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Root Causes and Impacts of Sool Issue: The Future of Somali Unity Begins with Resolving the SSC-khatumo Conflict.

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The Center aims to prepare ideas, enlightening public opinion and informs the public about the global attitudes, issues, and social trends shaping Somalia and the world. It does not take policy positions. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science researching cooperation with experts, and with governmental and non-governmental institutions. All the Center's reports are available at www.bayanresearch.org. Bayan Research Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

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Executive Summary

This grassroots survey examined perspectives from over 5,600 respondents on the escalating armed conflict in the contested Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) regions. The deteriorating situation has seen invasion by Somaliland forces aiming to control the territory, resulting in large-scale displacement, civilian casualties, extensive damage to economic and social infrastructure, and severe disruption to livelihoods and access to education.

Key Points:

- The conflict is predominantly perceived as stemming from territorial invasion by Somaliland military forces, reflecting complex historical grievances and sovereignty disputes between groups over the land. Lesser contributing factors cited include political instability, terrorist influences, clan violence and internal SSC leadership divisions.
- Socially, the human toll has included significant loss of life and injuries amid violence targeted at civilians. Mass displacement has uprooted 43% of respondents' communities, while destruction of schools has barred 14% from accessing education. Environmental damage and unraveling of communal trust were also raised as concerns.
- Economically, the destruction of livestock and agricultural markets, transportation links, businesses and other productive infrastructure has severely hampered economic productivity, mobility, and growth potential. Meanwhile currency devaluation and supply chain woes have contributed to high inflation further eroding household purchasing power.
- 64% worry the conflict could spill over to disrupt upcoming elections in neighboring Puntland and Somaliland, while 57% fear broader destabilization across Somalia if left unresolved. However, 84% believe the crisis has already exposed Somaliland weaknesses, damaging its international legitimacy and statehood recognition bid.
- 86% expect the SSC region to emerge from conflict as an autonomous state, representing local aspirations for self-determination and decisively ending political limbo. 93% expressed confidence in new SSC-Khatumo leadership to represent these community needs and dreams.
- The Federal Government of Somalia role has been deemed extremely poor or inadequate by 67% over its political and security leadership disengagement. More strategic involvement is sought for mediation, resource provision and facilitating locally-inclusive rebuilding.
- The SSC-khatumo conflict is a major obstacle to Somali unity.

Recommendations centered on community perspectives include urgent humanitarian assistance, social and cultural rehabilitation, political impact analysis, increased federal government engagement, long-term economic redevelopment with infrastructure reconstruction, and

enhanced regional cooperation on sustainable solutions to conclusively resolve SSC-Khatumo's status.

Overall, the findings underscore popular demands for decisive conflict resolution and people-centered reconstruction policies to chart a course towards sustainable peace and development after years of regional instability. Further analysis and ongoing civic engagement can help leaders shape responsive solutions anchored in public aspirations and insights from those most affected.

Introduction

Since late 2022, clashes have escalated in the SSC-Khatumo region between local residents and Somaliland forces, causing extensive casualties, property damage, displacement, and destruction of critical infrastructure like hospitals and schools. This has severely disrupted daily life, threatening both security and development.

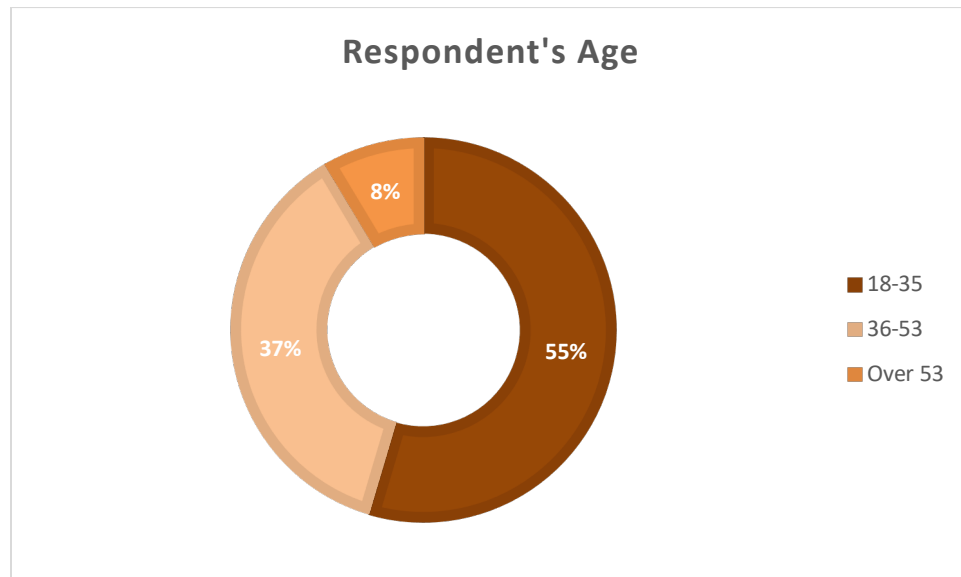
As the Bayaan Research Center compiles data on this crisis, analysis of community perspectives offers invaluable insights. This can elucidate the conflict's origins, cultural impacts, potential ripple effects on upcoming Somaliland and Puntland elections, the role of the Federal Government, and future prospects for the embattled SSC-Khatumo area.

With violence continuing to destabilize SSC-Khatumo, this grassroots-driven examination aims to inform policies that can decisively resolve the conflict, rehabilitate communities, restart development, and build sustainable peace. The study provides a compass for navigating the complexity of the crisis and underscores popular demands for decisive action after years of uncertainty.

Sampling

The study aimed to ensure diverse representation by including respondents from various regions in Somalia. Participants were recruited from the following regions: SSC-Khatumo, Somaliland, Puntland, Mogadishu, South and Central of Somalia. While this approach aimed to capture various perspectives, it's important to acknowledge that the sampling method used might not guarantee a statistically representative sample of the entire Somali population. Future research efforts could benefit from employing more robust sampling techniques like stratified or quota sampling, ensuring proportional representation from different regions and potentially including additional demographic factors.

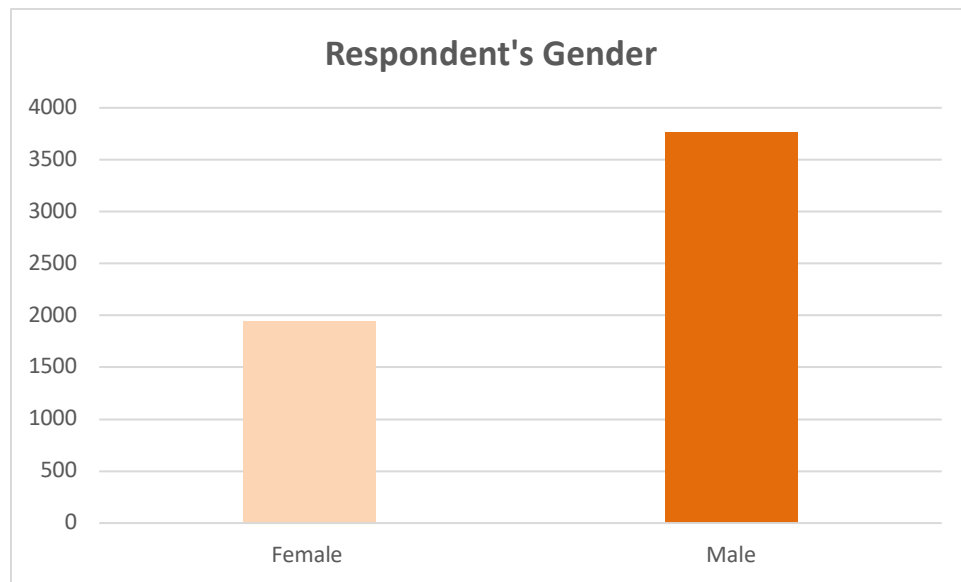
Age Distribution



- **Age Group 18-35** (Young Adults): This group represents the largest portion of survey respondents, with 3,116 individuals or 54.6% of total participants. Their active participation could reflect a keen interest in regional affairs or greater accessibility to the survey, possibly due to higher technological literacy or social media usage. This young adult group appears to be the most motivated to provide inputs through the survey. Their perspectives will be crucial, as they will inherit and shape the future of the region.
- **Age Group 36-53** (Middle-Aged Adults): Comprising 2,110 individuals or 37% of the respondents, this demographic likely includes community leaders, professionals, and parents. Their significant representation suggests they are considerably invested in the conflict's outcome, possibly due to its direct impact on their economic stability, community standing, and family security. Their experiences and views as mature adults with families and establishments in the region will add important context for understanding the conflict's impacts.

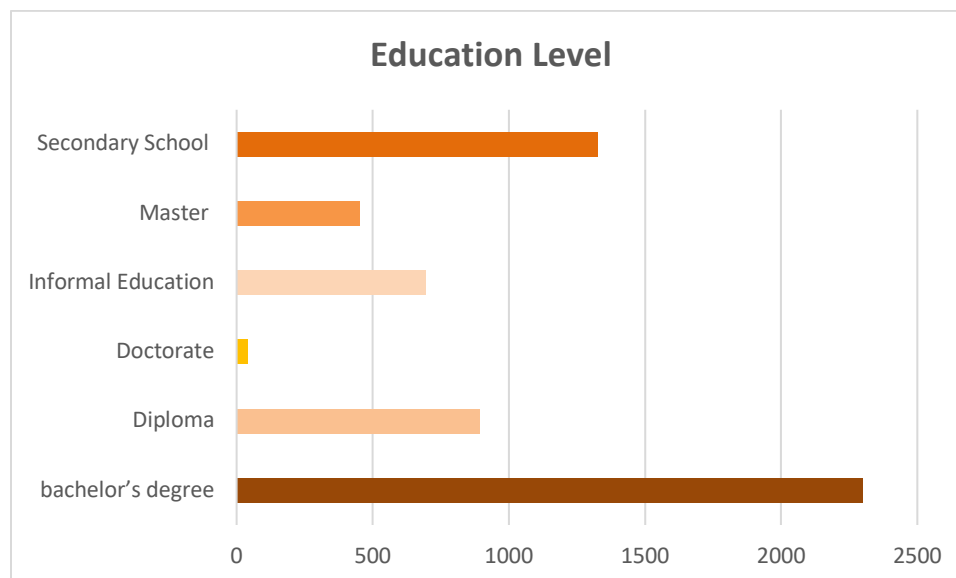
- **Age Group Over 53** (Older Adults): With 484 individuals or 8.5% participating in the survey, this group might indicate less engagement or accessibility to the survey process. However, their perspectives are invaluable, especially as they likely include elders and others who hold traditional knowledge and historical context about the region's conflicts and cultural dynamics.

Gender



The survey captured inputs from 1,942 females (34%) and 3,768 males (66%). This indicates a significantly higher representation of male perspectives, with women comprising only about one-third of respondents. The conflict may be disproportionately impacting men, especially with regards to direct violence and fighting. However, women likely also face high risks and unique challenges relating to physical security, loss of family members, displacement, and lack of access to resources. A comprehensive understanding of the conflict requires incorporation of female experiences and viewpoints. Additional focused outreach to women in the region could help address the gender disparity in survey participation. Gender-disaggregated analysis will also shed light on variances in how the conflict is perceived and experienced by women versus men. Targeted assistance and rebuilt social programs should consider the needs of both genders. Overall, the inclusion of both groups is valuable, but more equal gender representation could enrich the data further.

Education Level

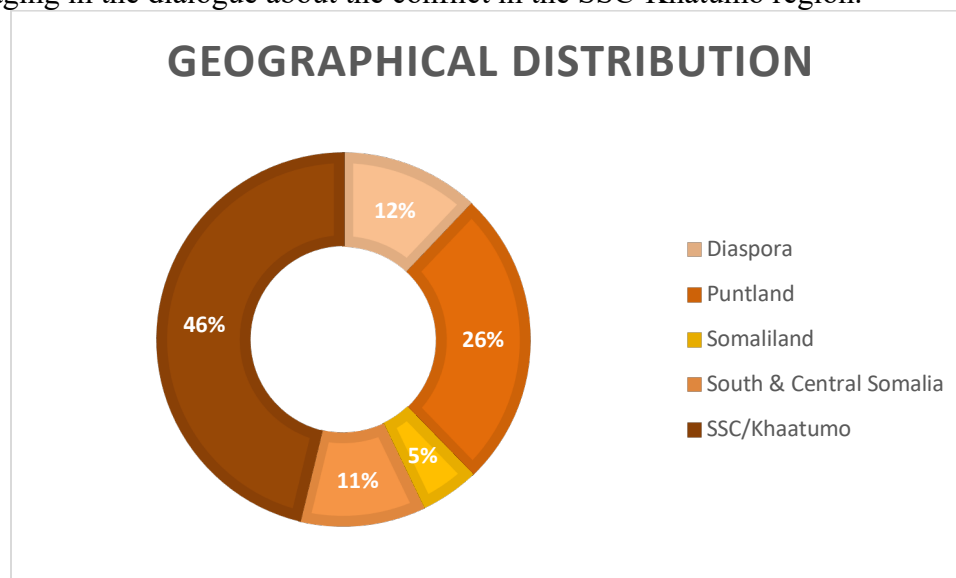







The educational distribution of the survey respondents provides a layered understanding of the conflict in the SSC-Khatumo region. Each educational level brings unique insights and considerations.

- ***Bachelor's Degree (40%):*** This group forms the largest portion of the respondents, indicating a highly educated populace participating in the survey. Individuals with bachelor's degrees are often well-informed, analytical, and potentially hold positions that either influence or are influenced by the conflict. Their responses likely reflect a sophisticated understanding of the conflict's nuances and might provide detailed insights into its social, economic, and political implications.
- ***Diploma (16%) and Secondary School (23%):*** These categories represent individuals with formal education but not at the tertiary level. Their perspectives are crucial as they likely reflect the views and experiences of the broader working-class population. These individuals might have practical, on-the-ground insights and could be among the most directly affected by the conflict's day-to-day realities.
- ***Master's Degree (8%) and Doctorate (0.74%):*** Though smaller in number, participants with postgraduate degrees bring a high level of academic and potentially professional expertise to their understanding of the conflict. They might offer more in-depth analyses or theoretical frameworks, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict's underlying causes and potential solutions.
- ***Informal Education (12%):*** This significant portion of the population cannot be overlooked. Their perspectives are shaped by life experiences rather than formal education, providing valuable grassroots insights into the conflict. Understanding their views can offer a more holistic picture of the conflict's impact on the general populace and might reveal practical, community-based solutions that are not apparent from an academic standpoint.

Geographical Distribution

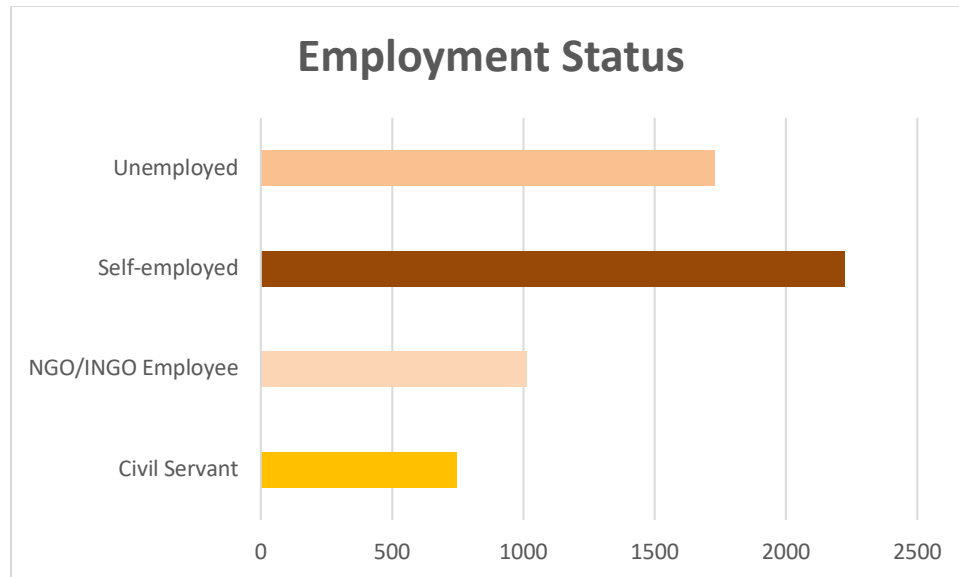
The location distribution of survey respondents provides insight into the geographic spread of those engaging in the dialogue about the conflict in the SSC-Khatumo region.



-  **Diaspora (12%, 688):** The diaspora's involvement indicates a continued interest and connection to their homeland's affairs. While they may not experience the conflict's daily realities, they can offer unique perspectives, including international context, comparison, and potentially a broader understanding of the conflict's implications on a global scale. They might also contribute to or influence international advocacy and policy discussions.
-  **Puntland (26%, 1471):** A significant number of respondents are from Puntland, a neighboring region. Their substantial representation might reflect socio-political ties with the SSC-Khatumo area or the spillover effects of the conflict. Their perspectives can provide valuable insights into regional dynamics and how the conflict affects surrounding areas, potentially influencing regional stability and politics.
-  **Somaliland (5%, 292):** The respondents from Somaliland provide important viewpoints from one of the key parties involved in the territorial disputes with SSC/Khaatumo. As the region with competing claims over areas like Sool, Sanaag and Cayn, their inputs help shed light on the conflict's roots in complex historical grievances over contested borders and sovereignty.
-  **South & Central Somalia (11%, 618):** Participants from this region contribute to understanding the conflict's perceived impact and significance across a broader geographic area. Their perspectives can offer insights into national solidarity, variations in regional experiences of conflict, and the broader implications for Somali unity and governance.
-  **SSC/Khaatumo (46%, 2640):** This is the most heavily represented group, indicating a strong local engagement in the survey. As residents of the conflict area, their responses are particularly crucial. They are likely the most directly affected by the conflict, with

firsthand experience of its impacts. Understanding their perspectives is essential for any realistic assessment of the current situation and for formulating effective local solutions.

Employment Status

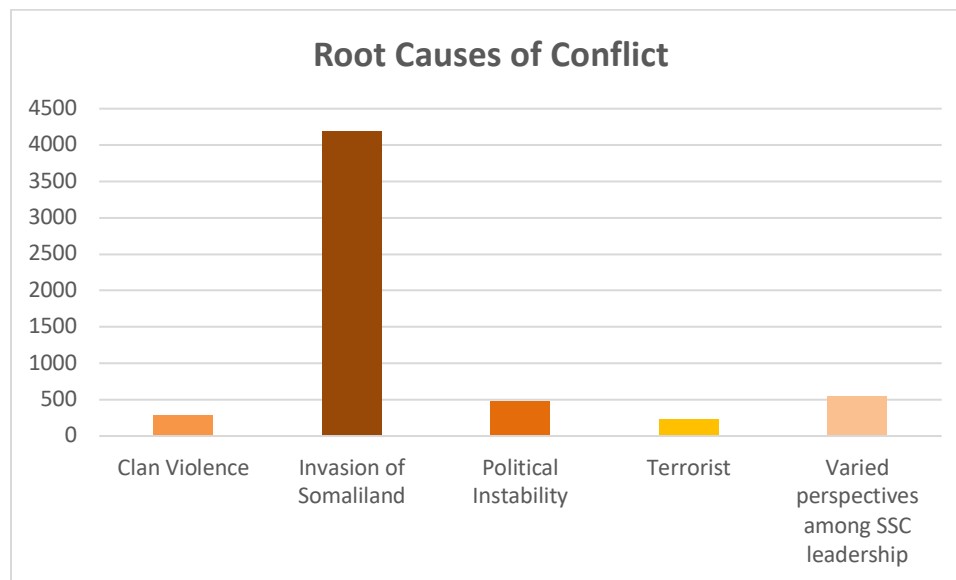


The work distribution of survey respondents provides insight into the occupational backgrounds of those engaging in the dialogue about the conflict in the SSC-Khatumo region. Here's a detailed and professional analysis of each category:

1. **Self-Employed (39%, 2,225 individuals):** The largest group among the respondents, self-employed individuals likely include business owners, freelancers, farmers, and tradespeople. Their substantial representation suggests that the entrepreneurial sector is significantly interested or affected by the conflict. As they might directly bear the economic brunt of instability, their perspectives are crucial in understanding the conflict's impact on local economies, livelihoods, and community resilience.
2. **Unemployed (30%, 1,729 individuals):** A high percentage of respondents are unemployed, indicating a significant portion of the community is without regular work. This group's perspectives are particularly important as they might be the most vulnerable to the conflict's adverse effects, including economic hardship and lack of opportunities. Their high representation also suggests a need for addressing employment and economic development in any post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building efforts.
3. **NGO/INGO Employee (18%, 1,011 individuals):** Individuals employed by NGOs and INGOs are well-represented. Their responses can provide professional and often external viewpoints on the conflict. They might offer insights based on their experience in humanitarian, development, or peace-building work, and their perspectives can help understand the broader implications of the conflict and the effectiveness of various interventions.
4. **Civil Servant (13%, 745 individuals):** Civil servants include government employees and officials. Their involvement in the survey indicates an engagement from the public sector.

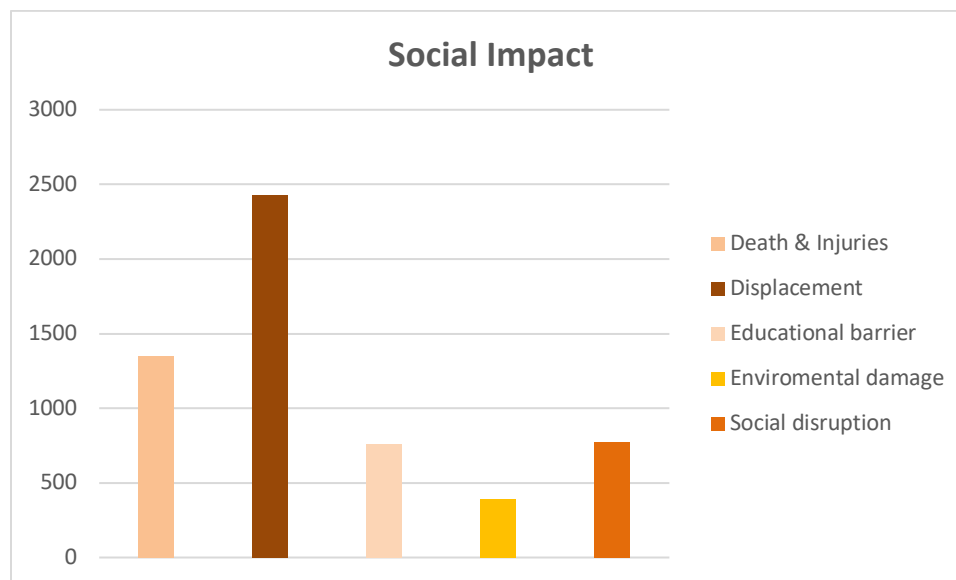
This group's perspectives are crucial in understanding the governmental response to the conflict, the public sector's role in the region's stability, and the implications of the conflict on public services and governance.

Root Causes of The Conflict



- ✓ **Clan Violence (5%, 277):** Clan violence is recognized by respondents as a contributing factor, reflecting the significant role of clan dynamics in the region. Reconciliation and unity across clan lines are necessary to mitigate conflict.
- ✓ **Invasion of Somaliland (74%, 4187):** A significant majority of respondents perceive the conflict as stemming from the invasion of Somaliland. This perspective likely reflects deep-seated issues related to territorial claims, sovereignty, and self-determination.
- ✓ **Political Instability (8%, 472):** Political instability is seen by a notable portion as a primary cause, emphasizing the need for political reforms, stable governance, and effective leadership to prevent future conflicts and ensure sustainable peace.
- ✓ **Terrorist (4%, 224):** A small percentage attributes the conflict to terrorism, pointing to concerns over extremist influences and destabilization. Addressing this requires security measures, counter-terrorism strategies, and addressing socio-economic conditions conducive to radicalization.
- ✓ **Varied perspectives among SSC leadership (10%, 549):** Divergent views among SSC leaders are identified by some as a key conflict driver, highlighting internal divisions and leadership disputes. Reconciling these differences and promoting unified leadership is essential for effective conflict resolution and community cohesion.

Social Impact of the Conflict



The survey results paint a grim picture of the devastating social impacts inflicted on SSC-Khatumo communities as a result of the ongoing conflict. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%, 1349 individuals) emphasized the grave human toll, pointing to loss of life and physical harm from violent clashes, bombings, and other conflict-related attacks targeting civilians. This highlights the tragic deaths and injuries that have become commonplace for residents caught in the crossfire.

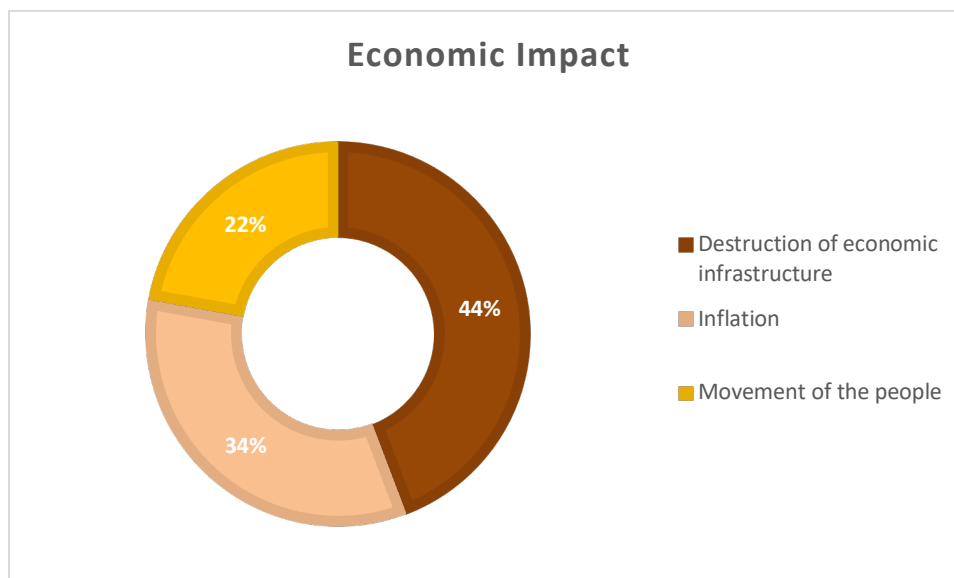
An even higher percentage (43%, 2432 respondents) focused on the mass displacement crisis that has uprooted families and entire communities. Waves of civilians have been forced to flee their homes and livelihoods in search of safety and stability. This exodus tears apart community cohesion, while creating dire humanitarian conditions in under-resourced refugee camps. Those displaced face profound trauma, uncertainty, and vulnerability.

Moreover, 14% (761 respondents) stressed enormous setbacks to education from school destruction and lack of access due to insecurity. Entire generations of children and youth are missing out on education, compounding existing challenges of limited learning opportunities. This bodes poorly for SSC-Khatumo's social and economic future.

Another 7% (394 individuals) pointed to far-reaching environmental damage from the armed conflict, including pollution, resource destruction, land degradation and more. This threatens ancient pastoral and agricultural livelihoods connected to traditional territories.

Finally, 14% (773 respondents) emphasized the tearing of the social fabric within and between communities. Trust between clans and neighbors has corroded, fracturing a once-unified society. Rebuilding relationships, reconciliation, and addressing psychological trauma will be monumental challenges even if the violence ends.

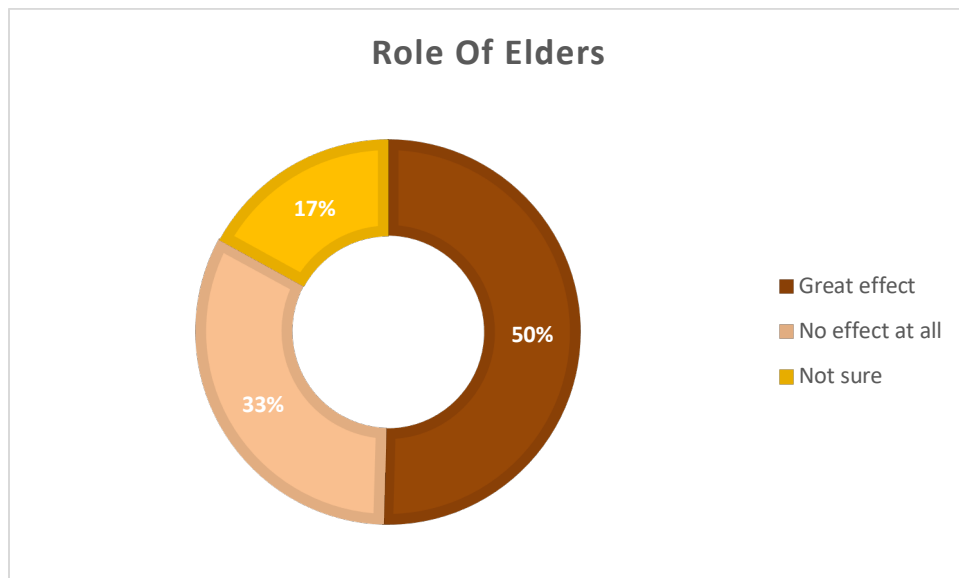
Economic Impact of Conflict



The survey highlighted the severe economic costs of the ongoing conflict recognized by many respondents. Most notably, 44% (2524 respondents) cited extensive destruction of economic infrastructure including livestock markets, farms, transportation links, and businesses. This infrastructure decimation severely hampers economic productivity and choking development potential. Rebuilding damaged and outdated infrastructure will require enormous investment to reconnect fragmented supply chains and markets.

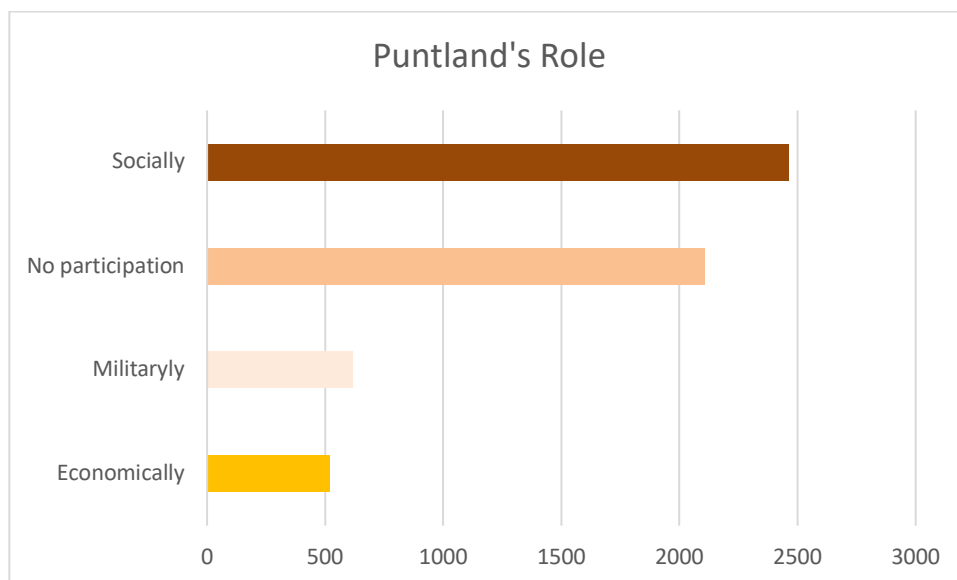
High inflation was another major concern, noted by 34% (1921 respondents) as eroding purchasing power and living standards. Inflationary pressures, exacerbated by supply chain disruptions and currency devaluation, have led to soaring food and commodity prices. This hits the most socially and economically vulnerable communities hardest at a time when household budgets are already stretched thin from loss of livelihoods. Targeted monetary and fiscal policies will be needed to control inflation and mitigate the burden on those struggling and impoverished. Additionally, 22% (1264 respondents) pointed specifically to mobility restrictions and transport network disruptions as heavily impacting business and trade flows. With road travel made highly dangerous from conflict, and disruptions at key ports, the movement of people and goods has been severely constrained. Reviving commercial activity and restoring economic stability hinges on improving freedom of movement through upgrading transportation links and enhancing security.

Elders, Scholars, and Women in Resolving SSC-Khatumo Conflict



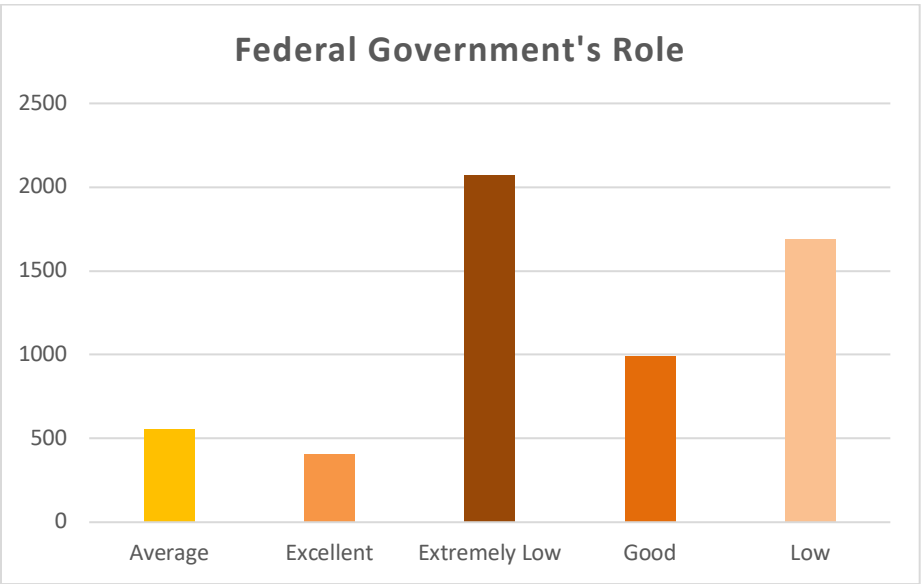
The majority, at 51%, view elders, scholars, and women as having a positive impact on resolving the SSC-Khatumo conflict, recognizing their potential contributions to peace-building. Conversely, 32% perceive no impact from these groups, reflecting skepticism about their influence or effectiveness. The remaining 17% are uncertain, highlighting ambiguity about the roles and influence of these groups in the complex conflict resolution process.

Puntland State's Role in SSC-Khatumo Conflict



43% acknowledge Puntland's social involvement in the conflict, suggesting its influence on societal and inter-clan dynamics. In contrast, 37% see no participation from Puntland, indicating perceptions of neutrality or non-involvement. 11% attribute a military role to Puntland, suggesting involvement at a security or military level, while 9% view its involvement as economic, reflecting perceived economic influences or resource-related issues impacting the conflict dynamics.

Federal Government's Role in Khatumo Issue



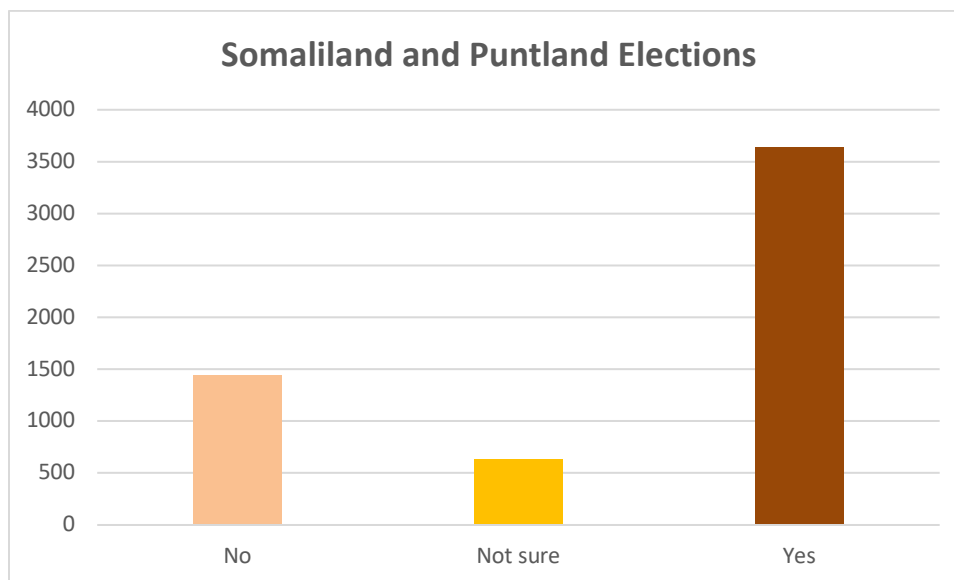
The survey exposed predominantly negative perceptions of the Federal Government's political and security response to the crisis in SSC-Khatumo. A significant 37% (2073 respondents) rated the federal role and engagement as extremely poor. This points to deep and widespread dissatisfaction with perceived inaction and disengagement from central authorities meant to provide leadership and support.

Likewise, 30% (1688 individuals) assessed the Federal Government's approach as simply poor. These views further underscore profound disappointment and discontent with the central government's policies, priorities, and interventions regarding the conflict.

In contrast, only around 10% (552 respondents) gave a more neutral rating of average for federal efforts. While 18% (988 respondents) considered the role good, just 7% (408 individuals) deemed it excellent. This indicates there are some more positive perspectives, likely from respondents evaluating initiatives like military operations undertaken in the name of stabilizing the region.

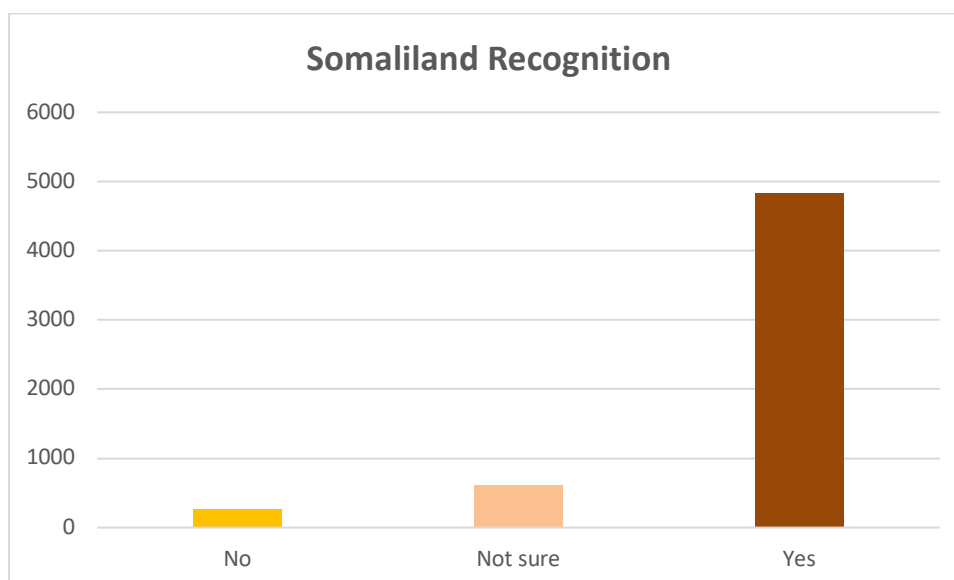
In summary, overwhelmingly negative perceptions of the Federal Government's conflict response suggest critical inadequacies in political reconciliation and security leadership. Moving forward requires addressing these governance gaps, promoting local inclusion, and revising failed policies to build greater public confidence and trust.

Impact of SSC-Khatumo issue on Somaliland and Puntland Elections



64% (3,635 respondents) believe the conflict could impact the upcoming elections in Somaliland and Puntland, due to close clan ties spanning their borders with SSC. But 25% (1,439) feel the elections will be unaffected, while 11% (635) are unsure. The majority opinion highlights perceived risks of regional instability spilling across borders to disrupt polls. But a sizable portion dismiss potential crossover effects. The variance spotlights differing calculations regarding the conflict's wider political ripple effects ahead of pivotal leadership transitions.

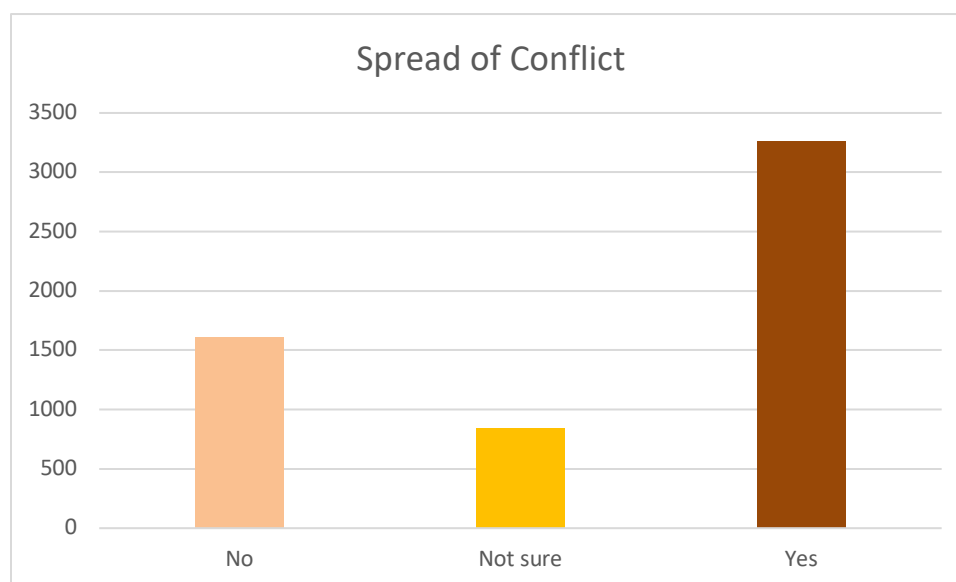
SSC-Khatumo's Impact on Somaliland's Recognition



An overwhelming 84.7% (4,836) feel the conflict has damaged Somaliland's international recognition bid by exposing political and military vulnerabilities. Only 5% (262) do not think there has been any impact on recognition efforts. The data reveals most see the crisis

compromising Somaliland's reputation and credibility as a stable regional actor worthy of statehood. This adds complexity to Somaliland's motivations in the conflict, beyond just territorial disputes.

Potential Spread of Conflict Across Somalia Amid Continued Tensions

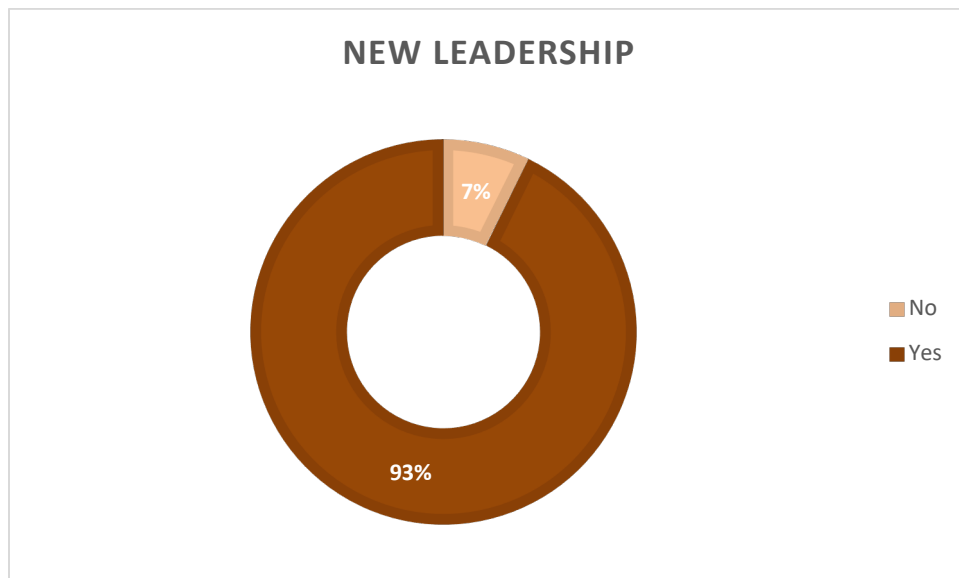


The data reveals concern about broader destabilization if the SSC-Khaatumo crisis continues unabated:

- 57% of the respondents worry the conflict could spill over to ignite tensions in other regions, especially election-bound areas like Somaliland and Puntland. This highlights fears of inflammatory wider ripple effects across Somalia's complex clan-based political landscape.
- However, 28% of the participants believe the conflict will remain geographically contained. 15% (840) are uncertain about potential for escalation beyond the SSC area.

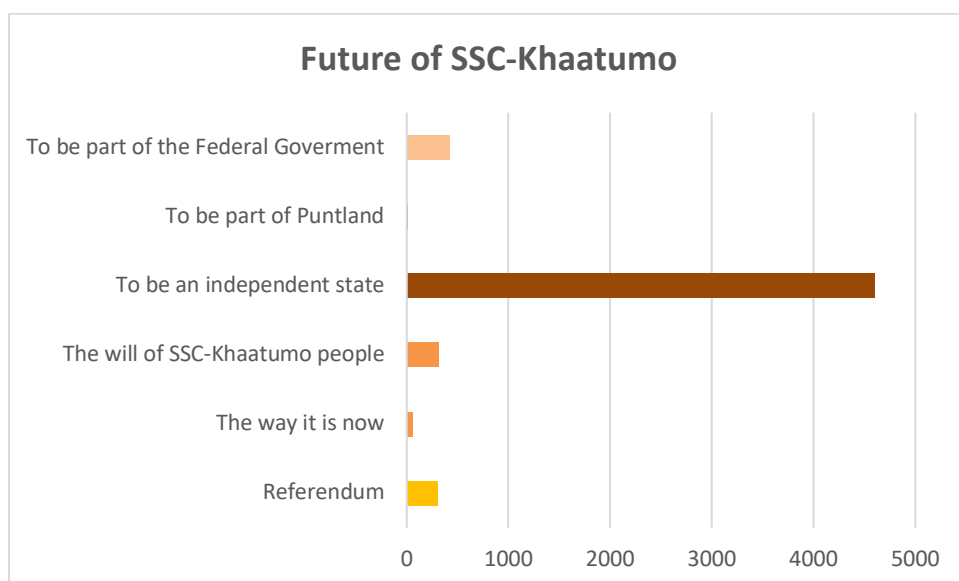
The slim majority expecting spillover effects underscores apprehensions about fragile security and stability nationwide. Further disaggregation could reveal which demographic groups harbor deepest concerns about escalation. Ongoing efforts by federal and regional authorities to firebreak the crisis will be crucial for preventing exacerbation of volatile dynamics during the elections period.

The New Leadership's Commitment to Fulfilling People's Dreams and Needs



An overwhelming 93% express confidence in the new leadership's commitment to fulfilling the people's dreams and needs, suggesting high hopes and expectations for positive change and responsive governance. This strong belief could be based on the new leadership's promises, perceived capabilities, or a general desire for improved conditions. In contrast, 7% do not share this optimism, possibly due to skepticism based on past experiences, differing political loyalties, or doubts about the leadership's capacity or willingness to effect change.

Forecasting a Resolution for the SSC-Khatumo Crisis



An overwhelming 86% (4,915) envision SSC emerging from the conflict as an independent state, signaling aspirations for self-determination after years of upheaval. Meanwhile, 7% (425) expect temporary federal custodianship, 5% (304) want a referendum to decide status, and just 1% (66) predict integration with Puntland.

The dominant narrative favoring SSC sovereignty underscores ambitions for decisively ending the region's political limbo through formal autonomy. But variations show smaller groups see federal influence or public votes as potential transitional resolution mechanisms. Disaggregating the data by location could reveal differing priorities - for example, Somaliland respondents may resist SSC independence. Overall, the results map varied proposals but point to firm local demands for definitive resolution of the contested region's status.

Recommendations

1. **Immediate Humanitarian Response:** Address the urgent needs caused by significant loss of life, displacement, and damage to infrastructure. Prioritize the restoration of hospitals, schools, and essential services to mitigate the immediate suffering and prevent long-term detriment to the community's health and education.
2. **Cultural and Social Rehabilitation:** Recognize the deep cultural ramifications of the conflict. Initiatives to repair and preserve cultural heritage, such as mosques and communal spaces, are vital for restoring community identity and cohesion.
3. **Political and Electoral Impact Analysis:** Assess the conflict's potential impacts on upcoming Somaliland and Puntland elections. Encourage transparent and inclusive dialogue to ensure that the conflict does not further destabilize the region's political landscape.
4. **Engagement of the Somali Federal Government:** Advocate for increased involvement and a more strategic approach by the Somali Federal Government. Their role is critical in mediating the conflict, supporting reconciliation, and providing the necessary resources for recovery and development.
5. **Long-term Developmental Focus:** Beyond immediate relief, focus on the long-term development of the SSC-Khatumo region. Address the root causes of the conflict and invest in sustainable economic, social, and infrastructure projects to build resilience and promote prosperity.
6. **Regional and International Collaboration:** Foster collaboration with regional entities and international partners to ensure a coordinated and supportive approach to resolving the crisis and preventing regional spillover.
7. **Establishing a political system that facilitates cooperation between the two states is a strategic approach.:** Collaboration between Puntland and Khatumo is necessary in managing the Ministry of Finance and Defense.
8. **The SSC-khatumo conflict is a major obstacle to Somali unity:** Somaliland's pursuit of secession faces strategic failure and significant challenges. We believe that the independence of the SSC-khatumo regions as a federal state is crucial for the establishment of a unified Somali state.

Conclusion

This grassroots-driven analysis provides a compass for navigating the complexity of the SSC-Khatumo conflict and highlighted the desire for decisive resolution after years of uncertainty. Core priorities include political inclusivity, social rehabilitation, economic reconstruction with livelihoods support, and definitive agreements over autonomy and inter-regional relations. Platforms for sustained civic engagement can help leaders shape responsive, community-centered solutions. With conscientious policymaking guided by public insights, sustainable peace and prosperity in the region is attainable.

The ongoing conflict in the SSC-Khatumo region presents a major hurdle to Somali unification. Understanding the specific details of the conflict, including its historical roots, contending parties, and underlying causes, is crucial for addressing its impact. Some argue that the independence of the SSC-Khatumo regions as a federal state could be a key factor in establishing a unified Somali state.

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Our annual financial report can be found online. The finding, interpretations, and conclusions in this are solely those of the authors(s) and are not affected by any donation.

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