The Centrifugal State: Somalia’s Constitutional Impasse, Federal Fragmentation, and the Crisis of Governance in 2026.

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The Somali federal project has arrived at a critical structural and existential juncture, exposing a profound misalignment between the formal institutions of the state and the highly decentralized, transactional realities of local political power. In March 2026, the Federal Parliament in Mogadishu approved a sweeping set of constitutional amendments, concluding a highly contested fourteen-year review of the 2012 Provisional Constitution. While framed by its proponents as a major step toward direct democracy and institutional modernization, this legislative maneuver has instead triggered a deep political and security crisis. By unilaterally extending presidential and parliamentary terms from four to five years and attempting to restructure the country's delicate balance of power, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has converted a stalled transition into an active, armed contest over sovereign legitimacy.

Somalia’s current crisis is not merely a dispute over election timelines or the legal mechanics of constitutional reform. It is a fundamental conflict between a centralizing executive attempting to manufacture state authority through statutory amendments and regional state elites who leverage non-cooperation and armed resistance to preserve their autonomous spheres of influence. As three of the country's six Federal Member States (FMS)—Puntland, Jubaland, and South West State—have suspended relations with Mogadishu, the state's bargaining architecture has fractured.

This internal polarization occurs against a perilous security backdrop. The transition from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the follow-on African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) is severely underfunded and operationally overstretched. Meanwhile, the Al-Shabaab insurgency continues to exploit political crises to recapture territory. Concurrently, the de facto independence of Somaliland has been emboldened by unprecedented external diplomatic overtures. The Somali state is operating as a centrifugal system where the decay of central legitimacy accelerates regional fragmentation and invites destabilizing foreign interventions.

The Historical Evolution of the Somali Federal Project

The adoption of federalism in Somalia was not the result of an organic, ideological consensus on the optimal division of territorial power. Instead, it emerged as a highly pragmatic, defensive mechanism designed to manage deep-seated clan mistrust and prevent the re-emergence of an authoritarian, highly centralized state akin to the regime of Major General Mohamed Siad Barre. The trajectory of state rebuilding over the last quarter-century reveals a persistent tension between elite-driven, top-down stabilization plans and highly localized, bottom-up structures of authority.

Historical Milestone	Key Institutional Outcome	Power-Sharing Mechanism	Primary Cause of Instability/Collapse
Arta Process (2000)	Transitional National Government (TNG)	Formalized the "4.5" Clan Power-Sharing Formula	Excluded major warlords and regional faction leaders; lacked territorial control
Mbagathi Process (2002–2004)	Transitional Federal Government (TFG); Transitional Federal Charter	Codified federalism as the state model; distributed power among major clan elites	Intense internal factionalism; external military interventions; rise of Islamist movements
Provisional Constitution (2012)	Establishment of the Federal Republic of Somalia	Retained the 4.5 formula in practice while promising universal suffrage	Left functional, resource, and security assignments structurally ambiguous
Electoral Revisions & Term Extensions	Transition to a highly centralized, five-year	Unilateral push for popular votes;	Active armed confrontation; total

Historical Milestone	Key Institutional Outcome	Power-Sharing Mechanism	Primary Cause of Instability/Collapse
(2026)	term framework	marginalization of state-level elites	suspension of FGS-FMS cooperation

The Arta Conference (2000) and the Consociationalism Imperative

The 2000 Arta Peace Conference in Djibouti sought to reconstitute the Somali state by bypassing the warlords who had dominated the post-1991 civil war. Led primarily by civil society, traditional elders, and intellectuals, the conference established the Transitional National Government (TNG) and formalized the "4.5" clan power-sharing formula. This formula allocated equal representation in the interim parliament to the four "major" clan families—the Hawiye, Darod, Dir, and Digil-Mirifle (Rahanweyn)—while reserving a half-share (0.5) for a coalition of minority clans.

Designed as a temporary, stabilizing compromise to manage representation in the absence of census data or functional institutions, the 4.5 formula acted as an informal consociational cartel. However, because the Arta process excluded the dominant military faction leaders on the ground, the TNG faced immediate armed and political opposition from the Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC), rendering the new central government virtually powerless outside a few neighborhoods in Mogadishu.

The Mbagathi Accord (2004) and the Institutionalization of Federalism

Recognizing the limitations of the Arta process, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) facilitated the Mbagathi peace process in Kenya from 2002 to 2004. This conference yielded the Transitional Federal Charter and established the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Unlike the TNG, the Mbagathi accord explicitly embraced federalism as the governance model for the Somali Republic. This was a critical concession to regional political blocs—most notably the self-governing region of Puntland, which had declared autonomy in 1998—and to neighboring states like Ethiopia and Kenya, which favored a decentralized Somali state to mitigate security threats along their borders.

The Mbagathi elite bargain institutionalized a system where faction leaders and clan elites expected guaranteed access to resources flowing through the central state, while retaining localized control over their respective territories. This political settlement stabilized elite relations but left the functional details of the federal state largely unwritten, establishing a long-term pattern of postponement regarding the constitutional division of authority.

The 2012 Provisional Constitution and Its Ambiguities

The end of the transitional period in August 2012 was marked by the adoption of the Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia. While the document formally established a bicameral federal parliament and declared Somalia a federal state, it was a deeply compromised, unfinished text. Article 54, for example, deferred the allocation of powers and resources between the FGS and FMS to future negotiations, with the exception of four exclusive federal competencies: foreign affairs, national defense, citizenship and immigration, and monetary policy.

The structural ambiguity of the provisional charter created a zero-sum political dynamic. Successive administrations in Mogadishu attempted to govern Somalia as a centralized, unitary state, while regional elites in the newly formed Federal Member States—Jubaland, Southwest, Galmudug, and Hirshabelle—jealously guarded their domestic authority and sought to maximize their fiscal and administrative independence.

The historical pattern reveals that every attempt to resolve these constitutional ambiguities without broad-based political consensus has triggered severe instability. When President Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmaajo" attempted to organize nationwide direct elections toward the end of his term in 2021, the lack of agreement with Puntland and Jubaland led to a fifteen-month electoral delay, armed clashes in Mogadishu, and a near-collapse of the federal project. The current crisis under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud represents a continuation of this cycle, as the central government again seeks to leverage constitutional reform to manufacture federal legitimacy while lacking the empirical control, territorial reach, and security infrastructure required to sustain it.

Theoretical Foundations of Divided Governance

The recurring institutional breakdowns in Somalia can be analyzed through the lens of comparative federalism, elite bargaining, and institutional design. The current crisis represents a collision between four primary theoretical paradigms of governance in deeply divided societies.

William Riker and the Rationality of the Federal Bargain

William Riker's classic formulation posits that a federal bargain is struck when prospective national leaders and regional officials negotiate to aggregate territory or pool resources to counter external threats or capture economic opportunities. In Riker's framework, the durability of this bargain depends on the mutual maintenance of guarantees: the center must respect regional autonomy, and the regions must accept central authority in specified spheres.

In Somalia, the federal bargain has deteriorated because the central government has repeatedly attempted to alter these constitutional rules unilaterally. The March 2026 amendments, which extended executive terms and concentrated authority in the presidency, represent an attempt by the FGS to rewrite the federal contract without the consent of the constituent regional units. Because the FGS lacks the necessary coercive capacity and administrative reach to enforce these changes nationwide, its centralizing efforts have eroded the original federal bargain, driving regional elites to withdraw their recognition of the state.

Daniel Elazar and the Core Deficits of Covenantal Federalism

Daniel Elazar distinguished between federalism as a mere mechanical contract and federalism as a covenant (*brit*)—a partnership rooted in mutual trust, shared responsibility, and the preservation of respective integrities. Elazar argued that sustainable federalism requires a horizontal social covenant that establishes a consensus on who constitutes the political community and what makes a government legitimate.

Somalia is plagued by an acute, structural "trust deficit". The failure of successive reconciliation processes has left the country without a foundational social covenant. In this environment, regional elites view every federal institutional reform as a zero-sum attempt to displace them, while the central government views regional autonomy as an obstacle to sovereign consolidation. The 2026 crisis illustrates Elazar's thesis that in the absence of horizontal trust, formal constitutional contracts cannot build cooperative governance; instead, they become instruments of competition.

Arend Lijphart and the Double-Edged Sword of Consociationalism

The 4.5 power-sharing formula is an informal manifestation of Arend Lijphart's consociationalism model. Lijphart argued that deeply divided societies can maintain democratic stability through an "elite cartel" characterized by grand coalitions, proportional representation, mutual vetoes, and segmental autonomy. The 4.5 system successfully facilitated the transition from warlord dominance to basic institutional stability in the early 2000s by ensuring that all major clan families had a guaranteed stake in the state apparatus.

However, as critics of consociationalism argue, such arrangements often freeze social cleavages, entrenching identity-based politics at the expense of democratic progress. In Somalia, the 4.5 formula has institutionalized clan-based patronage and marginalized minority groups and youth. It has also created a highly unstable executive branch, characterized by constant friction between Hawiye and Darod elites, leading to frequent parliamentary gridlock and prime ministerial dismissals. The 2026 amendments represent a direct attempt to transition away from this consociationalism model toward a more integrated system.

Donald Horowitz and the Centripetalism Trap in Low-Trust Environments

In contrast to Lijphart, Donald Horowitz advocated for centripetalism—an integrative approach that uses electoral incentives to force politicians to build cross-cutting alliances across group lines. The FGS's push for a "one-person, one-vote" (OPOV) electoral model with a direct presidential system, as initially envisioned in the March 2024 and March 2026 constitutional revisions, is deeply rooted in this centripetalist philosophy. By creating national constituencies and replacing the clan-based indirect selection system, the reformers aimed to bypass the 4.5 formula and build a direct relationship between the citizen and the state.

Yet, as Horowitz himself warned, centripetalist designs can trigger intense conflict if they are introduced unilaterally by an incumbent executive to consolidate power or bypass a consensus-building process. The FGS's push for direct elections, in a country lacking verified voter rolls, secure borders, and independent judicial arbitration, has been interpreted by the opposition and the FMS as a majoritarian power grab. The result has not been political moderation, but rather a severe armed backlash.

Anatomy of the 2026 Constitutional Crisis

The constitutional and political crisis of 2026 is the direct result of a highly contentious legislative process. On March 4, 2026, the Federal Parliament approved a final package of amendments to Chapters 5 through 15 of the Provisional Constitution, concluding a process that began with the passage of Chapters 1 through 4 in March 2024.

The Specifics of the 2026 Constitutional Revisions

While the initial 2024 amendments sought to transition Somalia from a parliamentary system to a semi-presidential model with a directly elected president, intense political pushback forced a series of tactical retreats. On August 25, 2025, President Mohamud signed a political agreement with a faction of opposition defectors, reverting to an indirect presidential election by parliament while maintaining a popular vote for the House of the People.
Despite these concessions, the final amendments passed on March 4, 2026, retained several highly centralizing and controversial features:

- **Mandate Extensions:** The term of office for both the Federal Parliament and the President was officially extended from four to five years. Crucially, this extension was made immediately applicable to the incumbent administration, pushing President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's mandate expiration from May 15, 2026, to May 15, 2027.
- **Centralized Allocation of Competencies:** The amendments finalized the division of powers across three tiers of government (Federal, State, and Local). However, the text details extensive lists of exclusive federal and shared competencies, contrasted with a very short list of exclusive competencies for the Federal Member States, thereby limiting regional autonomy.
- **Federal Control of the Capital:** The status of Benadir/Mogadishu was defined as the national capital with representation in the Upper House, but the FGS retained explicit, direct authority over its security and political affairs.

- **Control of Public Finances**: The amendments established centralized revenue-raising and expenditure frameworks, limiting the fiscal autonomy of regional ports and border posts.
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Level of Government	Key Competencies (Post-2026 Amendments)	Primary Revenue Sources	Institutional Accountability
Federal Government (FGS)	Foreign affairs, national defense, monetary policy, border control, establishment of national standards	International trade taxes, customs administration, foreign aid, bilateral grants	Bicameral Federal Parliament; Independent Constitutional Court
Federal Member States (FMS)	Shared administrative implementation, regional police, local infrastructure coordination	State-level fees, localized taxation, negotiated central transfers	Regional assemblies; State presidents and local courts
Local Governments	Primary health, basic education, municipal waste, local land management	Municipal property rates, local business licenses, market fees	Locally selected or elected district councils

The Regional Backlash and Armed Conflict The passage of these amendments shattered any remaining political consensus, driving three key Federal Member States into open rebellion against the federal center.

Puntland's Constitutional Secession

Puntland, which was established in 1998 and operates as the most institutionalized and cohesive regional administration in Somalia, rejected the amendments. On March 5, 2026, the day after the parliamentary vote, the government of Puntland announced that it was withdrawing its recognition of and confidence in the Federal Government of Somalia. Puntland declared that the original 2012 Provisional Constitution was the only legitimate legal framework for the country and announced that it would operate as an independent entity until a mutually accepted, referendum-approved constitution was established. It has boycotted all subsequent FGS-initiated dialogues, citing a lack of inclusivity and transparency.

The Jubaland Armed Crisis

The crisis in Jubaland escalated into open warfare. Defying the FGS's unilateral electoral laws, Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe amended the state's constitution to override federal term limits and held state-level indirect elections in November 2024, securing a third term in office. Mogadishu denounced the election as illegal. Following the March 2026 amendments, Jubaland suspended all cooperation with the FGS.

The conflict rapidly militarized. The FGS deployed Turkish-trained *Gorgor* special forces to the Gedo region in southern Jubaland to establish parallel administrative structures. This triggered violent clashes in Gedo, Ras Kamboni, and Dolow between federal forces and regional Jubaland troops loyal to Madobe. In a stark display of security fragmentation, multiple Somali National Army (SNA) units defected to Jubaland regional forces or retreated into Kenya to avoid fighting fellow Somalis. The legal systems of both entities were also weaponized: a court in Mogadishu issued an arrest warrant for Madobe on charges of treason, while a regional court in Kismayo issued an arrest warrant for President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on identical charges.

The South West State Watershed

The crisis spread to South West State, where President Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen attempted to hold regional elections under the state's own constitutional framework in defiance of Mogadishu. The FGS refused to recognize the process and deployed federal troops to the regional capital of Baidoa.

Following armed clashes between federal forces and South West militias, the FGS forced Laftagareen to resign and appointed an interim ally, Ahmed Mohamed Hussein, to run the administration. Rather than stabilizing the state, this intervention caused a severe political backlash. South West State became the third FMS to cut ties with Mogadishu, declaring the new amendments illegitimate and aligning itself with the opposition coalition.

Comparative Lessons for Somalia's Constitutional Design

The challenges facing Somalia are not unique in the history of post-conflict state-building. To identify viable institutional pathways out of the 2026 impasse, Somalia's constitutional planners must examine comparative lessons from other post-conflict states that have grappled with deep societal fragmentation.

Comparative Country Case	Primary State-Building System	Key Conflict-Mitigation Mechanism	Real-World Failure or Stasis Metric	Direct Policy Application for Somalia
Nigeria	Symmetrical Territorial Federalism	Federal Character Principle; Centralized Resource Pool	High regional dependence; oil-related militancy	Devolve functional assignments before centralizing revenues
Ethiopia	Multinational Ethnic Federalism	Ethnic-based regional autonomy; secession rights	Tigray War; extreme ethnic polarization	Avoid aligning administrative boundaries with clan territories
South Africa	Three-Tier Cooperative State	Constitutional mandate for intergovernmental cooperation	Intergovernmental friction; municipal capability deficits	Enshrine non-judicial conflict resolution procedures
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Decentralized Ethno-Consociationalism	Entity-level vetoes; rotating presidential executive	Permanent legislative gridlock and stasis	Limit veto powers to highly specific constitutional changes
Iraq	Ethno-Sectarian Consociationalism	*Muhasasa Ta'ifia* quota system	Systemic corruption; rise of sectarian militias	Establish a transition path away from the 4.5 system

Nigeria: The Challenge of Resource Sharing and Unitary Overreach

Nigeria’s transition to federalism was designed to accommodate extensive ethnic and linguistic diversity. However, the institutionalization of a highly centralized fiscal system—where the federal government collects oil revenues and distributes them via a national formula—has created chronic regional dependence and fueled localized violence in the Niger Delta.

For Somalia, Nigeria illustrates the danger of centralizing revenue-raising powers before establishing a functional system of intergovernmental transfers. Mogadishu’s efforts to control regional ports without a negotiated fiscal agreement risk entrenching economic marginalization and exacerbating regional conflict.

Ethiopia: The Perils of Institutionalizing Ethnic Cleavages

Following the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, Ethiopia adopted a system of ethnic federalism, redrawing its internal boundaries along ethnolinguistic lines. While this system initially accommodated cultural and linguistic plurality, it ultimately hardened ethnic identities, weakened national cohesion, and culminated in the Tigray war.

Somalia’s 4.5 system has had a similar effect, institutionalizing clan divisions at the expense of a merit-based, civic political identity. The Ethiopian experience suggests that while decentralization is necessary to prevent authoritarian centralization, organizing administrative boundaries around rigid, identity-based lines can lead to long-term conflict.

South Africa: The Strength of Cooperative Governance

South Africa’s 1996 Constitution avoided a rigid federal-unitary dichotomy by establishing three "distinct, interdependent, and interrelated" spheres of government (national, provincial, and local) bound by the principles of cooperative governance. The constitution mandates that all spheres must coordinate their activities and exhaust non-judicial, intergovernmental dispute mechanisms before resorting to litigation.

This cooperative model offers a vital lesson for Somalia. Somalia’s constitutional revisions have failed because they treat power as a zero-sum, hierarchically distributed commodity. Adopting a cooperative governance framework could help transition the FGS-FMS relationship from an active conflict into a legally regulated partnership.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Gridlock of Rigid Consociationalism

The 1995 Dayton Accords established a highly decentralized consociationalism framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, dividing the country into two primary entities with extensive veto powers. While this arrangement successfully ended the Bosnian war, it has produced chronic institutional stasis, rendering the central government incapable of implementing meaningful economic or political reforms.

Somalia’s current trajectory faces a similar risk of permanent "immobilism". If the FMS continue to demand absolute veto powers over all federal legislation without committing to a shared national framework, the Somali state will remain structurally paralyzed and highly vulnerable to external manipulation.

Iraq: The Corruption and Instability of the *Muhasasa Ta'ifia*

Following the 2003 US-led invasion, Iraq's political system was organized around an informal consociationalism quota system known as the *muhasasa ta'ifia*. This system divided senior political offices and ministerial budgets along ethno-sectarian lines (Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd). Rather than fostering stability, the *muhasasa* system institutionalized sectarianism, legalized systemic corruption, and hollowed out state capacity. It ultimately triggered widespread popular protests and enabled the rise of ISIS.

The similarities between Iraq's *muhasasa* and Somalia’s 4.5 formula are striking. Both systems began as temporary post-conflict stabilization agreements but evolved into entrenched patron-client networks that prioritize elite interests over public service delivery. The Iraqi experience demonstrates that relying on sectarian or clan-based quota systems in the long term erodes state legitimacy and fosters deep social unrest.

The Security Deficit and the Geopolitical Patronage Market

The political divisions between the FGS and the FMS have weakened Somalia’s national security, creating opportunities for the Al-Shabaab insurgency and transforming the country into an arena for external geopolitical competition.

The Security Deficit and AUSSOM's Crisis

The political dispute has compromised the fight against Al-Shabaab at a highly critical transition point. The African Union transition mission (AUSSOM), which assumed peacekeeping responsibilities in January 2025, is struggling under severe financial and operational constraints. The mission's $166.5 million operational budget for the 2025–2026 period remains significantly underfunded, with acute cash requirements exceeding $92 million for liabilities incurred in early 2025. Furthermore, due to the high levels of domestic instability, AUSSOM has been forced to maintain its forces across 49 separate locations, rather than consolidating its footprint into the 23 strategic locations originally planned in its Concept of Operations.

The fragmentation of the national security architecture has directly benefited Al-Shabaab. As elite federal units, such as the *Gorgor* and *Haramacad* brigades, are redeployed from counter-insurgency frontlines in central Somalia to assert political control over dissident regions like Gedo and Baidoa, stabilization gains have been reversed. Al-Shabaab has recaptured vast rural areas in southern and central Somalia, exploiting local clan grievances against federal overreach to present itself as a defender of local autonomy. Concurrently, the Islamic State in Somalia (IS-Somalia) has consolidated its presence in the mountainous Bari region of Puntland, capitalizing on the complete breakdown of security coordination between Mogadishu and Garowe.

The External Geopolitical Patronage Market

Unable to establish domestic consensus, both the central government and the fragmented regional administrations have turned to external patrons, creating a competitive market for Somali sovereignty.

Turkey remains deeply embedded in Somalia's security and energy sectors, providing maritime security support, training elite forces, and engaging in offshore hydrocarbon exploration. Exploiting the geopolitical dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Cairo has signed a security pact with Mogadishu, delivering substantial arms transfers and planning troop deployments to AUSSOM. This has heightened regional tensions with Ethiopia, which retains thousands of troops in Jubaland and South West State under bilateral agreements.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) maintains highly influential commercial, logistical, and port-security relationships with autonomous regional administrations, particularly in Berbera

(Somaliland) and Kismayo (Jubaland). When the FGS announced the unilateral cancellation of all UAE port and security agreements on January 12, 2026, several regional administrations openly rejected the decision, highlighting Mogadishu's lack of practical authority.
The external pressure on Somalia's sovereignty was further compounded by Israel's formal recognition of Somaliland on December 26, 2025. This diplomatic relationship became an institutional reality when Hargeisa's first ambassador presented credentials to Israeli President Isaac Herzog on May 18, 2026, emboldening Somaliland's secessionist narrative at a moment of acute FGS vulnerability. This development drew sharp condemnation from regional actors like South Africa, which reaffirmed its commitment to Somalia's territorial integrity.

Actionable Policy Recommendations and Implementation Matrix

To resolve the 2026 constitutional crisis and prevent a wider conflict, the Federal Government of Somalia, the Federal Member States, and their international partners must move beyond zero-sum bargaining. The following recommendations outline a pragmatic pathway toward cooperative federalism, accompanied by their key implementation challenges:

1. Establish a Rule-Based, Hybrid Electoral Model

The FGS must suspend its unilateral push for direct national elections, which are structurally unfeasible due to ongoing security challenges, and instead negotiate a phased, hybrid electoral framework with the FMS.

- **The Mechanism:** For the 2026–2027 electoral cycle, Somalia should adopt a hybrid model. The House of the People would be elected through a simplified popular vote in secure urban centers using biometric voter registration. Concurrently, the President would be elected indirectly by the bicameral parliament. This approach would preserve the democratic progress of direct representation while avoiding a high-stakes, destabilizing popular presidential vote in unsecured regions.

- **Implementation Challenges:** Incumbent federal elites may resist this hybrid model, as it requires them to roll back the centralized reforms passed in the 2026 amendments.

Additionally, regional leaders may oppose any federal administration of direct legislative voting within their territories.

2. Activate and Operationalize the Independent Constitutional Court

The ongoing political impasse cannot be resolved through armed conflict or ad hoc traditional elder mediation alone. It requires a legitimate, independent judicial arbiter.

- **The Mechanism:** The FGS and the FMS must prioritize the immediate nomination and joint confirmation of judges to the long-delayed Constitutional Court. This court must be granted exclusive jurisdiction to adjudicate disputes over federal-state competencies, term limits, and the legality of constitutional amendments. Both tiers of government must formally commit to respecting the court's rulings.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Achieving consensus on the selection of judges in a highly polarized, low-trust environment is extremely difficult. Both sides will likely attempt to pack the court with allies to secure favorable rulings, risking the immediate politicization of the institution.

3. Codify a Formulaic Intergovernmental Fiscal Framework

The allocation of power in Somalia will remain highly volatile until there is a clear, rule-based agreement on how public revenues are collected, shared, and spent.

- **The Mechanism:** The FGS and the FMS should adopt a "functional federation" model. Under this framework, major revenue-raising powers (such as international customs and trade taxes) would be consolidated at the federal level to ensure national economic integration. However, the resulting revenues would be distributed back to the regional states through an objective, formula-driven equalization transfer system to finance localized public services.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Coastal states like Puntland and Jubaland, which control highly lucrative ports, will resist ceding customs administration to the federal center. Furthermore, the lack of reliable demographic and economic data makes designing a fair, formula-based distribution mechanism exceptionally challenging.

4. Negotiate a Cooperative Security Architecture

The current fragmentation of the security forces into uncoordinated regional and federal units hinders effective counter-insurgency operations.

- **The Mechanism:** The National Security Council must be revitalized to integrate state-level regional forces into a unified national security framework. The FGS must halt the political deployment of special forces to regional capitals. Operational control over local stabilization missions should be delegated to joint command structures, ensuring that federal and state forces operate in tandem against Al-Shabaab.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Deep mutual suspicion between regional state presidents and federal military commanders limits their willingness to share intelligence or integrate command structures. Regional elites will remain highly reluctant to disarm or integrate their local forces as long as they view federal troops as potential tools for political intervention.

Implementation and Risk Matrix

Policy Recommendation	Key Implementation Steps	Primary Responsible Actors	Critical Implementation Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Hybrid Electoral Model	1. Suspend unilateral OPOV push 2. Convene NCC emergency summit 3. Draft compromise electoral law	FGS President; FMS Leaders; National Consultative Council	Boycott by regional hardliners; loss of donor momentum	Establish strict donor funding conditions tied to consensus
Constitutional Court Activation	1. Establish joint judicial commission 2. Vet and select independent judges 3. Enact	Parliamentary Committees; FMS Judicial Councils; Ministry of Justice	Factional packing of judges; regional rejection of rulings	Nominate judges with proven cross-clan and academic credentials

Policy Recommendation	Key Implementation Steps	Primary Responsible Actors	Critical Implementation Risks	Mitigation Strategies
	court operational budget			
Fiscal Harmonization	1. Harmonize customs tariffs across ports 2. Establish central revenue pool 3. Create objective equalization transfer formula	FGS Ministry of Finance; FMS Treasuries; World Bank / IMF	Regional hoarding of revenues; lack of empirical economic data	Use third-party international oversight for resource transfers
Cooperative Security Integration	1. Halt offensive deployments of elite brigades 2. Reactivate joint command structures 3. Standardize regional security budgets	FGS Ministry of Defense; FMS Security Organs; AUSSOM / UNSOS	Sabotage by local commanders; fear of central domination	Condition international security assistance on integration metrics

Conclusions

Somalia's federal project has reached a historical crossroad where the preservation of territorial integrity and basic state functions is at risk. The unilateral constitutional reforms of 2026 have shown that attempting to build centralized authority in a deeply divided, low-trust environment without elite consensus leads to instability rather than stability. For the central government in Mogadishu, the lesson of the current impasse is clear: state capacity cannot be manufactured through legislative decrees. Legitimacy in the Somali context is inherently relational, negotiated, and consensus-driven.

Conversely, the Federal Member States must recognize that permanent non-cooperation and fragmenting into isolated fiefdoms will not deliver long-term security or economic viability. In a context where Al-Shabaab is ready to exploit any governance vacuums, the continuation of zero-sum political competition is a recipe for mutual destruction.

The path forward requires a transition from competitive federalism to cooperative federalism, drawing on comparative lessons of institutional flexibility, rule-based conflict resolution, and formulaic resource sharing. Only by returning to the negotiating table to build a shared, consensus-based constitutional covenant can Somalia's leaders secure a stable future for their country.