. Separately, Puntland and Galmudug presidents met in Galkayo for the first time to discuss strengthening inter-state cooperation. Meanwhile, the state's election body, Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC), announced that 12 political associations passed phase two of the registration process, down from 17 associations in the first round.

In Bossaso, protesters rejected the local government's plans to sub-divide the port city into four sub-districts. The plan, intended to improve service delivery, has come under scrutiny and regional officials were reportedly reviewing the proposal to diffuse tensions. This month's *Puntland Situation Report* also covers reports of public concerns over the government committees' management of aid, especially the El Dahir-Erigavo Road project which started in 2016, and a cyclone victims relief initiative for Gardafui region.

2. PEACE AND SECURITY

2.1 **Key Developments:** During June, there were a total of 18 fatalities (dead and wounded) reported in Puntland state and in the regional fault-lines, representing a 57% decrease from the previous month. About 66.6% of fatalities were attributed to clan conflicts in Sool and Sanaag regions, about 16.6% were attributed to attacks in the regional fault-lines, 5.6% attributed to an incident among Puntland forces in Sanaag region, 5.6% attributed to counter-terrorism operations, and the remaining 5.6% attributed to local protests in Bossaso district. In Galkayo, joint forces from FGS, Puntland and Galmudug conducted targeted operations against Al Shabaab operatives in the region. Clan fighting in Buhodle district and eastern Sanaag region was the reason for higher fatalities during the month.

2.1.1 **Uncategorized:** On June 4, a female was sentenced to death by the Bossaso regional court, according to judge Abukar Abdinur Jama.¹ The judge told the media that Ruqiyo Abdirahman Mohamed was convicted of abducting a 1-year-old girl, who was later found dead at Ruqiyo's home.²

2.1.2 **Sub-National Conflict:** On Jun. 1, local media reported that Somaliland was “conducting military movements” in parts of Sool region, near the front-line with Puntland troops based near Tukaraq town (70km west of Garowe).³ Somaliland and Puntland officials did not comment on the report, although some media outlets reported that Somaliland troops were “conducting normal shift of troops between bases”.⁴

On Jun. 6, Puntland reportedly deployed troops to Sool region, as tensions began to rise in the region.⁵ On Jun. 8, Somali media reported that Somaliland army's 7th division, commander Col. Mahad ‘Ambashe’ Farah Elmi, arrived at Gocondhaale village, part of Buhodle district, which is an area not controlled by Somaliland forces.⁶ On Jun. 22, Somaliland deputy interior minister Nasir Aideed Mohamed reportedly said: “Somaliland troops are stationed at the boundary between Somalia and Somaliland.⁷ Areas they [Somaliland troops] have not yet reached, they will deploy soon and we will not ask anyone. Also, [Puntland President Said] Deni has no say in the talks between Somalia and Somaliland”.⁸ The Somaliland deputy minister's comments came after Puntland President Said Deni demanded Somaliland withdraw troops from Sool region.⁹

By Jun. 24, tensions were again heightened between Puntland and Somaliland administrations, when Somaliland information minister Saleban Kore said that Somaliland troops would “defend against provocations from Puntland”. On the other side, Puntland information minister Abdullahi Timacadde told reporters that, “Somaliland should withdraw from the land [Sool and Sanaag regions] or there will be conflict”.¹⁰ On Jun. 30, Somaliland-appointed Sool governor Abdigani Mohamud Jidhe claimed that Puntland officials were “expelled” from Karin-dabayl village, in Sool region, and that the delegation included the health minister and parliamentarians.¹¹ Puntland officials did not respond officially to the Somaliland official's claims.

2.1.3 **Regional Fault-Lines:** On Jun. 21, suspected Al Shabaab suicide bombers attacked Galmudug forces based at Bacaadweyn town, about 180km southeast of Galkayo, in Galmudug state. Galmudug officials said 2 soldiers and the suicide bomber were killed and the attack was under investigation.¹² Joint forces from Somali National Army, Puntland and Galmudug forces have conducted operations targeting Al Shabaab in Galkayo area over the past three months.¹³

2.1.4 **Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO):** During the reporting month, there were no incidents of VEO attacks reported in areas under Puntland state jurisdiction.

2.1.5 **Counter-Terrorism:** On Jun. 7, Puntland counter-terrorism forces (PSF), Galmudug and federal forces ‘Danab’ killed Al Shabaab operative in joint security operations in Galkayo.¹⁴ The PSF

statement said the dead suspect was a “bomb making specialist” and carried out attack operations against government targets in Galkayo.¹⁵ Galmudug security minister Ahmed Fiqi told media that Galmudug forces also arrested Aweys Moallim Mohamed Hassan in South Galkayo, who was Al Shabaab suspect caught “while carrying explosives”.¹⁶ Minister Fiqi said security forces “foiled an assassination plot” targeting him, while noting that “joint forces” (Galmudug, Puntland and federal forces) killed Al Shabaab operative Mohamed Hassan Farah (alias Hussein) who was “head of Al Shabaab in Galkayo”. State officials claimed that the deceased operative was “responsible” for recent attacks on government targets in Galkayo.¹⁷

2.1.6 Local/Clan Conflicts: On Jun. 2, at least 1 person was killed and 3 others wounded when two clan militias clashed near Gacondhaale village, outside of Buhodle town.¹⁸ On Jun. 12, a Somaliland delegation led by foreign minister Yasin Mohamud ‘Faraton’ and including clan elders travelled to Buhodle district to “intervene” in renewed clan conflict in the area.¹⁹ On Jun. 19, Somaliland public works minister Abdirashid Duale told VOA Somali Service that Somaliland troops “intervened” to stop clan violence in villages near Buhodle town and a mediation committee was appointed to resolve the clan conflict.²⁰

On Jun 19, Somali media reported that Puntland’s Bari regional governor Abdisamad Yusuf Mohamed ‘Abwaan’ reportedly said that protestors in Bossaso “are similar to Al Shabaab”.²¹ The remarks came after security forces were sent to disperse protestors who were opposed to the local government’s plan to sub-divide Bossaso into four sub-districts. On Jun. 20, at least 1 person was killed in the crossfire when protestors clashed with police at Laag village, about 30km south of Bossaso. Protestors were demonstrating against the local government’s plans to sub-divide Bossaso into four sub-districts.²²

On Jun. 27, VOA Somali Service reported that 8 persons were wounded in clan fighting over land ownership in Cowsane village, part of eastern Sanaag region.²³ On Jun. 28, Puntland forces were deployed to Sanaag region to intervene between two local clans who fought in Cowsane village.²⁴

2.1.7 Maritime Security: On Jun. 19, a group of 13 men, who served time in prison in Oman for piracy crimes, were returned to Puntland, Somalia, after completing their prison sentences, Puntland officials in Bossaso said.²⁵ International naval warships were deployed to the Somali coast in 2008 and hundreds of Somali pirates were arrested. Many have been held in foreign prisons ever since.²⁶

2.1.8 Security Sector Governance: On Jun. 3, an armed militia in Puntland’s north-eastern Gardafui region told reporters that they are “troops loyal to Federal Government of Somalia”.²⁷ The Puntland government did not comment on the development. Since early 2020, there have been challenges and controversy in Gardafui region, with the government’s Security Reform Committee facing obstacles to troop registration, while local elders recently complained over aid mismanagement for the region’s cyclone victims. On Jun. 8, Puntland police commanders in Qardo ‘apologised’ after social media backlash over a leaked video showing police officers ‘mistreating’ young persons. Reports said the police’s original charges of “cultural misconduct” was rescinded after public backlash over social media.²⁸ On Jun. 12, Puntland police commissioner Gen. Abdi ‘Yare’ Hassan Hussein told a press conference in Garowe that the 2 police commanders in Qardo district were suspended.²⁹ The commissioner said a police inquiry into the commanders’ conduct found them in violation of approved police procedures.

On Jun. 14, Puntland military court executed three men accused of terrorism crimes in Bossaso. The three men, identified as Mohamed Hassan Barre, Bishar Mohamed Hassan and Abdihakim Mohamed Farah, were convicted on terrorism charges in connection with Al Shabaab and ISIS groups.³⁰ On Jun. 21, President Deni attended the graduation ceremony for over 800 Puntland Darawish (paramilitary) forces, who received 5 months of training/re-training at Horgoble camp in Qardo, 54 camp in Garowe and Badhan camp in Sanaag.³¹ The event was held at Horgoble camp and attended by senior Puntland officials, including security minister, finance minister, Darawish

commander and police commissioner.³² President Deni instructed government forces to “shoot on sight” all armed groups suspected of terror attacks. President Deni also accused the FGS of being “an obstacle” to Puntland receiving security assistance from the international community.³³ On Jun. 25, the Puntland president travelled to Bossaso where he attended a ceremony for over 300 officers who finished basic training with the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF), the state’s anti-piracy force. PMPF force was established in 2010 and bases in Bossaso and several coastal districts of Puntland.³⁴

On Jun. 26, in a rare case, Puntland forces clashed among themselves after two police units began fighting at Badhan airport in Sanaag region.³⁵ According to local media, at least 1 police officer was killed in the fighting. The violence stopped after local elders intervened.³⁶

2.2 Security Forecast

- 2.2.1 **Sub-National Conflict:** The sub-national conflict between Somaliland and Puntland did not result in violence during this reporting period. However, throughout the month, negative rhetoric and statements of aggression was traded between the two sub-national authorities. Meanwhile, a clan conflict in the rural villages that come under Buhodle district was the object of both Puntland and Somaliland’s attention, as each administration vied for the role of intermediary between the fighting clans. However, local sources told NAI that clan elders have rejected both entities attempts to intervene, opting for the traditional system of conflict resolution instead. As both Puntland and Somaliland continue their dispute over the administration of Sool region, the FGS-Somaliland talks heightened the negative rhetoric the two sides engaged in during this reporting period. The dispute is not likely to turn violent during the next reporting period, unless the FGS-Somaliland talks in Djibouti produce a controversial outcome.
- 2.2.2 **Regional Fault-lines:** As the new Galmudug state administration looks to improve security in the region, they have met some resistance from VEOs in the area. The attack on Galmudug forces is an indication of Galmudug’s disruption of VEO networks, which resulted in a retaliatory attack by the insurgents. It is likely VEOs continue to wage asymmetric attacks on Galmudug positions in the next reporting periods.
- 2.2.3 **Counter-Terrorism:** Unilateral action and joint security operations conducted by Galmudug, Puntland and federal forces on VEOs in Galkayo area signals strong cooperation and commitment by the two states to root out VEOs operating in Mudug region. In the past, Puntland has accused Galmudug of being unwilling to address VEOs operating in their jurisdiction. However, the new Galmudug administration’s work over the recent months is drastically reversing these views. How well Puntland and Galmudug continue to coordinate on security matters will be crucial to the overall security of Galkayo and Mudug region more broadly.
- 2.2.4 **Local/Clan Conflicts:** There were a number of local clan conflicts that occurred during this reporting period. The conflict in Buhodle area garnered the attention of both Puntland and Somaliland officials, who arrived in the area to mediate. The conflict between two clans has its roots in local grievances over land ownership and unresolved previous killings, which escalated into recent violence. The mediation by elders will likely result in a settlement agreement to ease tensions, but for lasting peaceful resolution, clan grievances will have to be addressed directly without the involvement of political entities, such as Somaliland and Puntland. From the perspective of local communities, Puntland and Somaliland are two administrations vying for political and territorial control in the region. It is not clear if the violence involving protestors in Laag, a village under Bossaso district, could have been avoided or not; however, it was imperative to note that the local government could have better managed the local community’s disagreement with the four sub-district plan for Bossaso. It is also unclear whether or not the deployment of state police escalated tensions. It is likely that the act of violence will not give way to retaliatory attacks on security forces in Bossaso. **Section 4** of this report provides further details about sub-division plan for Bossaso.

The clan conflict in Cowsane village has been noted as renewed clan clashes in Sanaag region. Like any other clan conflict, the cause could have a number of motivating factors, including unaddressed grievances and a history of clan clashes between the two local clans. The conflict quickly spiraled before Puntland forces and community leaders intervened. Over the past year, Sanaag region has increasingly become more militarized, as the sub-national conflict between Puntland and Somaliland has continued to impact the region. Addressing the clan conflict in the region should be a high priority for Puntland, as an unaddressed situation has the potential to further destabilize a region embroiled in a tug-of-war.

2.2.5 Security Sector Governance: As Puntland attempts to reform its security apparatuses, public confidence with the security forces is an important measurement of success. Claims of mistreatment and public shaming are detrimental to the administration's image of reform. The swift action taken by the police commissioner, with regards to the police officials involved in the shaming of teenagers specifically adolescent females, indicates that the government is cognizant of the wrongdoing of its officials and its public image. Likewise, the Puntland government should also be cognizant of its actions or lack thereof in quelling local dissatisfaction with development plans for rural and remote areas, such as Gardafui region, and its impact on the security forces from these areas. The remarks made by members of the security forces in Gardafui region stem from grievances held by the local community with regards to government-led humanitarian efforts in the cyclone-hit region. (See **Section 4.2** for further analysis). In February, security forces stationed in the region voiced criticism of the Security Reform Committee's work in the region. Grievances, such as these, need to be remedied and incorporated into the security reform strategy the Puntland government is implementing in the state. Other potential risks that may impact the security reform strategy, such as the skirmish between state police in Badhan airport, should also form part of the strategy considerations. The two police units who clashed in Badhan will need to be closely investigated and adjudicated by the Puntland government, before the matter transforms to take on clan connotations. It is unclear how Puntland will address all of these issues in the months to come. Finally, the Puntland military court's execution of men convicted of terrorism forms part of the state's counter-terrorism policy and the state is likely to continue this approach.

3. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

3.1 Puntland Rejects Outcome of FGS-Somaliland Talks in Djibouti

3.1.1 Key Developments: On Jun. 14, political talks between the FGS and Somaliland government, hosted by the Djiboutian government, opened in Djibouti City. The political talks have the support of international partners, including the U.S., Ethiopia, Djibouti, African Union, and European Union.³⁷ However, at the local level, the talks were not widely welcomed. On Jun. 15, locals protested in Buhodle district against FGS-Somaliland talks, with protestors saying that, "no one at the conference represents Sool, Sanaag and Cayn regions" (SSC)³⁸. The SSC regions have been disputed between Somaliland and Puntland for years.³⁹ On Jun. 15, the FGS-Somaliland concluded with an agreement on the formation of a joint technical committee to advance the discussions.⁴⁰ On Jun. 15, Puntland president Said Deni officially opened the 46th ordinary session of Puntland House of Representatives (state parliament).⁴¹ The president's speech covered the administration's achievements and challenges, the state's security situation, and relations with the FGS.⁴² President Deni specifically remarked that, "Puntland will not accept" the outcome of FGS-Somaliland talks in Djibouti.⁴³

On Jun. 16, Somali media reported that Somaliland sent "additional troops" to Las Anod, capital of Sool region, after reports that a protest was planned in the city.⁴⁴ Some reports said the protestors wanted to express support for President Farmajo.⁴⁵ On Jun. 16, Abdulkadir Mohamed Hassan (Indho), a member of Somaliland parliament's House of Guurti, told local media that "Puntland cannot reject anything" with regard to FGS-Somaliland political talks. He claimed that Puntland "has no role", as Puntland state is represented by the FGS in the talks.⁴⁶ On Jun. 18, Puntland

information minister Abdullahi Ali Hersi ‘Tima-ade’ told a press conference in Garowe that Puntland “shall not recognize” the outcome of the FGS-Somaliland talks, reiterating the Puntland state government’s official position.⁴⁷

On Jun. 18, FGS-Somaliland political talks in Djibouti City concluded. The two sides agreed to cooperate on the following:⁴⁸ a) civil aviation management; b) confidence building; c) implementation of previous agreements; and d) formation of three sub-committees (Aid and Investment; Civil Aviation; Security – to meet for 45 days in Djibouti).⁴⁹ On Jun. 19, the Puntland government issued a press statement reiterating that it does not recognize the FGS-Somaliland agreement signed in Djibouti City.⁵⁰ Neither the FGS nor Somaliland administration responded officially to Puntland state’s policy declaration.

3.1.2 **Analysis:** Historically, Puntland has engaged in territorial conflict with Somaliland since 2002 over control of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn regions. The FGS-Somaliland dialogue process, backed by a section of the international community, has excluded Puntland as a stakeholder in the dialogue process. The Puntland administration, which sees itself as representative of SSC communities, argues that it has the right to partake in the political talks. Hundreds of people have died in the Somaliland-Puntland territorial conflict over the past 18 years, and this conflict has not been discussed or addressed. The FGS-Somaliland dialogue is a political process, while realpolitik considerations is influenced by ground realities, because it is Puntland and Somaliland troops at the frontline, and there are no federal forces. Ignoring Puntland risks raising clan tensions, as the SSC regions and Puntland more broadly feel excluded from political negotiations, which they have vested interests.

3.1.3 **Forecast:** The FGS and Somaliland have signed prior agreements to advance the two-way talks. However, until such time that the Puntland-Somaliland territorial dispute is addressed directly, it is unlikely that any FGS-Somaliland agreement can be implemented properly on the ground.

3.2 FGS-FMS Proposed Summit Postponed After Political Fallout

3.2.1 **Key Developments:** Throughout June, the political dispute between the FGS and the Federal Member States (FMS) continued to unfold. On Jun. 2, President Deni told a monthly media presentation that Puntland “does not accept 4.5 formula” as basis for political representation in Federal Parliament.⁵¹ He continued further, suggesting that federal parliamentarians “do not represent Puntland in negotiations with Federal Government”.⁵² The president’s argument rested on the constitutional principle that political negotiations for power and resource sharing, or national election consultations, is between the FGS and the FMS administrations.

On Jun. 10, Puntland government issued a statement on 2020/2021 federal elections in Somalia and “rescinded” its membership in a federal-state technical secretariat that was organizing the leaders’ planned summit.⁵³ The FGS and FMS leaders, planning to hold a summit, nominated the technical secretariat to facilitate and organise the leaders’ proposed meeting, and the Puntland government’s decision came as a setback.⁵⁴ Then, on Jun. 22, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi ‘Farmajo’ attended an online meeting via Zoom app attended by FMS presidents from Puntland, Jubaland, Southwest, Galmudug and Hirshabelle states, and Banadir regional governor.⁵⁵ The meeting was intended to agree on time, location and agenda of the upcoming FGS-FMS leaders meeting. Some reports said that the FMS leaders agreed that President Farmajo should propose time and location of the upcoming summit. The UN Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) welcomed and commended the proposed summit, referring to the development as an “important step in regular dialogue among Somali stakeholders”.⁵⁶

On Jun. 24, Puntland government issued a strongly worded statement warning against the Federal Government’s election plans.⁵⁷ The government’s communique reiterated Puntland state’s position that the state “would not recognize” the Federal Government’s electoral and resource-sharing laws.⁵⁸

Jubaland state also issued a similar statement on the same day.⁵⁹ On Jun. 25, Puntland and Jubaland issued statements supporting a statement on the 2021 election from the Upper House of Federal Parliament.⁶⁰ On Jun. 25, President Farmajo invited all FMS leaders to Mogadishu (Jul. 5-8) for a leaders' summit to discuss a range of issues, such as, national security, federal elections, and economic development.⁶¹

On Jun. 29, Puntland MPs in Garowe engaged in a heated discussion about the Lower House of Federal Parliament's vote proposing that 13 senators should be added to the Upper House to represent Banadir region.⁶² Puntland parliamentarians rejected the federal parliament's decision and advised President Deni not to attend the upcoming Somali leaders' summit.⁶³ Then, on Jun. 30, President Deni, speaking at a ceremony in Galkayo marking Somali Independence Day, commented that he accepted the Puntland parliament's advice not to attend the scheduled Somali leaders' meeting in Mogadishu.⁶⁴

3.2.2 Analysis: During June, the political impasse between the FGS and FMS leaders seemed to open up with direct talks and virtual meeting happening for the first time. It seemed to be the beginning of renewed efforts to commence political discussions between federal and state leaders. However, even as that objective was being pursued by different actors at the same time, the political sides seemed to be pulling further apart. This was demonstrated by Puntland state's decision not to attend the FGS-FMS conference in Mogadishu, proposed by President Farmajo. Other developments seemed to fuel the discontent. For instance, the federal parliament's vote to add 13 senators to Upper House, without broad-based consultations among political stakeholders on the constitutional amendment, was a development that further complicated an already tense political landscape.

The fallout from the suspended meeting in Mogadishu could trigger further political fragmentation among the key political actors in Somalia, who are supposed to work together as the 2021 federal elections draw nearer. The FGS-FMS dispute has a fundamental question at heart: is the 2021 election within the exclusive authority of the federal parliament, or is elections the outcome of FGS-FMS consultations to agree on an election model? The FGS leadership has pursued the first scenario by pushing the laws through federal parliament and leaving no space for consultations with state administrations. Conversely, the FMS administrations want a say in the election process, citing constitutional articles calling upon the FGS to engage in consultations with the FMS, and the fact that most of the elections will take place in districts under FMS jurisdiction. In a way, the type of federalism is being challenged – with Mogadishu promoting a model with more federal powers, and the FMS promoting a model that reserves more powers to state governments. Resolving the wider dispute may unfold over the coming years, as the federal system takes root, but agreeing on a model for 2021 elections is an urgent matter. The planned summit, which was later suspended, offered a good start and that path is likely to be pursued, as leaders attempt to create a political bridge.

3.2.3 Forecast: As the 2021 elections get closer, pressure will continue to grow on the FGS and FMS leaders to meet and agree on an election model, or risk an unplanned term extension. The FGS-FMS conference is likely to be held in the next month.

3.3 State Presidents of Puntland and Galmudug Meet in Galkayo

3.3.1 Key Developments: On Jun. 26, Puntland state president Said Deni and Galmudug state president Ahmed Abdi Karie 'Qoorqoor' met in Galkayo for the first time.⁶⁵ President Deni hosted the Galmudug president and his delegation at Puntland State House for discussions.⁶⁶ Local media reported discussions included regional security, economic cooperation and forging a Puntland-Galmudug political alliance ahead of the 2021 Somali national election.⁶⁷ In a second meeting, President Qoorqoor hosted the Puntland leader's delegation in South Galkayo for further talks.

3.3.2 Analysis: Puntland and Galmudug are neighboring states in central Somalia and share jurisdiction over Galkayo district. Galkayo, and Mudug region more broadly, has been impacted by conflict and

instability since the Somali central government collapsed in 1991. The Puntland-Galmudug leaders' meeting is the right direction, as the two state governments can further increase their cooperation and joint action, especially to improve security in Mudug region. Galkayo is strategically located, with access to markets in Puntland, Galmudug and eastern Ethiopia. As such, the city has the potential to develop into an economic and logistics hub, thereby benefitting from inter-state cooperation in security and trade, which contributes to long-term development objectives in the region.

3.3.3 **Forecast:** The Puntland-Galmudug renewed cooperation, especially security cooperation, is expected to strengthen over the coming months, as the two state governments seem more committed to cooperation and protecting their mutual interests.

3.4 TPEC Finalizes Phase Two of Political Association Registrations

3.4.1 **Key Developments:** On Jun. 3, three political associations registered with Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) – namely, Xaqsoor, Daryeel and Qaran-doon – united to form a single political association named 'Mustaqbal' (Future).⁶⁸ The previous week, TPEC announced that the political associations had entered phase two of the registration process.⁶⁹ On Jun. 4, Somali media agency *Puntland Post* reported that “traditional elders had joined” a political association in Puntland. The website argued that, under Puntland state laws, “traditional elders” are considered cultural figures and therefore are exempt from joining political activities.⁷⁰ On Jun. 22, TPEC announced it had concluded phase two of political association registrations, with commission spokesman Abdinur Sheikh Mohamed announcing that 12 political associations have completed phase two (17 political associations passed phase one). He also noted that three political associations merged to form one, as the commission moved to implement the next phase of the democratization process in Puntland.⁷¹

3.4.2 **Analysis:** Introducing multiparty political process in Puntland was not expected to be an easy task. However, public support for democratic elections is high, as witnessed with the hordes of people especially the youth joining registered political associations. Three political associations joining forces to form a single association is a move that other smaller political associations may be considering, in order to be more competitive. The conclusion of phase two of the registration process means that the democratization process is moving ahead in Puntland.

3.4.3 **Forecast:** TPEC is expected to continue inching forward the state's transition from clan-based political arrangement to a multiparty political system, a historic undertaking enshrined in Puntland state constitution.

4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

4.1 Puntland Government's Bossaso Sub-Division Plans Falter

4.1.1 **Key Developments:** On Jun. 13, an event attended by Puntland ministers, Bari regional governor, Bossaso mayor and other senior officials was held in Bossaso. The ceremony was to announce the government's plan to “sub-divide” Bossaso into four sub-districts: Bender Qassim; Baalade; BiyoKulule; and Buur-cad.⁷² Government officials said the decision to sub-divide Bossaso into sub-districts was aimed at improving security and delivery of service to local communities. On Jun. 15, Abdirahman Mohamud Dhore, a member of Puntland Parliament, wrote a message on social media warning Puntland Interior Minister Mohamed Dhabanad “not to stir trouble” and to “stay out of the mayor's job”.⁷³ MP Dhore is a critic of the government's plan to sub-divide Bossaso into four sub-districts to better manage security and service delivery, according to Puntland officials.

On Jun. 17, local media reported that a “protest” was being organised in Bossaso, with local communities concerned over the government's decision to sub-divide Bossaso into four sub-districts.⁷⁴ On Jun. 18, Puntland Interior Minister Dhabanad rejected allegations that Bossaso was

sub-divided into four districts based on clans and further warned elements against “inciting the public with misinformation”.⁷⁵ Sources in Bossaso told NAI that government officials opened community consultations and agreed to review implementation of plans to sub-divide Bossaso.

On Jun. 19, Puntland announced that a project to build a 7 megawatt solar power station in Bossaso. The project, supported by Abu Dhabi Fund for Development in UAE, and was launched by Puntland Energy Minister Ahmed Tarran in Bossaso, as part of the government’s development plans.⁷⁶

4.1.2 **Analysis:** The decision to sub-divide neighborhoods in Bossaso was deemed controversial by many among the local community, some of whom protested the decision. Understanding why the public reacted in this manner, a couple of factors will have to be examined. Firstly, the lack of public awareness as to the impending decision on the sub-division of Bossaso into four districts, which gave rise to a range of allegations that were not being clearly disproven by Puntland officials. Allegations of clan bias were levied by some critics who felt that the four planned districts were too little for Bossaso’s varying clans and that the decision benefitted a select group of clans. This was denied by Minister Dhabanad, as he stated that the four sub-districts were based on local government data. The warning against public incitement reduces the matter to a select dissenting group; rather, the misinformation likely came from the lack of public awareness as to how the process of sub-division occurred and the reasoning behind it. This gap allowed for misinformation to spread, leading to the public voicing their criticism through protests.

The division of Bossaso into sub-districts is a major transformation, which aims to decentralize service delivery. This policy provides districts the autonomy to collect revenue and implement service delivery. With Somalia becoming an increasingly rent-seeking economy, it is likely that the majority of criticism stems from prominent members who want to have more influence in areas they feel that their clan constituents reside in, thus making it easier to galvanize clans under a banner of representation to vie for more political influence.

The decision to open consultations and delay the implementation of sub-division plans attests to mounting public pressure and the government’s willingness to maintain social cohesion in Bossaso. This could have been avoided entirely, if broad consultations were implemented before the decision was made public. Even more necessary in this scenario was to make consultations open to the public to ensure that public concerns and the possible risks were factored into the final decision. This is a valuable lesson learnt for Puntland officials, as the state embarks on the democratization process, which will require demarcation of district boundaries for Puntland state’s 40 districts, many of which currently do not have clear administrative boundaries. The Puntland government will need to build consensus by conducting broad consultations and adequate risk assessment, especially in areas with revenue generation. Bossaso, as the state’s economic hub, provides the ultimate test.

4.1.3 **Forecast:** How the Puntland government deals with this matter in Bossaso, will be crucial to the social cohesion of Bossaso, a city that has become a prime target for VEOs. But it will also impact the wider democratization process, as it is a precursor to the task of demarcating district boundaries. It is possible that the Puntland government increases the number of district sub-divisions to accommodate public concerns.

4.2 Public Concerns Over Aid Management in Puntland

4.2.1 **Key Developments:** On Jun. 2, civil society groups in Puntland’s Sanaag region issued a public statement demanding “accountability” over funds donated for construction of El Dahir-Erigavo Road, which was a community-led project that commenced in 2016.⁷⁷ The statement appealed to Puntland parliament to “fulfil its oversight obligations” to ensure project completion. On Jun. 4, local media reported that elders and local politicians in Puntland’s Gardafui region complained about the

government's role in the region, such as delays in assessment missions for the cyclone that hit the remote region in the state's northeast corner in December 2019.⁷⁸

Regarding accountability, Puntland COVID-19 Prevention Committee has not adequately updated the public about state's COVID-19 response. On Jun. 11, the committee issued a statement on "increasing cases" of COVID-19; however, the committee did not provide details of its management of donations. For example, on Jun. 30, Puntland Ministry of Health director-general Dr. Abdirizak Hersi announced that the ministry received a donation of COVID-19 prevention materials from Ethiopian Consulate-General in Puntland.⁷⁹ Other donations have been received from the UAE and other international partners in recent months.

4.2.2 Analysis: The demand for more public accountability with community-led projects has been a reoccurring theme throughout the past months, as more allegations of mismanagement were raised. Criticisms from elders and politicians in Gardafui region reverberates sentiment felt in recent months over aid management of a committee tasked with building a feeder road damaged by the cyclone. This led to a shooting and a robbery by an armed group of men, who voiced grievances with the management of the road restoration project. Community members and government officials quickly intervened to de-escalate the situation. The more recent issue raised by community members in Gardafui region seems to be connected with the previous grievances that were likely quelled with government promises to do more to ensure relief for the cyclone-hit communities. The delays cited indicates that the promises have not been fulfilled, resulting in more criticism of the government from local communities.

The demand for more accountability of a community funded road project in Sanaag region is another example of the citizens indicating their unhappiness with how community funded projects are being managed. The Puntland government has taken a complicated stance on community funded projects, in one instance inserting itself as organizer while at the same instance recruiting public and community figures to manage the implementation of community projects. Funds are raised from the community but it is unclear who has the final decision of the allocation of these funds and if the government is conducting any oversight function. The El Dahir-Erigavo road project was started under the leadership of the former Puntland President Abdiweli Gaas and has continued on into the current administration. Community-led projects are important to the development of society and have the potential to inspire public confidence, if they are properly managed. The government will have to implement clear policies and procedures to ensure transparency and accountability, if it wants to continue pursuing community-led projects. Without stringent procedures and clear guidelines, mismanaged community-led projects will fail to ensure transparency and accountability and be detrimental to Puntland state's developmental goals, while tainting any positive efforts that may have been achieved. To undertake successful community-led projects, the Puntland government will have to mirror the strict protocols and procedures it follows when working with international development organizations, especially since the state's previous track record does not inspire public confidence. Civilian oversight mechanisms are essential and the inclusion of community members in committees is a good place to start, but civilian oversight mechanisms depend on broad transparency and access to information for the wider community to ensure accountability.

4.2.3 Forecast: It is possible that the Puntland parliament may conduct an official inquiry into the El Dahir-Erigavo road project and the allegations of mismanagement. However, it is unlikely that there will be any findings shared with the public.

New Access International (NAI Somalia), founded in 2012, is a research and development agency based in Somalia. NAI specializes in research, development, and advocacy. NAI Somali Law and Policy Program publishes the monthly Puntland Situation Report and the Somali Federalization Monitor.

W: naisomalia.com

E: contact@naisomalia.com

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