



Research Article

Identity, Recognition and Political Dynamics in Contemporary Somalia

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Abstract

This research examined the relationship between politics, identity, and recognition in contemporary Somalia. Specifically, the paper focused on the impact of identity and recognition on governance and stability, while exploring how the Somali diaspora has influenced national identity. The study employed a mixed-methods approach by administering an online survey to 505 respondents alongside 45 key informant interviews with experts on the subject matter. Findings indicate a significant relationship between clan identity and governance, as clan affiliations substantially influence coalition formation through both social and political behaviours. Additionally, the government has not adequately addressed historical grievances stemming from prolonged violence, resulting in cycles of conflict and divisions. The study reveals that lack of clan recognition is a root cause of recurring instability in the region. Survey data showed that 42% of respondents reported clan identity "strongly influences" their political opinions, while 43% felt excluded from political processes due to clan affiliation. Key informants emphasized that traditional governance systems (xeer) often operate alongside or replace formal institutions. The findings demonstrate that in-depth analysis of the relationship between identity, recognition, and politics is crucial for addressing governance issues. The paper provides recommendations for incorporating political systems that respect clan differences while enhancing government legitimacy and fostering unity. The study emphasizes the necessity for inclusive governments that address historical grievances among different clans and foster genuine belonging within a unified Somali state.

Keywords

Somalia, Government, Conflict, Clan Dynamics, Identity, Recognition.

1. Introduction

Somalia's current political situation is complicated by issues of recognition and identity linked to its clan structures and historical legacies. Identity significantly influences how Somali society organizes itself both socially and politically. [Ian Lewis \(2002\)](#) notes that clan ties strongly shape Somali identity. These connections often influence the actions of individuals and groups in politics. This deep sense of clan loyalty fosters factionalism, where the interests of specific clans take precedence over the needs of the entire country. As a result, creating a unified state becomes challenging.

The civil war that began in the early 1990s intensified these clan divisions. People used their identities to gain political power and survive ([Menkhaus, 2007](#)). With different clans fighting for recognition and representation, the political system remains broken, violent, and plagued by resource conflicts. [Kaplan \(2013\)](#) indicates that the ongoing struggle for political power among clans hinders the establishment of a unified national government.

The Somali diaspora is very instrumental in identity formation. It has changed the face of Somali nationalism outside the country by creating transnational identity that incorporates both local and international aspects (Hassan, 2010). This engagement carries with it a huge political implication as social networks and remittances affect the way the government functions and the political landscape within the region (Aden, 2015).

To comprehend group identity and its impact on politics, it is important to note the different identities of clans in Somalia. Menkhaus (2007) states that the predicaments of the governance of Somalia are the result of the inability to recognize these clan identities, which results in the current cycles of the conflict and division. A powerful political voice and the need to discuss the grievances and historical experience of various clans is one of the key elements of recognition seeking. The concept plays a crucial role in explaining the present state of affairs in Somalia.

This paper is an attempt to examine the relationships among political behaviour, identity and recognition in contemporary Somalia. It examines the ways in which these relations determine social ties, conflict character, and the efficiency of the government. This study will enhance our knowledge on the present social and political situation in Somalia by analyzing the identities of the clans, the diaspora, and the historical grievances. This paper aims to discuss the relationship between identity and recognition and their effect on political action in modern Somalia. It discusses the role of clan identity and recognition in social cohesion and conflict dynamics in the country. The paper also examines how the affiliations of political identities are influenced by the clan identities and how the two are interconnected to influence the political behaviour of individuals and groups, thus influencing the political environment in the country. The paper also examines how the Somali diaspora is altering Somali identity and the consequence of the alteration to Somali politics and governance.

Moreover, the research paper points out the influence of historical grievances concerning clan identity on present politics. Through these goals, the research will be able to offer useful information about the complicated social and political environment in Somalia.

2. Literature Review

In polarized societies, the constant struggle is usually based on ethnic, cultural, or religious differences and not on the disagreement of policies. Studies indicate that such identities tend to override national unity and have a significant impact on political activities and allegiance to groups. According to Horowitz (1985), people tend to focus on their ethnic or cultural affiliation rather than on a common civic identity. This usually results in resource and recognition competition. According to Kalyvas (2006), these dynamics enhance power struggles and complicate the process of attaining national peace. As an illustration, the Hutu-Tutsi rift in Rwanda took root and led to the eruption of extreme violence and protracted animosity (Mamdani, 2001).

It is a widely accepted notion that religious identities play an important role in conflicts. As an example, political parties were affected by sectarian differences and resulted in violence in the Middle East (Tilly, 2005). This means that individuals tend to associate with a group and then talk about politics, and this may result in a long-term conflict. The absence of knowledge in federalism, clan-based attitudes and political corruption are major impediments to the federalism in Somalia. These problems bring to light such issues as the distribution of power, finances, and regional conflicts (Ali, A. Y. S., Dahir, A. H., and Hersi, Z. D. (2019).

Weak and failed states need a more contextualized definition of fragility. It is the opinion that must take into account historical, social, and political aspects rather than state-centric perceptions influenced by Western opinions (Nay, O. (2013). Nay urges to redefine and rethink the definition and study of fragile states. He supports the policies that are based on the local conditions and social structure. Carment, D., Samy, Y., and Ferreira, I. A. (2023) agree with this concept, saying that classic definitions tend to simplify the notions of fragility to fragile/non-fragile binary. They propose a subtler conceptualization that incorporates different aspects such as authority, legitimacy, and capacity. These scholars emphasize the role of local settings and actor relations in the formation of state resilience and fragility, and the effects of external interventions.

Even though federalism was implemented as a viable measure to control the entrenched clan fragmentation and the need to have regional autonomy, it has largely served as a clan-based power sharing system. It has not really devolved power or established inclusive government. The federal system has entrenched elite dominance, undermined the local institutions through uneven funding and enabled national politics to intrude. It has also not enhanced unity of the nation or confidence of the people with the state. Federalism has resulted in more conflict rather than less because it institutionalized clan quotas (e.g., the 4.5 system) and created rival centers of power. This fact discredits both federal and regional

governments (Ali, M. H., and Mohamed, S. A. (2023)). The authors end by concluding that unless significant changes are made to the current system to ensure that the system is based on merit in terms of representation, equitable distribution of resources and proper constitutional definitions of the federal and subnational boundaries, the federal experiment in Somalia could only serve to further fragment the country rather than unite it.

The disastrous inability to establish a stable post-conflict state in Somalia was not caused by the rooted hatred between clans or simple greed. It was a result of profound internal institutional deficiencies, in which functions were not cohesive, and there were no explicit mechanisms of sharing power between rival groups. The failure of the movement was caused by the fact that leaders were driven by personal ambition and took the chairmanship without consensus, which disintegrated the weak unity of the clans and the legitimacy of other leaders was weakened (Ingiriis, M. H., 2018). Ingiriis claims that the leadership of the movement turned its weapons on each other, in contrast to the successful African liberation movements that established stable transitions to power, like the RPF in Rwanda or the EPRDF in Ethiopia. This move turned a revolution into a civil war. This inward conflict of power fueled by contested power and absence of inclusive governance systems preconditioned the long-term disintegration and the chronic instability of Somalia. It depicts how even movements that are founded on valid grievances are self-destructing without institutionalized conflict resolution mechanisms.

Somalia has not been able to attain sustainable stability despite numerous peace conferences that have been sponsored by international donors. Problems of representation, political fragmentation, and extrinsic factors remain to hamper development. The international peacebuilding activities require a better comprehension and incorporation of local solutions to the international peacebuilding activities to assist in the attainment of a sustainable peace in Somalia (Bradbury, M., & Healy, S., 2010).

Although the concept of clan identity has been researched as a social unit (Lewis, 2002; Menkhaus, 2007), a recent book by Francis Fukuyama (2018) titled *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* provides a valuable point of view; identity is not merely an affiliation to a group; it is a demand to be recognized as an equal, worthy, and dignified person. Clans in Somalia are not mere kinship networks. They are group players who want to be recognized as legitimate historical actors, have a political voice, and moral status in the national order.

The book by Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, emphasizes the importance of thymos, or the need to be recognized, in identity. He notes that members of the marginalized groups have been angry and isolated due to the inability of the modern democracies to meet their dignity requirement. According to Fukuyama, populist leaders take advantage of these sentiments by making identity politics more important than common democratic principles. This increases nationalism and segregation. Globalization impacts the economy and culture, which leads to loneliness and increases the distance between various social groups. He states that an excessive emphasis on group identity can be a danger to democratic principles and social peace. Fukuyama recognizes the value of identity, but he demands that individuals must reiterate their belief in universal human dignity to unify communities.

Lastly, he cautions that democracies may not be as stable and instead become more authoritarian when they overlook the necessity of dignity and recognition. Fukuyama is a supporter of political institutions that are open to all and respectful of individual differences and group cohesiveness.

2.1. The Concept of Identity and Recognition in Somalia

Identity and recognition are crucial to Somalia's current political situation due to the country's complex clan dynamics and historical influences. Ian Lewis (2002) states that clan ties are a key part of Somali identity and shape how people vote and organize. When one clan's needs take priority over the nation's, this strong sense of clan loyalty can lead to factionalism. Such divisions complicate state formation. During the civil war in the early 1990s, clan identities were used to vie for power and survival, intensifying these divisions. In this political environment, clan loyalty often outweighs national identity (Menkhaus, 2007).

Kaplan (2013) notes that tribes fighting for control have frequently resulted in brutal wars, hindering the development of a strong government. The diaspora has also significantly influenced the meaning of being Somali by blending local and international elements, reshaping political narratives, and altering how local governments operate (Hassan, 2010). Scholars argue that failing to acknowledge clan identities has led to conflicts and societal collapse (Menkhaus, 2007). Political power must recognize these identities. The refusal of various governments to address clan interests has sparked unrest and violence (Lewis, 2002). This highlights the need to include a broader range of social and cultural groups to unify the country. Without a central authority, clans struggle to gain legitimacy and recognition (Menkhaus, 2007).

People's political loyalties frequently shift as they seek acknowledgment, which complicates efforts to maintain stability. The international community's recognition of Somali identities significantly impacts Somali governance. However, this recognition is often selective, undermining the government's legitimacy (Farah, 2020). Somaliland's pursuit of recognition further illustrates the challenges of understanding Somali identity and statehood, making it difficult to connect external assistance to the realities on the ground.

2.2. *The Role of Traditional Structures in Somalia*

In order to appreciate the political system of Somalia, you must know about their traditional forms of governing especially the *xeer*, or customary law. The *xeer* is significant in ensuring that there is peace and conflict resolution. According to Lewis (2002), it tends to work alongside or even to replace formal government institutions. This system regulates marriage, property rights and dispute resolution, which are essential in everyday life (Kapteijns, 2013). It constitutes a significant component of the clan system that creates Somali identity.

According to Menkhaus (2007), the use of the *xeer* shows that there has been a suspicion of the centralized government since ancient times because of perceptions of its ineffectiveness or illegality. This shows the way in which customary laws tend to be more important than formal legal systems particularly in the regions where individuals are still suspicious of the government following a war. In certain areas, clan-based government has served to ensure stability even in the face of dysfunction and fragmentation of national institutions.

Nevertheless, such a decentralized system makes it difficult to establish a unified national identity. Kaplan (2013) explains that when the local interests are in conflict with the national interests, the question of the power of the clans may result in competition and conflict. The only way to bridge this divide is to incorporate the traditional practices into the formal government systems in a manner that does not undermine the clan identities but encourages the inclusion of all in the state-building process.

Recent works by Elmi (2019) and others point to the significance of integrating the *xeer* in peacekeeping and governance activities. Recognizing and integrating traditional practices into the law will enable the policymakers to enhance the political system of Somalia, promote community participation and establish a more representative and stronger government.

2.3. *Identity Politics Versus Universal Democratic Values in Somalia*

The primary concepts of universal democratic values are equality, human rights, and the rule of law. These principles underline the fact that all people are equally important and should be represented, no matter who they are. Nevertheless, these principles have proved difficult to implement in Somalia due to the persistent problems. According to Menkhaus (2007), the objectives have become more difficult to realize since the efforts to create a democratic system that reflects the various identities of Somalia have failed. Transitional governments including the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) were not satisfactory to people since they could not deal with clan-based problems.

In their attempt to assist Somalia in becoming a democratic state, the fact that the politics of the country is influenced by the clan dynamics is ignored. According to Kapteijns (2013), the tendency to impose the ideals of Western democracy on the Somali people without taking into account their social reality has frequently resulted in opposition and the emergence of more divisions on the basis of identity.

The difference between identity politics and universal democratic norms is quite substantial in the aspects of politics and representation. Recognition of clan identities can ensure stability, but it can also discriminate other groups and diminish dedication towards equality and inclusion. Clan rivalry is normally a zero-sum game and thus it is hard to establish a strong sense of national identity (Lewis, 2002).

Also, in case of the clan recognition being the priority, it will be more difficult to establish the political culture based on the democratic principles. According to Menkhaus (2007), loyalty to clans is usually more important than loyalty to the nation and this makes it difficult to unify the country.

The differences between genders are another complication. Elmi (2019) puts emphasis on the effect of clan politics on the political participation and visibility of women. The role of women in ensuring peace and governance is important to recognize. Thus, the structures involving the entire Somali society will be the key to stability and national cohesion.

2.4. *Research Gaps*

The relationship between identity, recognition and politics in Somalia has a great academic interest but there are numerous questions that are not answered. The recent works of [Lewis \(2002\)](#) and [Menkhaus \(2007\)](#) are useful in understanding the issue of clan identification and its history. Nevertheless, they tend to ignore the fact that identity changes particularly among the youth and those in foreign countries. Their views can change the future voting patterns, and it is necessary to explore how these groups are transforming the concept of being a Somali in a globalized world ([Hassan, 2010](#); [Aden, 2015](#)).

Although research has indicated the significance of diversity recognition to the sake of political stability, there is scanty research on effective models or frameworks on recognition. According to [Menkhaus \(2007\)](#), the governance systems must acknowledge the existence of clan identities though limited case studies have been used to determine the success of such recognition in various areas. Also, the lack of information contributes to the difficulty of determining those individuals who promote unity instead of division.

Moreover, there is a knowledge gap regarding how different dimensions of identity intersect, especially the issue of how gender influence the politics of the clan. [Elmi \(2019\)](#) explains that women might be the key to peace promotion, yet more studies are required to understand the impact of gender on political involvement in a clan organization in full.

Finally, the issue of centralism versus federalism needs further studies. Although there are scholars who have studied these governance structures, little has been done to examine how they impacted the national identity and clan life. Comparative research may help in finding out effective measures of promoting unity in Somalia.

This paper seeks to explain the connection between political behaviours, identity and recognition in Somalia. It aims at shedding light on the underlying causes of war and fragmentation to offer a recommendation to policymakers and local leaders on how to enhance governance. The paper highlights the need to include different voices in politics especially the marginalized groups in order to make sure that every part of Somali society is represented. Finally, it also seeks to establish trust and foster unity among the clans by settling past scores.

3. Methodology

This paper explored the multi-faceted connections between politics, identity and recognition in modern Somalia through a mixed methodology. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research to gather information about the participants who had different backgrounds and geographical locations in Somalia.

The study used quantitative surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), and a review of the literature as data collection methods. The literature review has provided a theoretical framework and revealed the gaps in the existing knowledge regarding the Somali identity and political dynamics that are critical. The researcher examined literature on the topic of clan identity and recognition challenges in order to be familiar with historical and modern problems.

The researcher distributed an online survey to different Somali social groups, which were purposively selected to capture diverse perspectives on clan loyalty and identity. This purposive sampling approach was chosen to ensure representation across clan backgrounds and geographical regions, given Somalia's clan-based social structure. The survey collected 505 responses from participants across all Federal Member States between November 2024 and April 2025.

To evaluate the internal consistency of items related to "identity," a composite scale was created using related questions. Cronbach's Alpha for this identity scale was 0.636, indicating acceptable reliability for measuring a unified "identity" concept, though the moderate alpha value reflects some variability in responses. Table 1 shows that respondents represented a substantial cross-section of the Somali population across different regions.

The researcher conducted statistical analysis using SPSS version 28.0, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and cross-tabulations to identify significant patterns in the data regarding political participation and identity dynamics.

Forty-five in-depth interviews were conducted with scholars, decision-makers and community leaders with expertise in Somali politics. The purpose of these KIIs was to gain deeper insights into how clan ties affect politics, government structures and identity dynamics. The informants were selected purposively based on their knowledge of the subject matter and interviews continued until a saturation point was reached. The research employed thematic analysis to identify patterns linking political participation and identity.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Gender per State	Frequency	Percentage
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Female	87	17%
Benadir	32	6%
Hirshabelle	13	3%
Jubaland	1	0%
Puntland	1	0%
Somaliland	23	5%
South-West	17	3%
Male	418	83%
Benadir	291	58%
Galmudug	17	3%
Hirshabelle	21	4%
Jubaland	40	8%
Puntland	9	2%
Somaliland	28	6%
South-West	12	2%
Grand Total	505	100%

Source: (Field Survey, Author 2025)

4. Empirical Results

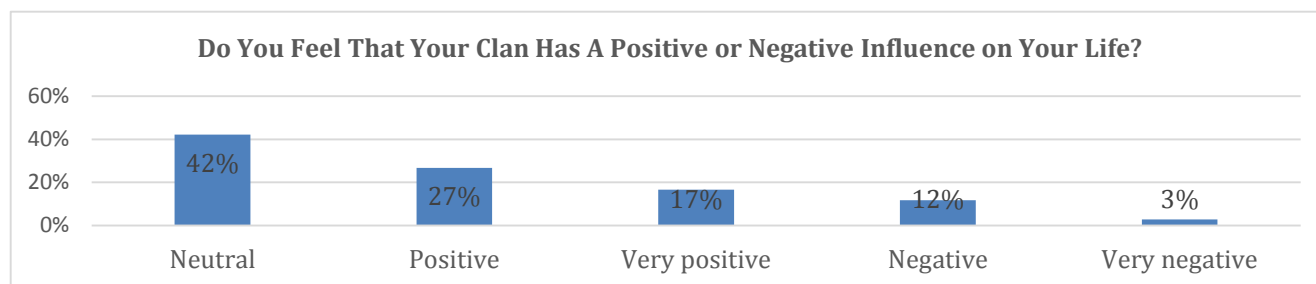
4.1. Impact of Civil War on Identity and Recognition in Somalia

The civil war that started in Somalia in the early 1990s had a big effect on how Somalia is shaped today. [Abdi \(2017\)](#) says that the war not only made clan divisions worse but created new identities based on the experiences of fighting and forced displacement. It was noted by the interviews that when different groups try to gain legitimacy and recognition in a society that is becoming more divided, the fight for acceptance among these new identities continues to affect political alliances and power struggles.

4.2. Role of Clan in Somalia

Figure 1. shows that being a member of a clan has a big effect on the Somali population. Fifteen percent said their clan made their lives worse by negatively affecting their lives, forty-two percent said it did not affect them at all, and forty-four percent said it made their lives better with positive effects. According to interviews with key informants, clans are important social groups that make people feel like they belong. Being a member of a clan affects many spheres of their lives, such as marriage, relationships with other people, political alliances, and sharing resources. Clans help each other out, especially when things get tough, and they are very important for settling disputes through *xeer*, or customary law.

Figure 1: Perception on Positive or Negative Influence of Clan



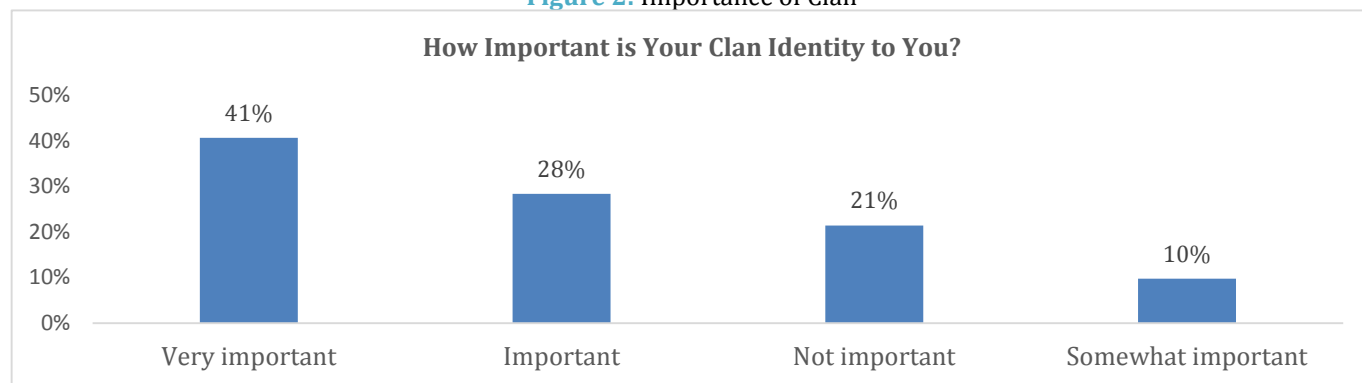
Informants say that clan ties, not individual qualifications, are usually what gets people political jobs. This dependence on clan ties can slow down real progress and growth because clan ties affect who is nominated for political office, giving some clan members an unfair advantage over others. Somalia's political system is based on 4.5 clan system.

Every interview said that clans are very important for government and political representation. Clan ties often give leaders more credibility, which has a big effect on what people think and the political parties they support. These forces that encourage both cooperation and competition affect political stability. In places where the government doesn't have a lot of power, clans are important social and political groups. They settle disagreements, offer important services, and deal with problems in the community. Clans help people feel like they belong and build social ties by keeping cultural traditions and practices alive. People feel strong and united when they identify with a clan, especially in areas that have been affected by conflict. Clans also provide important services like healthcare, education, and security, which lets local communities take care of their own business without the help of the federal government. They can also influence the economy by making it harder for people to get important resources like land and water. How these resources are managed could lead to either cooperation or conflict. That is why clan conflicts are prevalent in some parts of the country.

4.3. Value of Identity through Clan in Somalia

Clan identification is very important in Somalia. It helps people and groups form their identities by helping them understand each other and build networks of trust and cooperation. This feeling of belonging has a big effect on social mobility and opportunities. Clan identification is important to them in many areas of their lives, including their culture, social life, politics, and emotions. This is shown by the fact that 69% of respondents said it was "Very important" or "Important" (Figure 2). However, 21% of those who answered said that clan identification was not important to them, which shows that people have different ideas about how important it is. The strong focus on clan identity shows how important it is for both people and groups.

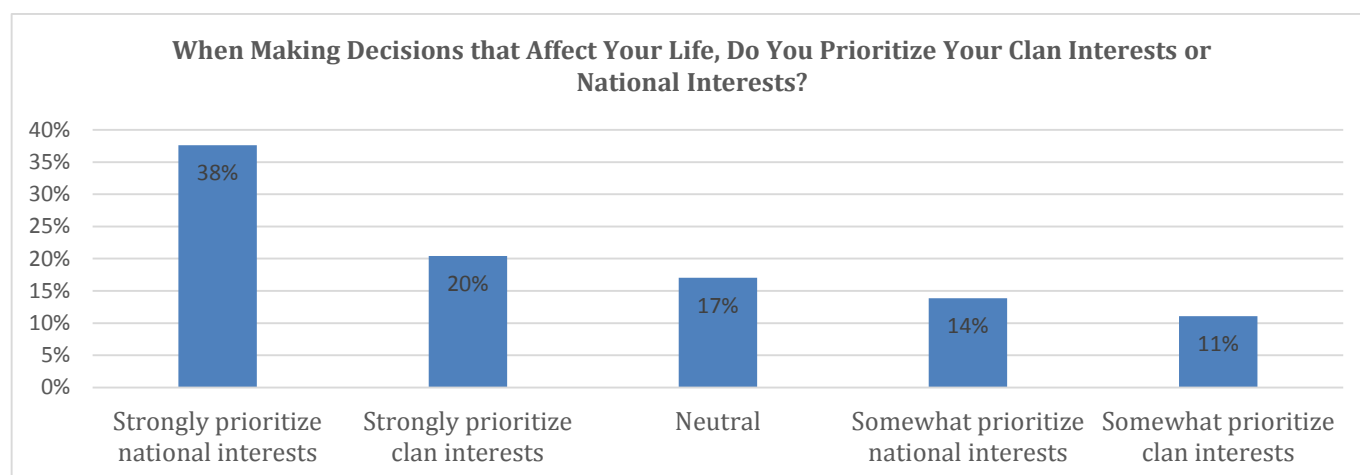
Figure 2: Importance of Clan



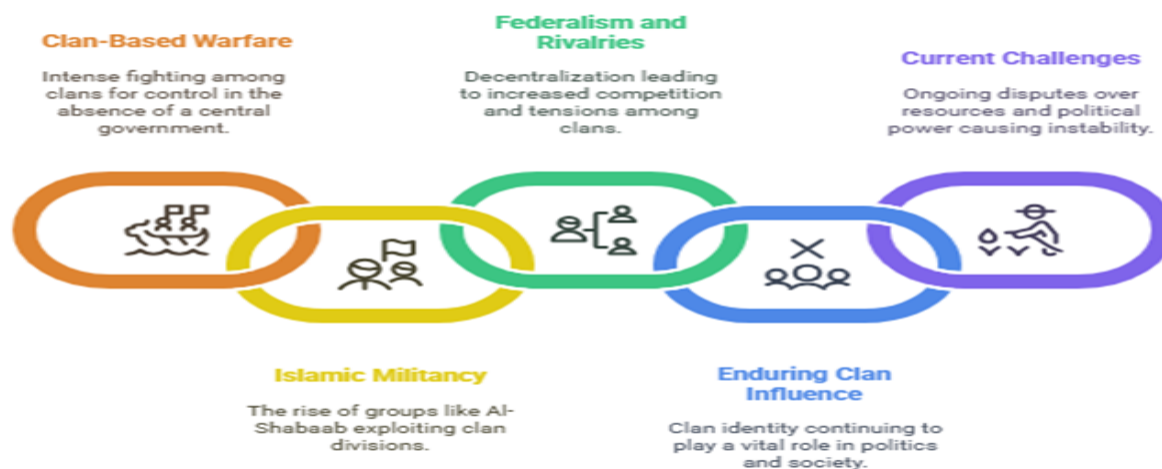
Key informants say that being part of a clan gives you resources and safety when things go wrong, especially when the government is weak. Clan identity is also linked to political power, which gives clans more status and authority in political situations and often leads to agreements to share power. Clan identity is important for keeping traditions and heritage alive, as well as for making people feel proud of their lineage and like they belong to a family. People who have this cultural background are better at dealing with tough social situations and staying strong, especially when there is conflict or money problems. Informants warned that clan identity can make members more loyal and trustworthy, but it can also make people who aren't in the clan feel left out. This could limit diversity and slow the growth of a more accepting society. They observed that marginalization along clan lines is a common phenomenon.

4.4. Clan Identity and the Political Landscape of Somalia

Clan identity has a big effect on Somali politics because it affects how different groups work together and compete. It is harder to set up a single national government, especially during elections, because political groups often work together based on clan ties. Figure 3. shows how both national and clan interests make the decision-making process more difficult and affect it. 38% strongly put national interests first, which shows that they care about bigger problems in society, while 20% prioritize clan interests, which shows how important clan loyalty is to them when they make decisions. This difference shows how national, and clan identities can be at odds with each other. Clan ties are still very important in people's lives because of deep cultural norms and historical contexts, even though many people put national issues ahead of clan issues.

Figure 3: Clan Interests Versus National Interests

Interviews show that clan identity was a bigger part of political conflict during the 1990s civil war. Figure 4. shows that clans often fought violently to protect their interests. People are still affected by these conflicts today as they try to get recognition and hold on to hold grudges. This chaos led to intense power struggles between different groups, especially between powerful leaders like Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and General Mohamed Farah Aideed, who hailed from two major clans. Five people who knew about the main problems that made their rivalry worse gave information. The fight for control of Mogadishu got worse after Siad Barre was overthrown, turning the city into a battleground for power. Yusuf, who was the leader of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), wanted to gain more power in the area. Aideed, who was the leader of the United Somali Congress (USC), wanted to make sure he was in charge of the capital, which he believed belonged to his clan. There was a lot of tension in Mogadishu because the two leaders were fighting for power.

Figure 4: Somalia's Conflict Dynamics

Source: (KII, Author 2025)

The conflict got worse because of clan rivalry. The Darood tribe mostly backed Yusuf's SSDF, while the Hawiye clan mostly backed Aideed's USC. Because these clans hated each other, personal problems got worse, military strategies changed, and bloody battles broke out. It was very important for both leaders to show that they were the rightful leaders of their clans took clan's interests at heart. Yussuf wanted to make a government that put the needs of the Darood first, so Aideed often questioned his claims to power. The constant fight for legitimacy often led to violence as one leader tried to undermine the other's power. One of the interviewees commented that Yussuf wanted power-sharing along the number of districts inhabited by each clan, which did not convince Aideed, who firmly believed marginalization of his clan if sharing is done by districts.

When peace processes were initiated, clan identity had impact on talks about how to share power in governments after a war. To protect clan interests, federal systems have been set up to protect clan interests. But instead of bringing the

country together, they made things worse. Clan identity is still a big part of politics and government in Somalia. Clan ties give leaders power, and clan meetings are often used to help make decisions. This reliance on clan systems makes it harder for democratic institutions to grow and for people to be held accountable.

Clan-based political movements are also gaining popularity, which shows how divided the political landscape is. It is hard to build coalitions and run the government well when clan membership is often the most important factor in who gets elected. Clans that support federalism also want to be independent and recognised, as shown by their desire for more control over their own affairs.

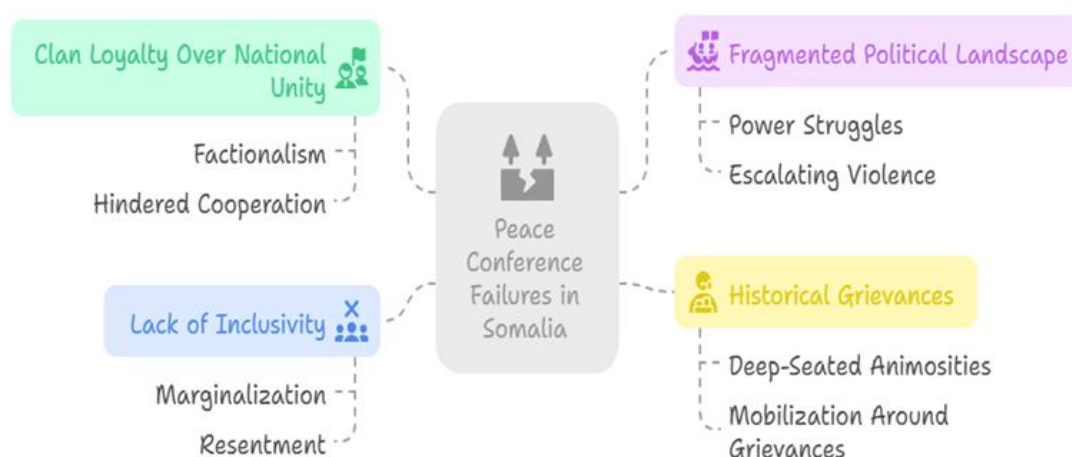
4.5. Key Peace Conferences and Their Failures in Somalia

Somalia has had a hard time finding peace since the Siad Barre government fell apart in 1991. This is because of strong clan ties and complicated identities. Violence and division prolonged because important peace talks couldn't bring everyone together.

The Sodere Conference in Ethiopia was one of the first attempts, but it failed because the clans couldn't agree on what to do next as factions that represented some clans were not accommodated. After that, the Cairo Conference tried to bring together different groups, but some leaders left because they were afraid of being left out. Not all tribes backed the 2000 Djibouti Peace Process's effort to set up a transitional government, which made the government look less legitimate.

The 2002–2004 Peace Talks led by Kenya led to the creation of a Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Some people said that some clans were in charge of the TFG and others were not. Clan or religious-based interests got in the way of the 2006 Khartoum Talks, which were meant to bring the TFG and the Union of Islamic Courts together.

Figure 5: Factors Influencing Peace Conference Failures in Somalia

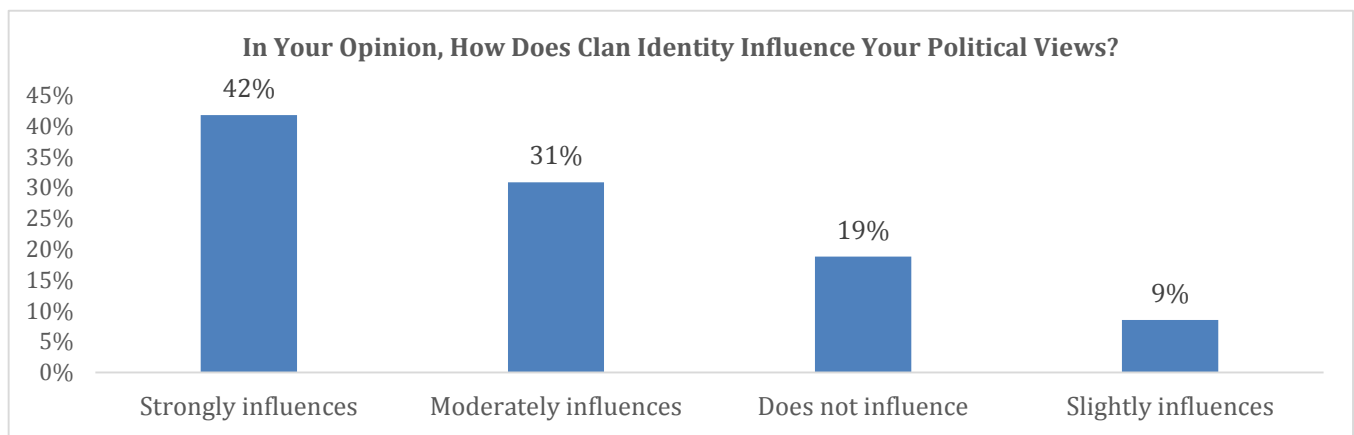


Source: (KII, Author 2025)

Figure 5. shows that these peace efforts have mostly failed because people care more about their clans than their country. The political situation is still divided, and problems from the past make it harder to reach an agreement. People are also angry that some groups have been left out of peace talks, which has made it harder for different groups to work together.

4.6. Clan Identities' Influence on Political Behaviour and Governance

Clan identities are very important in Somali society and affect politics and government. Being a member of a clan affects how people get along, make political alliances, and share resources. A lot of people put the needs of their clan ahead of the needs of the country. This implies that they are more loyal to their clan than to the country. This situation led to factionalism, which makes it harder to build a unified state. Figure 6. shows that clan identity can affect how people think about politics. The survey found that 42% of respondents said that clan identity "strongly influences" their political opinions, while 31% said it has a "moderate influence." On the other hand, 19% said that clan identity has no effect on their political opinions, and 9% said it has a "minimal impact." These results show how important clan ties shape people's political beliefs and choices.

Figure 6: Clan Identity and Political Views

Interviews show that clan networks have influence on political processes. For example, presidents and other federal leaders are usually members of certain clans, and clan interests often come up during negotiations. Clan meetings often make important political decisions, which supports the idea that political legitimacy depends on clan representation. The political landscape is more divided because clans rely on each other for power, which makes tensions and conflicts worse. During the civil war that started in the early 1990s, clan identities became even more important in politics. Clans fought for power and recognition, which led to weak, scattered governments run by clan chiefs or local warlords.

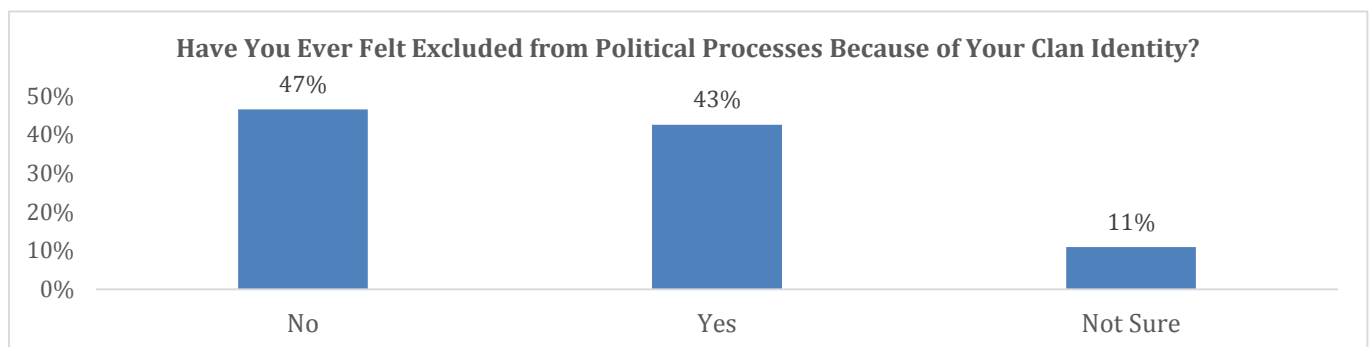
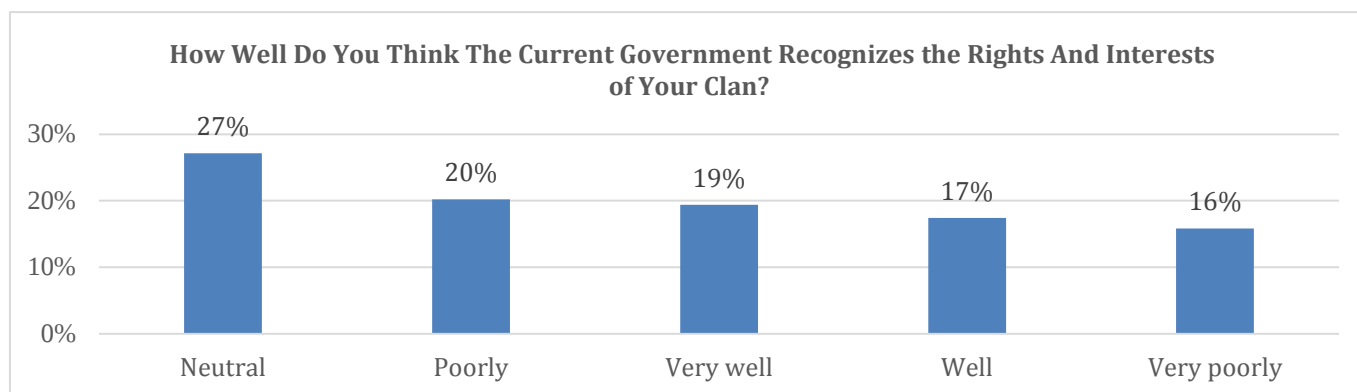
Figure 7: Experiences of Exclusion from Political Processes

Figure 7. shows that almost 43% of people who took the survey said they feel left out of politics because of their clan. 47% say they don't feel left out at all, and 10% say they don't know how included they are. These results show that people's representation in politics is not fair. People who feel left out because of their clan ties need to see more fairness and inclusion to feel better.

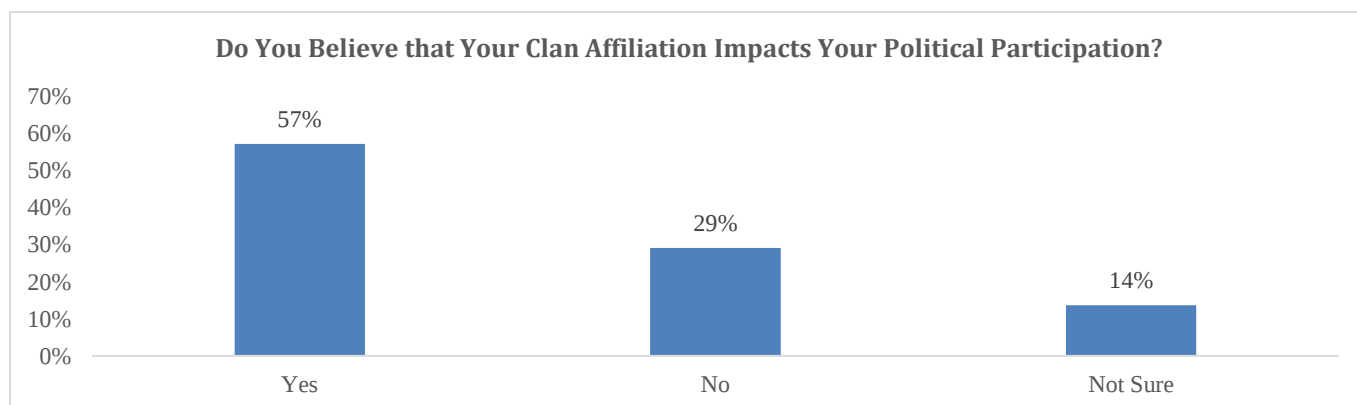
4.7. Recognition of Diverse Clan Identities and Political Stability

Clan identity has attributions to peace and conflicts in Somalia. People feel like they belong when they know about the different clans and the problems they have had in the past. When political parties talk about clan ties, it makes the government, and its institutions seem more legitimate. Recognising different clans and their past problems helps people feel like they belong and makes the community more welcoming. As a result, this makes government agencies more credible.

Figure 8 shows that most of the respondents think that clan identity has a very significant impact on how conflicts play out. 29% think it has a big impact, and 43% think it has a very big effect. Only 14% think it has a moderate effect, and only 13% think it has little or no impact. This interprets how important it is to deal with clan-related problems in order to bring about peace and stability in the country.

Figure 8: Impact of Clan Identity on Conflict Dynamics

Interviewees echoed that clan identification has a big effect on how people get along, how the government works, and how conflicts start. One person said that ignoring clan rights has caused people to lose faith and resorted to fight in the past. For example, the Transitional Federal Government hasn't done a good job of representing all clans, which has led to violence and division. But political systems like federalism that include clan representation have shown promise in promoting stability by letting clans handle their own business while keeping their cultural identities. Recognising clan identities can help people talk to each other and come to an agreement, which can help settle disputes and encourage cooperation.

Figure 9: Clan Affiliation and Political Participation

As shown in [Figure 9](#), 57% of respondents agree that their clan affiliation affects how politically active they are. But 14% are still not sure, and 29% think that their clan identity has nothing to do with their political activity. The data shows that clan identity and political participation are closely linked. This shows that a person's clan ties have a big effect on how involved they are in politics.

[Figure 10](#) shows that a lot of people are unhappy with the government's recognition of clan rights. 30% said that the government does not respect their clan's rights very well or at all. A lot of people think the government isn't doing enough to help them, which is what this means. Only 36% think the government did a good job of recognising clan rights, and 27% said they didn't have an opinion. This shows that the government needs to better meet the needs of clans and protect their rights to build trust and strengthen the community.

Figure 10: Perception on Recognition of the Rights and Interests of Clan

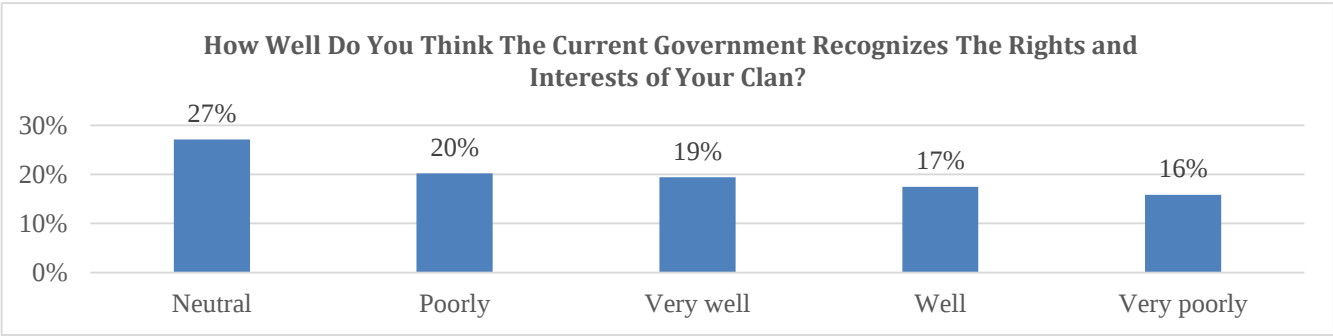


Table 2. shows that when asked what kinds of recognition are most important to them, respondents said that political and economic inclusion are the most important. This choice shows that a lot of people care more about money and power than about being accepted by other cultures. The results show how important it is for their clan's identity to get really political and economic rights. So, these problems need to be fixed if clans want to be recognised and given power.

Table 2: Forms of Recognition

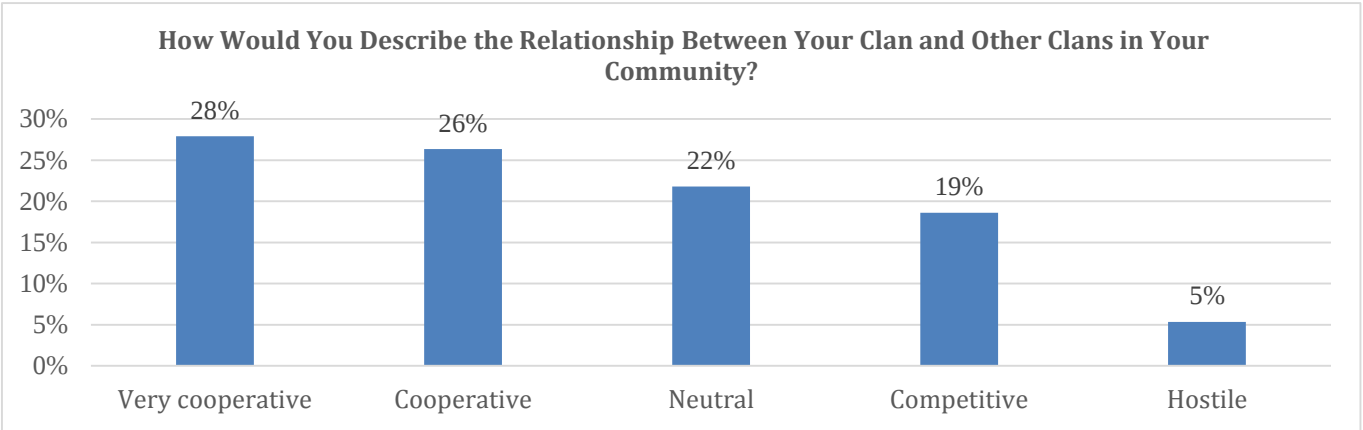
Form of Recognition	Percentage of Selections
Political Representation	65%
Economic Support	58%
Security and Protection	50%
Cultural Preservation	35%
Other (e.g., land rights)	10%

Source: (Field Survey, Author 2025)

4.8. Historical Grievances Related to Identity and Recognition and Political Dynamics

Figure 11. shows how hard it is for clans to work together. 54% of the respondents said the relationships between their clan and other clans is cooperative, and forty-five percent said they were cooperative. But 24% said their relationships were competitive or hostile, and 22% said they were neutral.

Figure 11: Relationship Among Clans

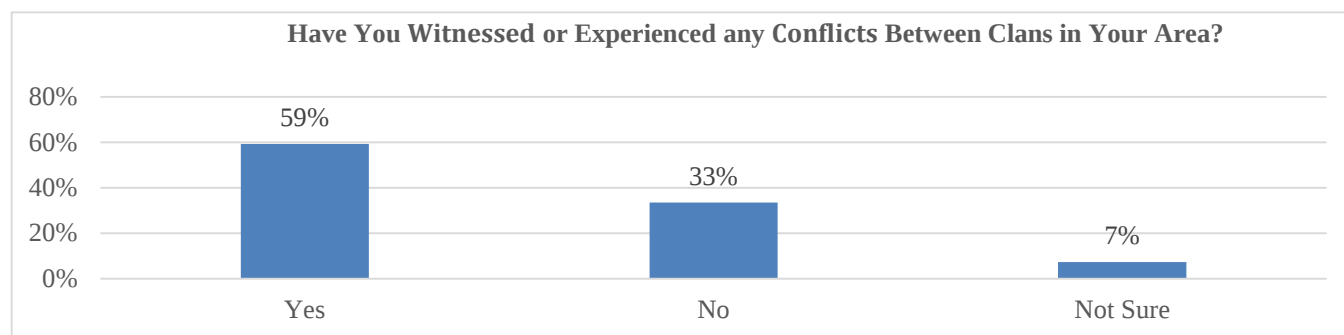


Key informants confirmed that old grudges play a role in politics in Somalia today, changing people's opinions, loyalties, and clan disputes. They said that the collapse of the central government, the civil war, and the legacy of colonialism had all led to a lot of anger, which caused by feeling left out, having no power, and fighting over resources. The Civil War showed how wrongs from the past can still affect people today.

For example, Siad Barre's dictatorship made people hate each other by favouring some clans over others. These stories from the past still inspire political action as clans try to get recognition and compensation for wrongs that were done to them in the past. Politicians often use these problems to get people on their side, which keeps the cycle of hate and division going. This history makes it harder to create a strong national identity and brings people together because many groups are still focused on past wrongs instead of working together to govern.

As shown in [Figure 12](#), clan fights happen a lot. About 60% the survey respondents said they had seen or been in one. But 7% weren't sure, and 33% said they had never seen a fight between clans. This information shows that clans are fighting for money and power and that many problems need to be solved. This shows how important it is to have good ways to settle disagreements to keep things stable.

Figure 12: Conflicts Between Clans



[Table 3](#), shows that the most common reasons for clan tensions given by respondents were a lack of resources and past conflicts. Politics is also a big part of these arguments. This shows that clans fight over more than just power; they also fight over cultural differences and for dignity.

Table 3: Causes of Inter-Clan Tensions

Cause	Percentage of Selections
Competition for Resources	60%
Historical Grievances	50%
Political Power Struggles	45%
Cultural Differences	25%
Dignity and Respect Issues	20%
Other (specify)	10%

Source: (Field Survey, Author 2025)

[Table 4](#), shows suggestions from the survey respondents on ways for clans to settle their differences. Dialogue and reconciliation exercises were the most popular choice, with 70% of participants, followed by working together on economic issues with 55% and liked community projects that involved everyone. 40% said they would like to see more educational programs and 35% said they would like to see traditional elders to have more power, and other strategies included getting people to get involved in their communities (20%), getting people to negotiate politically (25%), and getting people from different clans to marry each other (30%).

Table 4: Strategies for Resolving Inter-Clan Conflicts

Conflict Resolution Strategy	Percentage of Selections
Dialogue and Reconciliation Initiatives	70%
Economic Collaboration	55%
Joint Community Projects	45%
Educational Programs	40%
Empowering Traditional Elders	35%
Intermarriages	30%

Political Negotiations	25%
Community Engagement	20%

Source: (Field Survey, Author 2025)

4.9. Connection Between Identity and Recognition and Influence on Political Action

Table 5. shows that identity importance and government recognition have a weak positive relationship, which is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This implies that individuals who perceive their clan identity to be more significant do not always experience greater or lesser levels of perceived government acknowledgment of their clan rights and interests. This suggests that the significance of the clan identity and perceived recognition are rather independent in contemporary Somalia. Recognition perceptions can be affected by external factors, such as regional differences or historical grievances, without being affected by personal identity attachment.

Identity importance and political participation have a moderate positive correlation, which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). People who attach more importance to their clan identity are more likely to be involved in political activities. This is in line with the clan-based politics of Somalia whereby a robust clan identity may be used to motivate the engagement in rallies, voting, or advocacy to advance clan interests.

Government recognition and political participation have a very weak positive correlation which is not statistically significant. The perceived recognition by the government does not appear to be a very strong motivator or deterrent to political participation. This implies that there are other influences, like clan loyalty or regional conflicts, which can have a more significant influence on action motivation.

These results imply that the clan identity is a more powerful determinant of political action than the perceived recognition. The attachment to identity in the modern Somalia where clan politics is the rule of the day may result in participation to defend or advance clan interests even when the government acknowledgment is minimal. Low recognition may not be a barrier to action where there is another method of mobilization through clan solidarity.

Table 5: Correlation of Variables

Variable Pair	Pearson Correlation	p-value	Interpretation
Clan Identity's Importance & Government Recognition	0.134	0.189	Weak positive, not significant
Clan Identity's Importance & Political Participation	0.267	0.008	Moderate positive, significant
Government Recognition & Political Participation	0.029	0.775	Very weak positive, not significant

Source: (Field Survey, Author 2025)

4.10. Diaspora's Role in Shaping Identity Dynamics

The key informants emphasized the significance of the Somali diaspora in transforming identity relations in Somalia, particularly in the process of reconstruction that is being undertaken. They stated that the Somali diaspora contributes significantly to the identity dynamics in Somalia as it assists in preserving its culture, political agendas, and remittances back home a significant amount of money.

The diaspora is altering the meaning of being Somali by integrating local traditions and global perceptions and demanding narratives that encompass all, regardless of their clan affiliation. This transnational engagement influences the political discourse since the members of the diaspora engage in social media and other avenues to raise awareness of the issues in Somalia.

Remittance of funds back home keeps the local economy afloat and develops. They lobby to have policies that favour them and their communities with the political power that this money provides them. Although they are concentrated on rebuilding, the diaspora remains attached to the interest of their clan. One individual mentioned that these identity problems transcend boundaries and turn out to be international since every clan has its diaspora network where it addresses clan-specific issues.

The institutionalisation of the diaspora has been further enhanced by the formation of Federal Member States that are clan-based. According to informants, these groups of diasporas strive to safeguard the political and economic interests of their home areas in the context of statehood. As an illustration, the diasporas of Somaliland, Puntland and Jubaland all

attempt to satisfy the requirements of their respective regions. This unity of the clan reflects a large portion of what it is to be Somali: the allegiance to the clan usually precedes the nationality. Informants cautioned that this loyalty would render development and governance difficult. This helps to argue that a large number of Somalis perceive their political condition largely in terms of their identity.

4.11. Federal States and Clan Identity Versus Centralism in Somalia

The political environment in Somalia is not very stable at the moment as the Federal Government desires to foster national unity and at the same time acknowledge clan affiliations particularly in establishing a federal system. According to Hassan (2019), federalism can be helpful in certain issues and aggravate others. Since the regions desire greater autonomy in the national system, there is a need to strike a balance between the local government, which acknowledges clan diversity, and the development of a robust national identity. Federalism might unite the old and new forms of government running but it must be done with care to ensure that the old forms of government are compatible with the new ones.

How the federalism, clan identities, and centralism are all related, is difficult to comprehend. In Somalia, the social and political life is highly based on clan identity. Federalism was a result of the collapse of central power and the civil war. It attempts to satisfy the demands of various clans by providing them with varying amounts of power. According to Menkhaus (2007), the 2012 Provisional Constitution establishes regional states along clan lines. This implies that the federal system acknowledges clan identities. This is aimed at promoting participation in every tier of governance.

Lewis (2002) however cautions that excessive emphasis on the use of clan-based federalism has the potential of undermining national unity and intensifying rivalries, which makes it more difficult to compete over power and resources. Conversely, centralism proposes one national power that transcends the clan boundaries. This strategy has been championed by several Somali governments in the past particularly when Siad Barre was in power. However, this type of centralisation caused civil unrest since it tended to infringe on the rights of the clans. Lewis indicates that the government collapsed due to their failure to listen to the clan matters.

The current tussle between federalism and centralism in Somalia is an indication of a greater issue: the definition of national identity and the management of the country. According to Menkhaus (2007), federalism must find a solution to hold the country together and at the same time represent clans. It is difficult to balance this due to the past issues and the struggle over the resources.

In this instance, the foreign players who have vested interests are dangerous. Outsiders to the clan do not always comprehend the functioning of clan politics, something that may be detrimental to local government (Kaptein, 2013). Once Interview remarks, you must know much about the way things are done in your territory to be able to deal with clan identification in a federal system.

The interviews with key informants reveal that the federal government has deteriorated in terms of relationship with the federal member states since the adoption of federalism. This is largely due to the disagreements on the manner of sharing out resources. This conflict raises larger questions of identity and representation as both Member States have clans that support them in believing that they are the guardians of their own community interests. The aim of federalism is to empower local communities. Favouring some groups by the federal programs creates tension and leaves people out. These strains have been aggravated by the fact that resources are not being distributed equally. Although federalism attempts to decentralize power, citizens do not trust it. According to the member states, the Federal Government does not provide sufficient money to the states and does not spend its resources wisely. This war is related to not only economic issues but also political power struggles. This complicates the implementation of federalism.

When the government does not listen to the local voices, then it becomes more authoritarian and centralised, and people will not trust it much. According to key informants, the battle between federalism and centralism has a significant impact on the way the Somali government appreciates the clan identities. The citizens believe that federalism will aid in clans collaborating, but its implementation can aggravate the situation. Others argue that excessive focus on the idea of clan-based federalism might be detrimental to the national unity. Centralist policies, however, attempt to establish one identity yet tend to divide clans which may result in conflict and marginalisation as was the case during the rule of Siad Barre.

4.12. Enforcement of The Resolutions/Outcomes of The National Consultative Council

According to the interviews, Somalia's National Consultative Council (NCC) takes care of important national issues. The NCC is made up of the President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Federal Member State Presidents, and the Governor of Benadir Regional Administration. But it hasn't been very successful because the decisions made, and results of its meetings are often not enforced. Apart from discussing urgent national issues, the purpose of these meetings is to help

governments reach agreements and work together more effectively. However, they often turn into long debates where members of the NCC can't communicate and refuse to set their differences aside.

The NCC meets as needed to talk about important national issues, but these talks can go on for weeks because members can't agree. Participants often feel left out and alone because they think their local or specific interests aren't being considered. Some members quit or not participate because they feel left out. This hurts the council's credibility and ability to make decisions.

Recent reports say that leaders from Puntland and Jubaland did not go to a month-long meeting in October 2024. This absence showed that they were less interested in federal procedures. Some interviews pointed that the absence of Jubaland and Puntland States shows that they were politically alienated because of their tribal ties, while others think that they disagreed with the council's authority. These kinds of events make people even more worried about the fact that some important parts of Somali society are not included in national conversations.

There are serious consequences for this exclusion. When the federal government makes decisions without full representation, the relationship between the federal government and the states gets worse. This could make people even more divided and make them think the government isn't real. This setting makes it more likely that conflicts will happen, which makes it harder to bring the country together and change the government.

Also, NCC resolutions can't be enforced, which makes them less legitimate and useful for institutions. When people don't keep their promises, trust is hurt, which makes it harder to carry out both short-term and long-term governance plans. The NCC needs to be more open and include all Federal Member States to rebuild trust. To make the council more trustworthy and promote national unity and policy coordination, there needs to be real dialogue, recognition of different interests, and action on decisions.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate the intricate relationships among politics, identity and recognition. Stability in Somalia is affected by clan affiliations. A feeling of belonging is developed by being a part of a clan. Nonetheless, studies show that it influences political behaviour as well. Clan affiliation also plays a significant role in political views, and thus clan loyalty is important in the formation of political alliance and governing.

The recognition theory indicates that people and social groups require recognition of their identity and rights in order to develop social cohesion and political stability. Other scholars such as Fukuyama believe that a sense of resentment and instability are caused by being ignored. In Somalia, there are no formal identities of clans, which contributes to conflict. The results indicate that the identity of the clan has a significant influence on the development of conflicts in Somalia. This highlights the significance of the affiliations of the clan to political behaviour and conflict dynamics.

The current lack of stability in Somalia is a result of a general lack of acknowledgement of thymos, which is the innate desire of people to be seen as worthy, equal, and dignified by their community and state. According to survey information, the identity of the clan is the primary means through which Somali people can declare their value and receive social, political, and economic recognition. The thymotic needs are not satisfied when people or clans believe that the state does not recognize them, marginalizes them, or looks down on them as the rating of government recognition is high, i.e. the ratings of Poorly and Very poorly are high. This causes a great deal of resentment, humiliation and a feeling of injustice not just in terms of resources or power but also in terms of their humanity and place in the national order. This need to be recognized is not met, and this instability is achieved in three primary ways:

To begin with, on the political mobilization and moral outrage. When individuals feel that their clan is not being fairly represented in politics and more than 70% of the respondents rated it as either poorly or worse, they feel that it is not just a policy failure but an existential insult. This triggers thymos and transforms grievances into pressing needs to change. One of the respondents noted, "Clan identity is the only significant colour any Somali citizen can sleep under, which demonstrates that their identity is a proxy of dignity. The failure of formal institutions to offer recognition causes the clans to find other methods to establish themselves, be it armed opposition, secessionist movements such as Somaliland, or violent competition over power. This is what makes conflict not only a strategic question but also a question of life.

Secondly, in the zero-sum game of dignity. Dignity is replaced by political power and economic resources in a state that does not have legitimacy and processes based on merit. The competition over such resources is no longer based on practical needs, but rather on demonstrating the value of the group. The fact that responses mentioning Political power struggles and Competition for resources as the major factors of tension is indicative of this trend; to control a ministry or a

water source is not only about the material gains but also about the recognition that the state refused. Every political negotiation becomes a battle of symbolic control, and the process of exclusion and revenge repeats itself.

And thirdly, on loss of trust and legitimacy. Fukuyama believes that the political systems that are stable must be based on mutual recognition between the state and the citizens. The federal system of Somalia and especially the 4.5 power-sharing framework is perceived as a hierarchical structure than a compromise of inclusion, where certain clans are naturally more recognizable than others. Trust is lost when the citizens feel that the state does not recognize them as equals. Such reactions as No government born out of a peace process has found legitimacy among Somalis underscore this failure. Lack of legitimacy leads to a decline of governance to clan patronage, further dividing people and rendering reconciliation unattainable.

According to the survey responses, there is a close relationship between the non-recognition and instability in Somalia. The government is not perceived to be appreciating the identities of the clans by many people since the percentage of Poorly or Very poorly is high. This impression results in bitter resentment of political alienation and economic marginalization. Such perceptions of injustice are the direct causes of the primary reasons of inter-clan tension, including resource competition and power struggles. This usually leads to the manifestation of conflicts and general insecurity.

Many respondents consider the clan-based power-sharing system such as the 4.5 formula as flawed and corrupt. This system erodes the legitimacy of states and the unity of the nation and compels individuals to rely on the clan systems to survive and seek justice. Consequently, the cycle of non-recognition, competition, and violence remains in place to bring about instability. Although the respondents always demand such solutions as dialogue, education, and economic development, the inability to grant fair recognition to all the clans is still a major obstacle on the way to the peaceful state and proper governance.

The reason the Somali government is unwilling to acknowledge the existence of clans is due to historic grievances. Clan divisions were aggravated by the breakdown of the central government and the civil war. The regime of Siad Barre discriminated against certain groups of people and the discriminated groups developed strong animosities and feelings of being left out. This historical context demonstrates how unresolved grievances may result in the recurring cycles of violence.

Competitive or hostile relationships are manifested through cooperative relationships with other clans. This brings out the intricacy of clan relations, where there is always the tension underneath. The past and historical bitter feelings influence the present loyalties and political conflicts, complicating the process of finding the stable governance.

Recognition theory is empirically supported by the fact that the Somali government does not take into account the importance of clan identities, which leads to the feeling of alienation by the marginalized groups. Such alienation is resented and leads to conflict by these groups seeking recognition. The survey data shows clearly that the perception of clan identity has a great impact on political behaviour. It demonstrates that the governance structures must take into account these identities in order to enhance stability.

The results indicate that there is a direct relationship between the past grievances and the contemporary political processes. Political loyalties and conflicts are still affected by the legacy of past injustices such as favouritism in the Barre regime. This historical context reinforces the argument that Fukuyama made that neglecting the necessity of recognition may cause a disruption in political systems because unresolved issues of the past are reflected in the present-day governance issues.

Clan affiliations are usually used to seek political power. These clan identities were enhanced by the civil war thus making the formation of a unified national government difficult. Any government will find it hard to work when the interests of the clans are not taken into consideration. The analysis shows that the political power in Somalia is divided into clan lines. It is also a demonstration of how the continuous conflicts and tensions are an obstacle to the process of national unity in the country.

The Somali diaspora has been engaged in the affairs of the clan and is also involved in politics today. Its proactive attempts to transform Somali nationalism reflect the role of transnational networks in the politics of the region. But this influence can also increase the tensions between the clans and provoke a larger vision. The diaspora groups tend to put the needs of their own clan before the national interests.

It is important to recognize the existence of various clan identities in order to promote political stability. The results indicate that the government can never exercise actual power unless the identities of the clans are acknowledged. This recognition is not only political representation but also social and cultural recognition. The two are critical in promoting

trust between clans. Most individuals are not satisfied, and they feel that the government is not doing much to protect their clan rights.

An analysis of the relationships between clans shows that there is a complicated combination of cooperation and rivalry. The social life of Somalia is complex. This split highlights the fact that peace promotion initiatives should target these problems through dialogue and reconciliation, and it should also focus on the causes of conflicts.

There are merits and demerits of federalism. It can assist clans to work together, though when it is mismanaged it can further divide. The findings suggest that Somalia has to balance between maintaining the identities of clans and promoting national unity to achieve effective governance. This balance is necessary to change the political environment of rivalry to cooperation and common rule.

The empirical results are a strong support of the theoretical framework of identity and recognition by Fukuyama. The paper has shown that the root cause of the political instability in Somalia has been the lack of thymos - the human need of dignity and recognition and not just material competition. When the clans believe that their identities are sidelined or rejected by the formal political systems, they develop what Fukuyama refers to as the politics of resentment, which makes them find other means of expressing their value and position. This theoretical perspective is the reason why the conventional conflict resolution methods that merely emphasized on resource allocation have not been effective; the problem lies in existential recognition and not material grievance. The results also conform to the ethnic conflict theory of Horowitz, with the clan identities in Somalia acting as ethnic markers, which overrides national citizenship in political calculations. The continued use of the *xeer* system and formal institutions is an example of how communities form parallel systems of governance where the state is not able to give sufficient recognition to it, which confirms the predictions of both Fukuyama and Horowitz regarding identity-based political action in divided societies.

6. Conclusion

The complicated interplay between politics, identity, and recognition in Somalia demonstrates the rate at which the social and political situation in the country is evolving. The findings of the study show that the identities of clans are not mere social constructs. They have a great influence on the Somali society by affecting the voting behaviour, alliances, and giving some opportunities over others. Their political processes are dependent on clan identification. This means that the clans have a significant influence on the way the government functions and the manner in which decisions are made. The analysis also shows that ancient issues still plague the country as different clans still fight to be recognized. The governments of the day have been unable to resolve these problems and there has been a series of war and fragmentation. This interferes with the development of Somalia into a democratic system that embraces and accommodates all its diverse identities.

The Somali diaspora is even more complicating as it redefines the national identity and shapes the local politics of other nations. This inter-border exchange highlights the necessity to bridge local realities and global views. The governance in Somalia should be able to handle the problems that are affecting its citizens and at the same time recognize the positive and negative contributions of the diaspora.

The results indicate that there is the need to come up with political systems that are free to all and that include social and cultural recognition and representation. The recognition of clan affiliations is essential in sustaining social unity and legitimacy of politics. Clans should communicate and pursue peace in order to enhance a greater sense of national identity.

To achieve long-term peace and security, Somalia needs a system of governance that would give due consideration to clan identities and at the same time foster national unity to restore confidence between various groups. Open communication and equitable distribution of resources should be the priorities of the politicians and policymakers. The only way that Somalia can hope to change its fractured political system into a system that encourages cooperation, inclusion and sustainable development is to learn the intricacies of identity and recognition. It is necessary to have an all-inclusive strategy that promotes cooperation and takes into account clan politics. The Federal Government and the Federal Member States need to have an honest discussion to regain trust. To ensure that Somali federalism is benefiting all, it is important that there be an open discussion on sharing resources equally and making decisions that are inclusive. Under this, the practice of federalism will become a reality that will be beneficial to everyone.

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Author Contributions

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Conflict of Interest

I hereby declare that this study has no conflicts of interest in whatsoever and that the author paid for all of the research costs.

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