

Transitioning from Clan-Based Power Sharing to Electoral Democracy: The Case of Somalia

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Abstract: *Somalia's political evolution from the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing arrangement to a democratic electoral framework presents a complex challenge shaped by security constraints, elite resistance, and legal ambiguities. This paper critically examines Somalia's transitional journey, highlighting key constitutional reforms, institutional developments, and the role of international actors in supporting democratic consolidation. It argues that while the 4.5 model once ensured temporary political order, its persistence hinders inclusive governance and merit-based representation. Drawing on recent electoral milestones and setbacks, the paper underscores the urgency of legal clarity, political consensus, and secure infrastructure to realize One Person, One Vote elections. The analysis concludes by offering reform strategies to guide Somalia's path toward sustainable democratic governance.*

Keywords: Somalia, electoral democracy, power-sharing, political transition, governance reform

1. Introduction

The principle "One-person, one-vote" is a legal rule that should be equal to that of others within the same state⁽¹⁾. It's a universally accepted principle that ensures equal political representation regardless of race, religion, sex, clan, or ethnicity.

The Somali central government has collapsed after clan-based politico-military armed groups unseated the military regime of Siyad Barre. The aftermath of this collapse led to the total fragmentation of the Somali state, resulting in the loss of control over administration, the judiciary, and security. In its place, numerous small self-governing entities (fiefdoms) emerged across the country. It took several years of reconciliation efforts before clans reached a mutual agreement on a power-sharing framework, culminating in the adoption of the "4.5 formula." This model allocated political representation among major clans and minority groups through an indirect electoral system. While the 4.5 formula has contributed to relative political stability, it has simultaneously reinforced elite dominance, deepened social divisions, and constrained the growth of genuine democratic governance.

Somalia is a nation emerging from decades of civil war, state fragmentation, and political mistrust. The ongoing efforts to implement universal suffrage represent a significant milestone in the country's democratic transition, despite the challenges that accompany it. The Provisional Constitution of Somalia, under Article 22, outlines the citizens' right to participate in elections both to vote and to be elected⁽²⁾.

Over the past decade, Somalia has made notable strides in state and institution-building, including adopting a federal system, drafting the Provisional Constitution in 2012, and establishing its Federal Member States. The country has also

created key national institutions, such as the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC). However, the NIEC has not yet been able to organize and implement a universally accepted one-person, one-vote electoral process. Although Parliament enacted an Electoral Law in 2021, the legislation faced significant resistance from political leaders and Federal Member State presidents. Consequently, due to persistent structural, institutional, and political challenges, the direct electoral model was replaced with a modified indirect voting system⁽³⁾.

This paper critically assesses Somalia's journey toward electoral democracy. It explores the institutional, legal, security, and sociopolitical factors hindering the realization of direct elections and examines the prospects for transitioning from elite bargaining to inclusive governance. By analyzing national efforts, international support in electoral experiences, and the proposal of actionable reform pathways. It argues that universal suffrage is not only a legal right but also a strategic imperative for long-term stability, legitimacy, and state-building in Somalia. Clarifying the interplay between clan politics, institutional reform, and democratic transition in Somalia offers insights for other post-conflict states grappling with fragmented governance and identity-based representation.

Brief history of Somalia's electoral processes since independence

According to Afyare Elmi, Somalia held its first electoral process before gaining independence, when "Italian Somaliland" held elections in 1959 to choose 90 deputies from 30 political districts of the Trust Territory through a closed-list proportional representation (PR) system. Meanwhile, British Somaliland held elections in February 1960, electing 33 deputies under the First Past the Post (FPTP) system. Subsequently, on July 1, 1960, the two parliaments merged to form the Somali Republic. The peak

(1) LLI LEGAL Information Institute. Legal definition from Cornell Law School. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/one-person_one-vote_rule

(2) Hrlibrary. The Federal Republic of Somalia Provisional constitution (2012). <https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/Somalia-Constitution2012.pdf>.

(3) Mustaqbalmedia. (2021, July 8). Guddiga Hirgalinta Doorashada ee Heer Federaal. *HABRAACA DOORASHADA GOLAHA SHACABKA*. <https://horseedmedia.net/habraaca-siyaasadda-ee-hagaya-doorashada-2020-21/342754>.

period of the multiparty system occurred between 1960 and 1969, during which free and fair elections were held. This fostered political pluralism, strengthened national cohesion, and encouraged diverse opinions. Subsequently, from July 1960 to October 1969, Somalia witnessed successive transfers of power under a democratically elected parliamentary system, wherein periodic elections facilitated a smooth, orderly, and legitimate transition of governance⁽¹⁾.

The period from October 21, 1969, to January 1991 marked Somalia's governance under a military junta that seized power through a coup d'état, initially portrayed as a bloodless transition⁽²⁾. Severe restrictions on civil liberties marked this period, as the regime abolished Parliament, nullified the constitution, and disbanded political parties and civil society organizations. Governance was subsequently assumed by the Supreme Revolutionary Council, led by Mohamed Siyad Barre⁽³⁾. On July 1, 1976, the country adopted a single-party system under the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP). The regime's objective was to indoctrinate the population with socialist ideology across all levels of society through universities, labor unions, youth organizations, women's organizations, and cooperative movements⁽⁴⁾.

The military regime's centralization of authority and preferential allocation of political and economic power to the leader's clan generated widespread discontent and delegitimized the regime's mandate. This unequal distribution of power and resources fostered intense political competition, ultimately prompting major clans, including the Isaaq, Hawiye, Ogaden, and Digil-Mirifle, to organize clan-based militias as instruments of political assertion and to pursue state control. The authors observed that the subsequent outbreak of clan conflicts and militia infighting, driven primarily by competition for power and resources, was among the principal causes of the ensuing chaos. Consequently, the absence of institutions grounded in the rule of law and principles of good governance created a vacuum of legitimate authority, resulting in the complete suspension of electoral practices throughout the period of civil conflict in Somalia.

The foundation of the Third Republic began during the United States and United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), which sought to rebuild the Somali state through a bottom-up approach⁽⁵⁾. However, powerful warlords strongly resisted this state-building approach, ultimately forcing the United States and the United Nations to withdraw from the country. Following a series of peace conferences held in Addis Ababa, Djibouti, and Kenya in culminating to 2004,

facilitated by IGAD, the Somali Transitional Federal Government was formally established⁽⁶⁾. Although the international community helped establish the Transitional National Government with the specific mandate to conduct popular elections by 2009, this critical benchmark was ultimately missed⁽⁷⁾. The government achieved only limited progress toward the electoral mandate and subsequently reverted to the same clan-based power-sharing formula in 2009⁽⁸⁾. According to the author, a general commitment to popular and democratic elections was issued; however, this objective was postponed, citing critical and persistent security challenges as the primary impediment.

Leveraging international support, the Somali government achieved a critical political milestone in 2012 by transitioning from the provisional system to the established Federal Government of Somalia. This new government was simultaneously tasked with completing several core constitutional milestones: enacting a constitutional referendum, holding multiparty elections, and comprehensively building vital state institutions⁽⁹⁾. The stipulated constitutional milestones were partially achieved. The election of the first non-transitional Parliament and president marked a pivotal milestone in Somalia's post-conflict state-building process. This transition ushered in the formal implementation of federalism, resulting in the establishment of the Federal Member States of Hirshabelle, Puntland, Galmudug, Jubaland, Southwest as part of the broader effort to promote inclusive governance and decentralization⁽¹⁰⁾. The authors noted that the government successfully facilitated the election of a new president and ensured a smooth and orderly transfer of power.

The scheduled elections in 2021 were anticipated to be groundbreaking, as they aimed to implement a one-person, one-vote system, a development described by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as historic. The authors observed that the regional states of Jubaland and Puntland disagreed with the federal government's approach to the electoral process, casting doubt on the electoral commission's credibility and impartiality. Although the government introduced minor adjustments to the mechanism for selecting parliamentary delegates, the process essentially replicated the institutional model employed during the preceding transitional period⁽¹¹⁾.

(1) *Ibid*

(2) *Ibid*

(3) *Ibid*.

(4) *Ibid*.

(5) Burgess, Stephen F. (2009). Stabilization, Peacebuilding, and Sustainability in the Horn of Africa: *Strategic Studies Quarterly*. journal-article, pp.81–82,

(6) *Ibid*.

(7) Crouch, J., & Njagi, S. (2017). *Electoral Crossroads: Dilemmas of Future Democratization in Somalia*. *Saferworld-global website*, (pp. 1-36, Rep.). <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.saferworld-global.org/downloads/pubdocs/electoral-crossroads->

[somalia.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjV_Pueht2QAxVIKvsDHaf5BlwQFn_oECBwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2L_JN_MZ8A-7-ftaA5p6L7](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.saferworld-global.org/downloads/pubdocs/electoral-crossroads-somalia.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjV_Pueht2QAxVIKvsDHaf5BlwQFn_oECBwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2L_JN_MZ8A-7-ftaA5p6L7)

(8) *Ibid*.

(9) Mohamoud, M. A. (2015). Federalism for Somalia: internal and external challenges in the post-transitional period. High-quality Research Support programme (HQRS). Available from: <http://www.ocvp.org/docs/Cahort1/14.Pdf>

(10) Dr Abdinor, Ali. Y. S. (2021, November 8). Federalism in post-conflict Somalia: A critical review of its reception and governance challenges. Retrieved from the Taylor & Francis Online website. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13597566.2021.1998005>.

(11) *Ibid*.

The 4.5 power-sharing model: origins, structure, and role in federalism

The Somali peace conference, hosted by the government of Djibouti in Arta, culminated in the adoption of a power-sharing arrangement that subsequently became known as the 4.5 formula⁽¹⁾. The author asserts that the model was designed with a dual objective: to serve as an immediate stabilizing mechanism during the civil conflict while simultaneously functioning as a transitional bridge to democratic governance. This structure formally distributed political seats by granting equivalent shares to the four primary clan families (Darood, Dir, Hawiye, and Digil-Mirifle). In contrast, the remaining fraction, designated as the '0.5', was reserved for the collective representation of all minority groups. The framework delegated the responsibility of selecting sub-clan representatives to traditional elders, thereby establishing a non-competitive, consensus-based mechanism that fundamentally compromised the principles of free, fair, and transparent democratic representation⁽²⁾.

The role of the 4.5 power-sharing framework within the emergent federal system has elicited mixed academic reactions. Several authors contend that the model has polarized and fragmented the nation's regional structures, simultaneously asserting that its continued application directly violates the principles articulated in Articles 8, 11, and 21 of the Provisional Constitution⁽³⁾.

Though the power-sharing framework has its challenges, it has still achieved considerable stability in the country by narrowing divisions among different clans, the federal government, and the federal member states. The foundational objectives of the 4.5 framework were to facilitate a political transition from a clan-based mechanism to a modern, multiparty democratic system. This evolution was intended to culminate in One Person, One Vote (1V1P) elections, as expressly stipulated in the prevailing national electoral legislation⁽⁴⁾.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Article 111G of the Provisional Constitution mandates the establishment of an independent National Electoral Commission, clearly defining its responsibilities, while directing the two-tiered Parliament to enact laws necessary for the commission to fulfill its obligations⁽⁵⁾. Parliament has also unanimously passed the Independent National Election Bill, paving the way for the establishment of the commission⁽⁶⁾. The Houses of Parliament fulfilled their obligations during the 9th Parliament period by approving the commissioners for a 6-year mandate⁽⁷⁾.

In a significant legislative step, Parliament enacted the Elections Law, thereby operationalizing the commission's constitutional mandate. Specifically, the law's detailed provisions (including Articles 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 19, 20, and 24) establish the legal framework that secures its independence, powers, and responsibilities for conducting free, fair, and transparent elections across the Federal Republic of Somalia⁽⁸⁾.

The Provisional Constitution, under Article 111G, establishes the National Independent Electoral Commission as an autonomous body. However, Parliament has merged it with the Boundaries and Federation Commission established under Article 111E of the Constitution⁽⁹⁾. This merger risks expanding the commission's powers and workload, as boundary review is a politically sensitive and often contested matter among Federal Member States and districts with diverse communities. Consequently, this may overburden the commission and potentially delay the timely conduct of free, fair, and transparent elections across the country.

Article 11(1) of the Electoral Law mandates the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission to oversee all types of elections in the country, ranging from presidential to municipal levels⁽¹⁰⁾. However, some Federal Member States, including Jubaland and Puntland, have refused to participate in or recognize the law, citing ongoing disputes with the Federal Government⁽¹¹⁾. Puntland has opposed the Federal Government's amendments to the

(1) Adam, A. A. (2024). *Power sharing as a tool of conflict management in Somalia* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape). <https://uwcscholar.uwc.ac.za/items/e13b6b0e-5680-49e5-8b0d-013b82aadff0>.

(2) Hiiraan online, (2025, February 11). The Somali parliament passes the National Electoral Commission Bill. Hiiraan online. https://hiiraan.ca/news4/2015/Feb/98117/somali_parliament_passes_national_electoral_commission_bill.aspx.

(3) Peacemaker UN Organization, (2022, July). The Somali provisional constitution. Retrieved from Peacemaker website https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2022/07/sopresdecreejune2012_0.pdf

(4) East Africa development forum, (2023). STATE-BUILDING IN SOMALIA: Lessons learned & the way forward. Retrieved from the East Africa organization website. https://eastaficas.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Final-edited_CONFERENCE_BOOK-lllllllllll.pdf

(5) Ace Project. Somalia's provisional constitution (2012). The Electoral Knowledge Network website. <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/misc/somalia-provisional-constitution-2012/view>.

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https://hiiraan.ca/news4/2015/Feb/98117/somali_parliament_passes_national_electoral_commission_bill.aspx.

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(8) Parliament website (2024). The law of the National Electoral Commission. Retrieved from the Parliament Website. <https://parliament.gov.so/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Shuruuc/SHURUUC/Shuruucda-2024/Sharliga-Doorashooyinka-Qaranka-ee-Jamhuuriyadda-Federaalka-Soomaaliya.pdf>.

(9) World Property Organization website, The Somali provisional constitution 2012. <https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/14305>

(10) Ibid.

(11) Voa Somali news, (2024, November 17). Jubaland rejects the passing of electoral legislation. <https://www.voasomali.com/a/jubaland-oo-ka-hortimid-ansixinta-sharciga-doorashooyinka-dalka/7866769.html>

constitutional chapters on electoral laws, asserting that the process lacked consultation with Federal Member States and, consequently, declined to join the national consultation framework initiated by the President in June 2025.

Although the law is binding and the commission holds the mandate to conduct elections, there remains a lack of political consensus regarding both the nature of the elections and the commission's legitimacy. Members of the opposition, organized under the Somali Rescue Forum, contend that the government appointed the commission without adequate stakeholder consultation. The Forum consequently cautioned, stating: *'The Forum warns of the risks and consequences associated with the coerced and forceful election being conducted by President Hassan Sheikh's administration in the Banaadir region'* ⁽¹⁾.

Systemic Security Constraints: Al-Shabab Control and the Fragility of Electoral Logistics

Security remains the foremost obstacle to achieving universal suffrage in Somalia. The continued control of vast areas by the militant group Al-Shabab systematically inhibits the democratic process. Furthermore, the group's intensified attacks against government-controlled zones are explicitly intended to dissuade public participation in elections, thereby severely limiting the government's capacity to deliver free and fair electoral processes ⁽²⁾. The reversion of territorial control, specifically the withdrawal of government forces and the subsequent re-establishment of militant dominance in contested areas of Hirshabelle and Galmudug, has significantly diminished the electoral body's accessibility to voters.

This geographical contraction directly erodes the potential for many citizens' participation in the upcoming elections ⁽³⁾. The persistent territorial presence of Al-Shabab across significant swathes of South-Central Somalia constitutes a fundamental impediment to the electoral process. This control restricts the electoral body's ability to deliver materials and reach all regions. It also affects physical accessibility and voter engagement to the various areas by dominating the principal inter-city transit routes. Furthermore, the militant group's establishment of alternative governance policies in these areas challenges the authority of the Federal Government, thereby systematically undermining the prerequisites for national democratic participation.

Clan-Based Politics: Elite resistance to losing influence; the challenge of dismantling 4.5

The 4.5 quota system, initially intended to serve as a stabilizing mechanism and transitional bridge to democracy, has paradoxically become an impediment to democratic consolidation. This outcome is achieved by entrenching elite control over political power through the continuous empowerment and incentivization of traditional elders who retain the exclusive authority to select clan representatives ⁽⁴⁾. The author's analysis argues that the continued application of the 4.5 framework has undermined efforts to build institutions grounded in merit and professionalism. By prioritizing political allocation over individual qualifications, the system inevitably undermines the principles necessary for robust governance.

Legal Ambiguity: Incomplete constitutional review

The Provisional Constitution of Somalia clearly delineates the framework for amending the current constitution within its Transitional Provisions (Chapter 15). Article 132 (Subsections 1-10) further specifies the comprehensive procedural instructions that both houses of the Federal Parliament are legally mandated to execute for the amendment process ⁽⁵⁾. Despite precise procedural and institutional requirements, the constitutional review process has been continually stalled. The process, as stipulated in Articles 133, 134, and 136, is mandated to be conducted by two distinct bodies: a Provisional Constitution Review and Implementation Oversight Committee (OC) and an Independent Provisional Constitution Review and Implementation Commission (ICRIC). These entities must review the Provisional Constitution, adopt the necessary amendments via a two-thirds majority vote of both houses of Parliament, and subsequently present the finalized constitutional text to the Somali populace for ratification by national referendum ⁽⁶⁾. The author acknowledges the vital work of the two committees, which conducted a comprehensive review of the constitution to rectify language issues, address references, and improve the Somali text.

Article 138 (2) of the Provisional Constitution mandated the establishment of a bicameral Federal Parliament. Following the indirect elections held between December 2016 and January 2017, the Upper House was formally constituted. This essential development enabled the reconstitution of the Oversight Committee (OC) with representatives from both houses of Parliament, thereby advancing the constitutional review process. The delayed completion of the final constitution is attributable to a confluence of persistent

(1) Dawan media, (2025, September 2). The Salvation forum opposition group warns of gun-toting elections in Mogadishu. Retrieved from Dawan Media. <https://www.dawan.so/news/madasha-samatabixinta-oo-ka-digitay-doorasho-qori-loo-adeegsado-oo-lagu-qabto-muqdisho>.

(2) Abdulkadir, I. A. (2025, February 11). The Struggle for Universal Suffrage in Somalia: Political and Security Challenges. Atlas Institute. Retrieved from <https://atlasinstitute.org/the-struggle-for-universal-suffrage-in-somalia-political-and-security-challenges/>.

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(4) Prof. Abdinasir. A. O. (2025, April 8). The 4.5 Clan Quota System: A Systemic Impediment to Meritocracy and Professionalism in Somalia. Retrieved from the Medium website. <https://medium.com/@profabdnasiro/the-4-5-clan-quota-system-a-systemic-impediment-to-meritocracy-and-professionalism-in-somalia-08604d383542>.

(5) Mohammed, O.J. (2023, September 29). On the Finalization of the Constitutional Review Process in Somalia. Constitution net website. Retrieved from <https://constitutionnet.org/news/finalization-constitutional-review-process-somalia>.

(6) Ibid

challenges, notably including inadequate resource allocation and the protracted process of formally constituting the Federal Member States. As a direct consequence of these systemic impediments, the constitutional review process has been officially deferred for a third time during the mandate of the Tenth Federal Parliament⁽¹⁾. Moreover, the Oversight Committee (OC) and the Independent Provisional Constitution Review and Implementation Commission (ICRIC) have completed and formally submitted their proposed amendments concerning Chapters 5 through 9 of the Provisional Constitution to relevant parties. This submission has subsequently initiated a necessary broad-based stakeholder consultation process, which is being coordinated and facilitated by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs⁽²⁾.

Contested electoral frameworks

The Federal Government, following the president's commitment during his recent Eid address, has formally launched a national consultation initiative focused on electoral and constitutional reform. This call aims to secure inclusive commitment from key stakeholders, specifically involving civil society organizations, registered political parties, former national leaders, and the National Consultative Council (NCC)⁽³⁾.

Subsequently, the roadmap advanced by the National Independent and Boundaries Commission (NIBC), which includes the planned registration of constituents in Banaadir and other regional state capitals for municipal and national election readiness, has encountered vehement opposition from some Federal Member States and political parties. As reported by the *Somali Guardian*, this resistance stems from a lack of political consensus, exemplified by former President and opposition leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, who asserted: 'A credible election cannot proceed without a broad-based consensus'⁽⁴⁾. The former President further escalated the critique by alleging that the state deployed security forces to compel citizen participation in what he deemed a contentious electoral registration process. He specifically asserted that individuals were being forcibly diverted from public transport vehicles and directed into registration queues, suggesting a clear pattern of coercive electoral interference. Adding to the misunderstanding of the electoral process in Federal government agenda is the press release reported by VOA Africa where regional State of Puntland announced its revocation of its recognition of the Federal government due to ongoing election disputes as quoted "The Puntland

administration revoked its recognition and confidence in the federal government institutions until an outright constitutional process that is mutually accepted is obtained,"⁽⁵⁾. Collectively, these political actions and pronouncements underscore the persistent absence of a negotiated, broad-based consensus among key stakeholders on the path forward for constitutional and electoral reform. This failure to achieve elite accord directly impedes the realization of citizens' fundamental political rights to participate in free, fair, and transparent elections.

Consolidation of Democratic Foundations and International Support

The National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC) has successfully achieved a crucial operational milestone in preparation for One Person, One Vote (1VIP) elections at the municipal, regional, and national levels. Commencing on April 14, 2025, the commission launched and completed the initial voter registration process within the Banadir region (Mogadishu) and in several major cities across the Federal Member States of Galmudug, Hirshabelle, and Southwest⁽⁶⁾. In a press release dated October 20, 2025, the Chairperson of the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC) officially announced a significant electoral milestone: the registration of approximately 923,220 citizens within the Banadir region alone. This high voter registration volume confirms the feasibility of holding municipal council elections in the Banadir region, which are now officially scheduled for November 2025. The chairman has also emphasized in the press release that political parties should conduct their campaigns openly and will be granted the opportunity to do so.

In recent years, Puntland successfully held municipal elections, demonstrating that when a conducive political environment is in place, citizens are willing to exercise their political rights to elect representatives. Furthermore, the strong commitment displayed by political parties in democratically and transparently campaigning for their candidates confirms the potential for a competitive and professional electoral culture⁽⁷⁾. According to Horseed Media, the Puntland Election Commission formally announced that 401,120 registered voters are eligible to vote. The commission further provided a detailed regional breakdown of this figure, illustrating the geographical scope of participation: Mudug (102,253), Nugaal (97,923), Karkaar

(1) Ibid

(2) Max Planck Foundation. (2025, February 18). Second Interregional Conference on the Somali Constitutional Review Process for International Peace and the Rule of Law. <https://www.mpfpr.de/2025/02/18/second-interregional-conference-on-the-somali-constitutional-review-process/>.

(3) Shabelle media network, (2025, June 6). Somali President Launches National Consultations Ahead of Elections, Constitutional Reforms. Retrieved from the website of Shabelle Media Network. <https://www.allAfrica.com>.

(4) Somali Guardian News, (2025, August 17). Somalia's Opposition Leader Accuses President of Pushing. One-man, One-gun Election. Retrieved from Somali Guardian <https://www.somaliguadian.com/news/somalia-news/somalias-opposition-leader-accuses-president-of-pushing-one-man-one-gun-election/>.

(5) Agence France-Presse, (2024, March 31). Puntland Rejects Federal Institutions in Election Reform Dispute." *The Voice of America*. <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/puntland-rejects-federal-institutions-in-election-reform-dispute/7550699.html>.

(6) Africa News, (2025, April 14). Somalia Launches National Voter Registration Campaign. Retrieved from the *Africa news website*. <https://www.africanews.com/2025/04/14/somalia-launches-national-voter-registration-campaign>.

(7) Khadar. I. (2023, March 18), Guddiga Doorashooyinka Puntland oo shaaciyay liiska Diiwaangelinta codbixiyayaasha. Horseed media news. <https://www.horseedmedia.net/guddiga-doorashooyinka-puntland-oo-shaaciyay-liiska-diiwaangelinta-codbixiyayaasha/378284>.

(47,797), Gardafuu (14,253), Sanaag (22,608), and Haylaan (11,249 voters).

The Federal Government is also receiving essential international support for conducting free, fair, inclusive, and transparent elections. The Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG), operating under the auspices of the United Nations, is specifically mandated to assist both the Federal and regional governments by providing crucial technical expertise, logistical support, and financial resources for the successful execution of the electoral cycle⁽¹⁾. The chairman of the African union, in a press statement on August 25, 2025, welcomed the signing of the revised electoral framework between H.E. President Hassan Shiekh Mohamud and the faction of the political wing of the Salvation Forum, the main opposition alliance, and was quoted "He urges all Somali stakeholders to extend their unreserved support toward the consolidation of this political achievement. Furthermore, he advocates for an unwavering commitment to dialogue and consensus-building as the primary means of resolving all outstanding issues within the electoral process"⁽²⁾. This engagement clearly demonstrates substantive international endorsement of Somalia's democratic roadmap. Sustained external support is essential for nurturing the transition toward stable governance and consolidating democratic values within the Federal Republic.

2. Recommendations

The journey toward "One Person, One Vote" is Somalia's most critical step, demanding coordinated political, security, and institutional actions that look far beyond the next election cycle. To ensure immediate credibility, we must urgently settle the legal groundwork by finalizing the Constitutional Review and establishing a high-level National Consultative Council to resolve disputes instantly. Protecting the process means shielding the NIEBC from political interference, clearly separating its technical mandate, and deploying a unified, well-resourced security plan so every citizen can register and vote safely. For long-term stability, the NIEBC must be professionalized with permanent staff and predictable funding. At the same time, the 4.5 system should be gradually phased out through transitional quotas that champion merit-based representation. Ultimately, the success rests on institutionalizing nationwide civic education to foster unity beyond clan loyalties, buttressed by enforceable inclusion guarantees for women and minority groups, securing a future grounded in representative governance.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Somalia's transition from the interim 4.5 power-sharing arrangement to a One Person, One Vote (1P1V) democracy remains an urgent and vital aim, notwithstanding the friction between political ambition and structural restrictions. Significant hurdles remain, including

the continuous Al-Shabab security threat, elite resistance to phasing out the 4.5 model, and ongoing legal issues, but notable progress has been made. The National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission's successful registration of approximately 1 million voters in Banadir, as well as the demonstrated electoral experience in Puntland, are significant operational accomplishments, bolstered by persistent foreign support. Moving forward, a consensus-driven, transparent, and inclusive electoral structure is required. Such a structure will provide the foundation for long-term peace, democratic legitimacy, and stable governance throughout the Federal Republic of Somalia.

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Abbreviations

NIEBC: The National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

UNSOM: UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION IN SOMALIA

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

FPTP: The First Past-The-Post

SRSP: Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party

UNOSOM II: The United Nations Operation in Somalia

IGAD: **Intergovernmental Authority on Development.**

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

OC: Oversight Committee

ICRIC: Independent Provisional Constitution Review and Implementation Commission

NCC: The National Consultative Council

VOA: VOICE OF AMERICA

1V1P: One Person, One Vote

IESG: The Integrated Electoral Support Group