

Research article

Navigating chaos: IGAD's efforts Amidst Somalia's Governance crisis

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Horn of Africa
IGAD
Somalia
Peace and security
Realism theory
Regional cooperation

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how effectively Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has addressed the crisis in Somalia since 1991, using realism theory as its analytical framework. It employs a qualitative case study approach to delve into IGAD's interventions and their implications, conducting an in-depth analysis of IGAD's official documents, resolutions, and crisis-related reports concerning Somalia. By applying realism theory, the study scrutinizes IGAD's actions and motivations from a perspective centered on power politics, highlighting the significance of state interests and regional stability. It suggests that IGAD member states may resist to cooperate when they perceive IGAD's engagement in Somalia is regarded as a threat to their security interests. Despite IGAD's numerous peace initiatives, achieving sustainable peace in Somalia remains elusive. The paper asserts that while IGAD has made substantial efforts to resolve the Somalia conflict, its effectiveness has been constrained by the complexity of the conflict, external influences, and divergent interests among member states. To enhance IGAD's effectiveness, the study recommends various actions, including promoting regional economic integration, mobilizing external resources, improving transparency and accountability, fostering regional identity and solidarity, and maintaining a balanced power dynamic to prevent dominance by any single entity. Applying these measures could significantly improve IGAD's capacity to support peace and stability in Somalia and the entire East Africa region.

1. Introduction

East Africa, more precisely the Horn of Africa where Somalia is located, is one of the most unstable and conflict-prone areas in Africa. On the other hand, the area is highly significant and well-known for being situated where the main maritime lanes run from east to west and vice versa. Its proximity to the Middle East is considered a strategic location that may attract terrorist organizations and powerful nations. After the Cold War ended, this aided in the emergence of anarchy and political instability in Somalia as well as the surrounding area [1,2].

The Republic of Somalia gained its independence in the year 1960 [3]. Its population is homogeneous; they all speak Somali as their first language, practice only Islam, and have similar cultural beliefs. Nevertheless, the existence of homogeneity has never succeeded in preventing the outbreak of civil conflict and the subsequent human affliction, nor has it ended the civil war in present day Somalia [4].

Following its independence, Somalia has faced challenges from the autocratic and dictatorial regime of Mohammed Siad Barre. A military coup that ended hopes of establishing a post-colonial democratic state brought him to power in 1969. He ushered in socialism,

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37941>

Received 17 February 2024; Received in revised form 1 September 2024; Accepted 13 September 2024

Available online 14 September 2024

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which eventually gave way to a dictatorship and the fall of Somalia in 1991 [5].

For over two decades, Somalia has lacked a functioning government. While the northern regions of the country have witnessed moderate stability, the southern region of the country, including the capital Mogadishu, has been plagued by ongoing inter-clan violence driven by warlords and radical Islamic groups. This instability is rooted in power struggles and efforts to establish a caliphate [6,7].

Since 1991, the colonial legacy, outside involvement, clannism (inter- and intra-tribal warfare), poverty, terrorism, piracy, a lack of democratic institutions, and the escalation of violent oppositions have been identified as the main reasons for state dissolution. However, the main challenges facing different peace initiatives are found inside Somalia. The dispute has made the problems of property rights, resource distribution, and power-sharing more difficult. Additionally, it strengthened the already-existing clan separation, which political elites have always used to further their vested interests to the detriment of the larger national agenda [1,7,8].

A sub-regional institution, either unilaterally or in collaboration with others, has been actively involved in resolving the region's ongoing problems. To tackle the enduring issues within the area, a sub-regional organization has been involved. One prominent organization, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), was founded in 1986, incorporated nations such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, and Somalia [9]. Its aim was to address the issues of famine and drought that were severely devastating the region.

[8] states that the region and the continent continue to be gravely concerned about the instability that persists in Somalia. The people of nearby IGAD member nations are impacted by the deaths of scores of civilians, the harboring of terrorists, and the smuggling of weapons. Given that all IGAD member states are affected by Somalia in various ways, IGAD has assumed a leading role in efforts to end the protracted crisis that has lasted for decades [8,10].

Evolutionarily, IGAD as the youngest sub-regional organization eventually evolved into its current form in 1996 with a much broader mandate and ambition of addressing the regional peace and security challenges. It was restructured in 1996 to broaden its role and address new challenges within its scope. Since then, IGAD has organized several peace initiatives in Somalia [11,12].

The only sub-regional body tasked with ending the crisis in Somalia is IGAD. It has been actively involved for nearly thirty years in several peace-making projects aimed at resolving Somalia's ongoing problem. The IGAD member states committed time, resources, and effort to addressing the crisis. Under Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Somalia Mission (IGASOM), member governments have also dispatched soldiers to Somalia. Certain surrounding nations, such as Ethiopia, dispatched their military on their own to combat terrorism [10,13]. But things are spiraling out of hand in Somalia, where the situation has grown increasingly complex. As a result, I must pose the study question, "Why hasn't IGAD been successful in bringing about peace in Somalia?"

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Diverse theories of international relations provide several angles from which to examine how international and regional institutions function when it comes to resolving security concerns in particular domains. Applying International Relation theories to explain IGAD's behavior regarding the Somalia issue are essentially feasible. Different international relations dynamics and elements are highlighted by each theory. The power, interests, and level of collaboration among IGAD member states in handling the crises in Somalia will be explained in this paper using realism theory [14,15].

While there is a growing body of literature investigating IGAD's role using theories such as liberalism and functionalism [16–22], there is a scarcity of sources that discuss regional organizations such as IGAD from a realist point of view. Their assumption is that member states would cooperate and work together regardless of self-interest.

In this piece of paper, I would rather prefer to assess the IGAD's stance realistically to properly comprehend power nuances, degree of collaboration, and interests among the member nations. I was able to ascertain each state's commitment to implementing the objectives and strategies of IGAD in Somalia by looking at how seriously they took their pursuit of national security and sovereignty. This represents a literature gap that I have identified and sought to address, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

Realism is a framework in global politics that highlights the importance of power, sovereign interests and security needs that determine states' behavior. In the context of analyzing IGAD and its involvement in Somalia, several key concepts of realism are particularly pertinent [23,24].

Realists can contend that member nations of IGAD are motivated by their own national interests in the context of IGAD's involvement in Somalia [25]. Concerns over safeguarding economic interests, stopping the development of extremism, and maintaining regional stability may fall under this category [26]. Realists could see the Horn of Africa's geopolitical terrain as a means for regional countries to keep control and exert influence through their membership in IGAD [27].

1.2. Essential Ideas of realism

From the top of anything, realism places greater emphasis on state sovereignty. In the global arena, countries are the leading participants, frequently focus on advancing their own interests [24]. The reason for engaging in Somalia through IGAD from a realist's perspective is to maintain its interests and protect its sovereignty. Moreover, every action in IGAD is evaluated based on the benefits it can generate for their national interests and survival. Therefore, member states are ready to cooperate with IGAD's mission so long as it can deter the possible spillover effect of the Somalia crisis by fighting terrorism and containing the scope of the war. Some member states remain active in IGAD because they realize that if it is left unaddressed, it might affect their security and the region too [28].

Realists argue that states face a security conundrum whereby, in the process of pursuing their security, a state may inadvertently provoke insecurity in other states. For example, Ethiopia and Eritrea have such a tense relationship that each nation backs various rebel

organizations to weaken the other. Such a security dilemma is seen visibly in Somalia, where each has its own armed groups that finance armies to undermine the interests of its rivals [29,30].

Ensuring a balance of power is vital to avoid the emergence of dominance by any individual state or coalition of states, whether they are within or outside the system. This balance is crucial for preventing any one party from gaining excessive control or influence, thereby preserving stability and fairness within the international arena. This is the other fundamental component of the realist perspective. The involvement of IGAD in Somalia might be seen as an effort by regional powers to keep undesired individuals from assuming a dominant position or creating a power vacuum that would tip the scales of power. Ethiopia is very concerned about this and is doing everything in its power to prevent Egypt from playing a part in Somalia [31]. There will undoubtedly be a shift in the region's overall power dynamics and power balance if Ethiopia permits it [28].

To sum up, realists acknowledge that countries may collaborate, but they typically regard any cooperation as ephemeral and driven by self-interest. IGAD's joint efforts in Somalia could be interpreted as a practical reaction to a common issue rather than a sign of long-lasting collaboration motivated by shared ideals. Hence, I would like to know why states refuse to work together and will discuss this in detail in the next section.

1.3. Why is there less state cooperation?

As stated above, in international relations, realism postulates that governments prioritize their survival and national security and behave in their own self-interest. Realists contend that when states national interests' conflict with the objectives of the IGAD in Somalia, they are more likely to be less cooperative in the context of the IGAD and Somalia (See Fig. 1 below).

According to realism, member states may be less willing to cooperate with IGAD in Somalia if: 1. There is a conflict of national interests; if a state's national interests are at odds with the actions or policies that IGAD proposes in Somalia, that state may be less willing to cooperate. For instance, Eritrea left IGAD in 2007 after Ethiopian forces were sent to Somalia to combat the United Islamic Court (UIC), an organization Eritrea backed. At first, Eritrea opposed it unilaterally and made claims to others, but the other members of IGAD said nothing against Ethiopia. Ultimately, Eritrea leaves IGAD because Ethiopia's activities have affected its national interests [32,33].

2. Security concerns: a state may resist or cooperate less if it believes that IGAD's engagement in Somalia poses a threat to its security. Realism places a high value on security. Certain member states express concern that engaging in Somalia through IGAD may expose them to terrorist attacks on their land, ships, and citizens. Ultimately, realism holds that states are logical actors capable of weighing the pros and cons of their decisions. A state may be less likely to cooperate with IGAD in Somalia if it believes that the costs outweigh the advantages, and the opposite is also true [33,34].

Finally, based on the theoretical framework discussed above into account, I posit the proposition that, 'member states of IGAD might exhibit reduced cooperation in the Somalia peace process when influenced by power dynamics such as national interests and security concerns.'

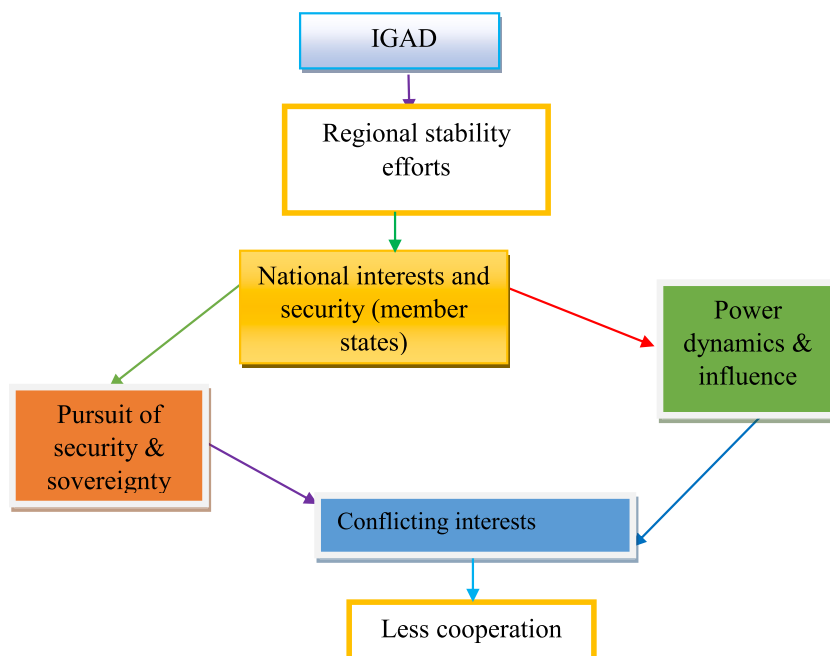


Fig. 1. Conflicting interests' result from the 'Pursuit of security and sovereignty' and 'Power dynamics and influence'.

1.4. The dynamics of inter-state relations among IGAD member states

As noted earlier, IGAD as a regional organization originally focused on alleviating poverty, promoting economic cooperation, and ensuring stability and security in the region. Recently, however, new issues such as the Nile River water management have become a central concern due to the conflicting interests of Ethiopia and Egypt regarding this trans-boundary river [33]. Although Egypt is not a member of IGAD, it has been actively engaging with the organization due to its strategic and economic interests in the region. Consequently, the inter-state relations among IGAD member states, along with Egypt's involvement, exhibit a blend of cooperation and conflict [11]. Fig. 2 below illustrates a detailed representation of the interactions between member states and non-member states, particularly Egypt, within the IGAD framework, highlighting their diverse interests.

A notable case is the persistent tension of Ethiopia and Egypt concerning the Nile River. Egypt's dependence on Nile waters is significant, while Ethiopia constructing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has sparked concerns in Cairo about possible decreases in water flow. Ethiopia's actions also impact other Nile Basin countries, such as Sudan, influencing regional diplomacy. Hence, Egypt utilizes IGAD as a platform for water-sharing dialogue, leveraging it to diplomatically persuade other member states to pressure Ethiopia to halt its unilateral dam construction. IGAD's role in facilitating discussions and negotiations on water management is considered essential for resolving these conflicts.

In terms of security and counterterrorism, Kenya through IGAD play an active role in peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts in Somalia, addressing threats from Al-Shabaab. This involvement aligns with IGAD's security objectives and contributes to regional stability. Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya collaborate on counterterrorism efforts due to shared security threats posed by extremist groups and instability in neighboring states, prompting collective action within IGAD.

Moreover, Egypt engages diplomatically with IGAD member states like Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, and South Sudan to influence discussions on Nile water management and regional security. These relationships can be seen as 'strategic alliances,' shaped by Egypt's interests in managing water rights and addressing regional security issues [53].

In contrast, Eritrea's relation with Ethiopia has been marked by ongoing conflict and rivalry, which has influenced regional stability and IGAD's peace initiatives. For instance, Eritrea has been accused of backing militant groups in Somalia to counter Ethiopia's influence, thereby affecting regional dynamics. Additionally, Egypt and Eritrea share a common stance against Ethiopia, with their alliance involving strategies such as offering safe havens for rebel groups that seek to overthrow the Ethiopian government and supporting other extremist factions that threaten Ethiopia's security [46,59,60].

Despite these divergent interests, IGAD member states share a common focus on addressing terrorism, regional instability, and natural disasters. The organization's role in uniting members around these shared concerns is crucial for advancing regional progress.

1.5. Research approach and data sources

Examining IGAD's role in the Somalia crisis deserves a qualitative case study approach, which offers a nuanced exploration of the complex and multifaceted nature of IGAD's interventions and its impacts. This method facilitates a thorough examination of IGAD's policies, strategies, and actions in response to the Somalia crisis. Utilizing a qualitative approach is crucial in this context for several reasons, particularly in analyzing the behaviors of organizations like IGAD and the complex dynamics of interactions among member states addressing the Somalia issue. Such an approach enables a deep, contextual understanding of the motivations, beliefs, and

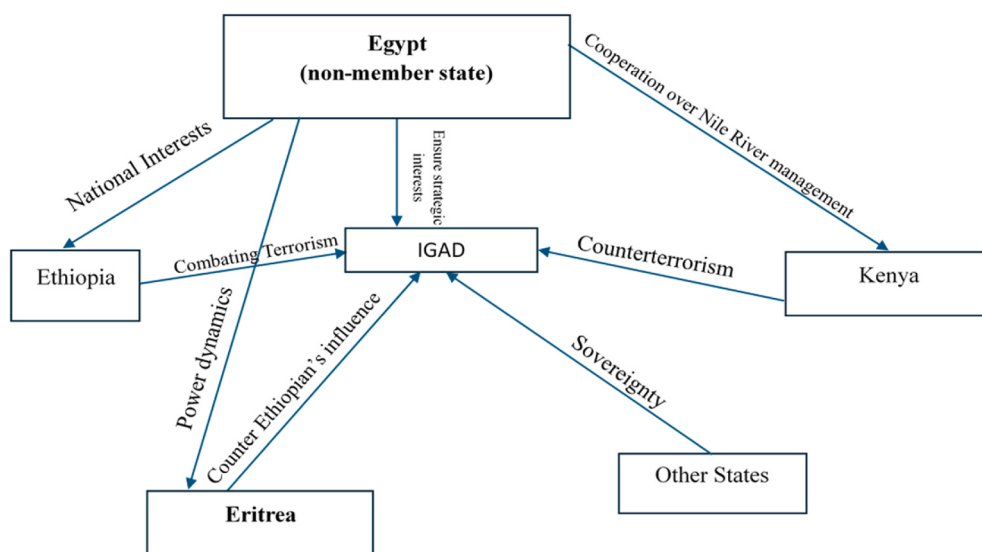


Fig. 2. The inter-state relations among IGAD members.
Source: Author, 2024.

perceptions of actors within IGAD involved in Somalia, essential for interpreting the nuanced behaviors of IGAD member states, their strategic interests, and the underlying power dynamics. Therefore, qualitative methods are instrumental in capturing human and state behaviors shaped by historical contexts, cultural influences, and political ideologies, aspects that quantitative data alone cannot fully capture. Consequently, qualitative methods are well-suited for conducting comprehensive case studies that delve into IGAD's initiatives, diplomatic negotiations, member states' actions, peace-building efforts, and the challenges encountered in resolving the Somalia conflict [35].

Moreover, it also helps to know the social, political and economic contexts where IGAD functions by utilizing multiple data sources such as official documents, reports, conference outcomes, and IGAD's policy orientations. Moreover, this approach helps in understanding context-specific issues and the historical background of IGAD's involvement in Somalia and its evolution over time. To do so, secondary data sources and official data of IGAD's and its member states were deeply consulted in order to gather the relevant information used for the analyses. Moreover, an extensive and thorough review was carried out, examining numerous books, journal articles, and news sources that explore the interactions among the three principal actors—Somalia, IGAD, and its member countries—in managing the crisis. In doing so, the researcher ensured the reliability and authenticity of the secondary data sources used in this research by selecting scholarly articles published in high-impact journals that undergo rigorous peer-review processes. These sources uphold high standards of accuracy and reliability. Additionally, reports from reputable international organizations and official documents from IGAD and related bodies, known for their authority in international relations, were also selected.

1.6. Data analysis

As previously mentioned, this study employs realism theory as a framework for analyzing the effectiveness of IGAD in addressing the Somalia crisis. Given its emphasis on state interests and regional stability, applying realism theory helps analyze IGAD's actions and motivations from a power-politics perspective. An in-depth document analysis was conducted, a thorough review of IGAD's official documents, resolutions, and reports related to Somalia crises were examined in order to scrutinize the patterns, effectiveness, and challenges of IGAD.

1.7. Scope of the study

The study conducts a comprehensive analysis of IGAD's effectiveness in addressing Somalia crisis through the perspective of realism theory. In doing so, the temporal scope of the study encompasses the collapse of the national government in 1991 to the present day. Throughout these long years, IGAD has organized numerous peace initiatives and conferences at various times and locations, involving both member and non-member states and other stakeholders. The study explores all initiatives and conferences organized by IGAD, but it does not encompass the landscape of other regional and international peace-building efforts.

1.8. Findings

1.8.1. Somalia crises & peace initiative efforts

Conflict in Somalia has its origins and reasons dating back to the colonial era of the early 20th century. During this period, Somalia has partitioned along the lines of the three colonial powers- Britain, Italy, and France. Each colonizer pursued a policy of isolationism between states, which posed a difficulty for Somalia's national unity and integration after gaining independence.

The civil war in Somalia was also fueled by the division among its clans, even though they share the same language and religion. These clans engage in intense competition for power and resources, with each clan further divided into sub-clans that engage in open competition. The loyalty of clan members lies more with their clan than with their country. These divisions even influence land settlements and access to natural resources, as each clan interprets their possession differently. The leader is delegitimized by each clan if they come from a different clan, and support is only given to those from their own clan. This situation led to the disintegration of Somalia and resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis, making it impossible to establish a central government capable of maintaining territorial integrity [32,36]. The details of this will be discussed below.

The persistent conflict in Somalia has led to the deaths of nearly a million civilians, a profound economic collapse marked by high unemployment and inflation, the devastation of over 95 % of urban areas, and a significant decline in critical services like healthcare and education. Moreover, since 1991, the country has fragmented, leading to the emergence of Somaliland and Puntland as de facto independent states, despite lacking official recognition from the United Nations [37,38].

The 2008 UNHCR report indicates that the civil war in Somalia has resulted in unprecedented repercussions. These consequences extend beyond the borders of Somalia and have impacted the region and global order as well. For instance, a significant number of refugees were displaced to neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya. Additionally, the proliferation of terrorism and piracy in the Indian Ocean and the Babel-el Mandeb has disrupted international shipping. This disruption has posed a substantial regional and international security threat, prompting the involvement of various stakeholders [39].

There have been numerous efforts to bring together the conflicting factions in Somalia and find a resolution [40]. Countries such as Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, and Egypt have all been involved at the regional level in some capacity. This has led to the organization of various peace conferences, which have included representatives from different clan factions and a range of groups. IGAD has granted member states the authority to address Somalia's problems on its behalf for many years. Unfortunately, these conferences have yet to produce positive results in terms of establishing peace in Somalia. Since the collapse of Somalia, more than 15 dispute settlement initiatives have been undertaken by several nations, and by continental and global entities [33,41].

Some of the notable meetings sponsored by neighboring countries and the international community include the 1991 and 1993 conferences held in Djibouti and Addis Ababa, respectively, as well as the 1997, 2000, and 2002 conferences in Cairo, along with the Arta and Eldoret. These efforts eventually culminated with the formation of the first Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004. In 1991, Djibouti held the pioneer international effort to reconcile the crises, bringing together six organizations representing each clan. However, they failed to reach a consensus on the selection of a president, as each clan expected the president to come from their own ranks [13,42].

When the Djibouti conference was unsuccessful, the UN supported the second assembly, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in March 1993. The goal of this conference was to increase inclusiveness by inviting new clans and minority groups that had not been part of the original assembly in Djibouti. However, like its predecessor, the Addis Ababa assembly did not achieve its goals due to the fragmentation of the new groups, which further complicated the peace process [8,43].

The IGAD requested the third attempt to be held in Sodere, Ethiopia, in order to organize another conference for reconciliation. This conference was conducted from November 1996 to January 1997, with the participation of over 27 members. However, Egypt also called for a new reconciliation conference in Cairo. As a result of this conference, the interim central government of Somalia was established [44]. However, before the conference had ended, Egypt organized another reconciliation meeting in order to hinder the success of the Sodere conference. IGAD members conveyed their concerns about the Egyptian role in exacerbating the situation and later called on all the parties interested in Somalia to work together with IGAD to facilitate a smooth resolution of the crisis [8]. The Sodere Conference ultimately resulted in the creation of a provisional central government in Somalia [44,45].

Ethiopia hosted multiple conferences with the help of IGAD, bringing representatives from the world community as well as the majority of IGAD factions. The purpose of this meeting was to successfully organize the standing committee on Somalia and arrange a fact-finding mission to Somalia in 1998. According to Ref. [8], Djibouti was encouraged to take a leading role in the peace negotiations in 2000 due to Ethiopia's involvement in a two years territorial dispute with neighboring [46].

2. Discussion

2.1. The challenges IGAD faces in pursuing peace in Somalia

IGAD has encountered several obstacles in its endeavors, particularly in reestablishing peace in Somalia, despite being founded to tackle the political and economic difficulties of member governments in the region. These difficulties come from both the inside and the outside. This study assumed that there has been no improvement in peace in Somalia as a result of IGAD's engagement in the region. The inhabitants of Somalia and surrounding area remain vulnerable to the country's instability. The war in Somalia remains unresolved despite numerous peace processes organized by the IGAD [47]. After nearly thirty years, IGAD will have made numerous attempts to restore a functioning government in Somalia. However, so far, none of the IGAD peace building initiatives have been successful.

Therefore, this study explored the obstacles IGAD had when trying to promote peace in Somalia and offered suggestions for improving the country's long-term peace building procedures. In the following section, the reasons behind IGAD's lack effectiveness in achieving peace in Somalia will be examined.

First, the conflict in Somalia possesses a distinct nature. What sets Somalia apart is its modern political landscape, characterized by a series of crises that have complicated the peace process and hindered the attainment of stability. The aftermath of Somalia's complete disintegration has given rise to numerous divisions within and between clans. Consequently, issues such as representation, competition for resources, the politicization of clan identity, and power-sharing have significantly complicated the efforts of IGAD to bring about peace in the state [40].

Among others, the main challenge faced by IGAD is the absence of genuine peace partners from within Somalia, as clan loyalty has consistently obstructed all peace initiatives launched since 1991. The interplay of zero-sum clan competitions, protracted conflicts, and deepened divisions further exacerbates the arduousness of achieving reconciliation and power distribution in Somalia. Moreover, the peace endeavors that have been undertaken have been frequently disrupted by opportunistic warlords and other factions who exploit the prevailing chaos for their own gain. These groups lack a sense of national interest and repeatedly violate and disavow the various agreements they have previously endorsed [8,23,40].

Secondly, the absence of a specialized organ or body with the capacity to effectively implement its authority and decisions is evident. The IGAD's responsibilities are entrusted to its secretariat, which is led by an executive secretary. Every three years, the meeting of state leaders and government officials selects an executive secretary to lead the secretariat [8]. However, the executive secretary lacks a clearly defined mandate and sufficient power to execute the decisions made [48].

Thirdly, the insufficiency of internal sources of income is a prominent issue faced by the secretary of IGAD, resulting in inadequate financial resources to support the peace process. External donors often serve as the primary providers of funds, with a significant portion originating from Egypt and Gulf countries. Although these countries are not members of IGAD, their vested interests exert influence over the ownership of the process, thereby burdening IGAD. Consequently, the control of resources holds considerable sway over the peace process activities of IGAD, significantly impacting its autonomy to propose and implement pragmatic solutions for Somalia's challenges [49].

Fourthly, terrorism emerges as a formidable concern within Somalia, primarily manifested through the presence of major terrorist groups, Al Shabab. It has resulted in IGAD staffs being targeted, leading them to grave risks of abduction and fatality. Faced with this perilous reality, numerous experts employed by IGAD have been compelled to tender their resignations [50].

In addition, inadequate support from the international community, coupled with inadequate funding or a high reliance on foreign

financial sources, serves to render the IGAD operation less effective and ultimately undermines its autonomy. Although member states of IGAD contribute their time, resources, and troops, their contributions are insufficient to meet the demands at hand. The effectiveness of IGAD is heavily contingent upon the diplomatic and financial support provided by Western powers, who, despite their reluctance to empower the TFG, play a crucial role in guiding the decision-making process related to Somalia crisis [41,49].

Moreover, the competing interests of member states to establish dominance in the region and the influence of external actors are significant factors to consider. Within the member countries of IGAD, there are divergent interests regarding the type of government that Somalia should have. At times, each state even supports factional groups that share the same objective. Realist scholarship suggests that states aim to maximize their power and influence within the global system. Ethiopia, being a regional power, views its involvement in IGAD's efforts in Somalia as a means to assert its influence in the region. By engaging in the settlement of conflicts in neighboring countries, Ethiopia can enhance its regional standing and reinforce its position as a major player in the horn. However, absence of peaceful relations within member countries of IGAD has hindered its effectiveness [29,33].

For example, the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia since 1998 has been marked by confrontation, which later escalated into open warfare and engagement in a sponsored war in Somalia and other countries as well. Although Ethiopia-Eritrea war was resolved in 2000 through international arbitration rather than IGAD's regional organization, Ethiopia refuses to accept the arbitrator's decision. Consequently, a situation of no peace no war has persisted. Both governments strive for hegemony in the region, and this struggle extends beyond their common boundary and encompasses Somalia [33,46].

As noted by Ref. [51], the struggle for dominance between Eritrea and Ethiopia has been a prominent aspect of IGAD's overall operation. Eritrea has been involved in providing a free zone and arming Ethiopian rebel groups and Somali Islamist groups. Conversely, Ethiopia has obtained support from both Kenya and the United States, as they all recognize the Islamists as a threat to their national interests. Ethiopia later deployed its troops to Somalia, while Eritrea refused to do so, setting it apart from other member states. Consequently, Eritrea withdrew from IGAD in 2007 when all member countries declined to condemn Ethiopia's deployment of troops to fight al-Shabab [46].

From the realist point of view, states are less cooperative and hesitant to engage with an organization when they perceive a clash of national interests. If the actions or policies proposed by IGAD in Somalia contradict the national interests of a particular state in the region, that state may be less inclined to cooperate. Eritrea's withdrawal from IGAD following Ethiopia's deployment of troops in Somalia to combat the United Islamic Court (UIC), a faction group supported by Eritrea, was perceived as a threat to Eritrea's interests in the region. Furthermore, Eritrea also had ongoing boundary disputes with Sudan and Djibouti, both of whom are members of IGAD. These strained relations and the competition for dominance in the region have impeded IGAD's efforts to achieve its intended objectives [11,46].

Kenya has committed significant resources to containing the growing trend of irredentists, terrorism, and Islamic extremism because the two countries share a long border. Kenya is extremely concerned about the situation in Somalia. Because of the threat posed by a significant influx of illegal weapons and refugees, Somalia's instability clearly affects Kenya's state and citizenry's security. Thus, Kenya's interest in Somalia would primarily revolve around a peaceful and stable Somalia [51]. Ethiopia is also concerned about Somalia, which asserts historical claims to Ethiopia's Ogaden region as its ancestral region by establishing a powerful, fundamentalist Islamic state. Hence, Ethiopia consistently meddles in domestic Somali politics, favoring one party over another and arming the transitional government to thwart the spread of Islamic control in the area [50].

Externally, Egypt has had the most impact over regional policy, particularly in Somalia, despite not being a member of IGAD and being a part of Africa. Its main goal is to seize control of the higher riparian nations along the Blue Nile River, which accounts for 86 % of the river (Ethiopia), by inciting internal unrest and sabotaging interstate relations between the riparian states. Because of internal conflict in Ethiopia, the upper basin countries have been mostly underdeveloped for the past fifty years, giving Egypt a monopoly over the advantages of the Nile [33,52,53].

Egypt therefore does not want Ethiopians to have unrestricted access to Nile water and peaceful relations with Somalia at any cost. Because Egypt believes that peace in Somalia will have its own positive trickledown effect on Ethiopia. Egypt therefore opposes a strong transitional administration in Somalia and backs factions like the Islamic Court Council (ICC), which has a strategy hostile to Ethiopia [54].

The other reason for the ineffectiveness of IGAD is polarized inter-clan division. Each division of the clan is manipulated by the politicians to enrich their selfish interests at the expense of broader national interests. There are sharp competing interests among the clan over power, resources, land, and property disputes. These groups of elites have benefited more from the persistent instabilities. Among the six clan groups, the rivalry between Hawiye and Darod, the two biggest clans, regarding the possession of the presidency has been very intense [40,48].

In the majority of Somalia, owning a gun is not merely commonplace but is revered as a symbol of honor and prestige. Access to firearms, predominantly sourced from the Middle East's Arab world, has profoundly influenced Somali culture to the extent that prospects for future disarmament appear bleak. This proliferation of arms exacerbates challenges to achieving peace in Somalia. Subsequent to the end of Barre's administration in 1991, the rise of warlordism intensified, plunging the nation into anarchy. Faction leaders engaged in brutal conflicts, employing guerrilla tactics to seize strategic urban, harbor, and airport locations, perpetuating instability and thereby hindering peace efforts [55,56].

Most warlords have neither an ideology nor a political agenda; rather, they are motivated by the pursuit of money and war booty through the exploitation of confiscated properties, as well as arms and drug trafficking. It has been seen as a successful business and a cheap source of income and employment. While doing this, the warlords' armed militias are responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people. This situation has continued to complicate and undermine the efforts of IGAD to transform the country towards stability through the establishment of an effective national government [49,56].

Member state competition and interstate conflict: The IGAD member states wage both covert and overt hostilities against one another. Boundary disputes, irredentism, and rivalry for regional hegemony are the main causes of hostilities. They also armed rebel groups and offered them free zones, meddling in other people's internal matters. The antagonistic relationships among most governments have made it challenging for them to cooperate, further complicating efforts to stabilize Somalia's turmoil [33,46,57]. Table 1 below illustrates the specific events that occurred among the states following Somalia's independence.

The other critical factor impeding peace in Somalia is the persistent rivalry among IGAD member states, which often clash over political matters. Hence, arriving at a unified stance on Somalia's issue has become increasingly challenging. For instance, in 1998, Ethiopia and Eritrea engaged in an escalating proxy war in Somalia by arming different groups within the country [58]. Contradictory opinions about the peace process in Somalia were also shown by Ethiopia and Djibouti. As a result, the domestic environment made it extremely hard for IGAD to address concerns of regional security and operate effectively [8].

The last reason is inadequate and inappropriate commitment of international communities on the IGAD's efforts. The global societies have shown minimal concern in the peace process managed by IGAD in Somalia, even though breakup of Somalia and its subsequent exposure to international terrorism drew the attention of western powers to maintain their interest in the region. For example, the US and the EU failed to acknowledge transitional national government that emerged from the Arta peace process in Djibouti [41,43].

They were less involved diplomatically in Eldoret peace process. Moreover, the UN continued to be represented by a low-key staff member. The UN's participation became merely symbolic, consisting of monitoring the process, due to this and the Security Council's lack of interest. One indication of the lack of foreign support for the IGAD peace initiative was the significant debt incurred during the Eldoret conference, which clearly exemplified this deficiency [8,48].

2.2. Limitation of the study

Despite the researcher's efforts to mitigate potential constraints affecting the study's quality, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, access to reliable and comprehensive data from Somalia, IGAD, and its member states is severely restricted due to political instability and security concerns. There are also issues with data codification, as not all events organized by IGAD are well-documented, and accessible to the researchers. Even some of the existing data are inconsistent and incoherent, which could impact the accuracy and relevance of the findings.

Furthermore, the political, economic, and social dynamics within IGAD and Somalia are highly complex and multifaceted, making it challenging to capture all relevant factors, processes, and interactions in a single study. The role and power of external actors, such as international organizations and foreign governments, are significant in the Horn of Africa and Somalia, and their impact might not be fully addressed within the scope of this study. Therefore, future research will examine the challenges and opportunities posed by the involvement of external actors for IGAD as it fulfills its responsibilities in addressing regional issues.

Moreover, since this study is limited to a specific case study bounded by time and a certain geographic area, the findings and recommendations might be specific to the context of Somalia and IGAD. It may not be directly applicable to other regions or organizations without adaptation.

3. Implications, recommendation and conclusion

3.1. Implication of the study

The study offers both theoretical and policy implications for IGAD as an institution and for its member states as key stakeholders. From the theoretical point of view, this study introduces new insights and nuances to the existing realism theory in international relations, particularly in the context of regional organizations like IGAD and their role in conflict resolution. While realism theory traditionally emphasizes national interests, this study delves deeper into how these interests manifest within regional organizations such as IGAD. It highlights the complexities of state behavior within these organizations, where cooperation and conflict can emerge based on perceived alignments or conflicts of national interests.

Realism theory often discusses power dynamics, but this study adds a practical dimension by examining how states within IGAD, as

Table 1
Inter-state rivalries and conflicts among IGAD member states.

Year	Nature of Interstate Conflict	States involved	Major Issue or area of dispute
1960s	Unease	Kenya & Somalia	Rule over Northern District of Kenya
1964	Brief armed conflict	Ethiopia & Somalia	Control over Ogadan of Ethiopia
1977–1978	All-out conflict	Ethiopia & Somalia	Control over Ogadan of Ethiopia
1994–1998	Unease	Sudan & Eritrea	Threat of Islamic militancy
1995–1998	Unease	Sudan & Ethiopia	Sudanese involvement in the plot to kill Mubarak
1998–2000	All-out conflict	Ethiopia & Eritrea	Boundary conflict
2006–2008	Intervention	Ethiopia & Somalia	Ethiopian military intervention
2008–2009	Brief armed conflict	Eritrea & Djibouti	Territorial controversy
2009	Unease	Kenya & Uganda	Territorial dispute over Migingo Island

Source: Assembled by the author from Ref. [57].

well as external actors, strive to maintain a balance of power. This includes efforts to prevent dominance by any single state or group, which could disrupt regional stability and impede peace-building efforts.

Since Somalia is not the exclusive state in the area plagued by violence, but other neighboring countries face similar issues, this study advocates for IGAD to adopt a comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing the complex stability and conflict challenges within the Horn of Africa. It emphasizes the importance of strategic planning, coordination, and sustained commitment from all stakeholders to achieve significant progress in reinforcing peace and stability.

3.2. Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several feasible recommendations for IGAD are proposed. It is believed that implementing these recommendations will enhance IGAD's effectiveness in promoting regional stability, security, and development.

1. **Enhance Regional Economic Integration:** IGAD has to develop and implement projects aimed at boosting trade, infrastructure, and investment among IGAD member states. Facilitate cross-border trade agreements and reduce trade barriers to promote economic interdependence and decrease the likelihood of conflict, thereby improving IGAD's effectiveness in promoting regional stability.
2. **External Resource Mobilization:** Launch a campaign to address financial shortfalls and support staffing and conference activities. More importantly, IGAD needs to establish strong partnerships with international donor agencies to secure funding for IGAD's initiatives.
3. **Promote transparency, accountability, and efficiency within IGAD** to build trust among member states and stakeholders.
4. **Promote Regional Identity and Solidarity:** Encourage initiatives that build and strengthen a sense of regional identity and solidarity among the populations of IGAD member states. Support cultural exchange programs and organize regional forums to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation.
5. **Alignment with National Interests:** To foster cooperation among member states, IGAD must emphasize the importance of recognizing and aligning with the national interests of its member countries, increasing the likelihood of their positive contributions and collaboration.
6. **Balance of Power:** As the primary regional organization operating in a conflict-prone area, IGAD must maintain a balance of power among member states and external actors. This is crucial to prevent domination by any single entity, which could destabilize the region and impede peace efforts and cooperation among member states.

4. Conclusion

IGAD play a pivotal role in trying to address the persistent conflict in Somalia since the collapse of national administration in 1991. However, lasting peace and stability have remained elusive in the country. The findings suggest that while IGAD has organized numerous peace initiatives and conferences involving member and non-member states, its effectiveness has been limited by several factors. These include restricted access to reliable data, the multifaceted nature of the conflict, and the influence of foreign actors in the region. Additionally, the divergent interests and security concerns of IGAD member states, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Eritrea, have at times undermined the organization's efforts to promote regional stability and cooperation.

To enhance IGAD's effectiveness in addressing the Somalia conflict, this study recommends several key actions. Firstly, IGAD should prioritize regional economic integration by facilitating cross-border trade agreements and reducing barriers to promote economic interdependence among its member states. Secondly, IGAD needs to secure external funding and establish strong partnerships with international donor agencies to support its initiatives and address financial shortfalls. Thirdly, the organization should promote transparency, accountability, and efficiency to build trust among member states and stakeholders.

Moreover, IGAD should adopt a comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing the complex security and conflict challenges within the Horn of Africa region. This includes strategic planning, coordination, and sustained commitment from all stakeholders to achieve significant progress in promoting peace, stability, and development. In the end, despite facing significant challenges, IGAD's efforts to resolve the Somalia conflict underscore its pivotal role as a platform for regional cooperation and settlement of conflicts within the region. Addressing those limitations identified in this study and implementing the recommended actions can enhance IGAD's effectiveness in promoting lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

Funding statement

This research did not receive any specific grant from any funding agencies.

Availability of data

Data will be provided upon the request.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Alene Agegnehu Waga: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgement

I thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback, which has significantly improved the paper.

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