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Issue Brief 01

### **The Ceaseless Political Conflict between Somali's President and Prime Minister: Root Causes, Consequences, and Possible Remedies**



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### **Background**

The country has had no proper functioning government since the civil war outbreak in 1991 which led to the collapse of the central government and, affected every part of the country. In early 2000, Somalia had formed a clan-based transitional National government for the first time after a decade of armed conflict and social strife (Shay, 2014).

All of the four presidents who ruled the country in the past twenty (20) years had dislodged three Prime ministers through a vote of no confidence by parliament. However, the incumbent president has ousted only one Prime Minister with the same procedure. Additionally, a new political dispute between the President and his Prime Minister Mr. Roble has emerged for the last two months due to the lack of clarity of power and responsibilities in the provisional constitution.

The political conflict between the president and the Prime minister become repetitive for the last three decades due to the overlapping and flaws of powers of the president and prime minister, clan political system, absence of political parties, and the lack of political ideology. This brief look focuses on the root causes, consequences, and possible remedies for the ceaseless political conflict between the president and his respective Prime minister.

### **The root cause of the Political Conflict**

The main root cause of political infighting between Somali presidents and prime

ministers since the 2000s is the ill-defined power in the constitution. According to article 90 of the federal constitution, the president has the mandate to nominate and dismiss the high-rank commanders after the recommendation of the cabinet. He can also fire ministers, deputy ministers, and state ministers on the recommendation of the prime minister.

In contrast, Article 100 of the Somali provisional constitution gives the Prime minister the power to appoint and fire the council of ministers (The Federal Republic of Somalia, 2012). This means that the Somalia political system is practically amorphous, and it is neither a presidential system nor a parliamentary system.

Article 100 of the provisional constitution states that the Somali Prime minister is the head of the government. However, in practice, the Somalia president is more powerful than the Prime minister. In international practice, the elected person is more powerful than the nominated person in the parliamentary system.

Additionally, the appointed Prime minister is powerful than the elected president by the parliament as article 89 of the Somali Provisional constitution mentions "the Houses of the Federal Parliament shall elect the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia in a joint session, presided over by the Speaker of the House of the People of the Federal Parliament" (The Federal Republic of Somalia, 2012).



Furthermore, the Prime minister and his council of Ministers are tasked with the general policy of the state including formulating and implementing the public policy of the country as stated in article 99 of the Somali provisional constitution. Any responsibility of the government's failure is responsible by the Prime minister and his council of ministers, and they are accountable to the House of the People of Somalia Federal Parliament. Nevertheless, in the Somali context, the President and the Prime minister seem to have equal power despite the Somalia parliament electing the president and approving the prime minister appointed by the president.

The overlap and flaws of power between the president and Prime minister in the Constitution are due to clan power-sharing system aimed to convince all the clans. Following the 2000s, Somalia has embraced the clan-power sharing formula (Nelson, 2018). This power-sharing formula induces political instability because when the president comes from a certain clan, and the Prime minister must come from another clan. The lack of political ideology of Somali politicians is another main cause of political conflict and clan politics become a tool to be exploited by the Somali politicians to gain the political outcome and lucrative projects. Additionally, the Absence of a multi-party democracy system exacerbates tension of political instability.

### **Major Consequences**

The ceaseless political dispute between the president and the prime minister may derail the progress hardly gained over

the last two decades and has serious ramifications for Somalia's reconstruction and development process. The major negative consequences of the rift between the two highest offices in the nation include the vulnerability of internal security, state dysfunctionality, the loss of trust in government by both ordinary citizens and international partners, and delays in both parliamentary and presidential elections.

### **1. Vulnerability of internal security**

The political dispute between the President and the Prime minister had a huge effect on the government functionality specifically internal security. The country's internal security becomes more fragile and the chain of command in the security agencies becomes disconnected during the political crisis. For instance, the commanders of the Somalia Police and National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA) split along lines of the two highest offices.

### **2. State dysfunctionality**

The everlasting political dispute between the two highest offices had an unembellished impact on government effectiveness and institutional building initiatives. The political conflict undermines the government's effectiveness and has tremendous effects on public institutions.

Moreover, the political disagreements between the President and his Prime Minister may lead to state dysfunctionality at a certain level and the smooth running of the government functions. (Khayre et al.) Divisions and divergence may also arise in the other governmental agencies like the



legislative and the judiciary branches. On the other hand, the ceaseless political conflict between these offices had an everlasting impact on institutional building efforts and (each office) tries to appoint someone loyal to key government institutions such as the Judiciary, the army forces, and the intelligence agency to influence and overcome the political contest.

### **3. Loss of Citizens' Trust in the government**

Citizens' trust in government is necessary for the legitimacy and effectiveness of public institutions as well as the state-building process in war-ravaged nations like Somalia. The recurrent conflict between the president and the prime minister is eroding people's confidence and public trust in the government. Many Somali citizens expressed their concern over the current gridlock between the two offices as they anticipate that this crisis has undesirable consequences on the government's efforts in securing the country, mobilizing domestic revenue, boosting the economy, and providing public services.

### **4. International Support**

The dispute also gradually weakens Somali's international support as a global community is observing the failure and the lack of commitment by Somali politicians to transform the nation. The reconstruction and development efforts by donors may lose their momentum and the international community likely considers giving a priority to other fragile states with relative political stability and public institutions that promote law and order. It is noteworthy to mention that

more than 50% of the revenue of the Federal government budget comes from donor support. Bilateral and multilateral development projects are often suspended during serious political conflicts and stalemates as the current one between the president and the prime minister. Furthermore, the international community funds the peace-keeping mission in the country and offers military and technical support to Somali National Army (SNA). Some political analysts contend that Somalia may ultimately face a fate similar to Afghanistan's fall into the hands of extremists if AMISOM troops suddenly pull out from the country. Recently Ugandan president Yuveneri Museveni told the press that he will withdraw his troops from Somalia if the political dispute between the president and the prime minister is not settled soon. Finally, the dispute between the prime minister and the president mostly takes place during election times which causes serious delays in the election schedule.

### **Policy Recommendation**

Based on this brief look, we recommend the following:

1. The power and the responsibilities of the president and prime minister should be clearly defined in the constitution;
2. embrace a clear government system that exists in a moderate state such as presidential system, or parliamentary system, or mixed presidential system because the current political system is practically amorphous, and it is neither a presidential system nor a parliamentary system;



3. the establishment of the constitutional court is very crucial to adjudication of political dispute among the branches of government levels, federal member states, and the federal government, Somalia Federal parliament had already passed the law of constitutional court in 2016;
4. Apply the rule of law in the whole of the country and all the citizens, and leaders have to respect the constitution and other ordinary laws of the country;
5. Somalia must shift away from the clan-power sharing formula and embrace a multi-party-political system;
6. The government should implement constitutional civil campaigns using the media to reach the people both in urban and rural areas and raise public awareness; and
7. Avoid politicization of the security sector during political deadlock since most insecurity accidents occur these days.

## Sources

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