

Somalia and the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden: Geopolitical Crisis and Emerging Security Challenges

(Friday, July 31, 2026 | Tribe Hotel)

1. Background

Recent geopolitical developments, including Israel's recognition of Somaliland in December 2025, together with Somalia's domestic political instability, have significantly reshaped the security environment in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. This seminar examines three interconnected dimensions of this changing landscape: regional geopolitical competition, domestic political dynamics, and emerging non-state security threats. By exploring how these factors interact, participants will gain a better understanding of the drivers of instability in Somalia and their broader regional implications.

- **Regional Geopolitical Rivalry and Emerging Alliances**

This session examines the changing regional balance of power following Israel's recognition of Somaliland and the opening of a Somaliland embassy in Jerusalem. It explores the emergence of competing regional alignments-particularly the Israel-(Ethiopia)/Somaliland-UAE partnership and the Somalia-Arab coalition-and how their rivalry is reshaping the strategic landscape of the Horn of Africa.

- **Domestic Political Dynamics**

While regional competition is transforming Somalia's external environment, internal political divisions continue to challenge state cohesion. This session examines key domestic political issues, including tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States, debates over President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's term extension, and efforts to strengthen central authority. It also explores how these developments affect Somalia's political stability and its capacity to respond to regional security challenges.

- **Somalia Piracy Trends and the Rise of Non-State Security Threats**

Building on the previous discussions, this session explores how geopolitical competition and weak governance have contributed to the resurgence of Somali piracy and other non-state security threats. It also examines the growing links between pirate networks and extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab and the Houthis, highlighting the emergence of hybrid security threats.

2. Programme

09:40-10:00	Networking
10:00-10:10	Opening Remarks <i>Dr. Woochul LEE (Deputy HOM)</i>
10:10-10:40	Presentation 1 Regional Geopolitical Rivalry and Emerging Alliances <i>Dr. Rashid Abdi (Sahan)</i>
10:40-11:10	Presentation 2 Somalia's Domestic Political Dynamics <i>Dr. Hassan Khannenje (The Horn Int'l Institute for Strategic Studies)</i>
11:10-11:40	Presentation 3 Somalia Piracy Trends and the Rise of Non-State Security Threats <i>Mr. Christopher Hockey (Royal United Services Institute)</i>
11:40-12:00	Q&A
12:00-13:00	Lunch

/END/