Glimpse into The Drawbacks in The Somali Political Landscape in 1960-1969

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Abstract

The political history of Somalia, from 1960 to 2023, unfolds across four distinct eras, i.e. democratic multi-party system, authoritarian military regime, political vacuum and national fragmentation, and clan-based selection/election; each marks a significant period in the country's political landscape. Each period has its characters and common denominator. The first era, from 1960 to 1969, witnessed the initiation of a democratic multi-party system, a unique phase in Somalia's contemporary history. Despite its brevity in the broader historical context, this phase holds profound significance in shaping Somalia's political mentality and has left an indelible mark on the Somali mindset. This paper delves into the political dynamics of this initial era, with a particular focus on the drawbacks that emerged and influenced its trajectory. The paper emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing these drawbacks within their historical context. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of Somalia's political evolution, offering valuable insights for formulating effective reforms to establish a resilient and inclusive political system in the future.

Keywords: *Somalia, multi-party system, political history, political drawbacks.*

Introduction

Beginning with a chronological exploration of political landscape in Somalia from its inception in July 1960 to 2023, while preparing this paper, this 63-year overview categorizes the nation's political trajectory into four distinct eras. Somalia's political journey unfolds across these four periods. The first period, from July 1960 to October 1969, witnessed the emergence of a new multi-party system that underwent the process of institutionalization and gained valuable experience, despite facing challenges and having its own drawbacks. In October 1969, the military intervened in politics, overthrowing the elected government and paving the way for a second period—a drastic shift marked by the emergence of an authoritarian military regime from October 1969 to January 1991. This period was characterized by military rule, centralized power and the suppression of civil liberties.

The subsequent third period, from 1991 to 2000, was characterized by a political vacuum, national fragmentation, and the rise of localized fiefdoms.[133] Since 2000, Somalia has navigated a clan-based system of selection and election, shaping its political landscape to the present day, which constitutes the fourth stage. Subsequent sections will provide some more details about these eras.
To transition from the current fourth stage, we notice in recent years, despite encountering difficulties and frequent setbacks, ongoing efforts and promises towards a democratic government with multiparty elections and establishing political stability amidst challenges.

The political history of Somalia from 1960 to 1969 is a crucial period in the contemporary political history of Somalia. It is the only period which experienced a democratic multi-party system. Spanning only nine years of the 63-year timeline, it constitutes 14.3% of the nation's post-independence history. However, it shaped the democratic experience of Somali society and its elite. Additionally, whenever discussing the establishment of a democratic system and the implementation of direct elections, the experiences of this period are often recalled. Therefore, it is essential to study this period, understand its characteristics, and draw lessons from it to enhance future democracy in the country.

[133] Somaliland, the self-declared republic in ex-British Somaliland in May 1991, charted its own political trajectory since then; hence, we do not discuss its political history in this paper.

This paper examines the drawbacks and weaknesses which Somalia's political landscape experienced during 1960-1969, aligning with the wisdom imparted by the Somali proverb *'khayr waxba kaama dhibee, shar u toog hay'*, which means '*do not be harmed by the good, but beware of the evil*' which underlines the significance of avoiding potential problems and the associated consequences —being proactive to prevent harm.

By delving into historical events and circumstances, the study seeks to provide a summarized comprehensive understanding of the factors that hindered the democratic multi-party system during this period. While existing narratives acknowledge the democratic nature of the era, this study aims to unveil, or highlight, the less-explored drawbacks that compromised the effectiveness of the political system. Hence, it contributes to a profound and nuanced understanding of this stage and encourages further studies, extracting objective lessons from it. As a methodological approach, this study aims to critically examine events and their implications by leveraging historical narratives, scholarly works, and available sources. The objective is to provide nuanced insights into the drawbacks that influenced Somali democracy during the study period.

A Journey Through Time (1960-2023) - A 63-Year Overview

Embarking on a chronological exploration of the political landscape of the Somali republic since its inception in July 1960, this 63-year overview categorizes the nation's political trajectory into four distinct eras up to 2023. The fourth era may even extend to any future time until the implementation of direct democratic elections.

These four eras are as follows:

1. Democratic multi-party system era (July 1960 – October 1969):
2. Authoritarian military regime era (October 1969 – January 1991):
3. Political vacuum and national fragmentation era (1991-2000):
4. Clan-based selection/election era (2000 – present):

The chronological breakdown into these four distinct periods offers insight into the various phases, each sharing common characteristics and a common denominator. This breakdown defines the contemporary political history of Somalia, providing an overview of political dynamics and developments since 1960.

Democratic Multi-Party System Era

At the inception of the Somali Republic in July 1960, Somalia adopted a democratic multi-party system, marking the establishment of a multi-party democratic system, which also operated in the final years before independence.[134] This system persisted until the coup d'état of October 1969. During this period, the foundational principles of democracy were evident and active. Free and fair elections were conducted regularly, allowing citizens the right to vote for their representatives. Political pluralism flourished, fostering a diversity of parties and opinions. Fundamental freedoms, including speech, assembly, and association, were respected, and the media operated freely and independently. Democratically elected governments alternated between July 1960 and October 1969 in a parliamentary system, with elections ensuring a smooth transition.[135]

However, beneath these positive aspects, noteworthy drawbacks emerged, and various setbacks occurred, testing the robustness of the process, governance efficiency, sustainability and institutionalization. These issues will be explored briefly in the upcoming sections.

Authoritarian Military Regime

In October 1969, Somalia transitioned to a military regime after a coup d'état, initially described as a *'bloodless coup'*, later revealing itself to be a *'bloody coup'*.[136] On October 21, the military overthrew the elected civilian government, abolished the parliament, nullified the constitution, banned all political and social organisations, and governed the country through a junta known as the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) *(Golaha Sare ee Kacaanka)* led by Mohamed Siad Barre. After a year, in 1970, Siad Barre declared the '*scientific socialism*' *(hantiwadaagga cilmiga ku dhisan)* as the guiding principle for the new Somalia.[137] By July 1976, the nation transitioned into a

[134] The Trust Territory of Somalia, encompassing the southern part of the Somali Republic, experienced democratic elections and a multi-party system beginning in 1956. In contrast, British Somaliland, constituting the northern part of the Somali Republic, initiated this experience later and had less than two years of exposure before gaining independence.

[135] For further details, refer to Trunji, *'Somalia: The Untold History 1941-1969'*, from page 371 and beyond.

[136] Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, *'The Suicidal State in Somalia'* p.66.

[137] For more details, refer to Mohamed Haji Ingiriis. *'The Suicidal State in Somalia'* ' pp. 83-84

one-party state under the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP). This period of totalitarian rule, encompassing the Military Regime and the One-Party State, endured for approximately 21 years. Throughout this era, power was centralized within a military junta or a singular party, where the leader, Siad Barre, held substantial control over all aspects of governance. He became the head of the junta, the party, the government and the state, consolidating all powers in his hands.

Human rights have been systematically violated on a significant scale. Civil liberties were notably restricted, curtailing fundamental human rights and freedoms such as speech, assembly, and association. The situation continued to deteriorate steadily. Any dissent or opposition was promptly suppressed, reflecting the hallmark characteristics of a totalitarian system. The regime systematically controlled and manipulated information through censorship, propaganda, and state-controlled media to shape public perception and stifle dissenting voices. Dissent was consistently suppressed through extensive political repression, including surveillance, arbitrary arrests, torture, and the elimination of political opposition. The regime's control extended to a formidable military presence, underscoring its reliance on military might to maintain its grip on power. The regime utilized any means to consolidate power, obliging citizens to adhere to its tenets.[138]

A cult of personality was cultivated around the president, Mohamed Siad Barre (1919 – 1995). He was named with many honorary titles,[139] and revolutionary songs praising him were composed,[140] constructing a heroic image for him, portraying him as an iconic figure and the embodiment of both the revolution and the state. This cultivation demands full loyalty; otherwise, he will be found guilty

[138] For more details about this era, refer to Mohamed Haji Ingiriis. *'The Suicidal State in Somalia' '* p. 63 and beyond

[139] The prominent honorary titles included *'aabbihii kacaanka'* meaning 'father of the revolution', *'aabbihii garashada'* meaning 'father of all wisdom' and *'guulwade Siyaad'* meaning 'Siad, the bearer of victory'.

[140] Among the prominent songs were *'Guulwade Siyaad'* and *'Caynaanka hay'*. *'Guulwade Siyaad'* means 'Siad, the bearer of victory', it was mandatory to recite it loudly in schools, community gatherings and government meetings. This song, composed by Hassan Haji Mohamed, aka 'Hassan Guulwade', in 1970 at the beginning of the revolution, held significant importance. The second song, *'Caynaanka hay*', or "May you hold onto the reins of power forever", was composed by Abdi Muhumed Amin in 1971.

of *'dibusocod' which* means '*reactionism*' and *'qaran dumis'* which means *'high treason'*; the song *'Samadiidow'* will be played on the radio, and he will be led to the gallows.[141]

During this period, armed rebel organizations emerged with the aim of overthrowing the regime. Their power steadily grew in the late 1970s and 1980s. By the mid-1980s, supported by the Ethiopian administration, their presence had spread geographically to several regions nationwide.[142] The prominent organisations were the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), established in 1978/1981; the Somali National Movement (SNM) in 1981; the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) in 1989; and the United Somali Congress (USC) in 1989.

Obviously, the first armed clash, marking the ignition of the Somali civil war, was the *'Awrayaal or Awryaalay Operation'* in January 1979. It was conducted by 72 militants of the Somali Salvation Front (SSF); one of the organisations later became SSDF, around *Galxamur* in the northern part of the Mudug region.[143]

The clashes escalated in magnitude and spread across various regions. The military forces engaged in numerous harsh and cruel activities, targeting unarmed civilians based on their clan affiliations. This resulted in the killing of livestock, the destruction of water pools and wells, and the destruction of cities and towns. The most severe devastation occurred in Hargeisa and Burao cities in 1988.[144]

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[141] Playing the song *'Samadiidow dabin baa kuu dhigan lagugu dili doono'*, meaning 'Be cautious, those who reject virtuous actions, a deadly trap has been laid for you', on Mogadishu and Hargeisa Radio, the only two radio stations in the country, became a signature tune for subsequent executions during the revolution. In September 1970, it was composed by Hassan Haji Mohamed, also known as '*Xasan Guulwade*' (1949-).

[142] This rebellion marked the beginning of the civil war in Somalia, which persisted for decades under various banners and agendas. Regional or international actors played various roles at different stages in this conflict.

[143] They used *'awr',* means he-camels, for transportation instead of cars, hence the term awryaal. Upon entering the border, the Somali military attacked them. After three rounds of clashes, they were defeated by the army, with nearly half of them killed and the other half mostly wounded. Refer to Xuseen Khaliif 'laba isma Saarin' pp. 172-176 and Abdulkadir Shire Farah 'Matxafka Cadaabta' p.245. Abdulkadir asserts that this clash was the initial spark that ignited the prolonged civil war.

[144] For more details refer to International Crisis Group [ICG]. (2006). Somaliland: Time for Africa Union Leadership, pp. 5-6;

This affected place far from the front lines, including Mogadishu, the capital. The most horrific aggression occurred during the Jazeera Beach Massacre on 15 July 1989, resulting in the killing of around 59 civilians who were captured from their homes at night.[145]

After the tyrannical regime of Barre, which disregarded the advice of the wise to seek a political resolution for the deteriorating crisis, the country sloped into an intensifying civil war. This period ultimately concluded with the ousting of the regime by armed opposition militias on 26 January 1991.

Political Vacuum and National Fragmentation

After a nearly decade-long armed conflict, Barre fled from the capital on 26 January 1991, and the armed opposition captured the capital, Mogadishu.[146] This marked a transition to a new era. This transition marked a shift from the era of dictatorship to the subsequent period of bloody chaos, extensive fragmentation and violence— a situation that aptly reflects the Somali proverb *'kud ka guur oo qanjo u guur'* which means *'out of the frying pan and into the fire'*.

After the expelling of the president and his government from the capital, the USC, allied politically with other armed factions, began competing for the power and the ensuing turmoil and large-scale civil war, mostly in the south. The absence of a central government led to power vacuums exploited by faction leaders and localized 'fiefdoms'.

Consequently, this period was marked by national fragmentation and a deepening civil war, representing a challenging and turbulent phase with disruptions, tensions, and chaos with further deepening of the shattering of social cohesion. The competition among armed groups and factions, aligned with subclans, escalated persistent armed conflicts and power struggles, resulting in a devastating civil war, economic disruption, humanitarian crises, and impeding national political reconciliation efforts. Prevailing instability and uncertainty contributed to a lack of predictability in political, economic, and social affairs. The rise of out-of-control militias and criminal gangs is

[145] For more details refer to Abdulkadir Shire Farah 'Matxafka Cadaabta' p.212-231; and Historical Dictionary p. 128. Abdulkadir listed the names of 59 victims in his book 'Matxafka Cadaabta' on pp. 228-231.

[146] For more about the circumstances at that time, refer to Badiyow, Somali History V2, pp. 32-36.

witnessed in various regions.[147].Numerous peacemaking conferences were conducted between 1991 and 1997, resulting in agreements that were never implemented.[148] In 2000, the Somalia National Peace Conference in Djibouti led to the formation of a clan-based political system and inaugurated the Transitional National Government (TNG).[149]

4 Clan-Based Selections/Elections

In 2000, the Somalia National Peace Conference, also known as the Djibouti Conference, was convened under the auspices of civil society and traditional elders in Djibouti.[150] This gathering led to the formation of a provisional government, the Transitional National Government (TNG). The *'4.5 formula'* was adopted for power sharing of Somali clans, an official clan-based political system.[151] Since then, Somalia entered a new era, it has operated under a system of clan-based selection and election, guided and influenced by clan elders.

It is worth noting that clannism has informally influenced Somali politics, often involving under-the-table deals away from public announcements or official documentation.[152] However, this conference formalized clannish politics and introduced the *'4.5 formula'* for political power-sharing among clans. It aims to achieve *de facto* representation and cultivate a more inclusive political environment in Somalia, a society ravaged by civil war. Under this formula, the clan community became an

[147] The situation has evolved in the first years, leading to the emergence of three distinct zones in the country: the North-West Zone (Somaliland), the North-East Zone (Puntland), and the Central-South Zone. This division remains prominent to this day.

[148] For more details, refer to Badiyow, Somali History V2, pp. 37-46.

[149] Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, Historical Dictionary, pp. 41-42.

[150] For more details, refer to Badiyow, Somali History V2, pp. 155-164.

[151] Power-sharing in the 1990s primarily involved political organisations, identified by their national names. However, with the Cairo Declaration on Somalia in December 1997, power-sharing dynamics shifted towards a community-based approach, employing the names of clans rather than the names of political organizations.

[152] The Somali political parties and their clan affiliations in 1960 and 1991, refer to Badiyow Somali History V1 p. 138 & 155.

official political entity; hence, parliamentary seats and cabinet portfolios were divided among clans, instead of political parties.[153]

The newly established TNG faced multifaceted internal, regional and international challenges immediately upon commencing operations, with one of the most prominent issues arising from the armed factions in Mogadishu. This predicament weakened the TNG, pushing it to a critical state.
In this context, it became necessary to convene another conference to revive the government institutions. A new reconciliation conference emerged in 2002, known as the Somali Reconciliation Conference in Kenya, amidst the influence of armed factions. After lengthy negotiations and extensive debates, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was formally inaugurated in October 2004. After about eight years, it upgraded to the Federal Government of Somalia in August 2012.

In summary, challenges to state-building persisted during efforts to reconstruct functional national governmental institutions and restore stability and the rule of law. The transitional period (2000-2012) witnessed successive transitional governments, including the Transitional National Government (TNG) from 2000 to 2004 and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) until 2012. Establishing the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2012 marked another step toward national consolidation.

One of the main missions of these successive governments during this period was to shift the country from a clan-based political system to establishment of democratic politics rooted in party pluralism, leading to the implementation of 1V1P elections, a Long-awaited aspiration that people have been anticipating until this moment. The latest initiative was in May 2023 when the National Consultative Council convened in Mogadishu and resolved that *'elections throughout the entire country should*

153 The '4.5 formula' in Somali politics refers to a power-sharing arrangement, the distribution of political power and representation in the government, aiming to ensure inclusivity and representation for the clans. It is applied strictly in the distribution of parliamentary seats and cabinet posts. Accordingly, each of the four major clans (Hawiye, Daarood, Dir, and Digil & Mirifle) is allocated an equal share of political power (MPs and cabinet posts), approximately 22.22% for each. The remaining 0.5 represents a collective share for the remaining clans (Beesha Shanaad), accounting for around 11.12% for them.

be conducted through a one-person, one-vote system in 2023', beginning with municipal elections on 30 June 2023, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections on 30 November 2023.[154]

More Insights into Somalia's Political Landscape: 1960-1969

The overview of Somalia's political landscape from 1960 to 1969 reveals that significant historical events played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the newly formed Somali Republic in July 1960. The republic embraced a multi-party system, conducting democratic elections for power rotation and fostering basic societal freedoms. Democratically elected governments alternated between July 1960 and October 1969 in a parliamentary system, with representatives chosen every five years and a President is chosen every six years by the parliament. With elections ensuring a smooth transition, peaceful power transfers characterized the democratic process. During this era, power was transferred between two Presidents, Aden Abdulle Osman (Aden Adde) and Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, along with three consecutive Prime Ministers leading the government in those years, indicating political instability.[155] In this regard, international observers have acknowledged the distinctiveness of Somalia's performance in African politics:[156]

'In the arena of African politics, Somalia has fared well. No coups, no civil wars, no internecine splits have marred its nine-year history. Its people—united by language, culture, and religion—form a national state which will probably remain intact for the foreseeable future. Elections for the presidency and parliament have demonstrated the system's ability to transfer power democratically. The country's Ex-President and two former Prime Ministers are today all in parliament—not imprisoned, exiled, or dead.'

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[154] Refer to *'Heshiiska Hannaanka Doorashooyinka Jamhuuriyadda Federaalka Soomaaliya. 27 Maajo 2023'*. Muqdisho, Soomaaliya.

[155] Aden Abdulle Osman Daar, aka 'Aden Adde' (1908-2007), served as the first president of the Somali Republic from July 1960 to July 1967. He transferred power to Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke (1919-1969), the second president, who held office from July 1967 until his assassination on October 15, 1969. In the role of prime minister, Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke served from July 1960 to June 1964, followed by Abdirizak Haji Hussein (1924-2014) from June 1964 to July 1967. The third prime minister was Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal (1928–2002), in office from July 1967 to October 1969 until the military ousted his government.

[156] Samatar p. 214, quoted from (US Department of State, Research Memorandum RAF-10, July 8, 1969, US National Archives, College Park, MD).

The emerging republic encountered challenges in nation-building, characterized by weak political institutions, leadership inefficiency, incomplete laws, and intricate social and cultural dynamics. The political and administrative elite lacked enough experience and qualifications, impeding effective governance. The shortage of university-educated Somalis exacerbated administrative weaknesses, presenting obstacles across state institutions and departments.

The political turmoil, exacerbated by the weakness of political parties and a singular actor's unfortunate manipulation of the political landscape, i.e. the hegemony of SYL ruling party, which contradicts the essence of multi-party pluralism, has disrupted the check-and-balance and monitoring system. Moreover, development and social services did not receive their share of the general budget; instead, *'most of the budget was absorbed by the expenses of the bureau/administrative and military staff'*.[157] The situation deteriorated, things went awry, and the state descended into confusion and disturbance. This state has thrust the country into a suffocating political and social crisis with ominous implications if not addressed by the wise in a timely manner.[158]

In this context, President Abdirashid Ali Shermarke was assassinated on October 15, 1969, in the city of Las Anod, precipitating a military coup on October 21, 1969.[159] The coup marked a regression from a fledgling and struggling democracy, anticipated to mature, to an era of comprehensive military rule and a repressive police state.

Key Drawbacks in the Somali Political Landscape in 1960-1969

There are significant weaknesses in the Somali Political Landscape in 1960-1969. This article addresses various issues, difficulties, or obstacles, particularly emphasizing the negative aspects, limitations, or weaknesses in the political landscape during the specified time. The objective is to

[157] Abdalla Mansur, 'Contrary to a Nation: The Cancer of the Somali State' in Ahmed, Ali Jimale (ed), The Invention of Somalia (Lawrenceville, NJ, Red Sea Press, 1995), p. 133

[158] Trunji, Somalia: The Untold History. pp. 532-535; Abdalla Mansur, *'Contrary to a Nation'* p.114.

[159] Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, Historical Dictionary of Somalia. P.17

highlight the unfavorable elements of the political situation or the negative aspects of the political landscape during that period.

From 1960 to 1969, through a careful examination of the events and circumstances within the Somali context, the Somali political landscape encountered a range of significant drawbacks and left a negative experience. The key drawbacks or setbacks during this period can be identified, among others, as discussed in the following section.

Fragmented Hollow Small-Sized Parties

The political landscape during this period was characterized by the presence of numerous small-sized parties that, at least most of them, lacked substantive ideologies, clear objectives, and cohesive representation. In the colonial era, the Somali political parties originated as national liberation movements; after gaining independence, they failed to develop a new program that addressed the new challenges. As a result, despite their slogans and previous credibility, they transformed into parties with hollow content. Therefore, most parties lacked a comprehensive and well-defined agenda, making it challenging to effectively address the needs and aspirations of the people. Many of them were temporary formations utilized merely as vehicles to compete in elections and gain entry into the parliament. In addition, the number of political parties increased steadily. In the parliamentary elections of March 1964, 21 parties contested, but after five years, the number of contesting parties increased threefold to 64 in March 1969.[160]

The political arena was overwhelmed by 'hollow parties', often lacking a meaningful set of principles, policies, or a solid organizational structure; they were *'temporary clan groupings… formed solely for the purpose of putting up candidates with the ultimate aim of joining the ruling party after the elections*.[161]

The abundance of these hollow, small-sized parties led to fragmentation, limited representation, and posed challenges in establishing a stable and efficient government with effective checks and balances.

[160] Abdi Ismail Samatar, Africa's First Democrats. p.199 and Trunji Somalia: The Untold History p. 525.

[161] Mohamed Trunji, Somalia: The Untold History p.525.

During this era, diverse partisan views and debates were disseminated in the parliamentary chamber rather than within party institutions. The ruling party, SYL, often avoided clear positions on crucial matters, such as selecting a presidential candidate or appointing a prime minister.[162] This failure to resolve internal debates internally led to conflicting positions among party members in the chamber. This situation contributed to the fragmentation of the ruling party, hindering its strength and success;[163] despite this, they entered the arena appearing as a single party, but their members were simultaneously playing on both sides. Moreover, one author wrote in this regard, *'... the role of political opposition has always been played by factions within the ruling party, and not by the opposition parties alone.'*[164] Furthermore, this generally weakened the role of the parties and their task in shaping national politics and addressing key issues.

Opportunistic Hopping Parliamentarians

There were elected representatives who opportunistically switched their party affiliation, which can be called *'hopping'* Parliamentarians. During campaigns and elections, temporary parties were formed, and candidates aligned themselves with these parties solely to benefit from their symbols during the campaign. If elected, they quickly shifted their allegiance to the majority party, the Somali Youth League (SYL), abandoning their original party. Additionally, when significant issues or motions arose in the parliament, temporary informal coalitions of parliamentarians emerged, often diverging from their established parties. Emphasizing the abrupt and opportunistic nature of their political involvement, Dr Abdi Samatar describes these MPs as *'overnight political wannabes'*, and says:[165]

"*… the proliferation of political parties clearly demonstrated that most of these overnight political wannabes had no national agenda but were merely interested in securing a seat at the national table to gain access to public resources."*

[162] Samatar. Africa's First Democrats. p. 137

[163] Samatar, Africa's First Democrats. p. 143

[164] Mohamed Trunji, Somalia: The Untold History, p.533

[165] Samatar, Africa's First Democrats. P. 128

In parliamentary elections in March 1969, 64 parties were contested; SYL, the ruling and main party in the country, got 73 out of 123 seats of parliament. But in the voting for the government in June 1969, there was only one opponent voice.[166] Only three months prior, the newly elected MPs switched from the opposition to the ruling party. In this regard, Premier Abdirazak wrote in his memoir:[167]

'The general rule was that every deputy, especially those elected for the first time, was told by their constituencies not to be in the opposition. The reason for this was so that he would be in a better position to do something for his people.'

It is not surprising then that the matter ends with *'a single-member opposition'*.[168] This conduct prompts the question: in principle, why did they advocate for a multi-party system?!
This opportunistic behaviour, driven by short-term gains or self-interest, hinders politics, adds complexity to its landscape, contributes to the fragmentation of political representation, and undermines the integrity of political figures or institutions in the eyes of the public. It adversely affects overall stability, effective governance, and the credibility of political entities.

Another negative behavior in this era was the transmission of diverse partisan views and debates within the parliamentary chamber instead of the partisan institutions. The ruling party, SYL, takes the lead in this regard, often refraining from adopting specific and decisive positions on crucial matters that require later parliamentary decisions, such as selecting a presidential candidate, appointing a prime minister, and approving the cabinet.[169] The ruling party, unfortunately, fails to resolve its internal partisan debates internally and instead brings them into the chamber, resulting in opposing and conflicting positions within the party parliamentarians. This manner also encourages opportunistic behaviour among parliamentarians.

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[166] "Elections in Somalia" African Elections Database; and Samatar p. 199.

[167] Abdisalam Issa-Salwe (ed.) *'Abdirazak Haji Hussein: My Role in the Foundation of the Somali Nation-state, a Political Memoir'*. P.289

[168] I borrowed this phrase from Trunji. It is a subtitle in his book. Trunji p.532

[169] Samatar. Africa's First Democrats. p. 137

Explicit Ethnic Politics (Political Clannism within Political Parties)

Somali society is inherently tribal, structured around clans, and this tribal influence has significantly permeated and become a prominent phenomenon in the political landscape. This phenomenon, known as political clannism or ethnic politics, is now evident in the political mainstream. [170]. The influence of clans in politics has grown substantially, to the extent that certain political entities are now identified as representatives of specific clans. The prevalence of political clanism prioritizes loyalty to specific clan affiliations over broader national issues within political parties. Clannism has long been an informal force in Somali politics, often operating behind the scenes. However, with the escalation of political competition, the politicization of clans has intensified. In the second half of the 1960s, certain parties were identified as parties for specific clans or subclans and determined by common ancestry.[171]

While clannism has long been an informal factor in Somali politics, its significance has grown with the intensification of political competition. People gradually recognized the significance of being close to government offices and political positions for influence in the management of public affairs, leading to the attainment of power and wealth.

The impact of political clannism includes division, favouritism, and the exclusion of certain groups, hindering inclusive governance and equitable representation. Addressing this issue has become crucial to cultivating a more unified and effective political environment. It has become a negative phenomenon that undermines the development of a national agenda and the effectiveness of national parties, with minimal efforts to rectify this growing concern. However, this challenge remained unaddressed and hence unsolved. Rather, it has worsened over the years.

[170] Clan politics refers to a political approach in which political parties or leaders are organized and aligned based on their clans, meaning ethnic identities. Accordingly, it formed political alliances, voted, or advocated for policies primarily based on clan affiliations. This conduct may contribute to discrimination and clan-based tensions, within other issues. Hence, it divides society into politicized parallel segments of clans that are not connected by issue-based agendas. In my opinion, the problem lies not in the existence of clans as societal segments but in their politicization, using them as a political agenda.

[171] Saadia Touval, Somali Nationalism, p.90. also, see Abdalla Mansur p.114. About the clan affiliations of Somali political parties in 1960 and 1991, refer to Badiyow Somali History V1 p. 138 & 155.

By the end of the 1960s, it became evident that clan politics contributed to the segmentation of society along ethnic lines, fostering *'us versus them'* mentality and marginalizing small clans or excluding them from decision-making processes. In the March 1969 election, the society polarized more than ever before along tribal lines. In some cases, clan politics and the competition for control escalated into inter-clan conflicts and violence.[172]

Lack of Strong Democratic Institutions

The democratic process and effective multi-party system need a robust independent judiciary, impartial electoral management bodies, political parties and effective checks and balances — robust democratic institutions. On the other hand, lack of strong democratic institutions can undermine transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, impeding the development and sustainability of a democratic system. In the era of 1960s, these institutions were certainly newly established and in the process of growth. They were functioning and somewhat effective and growing gradually during the early seven years after independence.

However, before reaching full maturity, their trajectory declined and took a downward turn. As a result, they lost their strength and effectiveness in later years, eventually leading to the dominance of manipulation in the elections of March 1969. Therefore, compromising the fairness and integrity of the election, the government utilized its authority and the resources of the state to manipulate the electoral process in its favor. Officials who did not comply with this conduct were dismissed a few months before the elections. In this regard, government officials in the relevant offices took steps to hinder certain active competitors and influential politicians from participating in their power bases and excluded them from the electoral process.[173]

[172] Mohamed Trunji, Somalia: The Untold History, p. 535

[173] Mohamed Trunji, Somalia: The Untold History, pp. 527-528; Samatar, 'Africa's First Democrats', p. 199.

In the judiciary, the Supreme Court rejected a number of electoral complaints filed by political parties against decisions made by local authorities. Some of these cases involved what could be described as *'scandals'*, yet the court rejected them on procedural grounds.[174]

Some scholars argue that the decline of institutions began in 1967 when top political leaders intended to seize power outside the rule of law and institutionalized government, and some scholars described that as *'The march toward dictatorship'*.[175]

What is at stake?

Above, we have highlighted several drawbacks that emerged during that period. Of course, they were multifaceted and complex, influenced by various political, social, and economic factors. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that certain factors may have interdependencies and mutually influence each other in a cause-and-effect relationship. During this era, significant challenges emerged, including structural issues, systemic obstacles, institutional limitations, and deficiencies. These encompassed problems such as inadequate governance mechanisms, weak democratic institutions, and ineffective checks and balances. Additionally, the challenges were compounded by socioeconomic disparities and limited civic engagement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The period from 1960 to 1969 holds profound significance in the contemporary political history of Somalia despite its brevity within the broader trajectory, only nine years out of 63 years. Its importance lies in the exclusive period during which Somalia practised a multi-party system and exercised its constitutional rights despite accompanying weaknesses and drawbacks.

This study identifies four key drawbacks that hindered the efficiency of multi-party politics during the 1960-1969 study period. They are as follows: firstly, numerous small-sized parties lacked substantive programs and cohesive representation; secondly, opportunistic parliamentarians frequently switched allegiance; thirdly, political clannism emerged within parties; and fourthly, a

[174] Mohamed Trunji, Somalia: The Untold History, pp. 529-531.

[175] Dr. Abdi Ismail Samatar explores this topic in Chapter seven of his book 'Africa's First Democrats, on page 186 and beyond.

deficiency in strong democratic institutions and effective checks and balances, where they experienced a downward trajectory before reaching full maturity, obviously in later years.

Though predominantly influenced by negative narratives and events, the experiences gained during this era left lasting impression on the Somali mentality. Its impact extended beyond its temporal boundaries. The negative narratives and events from this period became embedded in the collective consciousness of some Somalis, influencing their perceptions and attitudes toward political systems. Moreover, the military junta emphasized perceived inadequacies in that period. The predecessor exaggerated concerns about the problems, disruptions and challenges that involved the electoral process, possibly to justify the military coup and their actions in consolidating power.

The importance of this phase in Somali politics should be recognized, as people exercised their constitutional rights despite associated weaknesses and drawbacks. These drawbacks should not be a discouraging complexity that instils fear and hesitation about the elections. Instead, it should be considered an experience and lessons that enrich our vision towards an election process and political pluralism and illuminates the pathway, its landmarks and obstacles. It can shed light on the path for future elections. This involves taking necessary measures to avoid setbacks in terms of laws and practices while keeping up with recent developments.[176] In this regard, several key steps need to be taken. These include fostering a culture of political pluralism and tolerance, promoting civic education and engagement, strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring a transparent and fair electoral process, and encouraging effective political parties. Additionally, efforts should be made to address potentially existing challenges, such as fragmentation and opportunism among small-sized parties, and establish effective mechanisms for resolving internal party disputes.
This requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach to establish an inclusive, responsive and resilient political system. This necessitates achieving effective electoral engineering to overcome the

[176] For example, I authored a paper addressing drawback #1 'Fragmented Hollow Small-sized Parties', and proposed 'electoral threshold' to prevent the fragmentation of the legislature. The paper entitled *'Xatabadda Doorashada: Taabbagelinta Xisbiyo Badan iyo Baarlamaan Tayo leh'* [Electoral Threshold System in Somalia: Towards a Sustainable Multiparty System & Enhancing Political Representation] published on *WardheerNews, August 24, 2023. It is available at*

https://wardheernews.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Xatabadda-Doorashada-WQ-Mustafe-Fayruus.pdf

main drawbacks and challenges that hindered the democratic system in 1960-1969. Precautions should be taken to avoid returning to a totalitarian system or establishing weak democratic institutions. The sustainability of a multiparty system necessitates the encouragement of political inclusivity and participation, as well as the promotion of responsible party politics that engages in issue-based debates, fosters constructive dialogue, and fulfils the aspirations of the people.

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