

The Nexus of Federalism, Conflict Resolution, and Peacebuilding: Evidence from Somalia

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to examine the relationship between federalism, conflict dynamics, and peace processes in Somalia, focusing on how federalism impacts conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Methods: A qualitative approach was used to gather data from a sample of 150 respondents drawn from a population of 250 through simple random sampling. Respondents included community leaders, politicians, civil society representatives, and general public members. Slovin's Formula was applied to determine the sample size. Multiple linear regression analysis and structural modeling were performed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) software.

Results: Findings indicate a significant positive association between federalism and both conflict management and peacebuilding in Somalia ($R^2 = 0.58$, $Sig = 0.00$). Enhanced federalism practices corresponded with higher levels of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, while limited federalism was linked to reduced levels. Additionally, federalism was shown to support the accommodation of Somalia's diverse clan and regional identities.

Conclusions: Federalism plays a critical role in advancing conflict management and peacebuilding in Somalia. Effective federalization requires strategic planning and the integration of various considerations to address local complexities. Coordination between federal and regional governments is essential for ensuring balanced power distribution and resource allocation.

Keywords: Federalism; peacebuilding; conflict resolution; Somalia

نقطة التقاء الفيدرالية وحل النزاعات وبناء السلام: أدلة من الصومال

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ملخص

الهدف: الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو الحصول على فهم شامل للعلاقة المتبادلة بين الفيدرالية وديناميكيات الصراع، وعملية السلام في الصومال.

المنهجية: لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم جمع مجموعة شاملة من البيانات النوعية باستخدام تقنية العينة العشوائية البسيطة. تألفت العينة من أشخاص من خلفيات مختلفة، بما في ذلك قادة المجتمع والسياسيين وممثلي منظمات المجتمع المدني وأفراد من الجمهور العام. اختارت الدراسة عشوائياً 150 مشاركاً من مختلف مناطق المجتمع من أصل 250 شخصاً باستخدام صيغة سلوفين، وطبقت الدراسة تحليل الانحدار الخطي المتعدد كتقنية لتحليل البيانات. استخدمت الدراسة نماذج هيكلية باستخدام برنامج Partial Least Squares (PLS).

النتائج: كشفت النتائج عن وجود علاقة إيجابية، وذات دلالة إحصائية بين الفيدرالية وحل النزاعات، وبناء السلام في الصومال ($R^2 = 0.58$ & $Sig = 0.00$)، وبالتالي خلصت إلى أن المستوى العالي من ممارسة الفيدرالية يزيد من مستوى إدارة النزاعات وبناء السلام، وأن المستوى المنخفض من الفيدرالية يقلل منه. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أن الفيدرالية يمكن أن تكون آلية لاستيعاب الهويات العائلية والإقليمية المتنوعة في الصومال.

خلاصة الدراسة: تقترح الدراسة أن النظام الفيدرالي في الصومال يتطلب تخطيطاً استراتيجياً والنظر في عوامل مختلفة لمعالجة القضايا الداخلية. التعاون بين الحكومات الفيدرالية والإقليمية ضروري؛ لتحقيق الفيدرالية بنجاح، وضمان فصل السلطات وتقاسم الموارد.

الكلمات الدالة: الفيدرالية، بناء السلام، حل النزاعات، الصومال



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INTRODUCTION

Somalia's federal government, established in the early 2000s, aims to resolve historical conflicts, promote assimilation, and ensure national stability and unity through a central government and states. Ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle believed social conflict is a threat to a country's success and should be reduced to ensure its continued existence (Lim & Kwon, 2020). The situation has resulted in numerous deaths, property destruction, and wasted human and financial resources for development (Mengistu, 2015).

Since World War II, civil wars have killed more than 16 million people worldwide; This number is higher than in any other international conflict. These conflicts lead to high casualty rates, loss of resources and reduced living standards. Although the frequency of conflict has declined, 35 countries have experienced civil war since 2010, and more than a quarter have experienced conflicts that have lasted at least ten years (Nathan, 2019). During the 1970s and 1980s, armed struggles against colonialism, separatist movements and apartheid led to conflict in South Africa. Despite the ongoing peace in Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, violent conflicts occur in other countries (Nathan, 2019).

Somalia grapples with political and structural conflicts stemming from tribal feuds, historical grievances, and power struggles, influenced by the colonial system that dominated post-independence political systems (Nyadera et al., 2019). Somalia, which gained independence in 1960, faces many problems such as civil war, tribal conflicts and secession, and the control of Al-Shabaab is a widespread problem (Mohamed, 2021). Although the ongoing war in Somalia is mainly due to internal factors, the collapse of the Somali state is often seen as a conflict between different groups and cities (Ingiris, 2018). In the last 20 years, the international community has devoted significant political and financial resources to solving civil conflicts (Shortland et al., 2013), but almost all efforts have not achieved the expected results (Fernández and García, 2017).

Federalism is a governmental principle aimed at enhancing governance in ethnically diverse countries by dividing powers, resources, duties, and responsibilities between central and regional institutions (Hedaya, & Fakhrul, 2023). During World War II, as part of the decolonization of Burma (1948), Indonesia (1949), India (1950), Ethiopia (1952), Pakistan (1956), Nigeria (1960), Malaysia (1963), and Tanzania (1960). 1964), European democratic states adopted these institutional innovations only in the last decade of the twentieth century (Roeder, 2009). The African Union, established in the 1990s, was shaped by political and economic liberalization of one-party regimes, often used to accommodate ethnic diversity and foster social cohesion in extreme situations (Dekovic, 2014).

Federalism emerged as a unifying resolution at Reconciliation Conferences and Mbagathi Conferences held in Kenya between 2002 and 2004 (Dahir & Ali, 2019). According to the Somali Public Agenda (2021), Somalia's 2004 federalism faces challenges due to limited understanding of national and governance issues, conflicts of interest, and historical divisions between international community and regional powers, affecting security (Mahmood, 2015). Somalia's federalism system, requires proper implementation for its success (Sciences & State, 2021).

This article explores the long-term interaction of federalism in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Somalia, highlighting the unique dynamics and challenges faced in its quest for stability and nation-building. Studying federal structures helps understand power, resources, and authority distribution, and the role of conflict resolution mechanisms within a federal framework. The aim of this article is to contribute to the wider debate on good governance, conflict reduction and sensitive and sustainable peacebuilding in societies struggling with internal conflict through a careful review of the evidence from Somalia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Federalism

Decentralization, linked to ethnic politics in plural countries, emerged after colonial rule and communist bloc breakup, with over 40% of global population in federal systems (Usuanlele & Ibhawoh, 2017). In the aftermath of the Second World War, many plural nations experienced a surge in ethnically motivated discrimination, resulting in conflict, violence, and civil war (Yusoff et al., 2016). Localities have increasingly advocated for the sharing of centralized power and authority in

a multi-tiered government to effectively address the needs of citizens (Fombad, 2018). The central idea is that while federalism can aid in reconstructing a "destroyed" nation, it is not a standalone solution but rather a strategy that can contribute to bringing peace to ethnic divisions within a state (Making, 2018).

According to Okonmah and Arimie (2023), federalism, a successful model of global order, is prevalent in mature federations such as the US, Canada, Australia, and Germany, while African countries have adopted decentralization to promote democracy and economic development. Persistent conflict in Somalia, attributed to state failure, clannism, and regionalism, has led to the establishment of a federal structure aimed at restoring order (Zoppi, 2018).

The 1960 Somalia Constitution aimed for a federal system, but was hindered by the multiparty era and Siad Barre's regime, leading to the country's disintegration and ineffective central government (Fessha & Dessalegn, 2022). In 2004, an international reconciliation conference in Somalia adopted a Federal Charter, and subsequent elections and an interim federal pact in 2012 led to the establishment of four Federal Member States (Yimenu, 2023; Somali Public Agenda, 2023). Federalism in Somalia aimed to discourage conflict by redistributing power and resources (LSE, 2021).

Sometimes, federal systems may face challenges related to the centralization of power or resources in the hands of the central government (Dafflon, 2015). while Puntland and Somaliland's political success and stability are partly attributed to ownership (Farah, 2017). Federal systems require careful planning, clear powers, and effective institutional structures to resolve conflicts effectively, but poor implementation or lack of consensus can hinder their effectiveness (Bühler et al., 2017). Somalia's Provisional Constitution includes significant institutional features of federalism, which, if embraced correctly, could enhance peace in the country (Harun & 2021).

Concepts of Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

The term "conflict" originates from the Latin word *confligere*, meaning a clash or striking together (Kanu, 2017). Analyzing conflict stands out as one of the most challenging and demanding issues across various fields in today's world. Similarly, conflict resolution involves addressing and resolving existing conflicts (Oyeshola et al., 2022; Ibikunle, 2020; Yamahata & Takeda, 2022). The Horn of Africa, in particular, witnessed multiple layers of conflict during the late twentieth century. Due to the region's persistent conflict and prolonged instability, the causes of these conflicts are particularly complex (Wassara, 2019). Sub-Saharan Africa, as a whole, serves as the backdrop for a quarter of the world's conflicts (Temesgen, 2015).

According to Hastings et al. (2022), Somalia's historical conflict dates back to the 19th century, when the country was divided into five administrative regions by British, Italy, France, and Ethiopia. This division has influenced the ongoing conflict, with governance issues from the postcolonial era being the primary contributing factor (Mohamed Ibrahim & Masron, 2017).

Since the late 1980s, armed conflict and bloodshed have characterized Somalia (Birch, 2023). This conflict actively contributed to the collapse of the central government in 1991 and inflicted extensive damage on various aspects of life in Somalia, including the destruction of most water systems (Mourad, 2023). Somaliland, a nation established by north-central clans after the 1991-2012 civil war, faces territorial divisions and incomplete peace, lacking international recognition as a sovereign state (Opitz-Stapleton et al., 2022). The Somali conflict is primarily fueled by competition for resources, political power, colonial legacies, clan identity, weapons availability, youth unemployment, and violent cultural values (Hared, 2020).

In the 1970s, Galtung introduced the term "peacebuilding," which gained prominence after UNSG Boutros-Ghali's 1992 report highlighted its importance in engaging conflict-torn countries (Ahmed, 2020). Peace is crucial for community functioning, and conflict resolution styles vary across personal, communal, social, national, and global levels, promoting confidence and improving living conditions (Muluken, 2020). Over fifteen reconciliation conferences in Somalia, supported by international community and UN, failed to address genuine grievances and interests of Somalis, with limited citizen participation and ongoing financing of AMISOM posing challenges (Elmi, 2021).

Post-conflict reconstruction requires relationship healing, trust building, and fostering peace hope (Wassara, 2019). So, Somalis must take ownership of peacebuilding efforts, considering constituent perspectives (General et al., 2021). Somalia's

peacebuilding process, led by local elders, has made significant progress since 2012 and 2017 through a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches (Lindqvist, 2018).

Nexus Between Federalism, Conflict Resolution, and Peacebuilding

Federalism and territorial autonomy are increasingly utilized in conflict resolution and peace-building to manage diversity, regulate conflicts, and incentivize cooperative behavior, transcending ethnic divisions (Gebremichael, 2011). Federalism plays a significant role in conflict resolution by offering a structured approach to managing and mitigating conflicts within diverse societies (Berhane & Tefera, 2018). In Nigeria, federal structures have been adjusted to address administrative divisions and alleviate tensions between ethnic factions. The author argues that enhanced self-governance results in a decreased inclination towards secession (Weldemariam, 2011).

Eva Maria Belser asserts that the lack of functional federalism contributes to political instability in Iraq. In Moldova, Johann Wolfschwenger and Kirsten Saxinger compare the autonomy of Gagauzia and the settlement processes in Transnistria, while Karl Kössler highlights the intricate relationship between conflict, autonomy, and secession requests in Bougainville (Alber, 2019).

Nevertheless, a study by S. Keil (2018) Decentralization can effectively resolve ethnic conflicts when combined with power-sharing mechanisms, proportional representation of ethnic communities, and mutual veto rights over key policy areas, as suggested by Keil and Anderson. The debate on whether federalist arrangements effectively address societal conflicts is growing (Christin & Hug, 2012). India's ethno-federalism effectively reduces conflict by reorganizing states along linguistic lines, but a group-level analysis shows it has been both successful and unsuccessful in conflict management (Adeney, 2017). Remarkably, India has achieved enduring ethnic peace and political order (Adeney & Bhattacharyya, 2018).

Pakistan regained independence nine years ago, restructured its federal system by merging West and East provinces, restoring ethnically-based provinces, and incorporating federal and provincially administered tribal areas (Breen, 2022). While, many scholars, including Gemperle (2010) and Temesgen (2015), disagree, believing that decentralization can lead to increased conflict, social inequality, and tensions between human rights and local traditions. They argue that decentralization reinforces group identities and allocates resources to regions.

Tan (2020) examined the role of federalism in peacebuilding and its impact on ethnic conflicts, highlighting Belgium's federation's resilience despite regional autonomy challenges. (Belser, 2020), Power-sharing and internal conflict resolution have transformed conflict resolution and constitution-making, leading to a hybrid process. The international community recognizes decentralization and power-dividing strategies for managing ethnocultural tensions, prompting more governments to adopt them (Keil, 2018).

Zimbabwe's decentralization has led to conflicts over resources like CAMPFIRE revenues, fueled by tribal tensions and a history of discrimination, and confusion among institutions (Ravikumar et al., 2013). Furthermore, a study by Type and Oliver (2021) Jubaland's population strongly supports federalism for maintaining Somali unity, protecting local interests, and addressing needs, promoting sustainable political settlement and minority inclusion. advocates for power transfer to lower government levels aim to address ethnic diversity challenges (Fessha & Dessalegn, 2022). Sierra Leone's decentralization strategy demonstrated the importance of local government and the time required to fulfill promises (Edwards & Yilmaz, 2016), while Sudan's federal system aimed to resolve intercommunal conflicts (Fessha & Dessalegn, 2022).

Known for its successful federal system, Switzerland demonstrates how federalism can accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity while maintaining stability and harmony among its diverse regions (Sultana, 2020). India's federal structure gives states a lot of freedom, which helps the country's many cultural and linguistic identities coexist and lowers the chances of conflicts arising from these differences (Bhattacharyya, 2020). Following the Bosnian War, the Dayton Agreement established a federal system to accommodate ethnic divisions within the country, aiming to prevent further conflicts and promote reconciliation (Pinkerton, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between federalism, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding in Somalia, focusing on both immediate and enduring associations. Hypothesis testing was used in our research study to determine correlations among variables, providing valuable information to participants with knowledge in Federalism, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. This approach ensured that the research was firmly rooted in the pragmatic experiences and valuable perspectives of industry experts. This study diverges from previous research in its emphasis on the examination of academic scholars and the relevance and limitations of federalism in Somalia. The study utilized probability sampling, specifically employing the stratified sampling technique, in order to guarantee that the sample chosen for the study was both representative and diverse, including a broad spectrum of opinions.

In order to gather data in a systematic manner, a method utilizing structured questionnaires was adopted. A total of 160 questionnaires were issued, out of which 150 were accurately completed, while 10 were either inadequately filled out or left unfinished, resulting in their elimination from the future analysis. To measure the participants' perceptions and attitudes, a five-point Likert scale was employed which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for all variables, including Federalism (F), Conflict Resolution (CR), and Peacebuilding (PB).

The study utilized online resources, specifically Google Forms, to facilitate data gathering and distribution, taking advantage of their convenience and accessibility. Advanced statistical approaches, notably structural equation modelling (SEM), were utilized in order to undertake a thorough study of the data and explore intricate correlations among the variables. This analysis was carried out using the Smart PLS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Analysis

A total of 26 female contributors made up **17.3%** of the total, while **82.7** male participants characterized **82.7%** of the total. Concerning age distribution, **63.1%** of the participants were below 30 years old, **29.3%** fell within the 30–40 age range, and **7.6%** were above 40. In terms of qualifications, **3.2%** of the participants held a diploma, **54.8%** possessed a bachelor's degree, and **39.0%** had attained a master's degree while **3.0%** got a PHD. Concerning work experience **56.7%** of the participants had less than 5 years of experience, **33.3%** had between 1 and 10 years of experience, and **10.0%** had over 10 years of experience.

Table 1. Demographic

Questions	Frequency	Present	Cumulative (%)
Gender			
Male	124	79.0	82.7
Female	26	21.1	17.3
Age			
20-30	99	63.1	66.0
30-40	46	29.3	30.7
Above 40	5	7.6	3.3
Qualification			
Diploma	5	3.2	3.3
Bachelor	86	54.8	57.3
Master	55	39.0	36.7
PHD	4	3.0	2.7
Experience			
1-5 years	85	56.7	56.1
5-10 years	50	33.3	89.4
Over 10 years	15	10.0	100

Model Measurement

Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance. Factor loadings above 60% were categorized as high, while those below 40% were considered low (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Regarding Cronbach's alpha, reliability values greater than 0.90 were deemed excellent, those greater than 0.80 were considered fine, values exceeding 0.70 were regarded as adequate, those surpassing 0.60 raised doubts, and values below 0.60 were deemed unsatisfactory (Hair, 2011). Furthermore, composite reliability and average variance should both exceed 70% and 50%, respectively. Thus, for factor loadings to exceed 0.50, the threshold value for this study was set at greater than 0.60.

Table 2 shows the results, confirming that all items measuring the constructs had factor loadings greater than 0.60. Additionally, the table demonstrates that both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were above 0.70. All mixed AVE scores also exceeded the cutoff value of 0.50. This evidence supports the conclusion that the measurements of the variables are valid and reliable.

Moreover, Table 2 presents the results of the HTMT matrix, which was conducted to assess discriminant validity after processing the data using PLS. According to the recommendation by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), if the HTMT value is less than or equal to 0.90, discriminant validity between two constructs has been established. Since the value of each construct in the HTMT matrix is below 0.90, it can be concluded that all variables in the study are fully valid and reliable. Furthermore, the study instrument meets the Fornell-Larcker criterion for validity, as shown in Table 3.

Table2. Reliability and Assessment

Constructs	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Conflict Resolution		0.789	0.801	0.581
C1	0.285			
C2	0.225			
C3	0.218			
C4	0.178			
C5	0.176			
C6	0.249			
C7	0.163			
Peacebuilding		0.865	0.736	0.598
P1	0.202			
P2	0.226			
P3	0.224			
P4	0.197			
P5	0.221			
P6	0.224			
Federalism		0.736	0.840	0.574
F1	0.223			
F2	0.267			
F3	0.266			
F4	0.219			
F5	0.274			
F6	0.276			

Table 3: HTMT Matrix

	Conflict Resolution	Federalism
Conflict Resolution		
Federalism	0.828	
Peacebuilding	0.804	0.909

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Conflict Resolution	Federalism	Peacebuilding
Conflict Resolution	0.664		
Federalism	0.654	0.655	
Federalism	0.683	0.729	0.773

Structural Model

Table 5. Regression (R-square)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Federalism	0.577	0.572

Evaluating the inner model in this study involved two main aspects. Firstly, the tables mentioned earlier were utilized to assess the quality of the proposed model, particularly regarding its reliability and validity. Secondly, another part was dedicated to testing the model's goodness or fitness. It is crucial to evaluate the model's capacity to elucidate and forecast the relationships between constructs, and this was achieved through the examination of R-square values.

Table 4 reveals that economic development has an R-square of **0.577** and an adjusted R-square of **0.572**. The R-square value indicates weak predictive accuracy, as it is less than 0.50. However, it is noteworthy that Figure 1 demonstrates that every single path leads to a confidence level exceeding 95%. Consequently, it can be argued that the model, to a sufficient extent, can predict its dependent variables with accuracy.

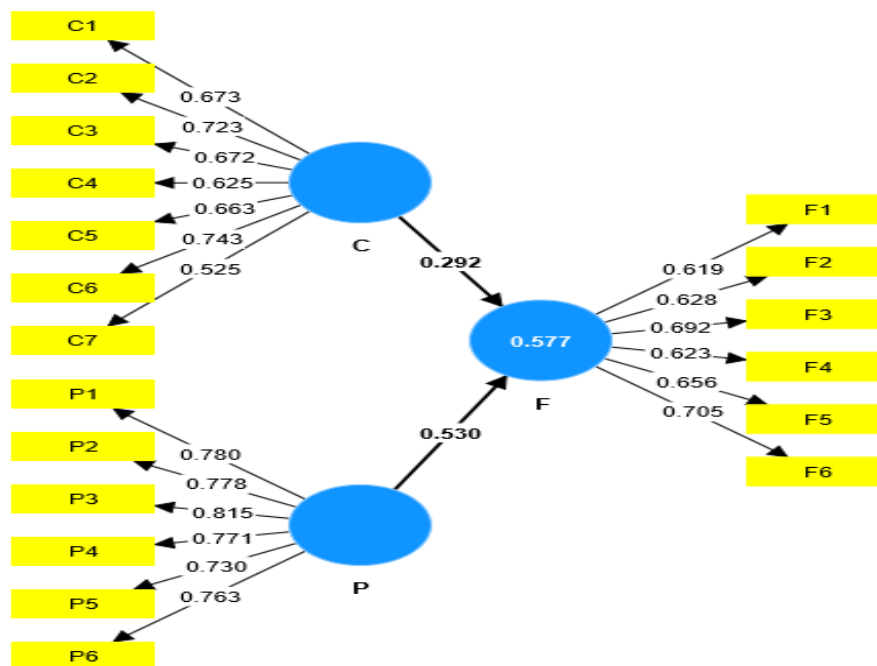


Figure 1. Structural Model

Research Hypotheses and Discussions

After evaluating both the outer and inner models, the next step involves testing the hypothetical assumptions of the study by comparing T-statistical and P-values. If the P-values for each construct are less than 0.05 and the T-statistic values for each construct are greater than 1.65, then the study hypothesis is considered supported and accepted. Table 6 illustrates the effects of explanatory factors on the dependent variable. Based on Table 6, it can be concluded that conflict resolution and peacebuilding have a positive and significant effect on federalism. This conclusion is drawn as both constructs have T-statistic values greater than 1.65 and P-values less than 0.05.

Table 6 presents the results of the first hypothesis of the study, which posits that conflict resolution significantly impacts federalism in Somalia. This requires a holistic approach involving local ownership, international collaboration, and adaptation to challenges for a cohesive society, as demonstrated in prior research by Keil (2018), Type and Oliver (2021), and Adeney and Bhattacharyya (2018), who found a strong correlation between federalism and conflict resolution. The second hypothesis suggests that peacebuilding significantly impacts federalism, emphasizing the importance of inclusive governance, power-sharing arrangements, conflict prevention mechanisms, institutional strengthening, reconciliation efforts, dialogue, and adaptability in Somalia's pursuit of stability and sustainable peace.

Table 6. Direct effect

Constructs	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
Conflict Resolution-> Federalism	0.073	4.008	0.000	Supported
Peacebuilding -> Federalism	0.069	7.673	0.000	Supported

Conclusion and Implications

The study explores the relationship between federalism, conflict resolution, and peace-building in Somalia, revealing the complexity of conflict-affected nations. Federalism has provided local governance structures and power distribution, but it has also exposed tensions between the central government and regional entities. The research emphasizes the need for a harmonized federalist approach that considers the aspirations of different regions. Conflict resolution mechanisms in Somalia face challenges, including ethnic, political, and territorial conflicts. The study highlights the need for adaptive conflict resolution strategies tailored to local contexts, along with strong national and international coordination. While peace-building efforts in Somalia have shown success in some areas, they have also encountered resistance.

Furthermore, the primary objective of the study was to evaluate the correlation between the concept of federalism and its impact on conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Based on the findings discussed, the following conclusions can be drawn: The first hypothesis suggests that federalism has had a discernible impact on the resolution of conflicts. The second hypothesis indicates that federalism significantly influences economic peacebuilding.

The study recommends the following: First, the exact application of the federal system in Somalia requires a strategic approach, considering many factors that can facilitate and provide sustainable solutions to the country's critical domestic issues. Second, both the federal government and regional governments should collaborate politically and administratively to achieve the goals of federalization. Finally, it should be ensured that the federal government and state administrations reach a consensus on the separation of powers, authorities, and how the different levels of government should share national resources, as authorized by law.

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