



From the Gulf to the Horn: The US-Israel war on Iran and its Implications in Somalia

Aweis Ahmed | May 2026



SOMALI PUBLIC AGENDA RESEARCH REPORT NO. 22

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Design and layout: Asal Creative Design

Copyeditor: Peter Chonka

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Executive summary

Although tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran have persisted for almost half a century, the US has refrained from engaging in direct conflict with Iran, despite having the military and economic might to do so. This restraint is largely due to the potential economic catastrophe that a US war with Iran could lead to for the US and the global economy. Conversely, Israel has been consistently pushing the US to engage in war with Iran for over two decades, claiming that the Islamic Republic and its nuclear facilities are an imminent threat to Israel and the West. However, none of the American Presidents during this period has become convinced of Israel's campaign.

President Trump, who was considered a newcomer from outside the establishment of American politics, has become convinced of Israel's campaigns against Iran. In his first term, he withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement on the Iranian nuclear program – a deal which was struck by his predecessor in July 2015 – imposed “maximum pressure” sanctions on Iran and authorized the assassination of influential commander Qasem Soleimani in the last days of his first term. In his second term, President Trump became even more influenced by Israel's campaign against Iran, shifting the focus from just dismantling Iran's nuclear program to a broader goal of destabilizing the Islamic Republic, potentially turning it into a dysfunctional state.

As a result, on February 28, a US-Israeli alliance launched an attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran. In response, Iran launched retaliatory strikes across the region, escalating the war into a regional conflict. The economic and security repercussions of the war in the region and the entire world have been estimated to reach hundreds of billions of dollars, with impacts expected to persist over time. This research report will explore the economic, security, and political implications of the conflict for Somalia, particularly if the situation escalates, deepens, and lasts longer than anticipated. The paper presents immediate and long-term policy recommendations to the federal government of Somalia and the federal member states to devise measures that could alleviate the pressures from the war.

Introduction

In the early morning hours of February 28, 2026, a joint American and Israeli operation codenamed “Operation Epic Fury” by the Americans and “Roaring Lion” by the Israelis was launched against Iran, hitting different key targets across different regions and cities in Iran. The United States president who spoke after the initial strikes in Iran justified the attack due to the Iranian regime’s persistent refusal to renounce its nuclear ambitions and its continued rebuilding of nuclear facilities, and its development of long-range missiles that could threaten the US and its allies. However, in the last sentences of his speech, President Trump emphasized that the Iranian people’s freedom was now in their hands, that they should take over their government, and that America was backing them. He also called for the various Iranian security forces to lay down their weapons in exchange for complete immunity, or else face certain death. The last part of the US President’s speech can be interpreted as indicating the ultimate objective of the US-Israeli attack on Iran was regime change (President Trump, 2026).

Despite complex negotiations between Iran and the US on Iran’s nuclear program, analysts have pointed out since December of last year that Israel was dissatisfied with any outcome except regime change in Iran and that negotiations between the Iranian regime and the US were just a façade and served as a ruse for the impending military action (Parsi, 2025; Mearsheimer & Parsi, 2025; Nasr, 2025). Besides, since late January, the US initiated mobilization of the largest military buildup around Iran since the US invasion of Iraq in 2023, which also indicated the US’s intention against Iran (Associated Press, 2026). Despite the various contradictory statements from the officials in the Trump administration on the core objective of the US military action against Iran, a recurring theme is avoidance of a protracted war with Iran. Analysts estimated that the US planned to launch a military operation in Iran within a few weeks and achieve a swift, decisive victory.

While Iran did make some critical concessions on its nuclear ambitions in the last few hours before the US-Israeli alliance initiated military actions (CBCnews, 2026), the US and Israeli demands for regime change posed an existential threat to the Iranian government. Tehran has repeatedly warned that further US-Israeli attacks on its soil would elicit a harsh response (Al Jazeera, 2025a). As it became apparent that the purpose of the US-Israeli military action was regime change or disintegration of the Iranian state, the Iranian regime threatened to escalate the war into a broader regional conflict.

Consequently, one of the first waves of the US-Israeli strikes wiped out the Supreme Leader of Iran and a number of senior political and military officials. This attack not only crossed a red line for the Iranian regime but also served as a trigger that prompted the Iranians to retaliate against targets in Israel, US military and diplomatic facilities in the region, and other key civilian infrastructures such as sea and airports, energy facilities, hotels, and residential buildings in the Persian Gulf states. The scale of US-Israeli strikes targeting various military and civilian infrastructures in Iran has escalated since the onset of the war.

As expected, the Iranian-led “Axis of Resistance” in the Middle East, encompassing Hezbollah in Lebanon and various militia groups in Iraq, have also joined the war (Gulf News, 2026), targeting Israel and American military facilities and diplomatic missions in Iraq. The Houthis in Yemen expressed their solidarity with Iran on the first day of the war. While they showed indications of potentially joining the war in the early days, (Haberler, 2026) they entered the conflict later on with limited missile strikes against Israel. The scale and timeline of their involvement will probably depend on how Iran performs in the hostilities.

As of writing, the war has rapidly escalated into a regional conflict. Analysts indicate that aerial bombardments would be unlikely to result in regime change in Iran. Additionally, the Iranians seem to be maintaining sufficient military and political unity and effectively turning the conflict into a war of attrition. The Trump administration has also attempted to arm and work with the Iranian Kurdish militias based along the Iran-Iraq border to participate in the CIA-planned ground operation in Western Iran (Axios, 2026). However, due to pressure from neighbouring countries with Kurdish populations, such as Türkiye and Iraq, the US ultimately abandoned this strategy for ground invasion.

As pressure mounts on the Iranian regime, it will resort to all available measures to ensure its survival. What makes this war more hazardous and raises the possibility of an unimaginable catastrophe is the US's desire to achieve a swift victory by utilizing all means necessary. At the same time, the Iranians are known for their strategic patience and a long-term war strategy. The consequences of the war are already affecting the region and the entire world. This research report analyses the potential economic and security implications of the US-Israel conflict with Iran on Somalia and offers policy recommendations.

The implications of the war in Somalia

Throughout Somalia's history, the country has consistently experienced a trade deficit, with imports always outweighing exports (Laitin & Samatar, 1984; Trunji, 2015). This imbalance became more pronounced following the collapse of the central government, leading to an excessive increase in imports and a substantial decline in exports. Although the Somali economy has been gradually recovering over the past two decades, the country currently depends on imports for more than 90% of its domestic consumption (Central Bank of Somalia, 2025; Mohamed, 2026). This dependence is further exacerbated by the fact that most staple items are imported, positioning Somalia among the world's most import-dependent countries. Besides, energy is an essential driver of economic development and sustainability in the country (Warsame and et al., 2024). Despite Somalia's low energy demand compared to its neighbouring countries, the country relies heavily on imported petroleum products to meet domestic demand (Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, 2017), including electricity for lighting and cooking, motor gasoline, jet fuel, and diesel fuel (Somali National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2024). With the outbreak of the US-Israel war on Iran, prices of staple items and energy, which are a lifeline for the Somali population, have increased. As the war continues and the warring sides ascend the escalation ladder, the negative implications for Somalia could increase.

Economic implications of the war

Somalia is one of the most import-dependent countries in the world, primarily due to its highly restricted capacity for domestic production. This import dependency means that disruptions from the ongoing warfare, which impact logistics and transportation and lead to inflated insurance costs, will significantly harm Somalia. According to the Central Bank of Somalia, staple foods have consistently been the dominant import item across the country's various import categories over the past several years (Central Bank of Somalia, 2025).

The food sector

Within the first days of the war, the prices of staple food items and cooking oil have risen sharply. Staple item prices in the main port cities – Mogadishu, Bosaso, and Kismayo, as well as in Hargeisa – have increased. For instance, in Mogadishu, a 50kg bag of sugar that previously cost \$28 has risen to over \$30. Similarly, the price of 20 litres of cooking oil, which was \$26.5, has risen to more than \$30. Furthermore, the price of different types of rice has increased, ranging from \$3 and \$4 per bag. The prices of the non-essential items have also experienced noticeable increases.

One critical factor contributing to the rise in the prices of essential goods is the opportunistic behaviour of Somali businesspeople during times of economic crises.¹ Before delving into this critical factor, it is imperative to explain the three categories of Somali businesspeople involved

¹ Interview with an officer from the FGS's Ministry of Trade, 06 March 2026.

in the sale of essential food items. The first group consists of importers, who often operate in international markets by purchasing food items, managing procurement and logistics, and coordinating shipping and customs clearance at ports. The second group contains wholesale traders, whose role commences when staple food items arrive at the seaport, where they purchase them from importers. Wholesalers usually store food items and sell to retailers, including markets, larger supermarkets, hypermarkets, and local shops. The retail traders are the final group that sells the food products directly to consumers.²

Immediately after the outbreak of the US-Israel war on Iran, importers began hesitating to place new orders or delaying imports due to concerns about fluctuations in commodity prices. Moreover, wholesalers have begun stockpiling staple goods rather than selling to retail traders, expecting potential higher market prices. These are some of the factors driving market dynamics that have pushed prices higher.

The role of the government is to control price surges. However, the capabilities of government agencies are limited, and they are not adequately prepared to control prices.³ Some federal government institutions took measures to address the economic effects of the ongoing war in the country, both before and after the war began. As fears of a war between the US-Israeli alliance and Iran increased, the Ministry of Ports and Marine Transport convened a meeting with Somali businesspeople to discuss preparations for potential economic repercussions. The Ministry agreed with businesspeople to increase the volume of essential imports, such as staple foods and fuel, to ensure the country has sufficient stockpiles in the event of war.⁴ However, it is important to highlight that there were no specific, measurable quantities of the essential items to be imported, such as the tons of food or the number of cubic tons of fuel necessary to be imported and reserved. It is also worth noting that the Ministry convened the meeting only with businesspeople who use the Mogadishu seaport, although it claimed that those in other major port cities were also reached and informed about the preparations.

Moreover, after the war broke out, a cluster of federal ministries, including the Ministries of Commerce, Ports, and Finance, engaged with businesspeople for consultations to evaluate and address the economic impacts of the war (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2026). Apart from engagements between some federal government ministries and businesspeople, the government has not introduced any economic measures to control or address the rising price of staple items.

Other federal member states with major port cities have also experienced increases in staple food prices. For instance, in Kismayo, a 50kg bag of sugar has risen from \$27.5 to \$28. Likewise, the cost of 20 litres of cooking oil has increased from \$27 to \$30. Additionally, the price of 50 kg of rice was \$46 and has since risen to \$50. In Bosaso, a 50kg bag of sugar that previously cost \$27.3 has increased to \$29. The price of 20 litres of cooking oil has climbed from \$25 to \$30, while the cost of 50 kg of rice has risen from \$49 to \$52. In Hargeisa, the price

2 Interview with a wholesale trader, 12 March 2026.

3 Interview with an officer from the FGS's Ministry of Trade, 06 March 2026.

4 Interview with an officer from the FGS's Ministry of Ports, 12 March 2026.

of a 50kg bag of sugar has risen from \$29 to \$30. 20 litres of cooking oil have moved from \$25 to \$29. The price of 50 kg of rice has jumped from \$49 to \$52.50. There are different types of sugar, oil, and rice available in the market at different prices. The prices outlined here represent the most consumed food items among citizens across the different cities. The prices outlined here represent the most consumed food items among citizens across the different cities. The following figure shows the percentage increase in staple food prices across the four federal member states with major port cities.

Percentage Increase in Staple Food Prices Across Federal Member States with Major Port Cities

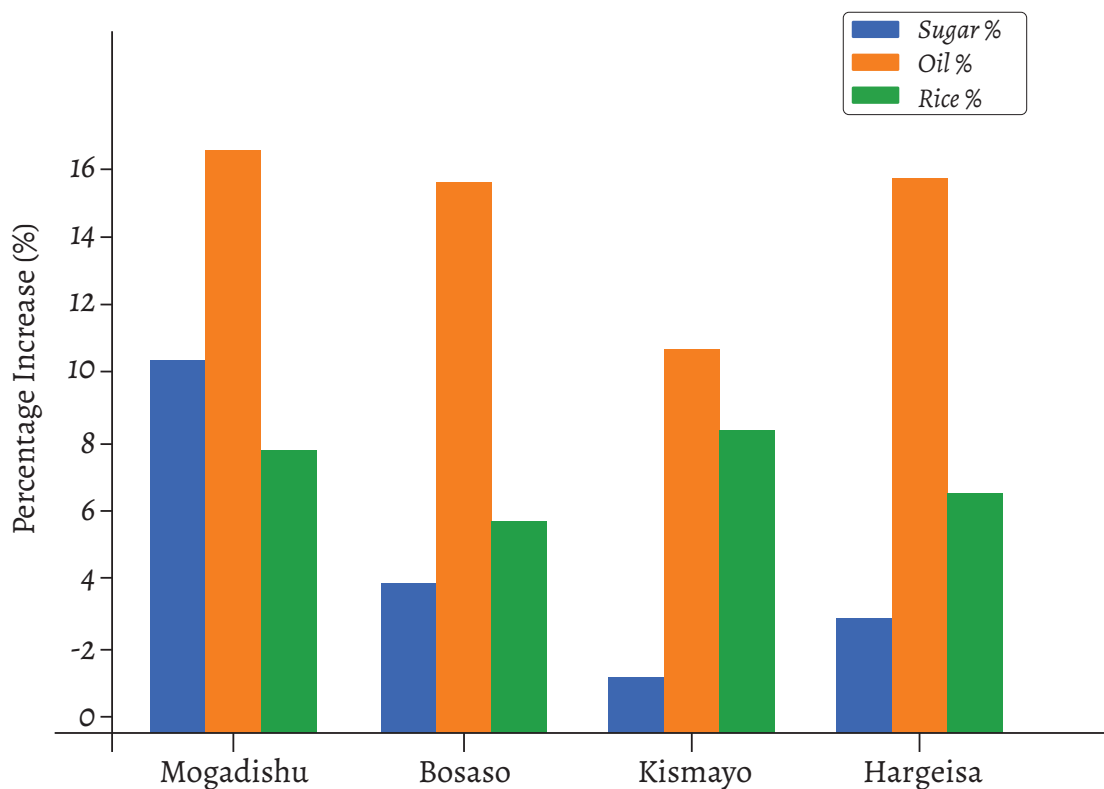


Figure 1: The price data for staple foods across the major port cities show that cooking oil has experienced the highest inflation. In contrast, sugar prices increased moderately, while rice prices have risen only slightly across all cities. It also shows that Mogadishu has consistently experienced the highest level of price pressure.

As the war drags on, its immediate impacts deepen and become more pronounced. The initial assumption was that the impacts would be greater for those living in cities and urban areas, given their closer links to global trade and their greater vulnerability to trade disruptions. In contrast, citizens in rural areas have a lesser connection to the global economy and possess better survival skills rooted in traditional practices. However, the country is facing a severe drought, making rural residents more vulnerable to the war than urban residents. The Federal Government of Somalia already declared a state of emergency in November last year in response to drought conditions associated with poor rainfall during the Deyr (autumn) season (SODMA, 2025). The arrival of the dry and hot Jiilaal (winter) season has exacerbated the drought crisis, affecting at least 5 million people across the country (OCHA, 2026).

The Somali Disaster Management Agency (SODMA) has issued appeals to international donors for assistance. In response, several states, such as Egypt, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Qatar, have committed to providing humanitarian support. However, the current Middle East conflict has led to delays in humanitarian deliveries due to logistical challenges and disruptions to shipping routes. Moreover, the Gulf countries have traditionally been major donors, often providing in-kind support to Somalia's drought-affected population.⁵ Nonetheless, the UAE, which has been the largest provider of in-kind and cash support to Somalia, is expected to cease this support due to their recent diplomatic rupture with Mogadishu. Meanwhile, the rest of the Gulf states, affected by the ongoing war, may also struggle to provide support, creating a significant gap in humanitarian assistance at this critical juncture.

On the other hand, the Humanitarian Country Team⁶ in Somalia has developed a Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2026, which sets a funding requirement of \$852 million and targets those with the most severe needs (OCHA, 2026). Under this plan, SODMA, in collaboration with humanitarian agencies, evaluated the quantities of required staple foods, their prices, and shared this information with donors. However, staple food prices have risen by 30% due to the war, rendering the initial evaluation inconsistent with current market prices. Consequently, SODMA and its humanitarian partners are unable to cover the increased costs, which will likely result in a reduction in the number of target beneficiaries due to the available funding. Additionally, before aligning the funds received with the target beneficiaries, donor approval is required, a process that may take time and potentially delay the distribution of humanitarian assistance.⁷ This complex situation, which worsens the drought crisis in the country, is a consequence of the US-Israeli conflict with Iran and potentially intensifies as the tensions escalate.

The financial and trade sector

The Gulf countries, which the conflict has heavily impacted, are critical to Somalia's financial landscape, particularly the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has been a central hub for Somali businesses. The UAE is a financial hub for Somalia's private financial institutions, including 13 licensed commercial banks active in the country (Central Bank of Somalia), and 17 licensed money transfer companies, locally referred to as hawala (Central Bank of Somalia). Remittances account for a significant share of Somalia's annual GDP. In 2024, total remittance inflows through these financial institutions amounted to approximately \$6.43 billion, equivalent to 53% of Somalia's GDP (National Economic Council, 2025).

5 Interview with an officer from the Somali Disaster Management Agency (SODMA) 17 March 2026.

6 The Humanitarian Country Team consists of organizations that undertake humanitarian action within the country and commit to participate in coordination arrangements. Those organizations include UN agencies, OCHA, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

7 Interview with an officer from the Somali Disaster Management Agency (SODMA) 24 March 2026.

Despite gradually more stringent regulations worldwide on financial flows to counter money laundering and terrorist financing, and Somalia's weak policies and institutions to address gaps in its financial regulatory framework, Dubai has been a critical route through which Somalia's financial institutions engage in global financial transactions. It has served for years as a safe haven where Somali businesspeople could physically transport millions of dollars in cash.⁸ Moreover, the UAE's influence extends beyond Somalia's financial sector to Somalia's import-export sector.

As an import-dependent country, Somalia heavily depends on goods from around the world. While the UAE may not be Somalia's primary source of imports, it is critical for facilitating the financial transactions for those imports, solidifying its position as a key hub for both Somalia's financial and trade sectors. The war has already impacted the UAE more than the rest of the Gulf countries (Anadolu Agency, 2026a). At times, the UAE has encountered even more Iranian missile and drone strikes than Israel, which highlights its precarious position in the ongoing Middle East conflict (UAE Embassy in the US, 2026). Therefore, the war will have a significant impact on Somalia's economy across several key sectors, potentially leading to a complete shutdown of economic activity.

The Yemeni Houthis, who hold a significant influence over the strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait, have already entered the war by launching a barrage of ballistic missiles and drones targeting Southern Israel (Al Jazeera, 2026a). Thus far, their entry into the war has been confined to strikes on sensitive military sites in Israel. However, should they close the Strait, which would entirely disrupt shipping routes to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, it would have an immediate, severe impact on Somalia's import and export operations. In 2024, Türkiye was Somalia's third-largest import source, supplying goods worth \$356 million, primarily through the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait. The disruption or complete closure of this critical choke point would significantly affect Somalia-Türkiye import-export trade.

As hostilities escalated, the geography of the battlefield expanded, reaching into the Indian Ocean, where the United Kingdom accused Iran of launching ballistic missiles at the joint British and US military base on the island of Diego Garcia (Al Jazeera, 2026b). In 2024, Somalia's first and second import sources, China and India, shipped \$1.771 billion worth of goods to Somalia mainly via the Indian Ocean (Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC)). The intensification of the battleground in the Indian Ocean will significantly impact maritime trade routes, leading to higher insurance costs for shipping companies and extending the time and distance it takes for goods to reach their destinations. Consequently, commodities transported through the Indian Ocean trade routes will arrive in the country at high prices, resulting in inflation and higher living costs in the future. Furthermore, the recent resurgence of piracy in the Puntland State of Somalia and the seizure of several vessels, including those carrying cargo to Somalia, will further exacerbate the negative impact of port operations in Puntland and on the regions dependent on its seaports.

8 Interview with a CEO of a commercial bank, April 4, 2026.

Somalia's largest export destination is the Gulf region, where livestock remains its largest earner. In 2024, Somalia's top exports were livestock, with \$375 million in shipments of sheep, goats, and other animals (Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC)). The demand for these livestock in the Gulf countries is significant, particularly around religious festivals. The shipping route for Somalia's livestock exports to Gulf countries is either the Strait of Hormuz, which was closed due to the war, or Bab al-Mandeb, which the Houthis threatened to close should hostilities intensify beyond their current geographic scope, and if Gulf states align with the US-Israeli alliance. This situation has arisen as the most important period for Somalia's livestock exports to Gulf countries approaches, leaving the country with a significant deficit in its largest export at the most potentially lucrative moment. Historically, the last time a conflict in the Middle East caused the closure of Bab-al-Mandab and severely affected Somalia's livestock export was the Arab Israeli war in 1967. This circumstance, along with other factors, played a crucial role in prompting the army coup and the subsequent revolution in Somalia (Payton, 1980). Indeed, the timeframe and context may differ slightly, but the current circumstances appear more dangerous than those in 1967. The country is currently facing an unpredictable political transition, continued security threats from militant groups, recurrent severe droughts, decreased international donor assistance, and a serious threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity (in Israel's recognition of Somaliland, discussed below).

The energy sector

Energy is one of the critical sectors in which many governments around the world impose regulations and do not accept complete control by private entities. In general, governments maintain substantial energy reserves during emergencies that can last for up to 6 months. However, in Somalia, government institutions are weak and struggle to provide even basic services, raising serious concerns about their capacity to respond effectively to future emergencies. Thus, in the event of war or other worldwide catastrophes, the effect on Somalia would be swift and severe. Somalia primarily relies on energy imports from the Gulf States and Iran, which are usually transported through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea via Bab El-Mandeb.⁹

Immediately after the war began, energy prices in Somalia's various regions skyrocketed, compared to pre-conflict prices, rising even faster than those of staple food items. In Mogadishu, the price of gasoline jumped from an average of \$0.65 cents to approximately \$1.50 per litre, marking more than a 130% increase. Additionally, the cost of a barrel of petrol rose from \$140 to \$260, while the cost of a barrel of diesel doubled from \$120 to \$240. Despite Somalia previously facing energy price increases, such as those caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, the current energy crisis represents one of the most substantial energy price shocks the country has experienced in years. Other federal member states with major port cities have also experienced similar hikes in energy prices. In Kismayo, the price of gasoline jumped from \$0.75 cents to \$1.1 per litre; in Bosaso, from \$0.77 cents to \$1.05 cents; and in Hargeisa, from \$0.7 cents to \$1.30.

9 Interview with an officer from the FGS's Ministry of Petroleum, 10 March 2026.

City	Before (\$/L)	Highest (\$/L)	% Increase
Mogadishu	0.65	1.50	+131%
Kismayo	0.75	1.10	+47%
Bosaso	0.77	1.05	+36%
Hargeisa	0.70	1.30	+86%

Table 1. Presents an overview of price changes across federal member states with major port cities: Mogadishu experienced the largest spike in fuel prices, followed by Hargeisa, while Kismayo and Bosaso faced moderate increases.

Although the nationwide increase in energy prices, Mogadishu has recorded the sharpest rise in gasoline prices, prompting sporadic protests by motorcycle taxi drivers, locally known as Bajaj (Shabelle Media Network, 2026). Strangely, Mogadishu had the lowest gasoline prices among major port cities before the war, and it has experienced the highest price surge. One possible interpretation of this phenomenon is the high demand for fuel in Mogadishu, driven by a larger population and stronger economic capacity, creating an opportunity for businesses to sell large volumes of fuel. Therefore, they leverage economies of scale: the higher the volume of fuel they sell, the lower the profit margin they seek per litre or per barrel.

On the other hand, Mogadishu and the regions economically dependent on its seaport face unique challenges compared to others, particularly due to the various taxes levied by state and non-state authorities. These taxes contribute to higher commodity prices, despite its larger population and relatively stronger purchasing power.¹⁰ Consequently, during energy price shocks, the multi-layered tax burden can potentially outweigh the benefits of economies of scale, compelling businesses to raise prices exponentially.

The FGS’s Ministry of Petroleum, which oversees energy issues, has licensed private companies to import energy, particularly in Mogadishu and the federal member states that rely on its seaport. Since the federal government is unable to import fuel itself due to its financial and institutional limitations, the ministry contacted energy-importing companies to establish a fuel reserve of at least 200,000 cubic tons, roughly equivalent to 250,000 litres, at any given time for emergencies.¹¹ However, the current available capacity is only 100,000 cubic tons, roughly equivalent to 150,000 litres. In the event the energy-importing companies exhaust their reserve capacity, the available stocks could be sufficient to maintain Mogadishu and regions dependent on it for approximately 5 to 6 months.

It is important to note, however, that these reserves are not consistently maintained at full capacity. Fuel-importing companies usually fill their reserves to only 25-30% of their total

¹⁰ Interview with an expert on the Somali economy, 19 March 2026.

¹¹ Interview with an officer from the FGS’s Ministry of Petroleum, 10 March 2026.

capacity, with a maximum fill level reaching 40-50%.¹² This trend shows that while the fuel-importing companies do not fully utilize their storage capacity, the average reserve level of 30-35% has been sufficient to meet the energy demands of Mogadishu and its seaport-dependent regions. This means that the energy consumption in this area was not as high as the established reserve capacity, indicating a moderate level of demand. Therefore, if the energy-importing companies had reached 50% of a reserve level before the onset of the war, they could meet the energy demands of Mogadishu and the regions that depend on its seaports for almost a year.

In this scenario, the expectation was that energy prices would increase just moderately in Mogadishu. However, prices have spiked significantly due to the existing reserve of the energy-importing companies, which can sustain Mogadishu and the federal member states that depend on its seaport for just two months.¹³ This constraint may explain why fuel prices have remained consistently above \$1 per litre, despite powerful protests by Bajaj drivers in Mogadishu.

In Mogadishu, the business entities in the energy sector can be categorized into four groups. The first group consists of the fuel-importing companies. The second group comprises entities with energy storage facilities. The third group includes companies or businesspeople who transport fuel using tank trucks, while the final group comprises the gas stations. It is essential to stress that a single entity may own multiple categories of businesses. However, most entities in the energy sector fit into just a single category.¹⁴ Another contributing factor to Mogadishu's high gasoline prices is the complex network of entities that influence energy availability and pricing, along with the government's inability to stabilize energy prices. For instance, in the early days of the war, some entities in the energy sector began purchasing large quantities of fuel to stockpile, anticipating they would sell it later at a higher price.¹⁵ Another strange instance is that fuel stations located close to one another have been observed selling a litre of gasoline at different prices, creating confusion about the official fuel price in the market. Various factors may contribute to different prices. For instance, a business operating across all, or some segments of the energy sector, might offer lower prices than others. However, the high and inconsistent prices in Mogadishu's energy sector appear to arise primarily from the federal government's insufficient commitment to implementing and overseeing effective market regulations. The absence of strong regulations and enforcement mechanisms led to price volatility and exploitation during this difficult period.

Other energy products that have experienced dramatic price increases due to the ongoing conflict include cooking gas, which is utilized predominantly in urban areas across the country. Since the Russia-Ukraine war, the price of cooking gas has been gradually increasing, rising from \$13 to \$20 for a 13-kg cylinder. However, the current war between the US-Israel alliance and Iran has led to a dramatic increase from \$20 to \$24 per 13-kg cylinder.¹⁶

12 Interview with an officer from a fuel-importing company, 22 March 2026.

13 Ibid.

14 Interview with an officer from the FGS's Ministry of Petroleum, 10 March 2026.

15 Interview with an officer from the FGS's Ministry of Trade, 06 March 2026.

16 Interview with a retail trader, 08 March 2026.

Moreover, a considerable portion of the population in the South-Central regions of the country relies heavily on commercial air travel, mainly due to insecurity on the highways connecting these regions. Accordingly, using aircraft via Mogadishu and other major cities in Southern Central Somalia is a key lifeline for them. Although the ongoing war has also driven up jet fuel prices worldwide, this did not have an immediate impact on air ticket prices. Nevertheless, the Somali Airline Operators Association (A.O.A.), which represents local airlines in Somalia, announced a new pricing structure for domestic flight tickets effective from March 28. The pricing structure highlighted a \$45 increase in the average flight ticket price between Mogadishu and other cities in the country. Additionally, some flights have already been affected. For instance, flights between Mogadishu and Garowe previously operated daily. However, due to soaring fuel prices, the frequency has been reduced to three to four times a week.¹⁷ This reduction in flights will also affect the number of staff working on these flights, as their daily tasks have decreased on certain days. Additionally, the number of staff at the airport and at other companies involved in flight operations will also be affected.

Security and political implications of the war

Somalia is in the process of recovering from a prolonged period of state collapse and continues to depend on international partners for assistance with security and political matters. The US-Israel war on Iran has greatly impacted the entire world, particularly the Gulf countries, which have provided substantial support to Somalia's security sector. The UAE, the most affected Gulf country in the war, has played a crucial role in Somalia's security sector, although the federal government recently terminated its security and defence cooperation agreements (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperations, 2026). The UAE, however, has also maintained close ties with some of the federal member states, particularly Puntland, which has dismissed the federal government's decision to cut ties with the UAE (Reuters, 2026). The UAE and Puntland have enjoyed a strong partnership over the years, focusing on security, investment, and development sectors.

Recently, the UAE has been providing Puntland with air support, logistics, and intelligence sharing as part of the military offensive against the militants of the Islamic State branch in Somalia. However, given the ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran on its doorstep, the UAE may struggle to sustain its current level of security support for Puntland. The US has also provided similar assistance to Puntland in its campaign against the militants but has enormously decreased this support lately. The militants have already shown signs of regrouping in the areas they were previously cleared from, taking advantage of the security vacuum created by the withdrawal of the Puntland defence forces (Hiiraan Online, 2026). These circumstances would negatively impact the military operation against Islamic State militants and overall security within Puntland and Somalia. On the other hand, following Somalia's termination of agreements with the UAE and the subsequent withdrawal of UAE funding for the country's security sector, the Federal Government has yet to secure an alternative source of support to fill the gap. While there was an expectation that Qatar and Saudi Arabia would step in to provide

¹⁷ Interview with an officer from an airline company, 26 March 2026.

security assistance, the ongoing Middle East war may delay or prevent receiving funding from these countries, further weakening Somalia's security sector at a critical moment.¹⁸

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz hugely affected the economies of the Gulf countries that have been supporting Somalia's security sector. It is estimated that the economic damages the Gulf countries experienced due to the closure of the Strait exceeded \$50 billion (Anadolu Agency, 2026b). Even if the Strait were to reopen soon, the repercussions of the closure on supply chains and logistical challenges will likely persist for a long period, owing to the destruction or damage to these countries' refining capacities. The complete restoration of the necessary infrastructure for processing and exporting hydrocarbons could potentially take years. As a consequence of these financial losses, Gulf countries may reduce or even suspend their security support to Somalia and redirect resources to address their internal challenges. This situation mirrors the impact of the Ukraine war on the European Union, which has led to a decrease in its assistance to Somalia, and diverted its resources back to Europe. On the contrary, the scaling back of the Gulf countries' security involvement in Somalia could also have a positive impact.¹⁹ The Gulf middle powers would unify in the response to resist the Iranian belligerence. Therefore, their intervention – and contestation – in Somalia, and the wider Horn would likely decrease. While the existing rifts among these countries will not completely disappear, if they can be expected to decrease, this would make Somalia less vulnerable to the detrimental effects of their security competition.

While many international partners contribute to Somalia's security sector, the US and Türkiye are the two largest, most persistent, and most comprehensive partners supporting the Somali security forces.²⁰ In the long term, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East could deepen its effects on both countries. For instance, the US Department of War has estimated that the cost of the war on Iran had exceeded \$11.3 billion in the first six days alone, while the estimate did not include many of the costs associated with the war (The New York Times, 2026). By the twelfth day of the war, the US costs were estimated at \$16.5 billion (Cancian & Park, 2026). If we incorporate these initial figures and assume the cost of the remaining days of the war continued at a lower rate, the total cost to the US over a 40-day war can be estimated at around \$45 billion.

The high costs associated with this war may lead to a reduction of the US security support for Somalia, which has already cut funding for the Danab brigade, a specialized unit within the Somali National Army (SNA) (Hiiraan Online, 2026). Türkiye has been actively involved in training, equipping, and providing allowances to Somalia's security forces, particularly the elite Gorgor Special Forces and the Haramcad Special Police Unit.²¹ As the war persists and causes economic devastation within the region, Türkiye's assistance to the Somali security forces may be reduced. Additionally, if access to the Bab al-Mandab Strait were blocked, it would significantly affect the transportation of military equipment from Türkiye to Somali security forces.

18 Interview with a Somali security expert, 08 March 2026.

19 Interview with a regional security analyst, 06 March 2026.

20 Ibid.,

21 Ibid.,

A widely held view of Israel's primary purpose in this war is to achieve total hegemony over the Middle East. The ulterior motive of this hegemonic ambition is the desire to create "Greater Israel", which extends beyond mere territorial acquisition to a Middle East region that is under the sphere of influence of Israel. To establish that domination, Israel already launched military operations in more foreign countries than any other country in 2025 (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), 2025). Its attacks spanned several countries across three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe, making it one of the widest geographic military offensives in a single year (Al Jazeera, 2025b). Moreover, to expand its sphere of influence in the strategic Red Sea, Israel has also recognized Somaliland as an independent state (Yusuf & Mohamed). The Horn of Africa is sometimes regarded as part of the Greater Middle East. Consequently, Somalia is already indirectly involved in this ongoing Middle East crises, as Israel continues to establish a presence in Somaliland. The Yemeni Houthi rebels who have officially entered the conflict, though their involvement is currently limited, have already issued threats against Somaliland and consider attacking it as a position in which they could target Israeli interests (Anadolu Agency, 2026c). Geographically, Somaliland is a very accessible target for the Houthis and the easiest location for them to reach with their strikes. This situation poses a risk to Somaliland, specifically the Berbera port, which is under UAE control, if the war extends into the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait.

The multidimensional African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) has played a critical role in strengthening Somalia's security by assisting the federal government in combating militant groups and promoting stability. However, a major challenge the Mission has been facing is funding gaps, which have already placed a massive strain on its operations. Due to unpredictable funding, the Mission has already undergone an adjustment, and its original exit timeline has been revised (Amani Africa, 2026). Moreover, international partners who have been financing the Mission for years are experiencing donor fatigue and are complaining about the lack of equitable burden-sharing. The annual budget for the AUSSOM is estimated at \$190.2 million (African Union, 2025). In its first year, the Mission raised \$140 million, leaving a \$50 million shortfall against the estimated budget. In its second year, the available funds remain at only the \$140 million accumulated in the first year. As the Mission faces this significant funding gap, the economic burden of the Middle East war may further discourage international partners from providing funds, as they have already grown weary of its enduring costs. This situation creates a serious threat to Somalia's fragile security, which has been heavily reliant on the Mission's assistance.

According to Article 60 of Somalia's 2012 provisional constitution, the official term of the federal government's two-house parliament ended on 14th of April 2026. The president's official term, in accordance with the provisional constitution, is expired on May 15th. The recent constitutional amendments approved by the federal parliament in March 2026, which extend the mandates of federal institutions, further complicated the situation. Two federal member states, Puntland and Jubaland, along with the various opposition groups, have strongly rejected the constitutional amendments, arguing that they lack a broad national consensus. A consensus on a political transition and an electoral framework agreement between the federal government and the political opposition remains elusive. This ongoing

impasse exacerbates the risk that political rivalries will spill over and escalate into heightened tensions, with serious consequences for the country's fragile peace and stability.

The international community has been playing a critical role in mediating among the country's political stakeholders during such a tumultuous period. Nevertheless, its attention may be distracted by the Middle Eastern crises, and it may only make limited efforts to meet the deadlines of the federal institutions and to foster internal consensus among Somali political stakeholders for a workable electoral framework.

In this context, Somalia's internal actors could take advantage of the situation and use the international community's distraction to raise the stakes higher. For instance, the FGS could exploit to move forward its agenda on the contested one-person, one-vote elections, and the opposition groups could raise the stakes by proceeding with a parallel process. This might only be avoided if the international community were fully attentive to Somalia's gridlock.

Conclusion

Despite the restricted time frame and geographical scope of the US-Israel war on Iran, its impacts have been profound and far-reaching. Somalia, one of the most import-dependent states in the world, heavily relies on international support for both its economy and security. Consequently, it was anticipated that the war would lead to severe and swift repercussions for the country. This study has explored the implications of the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran in Somalia, with a particular focus on its economic, security, and political repercussions. Within the limited period, the conflict has caused severe economic consequences, including a sharp price increase across sectors of the country's economy, particularly the food and energy sectors, and is expected to severely impact the financial and trade sectors. While the political implications of the conflict in Somalia appear relatively limited, the security consequences are deep and worrisome, given Somalia's fragile security and its heavy reliance on foreign assistance.

The study shows that government institutions possess limited capacity to manage prices during crises, and effective economic coordination among the country's federal member states with major port cities is critical during regional crises to stabilize local markets, protect citizens from price shocks, and enhance national resilience. The findings indicate that the economic impacts will be particularly severe for residents of rural areas and drought-affected communities. The study emphasizes that security assistance from Somalia's partners is likely to decrease due to the US-Israel war on Iran, which will adversely impact the military operations against the militant groups within the country.

Policy recommendations

The Middle East is a region closely connected to Somalia in various ways. The changing dynamics and major political and security events in that region have consistently had a significant impact on Somalia. The current Middle East conflict between the US-Israeli alliance and the Iran-led “Axis of Resistance”, has already caused substantial economic and security repercussions for Somalia. These impacts are anticipated to intensify if the war persists and its geographic scope widens. It is a widely held perspective that governance in Somalia is weak, while citizens show remarkable resilience and address their economic and social challenges without significant government assistance or services.

However, in the face of such a global catastrophe, citizens can no longer have much patience with their government, since the implications of the Middle Eastern war exceed individual capacities and require a more active and supportive role from the government. To address the immediate and long-term economic and security challenges of the war, this research report presents the following recommendations:

Immediate actions for the FGS and Federal Member States (FMS)

- The FGS and the FMSs should issue a directive to businesspeople to refrain from inflating prices and creating future fears about the availability of goods and warn that such actions could lead to the revocation of their business licenses or other legal consequences.
- To ease the situation during this conflict, the FGS and FMSs should consider temporarily reducing taxes on essential commodities, such as staple foods and fuel. They should also lower taxes on public transportation services, such as taxis and buses, which are essential to support citizens' daily lives.
- Fuel is a lifeline for the country, and during such crises, it is necessary to maintain sufficient reserves to ensure the country survives. The government should take responsibility and prevent businesses from monopolizing the fuel market during such a critical period. Therefore, it should seek alternative supply routes and establish new relationships with countries that possess large energy reserves.
- To mitigate excessive price hikes, the government should also monitor and stabilize the domestic market, track daily prices in the global energy market, and the routes through which energy is imported to the country.
- Influential government and business leaders should speak to citizens and reassure them that the situation will be brought under control. This is important because people's fear of the impacts of the war, along with word of mouth, plays a major role in driving fear and rising commodity prices.

Long term actions for the FGS

- Somalia heavily depends on Gulf countries for its financial and trade sectors. As the war drags on, it could severely impact these countries and risk a total shutdown of Somalia's economic activities. Therefore, the federal government should treat the current crisis as an early warning and, in collaboration with Somali businesspeople, should work to diversify the country's financial and trade sectors by exploring alternative markets.
- To prevent exacerbating the serious economic and security repercussions that the war could have on the country, the federal government should initiate a peaceful political transition. This process should involve reaching a consensus on the duration of the transition period and establishing an electoral framework agreement with opposition groups.
- Given the significant economic damage this war has caused to Somalia's security partners, along with donor fatigue in financing Somalia's security sector, the federal government should develop a proactive, innovative strategy that promotes self-sufficiency, empowers the operational capabilities of local security forces, and reduces the government's heavy reliance on the AUSSOM mission.
- Despite Somalia remaining internationally recognized as a single state with the federal government exercising *de jure* authority, its internal control remains fragmented across the federal member states. Apart from governance and political issues, businesspeople across state governments are well-connected and collaborate closely within their respective industries. However, when such a catastrophic war extends beyond the business community and the common citizen, the divided local authorities are required to unite and work to safeguard the population. Therefore, under the federal government's leadership, a platform should be created to bring together the federal member states, particularly those with major port cities. The platform would serve as a coordinating economic body that devises unified responses to the country's priority needs during crises and prevents businesspeople from exploiting citizens by raising prices on essential commodities.

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Better Governance for Brighter Somalia



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