

The Politics of the Electoral System in Somalia: An Assessment

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I. Introduction

Although Somalia has not conducted one-person, one-vote elections, it has had five governments through indirect dispensations since 2000. In 2017, Somalia's government initiated a discussion on choosing an electoral system for the country. The inter-ministerial technical committee recommended the adoption of closed-list proportional representation (PR), but the parliament rejected the proposal and instead adopted the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system based on the current 4.5 clan-based power-sharing model.

Besides briefly explaining electoral systems, this article examines Somalia's experience with the different systems since the 1960s. Second, the article discusses the different self-serving approaches that the government and the parliament took in choosing an electoral system for Somalia. Third, the article analyses and assesses the impediments to the implementation of the electoral law passed by the parliament. Finally, the article argues that closed-list PR remains the best electoral system for Somalia.

II. Making Sense of Electoral Systems and Their Implementation in the Somali Context

States in the post-conflict phase often engage in democratic state building involving institutional-design choices. The political class must decide on the suitable electoral system for the context at hand. David Farrell states that electoral systems “determine the means by which votes are translated into seats in the process of electing politicians into office.”¹ For countries recovering from a civil war sparked by competition for power and resources, this is crucial as the system provides peaceful ways of achieving power. In line with the above definition of electoral systems, Donald Horowitz identified six requirements for those designing such systems: “proportionality of votes to seats,” “accountability of politicians to voters,” “stability of the executive,” the system’s ability to moderate the behavior of politicians, “representation of minorities,” and the ability to facilitate the success of the most popular candidate.² For Benjamin Reilly, proportionality, accountability, and the system’s ability to moderate the behavior of politicians are key.³ Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart provide a more useful framework for those designing an electoral system for a given country. They contend that it involves determining an electoral formula (plurality, majoritarian, proportional, or mixed), the ballot structure (electing parties or individual candidates), the size of the legislature, the threshold for the parties to meet, and most importantly, the magnitude of the district (the number of seats in a district).⁴ Furthermore, Lijphart argues that the context, the experience of the political class, and the fairness built into the representation system play an important role in the success of a given electoral system.

Regarding Somalia, the citizens of “Italian Somaliland” or Somalia elected 90 deputies from 30 political districts of the Trust territory through closed-list PR⁵ in 1959.⁶ Somaliland, using the FPTP model, elected 33 deputies in February 1960.⁷ The two parliaments merged on 1 July 1960, forming the Somali Republic. Subsequently, during the civilian era of 1960–1969, the Somali Republic adopted a common electoral law⁸ based on closed-list PR, increased the number of political districts to 42,⁹ and successfully organized two more local and national elections in 1964 and 1969, respectively. In 1968, the legislative assembly enacted one electoral law¹⁰ that governed both the council and general elections. According to Halff, who collected all the electoral

bills that the country had produced, the ruling party introduced a new threshold that aimed at reducing or eliminating smaller political parties.¹¹ Any party with less than the quotient needed to win a seat was dropped from the competition, and the remaining seats would go to the parties that won seats.¹²

In 1969, the military overthrew the elected government and ruled the country for 21 years, followed by a 10-year statelessness era. Upon the establishment of the third republic of Somalia in 2000, hundreds of Somalis met in Djibouti and agreed to a tribal or clan-based power-sharing formula. Although this was not based on a census, through this formula, the four-armed clans (Darod, Digil & Mirifle, Dir, and Hawiye) got equal shares of 61 seats while many unarmed clans were given 31 seats. This is often called the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula. In addition, despite the clan-based power-sharing agreement, the delegates in Djibouti established a democratic state, which meant that there was no regime security for a governing administration after the expiration of its mandate. Even though universal suffrage was still a distant dream, a change of power became a new normal for the Somali politicians. In line with the spirit of the Djibouti peace process, Somalia has had five presidents since 2000. However, a debate on the choice of electoral system formally started in the summer of 2017.

III. Self-Serving Approaches of the Government and Parliament

On 8 February 2017, Somalia's two-chamber legislature, composed of 329 members, elected Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (also known as Farmajo) as the president of Somalia. President Farmajo, a Somali-American,¹³ appointed Hassan Ali Kheyre, another diaspora politician from Norway, as his prime minister. Together, they formed a diaspora-dominated cabinet in 2017.¹⁴ Additionally, like the other presidents before him, President Farmajo was expected to accomplish several transitional tasks, including organizing an election.¹⁵ As he had served as prime minister to President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in 2010, he was aware of the complexity of such task. Within months of President Farmajo's assumption of power, he formed a technical committee to look into electoral systems. The Ministry of Interior led the multi-agency committee.¹⁶ The technical committee consulted with experts and chose a closed-list PR electoral system for the country. The com-

mittee prepared a draft electoral law and submitted it to the Council of Ministers.¹⁷

Farmajo's administration, however, was too slow in engaging Somalia's political stakeholders. The president initiated the first meaningful negotiations on the issue 16 months after coming to power in 2017. In June 2018, the country's political leaders (the leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia, the presidents of five of the federal member states, and the governor of the capital city, Mogadishu) met in Baidoa and announced that they had agreed on an electoral model. According to their communiqué, the leaders decided on using the closed-list PR model and just one national district.¹⁸ The proponents of the closed-list PR model described it as a fair and simple electoral model. Besides these, the closed-list PR system has several advantages, such as representation of women and minorities and ease of implementation.¹⁹ More importantly, the closed-list PR system establishes a strong multi-party system that can help the country graduate from the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing system.

Ironically, the Baidoa agreement collapsed within three months. The presidents of the federal member states met in Kismayo in September 2018 and issued another communiqué, where they accepted the closed-list PR system but rejected the proposal that it be based on just one national district. Instead, the federal member states' leaders called for a multi-district closed-list PR system, where the regions would become political districts.²⁰ This was in fact not new as the country had used multi-member districts and the closed-list PR system in the past; the 123 members of parliament (MPs) of the Somali Republic in the 1960s used to be elected from 42 political districts.²¹ However, instead of engaging or negotiating with the federal member states and other stakeholders, the government ignored them.

The Council of Ministers approved a draft electoral bill partially based on the Baidoa agreement and then presented it to the parliament.²² The big surprise in the government's proposed bill was the presidential election process. In the past, and constitutionally, the MPs elected a president, who then appointed a prime minister. Without amending the constitution, the draft electoral bill that the cabinet approved attempted to change this and suggested that the leader of the political party or the coalition that wins the most seats automat-

ically become the president of the country.²³ Even if most of those in the political class (political parties, regional leaders, and members of civil society) openly rejected the draft bill and pointed out that it was unconstitutional,²⁴ the government presented it to the legislators.

The cabinet's approval of the draft electoral law that was at odds with the constitution further brought the gerrymandering intention of the government into the open. Consequently, this decision led to a stalemate and made Somalia's political atmosphere poisonous. The president's attempt to change the semi-parliamentary system that was in place then to a presidential system further alienated not only the regional leaders and other stakeholders but also many MPs. The president surprised everyone with his audacity in proposing a bill that contradicted the constitution he was tasked to protect. Moreover, the most important power that the Somali lawmakers have is electing a president, and many of them sell their votes to candidates multiple times. The president showed a poor understanding of how the government works, expecting that he could change constitutional articles and decades of practice with ordinary legislation.

After the Council of Ministers presented the draft electoral law to the parliament, the speaker of the first chamber, Mohamed Mursal, appointed a 15-member special ad hoc committee to review the cabinet proposal on 20 July 2019.²⁵ The committee rejected the draft electoral law.²⁶ Instead, the first chamber embraced the clan-based power-sharing system, arguing that it was the basis of the society. The parliamentary committee emphasized that the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula would be maintained. The committee also removed the articles that contradicted the constitution, contending that the two chambers would elect the president. Furthermore, the ad hoc committee dropped the closed-list PR system and instead proposed the FPTP model, which divided the country into 275 clan constituencies.

More importantly, the parliamentary committee report emphasized that a one-person, one-vote election is not possible until the constitution is reviewed, the country is united, a citizenship law is prepared, the census is completed, and the boundaries of districts and regions are demarcated. According to the committee, for all practical purposes, universal suffrage was not feasible in 2020 even though the Independent Election Commission claimed otherwise.²⁷ The lower house of the

parliament accepted all the committee recommendations and prepared a new electoral law and enacted it on 28 December 2019, thus creating a new reality on the ground. The upper chamber also passed this draft electoral law, and the president signed it into law in February 2020.

The irony is that the Council of Ministers (more than 70% of whose members were MPs from the lower house) approved the president's draft bill that was at odds with the constitution and called for the adoption of the closed-list PR system and just one national district. In the parliament, however, the same ministers rejected the model that they themselves approved and voted for the FPTP system with 275 clan constituencies. Is this in line with politicians' practice of not changing the system that brought them to power? Are the MPs confused? The answer to both questions may be in the affirmative, but the move also revealed that the cabinet had become a rubber stamp, where debate is not tolerated.

Furthermore, the conflict is also rooted in the trust deficit of the political class. The president's proposal of closed-list PR is consistent with the best practice internationally. Many post-conflict countries have chosen this model because it is simple, fair, and easy to implement.²⁸ In the case of Somalia, as explained by the Heritage Institute's policy paper, there has been an initial political agreement between the regional and national political leaders in Baidoa, Somalia.²⁹ The closed-list PR can easily secure the representation of women and the participation of internally displaced people (IDPs).³⁰ Additionally, the model is useful in creating trans-clan and disciplined political parties.³¹ Yet, instead of improving or modifying it, the stakeholders, the leaders of the federal member states, and the majority of the legislators, including the MPs in the cabinet, rejected the president's proposal.³²

The interviewees for this article and the public speeches and interviews that some politicians gave to media outlets suggest that the aforementioned conflict had to do with the trust deficit among the country's political stakeholders.³³ The government's "winner-takes-all" approach and determination to stay in power beyond 2020 deepened the mistrust between politicians. Moreover, legislators raised three concerns. First, the president's proposals of adopting just one national district and closed-list PR would disrupt the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula among the Somali clans. It became clear that

many sub-clans would lose their seats if the model were adopted.³⁴ Second, the president's proposals would strengthen political party leaders. Some of the legislators said that such model would create party bosses who would replace the traditional elders. A member of the parliament said, "I can deal with the traditional elder of my clan, but I cannot accept a party leader from another clan who is himself seeking the power of determining who will represent us."³⁵ The problem here is that candidates worry about their place in the party candidate list. Finally, the president's model creates a center-periphery dilemma. Another MP said, "Mogadishu has the largest population in the country and is where the government is located, and the people in the peripheral regions will be disadvantaged."³⁶ The legislators from the peripheral regions suspected that the government intended to rig the election using the Mogadishu population.

IV. Implementation Challenges for the Approved Electoral System

After the president's assent, the electoral law based on the FPTP system became the law of the land in February 2020.³⁷ However, it will be challenging to implement the law as there are political, logistical, financial, and security-related impediments to its implementation. The electoral law creates 275 clan-based political districts for the lower house and another 54 based on the 18 administrative regions that the military government left behind. It is a challenge to assign lower-house seats to geographical districts because many clans are dispersed in the country. Additionally, besides the dispute on the interpretation of the pertinent constitutional articles³⁸ in the senate, many communities have issues with how the military government created the districts and regions. Politically, the creation of 275 clan-based political districts will open a Pandora's box for the Somali government.

In addition to the difficulties of assigning seats to localities, the electoral law legitimizes the exclusion of five groups. First, it will end or significantly reduce the representation of women in the parliament³⁹ as the patriarchal tribal culture is biased against women. The idea that the parliament will in time draft and pass another piece of legislation or resolution that protects the quota for women is too optimistic at best. Although the gender quota in Somalia is 30%, only 24% of the sitting MPs are women. For some MPs, one way to ensure the gender quota

is to pass a resolution that reserves all the seats currently occupied by women only for women.⁴⁰ In other words, only women will compete for those seats. There are two problems with this idea. One is that sub-clans may contest it as an arbitrary process allocating seats to women. Another is that it is not clear how the remaining 6% of the seats would be assigned to women. Second, the current electoral law ignores the participation and representation of IDPs. At least 1.5 million Somalis are displaced within the country, meaning their political rights will be “indefinitely denied.” Third, the debate on the political participation and representation of the diaspora Somalis is the elephant in the room. The diaspora Somalis dominate Somali politics, but their participation in Somali politics has not yet been formalized. The draft “electoral law” is silent on whether the millions of Somalis who significantly contribute to all sectors of the Somali society can vote and become legislature members.⁴¹ Fourth, Article 12(7) of the electoral law states that given the prevailing political conditions in the country, the parliament should enact a separate bill or resolution electing the members of the two chambers who would represent the Dir-Waqooyi clans from Somaliland.⁴²

By way of comparison, Somaliland is far more advanced than Somalia when it comes to the democratization progress. Under the open-list PR system, Somaliland was able to organize a successful local and parliamentary election in May 2021. About 700,000 people voted in six regions.⁴³ Despite the inherent limitations of the open-list PR system (i.e., poor representation of women), according to international observers and the Commission, the May 2021 election was free and fair.

That said, even if the proposal of establishing a separate mechanism for the MPs representing the northern Dir clans in the name of Somaliland is accepted, the approach that the government has taken has complicated the election process. President Farmajo favors the ally faction of the current deputy prime minister, Mahdi Guled, at the expense of the other group led by the speaker of the upper chamber, Abdi Hashi. As Abdi Samatar has repeatedly argued, the government is determined to dictate and choose the representatives of the northern clans in the next parliament.

Finally, Al-Shabaab⁴⁴ controls large parts of Somalia, and its operatives are also present in most of the rural areas and big cities in the

country. How the people living in those areas can participate in the elections is not clear. Politics aside, however, the extremist movement poses security-related challenges in a big part of the country. In other words, the government has failed to use its legitimate monopoly on violence in the territory it claims to rule. In fact, it controls a very small portion of the country. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, there are financial and logistical impediments to the holding of elections in the country.

Interestingly, the whole election-related controversy could have been avoided. President Farmajo could have negotiated with the stakeholders for a win-win solution to the problems regarding the electoral system. Because of his “all or nothing approach,” however, he missed such important opportunity. Initially, the bone of contention between him and the leaders of the federal member states was only the number of political districts. He wanted just one political district, a national one, while his opponents preferred six or seven regional political districts. In all other areas, the government and the opposition accepted closed-list PR, a ballot structure of political parties, and a 7% threshold. There was also a consensus on the legislature’s size: 275 for the lower house and 54 for the senate. Unfortunately, President Farmajo refused to accept the regional leaders’ proposal of establishing six or seven political constituencies, but he later signed an electoral law creating 275 clan districts and installed the FPTP electoral model.⁴⁵

Instead of opting for the short-sighted approach, the President could have adopted one of the several options that were available for his government. He could have accepted the regional proposal, and that would not have been a significant concession. If this was too much for him, he could have negotiated with the regions that the 275 seats be divided into national and regional levels: seats that would be elected at the state level and seats that would be elected at the national level. The South African example is instructive, with the 400-member legislature divided along regional (200) and national (200) lines.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, President Farmajo chose to ignore the constitution, political institutions, and stakeholders and wasted precious time in resolving an important issue. For the president, the whole exercise became a public relations game of making the government appear to be preparing the country for a universal-suffrage election.

Another critical issue is the sequence of elections. In the past, council elections preceded national elections. For instance, during the trusteeship era, Somalia organized council elections before the territorial elections in 1954 and 1958. The Somali Republic used a similar format in its 1964 elections. In 1969, the country held the council and national elections at the same time. Even though the president's rejected draft bill was meant for preparing an electoral law for local, regional, and national elections, the current electoral law focuses only on national elections. This inadvertently legitimizes the current practice of executive authorities appointing the mayors and governors, including the mayor of Mogadishu.

As some have pointed out,⁴⁷ Somalia's provisional constitution clearly states that maintaining power sharing among the different segments of the society and maintaining the gender quota are mandatory. Yet, the constitution also prohibits discrimination based on several grounds, including clan and region. The electoral law that the two chambers passed maintains the clan-based power-sharing formula, but it does not do the same with the gender quota.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the political party law is based on the second set of constitutional articles that encourage a citizenship-based integration model. In this case, the law prioritizes a party-based ballot structure. In other words, this is a reminder that unless and until the constitution is finalized, preparing an electoral law will be an exercise in futility.

To date, the government has not presented how he wants to navigate the challenges listed above. For some of the interviewees for this study, including some MPs, the current electoral law is a theoretical exercise. In fact, on hindsight, proposing and adopting impractical laws served the goals of President Farmajo and the House of the People to stage-manage some sort of a term extension. This eventually happened when the House of the People of Somalia passed a two-year term extension resolution, which the president signed in April 2021. This move resulted in a political crisis. The country was close to another round of civil war, but this was averted when the opposition groups, international community, and civil society pressured the president to reverse the term extension and organize an indirect election.⁴⁹

V. Choosing an Electoral System: The Way Forward

Against the backdrop of state fragility and elite polarization, it became clear to everyone that imposing an ill-conceived and gerrymandered electoral system is dangerous and could lead the country to a renewed conflict. The choice of a suitable electoral system must be carefully managed. The first priorities should be creating a secure environment and establishing the rule of law. After these, electoral politics can begin at the local government level, followed by the regional level. Only after this and with adequate experience in managing local and regional elections can Somalia organize credible elections at the national level. The Somali elite and the international community must remember that the civil war resulted from a repressive military rule that refused to democratize the country's politics.

In the long run, before resolving the question of the suitable electoral model for the country, the structural issues must be addressed. Somalia's parliament consists of two chambers. In theory, the lower chamber (275-member) represents the people while the upper chamber (54-member) represents the states. In practice, both represent clans. The debate on whether it is right to shift from the collectivistic tribal or clan-based consociation model to a multi-party citizenship-based representation model, and how to do so, is still ongoing. Besides representing the same constituency, the two parliamentary chambers perform similar functions: deliberation, legislation (policymaking), and oversight and control. The Somali politicians have found this arrangement comfortable when populating the two chambers and electing the executive.

Concerning electoral-system choice, closed-list PR remains to be the most feasible electoral system for the country. This system is in line with the best practice globally. Moreover, the Somalis have used this model for their elections from 1954 to 1969. This experience is useful even if few people remember it. Closed-list PR can secure the participation and representation of women and IDPs. More importantly, this system can address most of the drawbacks of the FPTP electoral system, and is compatible with the move to party-based politics. For district magnitude, according to the literature, the ideal-sized district has five to ten MPs. This is not easy, but the government and stakeholders

can negotiate the specifics. With regard to the ballot structure, the citizens should elect political parties rather than an individual candidate.

Moreover, the lawmakers should design an electoral system for all levels, and should start with local elections, followed by regional ones. Perhaps those involved in the electoral-system design can start with the 1968 electoral bill, which can prepare a durable electoral law. Finally, those in the political class must seek to improve their understanding of the different electoral systems and engage in a quality debate. Hopefully, this study will inform and contribute to such debate.

VI. Conclusion

Due to the time constraints, designing an electoral law without considering relevant institutions such as political parties, decentralization issues, and the clan-based political culture will only result in more complications and confusion. As explained earlier in this article, in the debate on the suitable electoral model for Somalia, the government and the parliament backed different electoral systems. The government preferred a closed-list PR system while the parliament legislated the FPTP model. This article presents the different perspectives on this matter and analyzes the government's and parliament's self-serving approaches to it. It argues that the government has poorly managed the issue. Even though the parliament has passed a law based on the FPTP model, this article posits that the closed-list PR electoral model is more suitable for Somalia, a country recovering from conflict and aiming to establish citizen-based democratic institutions.

Notes

1. Farrell, David M. *Comparing electoral systems* (London: MacMillan, 1997), p. 5.
2. Horowitz, Donald L. "A primer for decision-makers." In Diamond, Larry and Plattner, Marc, *Electoral systems and democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006), p. 4.
3. Reilly, Benjamin. "Key issues for post-conflict elections: timing, sequencing and systems," *The RUSI Journal* 162: 5, 2017, p. 20.
4. Grofman, Bernard and Lijphart, Arend. *Electoral laws and their political consequences*, vol. 1 (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003), p. 4.
5. The Trust territory refers to the Somali region that was under United Nations trusteeship from 1950 to 1960.

6. See Castagno, Alphonso, "Somalia." *International conciliation*, vol. 32 (1959); Halff, Maarten. *Electoral legislation of Somalia, 2016*, available at https://www.academia.edu/29217724/The_Electoral_Legislation_of_Somalia_1953-1969; Trunji, Mohamed, *Somalia: the untold history 1941–1969* (Loohpress, 2015).
7. Millman, Brock. *British Somaliland: an administrative history, 1920–1960* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 271.
8. The legislators of the Somali Republic enacted another electoral law (Law No. 4) in January 1964. Please see this bill in Halff's collection above.
9. See the Heritage Institute of Policy Studies report "Somalia: in search of a workable 2020 electoral model" (Mogadishu, July 2019), http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HIPS_report_english_version.pdf. I was the lead author of this report.
10. Law No. 13 of 6 June 1968: Political Elections and Local Council Elections. Please see this bill in Halff's collection above.
11. Halff, *Electoral legislation of Somalia*, p. 189.
12. For further details, please see the Heritage Institute of Policy Studies report "Somalia: in search of a workable 2020 electoral model" (Mogadishu, July 2019), http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HIPS_report_english_version.pdf.
13. President Farmajo renounced his American citizenship in 2019. The reason given was that he had faced challenges in attending the General Assembly meetings while using his Somali passport. The U.S. would not provide a visitor's visa to its citizen, and if he used his American passport while he was the president, it would look bad. The *New York Times* also reported that tax-related issues forced the president to renounce his American citizenship. See Walsh, Declan and Dahir, Abdi Latif, 2021, *The Bureaucrat from Buffalo who Pushed Somalia to the Brink*. The *New York Times*, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/world/africa/somalia-president.html>.
14. Of the 26 ministers appointed to the Council of Ministers, over 70% came from the West. Seven of these ministers were Somali-Canadians.
15. Transitional tasks include review of the constitution, completion of the decentralization process, and organization of one-person, one-vote elections. The previous administrations had failed to do these and then opted for an indirect selection process.
16. Telephone interview with a government official, February 2020. The committee consisted of 27 members working in different government agencies, such as the President's Office, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Constitution, the Independent Electoral Commission, and the Boundaries Commission.
17. Interview with a government official, Nairobi, September 2019.
18. Somalia's National Security Committee met in Baidoa, Somalia, on 5 June 2018 and issued a communiqué in which they said they had agreed on the electoral model for the country. See <https://villasomalia.gov.so/soomaali/war-murtiyeedka-golaha-amniga-qaranka/>.
19. My interview with an official of the government (June 2018).
20. See the communiqué in which the state leaders suspended the relations with the government at <https://www.caasimada.net/akhriso-war-murtiyeedka-shirka-kis-maayo-maamul-gobleedyada-oo-xiriirka-u-jaray-dowladda-dhexe/>. (Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Umm Durman, Khartoum, 2007), 84.

21. As noted above, the Somali parliament harmonized the two different electoral laws in 1964. See Law No. 4 in January 1964 in Halff's collection.
22. See the electoral bill that the government presented to the parliament one year after the agreement at <https://www.radiodalsan.com/akhriso-xeerka-kheyre-u-gudbi-yay-baarlamaanka-ee-xulida-guddiga-agaasinka-bangiga-dhexe/>.
23. See Article 12 of the draft bill that the Council of Ministers approved and presented to the parliament.
24. The Council of Ministers approved the draft bill even though various stakeholders, including political parties, rejected it. See the BBC Somali coverage at <https://www.bbc.com/somali/war-48149785>.
25. The speaker of the parliament announced that he appointed an ad hoc committee that would review the cabinet proposal. The committee consisted of 15 members and was tasked with providing recommendations to the parliament. See <https://goobjoog.com/english/federal-parliament-appoints-an-interim-committee-to-amend-the-national-election-law/>.
26. The committee recommended the FPTP model. See https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2019/Nov/166268/somalis_want_a_winner_takes_all_electoral_system_parliamentary_report.aspx.
27. See the report of the Special Committee of the Parliament issued on 19 November 2019.
28. Reilly, Benjamin. 'Key issues for post-conflict elections: timing, sequencing and systems', *The RUSI Journal* 162: 5, 2017, p. 21.
29. For further details, see the Heritage Institute of Policy Studies report, 'Somalia: in search of a workable 2020 electoral model' (Mogadishu, July 2019), http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HIPS_report_english_version.pdf.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. See the communiqué in which the state leaders suspended the relations with the government at <https://www.caasimada.net/akhriso-war-murtiyeedka-shirka-kis-maayo-maamul-gobleedyada-oo-xiriirka-u-jaray-dowladda-dhexe>. The forum for the national party has issued many statements on the matter.
33. Both the government and the opposition groups often use media outlets through interviews and statements. I have also interviewed more than 50 people from different camps of Somali politics and diplomats working in Somalia.
34. Politicians from "big" clans are behind the campaign for ending the power-sharing formula while those who believe they will not get representation insist on maintaining the formula.
35. Telephone interview with a member of the lower house of the parliament, February 2020.
36. Telephone interview with a member of the lower house of the parliament, January 2020.
37. See Garowe Online, 'Somalia's Senate approves disputed electoral bill' (8 February 2020), <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalias-senate-approves-disputed-electoral-bill>. Aqalka Sare oo Ansixiyey Sharciga Doorashada Qaranka, <https://www.voasomali.com/a/5279345.html>.
38. See Article 72 of the Somali Constitution (in Somali), https://www.parliament.gov.so/images/Downloads/Dastuurka_ku_meelgaarka_SOM_03092012-1_2.pdf.

39. According to the constitution, there is a 30% quota for women. The last parliament, however, succeeded in securing only a 24% representation for Somali women.
40. I interviewed several members of the two chambers in December 2019.
41. Many countries have diaspora representation in the parliament, but in the Somali laws, there is none. Members of the diaspora come to the country and join politics through their clans. This has created grievances among the local Somalis, who are largely marginalized.
42. Somaliland is a self-declared state that is the successor to the former British Somaliland.
43. See Somaliland Election Commission Website, <https://slnec.org/2021-parliamentary-election/>. There has been global media coverage on this important election.
44. Al-Shabaab is an Islamist extremist group that is fighting against the Somali government.
45. See the draft electoral law that the two chambers enacted.
46. Reynolds, Andrew. *Electoral systems and democratization in Southern Africa* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 66.
47. Culusow, Maxamud M. "Barlamaanka Soomaaliya oo ansixiyay Sharci Doorasho Heer Federal oo Laalan" [Somali Parliament enacts an electoral law] Goobjoog News (10 January 2020), <https://goobjoog.com/barlamaanka-soomaaliya-oo-ansixiyay-shar-ci-doorasho-heer-federal-oo-laalan/>.
48. Article 64 and 72 of the Draft Constitution mandate that the legislative assemblies "must represent all communities of the Federal Republic of Somalia in a balanced manner." The political agreements consider the current 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula in accordance with this.
49. See the communiqué by six political parties announcing the formation of the Forum for National Parties: "Somalia: Six political parties inaugurate [sic] Forum for National Parties (FNP)," *Horn Diplomat* (7 November 2019), <https://www.horndiplomat.com/2019/11/07/somalia-six-political-parties-inaugurates-forum-for-national-parties-fnp/>.