

JOURNAL OF SOMALI STUDIES:

Research on Somalia and the Greater Horn of African
Countries

Indexed by: SCOPUS, IBSS, EBSCO, COPERNICUS, ERIH PLUS, ProQuest,
J-Gate and SABINET

Volume 11, (Number 1), April, 2024
Pp 109-130

Somalia's Tripartite Federalism Oxymoron: Building Democratic Institutions and Political Legitimacy in a Fragile Federation

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2056-5682/2024/v11n1a5>

Mohamed Bile Hashi, PhD

*(passed viva voce) Candidate,
Asia e University, Malaysia*

&

Professor Dr OO Yu Hock

Asia e University, Malaysia

Abstract

The study aims to explore the inherent tensions and complexities of pursuing democratic institution building and developing political legitimacy within the context of Somalia's fragile and seemingly contradictory tripartite federal system. In order to obtain the data needed to meet the study's objective, twenty-five (25) key informants were interviewed using a qualitative research approach. Key informants' interview responses show that the enervating political legitimacy both undermines institution building and contributes to the ongoing conflict in Somalia, thus making the prospect of restoring order a challenging undertaking, and the instability of Somalia's federalism conspicuously prominent! Legitimacy is a fundamental principle of politics that is premised upon the right to rule or govern. However, in Somalia's context, the right to govern and the political obligation arising therefrom involve the culture-bound informal and formal consent, norms and laws of Islam that

continue to influence the vicissitudes of political legitimacy and institution building needed to stabilize Somalia's federalism. In addition, the stability of Somalia's federalism requires effective institution building with political legitimacy that enables a strong government structure that promotes accountability and divert the clan-based power struggle to inclusive state. The results from this study endorse the argument that political legitimacy requires fair elections based on indigenous principles and open to all parties of the community, a legitimate and publicly ratified constitution, parties based on ideology, a civic state, honest leadership that wants to build the country, a distinct separation and distribution of power among institutions, and freedom of speech within legal bounds.

Keywords: *Political Legitimacy, Democratic Institution Building, Federalism, Instability, Accountability*

Introduction

Political theory has always placed a great deal of emphasis on legitimacy, which is also a fundamental question in political philosophy and political science that merits further research (Nozick, 1974; Weatherford, 1992; Tahir & Seid, 2023). Academics and public figures have regularly expressed concern that democracy may be in danger if legitimacy declines (De Waal, 2020; Biyo et al., 2023), and several studies call for academics to once again focus on political legitimacy as an important area for future research (Gabriele, 2016).

It has been emphasized by Kühnhardt (2001) that creating an institution is now seen as creating a constitution. Strong institutions are important for faster economic and social growth (Jones, 2003; Rodrik et al., 2004; Nurshaikhova et al., 2023). Others have argued that in countries like Somalia that are undergoing transition, institutions may have a significant influence on overall progress (Hoff & Stiglitz, 2016). Somalia's federalism has made progress in recent years, but challenges continue to hinder peace and stability (Zoppi, 2018; Hashi & Barasa, 2023). There is a research gap in exploring the influence of democratic institution building and political legitimacy on Somalia's federalism. While some studies have examined these issues individually (Akanbi, 2017; Fombad et al., 2022), there is a lack of comprehensive research on their interconnectedness and broader implications for sustainable governance. Discussions suggest that political instability contributes to Africa's institutional problems (Muhammad, 2007; Abdulyakeen, 2023),

but no previous study has examined the reasons behind Somalia's federal system's instability and its link to institution building and political legitimacy.

Research on Somalia's political landscape often overlooks the perspectives of Somali grassroots stakeholders, including local traditional elders, academics, women's groups, youth, and political movements. These stakeholders are directly affected by the deficiencies of governance institutions. Understanding their views on legitimacy, democratic participation, and federalism is crucial for developing effective governance reforms (Hashi & Hock, 2022). To the authors' knowledge, no previous studies have explored the link between political legitimacy, institution building, and federal stability in the Somali context.

Prior studies have used Deliberative Democracy Theory (Cohen, 1989), Institutional Theory (North, 1990), and the Theory of Federalism as a Mechanism for Balancing Power (Elazar, 1987) to examine the relationship between political legitimacy, democratic institution building, and federalism stability. This study makes significant contributions to the existing literature. First, our study includes individuals from both public and private institutions, resulting in a wider range of participants' interpretations on political legitimacy, the creation of democratic institutions, and the challenges of federalism stability compared to studies that only surveyed individuals from the public sector. Second, most of the literature on these concepts focuses on developed and developing countries, so our study offers valuable insights into how the same process operates in less developed countries like Somalia. Third, the post-conflict trajectory of Somalia serves as a useful case study for understanding the complex interactions among political legitimacy, the establishment of democratic institutions, and unstable federalism in fragile nations.

Literature Review

Political Legitimacy

According to Easton (1975), legitimacy is defined as citizens' views, more precisely as "the conviction that it is lawful and proper to obey the authorities and to adhere to the obligations of the system." By virtue of the traits, features, or procedures it possesses, legitimacy determines who has political authority, as well as what persons in that position are permitted to do (Biyo et al., 2023).

When Kornberg and Clarke (1992), using the Canadian scenario, defined three hierarchical dimensions — support for the political community, regime institutions, and incumbent political authorities — empirical support for the multidimensional nature of legitimacy progressed significantly. As Olivier's (2004) study contends, respecting nationalism, Islam, and local political culture is a requirement for political legitimacy in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that this idea of political development's primary flaw and reason for failure is that it ignores the crucial issue of political legitimacy, which can only be anchored in the history and political culture of the nation.

Building on Deliberative Democracy Theory, studies highlight the significance of public participation and deliberation in influencing political decisions (Cohen, 1989). Hashemi (2016), Chen (2017), and Abdullahi (2019) have asserted that cultural and religious differences, such as those between Islam, Christianity, and Confucianism, have a significant impact on how societies understand political legitimacy.

Democratic Institution Building

Grogan (2013) and Havrylyshyn & Van Rooden (2003) are exceptions, who utilize comprehensive measures of institutional building to examine the relationship between institutions and growth. Simonsen (2004) makes the case that ethnic divisions must be addressed in the creation of new political institutions given the importance of ethnicity in Afghan politics and society today. However, the success of an institution depends on how well government programs and policies are planned and implemented (Lambsdorff, 2007; Akanbi, 2017; Norris, 2011).

Trust-building is a crucial component in institution building in failed nations like Somalia, and attempts to duplicate the formal-legal political institutions inherited from the West have met with little success (Menkhaus, 2014). We ground our argument in Institutional Theory, which argues that functional institutions that preserve the rule of law and safeguard individual rights are necessary components of a legitimate government, and that formal institutions are essential to the establishment and maintenance of political legitimacy (North, 1990).

Stability of Somalia Federalism

Somalia, like many other African nations, has started to develop a federal structure to be able to solve its crisis (Yimenu, 2023); however, major

choices that would determine the specifics of Somalia's federalism still need to be made (Negussie, 2023; Hussein, 2023).

The primary obstacle to the Somali federalism project is converting individuals into stakeholders by redirecting choices away from short-term security arrangements provided by clans and toward long-term prospects offered by the state with federal local-level administration (Zoppi, 2018). Drawing on the theory of federalism as a mechanism for balancing power, studies provide evidence that federalism can aid in balancing the authority of the federal government and subnational entities, lowering the possibility of authoritarian rule and fostering regional autonomy (Elazar, 1987).

Building democratic institutions is based on political legitimacy because, in order for citizens to accept authority and abide by laws, they must feel that institutions are legitimate (Dagher, 2018). This can be complicated in Somalia due to the interaction between formal government structures, norms based on clan, and religious influences. On the other hand, maintaining the rule of law, providing equitable representation, and efficiently delivering public goods are all ways that strong democratic institutions can strengthen political legitimacy (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). However, legitimacy may be weakened in Somalia due to issues such as corruption and the fragility of institutions. Both political legitimacy and robust democratic institutions are necessary for the stability of federalism. Fragmentation and instability may worsen if people have little faith in the federal government or its institutions (Fessha, 2012).

Methodology

Using a qualitative research approach, this study examines how political legitimacy and institutional building influence the stability of Somalia's federalism. In-depth interviews were used as the primary method of data collection, and any notes made during the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. This approach has been chosen because it is a research approach that focuses on understanding people's experiences, perspectives, and meanings, which this study demands. Therefore, through this method, the meaning and intentions underlying human interactions are better understood and interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The in-person interviews also made sure that the interviewees, who included public leaders, government officials, academics, clan elders, youth, and women's groups, were able to

understand the questions in the semi-structured interview guide. These respondents were chosen because they are important as they have direct experience with the challenges of governing Somalia. They can provide insights into the factors that contribute to or undermine political legitimacy, institution building, and federal stability. Some of these respondents, like youth and women, are the future of Somalia and represent marginalized groups that are often excluded from decision-making processes. In order to gather the data required to fulfill the study's objectives, twenty-five (25) respondents were interviewed (see Appendix I on the Respondents' Demographic Profile). There was a strong sense of confidentiality displayed. To elicit the required response, the interviews were guided by semi-structured questions. Thematic analysis was used since it provides a way for both interpretation and researcher involvement in the examination of the data. Identification of codes and themes was the primary focus (Borcsa & Willig, 2021). The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines for research with human participants. The researchers obtained informed consent from all participants and protected their confidentiality.

Data Analysis and Results

Political Legitimacy

Given the extreme inequality in Somalia's political culture, respondents believe that political legitimacy means fair elections that are based on Islamic principles and open to all clans (Hawiye, Darod, Dir, Digil & Mirifle, and combined clans). A completed, legitimate, and publicly ratified constitution, law and order with a clear hierarchy, parties based on ideology and nationalism, a civic state, honest leadership that wants to build the country, a distinct separation and distribution of power among institutions, and freedom of speech within legal bounds are also regarded as indicators of political legitimacy.

The study draws on Deliberative Democracy Theory, which advocates for decision-making processes that are inclusive and representative of Somalia's diverse clans, regions, and marginalized groups. Respondents stated that open dialogue and reasoned arguments that address the concerns of various stakeholders can build consensus and cultivate a sense of shared ownership in political outcomes. As decisions and policies reflect this broader participation and reasoned debate, they gain legitimacy. People are more likely to accept and support

institutions built on this foundation of inclusivity. When institutions have legitimacy derived from deliberative processes, there is greater public buy-in, reducing resistance to their establishment and operation. Institutions built on legitimacy enjoy a mandate from the people and greater trust that they will serve the public interest rather than narrow agendas. This trust allows them to function more effectively.

Deliberative democracy principles suggest that prioritizing inclusive participation in decisions around resource allocation in Somalia, especially in contested areas, could enhance the legitimacy of new or reformed institutions tasked with managing those resources. This legitimacy would foster greater trust and cooperation, minimizing disputes and reducing the instability linked to political access in Somalia's federal system. According to one respondent,

...political legitimacy in the Somali federal system can be created by a united populace that elects the proper candidates through voting and population polls. (Lecturer, April 2023).

Clan elders and interest groups, that control the indirect election systems, engage in clan-based politics with a narrow mindset, resulting in youth having less influence and representation in the federalist system. According to one respondent,

Clans view the state as a reflection of themselves and believe that young people cannot represent the clan due to their lack of experience and political naivety (Civil society activist, April 2023).

The study also revealed a lack of unity among young people, a partially tribal mentality that influences them, and self-interest among those who join the system, which hinders other young people from pursuing positions and employment opportunities that would promote youth representation.

Many young people do not understand what a state is because they were born and raised during the civil war, a time when there was no effective state in the nation. Labeling and associating young people with rebel groups like Al-Shabaab has also lowered their status in the political system. Age and finance are two additional factors that reduce youth participation in politics because young people lack the resources to bribe state leaders and clan elders, who determine who is to participate in the political system. According to one respondent,

This is a result of the political system adopting the nomadic culture of Somalia, where elders dominate the clan (Medical doctor, March 2023).

As solutions to halt this marginalization, respondents proposed reform of the government structure, new enlightened leadership, combating corruption, and organized institutions.

No state agency that might act morally is trusted by the respondents.

I don't trust any sector of the current government; the most trusted one may have been a well-organized, lawful, and competent parliament and just judiciary system, but they are all crooked, claimed one respondent (Political analyst, March 2023).

The study discovered that respondents believed that the majority of those in charge of the government were not smart people who were typically knowledgeable in their fields, and many of them were also noted to be corrupt.

Because government representatives serve their own interests rather than those of the people they represent, my friends and I are not fairly represented in the political system, and I do not feel proud of the current federal system, argued one interviewee (Nurse, March 2023).

Democratic Institution Building

The results show that citizens lack a voice and are not held accountable by all tiers of government — federal, state, and local. Due to being targeted, people are afraid to speak up. One respondent said,

Even if someone from the dominant clan of the state tries to speak for the people or about their difficulties, he or she is immediately jailed or occasionally assassinated (University Administrator, April 2023).

Certain groups, such as journalists, civil society organizations, and women's groups, assert that they speak for the people; yet, since they are not independent, participants agree that this group speaks for the government and its member states. Each state has launched a radio and television show with its own journalists and media specialists.

There is no accountability in government institutions, as recently one of the federal government's authorities rejected a deputy who had been nominated by the government; such officials couldn't be held accountable to a disadvantaged populace that can't even demonstrate, one participant argued (Director, Ministry of Justice, March 2023).

According to the study, this may be prevented by establishing independent, trustworthy civil society organizations, strong governmental institutions, and empowered local communities.

This study draws on institutional theory to examine how weak, unaccountable institutions directly undermine the stability of Somali federalism. Personalized power, as described by respondent 13, has prevented the development of autonomous institutions capable of upholding the rule of law or providing a check on executive power. This lack of "institutionalization" breeds a perception of favoritism and erodes legitimacy. This creates a crisis of legitimacy for the federal system itself, as citizens see it failing to uphold its core promises. While minor reform efforts are noted in federal institutions, the dominance of personalistic rule remains a primary destabilizing factor. According to the respondents, there is no established federal definition or concept; there is no unified and structured army; there are no resource sharing policies, and there is no established electoral process. Additionally, Somaliland is not included in this institution building process.

One respondent stated,

Even the Members of Parliament who claim to represent you as a clan member don't speak for you if you are wronged by any institution (Lecturer, April 2023).

As the MPs were picked by state presidents rather than by the clans and constituencies they represent, the public is not happy with them. Due to the fact that institutions are assigned and appointed to unprofessional, uneducated, and underqualified individuals based on clan and kinship, the respondents stated that citizens do not acknowledge government effectiveness in institution building, which lowers the regulatory quality of public institutions.

Even if someone attempts to work better for the community in Somalia, where there is no rule of law and power is the key to operating, they will be fired by either the ruling group or the foreign agency that finances the federal government, one interviewee said (Humanitarian staff, March 2023).

Furthermore, participants confirmed that the enormous level of corruption in the Somali federal system is the most terrible issue facing the country, rendering its federal institutions weak, ineffective, and demoralizing.

The amount of corruption is so extreme that it can be more accurately described as theft because government officials accept bribes from both domestic and international sources, which makes it difficult to even determine the quantity of corrupt finance and those involved because, for instance, higher government officials receive funds from Gulf states without following regular banking procedures, one interviewee confirmed (Clan Chief, April 2023).

Stability of Somalia Federalism

This study draws on the Theory of Federalism as a Mechanism for Balancing Power (Elazar, 1987) to explore the mutually reinforcing interplay between political legitimacy, democratic institution building, and the stability of Somalia's federal system. Legitimacy, derived from factors like inclusive processes, fair power sharing, and service delivery, is seen as fueling the development of strong institutions. However, robust institutions further solidify legitimacy by enabling fair governance and demonstrating tangible benefits of the federal system.

As long as clan politics exist and elections are managed by a selected few state and federal officials, the public will not have faith in the institutions of government, an interviewee responded (Medical Doctor, April 2023).

The analysis asserts that it is still too early to predict if Somalia's federal system will be stable because the bulk of the country is still under Al Shabaab authority and because clans in that region have not publicly expressed their views on the federal structure. The study emphasizes that as long as legitimacy and institution building are not consolidated, Somali clans will continue to harbor hostility toward one another and be prone to clan warfare. One respondent stated that

..the stability of federalism can't be determined until Al Shabaab is either defeated or reconciled because Somaliland and Puntland, whose regions are less dominated by Al Shabaab, are presently in clan disputes

owing to federalism, and its muddled arguments; resource and border wars will occur as long as federalism is enforced (Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, April 2023).

The majority of people believe that federalism did not receive a fundamental tool that can advance it and that clan-based politics has degraded it and made it bankrupt; that it gave an opportunity to clans that do manifest strongly in the center. Yet, the study finds that federalism itself poses a greater threat to Somalia's political stability than clan-based politics because the system is run by incompetent and irresponsible politicians, and group interests rather than societal concerns are frequently prioritized. As one respondent put it,

If the society is content with the representatives and well represented, and service is delivered, they would have trusted the state, but regrettably, dishonest people are recruited, and this undermines the essence of federalism (Director, Ministry of Environment, March 2023).

According to the results, people are perplexed as to what the Member of Parliament represents – a clan, a region, a faction, a movement, or the general populace – because unqualified and deceptive posts are established to appease friends and clans, even though the nation is unable to bear the financial demands of all those positions. Federalism itself, as the study revealed, is not bad, but it lacks an atmosphere suited for application, effective leadership that leads, and federal instruments such as lawful power-sharing, competent and just institutions, and financial capacity.

Representing my community is more honorable than representing a clan. Government officials exploit my clan identity, but they don't represent me; they represent themselves, and they enter politics in search of resources rather than representation. Jobs and security checks are all dependent on finding your MP and elders, not on your skills and education. Hence, all worthless individuals are hired, according to one respondent (Banker, March 2023).

Taking a comprehensive approach to understanding how political legitimacy, the development of democratic institutions, and the stability of Somali federalism are interconnected, the argument put out by respondents is that Somali political institutions' structure, norms, and

regulations contribute to their perceived illegitimacy and incapacity to operate efficiently within a federal framework. The capacity of institutions to operate impartially, represent diverse interests, and provide basic services is devalued by respondents. Through this viewpoint, the instability of Somalia's federalism is linked to weaknesses in legitimacy and poor institutions. Limited engagement of individuals, for instance, results in a feeling of illegitimate institutions, which in turn feeds instability when citizens oppose the federal system, according to the respondents. Similar to this, a lack of institutional accountability breeds mistrust, which threatens the stability of federal stability. On the other hand, the unequal distribution of resources and poor service delivery undermine the legitimacy of state and federal institutions, which exacerbates tensions within the federal structure. The public's perception of institutions as untrustworthy and ineffective contributes to instability in the federal system. Previously documented reports, such as Hashi & Barasa's investigations in 2022, strongly suggest that collaboration between federal and state actors has broken down, putting stability at risk. The researchers also observed that citizens are left vulnerable by inaccessible and weak formal legal systems, indicating that malfunctions in the federal system result in a lack of legitimacy for institutions; conflict and instability are therefore both a cause and an effect of this.

As people seek protection outside of government structures, such as within their clans, the federal system is undermined, stated one respondent (Women's Association Leader, April 2023).

Discussion

As far as political legitimacy is concerned, the study found that the cultural and religious influences of Somali people have an impact on the idea of political legitimacy, which respondents perceive as the idea that people recognize and accept the authority of a political system or government. This means that what Westerners value as legitimacy, such as democracy and elections, is not recognized as legitimacy in Somalia. This is in line with Chen (2017), who argued that diversity in terms of culture and religion has a big impact on how people view political legitimacy. For instance, Confucian values such as moral rectitude and hierarchical relationships may be seen as essential to political legitimacy in Eastern cultures like China and Japan. This is also consistent with Hashemi's (2016) conclusion that religion is a significant factor in

determining how people view political legitimacy. Sharia, or Islamic law, is often viewed as the cornerstone of political legitimacy in nations with a majority of Muslims. As a result, the study concludes that the idea of political legitimacy is complicated and nuanced, and it is influenced by cultural and religious variables. It emphasizes how different cultures and faiths assign various meanings to political legitimacy, and how distinct interpretations may exist even within a single culture or religion. Knowing these subtleties is essential to understanding how political systems are viewed and accepted in various cultural and religious contexts.

According to the respondents' views, the study also discovered that youth without significant clan links have fewer prospects due to the perpetuation of nepotism and favoritism in clan-based politics. Clan-based politics frequently prioritizes allegiance to a particular clan or tribe over merit, which can make it difficult for young people to participate in politics on an equal basis. This discourages young people from participating in politics by making them feel excluded and disillusioned. Political corruption among leaders has reduced public confidence in the system and discouraged young people from becoming active in politics, as the study revealed. Young people lost interest in politics after witnessing unscrupulous behavior among political leaders and started to believe that it is a dishonest and unethical profession (see Abdullahi, 2019). Finally, in order to promote inclusiveness and meritocracy in politics and encourage meaningful participation of members in political processes, the study proposed extensive political changes and the promotion of openness and accountability. The respondents argued that the public does not trust government institutions because they believe that their executives are corrupt. People think that government agencies are run by "crooked" individuals for various reasons: high-profile corruption incidents involving government figures and unethical conduct or abuse of authority by government officials. Such views of the public have weakened confidence in governmental institutions and made it harder for them to believe that government officials can act in the best interests of the public.

According to the study's participants, when it comes to institution building, Somali citizens face difficulties in holding federal, state, and local governments accountable and expressing their views. People are afraid to speak up because they fear being targeted. This finding aligns with previous studies on civic engagement and democratic participation, which emphasize the importance of citizens' involvement in government

and holding elected officials responsible for their actions (Norris, 2011). Power imbalances, institutionalized discrimination, limited access to resources and information, retaliation, and harassment were identified as reasons for the lack of accountability and fear of speaking up. For instance, marginalized groups, including minorities, women, youth, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, may encounter greater challenges in communicating with the government and expressing their thoughts due to prejudice and a lack of political representation. The fear of speaking up further hinders civic engagement, highlighting the importance of removing barriers to citizen participation, promoting transparency and accountability in government, and safeguarding people's right to freely express their thoughts without fear of reprisal. This finding is consistent with studies by Hashi & Hock (2022) and Hashi & Barasa (2023), which found that Somali people restrain themselves from expressing their ideas or engaging in civic activities due to concerns about retaliation or repercussions.

The argument of the participants asserts that the quality and strength of institutions play a crucial role in a country's stability. However, the current weak institutions in the federal government of Somalia, instead of contributing to the stability of federal institutions, are the main causes of Somalia's instability. The argument highlights how weak institutions, characterized by corruption, a lack of accountability, and low capability, have hindered Somalia's attempts at state-building and undermined governance, contributing to the country's ongoing instability. To achieve lasting peace and stability in Somalia, the study proposes that it is essential to address institutional shortcomings as they play a significant role in determining a country's stability. This outcome is consistent with prior studies on the linkage between institutions and stability in fragile states. "Government without government in Somalia: Spoilers, state building, and the politics of coping," a paper by Menkhaus (2006), is among the studies that could be cited to support this finding.

According to the respondents, the term "corruption" refers to the misuse of authority or position for one's own benefit, which frequently involves bribery, theft, nepotism, and other unethical behavior. It occurs in an array of fields, including politics, business, education, and healthcare, as well as at all tiers of government, from local to federal. In addition to its numerous negative consequences, corruption weakens the rule of law, diminishes public confidence, distorts public policy, hampers economic growth, and worsens inequality. Many studies in the fields of political science and governance have supported the conclusion that

there is a connection between corruption and poor institution building. The “Institutional economics of corruption and reform” study by Lambsdorff (2007) provides empirical proof of this connection. During the study’s investigation into the stability of Somalia’s federalism, political legitimacy and institution building were found to be two essential elements in ensuring the stability of federalism in Somalia. The study’s results showed that political legitimacy is crucial for the stability of Somalia’s federalism; this implies that for federalism to be implemented successfully in Somalia, the federal government and regional states must have the trust and support of the Somali people. The analysis also highlighted the vital role of institution building in maintaining the sustainability and stability of federalism in Somalia. Institutions such as the constitution, the judiciary, the legislature, and the public administration regulate the interaction between the federal government and the regional states.

Successful institution building entails creating strong, effective institutions that can resolve disputes, uphold the law, and deliver public services in a fair and unbiased manner. Federalism can flourish and be stable in an environment that is supported by institutions that are regarded as reliable and trustworthy by all relevant parties. The results agree with De Waal’s (2020) findings on federalism and state-building in fragile and conflict-affected nations, including Somalia.

However, according to the respondents’ interpretations, the implication of the study is that Somalia’s federalism is “bankrupt,” having failed to bring about stability and reconciliation in the nation. This indicates that Somalia’s federal style of government has not been successful in resolving the problems the country confronts with regard to peace-building and stability efforts. Such a judgment, according to them, may result from a number of circumstances, including:

1. The ongoing war: For many years, Somalia has been plagued by conflicts, civil wars, and instability. As a result, federalism is perceived as being inefficient due to the absence of a powerful central government and the existence of numerous armed organizations and factions.
2. Inadequate capacity and resources: Somalia has failed to develop the capacity and resources required for efficient federal governance. The successful implementation of federalism, which necessitates strong governance structures, coordination, and resources at all levels of government, has been significantly hindered by weak institutions, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure.

3. Political fragmentation: Somalia has experienced widespread political fragmentation and conflicts between the federal authority and its component states. The ability of different levels of government to work together and coordinate effectively has been hindered by competing interests, power struggles, and disagreements about resource distribution and political representation. As a result, federalism's potential to bring about stability and unity across the country has been severely impeded.

4. Lack of inclusivity: To achieve stability in a war-torn nation like Somalia, all parties must be included. However, Somalia's federalism has not been fully inclusive, causing marginalized groups and regions to feel alienated from the decision-making process. This exclusivity has made federalism less effective in fostering stability and harmony. This result is fundamentally at odds with Muhammad's (2007) assertion that Nigeria's political system's inability to achieve full stability should not be seen as its collapse.

Conclusions

The outcome highlighted in the article implies that political legitimacy and institution building can influence Somalia's prospects for stable federalism, progress, and international attention, ushering in a unified country after years of civil conflict and sectarian clashes. A government may effectively provide leadership, enforce the law, and meet the needs of its people when its citizens believe it to be legitimate, and when its institutions are in place and operating properly. It is vital to remember that Somalia has recently faced several challenges, such as political unrest, violent crime, and ineffective governance. As a result, the process of restoring political legitimacy and institutions can be complex and prolonged, requiring consistent efforts from both local and international parties. The study's findings do, however, point to the possibility that Somalia's prospects for stability, development, and global recognition may critically depend on investing in political legitimacy and institution building. From a Somali perspective, a government or political system is said to have political legitimacy when its constituents acknowledge and accept it, while institution building is the act of constructing and bolstering formal organizations, such as governmental institutions, the rule of law, and public administration, in order to efficiently administer the nation.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

It is critical to recognize the limitations of the research investigation. The study used a qualitative method with a sample of 25 key informants from the capital cities of the five federal member states of Somalia. Future studies should focus on rural areas and conduct the same research by utilizing a mixed method. While the study explored the influence of political legitimacy, institution building, and the stability of Somalia's federalism, it did not fully account for the influence of external elements such as international politics, foreign aid, and climate change. Future research should look at similar circumstances in other African federal governments to draw similarities and learn from alternative techniques and their outcomes.

Acknowledgement: The researchers express their sincere gratitude to all the participants and teams of this research study. Without their participation and support, this study would not have been possible.

Declaration of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all the respondents involved in the study.

Funding details: We hereby declare that we have not received any funding from any source for the research study entitled "Somalia's Tripartite Federalism Oxymoron: Building Democratic Institutions and Political Legitimacy in a Fragile Federation." We have conducted this research independently and without any financial support.

Data availability statement: Data is available upon request.

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Appendix I

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Interview Respondents	Gender, Age, Education, Role	Coding
Senior Lecturer	Male, 63 years, PhD, Political analyst & public figure	R1
Director, Ministry of Justice	Male, 45 years, Master, Public servant	R2
Humanitarian Officer	Female, 36 years, Bachelor & Civil society Activist	R3
University Administrator	Male, 47 years, Master, Academic & Public figure	R4
Youth Club Leader	Female, 28 years, Master & Public figure	R5
Religious Scholar	Male, 47 years, PhD, Religious affairs expert	R6
Women's Association Leader	Female, 34 years, Bachelor, Civil society Activist	R7
Director, Ministry of Education	Male, 32 years, Bachelor, Public servant	R8
Clan Chief	Male, 77 years, Informal Education, Clan chief	R9
Clan Chief	Male, 68 years, Informal Education, Clan chief	R10
Officer Ministry of Agriculture	Female, 42 years, Master, Public servant	R11
University Secretary	Female, 34 years, Master, Academic	R12
University Lecturer	Male, 53 years, PhD, Political analyst	R13
Medical Association Leader	Male, 46 years, Master, Public figure	R14
Nurse	Female, 27 years,	R15

	Bachelor, Civil society Activist	
Humanitarian Expert	Female, 25 years, Bachelor, Public figure	R16
Director, Ministry of Health	Female, 36 years, Master, Public servant	R17
Banker	Female 35 years, Bachelor, Private sector employee	R18
University Graduate	Female, 24 years, Bachelor, Human rights advocate	R19
Director, Ministry of Education	Female, 35 years, Bachelor, Public servant	R20
Clan Chief	Male, 66 years, Informal Education, Clan chief	R21
Religious Scholar	Male, 55 years, PhD, Religious affairs expert	R22
Senior Political Analyst	Male, 69 years, PhD, Public figure	R23
Senior Researcher	Male, 53 years, PhD, Advisor & Public figure	R24
CEO of Business Corporation	Male, 52 Years, Bachelor, Political commentator	R25