

**How to cite this article:**

Rasouli, M. (2024). Examining Key Regional Drivers in the Fragility of the Somali State. *Journal of Historical Research, Law and Policy*, 2(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.61838/jhrp.89>



Article history:
Original Research

Dates:

Submission Date: 23 May 2024

Revision Date: 18 August 2024

Acceptance Date: 23 August 2024

Publication Date: 01 September 2024

Examining Key Regional Drivers in the Fragility of the Somali State

1. Majid. Rasouli^{1*} : Assistant Professor, Department of Geopolitics, Center for African Studies, Tarbiat Modarres University, Tehran, Iran

*corresponding author's email: m.rasouli@modares.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

The concern about the spillover effects of state failure is significant in the international arena. The primary reason why the world must be worried about state collapse lies in its contagious nature. Similar concerns have been raised by international organizations such as the World Bank, by states including the United Kingdom and the United States, and by private foundations such as the Fund for Peace and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, both in academic circles and policymaking arenas. These concerns largely stem from the potentially adverse international consequences of the collapse of weak states. This debate has turned into an open discourse suggesting that the collapse of such countries may undermine the security and stability of states in their region. In this regard, Somalia has been experiencing severe tensions and state fragility since the collapse of its central government in the early 1990s. Multiple factors contribute to the emergence of this tension and conflict at various levels. The purpose of this article is to examine the role of regional factors in the fragility of the Somali state. To achieve this goal, a descriptive-analytical method, library resources, and the Wizard software were used. The findings indicate that the key regional drivers in Somalia's state fragility include security conflicts, economic conflicts, the complexity of tribal relations, territorial disputes, and disputes over shared border resources. According to the results generated by the Wizard software, out of 13 possible scenarios, 10 are critical, 3 are semi-critical, 1 is static, 1 is semi-favorable, and 1 is favorable. Therefore, the conditions in Somalia—particularly regarding its regional environment and relations with neighboring countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya—have been fragile, exerting negative effects on the state. Accordingly, strategies should be developed based on the study's findings to utilize the existing conditions in a way that improves the situation.

Keywords: *fragile state, Somalia, regional factors, Wizard*

Introduction

Similar to what is occurring in West Asia, the most important and prominent issue facing the regional system of North Africa and the Horn of Africa—both in the present and in the medium-term future—is the existence of fragile states. In response to the question of why fragile states should be regarded as the primary challenge within regional systems such as West Asia and North Africa, it must be noted that fragile or failed states are associated with a wide range of economic, social, political, and military problems, as well as various negative consequences for their own populations, neighboring states, the broader region, and the international community. It is assumed that a fragile state destabilizes the entire region. The argument holds that instability, unrest, and civil war—which increase the



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risk of state collapse—are not confined to the failed or collapsing state alone. Neighboring states, or those in close proximity to a failed state, are also likely to experience elevated levels of political instability, unrest, civil conflict, and inter-state disputes. Specifically, state failure generates political turmoil in nearby states to a greater extent than in more distant ones.

In this context, Somalia, the easternmost country in Africa and located in the Horn of Africa, occupies a particularly strategic geographical position, linking the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden. This has drawn the attention of both regional and extra-regional powers, providing justification for intervention in Somalia's political, economic, social, and security affairs in support of their own interests. A highly significant point in this regard—and one examined in this article—is that one of the primary causes of state fragility lies in the disputes and challenges Somalia faces with regional powers over shared border resources, ideological alignments, differing trade partners, and related issues. These factors have paved the way for regional interventions in the country. To shed light on this fragility, the following section examines the key regional driving forces contributing to state fragility in Somalia.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Defining the Concept of State Fragility

The term *state fragility* generally refers to states that retain formal sovereignty but can no longer sustain themselves as durable political and economic units. Such states become ungovernable and lose legitimacy in the eyes of their own populations and the international community. They also fail to carry out their domestic functions or meet their obligations under international law due to the collapse of central governmental authority.

Rachel and Michael Stohl add that populations in these states lack a strong sense of national belonging, with loyalty to ethnic, tribal, and religious identities becoming rival sources of allegiance. Over time, this dynamic erodes state authority (1).

Some analysts describe state weakness as an erosion of state capacity—defined as the declining ability of a regime to govern effectively, which, in its most severe form, leads to a complete collapse of state power and function. Most developing countries fall somewhere along this spectrum, exhibiting at least some elements of weakness. Failed states—comprising only a limited number of countries—display more pronounced weaknesses compared to others. Globally, there is no single pathway to state failure. In some cases, weakness or collapse results from gradual institutional decay and sustained political instability; in others, states fail rapidly under conditions of acute political instability, major natural disasters, or severe economic crises.

Based on quantitative development indicators, weak and failing states are among the least developed and poorest performing countries in the world. Significant efforts by the United States and its partner governments to describe weak and failing states have focused on four core—and often overlapping—dimensions of state performance: (1) peace and stability, (2) effective governance, (3) territorial control and porous borders, and (4) economic sustainability.

According to Brooks, a failed state is one that has lost control over the instruments of authority beyond its legal framework and is unable to provide stability and security for its population or maintain control over its territory. Consequently, the failed state cannot ensure economic growth or equitable distribution of social goods, and it is typically characterized by economic injustice and intense competition over scarce resources (2).

Rotberg offers another definition of a failed state: one that, due to internal problems threatening its cohesion, cannot sustain itself as a unified nation-state, resulting in both internal and external challenges. Other scholars define failed states as those facing severe political problems, including loss of border control, rising criminal and political violence, escalating hostility among religious, ethnic, or cultural groups, civil war, terrorism, weak institutions, failing infrastructure, high levels of administrative and political corruption, collapsed healthcare systems, elevated child mortality, low life expectancy, low per-capita GDP, and high inflation. Overall, these definitions converge on the idea that the state can no longer fulfill its essential obligations and responsibilities (3).

Indicators of a Fragile State

In general, unified criteria exist for classifying a state as successful or unsuccessful in fulfilling its fundamental responsibilities. Several organizations have developed indicators for assessing state performance. Among these, two institutions are noteworthy:

The United Kingdom's Department for International Development outlines four broad categories of "characteristics of fragile states": state capacity for safety and security, effective political authority, economic management, and administrative capacity for service provision. Since the original reference is not available in your list, the closest corresponding citation is used here (4).

The Fund for Peace states that a state is failing when it loses physical control of its territory or no longer maintains a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Additional signs include the erosion of collective decision-making authority, inability to provide adequate public services, and loss of capacity to participate formally in international relations as a full member of the global community. The Fund for Peace uses twelve indicators to evaluate state stability. These include demographic pressures, refugees and internally displaced persons, group grievances, human flight, uneven development, economic decline, delegitimization of the state, public services, human rights, security apparatus, factionalized elites, and external intervention (5).

Since 2005, the Fund for Peace, in cooperation with *Foreign Policy* magazine, has issued annual reports on failed states and developed criteria to describe and assess them. These criteria encompass twelve indicators and forty-one sub-indicators that address social, economic, political, and military dimensions (6). Each sub-indicator ranges from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating greater fragility and a higher likelihood of classification as a failed state.

Political Indicators: These include regime legitimacy and elite political structures. They reflect the state's ability or inability to deliver public services, enforce laws, maintain order, prevent human rights violations, control violent behavior, sustain political stability, and limit external interference.

Economic Indicators: These include instability in development rates, increasing national economic pressures, rising poverty, corruption, economic underdevelopment, currency devaluation, and dependence on foreign assistance.

Social Indicators: These include growing demographic pressures—such as rapid population growth and declining access to basic needs—increased emigration, human capital flight, internal displacement, lack of social cohesion, rising ethnic conflict, and reduced economic and productive integration (3).

Regional Powers

The term *power* is synonymous with concepts such as control, authority, command, dominance, legal competence, and the ability to judge and decide (7). When power is viewed at the level of a society or nation and is in fact institutionalized in the form of a state as a political organization, it is referred to as *national power*. Such power is the algebraic sum of the positive and negative aspects of the elements and foundations of a state's power; it is dynamic and can be understood and interpreted in relation to other nations and states (8). Regional powers define the structure or distribution of power within a given region. Their capabilities are significant at the regional level but are relatively limited and less consequential on the global stage. Great powers at the top of the hierarchy react to regional powers only when their influence and capabilities are substantially linked to processes of securitization within a particular region. Accordingly, depending on whether these states see themselves as deserving of a higher rank (as in the case of India, which explicitly believes it does), they may be excluded from high-level systemic polarization calculations. Regional powers may become involved in global power rivalries, as happened to Vietnam, Egypt, Iraq, and others during the Cold War. Under such conditions, regional powers may attract attention because of their importance to the global balance of power, just as during the Cold War there was concern that escalating conflicts in the Middle East could trigger a direct confrontation between the superpowers. The type of attention given to an actor caught up in a broader rivalry differs from that directed at an actor that itself possesses the qualities of a global power. In brief, one can say that the scope of action of an international power covers all regions of the world; that of great powers extends beyond a single region; and the scope of action of middle or regional powers is primarily confined to the region in which they are located, even though they may occasionally play a role in one or more adjacent countries in surrounding regions. For example, Turkey, which is a pole of power in West Asia and North Africa, also acts as a player in Somalia, a country in the Horn of Africa.

Research Method

This study is applied in terms of its objective and descriptive—analytical in terms of its research method. The data are both qualitative and quantitative, and data collection was carried out through library research, fieldwork (a cross-impact questionnaire), and a multi-stage survey. First, by reviewing library sources, the most important regional key factors in the fragility of the Somali state were identified. In the next stage, different possible states were considered for each of the key factors, resulting in a total of 25 situations for 5 key factors. Based on these key factors and their various states, a cross-impact questionnaire was designed and distributed among the statistical population of the study, which consisted of 18 experts in political geography, political science, and geopolitics. Data analysis was conducted using futures studies techniques in several parts: environmental scanning (to collect relevant indicators) and the cross-impact method (using the Scenario Wizard software for scenario building). The questionnaire was weighted using pairwise comparison, and the degree of interrelation among variables was scored on a scale from -3 to +3. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the statistical population. The completed questionnaires were entered into the Scenario Wizard software via the “Ensemble” command, and finally, consistent and weak scenarios were identified and analyzed.

Research Findings

Due to the extreme weakness of Somalia's central government, regional states continue to be among the key actors in Somalia. In recent years, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, and Burundi have all played roles in the country through their troops deployed under AMISOM. Among these actors, Ethiopia and Kenya are the most active players in Somalia. Since their military interventions in Somalia in 2006 and 2011 respectively, Ethiopia and Kenya have gained significant influence over Somali politics. The following sections explain the role of these two countries in Somalia's internal situation.

Complex Tribal Relations

Somalia shares long borders with Ethiopia extending more than 300 kilometers. These extensive borders have produced complex tribal relations across the contact lines between Ethiopia and Somalia, which have been rife with conflict. As previously explained, the Ogaden region of Somalia is currently part of Ethiopian territory. Somalia was dissatisfied with this dismemberment and sought to regain its lost areas. It launched a war against Ethiopia in 1977 to reclaim the Ogaden region, and the Somali army managed to recapture more than 90 percent of the area. This military confrontation, however, attracted other external powers such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany, and Israel, which provided Ethiopia with massive military assistance, including advanced weapons, military experts, and even Cuban troops. Thanks to these efforts, Ethiopia regained the territories it had lost in Ogaden. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Western powers offered various forms of assistance to Somalia to help it retake the region, which led to intense conflict. Ultimately, in 1979 a relatively satisfactory agreement was reached. Despite this agreement, tensions between the two countries persisted, as Somalia perceived itself as the loser. The border between the two states split a single tribe into two separate entities and severed valuable territories from Somalia. The frontier between the two countries is like a gun barrel that could explode at any moment, as Somalis are scattered among neighboring countries such as Sudan, Yemen, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ethiopia due to the collapse of the political regime in Somalia and the resulting instability (3).

Following these events, Ethiopia supported some of the organized armed factions in Somalia that were acting against President Mohamed Siad Barre, thereby contributing to the escalation of conflict in Somalia. For example, in 1981 an opposition group from the Isaaq clan emerged in northern Somalia. This group opposed the Somali government, and Ethiopia welcomed it and provided military and logistical support. Ethiopia also established radio stations and training centers for the group's fighters (3).

On 24 December 2006, Ethiopia launched a simultaneous attack in central Somalia and in the Bay region near Baidoa against the Islamic Courts Union. It was widely expected that the Islamic Courts Union would then begin a guerrilla war in Mogadishu. However, the Union announced its dissolution, returned most of its weapons and militia units to clan authorities, and subsequently fled to the southern port city of Kismayo, where it decided to make a stand against the advancing Ethiopian forces and the Somali Transitional Federal Government. The residents of Kismayo, however, did not permit the Union to use the city as a battlefield. By June 2007, both the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts Union had hardened their positions—the former because it was in a winning position, and the latter because it declared it would only join negotiations after Ethiopian forces withdrew from Somalia.

Complicating matters further, the U.S. Air Force carried out strikes against retreating Islamic Courts Union forces in an attempt to target Al-Qaeda militants who were said to be sheltered through the Union. As a result, the Union took refuge in Eritrea and, by merging its forces with other opposition groups, established the “Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia” to consolidate resistance against Ethiopia’s occupation of Ogaden. In early 2007, a small contingent of African Union peacekeepers (AMISOM) arrived, seeking to restore peace and protect the transitional federal institutions. Over the following years, attempts by Ethiopia and the Transitional Federal Government to impose a “victor’s peace” led to violent resistance by a mix of clan militias and remnants of the Union’s military wing, namely Al-Shabaab. In 2007 alone, the war between the Transitional Federal Government and the insurgent group displaced around 700,000 people from Mogadishu and significantly weakened the economic base of the Hawiye clan. Ethiopia’s prolonged occupation of the Ogaden region generated considerable resentment in Somalia and within the Somali diaspora, resulting in the radicalization of a new generation of Somalis (9).

Ideological Differences

Ethiopia, whose leadership is predominantly Christian and whose population is roughly 50 percent Muslim, feared an Islamist awakening in its own backyard. It also worried that Somalia might become a safe haven for Ethiopian rebels and that Somali Islamists might ally with neighboring Eritrea, Ethiopia’s bitter regional rival. These concerns soon materialized, as heavy fighting between Islamist insurgents and Ethiopian forces led to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. Some hardliners within the Islamic Courts Union, in their calls for “jihad” against Ethiopia, urged Ethiopians to rise up against their government, asserted Somali claims over Somali-inhabited territories in Ethiopia, sought close ties with Eritrea (Ethiopia’s principal regional enemy), and proposed establishing bases for armed rebellion against the Ethiopian state while offering logistical support to insurgents. Overall, Ethiopia’s invasion of Somalia was a key factor in the evolution of Al-Shabaab into a destructive militant organization (9).

More broadly, the Somali regional state in Ethiopia (located in eastern Ethiopia), whose population is predominantly Muslim, is one of the main points of contention between Ethiopia and Somalia. This state is effectively a security state in which decision-making is highly authoritarian and concentrated in the hands of a senior leader and his inner family circle. Security forces in this state act in the interests of the ruling clique rather than the state, and they primarily use their coercive power against domestic opponents. These “security states” enjoy strong backing from an external actor, namely Ethiopia itself, and almost all of their annual budget is provided by the central government (10).

Efforts to annex this regional state to Somalia have been made but have failed. Historically, Ethiopia has supported factions that distance themselves from an Islamist agenda and favor a decentralized system in Somalia. Eritrea—Ethiopia’s former arch-rival—until recently backed forces with a strongly anti-Ethiopian agenda. The tension between Ethiopia and Kenya in 2019 over the regional elections in Somalia’s Jubaland is a clear illustration of the continuing and negative impact of conflicting regional interests in Somalia (11). Ethiopia also maintains close relations with the president of Somalia and the president of the South West State, whereas its relations with the president of Jubaland have deteriorated, reportedly because the Jubaland leader is linked to opposition movements in Ethiopia’s Ogaden region. On the other hand, according to the 2022 BTI Transformation Index report (pp. 41–42), rumors emerged in December 2020 that Somali soldiers trained in Eritrea had been sent to fight alongside Ethiopian forces in the Tigray region (11).

Territorial Disputes over Shared Border Resources

As noted earlier, what is now northeastern Kenya once formed part of Somali territory. This area includes three predominantly Somali counties named Garissa, Wajir, and Mandera. The region enjoys a degree of autonomy, with directly appointed governors and representatives in both state and national parliaments. A coalition of regional government officials, elders, women's market groups, traders, and others has assumed many governmental functions, including policing and judicial tasks. Kenya has thus established a hybrid, informal governance arrangement in this area (10). Kenya's objectives along its border with Somalia shape the nature of its actions towards the country. For instance, in response to Al-Shabaab activities in Somalia, Kenya deployed its troops there in October 2011. While the official justification was that Kenyan forces were responding to the kidnapping of Kenyan tourists by Somali militants, the intervention also served as a means to test the Kenyan army's capabilities (9).

In addition, national security concerns, the deteriorating situation in northern pastoral regions of Kenya, and the personal economic and political interests of senior Kenyan politicians and military officers from the Ogadeni Somali community in the northeastern province all played a role in the intervention. Their aim was to personally benefit from the stabilization of cattle and other trade, seize the port of Kismayo, create a Kenyan-dominated buffer zone south of the Juba River, and push Al-Shabaab into hostile areas north of the river. Kenyan authorities seek accommodation with the Ogadenis, who live along the borders, but must also consider the Marehan and Harti, the other principal clans in Jubaland. In reality, personal and sub-clan interests reinforce Kenya's broader national interests.

Conflicting Security Strategy

The Kenyan government is determined to establish order in the northern part of its territory, where security deteriorated after Ethiopian attacks on Al-Shabaab forces in late 2010. Kenya is keen to achieve economic goals such as constructing a deep-water port at Lamu, near the Somali border, to serve as a terminal for new oil pipelines from Uganda and South Sudan. The country also seeks major investments in the region, which require much tighter control over local security. Over a two-year period, Kenyan authorities trained Somali refugees in militias known as the *Iseolo* forces to combat Al-Shabaab on both sides of the border. They established close ties with six largely Ogadeni Somali militias fighting Al-Shabaab, including the Ras Kamboni brigade and forces aligned with the self-declared autonomous region of Azania, led by former Somali defense minister Mohamed Abdi Mohamed (Professor Gandhi). These Somali groups have fought alongside Kenyan forces since the start of the intervention. Kenya is unwilling to see Islamist militias move northwards into Puntland, the semi-autonomous Somali region. It has forged strong relations with Jubaland as one of the federal member states of Somalia and cooperates with Jubaland's security forces to secure its border with Somalia. According to the 2022 BTI Transformation Index report (pp. 41–42), in November 2020 Somalia expelled the Kenyan ambassador from Mogadishu and recalled its own ambassador from Kenya in protest against Kenya's interference in Somalia's domestic politics (11).

Conflicting Economic Strategy

As noted, neighboring states—especially Ethiopia and Kenya—have significant military and political interests in Somalia and therefore influence the Somali political process directly or indirectly through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa. While both countries seek a non-Islamist government in Somalia

capable of containing and curbing radicalism, they do not necessarily agree on which actors to support. Both states have also unilaterally intervened in Somalia in the past (11).

Kenya's objectives may not fully align with those of the United States and the European Union in the region. Western countries currently view their interests as best served by the establishment of a strong central government in Mogadishu capable of providing national cohesion. In contrast, both Kenya and Ethiopia are quite willing to accept a "Balkanized" Somalia composed of five or six interconnected regions under a weak confederal structure. Neither state is particularly interested in seeing a stable government in Mogadishu, especially not one with a strong Islamist presence. Nevertheless, both Kenya and Ethiopia seek greater stability along their borders and are prepared to work with Somali proxy forces to create more controlled and peaceful conditions along their frontiers (12).

Developing Scenarios for Regional Key Factors in the Fragility of the Somali State

Futures studies encompass a set of activities that, through the analysis of existing resources, established patterns, and both fixed and variable factors, seek to sketch out potential futures. Foresight can, by constructing scenarios, portray the realities of tomorrow's world today and outline desirable futures that can be reached through proper and well-designed planning (13). Futures studies, in essence, identify and describe forces that may significantly influence decision-making processes (14). This helps policymakers and planners adopt appropriate policies and actions consistent with their desired future across various dimensions and domains, since foresight can provide critical evidence for strategic planning processes (15).

Scenario building, as one of the methods of futures studies, is a tool for analyzing policies and understanding conditions, threats, opportunities, needs, and higher-order values in the future (16). The objective of scenario construction is to broaden thinking about the future and expand the range of alternative options that may be considered. Planning based on these scenarios is an effective strategic planning tool for long-term decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. It helps us, through appropriate and effective strategies, to design plans for unexpected situations and to choose suitable pathways for dealing with emerging issues (17).

Possible States of Key Factors

A range of different states can be envisaged for the five key factors outlined above, and these possible states are highly significant in the fragility of the Somali state. Considering the previous discussions and based on the future possible states facing the country, a total of 25 different states were designed for the 5 key factors, covering a spectrum from desirable to undesirable conditions. Table (1) presents the different possible states (uncertainties) in relation to the future of regional key factors in the fragility of the Somali state. After preparing the list of possible states, a questionnaire was designed in the form of a key cross-impact matrix and was completed by experts in political geography and geopolitics. The results of the questionnaire provided the necessary data for scenario development using the Scenario Wizard software. Given that the aim here is to generate possible scenarios from 25 potential states related to the 5 key factors, it is expected that more than 600,000 combined plausible scenarios could be extracted from these possible states, covering all the future configurations of the most important regional key factors in the fragility of the Somali state. The results obtained from the Scenario Wizard software show that there are 13 scenarios with strong and plausible consistency, 1,709 scenarios with weak consistency, and 108 inconsistent scenarios ahead of Somalia. Figure 2 shows the panel of strongly consistent scenarios and, in a sense, the likely scenarios along with their probable states in terms of being critical or desirable. In this scenario panel, the

green color indicates a fully desirable state, light green denotes a semi-desirable state, yellow represents a static state, pink indicates a state on the verge of crisis, and red signifies a critical state. The panel of strong scenarios consists of 13 different possible states. As can be seen in Figure 2, among these 13 possible states, 10 are critical, 3 are semi-critical, 1 is static, 1 is semi-desirable, and 1 is desirable.

Table 1: Main Factors and Their Possible Regional Future States in the Fragility of the Somali State

Factor	Key Factor	State Code	Description of Possible States
A	Ideological differences	A1	Complete reduction of ideological differences
		A2	Relative reduction of ideological differences
		A3	Continuation of the current situation
		A4	Relative increase in ideological differences
		A5	Significant increase in ideological differences
B	Complex tribal relations	B1	Significant reduction in complex tribal relations
		B2	Relative reduction in complex tribal relations
		B3	Continuation of the current situation
		B4	Relative increase in complex tribal relations
		B5	Significant increase in complex tribal relations
C	Territorial disputes over shared border resources	C1	Significant reduction in territorial disputes over shared border resources
		C2	Relative reduction in territorial disputes over shared border resources
		C3	Continuation of the current situation
		C4	Relative increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources
		C5	Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources
D	Conflicting security strategy	D1	Significant reduction in conflicting security strategy
		D2	Relative reduction in conflicting security strategy
		D3	Continuation of the current situation
		D4	Relative increase in conflicting security strategy
		D5	Significant increase in conflicting security strategy
E	Conflicting economic strategy	E1	Significant reduction in conflicting economic strategy
		E2	Relative reduction in conflicting economic strategy
		E3	Continuation of the current situation
		E4	Relative increase in conflicting economic strategy
		E5	Significant increase in conflicting economic strategy

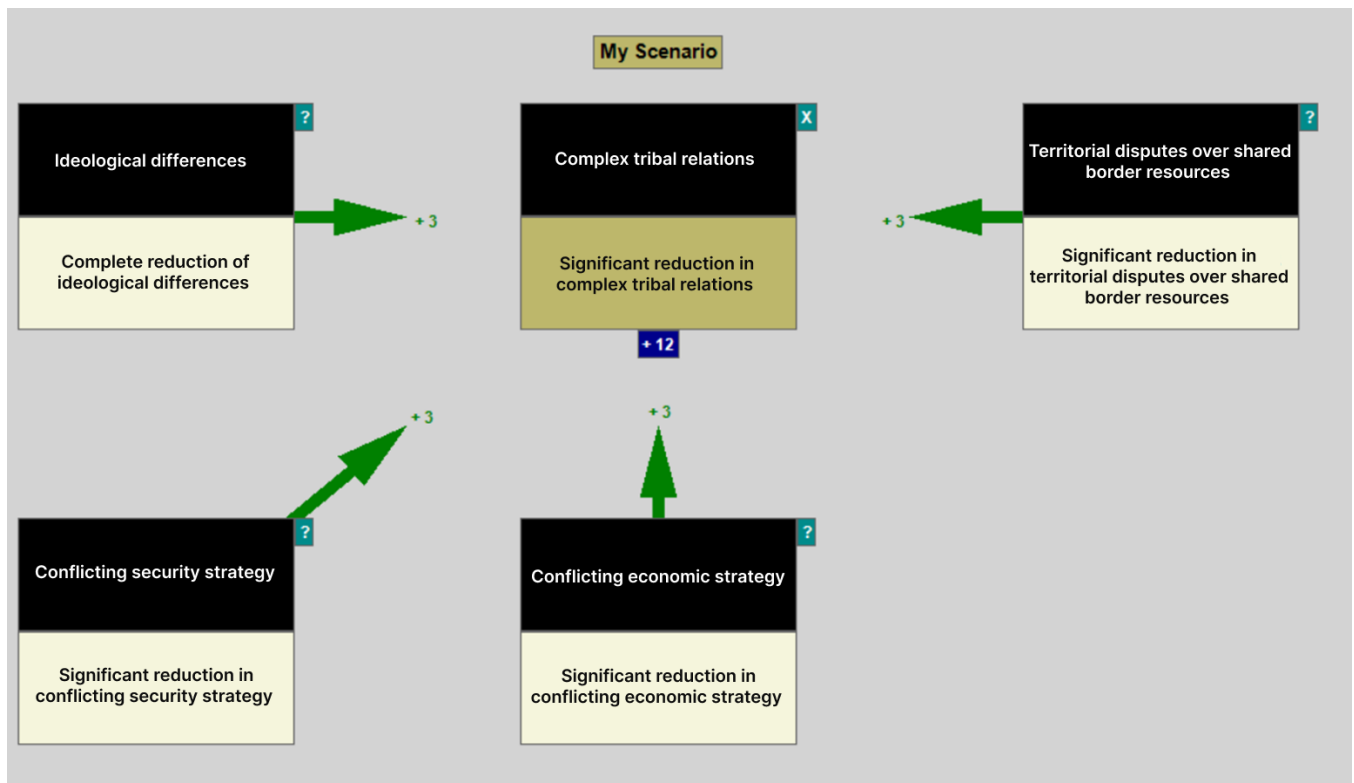


Figure 1: An example of the existing scenarios

Scenario No. 1	Scenario No. 2	Scenario No. 3	Scenario No. 4	Scenario No. 5	Scenario No. 6	Scenario No. 7	Scenario No. 8	Scenario No. 9	Scenario No. 10	Scenario No. 11	Scenario No. 12	Scenario No. 13
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Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources	Conflicting security strategy : Significant increase in territorial disputes over shared border resources
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Figure 2: Scenario board with strong consistency

Discussion and Conclusion

One of the main drivers of tension and instability in the Horn of Africa is the presence of regional rivals competing for influence and control in Somalia. The most important of these regional actors are Ethiopia and Kenya, and one of the ways to help restore peace and stability to Somalia will be through these two neighboring countries. Since 2000, both states have intervened with the stated aim of establishing peace in Somalia. Ethiopia and Kenya, due to the threats that the Somali conflict poses to their national security, have participated in efforts to rebuild peace and stability in Somalia. The conflict in Somalia has turned the country into a safe haven for rebel groups coming from neighboring states, radical groups supplying light weapons, and international terrorists. It has also sustained the flow of refugees into neighboring countries, making it a regional concern. This situation threatens the peace and security of neighboring countries, particularly in East Africa. However, despite the vital role of Ethiopia and Kenya

in efforts to restore peace and stability in Somalia, some of their behaviors and activities have undermined the peace process. For example, the intervention of Ethiopian and Kenyan armed forces—especially the war between Somali insurgent groups and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces between 2006 and 2009—created a mass of internally displaced persons and refugees who fled to neighboring countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya. As a result, Somalia's humanitarian crisis has worsened. In this way, the conduct of these external actors has had a profound impact on Somalia.

From a future-oriented perspective, it can also be said that in the short and medium term, the fragility of the Somali state is unlikely to improve, because the goals and actions of domestic actors are irreconcilable, and they are further fueled by the incompatible goals and interests of regional actors. However, if regional actors were to align their goals and interests and thereby push domestic actors in both countries to overlap their own objectives and interests—or if domestic actors, independently of regional and international actors, were to reach common goals and interests at the negotiating table—then it could be said that these problems and issues might be resolved. At present, however, the realization of such a situation does not seem feasible. In what follows, it is necessary to outline some policy requirements for Iranian decision-makers in dealing with fragile states on the African continent.

As noted, fragile and even collapsed states are the source of many security problems in today's world. Many of these fragile states are located in Africa, and some are in West Asia. Some of them border the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as Afghanistan and Iraq; others, such as Syria and Yemen, are located in the near surrounding region; and still others, such as Somalia, lie in the distant periphery of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Depending on the distance of these countries from Iran and their place in the hierarchy of Iranian interests, they may exert different levels of influence on the country's foreign policy, because their prioritization within the decision-making and policy-making apparatus differs. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran provides advisory assistance to Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to reduce state fragility there, whereas, despite being aware of the activities of its regional rivals such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates in Libya and Somalia, Iran has not taken any action in these two countries in favor of or against any particular group. It might be more accurate to say that Iran has pursued an ambiguous policy toward fragile and collapsed states located in its more distant periphery. To overcome this ambiguity, officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran need to consider the following requirements:

1. They should bear in mind that entering the crises of fragile states is highly costly. It is essential to adopt the best policies by carefully calculating the costs and benefits of intervention versus non-intervention in such states. In addition to calculating material costs, they must assess the impact of intervention in these states on Iran's relations with other regional rivals. "Imposing a high-cost foreign policy on the Islamic Republic of Iran may lead to Iran's entanglement in protracted regional issues and, ultimately, to the depletion of the country's strategic capabilities. On the other hand, rising costs may put pressure on Iran's economy and fuel public dissatisfaction at home."
2. They must recognize that entering the crisis of a fragile state will prompt regional rivals to intervene as well, which in turn will cause the regional interaction pattern, in the best-case scenario, to become competitive–conflictual and, in the worst case, purely conflictual. "This means that attempts by power poles to pursue conflicting interests will bring them face to face and foster hostility and confrontation among them. In such a situation, foreign policy agendas will inevitably be designed and formulated in ways that intensify and prolong this hostility. The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is no exception to this dynamic."

3. They must take into account that if intervention in the crisis of a fragile state is adventurous and meets with strong regional and international opposition, the chances of success—in the sense that the gains would significantly outweigh the losses—will be very low.
4. They should note that when the crisis of fragile and failed states is accompanied by intervention from neighbors and rivals of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there will be no option for resolving it other than cooperation and dialogue with all states that influence that crisis. The earlier such talks begin, the lower the costs will be, and the later they begin, the higher the costs will become.
5. They must understand that when entering the crisis of a fragile state and supporting a particular group, segment of society, or specific faction, they will unintentionally set the rest of that society against themselves, and those groups will perceive the Islamic Republic of Iran as their enemy. This factor will hinder the expansion of Iran's influence in the fragile state or, at best, prevent that influence from becoming widespread.
6. The best policy is for the Iranian government to seek to act as a neutral mediator and savior, engaging with all domestic groups involved in crises in fragile states and inviting them to reconciliation and compromise. By employing diplomacy, Iran should work to prevent other countries from intervening "in favor of" or "against" any internal faction. Such a policy would help the Islamic Republic of Iran to be accepted by all internal groups in the fragile state. "States are not always resigned to negative prevailing conditions and realities; in many cases, they try, by pursuing overlapping policies and actions, to construct a different reality that is acceptable to all states and all domestic factions in fragile countries. In fact, whenever states realize that the environment of their political actions is unfavorable and they possess the capacity and will to move beyond that undesirable situation, they do not hesitate to do so. It is for this reason that states are capable of constructing new, more desirable environments. Moreover, many of their actions are directed toward achieving the desirable conditions they have outlined for themselves." In this regard, it is better for policy-makers in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while identifying the desirable outcomes for all domestic parties in fragile states and, on the other hand, recognizing what is desirable for regional states, to seek remedies for the "wound of fragile states" so that the infection arising from this wound does not spread to other countries in the region.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

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