



# ISIR INSTITUTE: ANNUAL REPORT 2023

---



**COPYRIGHT © 2024** by *ISIR Institute*

All rights reserved.

No part of this policy brief may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, without permission in writing from the publishers.

**ISIR INSTITUTE**

**Off Airport Road, Masallaha Hargeisa**

**SOMALILAND**

Phone: +252 63 6226667

[www.isirthinktank.org](http://www.isirthinktank.org) | [info@isirthinktank.org](mailto:info@isirthinktank.org) |

X: @IsirThinktank

## *The Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR)*

### **ISIR INSTITUTE**

The Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR) is an independent, nonpartisan organization that uses research to inform its policy advocacy work. It undertakes impartial policy research, training and analysis to organizations and decision-makers in the horn of African region who are working toward innovative thinking to stimulate formulation of sound public policies leading to positive outcomes in the fields of peace & security, good governance, safeguarding human rights and democracy.

## *Message from the Managing Director*

As the Institute for Strategic Insights & Research (ISIR) advances, we have solidified our position as a foremost entity in shaping public policy throughout the Horn of Africa (HOA). Our strategic focus from 2022 to 2025 highlights our steadfast commitment to excellence, realized through rigorous research, proactive policy engagement, and in-depth training.

In 2024, the region will persist in confronting substantial peace and security challenges. Ongoing conflicts and pervasive underdevelopment have significantly impacted the economies of each country in the region. In Ethiopia, relentless internal civil strife, fueled by rising ethnic tensions in areas such as Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia, persists. Somalia continues to face threats from extremist groups. Somaliland will persist in dealing with the unresolved conflict in the Sool region involving the SSC/Khatumo forces. Sudan has been gravely impacted by the outbreak of civil war in April 2023, resulting in vast displacement, extensive loss of life, and widespread devastation of property and infrastructure.

Climate change has played a pivotal role in intensifying regional challenges. Key consequences include unpredictable weather patterns leading to floods and droughts that disrupt livelihoods and affect agricultural productivity. The rise in displaced communities is another serious concern. These environmental shifts lead to water scarcity and exacerbate food insecurity. Responding to these challenges, ISIR is intensifying its efforts in research, training, and policy outreach.

Moreover, many countries in the region struggle to establish democratic governance and develop robust public institutions. Often, the prevalence of conflict is tied to a lack of confidence in governance systems. To address this, ISIR will continue to create platforms for citizen engagement and promote dialogue with those in power through various initiatives, including speaker events.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our audience, now a vital part of our research community, and to our esteemed researchers for their invaluable contributions to ISIR's publications. Special thanks also go to our partners for their ongoing support as we work towards democratic governance, peace, stability, and economic prosperity in the Horn of Africa region.



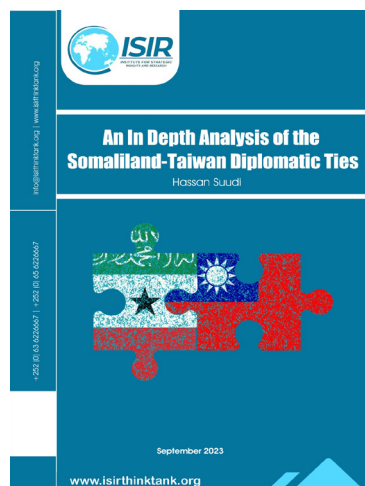
**Mohamed Abdirahman Hassan**  
Managing Director, ISIR

## Thematic Focus

### Regional Peace and Security

The Horn of Africa region faces some of the most critical peace and security challenges, due, in part, to socio-political crises. The region is fraught with governance challenges, economic underdevelopment, environmental catastrophes, and resource / territory-based conflicts. The Institute of Strategic Insights and Research contributes to the strengthening of peace and security in the region through conducting relevant, issue-based research on regional peace and security, keeping abreast of and connecting to relevant conflict transformation and peace building studies, and participating in key regional relevant research and practice exchanges.

In 2023, ISIR commissioned various research studies into the peace and security situation in the region, the drivers of instability, and policy recommendations for tackling these challenges. One of these papers was titled, "Understanding Las Anod conflict: Exclusionary politics, strategic (re) alignment, and rupture", which explained the triggers of the Las Anod conflict and made policy recommendations for various stakeholders to apply in their response to the conflict. Additionally, the ISIR Institute analyzed the 'U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa', published in August 2022. ISIR's analysis of the strategy document included a country-specific focus on the drivers of U.S. interest and action in the Horn of Africa region, as well as a brief look at the role of China in the HoA countries. The analysis report is available [here](#). Similarly, ISIR published a paper examining the recently established relations between Somaliland and Taiwan, focusing on the diplomatic implications Somaliland faces in its quest for international recognition. The paper is available [here](#).



In addition to research papers, the theme of Peace and Security was extensively covered in the ISIR digest, a bi-monthly newsletter published by ISIR to brief regional and international partners on the security situation in the Horn of Africa region.

All these papers are available [here](#).

## Democratic Governance

Governments in the Horn of Africa face many complex challenges as they have to meet the demands and expectations of an increasingly growing population. While each country struggles with its specific challenges, there is often value in understanding other countries' interventions and drawing insights from best practices through intra-regional learning. ISIR has long sought to strengthen public institutions to promote "responsible governance", where leaders establish accountability mechanisms to ensure political transparency and economic stability. Throughout the year, ISIR played a key role in regional development through "transformative democratization" which is the foundation of flourishing, prosperous nations. Overcoming governance challenges unlocks the region's potential to achieve sustainable development and national prosperity. ISIR addresses policy and governance challenges by providing insights and policy options grounded in policy-relevant research and context-specific analysis. The ISIR Institute also contributes to increased government effectiveness through the generation of new knowledge, designing training programs, capacity building, as well as offering policy advisory.

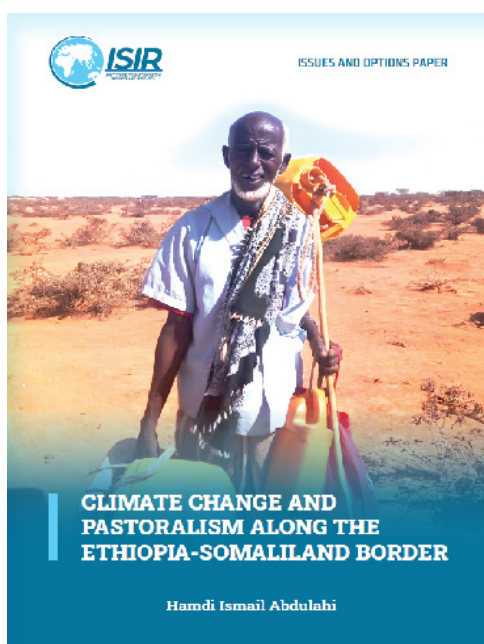
In 2023, ISIR commissioned various researchers to interrogate the state of governance in the region, resulting in papers such as "Interconnected moments and actions that formed the current image of Somaliland's social contract" which gave a review of the interconnection between identity politics and social contracts with special reference to the post-1991 history and contemporary circumstances of Somaliland. The paper is available [here](#).



## Climate Change Impacts

Climate change is one of the most urgent and critical threats to regional progress in the Horn of Africa. Climate change has far-reaching implications for the overall security of the region and affects all sectors of the economy. In addition, the increasing types of climate change hazards such as droughts, floods, soil degradation, and erratic rainfall patterns further fuel ongoing conflicts over natural resources, hence complicating an already fragile situation. ISIR's climate action is essential in preventing tensions in the long term. The ISIR Institute facilitates public dialogue on climate change by providing in-depth training to various stakeholders about climate change risk mitigation and adaptation, engaging in continued research to collect data on sustainable ways to address livelihood insecurities as well as environmental degradation, and expanding collaboration and networking with others on renewable energy goals and the Blue Economy.

In 2023, the ISIR Institute published various papers examining the impact of climate change on lives and livelihoods, as well as the role of climate change in resource-based conflict. One of the papers was titled, "Climate Change and Clan Conflicts: A Deadly Duo for Communities in Eastern Regions of Somaliland" and it focused primarily on conflicts experienced in the Eastern regions of Somaliland, driven by competition over dwindling resources occasioned by climate change. Another paper, "Climate change and pastoralism along the Ethiopia-Somaliland border", took a more regional outlook, examining the impacts of climate change on communities living along the Ethiopia-Somaliland border, both on the Ethiopian side and on the Somaliland side. These papers are available [here](#).



## Cross-Cutting Themes

Occasionally, ISIR publishes research papers, opinion pieces, and analyses on cross-cutting themes. One such paper in 2023 was the paper on the 'Wahen Market Fire' which took place in Hargeisa, Somaliland in April 2022, leading to the loss and destruction of billions of dollars worth of goods, property, and infrastructure. The paper published by ISIR was an examination of Disaster Preparedness in developing countries, given the rampant growth in urbanization, and common challenges of inferior infrastructural design and poor governance systems. The paper recommended, among others, the development and operationalization of a disaster risk prediction, prevention, and recovery mechanism in Somaliland. The research paper is available [here](#).



Poster of X space to discuss the Wahen Market Fire

## Civic Forum

The Civic Forum is an open platform acting as a catalyst for change. It is a community-based initiative designed to open up avenues for unfettered discussions and exchange of information about the region. The Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR) believes that open platforms unlock the community's potential to engage in critical and constructive conversation. The public has a key role to play in national development and success. The ISIR Civic Forum brings together key actors to help find solutions to issues of public interest and aims to improve growth, social mobility, and innovation. The forum is meant to provide a platform for citizens such as political analysts and other thought



leaders in the democratization processes in Somaliland to conduct debates and dialogues in a bid to encourage public participation in Somaliland’s transition to democracy.

In 2023, ISIR held 2 Civic Forums whereby participants discussed issues such as the Somaliland-Somalia dialogue, the democratization process in Somaliland, and policy recommendations on issues of regional diplomacy.

In addition to the Civic Forums, ISIR held 3 consultative workshops and meetings with stakeholders in the political, socio-economic, and governance sectors in Somaliland.

## EVENTS

ISIR has organized and hosted various events in 2023, including the Scholars’ Knowledge Exchange event that brought together ISIR’s advisory group, research fellows, management, and friends and partners of ISIR. The discussion revolved around the need to change mindsets and the importance of sustaining platforms that spark ideas to fill the gaps in ‘the missing role of intellectuals’.



## Research Skills and Culture Training.

ISIR manages internal archives of information related to the key thematic areas. This entails processing, publishing, and disseminating research findings and other research products by ISIR's commitment to freedom of information and open-access publishing. ISIR's research outputs include training of researchers, whereby we invest in capacities to generate analysis of data on public issues and enhance home-grown solutions to the region's challenges.

In 2023, ISIR continued with a series of trainings as part of ISIR's strategic objectives to empower and enable aspiring young researchers to excel in their profession. ISIR aims to build a network of researchers who are home-grown and based within the region of the Horn of Africa. The course facilitators reinforced the participants' knowledge of research and analysis topics important for early career researchers; the researchers are also set to receive mentorship for one year as they research a topic of choice. The training sessions were conducted through lectures, tutorials, and working groups.



*Facilitators during the Research Skills workshop*



*Participants during the Research Skills workshop*

ISIR disseminates research findings through reports, journals, traditional media, briefing papers, blogs, films, and our [website](#). The research papers are also available on the ISIR social media pages.

## The ISIR Digest

The Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR) publishes a bi-monthly newsletter that puts into perspective and analyzes the latest political and security news in Somaliland. The newsletter is targeted at stakeholders in the peace and security sector and partners in governance. These include diplomatic missions, development partners, and policy and research institutions. This is the fifth issue of the ISIR Digest.

In 2023, the ISIR Institute published seven issues of the newsletter, focusing mostly on the progress of the Somaliland-Somalia dialogue, the hindrances to the success of the dialogue, the security situation in both Somalia and Somaliland, the ongoing Al Shabaab threat, the Puntland question, the state of election-related processes and disputes, among other issues in the Horn of Africa region. All the issues of the ISIR Digest are available on the ISIR [website](#).



## Building Networks

ISIR Director Mr. Mohamed Abdirahman engaged in key discussions, visiting the Institute of Public Finance in Kenya, hosting Norway's Special Representative to Somalia and Somaliland, and meeting with ISSA's managing team in Addis Ababa to explore collaborative opportunities in research and policy work.





### International conferences

**Frame 1:** Mohamed Abdirahman met with the directors of Soil and More, a social enterprise in Ethiopia that enables sustainable development by outsourcing the circular economy. Soil and More works to turn waste into sources of revenue. The discussion revolved around potential areas of collaboration between Soil and More and ISIR.



**Frame 2:** In December 2023, the ISIR Managing Director, Mr. Mohamed Abdirahman attended and participated in the 10th Annual 'How to Build Peace' Conference in Nairobi, hosted by Build Up, a Non-Governmental Organisation focused on transforming conflict in the digital age, through peacebuilding, participation, and technology. The conference was themed around designing digital environments built on conflict resolution principles.

**Frame 3:** ISIR team attending the Annual Learning Conference organized by the Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi.

**Frame 4:** In 2023, Three members of staff from ISIR participated in a one-day learning event on Digital Democracy in Nairobi, Kenya, hosted by the Heinrich Boll Stiftung Organisation. The event was geared towards empowering CSOs to lobby and advocate for democracy through digital platforms.

**Frame 5:** In December 2023, Mr. Mohamed Abdirahman attended the Heritage Institute's Annual Forum for Ideas conference held in Djibouti. The forum was themed around Peace and Security Challenges in the Horn of Africa.



## Media Appearances and Special Interview



Mr. Mohamed Abdirahman during the special interview with KFM media and CBA TV

In January 2023, the ISIR Director Mr. Mohamed Abdirahman was a guest in a special interview on The US strategy towards Africa, especially in Somaliland, hosted by CBA TV. The ISIR research fellows also hold media briefings to disseminate and discuss the findings of research studies covering pertinent issues.



Hassan Suudi:  
On video presents the findings of one of the research papers published by ISIR

# ISIR INSTITUTE: ANNUAL REPORT 2023

---

## ISIR INSTITUTE:

Masala, Off Airport Road Hargeisa–Somaliland

Tel: +252-636226667

Email: [info@isirinstitute.org](mailto:info@isirinstitute.org)

Website: [www.isirinstitute.org](http://www.isirinstitute.org)



**The Institute for Strategic  
Insights and Research (ISIR)**

COPYRIGHT © 2024 by ISIR Institute