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A Research Paper

Title:

Assessing the Impact of Diplomatic Cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan on Regional Stability in the Horn of Africa.

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Abstract

This study assesses the impact of diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan on regional stability in the Horn of Africa. It address three objectives: (1) to analyze the political and economic inspirations behind Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation, (2) to investigate the reactions of neighboring states, IGAD and global powers particularly United States and China and (3) to assess the impact of this cooperation on regional stability. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research combines quantitative survey data with qualitative interview to provide a comprehensive analysis. The findings reveal that the cooperation is driven by mutual inspiration for international recognition, strategic alignment and shared democratic values. Somaliland emerges as a gateway for Taiwan's engagement in the East Africa while Taiwan enhances Somaliland's bridge to broader global visibility. Regional and international reactions are diverse, Somalia strongly opposes the ties, Ethiopia adopts economically supportive yet diplomatically neutral while, Djibouti, Eritrea and IGAD maintains cautious neutrality. Globally, China strongly rejects this ties in line with its One China policy, while the United States offers indirect support. Although the cooperation raises diplomatic tensions, it also contributes to promoting security, governance, development and Somaliland's geopolitical visibility. The study offers new insights into informal diplomacy among unrecognized states such as Somaliland and Taiwan can strategically enhance political, economic, governance and global visibility, while contributing to the evolving academic discussion on informal diplomacy and non-traditional pathways to political legitimacy. The study suggests valuable insights for policymakers, UN Bodies, international organizations, scholars, investors and analysts engaged in international diplomacy, peacebuilding and regional integration.

Keywords: *Somaliland, Taiwan, Diplomatic Cooperation, Regional Stability, Horn of Africa.*

1. Introduction

Diplomatic cooperation has increasingly extended beyond the traditional framework of officially recognized sovereign states to involve *de facto entities* like Somaliland and Taiwan. As As Neumann (2025) and Runde and Zargarian (2014) suggest, informal and adaptive diplomatic practices have enabled these unrecognized entities to foster strategic networks, emphasize national interests and gain a degree of international visibility despite their exclusion from official multilateral systems. The diplomatic ties of Somaliland-Taiwan demonstrates a unique form of diplomacy driven by shared geopolitical aspirations. Their diplomatic cooperation is non-traditional because both countries share the commonality of being as unrecognized states, despite big differences in politics, economy, history, culture, religion and geographic contexts, both entities engage in mutually beneficial diplomacy grounded in resilience, strategic alignment and pursuit of international engagement. According to Joy (2021) the comparative analysis of such *de facto* actors offers valuable insight into how one state's diplomatic strategies may inform and enrich the development of the other.

The Horn of Africa is considered a fluid and often unstable geopolitical landscape, where Internal conflicts, external influences and shifting alliances meet. Regional States such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, along with influential external actors including China and Gulf states, continue to shape the security and political dynamics of the region. (Kuol 2025). Fragile institutional frameworks for regional cooperation have left the Horn vulnerable to recurring instability, foreign intervention and protracted conflicts, thereby impeding sustainable peace and development (Kuol 2025). In this context, unconventional diplomatic relations such as emerging ties between Somaliland and Taiwan warrant closer inspection for their potential implications on regional stability.

Somaliland and Taiwan serves as remarkable cases of *de facto* states that despite lacking formal international recognition, have reputable effective governance systems, resilient political institutions and democratic practices. On July, 2020, Somaliland-Taiwan officially established mutual representative offices, signaling a new chapter in diplomatic engagement based on shared values of democracy, freedom, justice and rule of law. Formalized through a bilateral protocol signed in Taipei, the partnership focuses on the cooperation across key sectors such as fisheries, agriculture, energy, mining, publish health, education, and ICT. This diplomatic cooperation reflects mutual commitment to development, democracy and Deeping international collaboration, particularly in the East Africa (MOFA Taiwan 2020). Both states are located in sensitive geopolitical regions, the Horn of Africa and Indo-Pacific. Both remain excluded from major multilateral organizations such as United Nations and regional bodies (Shattuck 2020). Moreover, Somaliland-Taiwan bilateral diplomatic cooperation extends beyond ideological alignment, Somaliland seeks to attract foreign investment and foster economic integration, while Taiwan aims to broaden its international engagement specially enlarge its influence and access to Africa's emerging markets (Samah 2022).

Although, there is growing interest in the emerging diplomatic ties between Somaliland and Taiwan, most existing studies have primarily focused on issues such as sovereignty, recognition and soft power, diplomatic capacity and international cooperation and China-Taiwan competition over Somaliland & implications for small countries (Shattuck 2020; Joy 2021; Kłosowicz 2023; Atimniraye 2024). However, there is a gap in understanding how this diplomatic cooperation effects regional stability in the horn of Africa, therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap by pursuing three specific objectives, to analyze the political and economic inspirations behind the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation, to investigate the reactions of neighboring states, regional bodies such IGAD and global powers particularly United States and China and to assess the impact of this cooperation on regional stability in the horn of Africa. To achieve this objectives, the research used both primary and secondary data to asses “the impact of diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan on regional stability in the horn of Africa”.

The study provides valuable insights to policymakers, UN Bodies, international organizations, scholars, investors and analysts concerned with international diplomacy, peacebuilding and regional integration. By analyzing the Somaliland-Taiwan ties as unique case of diplomacy beyond traditional recognition frameworks. This research paper presents the introduction section, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, results and discussion, conclusion and reference to assess the impact of diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan on regional stability in the Horn of Africa.

2. Literature Review

This study adopts Neoliberal Institutionalism as its guiding theoretical framework. Rooted in the liberal tradition of international relations, Neoliberal Institutionalism highlights that cooperation among states and non-state actors is achievable even within an anarchic international system, particularly when actors pursue shared interests, mutual benefits and long term institutional frameworks (Keohane 2011). Unlike realist approaches that prioritize conflict and self-interest, this perspective acknowledges that actors regardless of official recognition can engage in strategic ties that promote collective advantages.

This theoretical lens is particularly relevant to the diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland-Taiwan, both of which are diplomatically unrecognized or partially recognized entities. Their cooperation demonstrates how pragmatic, interest based diplomacy can emerge outside traditional state-centric frameworks. Central to this framework is the concept of non-traditional diplomacy, which refers to informal engagements that leverage soft power tools such as development assistance, educational exchange, technology cooperation and shared governance values (Murray 2011). The Somaliland-Taiwan ties reveals these principles by prioritizing mutual political and economic interests, development oriented cooperation and symbolic legitimacy. Through this lens, the study argues that their diplomatic cooperation, although unrecognized, contributes to regional peace, security collaboration and increased political visibility in the Horn of Africa.

The diplomatic engagement among unrecognized or partially recognized states symbolizes a transformative shift in global diplomatic practices, where nontraditional diplomacy is increasingly used to overcome the limitations of formal state recognition. States such as Somaliland and Taiwan are at the forefront of this evolving landscape, utilizing soft power strategies including development cooperation, education exchange, technological partnerships and symbolic diplomacy to achieve mutual benefits and increase strategic visibility (Hocking and Melissen 2019). These approaches emphasize diplomacy driven by functionality and shared interests rather than formal sovereignty. The Somaliland-Taiwan ties demonstrates how such actors build diplomatic capital through informal institutions and shared democratic values, thus, challenging the traditional norms of diplomacy rooted in full statehood (Atimniraye 2024). As Gilboa (2023) and Liu (2021) argue, these non-traditional engagements reflect a broader redefinition of diplomacy in which sub state and non-state actors play dynamic roles in international governance and regional stability.

Regional stability in the horn of Africa is increasingly shaped by shifting diplomatic alignments and strategic partnership, including emerging relations such as Somaliland-Taiwan. The formation of informal blocs such as the Ethiopia-Eritrea-Somalia alliance has reshaped regional power dynamics, often sidelining traditional multilateral mechanisms (Henneberg & Stapel, 2020). Moreover, intensified external involvement from Gulf Countries, China and Western

powers has transformed the region into a contested geopolitical space (Melvin, 2019). Within this context, the Somaliland-Taiwan ties represents pragmatic, interest based diplomacy that operates outside the bounds of formal global recognition, leveraging shared political and economic goals for mutual visibility and development (Telci 2022). These evolving diplomatic alignments underline a fluid and adaptive regional order where informal partnerships increasingly shape stability and influence.

Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation is a pragmatic partnership grounded in shared strategic interests and mutual benefits, especially in light of both entities' limited international recognition. According to Atimniraye, (2024), this cooperation arises from the need for global visibility and engagement, with both parties employing soft power tools such as political collaboration, development aid, educational opportunities and health initiatives. Taiwan utilizes this ties to counteract Beijing's diplomatic pressure, while Somaliland benefits from political support and economic assistance, improving its global legitimacy. Joy (2021), analyzes the cooperation through a patron client lens, identifying Taiwan as the stronger actor providing aid and diplomatic exposure, while Somaliland offers strategic geopolitical access and political alliance in the Horn of Africa. Both parts leverage their diplomatic status to assert sovereignty, symbolized by the establishment of reciprocal representative offices in 2020. Taiwan's support in education, healthcare, agriculture, energy, fishers and technology has helped strengthen Somaliland's institutional capacity and democratization efforts. These development shows non-traditional diplomacy driven by shared values and strategic cooperation, underlining how Taiwan interests and value based cooperation. Therefore, these efforts underscore how Taiwan foster diplomatic ties through targeted investments.

The Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic engagement has elicited diverse reactions from neighboring countries and global powers, reflecting the complex geographical dynamics of the Horn of Africa. Somalia strongly opposes this ties, viewing them as a breach of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in response to Taiwan's establishment of representative office in Hargeisa, Somalia banned Taiwanese citizens from entry and condemned the move as illegitimate (Klosowicz 2023). China, following to its One-China Policy, has also expressed strong opposition, warning against any formal engagement with Taiwan and threatening entities that challenge its diplomatic stance (Mishra 2020), similarly, the united states has welcomed this ties, framing it as a positive stage aligned with democratic values and regional development goals (Shattuck 2020). Regionally, Ethiopia's port access agreement with Somaliland has strained its relations with Somalia and raised concerns among IGAD member states about growing diplomatic fragmentation and instability in the region (Moyo 2022). These diverse reactions highlight the geopolitical sensitivities and strategic recalibrations surrounding non-traditional diplomacy in the horn of Africa.

While previous studies (Shattuck 2020; Joy 2021; Kłosowicz 2023; Atimniraye 2024) have explored specific dimensions of the Somaliland-Taiwan relationship particularly in areas of security, diplomacy and economic cooperation, there remains an imperial gap in understanding the broader implications of this diplomatic cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa. This study address that gap by offering an in-depth analysis of the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation with the regional geopolitical context. To achieve this, the research employs both primary and secondary data to assess the impact of diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland-Taiwan on regional stability in the Horn of Africa.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study employs a mixed-method research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive and robust analysis

3.2. Sample size

A stratified sampling strategy was used to select respondents from key stakeholder groups in Somaliland, including government officials, academic scholars, the business sector, civil society/Non-governmental Organizations (CSO's/NGO's), students specializing in international relations and political science and media professionals. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, resulting in 70 respondents drawn from a total population of 85.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was applied to select key informants with direct expertise in Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. These included government officials, diplomats, regional security experts, economic experts and international relations scholars.

3.3.Data collection

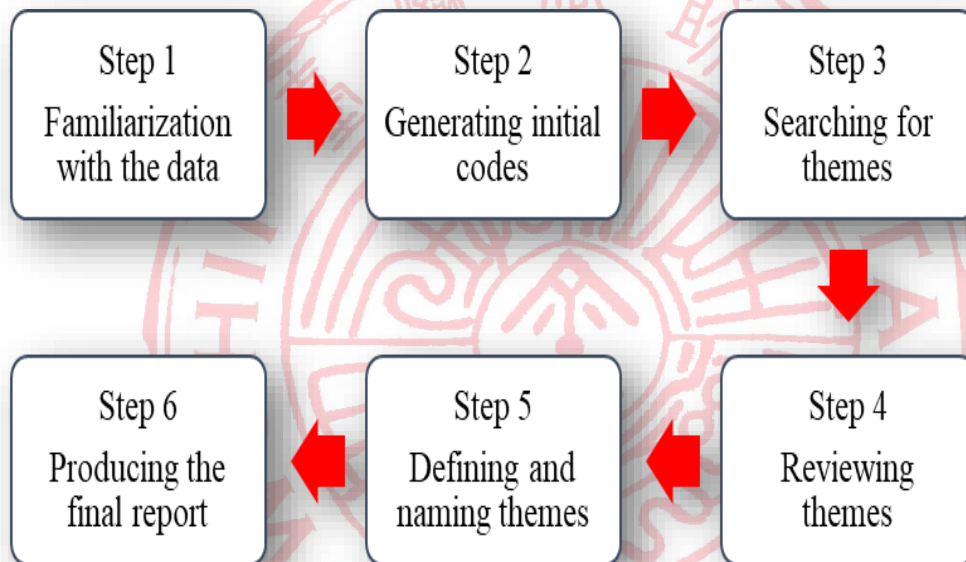
Quantitative data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Qualitative data were obtained through structured, open-ended survey questions delivered via email.

To ensure ethical integrity, informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any time. Some participants in the qualitative component voluntarily agreed to be identified and quoted directly, thereby enriching the contextual authenticity and credibility of the findings. In line with Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017), data saturation was achieved after interviewing nine key stakeholders.

3.4. Data analysis.

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, applying descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations to identify patterns and trends.

For the qualitative component, the study employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework as shown in below figure. This approach facilitated the systematic identification, coding and interpretation of recurring patterns within experts' narratives. By applying this framework, the analysis provided a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the perceived impacts of Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa.



4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Quantitative demographic profile of respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 70 survey respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	51	72.9
	Female	19	27.1
	Total	70	100
Age	25-34	53	75.7
	35-44	16	22.9
	45-54	1	1.4
	Total	70	100
Education	Bachelor's degree	16	22.9
	Master's degree	50	71.4
	Doctorate (PHD)	4	5.7
	Total	70	100
Type of work sector	Government	17	24.3
	Academic (Professor/Researcher)	17	24.3
	Student	8	11.4
	Business	11	15.7
	CSO/NGO's	11	15.7
	Media	4	5.7
	Other	2	2.9
	Total	70	100
Familiarity of Somaliland-Taiwan Relations	Slightly familiar	14	20.0
	Moderately familiar	22	31.4
	Very familiar	20	28.6
	Extremely familiar	14	20.0
	Total	70	100

Table 1: Quantitative Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study surveyed 70 respondents from diverse professional and academic backgrounds. The gender distribution shows that the majority were male (72.9%), while females were 27.1%. This reflects broader gender representation trends within the sectors targeted.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents (75.7%) were between 25-34 years old, followed by 22.9% aged 35-44 and only 1.4% aged 45-54%. This distribution indicates a youthful and early to mid-career demographic actively engaged in relevant fields such as government, academia, diplomacy and civil society.

Educationally, a significant proportion of respondents (71.4%) held a Master's degree, while 22.9% had a Bachelor's degree and 5.7% possesses a Doctorate (PhD). This shows a highly educated sample with strong academic foundations for contributing to policy debates and regional analysis.

Sectoral representation was determined through a stratified sampling strategy. The respondents come from various occupational sectors, with government and academic institutions equally represented (24.3% each), followed by business and CSO/NGO sector (15.7% each), students (11.4%), media professionals (5.7%) and other sectors (2.9%). This diversity ensured a rich and balanced perspective on the topic, incorporating both policy practitioners and knowledge producers.

Regarding familiarity with Somaliland-Taiwan relations, the majority of respondents underlined a moderate to high level of awareness. Specifically, 31.4% were moderately familiar, 28.6% very familiar and 20.0% extremely familiar, while only 20.0% reported being slightly familiar. This demonstrates that the majority of respondents had sufficient background knowledge to provide reliable and informed insights.

Table 2: Qualitative demographic profile of respondents

Table 2 presents the demographic background of the nine key informant's interviewed in the qualitative portion of the study.

Category	Sub-categories	Number
Educational Background	PhD	5
	Masters	2
	Bachelor	1
	Others	1
Professional Role	Diplomat	3
	Government	3
	Academia	3
Years of Experience	> 10 Years	8
	< 10 Years	1
Familiarity with the topic	Extremely	2
	Very	5
	Moderate	2

Table 2: Qualitative Demographic Profile of Respondents

In terms of educational qualifications, the respondents were highly educated: five held doctoral degrees, two had Master's degrees, one held a Bachelor's degree, and one had alternative professional qualifications. This strong academic background enhanced the reliability of the insights, which drew from both scholarly knowledge and practical experience.

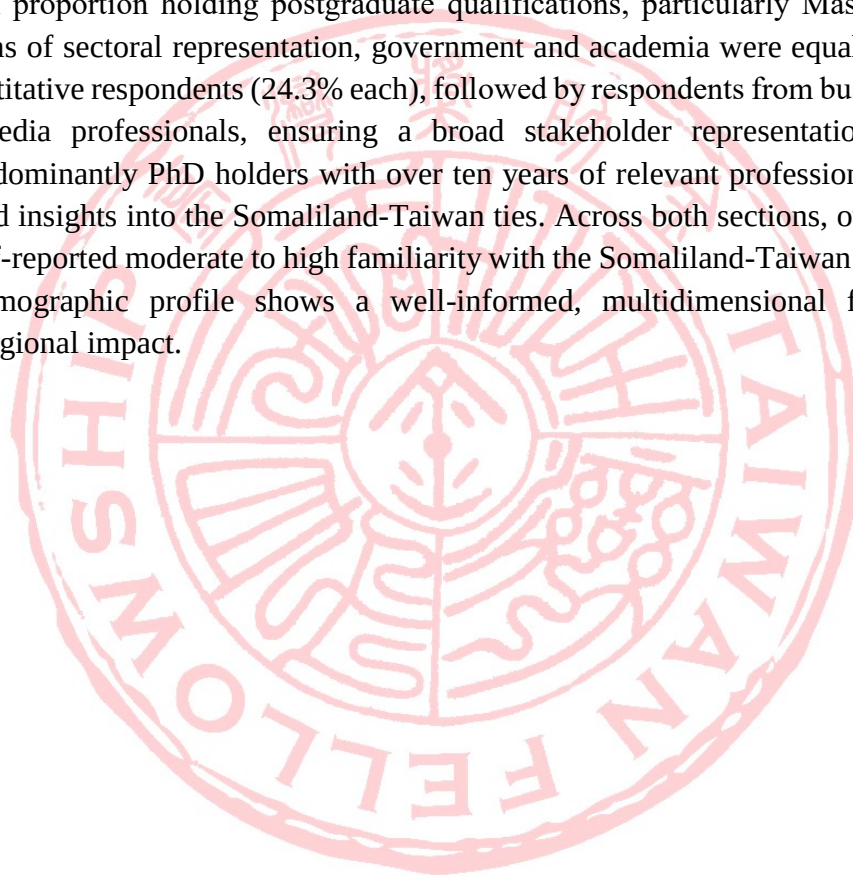
Professionally, the respondents included high-level diplomats, senior government officials, and academic scholars. Their diverse roles provided a multidimensional perspective on Somaliland–Taiwan relations, incorporating political, economic, and regional stability standpoints.

Regarding professional experience, eight out of nine respondents had over ten years of expertise in their respective fields, including diplomacy, international relations, development cooperation, and academia further reinforcing the credibility of their contributions.

Finally, familiarity with the topic was notably high: 2 respondents identified as “Very Familiar” 5 respondents identified “Extremely Familiar” and 2 respondents identified moderate with Somaliland–Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. This high level of awareness enriched the quality of the qualitative data and strengthened the credibility of the thematic analysis.

Discussion section: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study engaged 70 survey participants and 9 key informants with direct expertise in Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation, drawn from a broad spectrum of professional and academic backgrounds to ensure comprehensive representation. The majority were males aged 25-34, with a high proportion holding postgraduate qualifications, particularly Master’s and PhD degrees. In terms of sectoral representation, government and academia were equally represented among the quantitative respondents (24.3% each), followed by respondents from business, NGO’s, student and media professionals, ensuring a broad stakeholder representation. Qualitative informants, predominantly PhD holders with over ten years of relevant professional experience, brought nuanced insights into the Somaliland-Taiwan ties. Across both sections, over 80% of the respondents self-reported moderate to high familiarity with the Somaliland-Taiwan ties. However, this strong demographic profile shows a well-informed, multidimensional foundation for evaluating its regional impact.



4.2 Objective 1: Political and Economic inspirations behind the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.

Quantitative Result

Table 3: Presents respondent's perceptions of the political and economic inspirations behind Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. Respondents were measured using five point liker scale (1= *Disagree*, 5= *Strongly Agree*) and percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The primary reason for Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation is mutual diplomatic support and strategic interest.	70	4.21	.883	2.9	1.4	8.6	45.7	41.4
Somaliland gains economic benefits from Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.	70	4.00	.851	1.4	2.9	18.6	48.6	28.6
Taiwan's support has enhanced Somaliland's governance and institutions.	70	3.94	.883	1.4	4.3	20.0	47.1	27.1
The political and economic cooperation sector is the most benefited from Taiwan's support.	70	3.66	1.128	7.1	7.1	21.4	41.4	22.9

Table 3: Objective one analysis

Statement 1 shows a high level of agreement regarding the notion that “the *primary reason for Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation is mutual diplomatic support and strategic interest*”. It achieved a mean score of 4.21 and Standard deviation of .883, particularly 32 respondents (45.7%) strongly agreed and 29 respondents (41.4%) agreed, indicating a strong consensus. Only small proportion 6 respondents (8.6%) neutral, while 3 respondents (4.3%) expressed disagreement. This results implies that most respondents view strategic interest and mutual diplomatic backing, particularly aspirations for international recognition and geopolitical alignment as core motivations behind the cooperation.

Statement 2 also shows strong agreement with the assertion that “*Somaliland gains economic benefits from Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation*”. It recorded a mean of 4.00 and Std. deviation of .851, with 34 respondents (48.6%) strongly agreed and 20 (28.6%) agreed. A total of 13 (18.6%) remained neutral, while 3 (4.3%) disagreed. These findings highlights a widely held perception that Taiwan's engagement delivers tangible economic benefits, potentially including development assistance, investment support and trade.

Statement 3 addressed institutional impacts with the claim that *“Taiwan's support has enhanced Somaliland's governance and institutions”*. The statement received a mean score of 3.94 with a Std. Deviation of .883. A total of 33 respondents (47.1%) agreed and 19 respondents (27.1%) strongly agreed. 14 respondents (20%) were Neutral and 4 respondents (5.7%), disagreed. The result shows a positive perception of Taiwan's influence on governance, suggesting improvements in administrative capacity and public sector development.

Statement 4 explores sectoral impact, *“The political and economic cooperation sector is the most benefited from Taiwan's support”*. This statement is recorded a mean of 3.66 and higher Std. deviation of 1.128, showing more varied responses. Of the total, 29 respondents (41.4%) agreed and 16 (22.9%) strongly agreed, while 15 (21.4%) were neutral and 10 (14.2%), disagreed. This findings implies that the majority see political and economic sectors as primary beneficiaries of the partnership, the perception is less unanimous then for the previous items.

Qualitative Result

A Thematic analysis of respondent's responses demonstrates two main themes that reflect the core political and economic inspirations behind the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. These themes are supported by qualitative data and interpreted in line with the study objective.

Theme 1: Strategic Recognition and Democratic Alignment

Respondents regularly underlined that a key political inspirations of the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation is mutual pursuit for international recognition and sovereignty declaration. Somaliland views its partnership with Taiwan as strategic path to gain global visibility and challenge diplomatic isolation. Similarly, Taiwan perceives Somaliland as a geographical entry point into the Horn Africa.

Several Participants highlighted that this cooperation represents a strategic alliance aimed at improving each entity's global standing. Notably, Somaliland was described as Taiwan's “Gateway to Africa,” while Taiwan was seen as Somaliland's “gateway to the global stage.” This mutual positioning reinforces their international visibility and influence, even without formal recognition by most countries. Furthermore, the alliance is grounded in shared democratic values. Respondents cited a joint commitment to institutional governance, democratic norms and development oriented leadership.

As Ambassador Mohamoud Adam Jama (Galaal) Ambassador of the Republic of Somaliland to Taiwan described: *“I believe our diplomatic relationship with the Republic of China (Taiwan) is anchored in a shared commitment to democratic values, institutional governance and peace.”*

This theme demonstrates that the cooperation is both symbolic and strategic, aligning political inspirations with a shared democratic identity and a broader vision of diplomatic development

Theme 2: Economic Development and Strategic Connectivity

The second main theme captures the key economic inspirations behind the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. Respondents frequently revealed that Taiwan's engagement offers critical development assistance, including growth in foreign aid, infrastructure investment, trade diversification and support for private sector growth.

Respondents underlined tangible economic gains for Somaliland, including access to education scholarships, technological cooperation, healthcare initiatives and marine security. These sectoral development reflect Taiwan's strategic effort to reinforce Somaliland's internal capacity, which in turn increases its external legitimacy.

Numerous respondents noted that Taiwan's support has helped expand Somaliland's profile, enabling it to attract foreign investment and improve its trade competitiveness in the region.

This theme demonstrates how economic development and strategic connectivity are crucial tools for both states to promote resilience, enhance legitimacy and foster global integration, especially in the absence of widespread diplomatic recognition.

Discussion: Political and Economic Inspirations behind the Somaliland-Taiwan Diplomatic Cooperation.

The findings underline the centrality of mutual diplomatic support and intragenic interests in inspiring the Somaliland-Taiwan ties. This aligns with the core assumptions of neoliberal Institutionalism, which highlights that even in an anarchic international system, cooperation is achievable when actors perceive shared interests, mutual benefits and long term institutional commitments (Keohane 2011). Both entities, despite lacking widespread recognition, have formed a pragmatic alliance grounded in soft power, democratic norms and institutional development oriented engagement, as reflected in the qualitative themes.

These insights support the analysis of Atimniraye (2024), who argues that diplomatic alliances among politically marginalized actors are often shaped quests for legitimacy and international visibility. Similarly, Joy (2021) observes that such ties serve dual purpose, facilitating development cooperation while expending geopolitical leverage.

Therefore, this study contributes to existing theory by offering empirical evidence that unrecognized or partially recognized states can strategically leverage informal diplomacy to expand institutional capacity, strengthen governance and pursue external legitimacy. The Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation thus demonstrates an evolving model of interest based

diplomacy, where strategic recognition and development cooperation intersect, challenging conventional norms of sovereignty and formal statehood.

4.3 Objective 2: The reactions of neighboring states, regional bodies such IGAD and global powers particularly United States and china

Quantitative Result

Table 4: presents respondent's perceptions of the *reactions of neighboring states, regional bodies such IGAD and global powers particularly United States and china*, toward the diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan. Respondents were measured using five point liker scale (1= *Disagree*, 5= *Strongly Agree*) and percentages have been rounded to ne decimal place. The results offer insights into how various regional and international actors are previewed in relation to the emerging Somaliland-Taiwan Ties.

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SD	D	N	A	SA
				(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Somalia has expressed strong opposition to the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.	70	4.27	.916	1.4	4.3	10.0	34.3	50.0
Ethiopia's response to Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation has been supportive in trade but neutral in diplomacy.	70	3.49	.864	1.4	10.0	37.1	41.4	10.0
Djibouti and Eritrea have maintained a neutral stance regarding the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.	70	2.71	1.079	18.6	20.0	32.9	28.6	0.0
The Intergovernmental Authority On the development (IGAD) has adopted a neutral position concerning the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.	70	3.16	1.058	7.1	18.6	34.3	31.4	8.6
China has expressed strong opposition to the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.	70	4.26	1.086	2.9	7.1	10.0	21.4	58.6
The United States (US) has expresses support for Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation.	70	4.03	.916	0.0	5.7	22.9	34.3	37.1

Table 4: Objective two analysis

This component analyzes the reactions of neighboring countries, regional organizations and global powers to ward the diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan, drawing from both quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews, the findings demonstrate diverse perspectives that reflect geopolitical interests, regional sensitivities and the strategic calculus of involved actors.

The majority of respondents strongly confirmed that Somalia has strong opposition to the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. Statement one recorded a mean score of 4.27 and Std. deviation of .916, reflecting a strong consensus that Somalia view this cooperation as a direct challenge to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. 50% of respondents strongly agreed with stance and 34.3% agreed, emphasizing widespread recognition of Somalia's consistent diplomat resistance. This perception highlights Somalia's alignment with the "One Somali" Policy and its broader concern about any action perceived as legitimizing Somaliland's pursuit of independent statehood.

In contrast, Ethiopia's stance is seen as strategically balanced, supportive in terms of economic trade yet diplomatically neutral. The statement two recorded a mean score of 3.49 and Std. deviation of .854, reflects moderate level of agreement, with 41.4% of respondents agreed and 37.1% remained neutral. These results reveals that Ethiopia's engagement with Somaliland-Taiwan ties is shaped by pragmatic economic interests while maintaining diplomatic ambiguity to avoid potential political 7 respondents (10.0%) strongly agreed and 8 respondents (11.4%) disagreed. This findings indicates that the majority of respondents perceive Ethiopia's response to Somaliland-Taiwan cooperation as supportive in trade yet diplomatically neutral. This balanced approach proposes that Ethiopia is pragmatically engaging for economic benefit while avoiding political implications with both Somalia and China.

Respondent's perceptions of Djibouti and Eritrea's positions revealed more diverse. The statement regarding their neutrality yielded a lower mean score of 2.71 and Std. deviation of 1.079, demonstrating lack of strong consensus. While 32.9% of respondents remained neutral and 28.6%) agreed, 38.6% expressed disagreement. This distribution reflects uncertainty in the diplomatic postures of Djibouti and Eritrea, possibly due to their limited public statements or unclear diplomatic signals from both countries.

Similarly, IGAD's positions is perceived as one of the institutional neutrality. With a mean score of 3.16 and Std. deviation of 1.058, with 34.3% respondents remained neutral, while 31.4% agreed and 18.6% disagreed. The study reveals that IGAD has refrained from taking a definitive position, likely to maintain its role as a regional peacebuilder and avoid entanglement in sovereignty disputes. This cautious neutrality allows the organization to focus on conflict prevention. And regional stability, without challenging the contentious issue of diplomatic recognition.

China's reaction was overwhelmingly perceived as oppositional, consistent with its longstanding One-China policy. The statement on China's position yielded a high mean score of 4.26 and Std. deviation of 1.086, with 58.6% of respondents strongly agreed that China has expressed strong opposition to the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation and 21.4% agreed. Respondents highlighted that China's opposition extends beyond rhetoric, involving diplomatic pressure, economic leverage and global lobbying to delegitimize Taiwan's foreign relations including with Somaliland.

Likewise, the United States is broadly seen as cautiously supportive of Somaliland-Taiwan ties. The Statement six also recorded a mean score of 4.03 and Std. deviation of .916, with 37.1% respondents strongly agreed that the United States (U.S.) has expresses support for Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation and 34.3% also agreed. Although official recognition has not been extended, respondents underlined that the U.S. encourages this cooperation through development assistance, democratic governance promotion, and strategic alignment, particularly as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the region.

Qualitative sections

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed four principle themes that reflect the politically sensitive and strategically diverse reactions of neighboring states, regional organizations and global powers especially United States and China toward the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation. These themes capture a spectrum of responses, ranging from overt hostility and strategic ambiguity to geopolitical maneuvering and norm shifting diplomacy, demonstrating the multilayered regional dynamics shaped by sovereignty disputes, institutional conservatism and global rivalries.

Theme 1: Somalia's Hostile Rejection and China's Diplomatic Influence

Respondents regularly underlined Somalia's outright rejection of the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation, describing it as aggressive and deeply entwined with regional power politics. Somalia's opposition, framed around sovereignty and territorial integrity, has included lobbying at international forums and attempts to diplomatically isolate Somaliland. As Dr. Abdiqani Mussa (Assistant to Somaliland Representative in Taiwan) stated *"Somalia has expressed strong opposition to the Somaliland-Taiwan cooperation, viewing it as an infringement on its sovereignty. Somalia maintains that Somaliland is an integral part of its territory and rejects any foreign diplomatic engagements with the region"*. Respondents also noted that this stance is reinforced by Somalia's alignment with Mainland China, as both countries oppose actions perceived to undermine their territorial claims.

Theme 2: Strategic Ambiguity and Passive Regional Responses

In contrast, Countries such as Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea were perceived as adopting a stance of strategic ambiguity and diplomatic neutrality. Respondents attributed this to their adherence to the “One China” and “One Somalia” Policies, as well as their economic interests over definitive diplomatic stance. Similarly, regional organizations, especially the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was characterized as institutionally neutral. Participants highlighted that IGAD, while active in regional security and peacebuilding, refrains from engaging in debates on sovereignty. Instead, the organization prioritizes de-escalation, mediation and multilateral cooperation.

As Amb Mohamoud Adam Jama (Galaal) Ambassador of the Republic of Somaliland in Taiwan stated *“The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has not issued any formal statement on the diplomatic engagement between Somaliland and Taiwan. While IGAD plays an active role in areas such as conflict resolution, regional security and economic integration, it typically refrains from commenting on bilateral relations involving entities with contested international recognition. Its interventions are more commonly focused on de-escalating tensions and promoting stability, as seen in its resolution concerning the Las Anod conflict”*

Theme 3: China’s Assertive Enforcement of the One-China Policy

Another notable theme across respondents’ narratives was the strong opposition from China, rooted in its rigid adherence to the One China Policy. Participants defined China’s response as diplomatically aggressive and systematically enforced through both soft and hard power tools. These include economic coercion, political pressure on third-party countries and institutions and the use of international forums to oppose Taiwan’s external engagements. As one political analyst said *“China refused these relations and described it as a violation of its integrity and unity”* Mustafa Ahmed (Political and Security Analyst)

Participants viewed China’s assertiveness not only as a defense of its territorial claims but also as a intended strategy to destroy diplomatic recognition of Taiwan and to discourage other forms of state like engagement by contested entities including Somaliland.

Theme 4: U.S. Strategic Engagement and Norm-Shifting Diplomacy

In contrast to China’s resistance, the United States was widely perceived by respondents as strategically supportive actor in the Somaliland-Taiwan ties. Participants noted that although the U.S. has not officially recognized Somaliland, it has expressed tacit approval of the partnership, particularly with the broader context of its international rivalry with China. The U.S. approach is seen as a blend of normative and strategic considerations promoting democracy, governance and resilience without overtly violating traditional norms of diplomatic recognition.

Moreover, participants viewed the U.S. position as illustrative of a broader shift in global ties, a transition toward more flexible, interest driven diplomacy that transcends official recognition frameworks. This emerging paradigm permits for functional bilateral engagements in domains including trade, education and governance even in the absence of de jure recognition.

As one international affairs expert explained *“The U.S. plays an indirect yet influential role, as it has shown implicit support for enhanced Taiwan-Somaliland relations, viewing the partnership as a useful counterbalance to China's growing geopolitical influence in Africa. Although the U.S. has stopped short of formal diplomatic recognition, it supports initiatives that strengthen democratic governance, economic resilience, and strategic autonomy in both Somaliland and Taiwan, indirectly contributing to the viability of their partnership.”* Dr Richard Atimniraye Nyelade, PhD Candidate, University of Ottawa.

The qualitative results underline that regional and global reactions to Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation are deeply shaped by political interests and strategic calculations. Somalia and China strongly oppose this ties, while neighboring states and IGAD maintain cautious neutrality. In the contrast, the United States offers indirect support, reflecting broader global rivalries and the emerging complexity of diplomatic recognition and legitimacy in international relations.

Discussion: Reactions of Neighboring States, Regional bodies such IGAD and Global Powers particularly United States and China

These findings highlight the diverse strategic calculations shaping reactions to Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic ties. Somalia's opposition reflects its adherence to territorial integrity and the One Somalia Policy, reinforced by its alignment with China. Ethiopia's pragmatic position highlights how economic interests often balance official political stance. IGAD's Institutional neutrality reveals a cautious approach to preserve its mediatory role in a politically sensitive regional landscape.

China's assertive opposition is rooted in its geopolitical rivalry with the west and its broader campaign to suppress Taiwan's international presence. Equally, the United States shows a form of norm-shifting diplomacy, supporting unrecognized diplomatic engagements that align with democratic values and strategic interests without officially breaching traditional norms of the state recognition.

These empirical results emphasize and expand existing literature. Klosowics (2023) argues how external actors increasingly shape the of Africa's political dynamics through strategic alliance and economic influence, a trend evident in both Ethiopia's careful balancing and China's aggressive opposition. Shuttuck (2020) underlines that Taiwan Finds an Unexpected New Friend in Somaliland, where engagement occur in the absence of legal recognition. This is particularly

relevant to the U.S. approach, which blends normative commitments to promoting democracy with geopolitical strategy.

Collectively, the findings shows the emerging of international engagements with unrecognized states, where diplomatic recognition is increasingly shaped by power politics, strategic interests, and shifting international norms rather than solely by legal status.

4.4 Objective 3: The impact of this cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa

Quantitative Result

Table 5: Presents respondent's perceptions of the impact of this cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa. Respondents were measured using five pint liker scale (1= *Disagree*, 5= *Strongly Agree*) and percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland-Taiwan has increased political tensions in the Horn of Africa.	70	3.83	1.142	4.3	11.4	14.3	37.1	32.9
The diplomatic cooperation of Somaliland-Taiwan has positive impact on regional security in the horn of Africa	70	3.79	1.075	2.9	11.4	18.6	38.6	28.6
The diplomatic cooperation of Somaliland-Taiwan has enhanced Somaliland's geopolitical position in the Horn of Africa.	70	3.97	.868	0.0	7.1	17.1	47.1	28.6
The economic cooperation of Somaliland-Taiwan contribute peace and development in the Horn of Africa.	70	3.69	.826	0.0	7.1	32.9	44.3	15.7

Table 5: Objective three analysis

This component analyzes the impact of this cooperation on regional stability in the horn of Africa, drawing from both quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews.

The first Statement reflects strong agreement with the assertion that “*The diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland-Taiwan has increased political tensions in the Horn of Africa*”. The mean score was 3.83 and Std. deviation of 1.142, 37.1% agreed, 32.9% strongly agreed. A smaller portion 14.3% remained neutral, while 15.7% disagreed. This results implies that the majority of respondents perceive the cooperation as contributing to political tensions, potentially disrupting regional alignments and straining ties with neighboring countries.

The second statement also received strong agreement, with a mean score of 3.79 and Std. deviation of 1.075, indicating that participants believe the cooperation has positive impact on regional security. Among the respondents, 38.6% agreed, 28.6% strongly agreed, 18.6% were neutral and only 14.3% disagreed. This indicates that the diplomatic cooperation is viewed by many as promoting regional peace through institutional support, strategic balance and development.

The third statement received the highest agreement, with a mean score of 3.97 and Std. deviation of .868. A total of 47.1% agreed, 28.6% strongly agreed, 17.1% were neutral and only 7.1% disagreed. This demonstrates support for the idea that the cooperation has enhanced Somaliland’s geopolitical stance, elevating its visibility and influence in the Horn of Africa.

The fourth statement, regarding economic cooperation, recorded a mean score of 3.69 and Std. deviation of .826. Of the participants, 44.3% agreed, (15.7%) strongly agreed, 32.9% were neutral, and only 7.1% disagreed. These findings indicates that the cooperation is seen as contributing positively to peace and development in the region through economic engagement and shared initiatives.

Qualitative Result.

The thematic analysis of interview responses demonstrates two core themes that reflect the complex and dual nature of the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation's impact on regional stability.

Theme 1: Enhancing Regional stability through Governance, Development and Security

Numerous respondents emphasized that the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation contributes positively to regional stability by strengthening internal governance, institutional capacity and strategic alliance. These dimensions, in turn, support political resilience, economic development and security coordination in the Horn of Africa.

As Richard Atimniraye Nyelade, PhD Candidate, University of Ottawa stated: *“Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation has contributed positively to political stability in the Horn of Africa by reinforcing Somaliland’s governance capacities and international credibility. By providing strategic diplomatic and economic support, Taiwan enhances Somaliland’s political resilience, governance effectiveness and regional security capabilities, thereby strengthening Somaliland’s stabilizing role in a historically volatile region.”*

Furthermore, respondents highlighted that Somaliland’ developing institutional legitimacy, reinforced by Taiwanese development support in the areas of education, healthcare, agriculture, energy, fishers and technology as a constructive actor in promoting peace and stability within the fragile and conflict prone horn of Africa.

Theme 2: Geopolitical Tensions and Regional Diplomatic Realignments

Despite the perceived benefits, respondents pointed to the cooperation’s destabilizing effects, particularly in its broader geopolitical implications. The diplomatic ties has provoked resistance from Somalia and China, who interest this cooperation as challenge to sovereignty and traditional regional alignments. Numerous African countries, due to their political and economic ties with China, remain cautious stance, avoiding open support for the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic relations to preserve ties with Beijing.

“This cooperation has had a dual impact. On one hand, it contributes to regional stability by promoting economic growth, governance and international engagement for Somaliland. On the other hand, it increases geopolitical tensions as it challenges Somalia’s territorial claims and China’s influence, leading to diplomatic friction with regional and global actors”. Alyne Chen, chairperson Somaliland-Taiwan Business Association

This theme shows that while this cooperation enhances peace and development from one perspective, it also increases tensions by disrupting formal diplomatic norms and activated opposition from dominant regional and global players.

Discussion: Impact of this cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa

The findings for objective three demonstrates a complex and dual impact of Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa. Quantitative data shows that while a significant majority (70%) agree or strongly agree that the cooperation has increased political tensions, a nearly equal proportion (67.2%) also believe it contributes positively to regional security. Moreover, 75.7% of participants highlight that the cooperation has enhanced Somaliland's geopolitical visibility, while 60% recognize its positive contribution to regional development through economic collaboration. Additionally, qualitative data shows, Somaliland' developing institutional legitimacy, reinforced by Taiwanese development support in the areas of education, healthcare, agriculture, energy, fishers and technology as a constructive actor in promoting peace and stability within the fragile and conflict prone horn of Africa.. Also it reflect a nuanced paradox, the cooperation simultaneously generates geopolitical friction while fostering internal ad bilateral stability.

This findings aligns with Joy (2021) argues that the Somaliland-Taiwan relations is shaped by a patron client dynamic, where development assistance serves as a substitute for official diplomatic recognition, strengthening internal legitimacy while inviting external security. Henneberg and Stapel (2020) further underline how new regional blocs and alignments in the Horn, including the Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia triangle, are reshaping power dynamics and provoking both cooperation and conflict. The study supports this view, emphasizing how the Somaliland-Taiwan partnership disrupt traditional alliances while offering an alternative model of regional engagements. Likewise, Klosowicz (2023) emphasize that unrecognized actors such a s Somaliland and Taiwan are growing using diplomatic innovation to gain relevance and project stability, often drawing both support and resistance from competing international powers.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the critical research problem of assessing the impact of diplomatic cooperation between Somaliland and Taiwan on regional stability in the Horn of Africa. It addressed three specific objectives: (1) to analyze the political and economic inspirations behind the Somaliland and Taiwan diplomatic cooperation, (2) to investigate the reactions of neighboring states, regional bodies such as IGAD and global powers particularly the United States and China and (3) to assess the impact of this cooperation on regional stability in the Horn of Africa.

The key findings reveal that the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation is driven by mutual inspiration for international recognition, strategic alignment and shared democratic values. Taiwan views Somaliland as a gateway to the Horn of Africa, while Somaliland regards Taiwan as a bridge to global and broader international engagements. Reactions to this cooperation vary widely; Somalia strongly opposes the cooperation, Ethiopia adopts a balanced stance, economically supportive yet diplomatically neutral, Djibouti and Eritrea shows uncertainty and limited engagement, reflecting a lack of clear official stance. IGAD maintains institutional neutrality to avoid sovereignty-related disputes. Globally, China strongly rejects this tie, consistent with its One China policy. While the United States demonstrates cautious support. The cooperation presents a dual impact on regional stability; on one hand, this cooperation promotes internal resilience and offers alternative channels for diplomatic interaction beyond formal recognition, contributing positively to peace and development in the Horn of Africa. However, this diplomatic cooperation also increases political tensions, especially due to opposition from Somalia and China, which challenge and disrupt established regional alignments.

The findings have significant implications. Politically, they demonstrate the strategic potential of diplomatic cooperation among unrecognized or diplomatically marginalized entities to assert influence in regional and international stages. Practically, it shows how such ties can reinforce institutional capacity, foster governance and expand global presence. Theoretically, this study contributes to increasing literature on informal diplomacy, political recognition and cooperation, highlighting that legitimacy and engagement are growing negotiated through unconventional diplomatic pathways.

Numerous limitations are acknowledged. First, the study's scope was limited to Somaliland, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings across the Horn of Africa. Second, although a mixed method approach was employed, the qualitative sample size was small ($n=9$), and also the study focused solely on perceptions and expert insights without integrating longitudinal data or policy analysis across time. Lastly, due to the growing nature of regional geopolitics, the relevance of some findings may shift over time.

Future research could benefit from comparative case studies involving other unrecognized or partially recognized states, such as Palestine, Kosovo, or Western Sahara, to enhance understanding of how *de facto states* evolve across different contexts. Furthermore, quantitative analyses that measure regional security indicators before and after diplomatic engagements would provide more robust evidence of impact. Expanding the scope to incorporate perspectives from regional stakeholders such as Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea and IGAD would also yield a more comprehensive understanding of how such diplomatic cooperation influences regional diplomacy.

Lastly, the Somaliland-Taiwan diplomatic cooperation offers a compelling model of how non-traditional cooperation's can challenge geopolitical norms, strengthen country capacity and contribute to regional and international discourse on diplomacy, legitimacy and recognition.



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Ethical Approval Statement

To ensure ethical integrity, informed consent was obtained from all research participants. In the qualitative section of the study, several participants voluntarily agreed to be identified and quoted directly, thereby enhancing the contextual richness, authenticity and credibility of the findings.

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