

Somaliland Democracy and Election's

Mustafe Mahamoud Abdillahi

Kampala International University School of Humanities and Social Science Management
Public Management

Author for Correspondence Email: alkhalili123@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4743-3695>

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ABSTRACT

No UN member state or international organization has formally recognized Somaliland's self-proclaimed independence. It is the world's largest unrecognized state by de facto controlled land area. It belongs to an advocacy group called the Organization of Unrepresented Nations and Peoples, which includes minorities, native populations, and unrecognized or occupied areas. Democratically elected governments have ruled the region since 1991 and are working to gain worldwide recognition as the Republic of Somaliland's government. A democracy is a system of governance where the people themselves make decisions, hold the authority. Its components include the rule of law, respect for individual rights, accountability and transparency, free and fair elections, and citizen participation. Although the upper house has not been elected since 1997, this article will analyze Somaliland's constitutional referendum and the polls for presidential, representatives, and local councils. The old and new problems and solutions to Somaliland elections are also examined in this study, as they are still present in the Somaliland context. The approach of this study is rooted in the review of narrative literature.

Keywords: Constitution, Elections, Presential, Representatives, Local Councils, and Challenges

OVERVIEW

Both notable achievements and ongoing issues characterize Somaliland's democracy. Its establishment of a regular presidential changeover is by far its greatest achievement. According to Posner and Young's (2007) research on the institutionalization of political power in sub-Saharan Africa, presidents have five methods to step down. They fell into two primary groups: "individuals whose leaders were removed from office through ordinary procedures (losing an election, resigning voluntarily, or dying naturally) and instances when leaders were ousted through unethical means (coup, violent overthrow, or murder)". When it comes to limiting institutionalizing political authority and presidential power more generally, frequent leadership change "marks the most important step," Abdirahman Ahmed Ali "Tuur" (1991–1993, losing a clan elder election); Mohamed Ibrahim Egal (1993–2002, natural death); Dahir Riyale Kahin (2002–2010, losing a popular election); Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud "Silanyo" (2010–2017, resigning voluntarily and not running for reelection); and Muse Bihi Abdi (2017–2024) were the first four presidents of Somaliland to leave office through the normal course of events. A consolidated democracy exists in Somaliland. (2007) Daniel J. Young and Daniel N. Posner.

Additionally, the democracy of Somaliland has weathered several crises and shocks, including the untimely passing of President Egal in 2002. the substitution of a vice-president by Somaliland's constitution, a very tight presidential election in 2003, when the winner was declared the victor with an initial 80-vote margin, the 2005 takeover of Somaliland's parliament by two opposition parties, the repeated postponements of a 2008 presidential election until 2010, and the collapse of the nation's previous ruling party, the United Peoples' Democratic Party (UDUB), following its electoral defeat. Somaliland's frequent presidential turnover is also mitigated by the country's repeated election delays. President Riyale, understandably concerned about losing power, orchestrated a string of postponements that delayed the 2008 elections till the year 2010. Elections were postponed until 2017 despite President Silanyo's desire to hold them as planned in 2015. Muse Bihi's decision to postpone the 2022 elections until 2024 The legislative branch is in a worse state of affairs. Members of the Guurti or upper house are supposed to hold office for six years, however, they have not been chosen or elected since 1997. Public trust in the Guurti has been severely damaged by the organization's frequent extensions of itself and propensity to

swap out departed members with close relatives. The fact that members of the lower house, who are elected to five-year terms under the constitution, have not been elected for three terms (16 years) since 2005, despite Somaliland holding lower house elections in 2021, further solidifies the president's hold on power. Local council elections are being postponed in addition to the presidential and parliamentary elections.

RESEARCH METHODS

Significant achievements and persistent challenges mark Somaliland's democracy. Its regular presidential transitions stand out as its most notable success. Since the nation's first democratic election, the people of Somaliland have elected four presidents. This research used A review of narrative literature that creates a coherent narrative of the current state of knowledge on a certain issue by synthesizing and summarizing the body of research on that topic. It is frequently employed to summarize a subject and point out areas that require more investigation. Munn, A. et. al. (2018)

SOMALILAND; AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We give a quick overview of Somaliland's recent past before examining the current issues it faces. When the Somali National Movement's (SNM) leaders announced in May 1991 that they were ending the union between the 1960-established Italian Somalia and The Republic of Somaliland, the former colonial lands of the British Somaliland Protectorate which included the former northwest Somalia—was established. Somaliland authorities claim that the country has regained its sovereign independence, it lasted for five days, from June 26 to July 1, 1960, when it became part of the Somali Republic by joining Italian Somalia (Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002). Somaliland is no longer a secessionist state.

Although several nations have expressed encouragement for Somaliland's cause, no nation has acknowledged its sovereignty as of yet. South Africa has legally stated that Somaliland adopts the Somaliland passport and satisfies the Montevideo requirement for statehood. Additionally, Somaliland's bid for membership is being reviewed by the African Union (AU), which has stated that it is willing to handle it as an "outstanding case." Stig H, and Mark B. (2007)

The British colonial authority founded the Legislative Council of Somaliland in February 1960. marking the first democratic election held on Somaliland territory. Although the elected council's decision to join Italian-administered Somalia was widely accepted, dissatisfaction in conjunction with the union started to emerge as those in the north sensed more and more excluded from the socioeconomic and political changes that were concentrated in the south Stig H, and Mark B. (2007). Nonetheless, Somaliland's political elite was heavily involved in Somalia's politics after independence, and all of the current political party leaders in Somaliland were once senior government officials or well-known Somali politicians. Northerners became increasingly estranged from the Somali state during the last years of the military government of Siyad Barre (1969–1991)

The prominent Isaaq clan in northwest Somalia became estranged from the administration due to its economic expropriation tactics and concentration of political power. After the loss of Somalia in the 1987–1988 conflict across the Ogaden with Ethiopia, a significant number of Somali refugees from Ethiopia moved into Somaliland, significantly taxing the region's economy and environment. Social tensions were made worse by the government's humanitarian aid While giving the refugees priority treatment, the majority of whom belonged to tribes that were distinct from those of Somaliland's citizens. The Somali National Movement (SNM), which launched ten years of rebellion against the Barre dictatorship, was founded in 1981 as a result of growing dissatisfaction with the regime.

The SNM primarily enlisted warriors from the clan Isaaq, as it had its base in neighboring Ethiopia. A peace deal between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1988 compelled the SNM to act desperately, attacking and quickly seizing the cities in the north of Burco and Hargeisa. The government responded by bombing Hargeisa and enforcing severe retaliation against the civilian Isaaq people. According to Africa Watch (1990), Fifty thousand refugees escaped to Ethiopia, and up to 60,000 civilians were killed between 1988 and 1989. The majority of non-Isaaq people were expelled from the SNM, while the ranks of the SNM were enlarged by those who escaped.

According to Stig H and Mark B (2007), many SNM members who had stated earlier favored a unified Somalia now advocated for independence. Following the toppling of Siyad Barre in January 1991, one section of the United Somali Congress (USC) quickly installed Ali Mahdi as president of Somalia without first consulting the SNM, it led to Somaliland's independence being declared in May 1991.

Somaliland Democracy and Its Elections

In Burco, during a gathering of the northern tribes and SNM, the declaration of Somaliland's independence was made. The assembly gave the SNM a two-year mandate to rule and to get the nation ready for elections through a hastily drafted Charter. Considering the government's limited funding and the devastation caused by ten years of conflict, this proved to be an impossible endeavor (Stig H. and Mark B., 2007). Within a year, the nation was in danger of devolving into civil war due to divisions within the SNM and the clan militias' refusal to disarm. A succession of Shiir-beeleed clan peace talks mediated the elders of the clan and supported by businesspeople and civil rights advocates, prevented this.

The meeting, which took place over many months in 1993 in the town of Borama, turned out to be pivotal. The SNM gave up authority to a civilian administration at Borama, where a Elders' council elected President Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal and agreed upon a charter for governance as well as procedures for disarming and regulating the militia. The Borama government structure combined Western-style institutions of governance with the indigenous social and political organization to create what came to be referred to as the "beel system.". An electoral college of elders nominated members of the bicameral parliament, which included an Upper House of Elders and a Lower House of Representatives, as well as an executive president (Bradbury et al. 2003). For eight years, the foundation of the government was this clan-based system of power sharing. It provided Somaliland with a high level of stability despite the two years of civil conflict that raged there from 1994 to 1996. The final nationwide shir beeleed took place in Somaliland's capital, Hargeisa, from October 1996 to February 1997. The attending elders accepted a proposed constitution and a timeline for the switching from a clan-based to a multi-party, democratic style of governance, and Egal was re-elected as president.

Although it seems strange at first that the elders would back a move that supposedly aimed to devalue their position, several more demands were made, including democratizing those from the diaspora. Another was the desire to receive an international reputation and money from benefactors, both of which the elders eagerly anticipated. Somaliland has been stable for five years. began with the Hargeisa summit. There have been four phases in the transition of Somaliland's political institutions from a selected representation system to an elected representation system. In May 2001, a referendum passed a constitution that laid the groundwork for a democratic political system. In December 2002, elections were conducted for 23 district councils. three national parties were established., the president was elected in April 2003, and Parliament's Lower House was elected in September 2005. (Hansen & Linderman, 2003; Abokor et al. 2002; Abokoret al. 2005). Subsequently, Somaliland held elections in the present in 2010, local councils in 2012, parliament and local councils in 2017, and the most recent was in 2024. and Somaliland anticipates holding elections for local councils and the parliament in 2026. Foreign observers have judged all of these elections to be reasonably free and fair.

Somaliland Referendum 2001.

Somaliland conducted a constitutional referendum on May 31, 2001. There was a referendum on a draft constitution that maintained Somaliland's independence from Somalia. 99.9% of eligible voters cast ballots in the referendum, and 97.1% of them voted in favor of the constitution. The constitution's approval affirmed Islam as the "national faith," reinforced the executive branch, and acknowledged Somaliland's independence. Tom Muller, April 2, 2012. Most significantly, it supported universal suffrage and multiparty elections at all governmental levels, opening the door for democratic governance. However, the Somali government rejected the vote, which has so far failed to get international recognition.

Nearly 5% of the whole national budget, or more than \$650,000, was set aside by the Somaliland Parliament to fund the referendum. Elders in the village determined who was qualified to vote because there had been no voter lists or census. (Final Report of the Election Observers for the 2020 Somaliland Constitutional Referendum by the Initiative and Referendum Institute) In August 2002, the government of President Egal distributed thousands of copies of the proposed constitution across Somaliland.

The Initiative and Referendum Institute sent 10 observers to watch the referendum. Because of security concerns, they avoided the Sool region entirely and could only attend 57 of the 600 polling stations. (International and Strategic Studies Centre, 2009). This resulted from resistance to the referendum taking place and the area being considered the "most volatile" part of Somaliland. Nonetheless, those stations noted that there was little to no fraud and that the referendum was free, fair, and peaceful.

Summary of the Somaliland Referendum Results

Choice	Votes	%
For	1,148,940	97.10
Against	34,302	2.90
Total	1,183,242	100.00
Valid votes	1,183,242	99.61
Invalid/blank votes	4,591	0.39
Total votes	1,187,833	100.00
Registered voters/turnout	1,188,746	99.92
Source: African Elections Database		

SOMALILAND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN 2002. (First elections since 1991)

On December 15, 2002, municipal elections were conducted in Somaliland. In 19 of Somaliland's 23 election districts, 2,368 candidates from six political groups ran for 379 local council seats. There were two reasons for the elections. The first was electing 23 municipal and district councils across the six regions of Somaliland. Mayors would thereafter be chosen by the elected councils. Determining which parties would run in the legislative and presidential elections was the second goal.

Three national political parties were allowed under the constitution. A political party must obtain 20% of the vote in four of Somaliland's six regions to be recognized as a national party that was authorized to run in presidential and parliamentary elections. The three groups with the most votes would be eligible to become parties if this criterion was not met. To prevent the formation of parties controlled by clans, as occurred in 1969 when more than 60 groups ran for office, this equation was designed to guarantee that a variety of clans were represented by the three parties.. The Justice and Welfare Party (UCID), the Unity of Democrats Party (UDUB), and the Peace, Unity, and Development Party (KULMIYE) were formed as political parties after the election.

Vote distribution for political groups in Somaliland, 2002

Registered Voters	Not Available
Total Votes (Voter Turnout)	Not Available (N/A)
Invalid/Blank Votes	Not Available
Total Valid Votes	440,067

Political Organization	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Unity of Democrats Party (UDUB)	179,389	40.76%
Peace, Unity, and Development Party (KULMIYE)	83,158	18.90%
Justice and Welfare Party (UCID)	49,444	11.24%
Somaliland Alliance for Islamic Democracy (SAHAN)	47,942	10.89%
Champions for Peace and Prosperity (HORMOOD)	40,538	9.21%
Alliance for Salvation and Democracy (ASAD)	39,596	9.00%

Source: SLNEC (2002)

Votes for Somaliland's political associations by region, 2002

Political association	Maroodi-jeex	%	Awdal	%	Saaxil	%	Togdheer	%	Sool	%	Sanaag	%
UDUB	70,989	38	58,939	58	13,502	50	18,330	28	1,055	17	16,574	31
Kulmiye	29,923	16	13,679	14	5,309	19	17,476	26	3,070	49	13,701	26
UCID	30,676	16	7,422	7	2,900	11	4,821	7	224	4	3,401	6
Sahan	14,748	8	4,499	4	2,054	8	15,234	23	51	1	11,356	21
Hormood	29,104	16	7,229	8	1,188	4	1,454	2	154	2	1,409	3
ASAD	10,943	6	8,727	9	2,281	8	9,283	14	1,707	27	6,655	13
Total	186,383		100,495		27,234		66,598		6,261		53,096	

Source: African elections database (2002)

Somaliland Presidential Elections In 2003 (the second elections)

On 14 April 2003, Somaliland conducted presidential elections. As a consequence, incumbent President Dahir Riyale Kahin prevailed by a slim 0.01% margin. Following the major opposition's first rejection of the vote, there was a 10-day prohibition on public protests and acts of violence beginning on April 22. (BBC News, April 23, 2003). The election was still hailed as a democratic "milestone" for the breakaway state by the International Crisis Group. (2003-07-28) International Crisis Group. The Somaliland Supreme Court confirmed Kahin's win on May 11. Agence France-Presse, May 11, 2003. On May 16, he was sworn in.

The number of polling stations for the presidential election was raised from 800 to 900 to learn from the district elections' prior experience. Mark Bradbury and associates (August 2003). To prevent electoral officials from

ruling over their communities, where their clans may sway them, the SEC enhanced and expanded instruction for cross-assigned election officers, party agents, and employees Walls Michael (2009).

Voter education was essential since a sizable section of the populace was still illiterate and nomadic. To educate the public about the impending elections and voting processes, the SEC formed acting groups that drove about utilizing loudspeakers installed on automobiles. On the day of the election, polling places displayed posters with textual and visual details on the candidates and voting procedures. Hansen, Stig Jarle; Lindeman, Berit Nising (2003).

All of the contestants ran on similar platforms. First, Somaliland's independence and acknowledgment on a global scale. Due to their disparate colonial histories and clan affiliations, the bulk of Somaliland's population has formed an identity that sets them apart from the rest of Somalia (Huliaras, Asteris, 2002). The remainder of the program pledged stability, peace, and economic prosperity. This was condensed into the campaign slogan for UDUB, "Peace and Milk."

As the ruling party due to its incumbency, UDUB occasionally benefited improperly from public monies. Bradbury, Mark, and others (2003). The UDUB campaign's propaganda linked UDUB to peace, continuity, and stability, while Kulmiye was linked to war. Despite its stability and incumbency, Kulmiye presented UDUB as a holdover from Somalia's previous Barre Government, a military regime that ruled the nation for 20 years until the rise of the SNM in the late 1980s. Mark Bradbury, and others (2003). Kulmiye propaganda linked Kulmiye to liberation and change, while UDUB was linked to oppression. They also promised a "cleaner and leaner" administration and increased participation from women.

To mobilize voters in UDUB regions, UDUB used state funding and resources, such as ministry employees, government radio, and government vehicles. To influence the process, all three parties disbursed money. It is quite doubtful that this had an effect on the election, though, as the bribes rarely made it to the voters because they went through the ministries. The election behavior laws were directly broken by all of this. Hansen, Stig Jarle; Lindeman, Berit Nising (2003). As scheduled, voting was held on April 14, 2003. According to reports, the voting was polite and in order. Despite the expected problems that come with a first-time presidential election, the election was declared a success and verified as free and fair by foreign observers. Gabriel Packard (2003). Additional restrictions were put in place even though issues from the district elections, like multiple voting, ballot stuffing, and illiteracy, continued. The reduced voter turnout in some areas may be explained by some of these methods.

International observers from nations such as the U.S., Canada, Sweden, the U.K., Ethiopia, and South Africa came to monitor the election primarily as members of NGOs. Packard, G. (2003). The observers provided positive reports but pointed out some inconsistencies in how various polling places are run and how voter age restrictions are not strictly enforced. It was said that the elections were "One of the most open and transparent democratic processes ever carried out in the Horn of Africa." Bradbury, Mark; et al. (2003). The elections signaled to Somaliland's men and women took satisfaction in the fact that the world community recognized and respected Somaliland. Even after holding successful democratic elections, Somaliland has been unable to gain international recognition.

Similar to the district elections, 118 voting places had been shut down in the East. Sanaag and Sool areas for identical causes. An election official was killed in a confrontation in the Sool area, which was the most significant electoral problem. Michael Walls and Steve Kibble (2011)

The results barely improved by 10% from the district elections, which was less than what was anticipated. Mark Bradbury and associates (2003). The SEC said on April 18, 2002, that the outcomes would be made public the next day. The majority of people, including both supporters and opponents, thought Kulmiye had won the election. According to the Somaliland Times, Silanyo even declared victory. But the Kulmiye supporters' euphoria didn't last long. The SEC declared that UDUB had won by a mere 80 votes on April 19. Party leaders and Kulmiye supporters were incensed and thought the election had been manipulated. The government declared emergency regulations after minor protests broke out in Kulmiye strongholds. In a report, the human rights group

African Rights harshly condemned the government's response as well as the police brutality and intimidation directed at Kulmiye supporters. The public stayed composed despite the agitation of the political elite and party activists. Kulmiye contested the outcome four days later, and the Supreme Court heard their case (Bradbury, Mark; et al., 2003).

Detailed Results Based on Regions.

14 APRIL 2003 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BASED IN REGIONS								
Candidate (Party)	Region						Others	National Total
	Awdal	Hargeysa	Saaxil	Sanaag	Sool	Togdheer		
Dahir Riyale Kahin (UDUB)	43,347 (65.75%)	79,328 (37.98%)	17,554 (57.48%)	23,359 (40.32%)	3,715 (38.29%)	38,105 (33.12%)	187 (36.81%)	205,595 (42.08%)
Ahmed Mohamed Mohamud Silanyo (KULMIYE)	16,607 (25.19%)	81,585 (39.06%)	10,271 (33.63%)	27,830 (48.03%)	5,524 (56.94%)	63,506 (55.19%)	192 (37.80%)	205,515 (42.07%)
Faysal Ali Warabe (UCID)	5,976 (9.06%)	47,951 (22.96%)	2,712 (8.88%)	6,749 (11.65%)	463 (4.77%)	13,453 (11.69%)	129 (25.39%)	77,433 (15.85%)
Total Valid Votes	65,930	208,864	30,537	57,938	9,702	115,064	508	488,543
Invalid/Blank Votes	2,466	5,092	591	843	83	982	39	10,096
Total Votes	68,396	213,956	31,128	58,781	9,785	116,046	547	498,639
Registered Voters							N/A	
Voter Turnout							N/A	

African Elections Database (2002)

SOMALILAND PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN 2005. (the third election)

Before the 2001 constitution was ratified, the current parliament was chosen by the clan before the 2005 parliamentary elections. The statute governing Somaliland's first post-independence parliamentary elections was droughted by the current parliament, which was composed of unelected clan members. This was compared by many observers to mandating that parliamentarians write their own "death warrant." It should come as no surprise that the procedure was very controversial and that the lame-duck lawmakers caused significant delays.

In January 2005, the House of Representatives eventually enacted an election bill; however, it included two "poison pills" that would have made elections all but impossible. Initially, the measure mandated that all voters register before to Election Day, which would be a challenging procedure that may take several months or perhaps a year or two. Second, the bill called for voting to take place throughout Somaliland, which was impossible because militants from nearby Puntland controlled sections of the Sool region.

The measure was handed to the president for ratification after passing both chambers of parliament with a veto-proof two-thirds majority, despite fierce lobbying by Somaliland's political parties and civil society. Sending the law to the Supreme Court for a constitutional ruling was the President's last resort. The court declared in February 2005 that the measure was unconstitutional because it made it technically impossible to hold the poll within the

allotted time. The House of Representatives was instructed by the court to rewrite the measure. The contentious provisions were removed from the new law that was enacted in April 2005.

One of the most controversial topics during the creation of the second and final drafts of the Election Law was the distribution of seats among the several regions. All three political IRI leaders, including Somaliland Assessment Report of the September 29, 2005, Parliamentary Election Ten parties decided that the proportional allocation of seats should be the same as in Somaliland's most recent parliamentary election, which was conducted in 1960, to speed up the process and avoid using inaccurate census data. The parties decided that each region's seats should be multiplied by a factor of 2.5 because the present parliament has 82 MPs, compared to the previous parliament's 33. The distribution that emerged from this was as follows:

29 SEPTEMBER 2005 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION							
Party	Region						National Total
	Awdal	Hargeysa	Saaxil	Sanaag	Sool	Togdheer	
Unity of Democrats Party (UDUB)	74,691 (56.15%)	81,552 (32.20%)	21,793 (41.53%)	34,727 (38.89%)	9,157 (44.54%)	39,529 (32.47%)	261,449 (39.00%)
Solidarity (KULMIYE)	26,837 (20.18%)	95,881 (37.86%)	12,355 (23.54%)	36,652 (41.05%)	8,964 (43.61%)	47,639 (39.13%)	228,328 (34.06%)
Justice and Welfare Party (UCID)	31,492 (23.67%)	75,796 (29.93%)	18,331 (34.93%)	17,907 (20.06%)	2,436 (11.85%)	34,583 (28.40%)	180,545 (26.93%)
Total Valid Votes	133,020	253,229	52,479	89,286	20,557	121,751	670,322
Invalid/Blank Votes							N/A
Total Votes							N/A
Registered Voters							800,000 (approx.)
Voter Turnout							N/A

SEATS WON BY REGION

Party	Region						Number of Seats (82)
	Awdal	Hargeysa	Saaxil	Sanaag	Sool	Togdheer	
Unity of Democrats Party (UDUB)	7	6	4	5	6	5	33
Solidarity (KULMIYE)	3	8	2	5	4	6	28
Justice and Welfare Party (UCID)	3	6	4	2	2	4	21

African Elections Database (2002)

SOMALILAND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 2010 (the fourth election)

The Guurti extended the incumbent's tenure for an additional year in early April 2008 because of the unrest in the eastern Sanaag and Sool areas, delaying the initial August 31, 2008, election date to March 15, 2009. The opposition strongly objected to this; nevertheless, a compromise resulted on the date of April 6, 2009, UNPO (2008), which was then shifted to March 29, one week earlier. It was announced on March 3rd that the elections would now take place on May 31st, two months later. UNPO (2009).

The electoral commission declared on September 6, 2009, that "current political, economic, and technical conditions" would prevent the election from taking place on September 27, as scheduled. No new date was specified. UNPO (2009). Since it was set to expire on September 29th, President Dahir Riyale Kahin then requested another term extension from the Guurti, but this request was turned down. However, it was announced on September 28 that a second vote had approved the term extension, under the condition that the administration follow a six-point plan to hold the next elections.

Politicians in Somaliland then anticipated that the election would take place as soon as possible in January 2010. Brown (2009). April 2010 was later brought forward, but it quickly became apparent that this date would also be overlooked. Election preparations were then in progress, and the elections were anticipated to take place in June 2010.

Before the election, party leaders signed a code of conduct in which they agreed on several items. The most important of these was the pledge to follow the results, which was repeatedly reaffirmed in the media and to election watchers, though there were sporadic threats to the contrary. Additionally, the rule of conduct required that parties only run on certain campaign days and in good faith. On June 4, the campaign officially began, and there were no reports of violent incidents or significant disruptions to party gatherings. The parties' commitment to the agreement that rallies would take place on distinct, predetermined days was particularly commendable. Additionally, anecdotal data suggests that harsh "anti-other" party language turned off supporters, as seen by tales of audiences leaving rallies where this

It was thought that the insults had gone too far. Not every rally drew large crowds. Since the majority of students finished their examinations during the campaign, the election's lead-up gave young people—especially young women, who are often more socially restricted—a chance to celebrate, which added to the carnival-like atmosphere. Steve Kibble and Michael Walls (2011).

A debate between the three presidential contenders was suggested at one point, but it was eventually canceled because it did not garner the support of all the leaders. There were also widespread rumors that certain parties were purchasing voter cards for US\$1 to \$50 or more. Voting anomalies in several places, especially Borama (see "Case study: Borama district"), and the persistence of these stories raise the possibility that they were somewhat true. Before the election, nevertheless, we were unable to verify these stories. The reasoning behind this practice was

similarly unclear; some said that the goal was to remove opposition-leaning voters' cards from circulation, while others interpreted it as an effort to gather cards for distribution to enable multiple or underage voting. IEO crews' direct observations, especially in Borama, indicate that the latter goal was more plausible.

Claims and counterclaims against the government's record while in office were a common theme of the campaign itself. This was especially true of the stances taken by the ruling party, UDUB, and the main opposition party, Kulmiye, the latter of which placed a strong focus on the accomplishments of the current administration at home and the president's worldwide political stature. On the other hand, Kulmiye condemned the same record. When UCID leader Faisal Ali Waraabe said at a rally in Burco that if he were elected, he would impose sharia law, it sparked a lot of discussion. He explained the comment by saying that it was a pledge to uphold the degree of sharia that was established in the Somaliland constitution. According to Michael Walls and Steve Kibble (2011), the UCID program advocated for public spending on education, infrastructure (especially roads), and state reduction. Several observers pointed out the seeming inconsistency between a pledge to encourage state investment and a vow to shrink that state.

New cards for voter registration will be distributed starting the second week of May, while the election's first vote boxes were shipped from Denmark on April 19. On April 28, 2010, Somaliland's electoral commission supported a June election, claiming that the voter list had been updated and now included 1.1 million individuals. Noor (2010).

On July 1, 2010, the 50th anniversary of Somaliland's independence from Britain, the results were made public by the Somaliland National Election Commission. According to Al Jazeera English (2010), they demonstrated that incumbent president Dahir Riyale Kahin had just 33% of the vote, whereas Ahmed M. Mahamoud Silanyo won the presidency with little under 50%.

2010 Presidential Election Results Summary

Candidate	Running mate	Party	Votes	%
Ahmed Mahamoud Silanyo	Abdirahman Saylici	Peace, Unity, and Development Party	266,906	49.59
Dahir Riyale Kahin	Ahmed Yusuf Yasin	United Peoples' Democratic Party	178,881	33.23
Faysal Ali Warabe	Mohammad Rashid	For Justice and Development	92,459	17.18
Total			538,246	100
Total votes			538,246	–
Registered voters/turnout			1,069,914	50.31

Source: NEC, African Elections Database

2010 Presidential Election results based on Regions and Districts

26 JUNE 2010 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

REGION District	Candidate (Party)						Total Valid Votes	Registered Voters
	Dahir Riyale Kahin (UDUB)		Ahmed M. Mohamud Silanyo (KULMIYE)		Faysal Ali Warabe (UCID)			
	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%		
Baki	8,826	67.13%	3,951	30.05%	370	2.81%	13,147	24,772
Boorama	44,443	79.02%	9,218	16.39%	2,584	4.59%	56,245	113,180
Lughaya	2,080	48.41%	2,074	48.27%	143	3.33%	4,297	12,894
Saylac	4,256	55.64%	3,209	41.95%	184	2.41%	7,649	26,070
AWDAL	59,605	73.28%	18,452	22.69%	3,281	4.03%	81,338	176,916
Baligubadle	1,813	24.15%	4,984	66.40%	709	9.45%	7,506	18,720
Gabiley	12,341	23.50%	38,305	72.96%	1,858	3.54%	52,504	87,357
Hargeysa	40,919	24.74%	73,884	44.66%	50,616	30.60%	165,419	23,1875
Sallaxley	423	3.77%	999	8.90%	9,800	87.33%	11,222	23,546
MAROODI-JEEX	55,496	23.45%	118,172	49.94%	62,983	26.61%	236,651	361,498
Berbera	11,046	52.08%	8,115	38.26%	2,048	9.66%	21,209	30,958
Sheekh	4,507	56.32%	2,433	30.40%	1,062	13.27%	8,002	12,138
SAAXIL	15,553	53.24%	10,548	36.11%	3,110	10.65%	29,211	43,096

Badhan	734	40.22%	126	6.90%	965	52.88%	1,825	8,350
<u>Ceel Afweyn</u>	2,762	19.66%	9,313	66.30%	1,971	14.03%	14,046	34,916
<u>Ceerigaabo</u>	18,349	48.81%	15,061	40.06%	4,182	11.12%	37,592	74,964
Dhahar*	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	7,791
<u>Garadag</u>	735	14.55%	4,131	81.77%	186	3.68%	5,052	20,850
SANAAG	22,580	38.59%	28,631	48.93%	7,304	12.48%	58,515	146,871
<u>Caynabo</u>	2,317	13.83%	13,509	80.61%	933	5.57%	16,759	49,923
<u>Las Canood</u>	1,717	41.68%	1,848	44.87%	554	13.45%	4,119	43,050
<u>Xudun**</u>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	5,340
SOOL	4,034	19.32%	15,357	73.56%	1,487	7.12%	20,878	98,313

Burco	16,824	18.82%	63,554	71.11%	8,999	10.07%	89,377	178,612
<u>Buuhoodle</u>	309	4.01%	7,252	94.06%	149	1.93%	7,710	15,511
<u>Oodweyne</u>	4,480	30.76%	4,940	33.91%	5,146	35.33%	14,566	49,097
TOGDHEER	21,613	19.36%	75,746	67.84%	14,294	12.80%	111,653	243,220
NATIONAL TOTAL	178,881	33.23%	266,906	49.59%	92,459	17.18%	538,246	1,069,914

*Elections in the district of Xudun were canceled due to security reasons.

**Voters in Dhahar cast their ballots outside of the district.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN SOMALILAND 2012 (the fifth elections)

In addition to choosing individual councilors, this election was significant for Somaliland since it was intended to choose the top three political parties, who would then be qualified to run in all subsequent elections for the following ten years. About 20% of the voting places throughout the six regions of the nation were inspected by the international observation team. It was able to provide an account of a largely calm, free, and highly enthusiastic public process. Although there was a high level of participation, observers also saw signs of numerous voting attempts, which were made worse by the absence of a voter registration system. Global Observation (2012)

The second local council elections in Somaliland have been conducted since gaining independence in May 1991 on November 28, 2012. In Somaliland, district and municipal councils are the lowest elected tier of government. Since the initial local council elections in 2002, this was the sixth election to be held. In 2005, there were legislative elections, while in 2003 and 2010, there were presidential elections. In May 2015, the legislative and presidential elections that were set for 2015 were moved to 2017. A record quantity of applicants ran in the 2012 elections, and the turnout was the greatest in Somaliland's history. While Somaliland's constitution limits there to be no more than three officially recognized political parties (Xisbi) at any given time, the country's electoral rules permit the formation of new political groups (urur) once every 10 years before local council elections. Then, through elections for local councils, associations vie for the opportunity to become political parties. With the most votes in the 2002 election, the United People's Democratic Party (UDUB), the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID), and Kulmiye emerged as the three legal parties. Ibrahim Jama (2011).

As a result, there were two possible outcomes from the 2012 local council election: the vote decided Which political organizations would become parties, or which parties that previously existed would maintain their legal standing, in addition to deciding which individual candidates would win. A candidate from a failed organization would have to join a new, legitimate party if they were elected. All levels of government are subject to this obligation to connect with an official party; in theory, the president of Somaliland would have had to either stay in office as an independent or join a new party if his party had lost its official status. Alongside Kulmiye (the ruling party since 2010), UDUB (the ruling party from 2002 to 2010), and UCID, fifteen political groups submitted applications to run in the municipal elections. Five of the fifteen potential associations, in the end, fielded candidates after six of them satisfied the legal criteria. Since UDUB did not participate in the election, it was no longer considered a legitimate party.

The nation's election system is nonetheless vulnerable on several levels notwithstanding the democratization process. Following the 2012 elections, voters, legislators, and political parties all publicly voiced their worries about the system's operation, particularly about election funding. According to candidates, political parties, and political groups, the electoral process in November 2012 seemed to demonstrate a significant rise in the amount of money spent on individual campaigns in comparison to earlier surveys. Ibrahim Jama (2011). The importance of campaign money in assessments of Somaliland's election processes has received little attention up to this point. By evaluating and charting the primary expenditures and revenue streams list candidates and political parties in the local council elections in 2012 and the parliamentary elections in Somaliland in 2005, this study seeks to close this gap to some extent.

It's possible that up to USD 50 million was raised for election campaign costs in the 2012 local council elections. These expenses, which account for about half of the nation's 2012 annual budget, greatly outweigh the costs of conducting the election. The election's added importance in deciding whether, for the ensuing ten years, political parties would either keep their formal party registration or lose out to newly established political groups is partly responsible for the 2012 rise in spending. The national legislature of Somaliland decided that political parties would either continue to be recognized as official parties for the ensuing ten years or lose out to newly for the 2011 local council elections, Rift Valley Institute (2015). Voters can select a candidate from open lists regardless of their position on the list of parties or associations. In contrast, a closed list selects candidates based on their rating on the list, and voters only pick a party or organization.

Because candidates were compelled to run against both their party or association's list and their opponents from other parties, the open list election system promoted fierce individual competitiveness amongst candidates and, as a result, increased spending. However, the 2012 surge in campaign spending can only be partially explained by the political system. Additional factors include the fact that more candidates were running compared to other elections and that because the local council elections focused on both local and national politics, they were more contested. The improved stability of the administration raised the political and economic stakes in Somaliland. the country's expanding economy, the emergence of new industries like hydrocarbon prospecting, and the rise in investments made by diaspora members in Somaliland since 2002. Additionally, it seems that elections are a major factor in the economic redistribution of Somaliland society since politicians' expenditures are driven by low voter loyalty, peer pressure among candidates, and cultural norms and expectations, Rift Valley Institute (2015)

In Somaliland, the necessity and capacity to raise money for elections have drastically changed the behavior of voters and candidates, even spawning a whole new vocabulary for election-related activities. Winning candidates complained that they were obsessed with finding methods to recover their campaign expenses in 2012 since stated campaign expenditures were several times more than the salary or stipend elected council members might anticipate receiving in office (thus signaling the probable necessity to resort to unlawful behavior in office). Institute of the Rift Valley (2015). Both in 2005 and 2012, a large number of defeated candidates claimed to have significant debt and frequently stated that they were unable to pay it back.

The Municipal Election results in 2012

Party	Votes	%	Seats
<u>Kulmiye</u>	244,795	30.19	99
<u>Waddani</u>	163,789	20.2	68
UCID	105,105	12.96	40
<u>Umadda</u>	94,689	11.68	37
Rays	83,596	10.31	32
<u>Xaqsoor</u>	74,204	9.15	31
<u>Dalsan</u>	44,680	5.51	16
Total	810,858	100	323

Source: Africa Election Portal (2012)

SOMALILAND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 2017 (the sixth elections)

The 2017 vote was Somaliland's third direct presidential election, following polls in 2003 and 2010, and its sixth direct election overall (counting local council elections in 2002 and 2012 and parliamentary elections in 2005).

5. Apart from the upcoming local council elections in 2012, where a large number of voters may have cast multiple ballots due in addition to the "ease of removing permanent ink," there was no voter registration. international election observers have observed elections and typically discovered them to be credible and well-run. This could have compromised the integrity of the results. Michael and Steve (2013.)

On election day, 1,642 voting places were open in Somaliland. To reduce the possibility that clan affiliations might taint impartiality, polling booths were often manned by four NEC personnel, frequently college students, who were sent outside of their areas. In the cities, it was common to have polling places with only female employees. Poll workers in the rural regions were often men. The majority of polling places featured

representatives from the three political parties in addition to officials. The International Election Observation Mission observed that these "party agents" were generally cooperative and friendly.

620 domestic observers were sent by the Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum (SONSAF), who stayed at a single voting place throughout the day, covering around 38% of all polling places. In 30 teams of two people each, the International Election Observation Mission sent 60 observers from 27 different nations to each of Somaliland's six provinces. International observers visited 350 voting places, or little more than 21% of the total, spending an average of 20 to 30 minutes at each location. All voting places had Somaliland police officers stationed outside, but they were not allowed inside. They generally kept a low profile and behaved professionally, and they didn't meddle in the electoral process.

The election was reportedly calm, joyous, and well-organized. Hours before voting places opened at 7:00 AM, hundreds of people were waiting in queue outside. 58.85% of voters cast ballots, accounting for 63.57 percent of all registered voters and those who picked up their registration cards., totaling 555,142 votes. International and domestic observers saw a few tiny anomalies here and there, but nothing that compromised the election's overall integrity, Michael Walls and Steve Kibble, (2013.)

"The people of Somaliland are commended by international observers for a calm election" International Election Observation Mission, November 14, 2017 (5 January 2018). "The people of Somaliland are congratulated by their international allies on the calm and responsible election of a new president.," November 21, 2017 (5 January 2018). To watch the elections, 60 foreign observers from more than 27 nations were stationed around Somaliland. 335 of the 1,624 voting places in Somaliland were visited by observers in 17 of the country's 21 districts. Michael et al (2018) "Somalilanders voted peacefully and in huge numbers during the election season, demonstrating their respect for the rule of law and the constitutional process. The mission commends this continued dedication to peaceful participation in an incredibly transparent political process.," The University College London Development Planning Unit study came to a close.

The NEC declared on November 21 that Muse Bihi Abdi, the leader of the ruling Kulmiye party, had won with 55% of the vote. Faysal Ali Warabe came in last with 4%, while Abdirahman Irro of the Waddani party was his closest opponent with 41%. Africa News (2017)

Summary of Results Somaliland Election of the President 2017

Candidate	Running mate	Party	Votes	%
Muse Bihi Abdi	Abdirahman Saylici	Kulmiye	305,909	55.1
Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi	Mohamed Ali	Waddani	226,092	40.73
Faysal Ali Warabe	Abdi Ahmed Musa Abyan	UCID	23,141	4.17
Total			555,142	100
Valid votes			555,142	98.15
Invalid/blank votes			10,475	1.85
Total votes			565,617	100
Registered voters/turnout			704,198	80.32

Source: SLNEC 2017

Summary Of Presidential Elections 2017 By Region

Region	Bihi		Abdullahi		Warabe		Invalid	Total	Registered	Turnout
	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%				
Awdal	38,454	48.1	40,959	51.18	617	0.77	1,406	81,436	102,571	79.39
Marodi-jeex	130,334	61.1	63,127	29.6	19,795	9.28	3,974	217,230	249,229	87.16
Sanaag	26,732	47.7	28,777	51.33	550	0.98	1,422	57,481	80,443	71.46
Saaxil	31,183	64.8	16,399	34.06	563	1.17	390	48,535	60,817	79.8
Sool	21,707	54.9	17,426	44.1	383	0.97	782	40,298	63,698	63.26
Togdheer	57,499	48.7	59,404	50.28	1,233	1.04	2,501	120,637	147,440	81.82
Total	305,909	55.1	226,092	40.73	23,141	4.17	10,475	565,617	704,198	80.32

Source: SLNEC 2017

PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTION IN SOMALILAND IN 2021 (the seventh election) PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN 2021

Since 2005, the parliamentary election has been repeatedly postponed. Due to political problems and drought, Somaliland's planned simultaneous presidential and legislative elections in 2015 were postponed. Walls and Scott (2017). Additionally, the proposed date of March 2017 was postponed due to delays in voter registration brought on by pastoralists' forced migration due to droughts. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) and all three major parties negotiated the schedule of the 2017 presidential election, which went according to plan, and the April 2019 legislative election. After being postponed, the election was again postponed in August 2019. The 2019 Somaliland Standard. The three national political parties of Somaliland decided on July 12, 2020, to organize municipal and parliamentary elections before the end of the year. BBC (2021). A new date of May 2021 was agreed upon following weeks of discussions with the NEC over the feasibility of holding elections. (Somaliland Sun 2020)

There was just one woman and no members of minority clans in the House of Representatives before the election. Reuters, 2021. Thirteen women and one member of a minority clan stood for office in 2021. BBC (2021). None of the women, nevertheless, were elected. Reuters, 2021. Prior to the election, a number of journalists were detained and five opposition candidates were arrested. BBC (2021).

The advancement of minorities and women in society was a top priority for Waddani, the main opposition party Stebach Adèle (2021). In its party manifesto, the left-wing party, which is socially and economically associated with nationalism and Islamism, called for a quorum of women to make up 30% of the parliament. Kulmiye, a Liberal International observer party, has long advocated for the creation of a capitalist economy, but in recent times has demanded the nationalization of some businesses and a social program financed by a wealth tax Stebach Adèle (2021). At the time of the election, Kulmiye was considered the front-runner. Social democratic stances are supported by UCID, a Socialist International observer party.

The 82 members of Somaliland's lower house of representatives are chosen via open proportionate representation in the list for five-year terms in six multimember districts that correspond to Somaliland's regions Hoehne (2021). Three legitimate political parties are allowed at the national level per the constitution. Voting is open to residents who are at least 15 years old. In Somaliland's history, this was the first election overseen by an outside agency instead of the president.

Seats Of Lower House Election by Region

Electoral region	Seats
<u>Awdal</u>	13
<u>Sahil</u>	10
<u>Maroodi Jeex</u>	20
<u>Togdheer</u>	15
<u>Sanaag</u>	12
<u>Sool</u>	12

Somaliland set a record with 1,065,847 voter registrations for the parliamentary election. 246 applicants fought for 82 spots. The polls opened on May 31 at 7 a.m. Maruf and Akule (2021). Iris recognition technology was utilized in the legislative election, just as it was in the 2017 presidential election; This was the first national election to employ such technology. Stebach, Adèle (2021). There were 2,709 voting places in the 2021 election, up 61% from the previous year, and over 30,000 poll workers. The administration granted international election monitors extensive monitoring authority. Rubin (2021). Among the 103 observers were South African analyst Greg Mills, Kenyan journalist and anti-corruption campaigner John Githongo, and former Sierra Leonean President Ernest Bai Koroma.

Seventy portions of the \$21.8 million spent on the election were covered by Somaliland, one of the world's poorest countries with a \$339 million government budget; the remaining amount was covered by the EU, Sweden, Taiwan, and the UK. Rubin (2021). To express support for the election, ambassadors from ten European countries as well as one from the European Union visited the city of Hargeisa.

It took around a week for the election's official results to be declared. On June 2, the NEC announced the preliminary results for the five electoral districts of Garadag, Hudun, Lughaya, Salahlay, and Zeila. Kulmiye was given 24 seats in those areas, Waddani was given 15, and UCID was given 10. Somaliland Standard, (2021). While the counting was still in progress, the NEC cautioned political parties and government representatives against making predictions about the outcome of the election.

Waddani earned 31 seats, Kulmiye received 30, and UCID received 21 seats, according to the NEC's final results, which were released on June 6. (Reuters, 2021). Waddani and UCID said they will create a coalition in power in a joint statement. Additionally, in the municipal elections, Waddani and UCID together secured a majority of seats. (Reuters, 2021). None of the 13 female contenders won a seat in parliament.

Summary of Parliament Elections 2021

Party	Votes	%	Seats	+/-
<u>Waddani</u>	258,658	37.22	31	New
<u>Kulmiye</u>	256,524	36.91	30	2
UCID	179,735	25.86	21	0
Total	694,917	100	82	0
Registered voters/turnout	1,065,847		—	

Source: EC, Reuters, EC 2021

Distribution of Seats and Popular Vote by Party by Region

Party name		<u>Awdal</u>	<u>Sahil</u>	<u>Marodi</u> <u>Jeh</u>	<u>Togdheer</u>	<u>Sanaag</u>	<u>Sool</u>	Total
<u>Waddani</u>	Seats:	5	3	7	7	5	4	31
	Vote:	37.43%	28.51%	37.59%	43.23%	37.98%	30.58%	37.22%
<u>Kulmiye</u>	Seats:	5	4	8	4	4	5	30
	Vote:	41.33%	40.39%	38.04%	29.87%	32.85%	42.55%	36.91%
UCID	Seats:	3	3	5	4	3	3	21
	Vote:	21.24%	31.11%	24.36%	26.91%	29.17%	26.86%	25.86%

Source SLNEC 2021

Somaliland Municipal Elections 2021

Stakeholders regarded the calm and credible local council and House of Representatives elections that took place on May 31, 2021, as legitimate. Despite difficult conditions brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic and infrastructural constraints, these elections showed advancements along Somaliland's democratic path. Voter turnout was significantly better than in the last municipal and parliamentary elections. The parties and other stakeholders maturely accepted the results of these elections, in which the ruling party lost seats to the two opposition parties at both the local and national levels. But these elections also brought to light several crucial issues that require improved technical measures and legislative improvements. Two significant modifications are among them. First, the limited political system that only allows three political parties to run for office should be reformed. Second, there is a significant democratic deficit since, unlike in Africa, no women were elected to Parliament. Since efforts to date, including voluntary actions performed the breakthrough that many Somalilanders had hoped for has not been achieved by political parties, civil society, and foreign donors; thus, Somaliland-led legislative measures are necessary to ensure female political representation. Walls and associates (2021). To ensure that future elections are held on schedule, there should also be a political recommitment to the current constitutional electoral schedule. Simplifying voter registration, greatly improving voter education, promoting voting secrecy, improving poll worker training, giving clear instructions for counting votes, and improving technical steps for the vote tabulation are some examples of technical measures that could contribute to improving the electoral process.

In the local elections in Somaliland, 1,065,847 individuals registered to vote. There were 552 contenders for 220 seats. According to the preliminary results and the final high court approvals, UCI finished in third place, Waddani came in second, and Kulmiye gained a plurality of seats. Three women and 217 males made up the 220 elected local councilors (SLNEC, 2021).

Summary of the Results in Somaliland Municipal Elections 2021

Party	Votes	%	Seats	+/-
<u>Kulmiye</u>	268,815	38.99	93	-6
<u>Waddani</u>	260,841	37.83	79	11
UCID	159,801	23.18	48	8
Total	689,457	100	220	—
Registered voters/turnout	1,065,847	—		

Source SLNEC (2021)

Seats Results by District

Seat results by district					
No	District	Party			TOTAL
		UCID	Kulmiye	Waddani	
1	Erigavo	2	5	6	13
2	Las Anod	3	5	5	13
3	Salahlay	3	4	2	9
4	Garadag	2	4	3	9
5	Oodweyne	1	4	6	11
6	Lughaya	2	5	2	9
7	Zeila	3	4	4	11
8	Baligubadle	2	4	3	9
9	Baki	1	3	5	9
10	Sheikh	3	3	3	9
11	Aynaba	3	4	2	9
12	Hudun	0	7	2	9
13	Taleh	0	6	3	9
14	Buhotle	2	4	5	11
15	El Afweyn	3	5	3	11
16	Borama	3	5	5	13
17	Burao	4	4	5	13
18	Berbera	3	6	4	13
19	Gabiley	4	5	4	13
20	Hargeisa	4	6	7	17
21	Las Khoray, Dhahar and Badhan	No Elections held (Disputed Area)			
TOTAL		48	93	79	220

Source: SLNEC 2021

SOMALILAND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2024 (the eighth elections)

Since Somalia adopted a one-person, one-vote system, this election will be the fourth presidential election held directly. Due to unresolved disagreements between the opposition parties and the administration, the House of Elders decided to postpone the election by two years from its initial 2022 date. After the election was postponed, a man was slain, sparking civil disturbance in the country's eastern Sool area. The current Las Anod war would eventually break out as a result of the instability, and Somaliland would lose control of portions of Sool that it had ruled since 2007. Reuters (2024)

Somaliland's constitution stipulates that there must be presidential elections every five years. The National Electoral Commission declared on September 24, 2022, that the elections, which had been originally planned for November 13, 2022, had been moved to July 2023. Reuters (2022). On October 1, 2022, the House of Elders decided to postpone the elections by a further two years instead of the nine months that the National Electoral Commission had first recommended. This essentially moved the election date to November 2024. VOA, 2022. The House of Elders reached a consensus on election-related matters on January 8, 2024, and voting was scheduled for November 13, 2024.

Having been elected in 2017, incumbent President Muse Bihi Abdi of the Kulmiye Peace, Unity, and Development Party (Kulmiye) is qualified to run for a second and final term. At the party's 2023 convention in Burco, he was officially declared the party's nominee. Somaliland.com (2023). Mohammed Hassan Saajin, the new running partner of President Bihi, was the commerce minister. This is because Vice President Abdirahman Saylici, who held the office for two terms—one under President Silanyo and the second under President Bihi—has reached his term limit. Additionally, the UCI and Wadani, the two opposition parties, have declared their respective presidential candidates. Dr. Abdirahman Mohamed Irro, who was the party's candidate in 2017, ran as the Waddani party's candidate (AllAfrica, 2024). The sole candidate to run in every direct presidential election conducted in Somaliland since 2003 is Faysal Ali Warabe, who ran as the UCID candidate for the fourth time in a row.

Irro's campaign was more concerned with societal harmony and democratic reforms, Warabe's with national unification, and Muse Bihi Abdi's with securing diplomatic recognition for Somaliland. Omar Faruk (2024). A contentious agreement with Ethiopia, which called for giving the landlocked country maritime granting access to a naval base in the Port of Berbera in return for a "thorough evaluation" of recognition, was also scheduled to be decided before the election.

According to official results announced on November 19, incumbent President Muse Bihi Abdi earned 34.81% of the vote, while Abdulrahman Mohamed Abdullahi had 63.92%. Since the opposition took authority for the first time in fourteen years., the election was regarded as a turning moment and a landslide victory. "Everyone had triumphed.," "Nobody lost.," and it was "a brotherhood election to bring the populace together," according to Dr. Abdirahman Irro's accommodative response. Mohamed (2024). The reason for the incumbent Bihi's defeat was his general unpopularity, which resulted from many controversial choices, most notably the 2022 extension of his tenure as president, which sparked fatal demonstrations, and the poor management of the conflict with the Eastern Sool.

Results of Somaliland Presidential Elections 2024.

Candidate	Running mate	Party	Votes	%
Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi	Mohamed Ali Abdi	<u>Waddani</u>	407,908	63.92
Muse Bihi Abdi	Mohamoud Hassan <u>Saajin</u>	<u>kulmiye</u>	225,519	35.34
Faysal Ali Warabe	Abdirashid Duale Diriye	UCID	4,699	0.74
Total			638,126	100
Valid votes			638,126	98.45
Invalid/blank votes			10,037	1.55
Total votes			648,163	100
Registered voters/turnout			1,227,048	52.82

Source SLNEC (2024)

CHALLENGES OF SOMALILAND ELECTIONS

Somaliland has made significant strides in establishing a democratic system of governance. However, its elections continue to face numerous challenges, which hinder the consolidation of its democratic institutions. Below is an analysis of the key challenges Somaliland elections

1. Political Challenges

Delayed Elections and Political Tensions

Among the most pressing challenges in Somaliland's electoral process is the repeated postponement of elections. The country has faced delays in holding parliamentary and local council elections, often due to political disputes between opposition parties and the government. For instance, parliamentary elections were delayed for over a decade before finally being held in 2021 (ICG, 2021). Such delays undermine public trust in democratic institutions and fuel political instability.

Additionally, disagreements over electoral laws and the composition of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) have led to tensions. Opposition parties frequently accuse the government of manipulating the NEC to favor the ruling party (Walls, 2014). These disputes sometimes escalate into protests and violence, further complicating the electoral process.

Clan-Based Politics and Representation

Somaliland's political system is deeply influenced by clan dynamics, which play a crucial role in elections. While the clan system has historically contributed to conflict resolution and governance (Bradbury, 2008), it also creates challenges in ensuring fair political representation. Certain clans dominate political offices, while minority clans feel marginalized. This imbalance can lead to electoral boycotts or disputes over results, as seen in past elections (Hagmann & Hoehne, 2009).

Logistical and Financial Challenges

Limited Infrastructure and Voter Registration

Conducting elections in Somaliland is logistically difficult due to poor infrastructure, including inadequate roads, communication networks, and electricity. Voter registration is particularly challenging, as many citizens live in remote areas with limited access to registration centers (ICG, 2021). The lack of a reliable civil registry also complicates efforts to prevent multiple voting and electoral fraud.

Financial Constraints

Somaliland's government relies heavily on domestic revenue and limited international aid, making it difficult to fund elections adequately. Organizing elections requires significant financial resources for voter education, ballot printing, security, and logistics. The lack of sustained international support exacerbates these financial challenges (EUBAM, 2020).

Security Challenges

Threats from Armed Groups

Although Somaliland is relatively stable compared to Somalia, it still faces security threats from armed groups, including Al-Shabaab and local militias. These groups occasionally disrupt electoral activities, particularly in border regions (Hoehne, 2015). Ensuring security during elections is a major concern, as attacks on polling stations or political candidates could derail the democratic process.

Inter-Clan Conflicts

Elections sometimes exacerbate inter-clan tensions, especially in disputed regions such as Sool and Sanaag, where clans compete for political dominance (Bradbury, 2008). Violence has erupted in past elections, leading to casualties and further delaying electoral timelines (ICG, 2021).

Legal and Institutional Challenges

Weak Electoral Laws and Dispute Resolution

Somaliland's electoral laws are often ambiguous, leading to disputes over candidate eligibility, voter registration,

and vote counting. The judiciary, which is supposed to resolve electoral disputes, is sometimes perceived as biased, undermining confidence in the electoral process (Walls, 2014).

Lack of International Recognition

The absence of international recognition limits Somaliland's access to technical and financial support for elections. While some international partners provide limited assistance, the lack of formal diplomatic relations restricts large-scale electoral aid (EUBAM, 2020).

SOLUTIONS OF SOMALILAND ELECTION OBSTACLES

Somaliland's electoral system faces multiple challenges, including political disputes, clan-based manipulation, financial constraints, and logistical hurdles. While the region has made notable progress in maintaining a democratic system, these issues threaten its long-term stability and legitimacy. Strengthening electoral institutions, enhancing transparency, and securing international support even without formal recognition are essential steps toward ensuring free and fair elections in Somaliland.

Strengthening Electoral Institutions and Processes

The establishment of robust electoral institutions remains paramount for Somaliland's democratic consolidation. A critical solution lies in comprehensive electoral reform that addresses both structural and procedural deficiencies. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) requires substantial capacity building to enhance its technical competence and operational independence. As Walls (2019) argues, electoral management bodies in emerging democracies often suffer from inadequate training and resources, which directly impacts their ability to conduct credible elections. Somaliland could benefit from establishing a permanent electoral commission with guaranteed funding and clear constitutional mandates, rather than the current ad hoc arrangements that are reconstituted before each electoral cycle. This institutional permanence would allow for the accumulation of expertise and the development of standardized procedures. Furthermore, the appointment process for NEC members should be depoliticized through a transparent selection mechanism involving multiple stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and traditional leaders (Hoehne, 2018). Such reforms would enhance public confidence in the electoral process and reduce the recurring disputes that have characterized Somaliland's elections.

The implementation of a comprehensive voter registration system presents another crucial solution. The current manual registration process is prone to errors and manipulation, particularly in the contentious border regions. As observed by the International Crisis Group (2021), the absence of a reliable voter registry has been a persistent source of electoral conflicts. Somaliland should invest in biometric voter registration technology, which has proven effective in similar contexts across Africa in reducing multiple voting and ghost voters (Mwai, 2020). This technological solution should be accompanied by extensive civic education campaigns to ensure widespread public understanding of the new system. The voter registration process must also be inclusive, with special measures to ensure the participation of marginalized groups, including minority clans, women, and internally displaced persons. The European Union's Election Observation Mission (2020) recommended that Somaliland adopt targeted registration drives in underserved areas and implement affirmative action policies to guarantee broader political representation.

Mitigating Clan-Based Politics and Enhancing Representation

Addressing the pervasive influence of clan dynamics in Somaliland's elections requires a multifaceted approach that balances traditional governance structures with modern democratic principles. While the clan system has historically contributed to conflict resolution and political stability in Somaliland (Bradbury, 2008), its excessive influence in electoral politics undermines the development of issue-based party politics. One potential solution lies in the reform of political party laws to encourage programmatic rather than clan-based political competition. The current three-party system, while designed to reduce clan fragmentation, has inadvertently reinforced clan allegiances as parties increasingly identify with specific clan constituencies (Hoehne, 2015). Somaliland could

consider introducing a hybrid electoral system that blends seats based on constituencies with proportional representation, potentially diluting the clan factor in political representation.

Enhancing minority clan representation requires deliberate institutional interventions. The establishment of reserved seats for marginalized clans in both parliamentary and local councils could help address historical grievances and promote political inclusion. This approach has been successfully implemented in other post-conflict societies, such as Iraq and Nepal, where quota systems helped integrate marginalized groups into the political process (Reynolds, 2011). Additionally, Somaliland should strengthen its legal framework to prevent electoral violence and clan-based intimidation. The current electoral laws lack specific provisions against clan-based electoral offenses, creating an environment where political competitors can exploit clan tensions with impunity (ICG, 2021). Introducing stringent penalties for clan-based electoral violence and establishing specialized electoral dispute resolution mechanisms would contribute to more peaceful electoral contests.

Overcoming Logistical and Financial Constraints

The logistical challenges of conducting elections in Somaliland's underdeveloped infrastructure require innovative solutions and sustained investment. The country's vast territory coupled with poor transportation networks makes election administration particularly difficult, especially in rural areas. A potential solution involves the decentralization of electoral logistics through the establishment of regional electoral offices with permanent staff and storage facilities for election materials. This approach has been successfully implemented in other challenging environments, such as Afghanistan, where provincial electoral offices significantly improved the efficiency of election administration (Wilder, 2014). Somaliland could also explore partnerships with private logistics companies and telecommunications firms to improve the dissemination of election-related materials and the transmission of results. The use of mobile technology for results transmission has proven effective in reducing delays and minimizing opportunities for tampering in several African countries (Mwai, 2020).

Addressing the chronic underfunding of elections requires creative financing mechanisms. While Somaliland's lack of international recognition limits access to traditional donor funding, alternative financing models could be explored. The establishment of an election trust fund, financed through a combination of domestic revenue, diaspora contributions, and targeted international support, could provide sustainable financing for electoral processes. As suggested by the European Union's Election Observation Mission (2020), Somaliland could implement a small levy on certain financial transactions or mobile money transfers specifically earmarked for election funding. Additionally, the government should prioritize election budgeting within its annual fiscal planning to ensure adequate and timely allocation of resources. Technical assistance from regional organizations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) could help build the capacity of Somaliland's electoral authorities in budget planning and financial management, even in the absence of formal recognition (Hoehne, 2018).

Enhancing Security and Conflict Prevention

The security challenges surrounding Somaliland's elections demand comprehensive prevention and response strategies. The threat from armed groups, particularly in border regions, requires enhanced intelligence-sharing and coordinated security operations between Somaliland's forces and local authorities. A solution proposed by security analysts involves the establishment of specialized electoral security units trained in crowd control and rapid response to election-related violence (Menkhaus, 2017). These units could work in close collaboration with community elders and religious leaders to identify and defuse potential flashpoints before they escalate. The incorporation of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, known as "xeer" in Somali culture, into the electoral security framework could provide a culturally appropriate solution to election-related disputes (Bradbury, 2008).

To address inter-clan conflicts during elections, Somaliland could implement a nationwide early warning and response system. This system would monitor political tensions and clan dynamics in the pre-election period, allowing for preventive mediation in potential hotspots. The African Union has successfully employed similar mechanisms in other member states, combining traditional authority structures with modern conflict prevention

techniques (Reynolds, 2011). Additionally, Somaliland should consider establishing an inclusive national dialogue process specifically focused on electoral reforms and conflict prevention. Such a dialogue could bring together political parties, clan leaders, civil society, and security forces to develop a code of conduct for peaceful elections and create mechanisms for addressing grievances before they turn violent (ICG, 2021). The success of this approach would depend on genuine commitment from all stakeholders and adequate resourcing to ensure sustained implementation.

Legal and Institutional Reforms

Comprehensive legal reforms are essential to address the weaknesses in Somaliland's electoral framework. The current electoral laws contain significant gaps regarding candidate eligibility, campaign financing, and dispute resolution, creating opportunities for manipulation and conflict. A thorough revision of the electoral legal framework, conducted through an inclusive and consultative process, would help address these deficiencies. International best practices suggest that such reforms should include clear provisions for: campaign finance transparency, equal access to media, and gender balance in candidate lists (Reynolds, 2011). Somaliland could benefit from establishing an independent electoral reform commission comprising legal experts, civil society representatives, and international advisors to guide this process. The experience of Kenya's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in implementing far-reaching electoral reforms following the 2007-08 post-election violence provides valuable lessons in this regard (Mwai, 2020).

To strengthen electoral dispute resolution, Somaliland should consider establishing specialized electoral courts or tribunals with expedited procedures for handling election-related cases. The current system of adjudicating electoral disputes through regular courts has proven inadequate, with cases often lingering beyond electoral timelines (Walls, 2019). These specialized courts could be staffed by judges with specific training in electoral law and could incorporate traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms to enhance their legitimacy. The inclusion of international observers in the dispute resolution process, as practiced in several post-conflict African states, could further enhance confidence in the system (Wilder, 2014). Additionally, Somaliland's civil society organizations should be empowered through legal reforms and capacity building to play a more active role in electoral observation and voter education, thereby complementing official electoral institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the Somaliland constitution, the country's politics are conducted under a hybrid form of government that blends Western and traditional institutions. According to the Constitution, the government is divided into three branches: the legislative, executive, and judiciary. Each of these branches operates separately from the others. This paper discussed Somaliland's Historical Background, the Somaliland Referendum 2001, Somaliland Democracy and its elections (Presidential, lower house, and local councils), and Somaliland's electoral system faces multiple challenges, including political disputes, clan-based manipulation, financial constraints, and logistical hurdles. While the region has made notable progress in maintaining a democratic system, these issues threaten its long-term stability and legitimacy. Strengthening electoral institutions, enhancing transparency, and securing international support—even without formal recognition—are essential steps toward ensuring free and fair elections in Somaliland.

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