

Revisiting Taiwan–Somaliland Relations Post Covid-19

Gallous Atabongwoung, PhD¹

Abstract

The 2019 Coronavirus (Covid-19), that was first reported in Wuhan, China, spread rapidly across the globe. In less than three months, the virus was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Governments across the world-initiated lockdown measures in order to curtail the spread of the virus. But, the rise in infection suggested deeper economic disruption as countries increased borrowings because the pandemic restrained public purse and imposed limitation on governments' ability to address basic social needs due to lockdowns and isolation policies. Amidst the lockdowns, Republic of China (Taiwan) and Somaliland signed bilateral relations in 2020, based on shared values and interests. The move provoked reaction from governments and institutions across the world. As both states continue to seek international recognition. However, unlike Somaliland, Republic of China (Taiwan) was previously a member of United Nations Organization (UNO), having about 68 diplomatic relations by 1979. The country maintain significance within and beyond its borders due to its contribution in global supply chain. This study is therefore, guided by the following objectives; (a) To find out the prospects and challenges of Taiwan–Somaliland relations; (b) To establish significance of the relations; (c) To determine how African countries can benefit from the relations; (d) To examine the global implication of the relations. The study adopts extensive literature review of qualitative secondary data that comprise of journal articles, government gazette, websites, books, book chapter publications and other sources relevant to achieve the objectives of the study. Content analysis - “a systematic replicable techniques for compressing many words of text into fewer content according to specific research objectives was employed to provide an analysis of the findings. The findings reveal a prospective multiplier effect in both economies as a result of Taiwan’s increasing influence in the Horn of Africa in terms of trade, investment and infrastructural development in Somaliland. It demonstrates a complex challenge of legality and political reality in the relations. It presents areas that African countries can benefit from Taiwan-Somaliland relations; and asserts that the de facto partnership between Taiwan and Somaliland has a positive impact on global diplomacy and regional security in the Horn of Africa. The study therefore, recommends Taiwan and Somaliland should concentrate on long-term sustainability in the relations.

Keywords: Taiwan, Somaliland, PostCovid-19, Relations, Prospects and Challenges

¹Visiting scholar, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica; Research fellow, Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation, University of Pretoria; Postdoctoral fellow, The Harriet Tubman Institute, York University. Email: awounggal@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The 2019 Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), was a severe acute respiratory syndrome of coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)", that was first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Park, 2020). In less than three months, Covid-19 virus had spread across the globe. The virus was declared a global pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th of March 2020 (Cruickshank & Shaban, 2020). The spread of the virus made governments across the world to initiate series of lockdown initiatives in order, to delay the spread of the virus (Kitara & Ikoona, 2020).

But the rate of global infection of Covid-19 increased irrespective of lockdown measures. There was therefore, a need to put in place stricter restriction measures. The measures came with deeper economic disruptions (Gupta et al., 2021). Several countries including those in the global south increased borrowings because the pandemic constrained public purse (Gupta et al., 2021). It placed limitation on governments' ability to address basic social needs including those predating the pandemic (Gupta et al., 2021).

In addition, the lockdown and isolation policies constrained work activities, value chains, trade and people's mobility. This made life unbearable (Gupta et al., 2021). However, amidst the lockdowns, restrictions, and isolation policies, Taiwan (Republic of China – ROC) and Somaliland signed bilateral relations in 2020, based on common values and interests (Joy, 2021). Both countries set up diplomatic missions and established economic partnership (Joy, 2021). As they continue to seek political independence through legitimate channels in the international arena (Ylönen, 2022; Kim, 2019).

Conversely, unlike Somaliland, Republic of China (Taiwan) was previously a member of the United Nations Organization (Munro, 1994). It had diplomatic relations with 68 countries by 1979 (Pajtinka, 2017). Currently, it has lost some of its diplomatic relations in several continents including Africa (with the exception of Eswatini), where it maintains plenipotentiary diplomacy and recently Somaliland (a de facto state) (Kironka & Dramane, 2022).

In Africa and other parts of the world, Taiwan's diplomacy is reframed in the guise of trade office (Lim & Fei, 2022). This place limitations on the extend countries can benefit from ROC in terms of science, technology innovation, and cultural exchanges. Somaliland is also facing similar reframing even though the country is not of equal socio-economic and political weight

as Taiwan (Elmi, 2026). Taiwan also maintains official relations with Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and some member states of the European Union (EU) (Chen, 2019).

Somaliland on the other hand maintains political contacts with Ethiopia, Djibouti, Belgium, Canada, France, Ghana, Kenya, Norway, and others (Deych & Zhukov, 2016). Just like Taiwan, Somaliland's efforts toward international diplomacy and recognition are being curtailed by efforts from Somalia prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Taiwan and recently Israel (Aidi, 2022).

2. Taiwan, Somaliland and the United Nations Organization: Navigating Exclusion

Taiwan left United Nations Organization in 1971, after the UN General Assembly voted to shift the 'China United Nations seat' from the Republic of China-Taiwan to the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) (Munro, 1994). The move had far-reaching consequences as it repositioned the United Nations on a trajectory of double-standard (when rules are administered differently to different people). For example, a key interrogation is why did the United Nations not grant the PRC membership to the organization, alongside membership of the ROC (Huang, 2003). Seeing that, in the same year (1971), Bangladesh gained political independence by breaking from Pakistan and was granted UN membership status alongside Pakistan (Hossain, 2015).

Obviously, in the case of the ROC (Taiwan), the United Nations organization has demonstrated malignity in its guiding principles which is to provide a space where nations could consult each other on issues of common interest, in order, to foster global peace and stability (Huang, 2003). The UN has not lived up to its expectation as documented in the preamble of the Charter. Even though several countries have achieved political independence under the auspices of the UN, as a result of the wind of change of de-colonization in the 1950s (Huang, 2003). It is clear the UN has not been impartial to all.

Furthermore, the significant increase in the number of countries with international borders that were granted UN membership was not without bias (Huang, 2003). This is because there is no valid reason why Taiwan and Somaliland remain de facto states until now. Owing to the fact that both Taiwan and Somaliland have international borders. And Taiwan maintains significance within and without its borders. It is a country with high-income and human development index that is greater than the of majority UN member states (Mutiarin et al., 2019).

That is why Taiwan is able to enter into diplomatic relations with Somaliland based on shared interests (democracy and the pursuit of political independence (Weller, 2009). Nonetheless, both countries are confronted with grotesque challenges due to dubious interpretation of international law principles on question of self-determination (Chen, 1990). Self-determination is the foundation of liberation struggle across the world. As it allows the emancipation of collectives from colonial or oppressive rules to political freedom (Chen, 1990). Self-determination as a human rights principle, was therefore, the catalyst behind the proliferation of new states post-World War II (Chen, 1990).

The question that one may therefore pose is that, why is Taiwan and Somaliland deprived of exercising their rights to self-determination, if other nations have been given the opportunity to do so? The precedent interrogation is part of the reason this study is making an assessment of Taiwan-Somaliland relations post Covid-19. The study would provide recommendations on how Taiwan and Somaliland can elevate the bilateral relations to becoming more proactive and win-win. The study would therefore, highlight areas where African nations can leverage and explore for common good in (re-) establishing or restrengthening diplomatic ties with ROC-Taiwan.

Based on the fact that self-determination remains international law principles that can be invoked by a group of people anywhere in the world in conformity with legal provisions of international law guided by the Montevideo Convention (Alfredsson, 2019). The Convention on face value presents basic requirements of statehood. The criteria demonstrates both Taiwan and Somaliland qualify to be independent states with full political status. This is because both countries have defined territories, permanent population, governments, and the capacity to enter diplomatic relations (Bachmann & Prazauskas, 2019).

On the same line of argument, in order to present a contextual understanding of Taiwan-Somaliland relations post Covid-19. It is imperative to approach the issue through the lens of sovereignty and statehood. This is because both Taiwan and Somaliland enjoy sovereignty and statehood in their own rights for decades now without direct foreign interference. Despite the fact that sovereignty and statehood are contested notions in international relations (Bhadauria, 2012).

Notwithstanding, thinkers such as Machiavelli and Rousseau opine that instability is a threat to the international community because of the way nations are overly dependent on each other for socio-economic and political survival (Bhadauria, 2012). Therefore, one way to overcome

geopolitical instability is to integrate democratic societies such as Taiwan and Somaliland fully in the international community as independent entities (Bhadauria, 2012). This is a point of view that is supported by globalists who argue that globalization has increased interaction and integration of citizens across the world (Bhadauria, 2012).

Evidently, there is deeper integration of national economies and cultures, as a result of technological innovation that transform the governance of societies into seemingly one central global system that allows nations to experience high level of interconnectedness (Bhadauria, 2012). The later has therefore, given new meaning to the notion of sovereignty and statehood and what they represent. That is why Taiwan and Somaliland can easily operate within the international community while being de facto states (Bhadauria, 2012).

The question therefore, is why is it difficult for de facto states such as Taiwan and Somaliland to ascend the apogee of political freedom? If the glories of global stability that is preached in the international community is a true reflection of the human aspiration and experience of a better world post-World War II. Why is the political independence of Taiwan and Somaliland not perceived as issues that would make positive contribution to global stability and peace (Bhadauria, 2012)? The precedent interrogation is important because of collectives view sovereignty and statehood as essential for a people's ability to self-determine their political, economic, and cultural future.

3. Sovereignty and Statehood

Sovereignty is a concept derived from the Latin word *Superanus*, which is translated – supreme (Bhadauria, 2012). It denotes absolute power states exert over people and organizations under their jurisdiction (Bhadauria, 2012). While Statehood is the capacity to protect social, economic and political life of people in a given state to ensure unity, and a sense of common and public interest, while combating external threat of hostilities (Waltz, 1979; Cerny, 2010).

Sovereignty can be exercised internally or externally, and may exist as; (a) Legal Sovereignty (the supreme, absolute, and legally recognized authority within a state that has power to make, amend, and enforce laws without legal limitation) (Bhadauria, 2012); (b) Political Sovereignty (the supreme authority within a state vested in parliament or the people (Bhadauria, 2012). To ensure continuity and stability of the state. Legal sovereignty and political sovereignty must work side by side for the stability of the state (Bhadauria, 2012).

Popular Sovereignty (this is the foundation of modern democracy because it is rooted on the ideal that source of power is the people) (Bhadauria, 2012). Rousseau is among the scientists who expound on popular sovereignty based on the fact people have supreme power, and ultimate authority in every state is in their hands (Marini, 1967). The next is National Sovereignty (which presents the viewpoint that sovereignty resides essentially with the state (an organized political entity where all people within a geographic space enjoy independence from external control) (Bhadauria, 2012).

Then Real and Titular Sovereignty (sovereign power accorded to monarch or constitutional or ceremonial head of state) (Bhadauria, 2012); and lastly, De Jure and De Facto Sovereignty (sovereignty established by international law) (Bhadauria, 2012). The precedent is evident in situations of war or violent conflicts where the control and exercise power over a territory and population is often without legal recognition (Bhadauria, 2012).

3.1 Contextualizing Sovereignty and Statehood in Taiwan-Somaliland Relations

3.1.1 *Sovereignty*

There are opposing schools of thought that exist on the question of sovereignty and statehood (Bhadauria, 2012). For example, for the purposes of clarity, in order to understand the nexus between sovereignty and statehood in the context of Taiwan-Somaliland relations. This study considers ‘Monism School of thought’ (a classical defence of determinate, absolute and indivisible character of state sovereignty), and the ‘Pluralism School of thought’ (an eloquent protest against the Monism school of thought) that insists on the limited nature of sovereignty that must be shared between the state and a host of associations which are indispensable as the state (Bhadauria, 2012: 43).

Notwithstanding, both the Monism and Pluralism schools of thought have come under severe scrutiny. For example, critique on Monism school is premised on the discourse that the notion the sovereignty of the state that gives it absolute and unlimited authority is in conflict with the ideals of democracy that are rooted in equality of all (a notion that is underpinned by popular sovereignty) which upholds the principle that the state’s legitimacy and authority is solely in consent with the people who remains the true source of all sovereignty (Bhadauria, 2012: 43).

A viewpoint contrary to Pluralists school of thought who critique the absolute sovereign power of the state by arguing the state is one entity among many others within a specific geographic space (Bhadauria, 2012: 43). Consequently, the state cannot be vested with absolute sovereign

power especially when such power go unchecked (Bhadauria, 2012). Pluralists school of thought further contend that associations within a given geographic space grow naturally with a will of their own and that life lived within each association is an important part in the life of individuals (Bhadauria, 2012). The Pluralists have not been quite convincing in their argument because they fail to “expunge” the notion of sovereignty from the political supposition they claim (Bhadauria, 2012).

But the truth of the matter is no law, however good, substantially is valid unless it is formally recognized by the state (Bhadauria, 2012). This argument therefore, reinforces the notion of absolute sovereignty that the state enjoys, as put forward by Monism school of thought. Which at the same time presents conflicted relation between sovereignty of state and sovereignty of the people (Nemtoi, 2015). As one may argue the state is the people and vice-versa.

Therefore, to fully grasp the power of popular sovereignty in the context of Taiwan-Somaliland relations, one may suggest that the United Nations should organize a referendum of self-determination in both regions to “test the waters”. The prediction is that the outcome would be similar in both societies because of the power of statehood (the ability of a community to act as an independent legal subject to exercise sovereign authority over a territory).

3.1.2 Statehood

Regarding statehood, there are two competing issues that stand out; the first is Constitutive supposition of statehood that claims a state is a subject of international law, if and only if, it is recognized as sovereign by other states (Ioannidis, 2014). New states cannot integrate the international community immediately or bound by international law (Ioannidis, 2014). In the same way already recognized states have no obligation to respect international law when dealing with new states (de facto states in the context of this study) (Ioannidis, 2014). Notwithstanding, a critique of Constitutive supposition is that it may lead to relativity of the state as a subject of international law (Ioannidis, 2014). Which ought not to be so because states are not by any means relative subjects of international laws created by other states (Ioannidis, 2014).

The second issue is Declarative supposition that upholds the view that statehood of any political entity is independent of its recognition by other states (Ioannidis, 2014). This is documented under Article 2 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933). To be precise, Declarative supposition as stated under Article 1 of the Convention describes the

state as a person in international law who has a defined territory; a permanent population; a government; and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Ioannidis, 2014).

Both Taiwan and Somaliland satisfactorily meet the requirements of statehood as stated in the Montevideo Convention (Joy, 2021). Taiwan, for example, despite its de facto position in the international community, has successfully built a vibrant economy that is more functional than several economies with full uncontested political sovereignty (Joy, 2021). Taiwan has commendable success stories in how it has achieved economic prowess, military security and diplomatic relations with nations that have opened their doors for Taiwan including Somaliland (Joy, 2021).

It is without doubt that the relationship between Taiwan and Somaliland is of unequal strength with Taiwan (the stronger entity) and Somaliland (the weaker one). Based on Walter Rodney's argument that when two societies of unequal strength entangle, one with greater strength tends to pull the one with weaker strength (Rodney, 2018). We are however, yet to fully grasp how Taiwan-Somaliland relations play out in the near and long future due to domestic and external factors.

But what can be extracted from the relationship is that Taiwan has demonstrated its strength through socio-economic and infrastructure contributions in health care, medical supplies, data centre and road construction in Somaliland without trying to transform Somaliland to a colony of Taiwan, as Taiwan is not seeking to become a super power (Ylönen & Ali, 2026). It is evident, even though Taiwan and Somaliland are de facto states, Taiwan's contribution to Somaliland has multiplier effects on citizens of both countries. This is an area that needs further attention because it allows rethinking.

4. Rethinking Taiwan-Somaliland as de facto states

Taiwan and Somaliland are described as de factor states in international relations (McGibbon, 2022). Scholars such as Aidi, (2022) and (Hoch & Rudincová, 2015) support such description by asserting Taiwan and Somaliland are great examples of de factor states, irrespective of their abilities to function better than several independent countries in the world. For example, both states exhibit progressive democratic governance, high civic responsibility of citizens, and commendable territorial safety. And even though both states have not been granted full political independence, they have successfully signed agreements that are guided by shared democratic values and mutual interests (Aidi, 2022; Hoch & Rudincová, 2015).

Paradoxically, as de facto states, their diplomatic ties came under severe attacks in the media, the African Union and from China and Somalia. The attacks were efforts to stigmatize both de facto states in the context of their acceptance in international community (Ker-Lindsay, 2018). The stigmatization is a cynical strategy aim at relegating foreign policy of both de facto states toward political isolationism (Toomla, 2016). Mindful of the fact that diplomatic achievements are integral contour of political survival of de facto states (Toomla, 2016).

Consequently, when de facto states enforced diplomatic agreement, the act is framed illegal by nations and individuals that are enemies of the de facto states (Ker-Lindsay, 2018). They immediately face backlash from foes all in an attempt to curtail further advancement of de facto states to manoeuvre the international community and present their case in similar ways so-called recognized countries do (Ker-Lindsay, 2018). In the same line of thought, Visoka (2021) therefore, unpacks the danger de facto states such as Taiwan that makes meaningful scientific and technological contribution to the international community is facing if it not protected.

For example, Taiwan is contributing tremendously to the global economy through advanced semiconductor manufacturing. It holds approximately 90% of advanced chips production which Africa with similar meteorological conditions as Taiwan can leverage on Taiwan's expertise to embolden its economies the sector (Rahman, 2025). In addition, Taiwan and Somaliland have stable democracies (Rahman, 2025). It is intriguing how democracy and the rule of law can flourish in de facto state (Rahman, 2025). Taiwan is a key stakeholder in the promotion of global health and sustainable development.

Its contribution to the global supply chains, disaster relief support, and digital innovations are advancement that no nation should stop any other from building alliances with Taiwan in the same way Somaliland has done (Rahman, 2025). The precedent point is important because of ongoing coercion from external powers to stop Taiwan and Somaliland from advancing diplomatically (Werner Bastek, 2019). The political stability of Taiwan and Somaliland is significant for global stability (Caspersen, 2018). Taiwan, continues to position itself as a success story owing to the country's benevolence as envisaged in its humanitarian aid, travel and educational exchanges offered to citizens across the globe.

There has never been any success story of a de facto state that provides the level of support in terms of human development that Taiwan is providing to communities across the globe (Caspersen, 2018). No African or Latin American countries, for example, can provide the level of support Taiwan is providing. Certainly, the full political recognition of Taiwan means more

opportunities to communities in need across the globe. Florea (2017) therefore argues that casting aspersions on Taiwan as a de facto state through stigmatization with the aim of isolating Taiwan and Somaliland, is not the right way to go (Berger & Lester, 2015). Especially, as the history of both countries does not demonstrate ties with China and Somalia.

4.1 Brief History of Taiwan

Lee, (2014) narrates Taiwan's history in five periods; (i) the Dutch Rule (1624–1662), (ii) The Kingdom of Tungning (1661–1683), (iii) the Qing Dynasty Rule (1683–1895), (iv) the Japanese Rule (1895–1945), and (v) the Republic of China Rule (from 1945 hitherto) (Lee, 2014). According to Lee, (2014), when Dutch encountered the shores of Taiwan (1623–24), found human activities as a result of the presence of Austronesian aboriginal peoples (Corcuff, 2012). During this period, there was no trace of Han Chinese communities in Taiwan (Corcuff, 2012).

The documented evidence of Han Chinese is their encounter with Dutch and Austronesian Aborigines through migration for trade, fishing and piracy (Corcuff, 2012). The Dutch administered Taiwan and defeated Spaniards in 1642 (Lee, 2014). They exercise unchallenged control over the territory (Lee, 2014). The Dutch emphasized on trading with China, Japan and south-eastern Asia (Lee, 2014). But across the waters of southeastern Asia, Zheng Zhi-long was a powerful power broker in the 1640s (Lee, 2014). He was a pirate mogul. In order to lure him to join the government of Ming Dynasty, the latter proposed a position which he accepted and became an official (Lee, 2014).

The position gave him leverage over pirate business to gain substantial competitive advantage over Dutch East Indian Company (Lee, 2014). But, when the capital of Ming Dynasty ruled by Han Chinese was taken by Qing Dynasty ruled by Manchus in 1644 (Lee, 2014). The Ming Dynasty was left with no choice but to shift to the south to become the Southern-Ming Dynasty which reign until it collapsed in 1662 (Lee, 2014). Zheng Chi-long who had great military power was offered lucrative position and attractive remuneration by Qing Dynasty.

He accepted the offer and surrendered himself (Lee, 2014). But his son, Zheng Cheng-gong rejected the position of his father and refused to surrender. He took over leadership of the military loyal to him. But due to inability of Zheng Cheng-gong's soldiers to defeat the Qing Dynasty, he crossed to Taiwan (Lee, 2014). While in Taiwan, Zheng Cheng-gong confronted the Dutch who were in the country. This forced the Dutch out of the territory (Lee, 2014).

Zheng Cheng-gong introduced the presence of Han Chinese in Taiwan history for the first time (Lee, 2014).

Taiwan became dominantly Southern-Min Chinese people (Lee, 2014). The Dutch and Taiwanese aboriginal languages were absorbed (Lee, 2014). And after the death of Zheng Cheng-gong, his son, Zheng Jing, and his official Chen Yong-hua designed Taiwan's education trajectory. Confucius temple for the first time in Taiwan was constructed in Tainan alongside a school (Lee, 2014). Zheng dreamt of reconquering China for the Ming Dynasty. This was not achievable until Taiwan was conquered by the Qing Dynasty. Marking the end of the Kingdom of Tungnin (Lee, 2014).

The Qing Dynasty reigned in Taiwan until 1895 when China was defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War (Lee, 2014). The Qing Empire signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki which ceded Taiwan to Japan (Lee, 2014). Taiwan became a Japanese colony (Lee, 2014). Since Taiwan was Japan's first colony, Japan transformed Taiwan into a "model colony". It embarked on developing projects improve the economy, industry, and public works, such as railways, vaccinations, and running water (Lee, 2014). But when the wave of nationalism grew in the 19th century, Japan reshaped its colonial policy to resemble French policy of assimilation (Lee, 2014).

The Japanese policy in Taiwan centred on transforming Taiwanese into loyal subjects of Japan Empire. Interracial marriages between Taiwanese and Japanese were recognized, and Taiwanese who had mastery of Japanese language were rewarded and integrated into Japanese public service (Lee, 2014). But in the first twenty years of Japanese rule, there was rebellion in Taiwan which led to the establishment of Republic of Formosa, "Democratic State of Taiwan" which lasted 5 months (Lee, 2014). Following combats across the islands, people started campaigning for democratic local governance.

This intensified and ushered the end of fifty years of Japanese efforts in developing Taiwan's (Lee, 2014). And in 1945, after the end of World War II the Republic of China took over Taiwan (Lee, 2014). It governed Taiwan until 1949 when the Communist Party of China founded the People's Republic of China (Lee, 2014). The government of the Republic of China which was founded by Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) formally retreated from China to Taiwan.

In a nutshell, Taiwan has never been a part of any political entity, despite its closer geographic location between Japan and mainland China (Lee, 2014). It was after the surrender of Zheng

regime that the Kangxi Emperor claimed Taiwan as part of China in a consolidated effort to harmonise national defence strategy (Lee, 2014). Several nations; Great Britain, France and Japan also have historical ties with Taiwan (Lee, 2014). For example, in 1858, China entered a treaty with Great Britain to open the harbours in Taiwan (Lee, 2014). This is a clear demonstration that Taiwan has been a sovereign since time immemorial.

4.2 Short Account of Somaliland

Similarly, the history of Somaliland can be described into three phases; (i) British Somaliland (1884-1960), when Somaliland was governed as a protectorate under British rule; (ii) State of Somaliland (26 June 1960), when the territory gained political independence from the British with more than 30 independent states recognizing its independence before forming a confederation with Italian Somalia after 5 days of independence (Kaplan, 2008); (iii) Republic of Somaliland (1991-hiterto), which was born post collapsed of the government of Mohamed Siad Barre that saw the British Somaliland ending its association with Somalia on the 18 of May 1991 (Joy, 2021; Kaplan, 2008).

The union between British Somaliland and Italian Somalia had no legal bases because of the absence of a formal contractual agreement (Joy, 2021). Both Somalia and Somaliland were flattered by sentiments of *Pan-Somali* which perceived a greater Somalia state after the union (Joy, 2021). Nonetheless, in the process of unification issues of power dynamics were not comprehensively addressed. There was no legal framework guiding the co-existence of the two states from diverse colonial experiences (Joy, 2021). Consequently, there was no bilateral agreement or Act of Union of Somalia that was signed (Joy, 2021).

Instead, two separate acts were approved by two separate assemblies – the Northern Assembly and Southern Assembly to reflect the independence of the two states (Joy, 2021). It therefore, became clear the union looked like a forced marriage. For example, almost a year later, a referendum was held to unite the two states under a single constitution. A mixed reaction was seen in the suffrage. For example, of almost 100,000 people in the north who casted their votes towards a unified constitution, more than half voted against (Joy, 2021).

While, in the south, there was strong support for a single/unified constitution (Joy, 2021). The opposing suffrage was demonstration of visible political cracks and rifts to come because there were strong disagreement and power imbalance between people in the north and south (Joy, 2021). Coupled with the fact that when the central government of the union was installed in Mogadishu- the south/central region of Somalia (Joy, 2021). The people of north Somalia

(Somalilanders) immediately started experiencing marginalization and discrimination because of political practices that move along ethnic lines (Joy, 2021).

While the Somalilanders were increasingly sidelined, the sentiment of marginalization got worse after General Mohamed Siad Barre took over power in a military coup in 1969 (Joy, 2021). Siad Barre ruled with ‘iron fist’. He brought in repressive authoritarianism to the union which led to the Ogaden War with Ethiopia in 1977 (Joy, 2021). The war precipitated the collapsed of the union after Somalia was defeated in the war. Consequently, Pan-Somali as an ideological justification for the union became nemesis, the army and economy were in ruins amidst refugee crisis (Joy, 2021).

There was discomfort and agitation in Somaliland as a result of the war and refugee crisis. As a result, Somaliland reasserted its sovereignty and declared independence from the union with Italian Somalia in 1991 (Pegg, 2019). Arguably, even though Somaliland, just like Taiwan, have clear historical case for full political independence, both countries still exist as de facto states (Pegg, 2019). This study is therefore, important because it introduces new dynamics in international relations in the context of diplomacy among de facto states. Mindful of the organic challenges de facto states face, this study poses the following research questions; (a) What are the prospects and challenges of Taiwan–Somaliland relations? (b) Why is Taiwan-Somaliland relation significant? (c) How can other African countries benefit from Taiwan-Somaliland relations? (d) What is the global implication of Taiwan-Somaliland relations?

The questions are guided by the following research objectives: (i) To find out the prospects and challenges of Taiwan – Somaliland relations; (ii) To establish the significance of Taiwan-Somaliland relations; (iii) To determine how other African countries can benefit from Taiwan-Somaliland relations; and (iv) To examine global implication of Taiwan-Somaliland relations. However, in order to achieve the objectives of the study, the subsequent methodology was adopted.

5. Research methodology

The answer to the research questions were obtained through qualitative research design that used secondary data comprising of journal articles, books and book chapter publications, government gazettes, websites, and other sources relevant to achieving the objectives of the study. Content analysis - “a systematic replicable techniques for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:111), was then adopted to analyse the data. Themes that pattern across data sets, and that are

important to describe the phenomenon under study, and that are associated with specific research questions/objectives were used to present the findings (Boyatzis, 1984:4). Namey et al., (2008:137-161) argues that, “using themes goes beyond counting explicit words and focus on describing implicit and explicit ideas.”

Content analysis is appropriate to analyse the data because the research questions/objectives of the study are to; find out the prospects and challenges of Taiwan – Somaliland relations; to establish the significance of Taiwan-Somaliland relations; to determine how other African countries can benefit from Taiwan-Somaliland relations; and to examine the global implication of Taiwan-Somaliland relations. These objectives offer contextual detail into qualitative description (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:300). As they allow the researcher to provide detail description of the prospect and challenges of Taiwan-Somaliland relations and how African countries can benefit from the relations (Lather, 1992: 87-92).

6. Findings and Discussions

6.1 The prospects and challenges of Taiwan – Somaliland relations

Certainly, diplomatic relation is a coin of two sides (it comes with prospects and challenges). However, the uniqueness of the prospects and challenges of Taiwan-Somaliland relations are shaped by politics of de facto states in international relations and is explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

6.1.1 Prospects of Taiwan-Somaliland Relations

6.1.1.1 Maritime Cooperation, Intelligence Sharing and Technology Transfer

(a) Maritime Cooperation

Maritime cooperation is a significant aspect of Taiwan-Somaliland relations. The cooperation, if invested in, can foster development in Somaliland, owing to the fact that, the proliferation of Somali piracy that emerged in the 90s, after the collapse of Somalia's government, and that is operating off the Horn of Africa (including along the Gulf of Aden) have negative consequence on the economy of Somaliland as piracy hinders economic growth, discourage investment, and promote instability in the Horn of Africa (Edmunds, 2017). On the side of Taiwan, the diplomatic relations present an opportunity to access market for Taiwanese products in the Horn of Africa. Therefore, the landmark Coast Guard Cooperation Agreement that was signed in Taipei on July 24, 2025, to establish formal maritime collaboration between Taiwan and

Somaliland within the framework of diplomatic relations between the two countries comes with a lot of promises. For example, the cooperation is focusing on combating piracy, illegal fishing, and human, drugs and arms smuggling. It is obvious Somaliland stands to benefit from the cooperation because, looking at Taiwan's capability in the global stage (it is ranked among the seventh largest ship-owning economies in terms of the total deadweight of its fleet in the world). Somaliland can gain technical know-how/expertise on different maritime areas (Lirn et al., 2016).

For example, Taiwan can strengthen Somaliland's Coast Guard through technical training, implementation of information-sharing platforms, and foster international partnerships for security and infrastructure development that can be extended to other countries in the Horn of Africa with positive unintended outcome. Taiwan can also leverage on its global maritime network to improve operational capability for Somaliland that can assist in combatting illegal fishing, and securing vital trade routes through the Red Sea especially at a time when Israel has signed diplomatic relations with Somaliland.

Not to ignore the opportunity of maritime academic exchanges that can take place between Taiwan's maritime research institutes and those of Somaliland (Lirn et al., 2016). It is important to note that the maritime agreement between Taiwan and Somaliland offers Taiwan a safe trade route in the Horn of Africa, as Somaliland is determined to protect Taiwan's interests along the Gulf of Aden right to the Red Sea corridor as both countries now have diplomatic relations with Israel.

The relations between Taiwan and Somaliland also present opportunities for Taiwan to access Somaliland's maritime resources that remains untapped. This includes; fisheries, oil and gas which can offer competitive advantage to Taiwan and Somaliland businesses in the maritime sector.

(b) Intelligence Sharing and Technology Transfer

Taiwan-Somaliland relations offer the possibility of deeper intelligence sharing. Increasingly, the collection and analysis of data related to intelligence gathering has become critical for the survival of many nations in the world. Governments and multinational cooperations across the globe are in constant need of timely and accurate intelligence report, in order to successfully deal with various security and economic threats. Taiwan and Somaliland are de facto states that are constantly confronted with existential threat. The two countries are therefore, bound to

share intelligence among themselves and allies in order to ensure they survive in a hostile geopolitical environment (Edmunds, 2017).

Certainly, even though, Somaliland is at a more advantaged position to benefit from Taiwan's expertise including intelligence gathering. Somaliland can provide intelligence to Taiwan that would strengthen Taiwan's security along the Gulf of Aden. Access to the Gulf of Aden is important to Taiwan because it would provide the country with access to strategic African logistics hubs that can lead to conquering new diplomatic relations that Taiwan and Somaliland need in order to expand their international support (Edmunds, 2017).

In addition, Taiwan has high reputation in technology advancement (Chen, 2015). The country, has the potential to replicate its technology hubs in Somaliland through technology transfer. For example, Taiwan's industrial parks such as; Hsinchu Science Park (HSP), Central Taiwan Science Park, and Southern Taiwan Science Park (STSP) that promote innovative interactions between firms and stakeholders is a prospective strategy that can be replicated in Somaliland. This is important because Taiwan's business models are seen to be the bedrock of the creation of over 900 technology companies in the country (AmCham, 2019). The companies have therefore, placed Taiwan among key actors pioneering global high-tech industries.

It is evident that high-tech industries offer technologies that are needed for the effective growth of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs have the ability to transform economies through innovations and job creation (Hu et al., 2005). Taiwan has the potential to create an intellectual environment for research and development by building infrastructures and support services for high-tech industries unique to the continent of Africa (Hu et al., 2005). Through Somaliland, Taiwan's semiconductors, AI, renewable energy, and fintech products can enter into partnership with likeminded companies in Kenya and others in Horn of Africa.

This is one of the ways Taiwan can strengthen its strategic presence in the horn of Africa, while simultaneously repositioning itself across other parts of Africa. And taking advantage of Somaliland's position at the Gulf of Aden that offers important trade routes for Taiwan's technologies and electronic products to the East African market. Taiwan can therefore, leverage on its relations with Somaliland to increase its economic influence in East Africa by decisively diversifying its investments in Africa. For example, information and communications technology (ICT), textiles and electronics manufacturing, agriculture, renewable energy, and resource development are critical areas of investments in the whole of Africa.

Therefore, a good investment in such areas would enable Taiwan to access African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to access more markets. Digital technologies, smart city solutions and medical technologies are also important areas that Africa is lagging behind in its efforts to transforming the continent. A substantial investment in Somaliland tech hubs and partnerships with other emerging tech hubs in the Horn of Africa would increase the prospect of Taiwan securing further diplomatic advancement with other African countries.

Notwithstanding, the infrastructure development that Taiwan is building in Somaliland such as; the 22 million or more US dollar Taiwan Medical Centre, Taiwan Road that connects the capital Hargeisa to the airport, the US dollar 20 million Central Sky Quarantine Zone for livestock, and the Somaliland National Data Centre are tangible rewards of Taiwan-Somaliland relations. Nonetheless, it looks like the benefits of the relations is mono-directionally (one-way). This is partly, because, Somaliland does not have the financial muscles and resources to contribute in the development of Taiwan. There is therefore the need for other studies to document tangible benefits of Taiwan in the relations.

6.2.1 Challenges of Taiwan-Somaliland relations

The greatest challenge confronting Taiwan-Somaliland relations is the fact that both countries are de facto states (states lacking international recognition). Their situation as de facto states is restraining them from fully operating in the global financial systems (Ker-Lindsay, 2018). Consequently, in order both countries to participate in the global financial systems and markets, they must endure high security costs. The high costs place limitation on international trade opportunities that they may want to take advantage of.

It also adds complexity in terms of how companies in these countries navigate international markets through the use of companies in parent states. This often put them in a vulnerable position (Ker-Lindsay, 2018). Furthermore, as de facto states, governments and companies from several nation especially those in the global south tend to avoid any form of engagement with Taiwan and Somaliland. Sometimes, the governments and companies act under compulsion and coercions from China which seeks to promote the international isolation of Taiwan and Somaliland of recent, because of its diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

In addition, because Taiwan and Somaliland are de facto states, they find it difficult to attract foreign direct investment which is key to economic growth and development. Also, as de facto states, the government of Taiwan and Somaliland invest substantial amount of national budget on security issues. This is a challenge because when more money is spent on security, the

citizens are deprived of cost-effective social amenities and infrastructures that could improve the standard of living. Moreover, citizens of Taiwan and Somaliland cannot move freely from one country to another because their passports are not recognized by the vast majority of countries. Consequently, economic growth, demographic rejuvenation, and accessible opportunities for citizens of these countries in other countries is a huge challenge.

6.2.2 The question of legality against political reality

The issue of legality (conformity with international law) against political reality (adverse conditions, power dynamics, and constraints that influence political actions and outcomes) are conflicting challenges confronting the political future of Taiwan and Somaliland. For example, irrespective of the fact that self-determination remains a principle of international law that allows a people to freely decide on a political path that gives them the freedom needed to pursue economic, social and cultural development of their choice, as stated in the United Nations Charter and international covenants such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that guide decolonization and self-determination is found wanting in the case of Taiwan and Somaliland (Alfredsson, 2019).

Both countries as per the Montevideo Convention have legal grounds to be integrated as independent states in the international community (Bachmann & Prazauskas, 2019). But due to the complexity of political reality they are considered de facto states. Despite the autonomy they enjoyed. The political reality overshadowing the quest of independence of both Taiwan and Somaliland is that it is constructed through subjective and selective acumen of political happenings that promotes distorted narrative, rather than objective judgment of political events.

The falsified version of history therefore, enforces a certain collective perception which is echoed through media outlets that capitalised on fragmented realities and polarization with the intention of deception (Elcheroth et al., 2011). For example, the political history of Taiwan and Somaliland demonstrates episode of culture encounters with China and Somalia, respectively. However, even though shared language, culture or philosophical similarities, traditional practices and spirituality may be observed as important markers, these factors are not enough reasons for a successful political integration.

Taiwan and Somaliland evolve in contrast with China and Somalia. For example, both de facto states practice multiparty democracies, while China is a one-party state, and Somalia a failed state. That is why China and Somalia are promoters of the political reality that is hindering the political recognition of Taiwan and Somaliland. China for example, has successfully pressured

and coerced several nations across Africa and the globe to sever relations with Taiwan. A move that is heightened by the one China-two systems narrative which arguably, may mean one thing to China, and another to Taiwan. The one China two systems narrative presents a questionable outcome in the case of Hong Kong (So, 2011). Which according to Lorenzo, (2024) continue to fuel resistance against China in Taiwanese communities.

The political reality that Taiwan and Somaliland are experiencing from China and Somalia opposition is an indication of what de facto states go through when dealing with already independent countries (Corcuff, 2012). It is worth mentioning that citizens of de facto states are not undesirable human beings, neither are de facto states illegal states. They are states that have been denied the privilege to be recognized as independent states. Moreover, the challenge of political reality is that it is a construct that is no longer befitting in the present changing global order shaped by power shift which exert consequence on how countries relate to each other including de facto states.

The question of political reality is more complex with the issue of the veto power of the United Nations Security Council which is a central organ for the political independence of countries. The way the veto power is configured to prevent the UNSC, and the UN General Assembly to move to a direction that affects any of the principal founding members is pure lunacy if political stability is treasured in the global political ecosystem (Vicente, 2013). The political reality that China is among the five permanent members alongside the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia means that China would veto any resolution in favour of full political independence of Taiwan and probably Somaliland by virtue of its relations with Taiwan (Vicente, 2013).

It is certain that in order for Taiwan and Somaliland to gain full political independence, the United Nations Security Council and the entire United Nations Organization must undergo structural reforms that would usher a new political reality that would be able to address contemporary challenges that can culminate to a lasting solution on the question of Taiwan and Somaliland.

6.2.3 The matter of existential threat

Despite the distance between Taiwan and Somaliland, they share a common fate in their struggle for political independence. But looking at the political and economic muscles of China and Somalia, it is obvious Taiwan which is China's adversary is under more political pressure than Somaliland which is Somalia's adversary. This is partly, because, China unlike Somalia

has more capabilities to invade Taiwan than Somalia to takeover Somaliland. This is evident in the increasing military exercises conducted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) over the Taiwan strait in recent years. The repeated dispatched of military aircraft and warships to circumnavigate Taiwan Strait is a demonstration of China's capabilities. It is worth mentioning that the military exercises are not in the interest of peace. Even though Taiwan has demonstrated good will that it wants to live at peace with its neighbours including China.

The position of its government has not been taken into seriously. However, it should be noted that any attempt to take over Taiwan by force would have severe consequences because of the potential to become a proxy war. A proxy war is a danger to global stability and peace because of its prolonged nature, high-intensity violence, catastrophic humanitarian crises, and escalation which may lead to nuclear conflict that may obliterate the human experience (Watts et al., 2023). China is therefore, advise to desist from the intention of taking over Taiwan by force.

It is true that Taiwanese have varied opinions regarding the question of 'existential threat' the nation is facing. For example, according to a survey conducted in November 2021, by Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation on 'Taiwan Public Opinion in the Cross-Strait Military Crisis', 28.1% of the respondents are certain that 'China would attack Taiwan by force sooner or later.' However, even though there is indication that majority of people in Taiwan do not believe China would attack Taiwan with force despite the frequent military violation along the Strait of Taiwan. There is still some level of ambiguity and unpredictability regarding the future of Taiwan.

Concern over the future of Taiwan can create agitation and fuel political sectarianism across the country's democratic landscape in the context of the existential threat the nation is facing. Contrarily, the evidence of existential threat is the case of Somaliland is not as clear as that of Taiwan because there is no certainty that in a military confrontation between Somalia and Somaliland, Somalia would be able to take over Somaliland as Somalia does not possess the level of military capacity that China has.

However, any attempt to take over Taiwan by force or compulsion should be traded with caution because the outcome may be more disastrous than anticipated. A "food for thought" that serves as an example is the Russian invasion of Ukraine since February 2022 (Ozili, 2024). That has witnessed the death of over 15360 civilians (verified by the UN), and the death of over 100,000 to more than 300,000 military personnel on the side of Russia, alongside more than 140,000 for Ukraine according to UN reports (Ordeanu & Andronic, 2024). Russian

President Putin simplistic description of the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a military exercise – ‘special military operation’ to defend the Russian-speaking territories in eastern Ukraine (the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics) under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Regrettably, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has resulted to a prolonged crisis with untold human suffering (Szpak, 2023). It is obvious forceful military operations don't only inflict chaos; they have severe negative consequence on economies across the world. China therefore, should think twice before embarking on a military action against Taiwan. There may not be a victor after the event. The Chinese economy may tend to ruins that might take decades to recover because in the event of a war with Taiwan, evidence points at the possibility of proxy war (Tierney, 2021).

Taiwan has less to lose than China because as it is not in competition with any nation. China, on the contrary, is the United States greatest economic competitor. In the case of a proxy war, the Chinese civilization and economy that is currently the envy of the world may be destabilize or taken decades backward (Tierney, 2021). This would not be good for global stability and prosperity.

6.2.4 The issue of China as a strong opposition

China, unlike Somalia, is a strong opposition. Presently, China occupies a central position in current global order (Economy, 2022). It is the world's largest trading partner and greatest source of global lending to developing countries (Economy, 2022). China is Africa's largest trading partner. It has great influence over African governments through (amongst others) its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that funds critical infrastructure across continents such as railways, ports, and energy projects (Yildiz, 2025). China has become the infrastructure stronghold of Africa.

It is expanding security ties, digital surveillance infrastructure, and ideological training for political elites across the continent with the intention of raising a cohort of African politicians who align with China's foreign policy (Yildiz, 2025). China is apparently succeeding in this regard, as several African countries have been compelled to make difficult choices between the PRC or the ROC in the 1990s and early 2000s (Carrai, 2022). The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is one of the useful tools that China is using to mount pressure on African countries to side with China because it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of China (Carrai, 2022). That is why nations such as The Gambia (2016), Sao Tome and Principe (2016),

and Burkina Faso (2018) officially severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan and re-established ties with China (Carrai, 2022).

China has the world's largest population, it is leader of global innovation (Economy, 2022). Several analysts have predicted China's real GDP would surpass that of the United States by 2030, to becoming the largest economy in the world (Economy, 2022). Looking at the amount in terms of treasure security that China holds in United States as of early 2025, is estimated at USD\$750–\$800 billion), and the fact that China remains the greatest overseas investor, with outward direct investment (ODI) flows rising to about USD\$200 billion in 2016, from USD\$180 billion in 2021, as reported by National Bureau of Statistics of China (Chen et al., 2025). Possibly, China's GDP already surpassed that of United States if not of the dollarization of the global economy which offers unfair advantage to the United States (Abbas et al., 2025).

Hence, any attempt to de-dollarize the global economy is a declaration of war against the United States. The United States hitherto, perceived China as the greatest threat to its economic prosperity. China should therefore be mindful of the fact that the glories of its economic miracle would continue as long as it handles the question of Taiwan with profound objectivity, because the issue has the potential to break China. Even its capacity to response to global challenges that was seen during the COVID19 pandemic may never be recovered (Economy, 2022).

While some observers ponder on whether China wants to create a new international order or make adjustments to the current global order as a strong opposition that previously advanced its interests without attempting to change the global order. However, looking at China's opposition to Taiwan's independence, there is a sense that its opposition to Taiwan could be a miscalculation that could facilitate infiltration from outside (Economy, 2022). The precedent finding is based on the argument that there seems to be no limit as to the extent a society of resilient people with strong political will can go, in order, to protect their existence and values (Economy, 2022). A courtesy call is that, no nation, no matter how strong it may be in its own eyes, has monopoly of strength in a war. There is need for a change of attitude from China.

6.3.The significance of Taiwan - Somaliland relations

Unquestionably, the diplomatic relation that was enforced between Taiwan and Somaliland on July 1, 2020, with representative offices opening in Hargeisa, Somaliland on August 17, 2020, and Taipei, Taiwan on September 9, 2020 is significant because it is an epitome of diplomatic pragmatism – a foreign policy approach that emphasizes on practical, workable solutions and national interests over ideological adherence, dogma, or rigid principles in a complex

international order (Chen, 2002). Taiwan for example, is neither seeking to become the patron of Somaliland nor trying to have a colony in the Horn of Africa. Its diplomatic ambition with Somaliland is evinced through shared strategic interests and mutual benefits especially as both are de facto states that are trying to impress the international community, in order to gain further diplomatic recognition across the globe.

Therefore, in pursuit of deeper global visibility and engagement, both Taiwan and Somaliland have adopted soft power tools like political and maritime collaboration, development aid, educational and cultural exchange opportunities and health initiatives to deepen their relations (Atimniraye, 2024). Worth mentioning is the fact that the relations is of significance to both states because while Taiwan offers Somaliland political support by lobbying for Somaliland amongst its allies, as well as providing economic assistance that contributes to the improvement of Somaliland's legitimacy (Joy, 2021). Somaliland in return provides Taiwan strategic geopolitical access and political alliance in the Horn of Africa (Joy, 2021).

Taiwan's contribution to Somaliland's education, healthcare, agriculture, energy, fishers and technology has added value in terms of Somaliland's institutional capacity and democratization efforts, which is of great significance because of the multiplier effects that comes along (Joy, 2021). The contributions demonstrate the significance of traditional diplomacy between a stronger and weaker de facto state. That doesn't consider the interest of the stronger de facto state above the weaker one. A significant lesson to be learned from Taiwan's relations with Somaliland is what can be described as 'safer diplomacy' (diplomacy that is free from political coercion).

Importantly, although Taiwan and Somaliland have commonality in terms of shared political status as unrecognized, they have striking difference in their historical trajectories, geography, economy, culture, religion, regional geopolitics, and patrons (Joy, 2021). This may have been an element of discouragement because politically, Taiwan is at a far much better space than Somaliland in the international arena. If Taiwan, therefore, decides to enter into diplomatic relations with Somaliland, it is based on the fact that Taiwan's foreign policy is more of value-based diplomacy that leverage on progressive democracy, technological advancement, and economic resilience to enter into diplomatic agreement that is based on equality.

Even the contribution that Taiwan is making to the international community is so significant that it cannot be ignored (Tubilewicz, 2012). There is need for African countries to reconsider their position towards Taiwan. For example, looking back at the significant intervention Taiwan

did when it supplied Covid-19 vaccines to Somaliland after countries that were manufacturing vaccines demonstrated less consideration for Africa during the pandemics (Aidi, 2022). It is certain, there is no messiah to save Africa. The continent must therefore, objectively collaborate with opposing forces for its advancement. African countries can have diplomacy with China and Taiwan simultaneously. And also benefit from Taiwan in similar ways Somaliland is benefiting. African countries need China, in the same way China needs them. They must reflect on that benefit Taiwan has to offer to them.

6.4 How African countries can benefit from the relations

African countries can benefit from Taiwan's semiconductor and chip manufacturing industries (Jones et al., 2023). Semiconductors and chips have become the foundational technology of the modern digital world (Jones et al., 2023). Because semiconductors and chips enable computing power, data processing, and connectivity in devices from smartphones and medical equipment to cars and infrastructures. Semiconductors and chips are the driving force behind innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the fifth generation of global cellular wireless technology (5G) (Peters, 2023). They are a principal component in modern systems of warfare and management in battlefields (Peters, 2023).

Africa is a constant battlefield of great power rivalry (Sari, 2022). From liberation struggles to wars on terror (Zezeza, 2008), civil wars (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002), and coups d'états (Fagbadebo, 2024). The conflicts have huge bearings on Africa, as many African countries lack modern warfare systems which makes them ineffective in dealing with terror and other conflicts. There is therefore, the need for African countries to create an African centric warfare and management systems that incorporate semiconductors and chips in a way that it reflects the African reality, if the continent wants to effectively eradicate terror and conflicts.

Since, Taiwan is in charge of manufacturing 70% of the world's semiconductors and 90% of the most advanced chips (Tung, 2024). It is imperative that African countries must deal with Taiwan directly. As Taiwan remains key in the semiconductors and chips global supply chain with a burgeoning economy (Tung, 2024). Africa is lagging behind in economic development (Dodo, 2018). African countries can benefit from insights on how Taiwan - a de facto state with less mineral resources in comparison to Africa, could achieve multifaceted economic development (quantitative growth (GDP)), improved quality of life; economic well-being, and opportunities for its citizens.

In terms of capacity building, no country in the worldwide has developed capacity to provide alternatives of what Taiwan is doing in terms of chips and semiconductors manufacturing (Rigger, 2013). This is an opportunity for African countries. They ought to look at Taiwan as a source of inspiration and opportunity to attract technology for chips and semiconductor manufacturing in this present digital age. This is because digital innovation has the capability of transforming Africa (Boateng et al., 2022). It can shift Africa from traditional development to more sophisticated economic development that enhance service delivery (Boateng et al., 2022).

As digital technologies have the ability to increase quick access to finance via (fintech), agriculture (agritech), education (edtech), and health services (healthec), while simultaneously creating millions of job opportunities for Africa's youth (Boateng et al., 2022). Additionally, one-way rural economies in Africa can compete effectively, access global markets, and facilitate trade is through digital transformation with the use of semiconductors and chips which Africa can leverage in its relations with Taiwan (Boateng et al., 2022). Access to semiconductors and chips supply can assist African countries to limit the overdependence on superpowers.

Taiwan is not a superpower. It is economically self-reliant. It has a population size of 23.6 million (Kuo et al., 2015) that is similar to several Africa states. African countries can effectively work with Taiwan on mutual and equitable partnerships that has equality as the base of collaboration. Taiwan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as of 2020 was US\$668.5 billion making the country to rank 21st among the world's economies, and sixth largest in Asia after China, Japan, India, Korea and Indonesia (Rigger, 2013). This has enables Taiwan to provide funding for smart farming projects in countries such as Eswatini, Burundi and Somaliland, where local farmers are empowered with skills on adopting drip irrigation systems and circular economy practices in order to increase production.

This is an area African country can benefit. There are several other small-scale initiatives in local communities of African states that can benefit from Taiwan which has a reputation of providing supplies that are sensitive to African needs such as in the area of food security (Andoko et al., 2020). In a nutshell, Taiwan's relations with Africa would be of great benefit to African states. The reason is its *modus operandi* contrasts the more transactional Chinese and Western models which comes with development aids and the problematics thereof; (Fentahun, 2023), in terms of debt trap and political coercion. Contrary to Taiwan's model that offers

assistance through mutual learning and engagement because Taiwan is not seeking to become a colonial power in Africa.

6.5 The global implication of Taiwan-Somaliland relations

The prolonged status quo of Taiwan and Somaliland as de facto states is an indictment on international law principle of self-determination (Klabbers, 2006). The status quo exposes the adverse transformation that is experienced in contemporary international law. Taiwan-Somaliland relations present an opportunity to observe how the legal principle of self-determination is progressively emptied of its political content. As a result of more than two decades of multilateralism that is dominated by superpowers with consequent proliferation of conflicts that perceived risk management as safer than legal settlement that creates lasting solution.

Additionally, the manner in which the international community, and in particular the United Nations (UN) Security Council continues to handle the question of Taiwan and Somaliland is an indication the United Nations Organization as a supranational body has failed in its normative approach to global stability on the question of self-determination through referendum as it is used to conceal the full realization of the inalienable rights of Taiwan and Somaliland.

Another global implication of Taiwan-Somaliland relations is the affirmation that pragmatic interest-based diplomacy can emerge outside traditional framework of international relations. Taiwan and Somaliland relations prioritize mutual interests and development-oriented cooperation. The relation in the state of de facto states still contribute to regional peace, security and economic development in the Horn of Africa. Such nontraditional diplomacy has demonstrated that formal state recognition does not automatically transform a country. It only allows a country to offer more to the world.

Taiwan and Somaliland remain at the forefront of effective diplomacy among de facto states that adopts soft power strategies that include; development cooperation, education exchange, and technological partnerships to achieve mutual benefits and increase visibility (Hocking and Melissen 2019). The relations, however, elicited adverse reactions from countries in Africa and the globe. For example, Somalia irrationally opposed the relations, and view it as a breach of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Somalia officially declared Taiwan an enemy in response to the opening of Taiwan's representative office in Hargeisa (the capital of Somaliland (Klosowicz, 2023)). Somalia therefore, banned Taiwanese passport holders from entering the

country, and condemned the move as illegitimate (Klosowicz, 2023). China, following its One-China Policy, also expressed distressed, and menace Somaliland of its engagement with Taiwan (Mishra 2020).

But the United States a great ally of Taiwan, accommodates Taiwan-Somaliland relations, framing it a move that aligns with the values of democracy and regional development (Shattuck 2020). Even Ethiopia's port access agreement that it entered with Somaliland came under attack from Somalia because of Taiwan-Somaliland relations. This raises concerns among member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa on the growing diplomatic fragmentation and instability in the region (Moyo, 2022). The implication of various reactions toward Taiwan-Somaliland relations demonstrates the geopolitical sensitivity of the relations.

It shows that Taiwan-Somaliland relations should not be taken for granted as the political status quo of Taiwan and Somaliland has the potential of destabilizing global stability because of geopolitical rivalries. Another way to look at the global implication of Taiwan-Somaliland relations is to look at geopolitical rivalries of superpowers in the context of the benefits Taiwan is offering to its superpower allies. This is important as it is part of the reason Taiwan has membership in the World Trade Organization, even though its presence in the event is often provocatively coined as "Chinese Taipei" in an effort to manage sensitive political disputes with the PRC (Chen & Cohen, 2019). Irrespective of the fact that neither China nor any other superpower has governed Taiwan. In similar ways no power has governed Somaliland since it walked out of the union with Somalia.

In addition, Taiwan-Somaliland relations has added the burden of the African Union (AU). The union is confronted with governance and institutional challenges which hitherto, constitute significant barriers to the functioning of the institution (Schnabel & Carment, 2004). While member states are required to have consensus on political matters, there seem to be delays in decision-making process, especially during crises (Schnabel & Carment, 2004). Somaliland is already a question of conflict in the African Union. Therefore, having a relation with Taiwan not only violates the one China policy, but it places the African Union in a more awkward position vis-à-vis China which designed and funded the construction of the African Union Commission headquarters in Addis Ababa on pro-bono (Mulugeta, 2021; Cupers et al., 2023).

So far, the AU has not taken any decisive steps to resolve the question of Somaliland. Even its comments on Taiwan-Somaliland relations lacks objectivity (Kurtenbach, 2017). Nevertheless,

China's ambassador to Somalia visited Somaliland to offer development packages, including road and airport construction, provided Somaliland cut ties with Taiwan and adopt the One-China policy. President Bihi of Somaliland rejected the offer and said, "Somaliland is ready to nurture friendly and cooperative relations with all countries based on the five principles of 'peaceful co-existence,'" a reference to the doctrine that has guided China's foreign policy since the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung (Ahmed, 2020). African countries should also enter into diplomatic relations with Taiwan based on these five principles.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the prospects of Taiwan-Somaliland relations as de facto states. It shows that even though Taiwan and Somaliland are diplomatically marginalized, they can still assert their influence in the regional and international stage. Importantly, Taiwan-Somaliland relations highlight relevance of institutional capacity to foster governance and expand global presence. As both countries have common interest of achieving full political recognition which should be treated as a matter of urgency. Accordingly, Somaliland see Taiwan as a strategy to increase its global visibility. Taiwan on the other hand considers Somaliland's geographic location as an entry point into the Horn of Africa.

The greatest challenge to Taiwan-Somaliland relations is the People's Republic of China (PRC) which has significant historical ties with African nations. The PRC provided support to anti-colonial movements across Africa in the 60s. It is currently, Africa's largest bilateral lenders, with over USD\$180 billion in loan committed to African states between 2000–2024 to fund infrastructure projects. China has the potential of coercing African states through its soft power diplomacy in order to frustrate Taiwan-Somaliland relations. It is therefore, important for Taiwan and Somaliland to have well defined short-term and long-term goals at different stages of the relations.

Taiwan-Somaliland relations is significant to Africa and the rest of the world because it demonstrates how de facto states can establish safer diplomatic relations that is void of patron-client dynamics. Importantly, Taiwan-Somaliland relations show that irrespective of limitations confronting de facto states, their level of resilience can enable them to achieve democracy and the level of prosperity they want. Taiwan-Somaliland relations continue to defy the notion of international isolation confronting de facto states. The relations provide Taiwan a strategic opportunity to exert its influence in the Horn of Africa and possibly to other regions of the continent. While offering Somaliland several development opportunities.

Citizens of African countries with/without diplomatic relations with Taiwan have been benefitting from Taiwan's benevolence through specialized technical assistance in agriculture, healthcare, and technology, and several scholarships in education and cultural exchanges. The benefits are often at the micro level, except for countries such as Eswatini and Somaliland with official diplomatic relations with Taiwan. It is evident that when African countries enter diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the benefits would shift to the macro level.

More importantly, Taiwan's position in the global supply chain of semiconductors and chips manufacturing offer African countries transformational benefits that are key to today's digital age. Therefore, even though the political future of Taiwan and Somaliland is opposed by China and Somalia. It is certain the invasion of Taiwan would have much more implication on the global economy than that of Somaliland. Partly because the invasion of Taiwan may likely lead to a proxy war and the catastrophe thereof. This is less likely to be the scenario of Somaliland because Somalia is a failed state.

It is worth mentioning that the question of Taiwan-Somaliland relations should be approached in an objective manner based on Taiwan's indispensability in the global economy and its relations with powerful allies like the United States. Taiwan has risen to champion the global supply chain of semiconductors and chips. The international community must leverage on such vital contribution to push for the political independence of Taiwan and Somaliland. As any attempt to invade these countries would have severe unintended consequences that could see the obliteration of human achievements.

8. Recommendations

Taiwan-Somaliland relations should focus more on pragmatic, interest-based cooperation to heighten shared democratic values, economic development, and security. Both countries should slightly move towards 'soft' offensive diplomacy that focus on human development and communitarianism (community relations) in African states that does not have diplomatic relations with the de facto states. Communitarianism can enable Taiwan and Somaliland to establish trade and logistics corridor from the Horn of Africa to other parts of the continent. In all they do, long term sustainability should be at the center of all engagements.

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