



# PUNTLAND SITUATION REPORT

## Somali Law & Policy Program

March 2019

## 1. SUMMARY

Puntland State, in northern Somalia, was relatively calm and stable during the reporting period. New Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni's newly appointed government took office in Feb. 2019 and commenced its governmental duties in earnest. The new Government organized a Policy Strategy Conference, attended by members of the Council of Ministers and policy experts. The Government also held two meetings focusing on raising awareness around drought conditions devastating parts of Puntland territory. Furthermore, military tensions between Puntland and neighboring self-proclaimed 'Republic of Somaliland' increased in March, due to guerrilla-style attacks launched by members of an unidentified militia group in Sool region, and the deployment of Somaliland troops in parts of eastern Sanaag region. In 2018, Somaliland militarily seized Tukaraq, a town in Sool region about 70km east of provincial capital Las Anod, sparking off a military standoff with Puntland forces that led to heavy fighting in August 2018.

During Mar. 2019, there was a number of reported security incidents, including the military standoff in eastern Sanaag region, guerrilla-style local militia attacks against Somaliland forces in Sool region, the high-profile assassination of a local elder in Bossaso, and deadly clashes between local militia in Galkayo over a plot of land. Meanwhile, Puntland government forces continued intense security operations inside major urban centers, including in Bossaso and Galkayo, while conducting major military maneuvers in areas of active hostility near the Al Madow Mountains, southwest of Bossaso.

Puntland state's development progress was also on track, as the new government made headways to increase international engagement and attract foreign investment. In Galkayo, a new Local Council was formed and a new mayor elected, ensuring the government's commitment to decentralization policy as required by the state constitution. Overall, the state was politically stable, the new government was prioritizing security, and development was high on the agenda.

## 2. PEACE AND SECURITY

### 2.1 Overview

According to open source data, violent fatalities occurred in Puntland State in Mar. 2019. The total number of violent deaths reported by local media was 36 deaths. The fatalities were attributed to increased counter terrorism military offensives targeting Al Shabaab group (54.2%), intra-clan violence in Mudug region (14.2%), ISIS assassination in Bossaso (2.8%) and a tragic traffic accident in Bari region (28.5%). It was hard to verify the number of Somaliland military casualties in an ambush by local militia under the command of Col. Faisal Falalug in Gambadhe, Sool region.

### 2.1 Key Security Developments

**2.1.1.** The Puntland and Somaliland conflict, which had lull during late 2018 and early 2019, was reignited last month. On Mar. 4, local clan militia loyal to Col. Faisal Falalug raided a Somaliland forward operating base at Gambadhe, approximately 30km east of Somaliland-controlled Las Anod, provincial capital of Sool region. Somaliland troops reportedly sustained injuries and lost weapons to the militia. Somaliland-appointed Sool Governor Abdullahi Jama Dirie claimed that one soldier was killed and another was injured in

the attack<sup>1</sup>. However, Somaliland spokesman Col. Abdirahman Abdullahi Hassan contradicted this report and accused Puntland of the attack, telling local media: “Two military vehicles belonging to Puntland ambushed Somaliland forces in Gambadhe.” He claimed that Somaliland “captured one vehicle, injured 4 of the attackers”<sup>2</sup>. In an official statement on Mar. 5, the Puntland government refuted Somaliland’s allegations against Puntland. Ali Hassan Sabarey, Puntland’s information minister, confirmed that Puntland forces did not attack Somaliland troops in Gambadhe and instead referred to the attackers as “local militia” from the area.<sup>3</sup>

**2.1.2. Eastern Sanaag:** Somaliland troops advanced into new areas of eastern Sanaag region during the reporting period. On Mar. 11, Somaliland forces deployed near Yubbe town in eastern Sanaag unannounced. Somaliland commanders told local media that they intend to move further east towards Badhan, as a preventative measure against attacks launched from inside Puntland.<sup>4</sup> On Mar. 14, local communities in Hadaaftimo, Yubbe and other towns in eastern Sanaag region, publicly demonstrated and protested against the Somaliland troops’ arrival in their towns.<sup>5</sup> On Mar. 21, Puntland forces arrived at El Ad village, a few kilometers from Yubbe town. The following day, Somaliland troops in Yubbe town retreated to a mountainous area some 6km west of Yubbe. On Mar. 24, Somaliland President Muse BihiAbdithe Somaliland Parliament, appealed for peace with Puntland, saying that Somaliland “shall be compelled to defend its interests” in Sanaag region.<sup>6</sup> Media reports said that Sanaag community leaders informed Somaliland to “withdraw its forces from Yubbe area” in Sanaag region.<sup>7</sup> The meeting took place in Erigavo, capital of Sanaag region.

**2.1.3. Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs):** Violent extremist organizations continued to operate in small mountain villages near the Al Madow Mountains with demonstrated capability to coordinate attacks on Puntland from their centers of gravity in Al Madow and Al Miskood mountain ranges. Al Shabaab continued to operate in small groups in mountain villages, such as like Madarshoon, Karin Hagarood, Dindigle, Macagta area, and other villages. Meanwhile, ISIS militants continued to operate clandestinely in small groups in villages located in Al Miskood mountain ranges. On Mar. 8, an unknown assailant killed Puntland traditional elder Sultan Bashir Muse Konte inside Mubarak Mosque in west Bossaso. The attacker threw a hand grenade immediately after the shooting to escape the scene, witnesses reported.<sup>8</sup> Local security sources said the attack bore the hallmarks of ISIS, but the group has not claimed responsibility for this assassination.

**2.1.4. Counter-terrorism Operations:** The Puntland government intensified security operations and reforms during the reporting period. On Mar. 8, Puntland Defense Force (Darawishta) commanders and US-trained Puntland Security Force (PSF) counter-terrorism unit commanders met at AfUrur a military post, 70km south of Bossaso and “discussed a military strategy to fight against Al Shabaab and ISIS throughout Puntland regions”, according to PSF press statement.<sup>9</sup> On Mar. 23, in a press release, US-trained PSF units claimed victory over the Al Shabaab in counter terrorism operations conducted in the Al Madow mountain ranges in Puntland. PSF claimed to have killed 19 Al Shabaab fighters and seized food supplies.<sup>10</sup> The information could not be independently verified.

**2.1.5. Protest over Salaries:** On Mar. 16, Puntland Darawish units posted at Galgala reportedly abandoned their frontline positions in a protest over unpaid salaries. The state government reinforced the deserted positions with troops from PSF and the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) and sent a delegation from Garowe to address the issue.<sup>11</sup> On Mar. 18, a government delegation led by Puntland Livestock Minister Said Osman Aden met with commanders of Darawish Force south of Bossaso. Discussions included instructions from Puntland government that the Darawish troops “return to their military posts” pending government payment of salaries and stipends.

**2.1.6. Maritime Security:** No piracy activities were reported in the Gulf of Aden near Somali waters during the reporting period. However, there was one piracy-related case reported in Somali media: the killing of a former pirate kingpin in Galmudug. The Puntland government increased joint operations to counter irregular migration across the Gulf of Aden and engaged a key international partner during the reporting. On Mar. 9, UAE-trained PMPF units seized eight

boats near the Bossaso coast. Puntland Police Commissioner Gen. Muhiyadin Ahmed Muse told reporters that the “boats were used by human smugglers”; for years, Bossaso coastal area has been utilized as a human smuggling transit hub connecting illegal migrants to Yemen and beyond.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, on Mar. 25, European Union’s NAVFOR commander Admiral Ricardo Hernandez arrived aboard a helicopter at Bossaso International Airport to meet with Puntland Ports Minister Mohamed Abdi Majino, Bari Regional Governor Yusuf Dhedo and port police commander Mohamed Ali Hashi. Ports Minister Majino said EU supports Puntland “with training and the fight against maritime crimes”.<sup>13</sup> The meeting was one of many meetings between Puntland officials and EU naval commanders.

**2.1.7. Security Sector Reform:** During the reporting period, the Puntland government was engaged in improving the structure, governance and local ownership of the security sector. On Mar. 23, President issued executive orders restructuring police and Darawish command structures. Brigadier General Said Ahmed Mohamed ‘Shodhe’ was appointed the acting Field Force (Darawish) commander, while Hussein Ali Mohamed was appointed the new Bari regional police commander. Gen. Shodhe’s nomination comes after the sudden resignation of the former Darawish commander Gen. Abdishukri Abdullahi Hussein on Mar. 12.<sup>14</sup> On Mar. 28, Puntland Security Minister Abdisamad Gallan chaired a security meeting in Bossaso. The Minister declared that Puntland government shall focus on improving security in Bossaso, with more funds and more security forces.

**2.1.8. Clan Conflicts:** Inter clan conflicts remained minimal and contained to Mudug region during the reporting period, with new clan fault lines emerging in eastern Sanaag region at the end of the reporting period. On Mar. 13, fighting erupted in north Galkayo between two clan militias disputing over land ownership. At least two persons were killed and 5 others wounded. Local government and community leaders successfully intervened and ended the violence. Currently, there are ongoing efforts to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation between the warring parties.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, on Mar 21, three villagers were killed in a separate incident at Bali Busle village, Mudug region. The attackers escaped and local media reports that the killing is linked to clan violence in Mudug region.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2. Security Forecast

**2.2.1. Sool Attack:** Although Puntland has distanced itself from involvement in the Gambadhe attack, the guerrilla-style attack itself has the potential for retaliatory attacks from Somaliland. With the presence of Puntland troops near Tukaraq, in Sool region, the reactivation of full-fledged hostilities in the area is unlikely but possible during the coming months.

**2.2.2. Eastern Sanaag:** The arrival of Somaliland troops in new areas of eastern Sanaag region unexpectedly, has mobilized traditional elders from the region’s Warsangeli clan to unanimously demand Somaliland’s immediate withdrawal and end to military operations in the region. Somaliland forces reportedly shot at and injured a local civilian near Yubbe town, sparking a local uprising against Somaliland troops, which may attract support from other regions of Puntland. Such a scenario would immediately militarize Sanaag region and lead to increased military hostilities fueled by clan provocations and regional interests. Such a scenario is possible if Somaliland does not retreat its forces and this may also derail ongoing interventions by clan elders.

**2.2.3. Violent Extremism:** Despite the success of recent Puntland security operations in the Al Madow Mountains, Al Shabaab presence, operations and capabilities are not expected to wane in the following months. The armed group is expected to maintain high mobility in the mountain bases and continue to attempt asymmetric attacks on Puntland positions in Al Madow Mountains, as well as conducting guerilla-style attacks in major urban centers, such as Bossaso. Meanwhile, the lone wolf attack on the traditional elder in Bossaso could become detrimental to ISIS group’s operations in Al Miskood mountain positions. The traditional elder was a tribal leader from a major resident clan, in both urban and rural locations in Al Miskood

Mountains and in Bossaso. Local support for ISIS in the area will face challenges and may galvanize Puntland's counter terrorism operations in the future.

- 2.2.4. Troop Salaries and Stipends:** This is expected to end as the government recovers from financial constraints inherited from the previous administration. The short-lived army protest has been resolved. Similar incidents are highly unlikely in April 2019, if the government continues to improve conditions for the security forces.
- 2.2.5. Security Sector Reforms:** The structural changes in Bari regional police command coupled with the mobilization of community support for security operations led by Security Minister Gallan complements previous successes by government security forces in Bossaso. The reforms are expected to improve security in Bossaso over the coming months. In general, Puntland State is expected to review security sector reforms and poor coordination with Federal Government and international assistance partners. New security sector reform policies and strategies are expected to be implemented in 2019.
- 2.2.6. Clan Conflicts:** The conflict between clansmen over land in North Galkayo has been contained and is undergoing a reconciliation phase. The success of the ongoing conflict resolution depends on the compensation of victims' families to forestall a cycle of revenge killings. Efforts should focus on reinforcement of current peace-building efforts during April 2019. Relatedly, the killings in Bali Busle village, in Mudug region, sets a dangerous fault-line with the potential to reignite intra-clan animosities between communities in Puntland and Galmudug. Related vengeance killings may reignite the cycle of blood feuds if not addressed immediately.

## 3. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

### 3.1 Puntland Relations with Somaliland

Over the course of March 2019, political relations between Somaliland and Puntland deteriorated. The two sub-national entities wrangled politically and engaged in military activity in parts of eastern Sanaag region. Political tensions heightened after Somaliland forces arrived on the outskirts of Yubbe town, located along an important feeder road southeast of Erigavo.

- 3.1.2 Key Developments:** On Mar. 12, speaking to the media at the government's annual Cabinet Retreat, Puntland President Said Deni said Somaliland was responsible for "military provocation" in parts of Sanaag region. The Puntland president's remarks came a day after a force of around 300 Somaliland troops with 30 military vehicles arrived outside of Yubbe, a town along an important feeder road linking parts of western and eastern Sanaag region. In a written statement, the Puntland government directly accused Somaliland of "invasion intended to disrupt the new [Puntland] government's ongoing preparations to displace terrorist group hiding out in the mountainous area of Sanaag and Bari regions".<sup>17</sup> The statement warned that Puntland "will no longer have patience for the constant provocation and military aggression by the Somaliland administration". On Mar. 13, Puntland sent a senior government delegation to Badhan, in Sanaag region. The delegation included Cabinet ministers and parliamentary representatives from Sanaag region. The next day, the delegation held meetings with Sanaag regional governor, Badhan mayor and regional security commanders, with local media reporting that discussions were focused on diffusing tensions after the arrival of Somaliland troops in new areas of Sanaag region.<sup>18</sup>

Somaliland Defense Minister Isse Hawar responded to Puntland's allegations. In a televised response on Mar. 13 from Hargeisa, Mr. Hawar said: "Somaliland troops did not enter Puntland territory, but we reinforced Somaliland troops already in parts of eastern Sanaag region". He accused Puntland of "supporting trouble-makers near Qardo area", the provincial capital of Puntland's Karkaar region. The Somaliland defense minister added: "Somaliland troops were deployed to Yubbe town to fight against troublemakers led by Col. [Said Awil]"

Arre”.<sup>19</sup>Mohamed Hassan Ali Weji, Somaliland Information Ministry spokesman, issued a statement on Mar. 14 declaring that, “Somaliland did not invade the border with Somalia, but Somaliland is securing its historic boundaries”. The media statement said that the Puntland leader “will fail in his provocation of Somaliland, similar to his predecessor [ex-Puntland President] Abdiweli Gaas”.<sup>20</sup>

**3.1.3 Analysis:** When the Somali central government was overthrown in Mogadishu, in 1991, the country largely fragmented along clan and regional lines. For years, Somaliland and Puntland have disputed over territorial control of Sool and Sanaag regions, and Buhodle district in Togdheer region. The territorial dispute between the two Somalia sub-national entities is founded on two diametrically opposed political directions: Somaliland’s unilateral declaration of independence in 1991, based on defunct colonial-era boundaries; and Puntland’s claim based on the voluntary merger of five regions and Buhodle district in 1998, pending the future configuration of a federal Somalia, which was emerged in 2012. The Somaliland-Puntland dispute has been a military flashpoint since 2002; most recently, in August 2018, heavy fighting in Sool region between the two forces led to a permanent military frontier, affecting the ordinary flow of people, trade and much-needed humanitarian assistance.

**3.1.4 Forecast:** For the foreseeable future, the claims and counter-claims will continue to affect the region’s potential for peace and development; however, heavy fighting in Sanaag region, as witnessed in Sool region in 2018, is unlikely in the next month. This assessment is drawn from ongoing developments in Sanaag region, where local community elders and political leaders have pressured Puntland to halt its military operations, demanded the full withdrawal of Somaliland forces from the area and have mobilized “clan militia” in response. It is probable that political and military tensions in Sanaag region will remain high and, if unresolved, the possibility of armed clashes is ever more likely.

## **3.2 Puntland Relations with Federal Government of Somalia (FGS)**

**3.2.1 ‘Puntland Role’ in FGS-Somaliland Dialogue:** On Mar. 14, Puntland’s new government took a strong stance regarding the continuation of the dialogue process between the Somali Federal Government and Somaliland. The policy was announced at the conclusion of a three-day annual ministerial conference, to review the government’s past work and present the new government’s annual plan and work objectives. At the Conference, members of the Council of Ministers discussed, debated and agreed on a set of objectives related to the state’s political, economic, security and development goals. The government’s “Policy Strategy” communiqué summarized the Cabinet members’ discussions and set of agreed objectives for the annual 2019 work plan. According to Article 4 of the “Policy Strategy” communiqué:

*“In accordance with the Provisional Federal Constitution, in the case of any negotiation or agreement that affects the Federal Member States, then the affected Federal Member State must participate and the negotiations or agreements cannot be limited to the Federal Government only; therefore, Puntland must be part of any dialogue that affects Puntland interest and territories, especially the dialogue process between Federal Government and Somaliland administration”.*<sup>21</sup>

This politically loaded statement cites articles within the Somali Provisional Federal Constitution, which was approved by the National Constituent Assembly in Mogadishu in August 2012. It sets forth a clear new policy from the Puntland government, founded on legal and constitutional principles, and positions Puntland as a key stakeholder at the negotiation table. Neither the Federal Government nor Somaliland has directly responded to the new Puntland government’s policy. However, on Mar. 24, as Somaliland President Muse Bihi addressed the two houses of Somaliland Parliament, he raised the issue of the dialogue process, saying that Somaliland “proposed” more countries to mediate the talks and he was openly critical of the Turkish government’s role: “Turkish mediation of past seven years did not lead to results”. Mr. Bihi also noted that other countries, including Sweden and

Switzerland, had “offered” to host the talks.<sup>22</sup>

**3.2.2 Analysis:** The talks between Puntland and Somaliland have been held in various global cities since 2012, including London, Istanbul and Dubai. However, the talks have not produced any tangible results aside from formulaic photo-op meetings and brief appearances. Moreover, the dialogue process has centered on direct talks between delegations representing the Somali Federal Government and Somaliland, thereby alienating key stakeholder Puntland. For years, Puntland leadership has viewed the dialogue process between Federal Government and Somaliland as bypassing and ignoring its long-standing land conflict with Somaliland, which has, over the course of the past 17 years, cost Puntland directly in terms of manpower, funding and resources. It is a historical fact that, since 2002, Puntland and Somaliland have engaged in sporadic fighting over control of Sool and Sanaag regions, and Buhodle district. Moreover, since the Federal Government has no security forces in these aforesaid regions, it seems unrealistic to sideline Puntland, which has ground control and a history of conflict with Somaliland to resolve.

In this respect, it is noteworthy to highlight that the first-ever Technical Committee for the dialogue process nominated by former Somali President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed on Apr. 15, 2012, consisted of five Federal Government ministers and two representatives from Puntland.<sup>23</sup> This presidential decree reportedly frustrated Somaliland, which has refused to recognize Puntland’s claims and has repeatedly stated that its territorial dispute is not with Puntland, but with ‘Somalia’.

**3.2.3 Forecast:** The approach to the format for dialogue between Somali Federal Government and Somaliland in the near future may greatly depend on the nature of relations between the Federal Government and Puntland. However, it is highly unlikely that the FGS will bend the rules to accommodate the comforts of Somaliland. In the event that FGS is pressured to bend the rules and violate the Provisional Federal Constitution (2012) and existing policy for addressing the Somaliland issue, a new threat to the Somali federal fabric will emerge with the potential of returning Somalia to a transitional stage.

### **3.3 Garowe Conference Delayed?**

**3.3.1 Key Developments:** On Jan. 28, Puntland President Said Deni announced that the Puntland government would host a conference between the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States (FMS), to be held in Garowe sometime in late March. President Deni stated that Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo had suggested such a conference and requested Puntland to host it. However, as the month ended, it became evidently clear that the proposed conference had been delayed without any public announcement. There was no update from the Federal Government, Puntland or any other FMS. This silence has quietly stirred some speculation, with a wide range of reasons being discussed or speculated on ordinary media platforms and social media. In recent weeks, the Federal Government has been extremely focused on containing rising insecurity in Mogadishu, amidst strong criticism from opposition politicians.

However, ordinary relations between the Federal Government and Puntland seemed to be on track, at least on the surface. On Mar. 26, Somali Planning Minister Jamal Hassan arrived in Garowe and held a joint meeting with Puntland Planning Minister Abdigafar Hange on consultations for Somalia’s National Development Plan and ongoing debt relief efforts. The federal planning minister undertook similar consultations in Baidoa (Southwest State) and Kismayo (Jubaland State).<sup>24</sup>

**3.3.2 Analysis:** Some theories have suggested that the Puntland government’s “Policy Strategy” communiqué sent political shockwaves in Mogadishu, as the new government clearly articulated its vision and defended its state autonomy protected under Somalia’s federal system. For example, the Mar. 14 Puntland communiqué proclaimed that, “prior consultations

with Federal Member States is required before any laws are approved” by the Federal Government of Somalia, citing the country’s Provisional Federal Constitution. The Federal Government has not directly responded to the new Puntland government’s position on federalism; however, critics have often accused the Federal Government of seeking to centralize power and limit the autonomy of FMS, including engaging in direct political interference, such as in the case of Southwest state election, in Dec. 2018.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, the likelihood of the National Development Plan’s consultative efforts to produce a locally owned and viable national development is limited. The duration (of 3 days only) and scope of the consultative efforts does not follow accepted standards and norms for the formulation of an inclusive National Development Plan that represents the aspirations of citizens. This is critical, especially considering the unique undocumented needs and the statistical obsolescence prevailing in Puntland State.

**3.3.3 Forecast:** It is too early to predict the trajectory of political relations that will transpire between the new Puntland administration led by President Deni and the Federal Government of Somalia, led by President Farmajo and Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairé. Despite the best efforts by the current Puntland leadership to repair relations with the FGS, the likelihood of improvement is limited without sincere reforms and political commitment from Mogadishu. Improvement of relations between FGS and Puntland seems unrealistic in Apr. 2019.

### **3.4 Local Council Elections**

**3.4.1 Key Developments:** During the month of Mar. 2019, the new Puntland administration was on track to prioritize its decentralization policy. On Mar. 21, Puntland Minister of Interior Mohamed Dhabanad announced requirements for joining the new Galkayo Local Council, including property ownership and no criminal record. On Mar. 23, President Deni nominated Galkayo Local Council Election Vetting Committee.<sup>26</sup> The 31-member Local Council, including 6 women, was announced on Mar. 24 following a clan-based selection process in consultations with elders and civil society. The next day, on Mar. 25, Mr. Sahid Sayn was elected Mayor of Galkayo with 23 out of 31 votes.<sup>27</sup>

Speaking in Galkayo on Mar. 27, Interior Minister Dhabanad said the new Puntland government planned to organize “multiparty elections for three select districts” in 2019, aiming to appraise the process at the level of local council elections.<sup>28</sup> The minister did not specify which districts; however, the announcement underpins the new government’s commitment to its election pledges and meeting the public’s expectations for the introduction of multiparty political system.

**3.4.2 Analysis:** Since its inception in 1998, Puntland has not implemented multiparty politics; in 2013, an attempt to introduce multiparty elections for Local Council elections across Puntland sparked some cases of election related violence in two districts and compelled the then-Puntland government to “suspend” the process entirely. Currently, Puntland government is based on clan sharing formula of Local Council seats, with Councilors selected by traditional elders and civil society representatives from local sub-clans. They then make up the Local Council body that elects amongst themselves a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor. Over the years, the process has evolved to become more transparent and participatory with candidates carrying out campaigns, presenting policies and competing in an electoral process.

A new development during the Galkayo Local Council elections was the initiatives carried out by the Ministry of Women’s Development and Family Affairs, together with USAID, who disseminated video profiles on social media platforms, of women candidates running for elections in Galkayo Local Council. These campaign profiles gave a short introduction to the female candidates and their campaign platforms, allowing for more exposure of female candidates and possibly broader acceptance within the clan structures. The election resulted

with 6 women being elected to the 31-member Local Council, which is 10% below the 30 percent quota, but is double the number of women Council members from the 2017 election. The new administration has promised to transition Puntland into full multiparty elections and have maintained that narrative in public spheres. However, reaching that goal will be depend on studying what went wrong in previous electoral processes and a commitment to undertaking the necessary steps to realize that goal.

**3.4.3 Forecast:** Puntland government's commitment and approach to democratization will be a crucial area to watch. The recent of unveiling of the government's plans to pilot multiparty elections in select Local Council elections will provide a snapshot into electoral process.

## 4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**4.1 Trade Impact of Somaliland Military Activity in Sanaag Region:** On Mar. 11, Somaliland's armed forces descended on Yubbe a town in Sanaag region, a key town west of Badhan.<sup>29</sup> Reports from Yubbe say that the Somaliland troops imposed a ban on vehicles in the area traveling west of the town, blocking people from the region from business and travel, west of Yubbe.<sup>30</sup> On Mar. 12, Puntland State issued a statement condemning 'Somaliland aggression' and demanding that Somaliland forces retreat from the town<sup>31</sup>. According to residents in Yubbe, members of the town have sanctioned the Somaliland armed forces in a bid to starve them from supplies. Shop owners and suppliers were informed by local elders opposed to Somaliland, to not to sell any supplies to Somaliland troops.<sup>32</sup>

**4.1.1 Analysis:** The second major offensive by Somaliland in less than two years can have an adverse impact on local economies of both sides. Despite the political and territorial differences Somaliland and Puntland have, the two sub-national entities have maintained good trade relations and depend on each other for commerce. Somaliland has maintained an advantage in that trade for the past 10 years, as Somaliland's proximity to Ethiopia and the established Berbera Port allows cargo to flow from Somaliland into Puntland. Somaliland has enjoyed extensive trade with Puntland, in particular with the residents of Sanaag region<sup>33</sup>. The lucrative sector of frankincense, of which vast amount of reserves are located in Sanaag region, has allowed many export companies in Somaliland such as Asli Maydi, to thrive.<sup>34</sup> However Somaliland's decision to militarize Sanaag region may be detrimental to the trade that Somaliland enjoys in the said region<sup>35</sup>, with many upset residents potentially opting to take their products east (Bossaso), rather than west (Berbera).

**4.1.2 Forecast:** Somaliland's inability to get business owners of Yubbe to provide services to their military does not look like it will automatically impact the frankincense trade via Somaliland, as of now. However, the variable is the Puntland government, which has taken a defensive military strategy towards Somaliland's bid to secure its self-proclaimed 'borders'. It is still unclear if the new administration of Puntland may look to reexamine trade and use that as leverage to disrupt Somaliland's economic interests in a bid to curb Hargeisa's military advances in Sool and Sanaag regions. However, trade wars are a double edged sword and may cause unwanted impact in both local economies.

**4.2 Water Companies Go Digital:** Nugal Water Company (NUWACO) has decided to shed their paper receipts for digital ones<sup>36</sup>. The company that has employed a paper based receipt since their inception is testing out mobile phone software which it anticipates will bring down costs. In an interview with NAI, a NUWACO employee said that the introduction of mobile phone software allows for customers to know their water costs for that month automatically, eliminating the referral of water usage by NUWACO employees to their headquarters. The move will save the companies costs on supplies, logistics and manpower and will likely increase revenue.

**4.2.1 Analysis:** The move has also come under scrutiny in the public sphere, where the banter is centered on its impact on jobs and consumer protection. A Garowe resident Hodan Ahmed



stated that she is, “more comfortable with the paper based receipt because you can observe how much your household used, where as this you are told how much you used”.<sup>37</sup> Many consumer protection regulations are non-existent or are not enforced in Puntland, leading to unchecked predatory business practices by some companies and business owners. The current methods do not seem to be in line with international consumer protection standard practices, which stipulate that consumers should be offered a receipt or proof of purchase. Many have called on Puntland State institutions to be proactive in developing frameworks that ensure technological advances still maintain consumer protection principles. For the first time, the new government of Puntland established the Ministry of Energy, Minerals and Water, which is mandated to govern and regulate the state’s water and energy policy.

**4.2.3 Forecast:** The move from paper to electronic will help generate more revenue for the local water company. Developments in technology usually carry symptoms of worry for consumers and employees. It is unclear if NUWACO will downsize due to their new system. However, it seems likely that if these systems are officially adopted that NUWACO will have to reassess their labor force. The new strategy may also be subject to change if the Puntland government enacts a review of the new methods and adherence to consumer protection. This will depend on the government’s will to enact policies that regulate businesses in Puntland.

**4.3 Puntland Declares a Drought:** Puntland Vice President Ahmed Elmi Osman ‘Karash’ announced on March 10 that Puntland was facing a drought emergency and that urgent support and attention was required<sup>38</sup>. Speaking at a conference specifically about the drought, Vice President Karash in his capacity as Chairman of the Drought Committee made an appeal to local and international development organizations and the business community to take part in alleviating the impact of the drought. The Puntland Drought Committee consists of Ministers of Environment; Interior; Health; Livestock; Planning; Energy, Minerals and Water. On March 28, Puntland Information Minister Ali Hassan Sabarey announced that the government had designated 200 water trucks to be sent towards drought-affected areas<sup>39</sup>.

**4.3.1 Key Developments:** Over the years, droughts and Somalia have become synonymous. Successive droughts have had crippling effects on the country’s economic and societal sectors. The backbone of the Somali and more specifically the Puntland economy has been livestock and the free range methods of livestock herding used by Somali livestock owners has made rainfall essential to the success or failure of the sector. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) released a Drought Watch Report for March, where it listed many regions in Puntland as suffering from “moderate drought conditions”<sup>40</sup>. It also stated that the water shortages were the most severe in Sanaag, Bari, Nugal and Mudug regions. However, the report was not all tragic, in a positive note, the report stated:

*“The latest consensus statement from the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF51) indicates greater likelihood of near normal to above normal rainfall in most parts of Somalia between March and May 2019.”*

A report by UN Environment suggested that the effects of the protracted droughts have amounted to a 60% loss in livestock herds in Somalia.<sup>41</sup> To tackle the problem of drought, there has been a joint effort to improve resilience of the agriculture sector in Somalia from both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The Recovery and Resilience Framework (RRF) is a framework led by the Federal Government of Somalia and supported by the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Union.

According to the FGS, “the RRF objective is to promote a sustainable recovery while addressing the underlying drivers of drought vulnerability”.<sup>42</sup> The accompanying document and basis on which the RRF will be guided by is the Somalia Drought Impact and Needs Assessment (DINA), launched in January 2018, which bids to identify the ‘drought caused needs’ of Somalis<sup>43</sup>. The DINA report of January 2018 put the damages of the drought at a cost

of \$1.02 billion and losses at \$2.23 billion.<sup>44</sup> The RRF and DINA documents propose measures to understand and reduce the country's vulnerability to climate change.

**4.3.2 Analysis:** The RRF mentions the need for institutionalizing needs assessment methodology. The RRF puts the onus of gathering data on the Federal and State level government to ensure proper prioritization and phasing. The Puntland Drought Committee will be wise to heed this recommendation and assess the needs of its constituents in order to accurately gauge the resources required. Another recommendation from the RRF emphasizes, "focusing on right financing investments that accelerate growth."

After gathering data, Puntland state authorities will need to create and support programs that can improve resilience in their constituents. One area that has increased scalability that Puntland can focus on is livestock ranches. As of late, the establishment of ranches has increased access of dairy products to urban and small town populations in Puntland despite minimal rainfall<sup>45</sup>. Increasing access to sustainable water supplies in the form of drilling wells is advocated in the RRF. If Puntland wants to battle drought – as the result of anthropogenic climate change – than environmental programs that aim to reverse the effects of deforestation and reduce water wastage will be crucial. It will not be enough to provide food rations and water trucks to those suffering from the drought as these are surface solutions but the overall situation will require more than just Band Aids.

**4.3.3 Forecast:** The weather forecast for Puntland State and northern Somalia is hopeful. However if the current forecast were to change for the worse, the Puntland administration's response to drought will rely on their ability to effectively communicate its constituents' needs to stakeholders in the form of assessments. And subsequently develop tangible and sustainable solutions to ensure that its economic cash cow does not continue to wither away.

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*New Access International (NAI Somalia), founded in 2012, is a local development agency based in Somalia. The organisation launched its **Somali Law and Policy Program** in January 2019, publishing the monthly Puntland Situation Report that focuses on collecting, observing, recording, and analysing all major events and developments linked to matters of law and policy, and its impact on peace, politics and development in Puntland State, Somalia.*

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