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Abstract:

Purpose of the Study: This study examined the influence of inter-clan politics on border security along the Kenya–Somalia border, focusing on Mandera County. It sought to determine how clan-based political competition, cross-border clan alliances, political mobilisation, and disputes over representation contribute to insecurity and undermine effective border security management and regional stability.

Methodology: The study adopted a mixed methods approach using a comparative descriptive research design. Data were collected from 95 respondents selected through stratified

random sampling from a target population of 2,000. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were used. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis.

Findings: The findings established that inter-clan politics significantly influences border security along the Kenya–Somalia border. Respondents strongly agreed that clan-based political competition escalates violent conflicts ($M = 4.30$), clan alliances weaken security cooperation ($M = 4.10$), and politicians exploit cross-border clan loyalties to fuel hostility ($M = 4.00$). Regression analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between inter-clan politics and border insecurity ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.001$), with the model explaining 55.5% of the variation in border security ($R^2 = 0.555$). Qualitative findings further revealed that political exclusion, historical grievances, and weak integration of traditional governance structures perpetuate insecurity.

Conclusion: The study concludes that inter-clan politics is a major driver of insecurity along the Kenya–Somalia border. Sustainable border security requires inclusive governance, equitable resource allocation, strengthened cross-border collaboration, and integration of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms into formal security frameworks to address structural grievances and promote lasting peace in border communities.

Keywords: *Inter-clan politics, Border security, Kenya–Somalia border, Mandera County, Conflict Theory, Cross-border security.*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Border security is a fundamental component of national sovereignty and regional stability, particularly in regions characterised by porous boundaries, weak state institutions, and complex socio-political dynamics. The Kenya–Somalia border, stretching approximately 682 kilometres, represents one of the most volatile and complex border regions in the Horn of Africa (Hallo & Odour, 2025). This borderland is not merely a geographic demarcation between two sovereign states but a living landscape of kinship networks, informal economies, and overlapping clan affiliations that transcend colonial boundaries. The Somali ethnic group, predominantly inhabiting both sides of the border, maintains strong clan-based social structures that have historically shaped political organisation, resource allocation, and conflict dynamics in the region (Ali, 2023).

The border region, particularly Mandera County, is home to several major Somali clans, including the Garre, Degodia, Murulle, and Corner tribes, each with complex cultural-political frameworks that influence governance and security (Doyo, 2022). These clans share historical, cultural, and economic ties that predate the colonial partition of the Horn of Africa. The arbitrary border demarcation during the colonial era divided homogeneous communities, creating a situation where clan loyalties often supersede national allegiance. This has profound implications for border security, as clan-based political competition frequently generates tensions that manifest as cross-border violence, resource conflicts, and challenges to state authority (Majid & Abidrahman, 2026).

The Kenya–Somalia border has been a site of persistent insecurity, characterised by inter-clan clashes, terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab, arms smuggling, and cross-border criminal activities. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), over 90 political violence events involving Al-Shabaab militants were recorded along the border area between June and early August 2023 alone (Abdullahi et al., 2025). The Mandera Triangle, where Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia converge, has experienced recurrent inter-clan conflicts, with incidents such as the December 2022 clashes between the Garre and Degodia clans resulting in 10 deaths and numerous injuries (Monica, 2023). These conflicts are not merely spontaneous outbursts of violence but are deeply rooted in political competition, resource scarcity, and historical grievances.

The porous nature of the Kenya–Somalia border exacerbates these security challenges. The border is characterised by numerous unofficial crossing points that facilitate the movement of people, goods, and weapons, making effective border control extremely difficult (Katelo, 2025). Criminal elements and extremist groups exploit these vulnerabilities to operate with relative impunity. Al-Shabaab, in particular, has capitalised on inter-clan disputes to recruit fighters,



gain local support, and establish operational bases in border communities (Katelo, 2025). As noted in a special report, Al-Shabaab militants exploit clan differences to gain the favour of clan-based militias and historically marginalised groups, enabling recruitment into their ranks (Ingiriis, 2020).

Inter-clan politics plays a pivotal role in shaping security outcomes along the border. Political elites on both sides of the border manipulate clan loyalties to consolidate power, secure electoral support, and access resources, often at the expense of broader stability (D'Agoot, 2025). During election cycles, clan-based political competition intensifies, frequently escalating into violence that transcends national borders. The devolution of governance in Kenya, while intended to bring services closer to the people, has in some instances reinforced clan-based political mobilisation, as local political offices become contested along clan lines (Abdiweli & Akoth, 2026).

The influence of inter-clan politics on border security is further complicated by the presence of clan militias and the proliferation of small arms. Weak state presence in border areas has allowed clan-based armed groups to emerge as *de facto* security providers, filling governance vacuums left by formal institutions (Terpstra, 2020). These militias, while sometimes cooperating with state security forces, also perpetuate cycles of violence through retaliatory attacks and competition for territorial control. The easy availability of small arms and light weapons, smuggled across porous borders, fuels inter-clan conflicts and undermines efforts to establish lasting peace.

Regional and international efforts to address border insecurity have focused primarily on counter-terrorism operations and state capacity building. The Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia borderland project, launched in May 2023 with support from the United Kingdom government, aims to enhance intelligence sharing, border security management, and surveillance of arms movement. Similarly, the Mandera Triangle Cross-Border Agreement, signed by Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia in October 2023, seeks to enhance peace, security, trade, and movement of people through structured dialogue and cooperation (Ahimbisibwe & Nkiko, 2025). However, these initiatives often overlook the underlying clan dynamics that drive insecurity, focusing instead on state-centric security approaches that have limited effectiveness in contexts where traditional governance structures hold significant sway.

Despite the growing recognition of inter-clan politics as a security concern, there remains limited empirical research examining its specific influence on border security along the Kenya–Somalia border. Existing studies have largely focused on terrorism, particularly Al-Shabaab activities, or on the broader impacts of Somali instability on regional security. The intersection between inter-clan politics, cross-border dynamics, and border security outcomes has received comparatively less scholarly attention. This study addresses this gap by examining how inter-



clan political competition, clan-based alliances, and political manipulation of clan identities influence security along the Kenya–Somalia border, with a specific focus on Mandera County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Border security along the Kenya–Somalia border remains a persistent challenge despite sustained efforts by national governments, regional bodies, and international partners to stabilise the region. The border is characterised by recurrent inter-clan clashes, terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab, arms smuggling, and cross-border criminal activities that threaten both national security and regional stability. In Mandera County alone, inter-clan clashes in December 2022 resulted in numerous deaths and injuries, while Al-Shabaab attacks continue to claim lives and displace communities (Wafula, 2024). The porous nature of the border, estimated at 682 kilometres with numerous unofficial crossing points, facilitates the movement of combatants, weapons, and illicit goods, compounding security challenges.

Existing literature has predominantly focused on terrorism and state capacity deficits as primary drivers of insecurity, examining Al-Shabaab's cross-border operations and counter-terrorism strategies (Tegegne & Yigzaw, 2025). However, these studies often overlook the underlying socio-political dynamics, particularly inter-clan politics, that shape security outcomes. Research on clan dynamics has largely been confined to Somalia's internal conflicts, with limited attention to how transboundary clan politics influences border security between Kenya and Somalia (Waga, 2024). While some studies have examined inter-clan conflicts in Kenya's northeastern region, they have focused on domestic dimensions such as electoral violence, neglecting the transboundary nature of clan politics where political elites manipulate shared clan identities (Thompson et al., 2025). At the policy level, security interventions have adopted state-centric approaches, including border closures and military deployments, which have had limited success as they fail to engage with traditional governance structures and address clan-based grievances (Onor, 2025). There is therefore a knowledge gap regarding how inter-clan politics specifically influences border security along the Kenya–Somalia border.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of inter-clan politics on border security along the Kenya–Somalia border.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Inter-clan politics does not significantly influence border security along the Kenya–Somalia border.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW



2.1 Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory

This study is anchored in Conflict Theory, which provides the central analytical lens for understanding how transboundary clan dynamics influence border security along the Kenya–Somalia border. Initially advanced by Karl Marx and subsequently developed by scholars such as Ralf Dahrendorf, Conflict Theory posits that competition for scarce resources and unequal power relations are central drivers of social conflict, with social structures characterised by inherent inequalities that generate tension between dominant and subordinate groups (Castilhos, 2023). Applied to the Kenya–Somalia border, the theory explains how structural inequalities in resource allocation, political representation, and access to state services fuel inter-clan rivalries—particularly among the Garre, Degodia, and Murulle—that manifest as insecurity, with political elites manipulating clan loyalties to consolidate power during election cycles, thereby exacerbating hostility that transcends national borders (Ali & Kiruthu, 2026). Historical injustices, dating back to colonial boundary demarcations that arbitrarily divided Somali territories and post-independence policies that marginalised border communities, entrenched systemic inequalities that continue to generate resentment, making clan rivalry not merely a localised phenomenon but a structural feature of governance in borderland regions (Meehan & Dan, 2022). By explaining how power struggles and resource competition among clans’ influence security, Conflict Theory captures the study’s core argument that insecurity along the Kenya–Somalia border is rooted not merely in terrorism or weak borders but in the entrenched clan-based socio-political and economic dynamics that shape the region.

2.2 Empirical Review

Inter-Clan Politics and Border Security along the Kenya–Somalia Border

The existing literature establishes a strong consensus that clan-based political competition undermines state authority and fuels insecurity, yet it remains predominantly confined within national borders. Studies by Crossey (2025) in Mogadishu, Ali and Mohamed (2021) in Yemen, and Zona (2020) in South Sudan all demonstrate how politicised kinship networks fragment institutional legitimacy and create governance vacuums that armed groups exploit. Within Kenya, Simuziya (2024) confirm that electoral competition and political patronage mirror entrenched clan divisions, generating violence and grievances that extremist groups like Al-Shabaab leverage for recruitment. However, these domestic-focused analyses fail to capture the transboundary dimension that is critical along the Kenya–Somalia border, where clan affiliations transcend colonial boundaries and political actors on both sides manipulate shared identities to mobilise constituencies across jurisdictions. Gemechu (2024) study of Ethiopia’s Somali Region offers the closest approximation, demonstrating how inter-clan rivalries spill across administrative borders, yet it does not address the specific dynamics of the Mandera–Beled-Hawo corridor where electoral politics, cross-border kinship ties, and Al-Shabaab’s operational reach converge to produce a uniquely complex security environment.

This study addresses these critical gaps by examining how political elites on both sides of the Kenya–Somalia border exploit shared clan identities to advance their interests, with direct



implications for bilateral stability and border security. While Omar and Abdi (2022) highlighted how state exclusion fosters grievances that enable extremist recruitment, they did not explore the transboundary strategies through which such grievances are manipulated across the border—a gap this research fills by analysing how Al-Shabaab capitalises on cross-border clan tensions for operational purposes (Pfundmair et al., 2022). Unlike prior work that treats clan politics as a domestic phenomenon, this study adopts a binational lens to investigate how political competition along clan lines in Kenya's northeastern counties interacts with parallel dynamics in Somalia's southern regions, creating a security dilemma where instability in one state perpetuates insecurity in the other. By focusing on the Mandera–Beled-Hawo corridor, this research will contribute empirically to understanding how transboundary clan politics shape border security and theoretically to refining frameworks on fragile states by demonstrating that clan-based governance cannot be understood in isolation from its cross-border manifestations.

Border Security along the Kenya–Somalia Border

While regional and international initiatives such as the Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia borderland project and the Mandera Triangle Cross-Border Agreement represent important steps toward enhancing intelligence sharing and arms surveillance, their effectiveness remains fundamentally constrained by their state-centric orientation, which overlooks the pervasive influence of transboundary clan politics. As United Nations (2020) document, the porous 682-kilometre border facilitates not only the movement of combatants and illicit goods but also the exploitation of inter-clan grievances by Al-Shabaab, which has embedded itself within border communities by manipulating historical marginalisation and clan divisions—a strategy particularly evident in Mandera County where the group has reportedly gained territorial control. The failure of Kenya's 2011 border closure to curtail informal crossings underscores that hard security measures alone cannot address a problem rooted in kinship networks that transcend colonial boundaries, while the August 2025 incursion of Jubaland Forces into Mandera highlights how internal Somali political rivalries in the Gedo region routinely spill over, entangling Kenyan border communities in conflicts not of their making (Abdiweli & Akoth, 2026). These dynamics expose a critical gap in current policy frameworks, which treat border security as a bilateral state-to-state issue rather than a locally embedded phenomenon shaped by clan affiliations that unite communities on both sides of the frontier.

Addressing border insecurity effectively therefore requires moving beyond conventional state-building approaches to integrate traditional governance structures and community-led mechanisms that resonate with local realities. Abdullahi et al. (2025) notes that in stateless Somalia, clan elders have historically managed conflict and dispensed justice through customary law (xeer), demonstrating resilience where formal institutions have collapsed, while Kenya's Banisa Peace Accord exemplifies the potential of community-led peacebuilding when traditional and formal structures. However, as this study contends, such initiatives remain fragmented and insufficiently linked to the cross-border dimension, where political elites on both sides manipulate shared clan identities to mobilise constituencies and advance electoral interests, thereby deepening divisions that extremist actors exploit. The present research



addresses this gap by examining how transboundary clan politics along the Mandera–Beled-Hawo corridor directly shape bilateral stability, arguing that sustainable border security hinges not on sealing the frontier but on reconciling the competing claims of kinship, governance, and state sovereignty that define daily life in this fragile region. Without acknowledging that insecurity flows along clan lines as much as it does through physical crossings, regional cooperation frameworks will continue to treat symptoms rather than the underlying political economy of clan-based mobilisation that perpetuates violence across the Kenya–Somalia border.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a structured approach that outlines the key variables and their relationships within a study. It serves as a guide for researchers to understand how different concepts interact and influence each other. According to Crossey (2025), a conceptual framework is a visual or written product that explains the main aspects to be studied, including the key factors, variables, and the presumed relationships among them. It provides a theoretical foundation that helps in interpreting research findings and aligning them with the study's objectives. In this research, the independent variable is inter-clan politics. These factors influence the dependent variable, border security, which reflects the stability, safety, and effectiveness of border management along the Kenya–Somalia border.

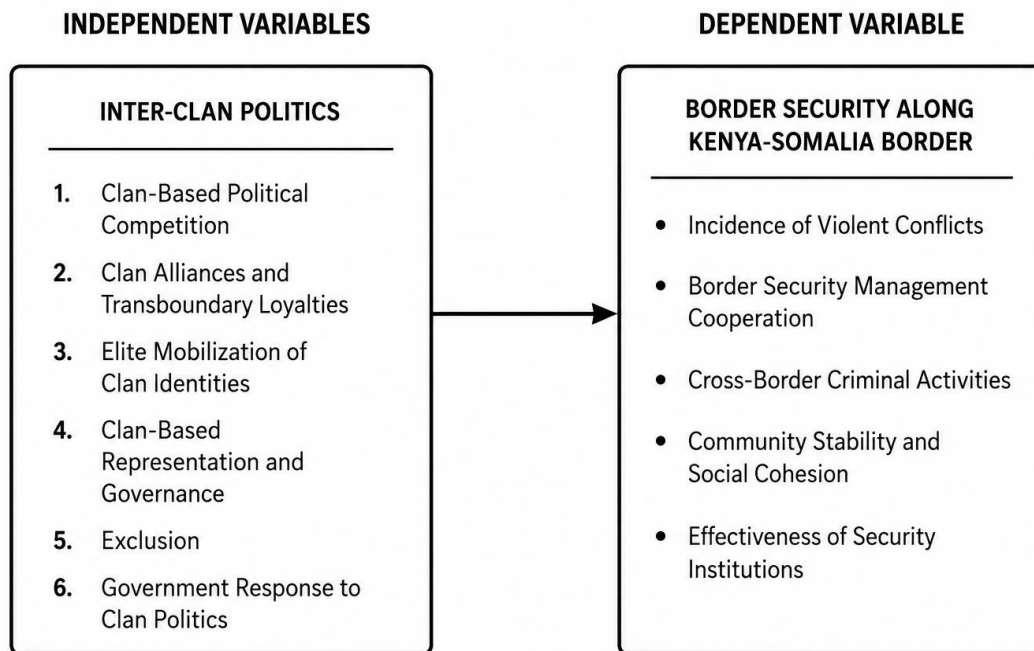


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods research approach using a comparative descriptive research design to examine the influence of inter-clan politics on border security along the Kenya–Somalia border. This design enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of how inter-clan political dynamics affected security in border communities. The mixed methods approach allowed for triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research conclusions. The target population comprised local community members, government officials, clan elders, chiefs, and civil society organisation representatives in Mandera County, Kenya, with a total population of 2,000 respondents. Mandera County was selected due to its strategic location at the tri-junction of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia, and its history of inter-clan conflicts and border security challenges. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of all stakeholder groups, while Yamane's formula was used to determine a sample size of 95 respondents. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS through descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analysed thematically using NVivo software, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and patterns. The findings were presented using tables, charts, graphs, and thematic narratives.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

Out of the 95 questionnaires distributed to the sampled respondents, 83 responses were fulfilling to the study and deemed suitable for analysis, while 12 did not meet research viability, yielding a response rate of 87 percent, which is considered satisfactory for social science research. Table 1 summarises the frequency and percentage of distributed, returned, and unreturned questionnaires. Figure 4.1 further illustrates the proportion of successful and failed responses, highlighting the 87 percent participation rate.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Total Respondents	95	100%
Successful Responses	83	87%
Failed Responses	12	13%

The response rate, with 83 responses out of 95 sample, represents approximately 87 percent, which is considered strong for empirical research. This level of participation indicates a high degree of engagement between respondents and the subject of the study, reflecting the



significance of clan dynamics and security issues in the Kenya–Somalia border region to both local communities and institutional stakeholders. The substantial response rate enhances the reliability, credibility, and generalizability of the study findings, as the data gathered are sufficiently representative of the target population's perspectives. Moreover, the high level of participation reduces the risk of non-response bias, as the views and experiences captured can reasonably be interpreted to reflect the broader community living in the border areas.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Influence of Inter-Clan Politics on Border Security along the Kenya–Somalia Border

The study assessed the extent to which inter-clan political competition influences security dynamics within the Kenya–Somalia border region. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Inter-Clan Politics and Border Security

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Clan-based political competition escalates violent conflicts	83	1.00	5.00	4.30	0.72
Clan alliances weaken cooperation in security management	83	1.00	5.00	4.10	0.81
Politicians mobilise clan loyalties across borders, fuelling hostility	83	1.00	5.00	4.00	0.77
Disputes over clan-based representation increase political unrest	83	1.00	5.00	3.90	0.84
Government actions regarding clan politics have not reduced insecurity	83	1.00	5.00	3.80	0.79

The statistics show that inter-clan politics are a main factor predisposing insecurity in the border region. There was strong agreement among respondents that clan-based political competition across the frontier intensifies violent conflicts ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.72$), suggesting that conflicts over political influence cross national boundaries and manifest as cross-border violence, resource competition, and tensions that enhance local instabilities. This finding aligns with Rios (2024), who found that clan-based political affiliations fragmented authority and weakened institutional legitimacy in Somalia, reinforcing cycles of violence. This quantitative finding was reinforced by a local administrator who observed: *"Leadership within most border areas is*



often on clan basis and political rivalry among clans occasionally results in tensions and insecurity especially during national elections." This observation highlights the temporal dimension of inter-clan political competition, with election cycles serving as particularly volatile periods when clan-based tensions escalate into violence, consistent with (D'Agoot, 2025) finding that electoral competition in Mandera County often mirrored entrenched clan divisions.

Similarly, respondents strongly agreed that inter-border clan alliances weaken cooperation in security management ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.81$), indicating that informal loyalties often undermine coordinated security missions between Kenya and Somalia. This finding is consistent with Doyo (2022) comparative study of Ethiopia's Somali Region, which revealed that inter-clan political rivalries fostered retaliatory attacks that undermined state authority and spilled into neighbouring territories. The relatively low standard deviation (0.81) suggests a high level of agreement among respondents, indicating that the perceived weakening of security cooperation due to clan alliances is a widely held view. A civil society organisation worker elaborated on this challenge: *"Although the authorities may attempt to integrate patrols, clans defend their members on the other side of the border, making any implementation of such defence feebler."* This observation highlights the transboundary nature of clan loyalties and the challenges they pose for bilateral security cooperation, where clan members on one side may protect their kin on the other side, undermining joint security operations. This finding is particularly relevant given recent tensions between Kenya and Somalia over the incursion of Jubaland Forces into Mandera County (Gemechu, 2024).

Respondents further indicated that political leaders politicise clan loyalties on both sides of the border, promoting hostility ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.77$), demonstrating that political leaders leverage clan networks to consolidate power, contributing to inter-clan conflicts particularly during election periods. This finding corroborates Hallo and Odour (2025), who demonstrated that political leaders in northern Kenya exploit clan identities to secure electoral support, thereby deepening divisions that transcend the border. A security officer elaborated on the challenges faced by formal security institutions: *"When the political elites start to play around with the clan loyalties, they set the stage in which informal militias are marshalled and the law enforcement cannot even respond in the right manner since the loyalties would be divided into two."* This underscores the challenge of maintaining professional security forces in contexts where clan loyalties penetrate state institutions, as officers may be reluctant to act against members of their own clan or may be perceived as biased by other clans.

The finding that disputes over clan-based representation contribute to increased political and social destabilisation ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.84$) emphasises the importance of structural inequalities in governance, as marginalised clans may resort to protests or confrontations to express grievances. This is consistent with Levi (2025) research, which revealed that state resource



allocation is frequently mediated by clan patronage, fostering grievances among marginalised groups. A community member expressed these frustrations: *"Where a local leadership is dominated by one clan, other clans feel excluded and this at times leads to violent confrontations."* This observation speaks to the structural inequalities that underpin inter-clan political competition, with marginalised clans resorting to violence when excluded from governance and development opportunities. Traders operating across the border further highlighted the economic dimensions: *"Clan politics influences access to markets and grazing grounds. As one clan is preferred in politics, others consider themselves excluded hence conflicts arise."* This underscores the intersection between political and economic dimensions of inter-clan competition, where control over political power translates into control over economic resources.

Lastly, respondents agreed that government actions concerning clan politics have not reduced insecurity along the border ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.79$), indicating the weakness of top-down solutions that fail to involve traditional leadership systems or address historical grievances. This finding underscores the limitations of state-centric security approaches in contexts where traditional governance structures hold significant sway. The Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia borderland project and other state-led initiatives, while important, may have limited effectiveness without addressing the underlying clan dynamics that drive insecurity (Ingiriis, 2020). The consistently low standard deviations across statements (0.72 to 0.84) indicate a high level of agreement among respondents, supporting the conclusion that inter-clan political rivalry is an important factor determining security outcomes along the border.

4.3 Inferential Statistics

4.3 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were employed to determine the predictive relationship between inter-clan politics and border security along the Kenya–Somalia border. The regression model summary is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.683 ^a	.555	.522	.59870

a. Predictors: (Constant), Inter-Clan Politics

The model summary indicates a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.683$, reflecting a moderate to strong positive relationship between inter-clan politics and border security. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.555$) indicates that inter-clan politics explains 55.5% of the variation in border security along the Kenya–Somalia border. The adjusted R^2 of 0.522 confirms that the model maintains reasonable explanatory power after accounting for the number of predictors. The standard error of estimate of 0.599 indicates that predictions made by the model are



relatively precise, though with slightly greater variability than ideal. These results suggest that inter-clan politics is a substantively important predictor of border security outcomes, consistent with the theoretical expectations of Conflict Theory.

ANOVA Results

Table 4: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	14.769	1	14.769	58.213	.000 ^b
Residual	38.564	81	.254		
Total	53.333	82			

a. Dependent Variable: Border Security

b. Predictors: (Constant), Inter-Clan Politics

The ANOVA results confirm that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 58.213$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that inter-clan politics has a significant effect on border security along the Kenya–Somalia border and that the regression model provides a statistically valid fit to the data. These results support the rejection of the null hypothesis that inter-clan politics does not significantly influence border security along the Kenya–Somalia border.

Regression Coefficients

Table 5: Beta Coefficients for Inter-Clan Politics

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.421	0.186		2.263	0.025
Inter-Clan Politics	0.365	0.068	0.152	5.771	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Border Security

The regression coefficients in Table 5 indicate that inter-clan politics is a statistically significant predictor of border insecurity ($B = 0.365$, $\beta = 0.152$, $t = 5.771$, $p = 0.000$). This means that a one-unit increase in inter-clan political competition is associated with a 0.365-unit increase in border insecurity. The statistical significance of this relationship ($p = 0.000 < 0.01$) confirms that the effect is not attributable to chance and is consistent across the sample. These findings are consistent with those of Meehan and Dan (2022), who demonstrated positive correlations between clan-based political rivalries and heightened insecurity in Kenya's border regions. Similarly, Simuziya (2024) found that cross-border clan politics significantly exacerbated resource-based conflicts in the Horn of Africa. The positive and significant beta coefficient further validates Conflict Theory's contention that competition for scarce resources and political power among clans' fuels insecurity and instability. The finding that a unit increase in inter-clan political competition yields a measurable increase in border insecurity provides a compelling evidence base for policymakers to prioritise inclusive governance and conflict resolution mechanisms along the Kenya–Somalia border.

5.0 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY



The analysis reveals that inter-clan politics is a significant determinant of border security, with strong evidence showing that clan-based political competition escalates violent conflicts ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.72$), clan alliances weaken security cooperation ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.81$), and politicians mobilise clan loyalties across borders, fuelling hostility ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.77$). The regression analysis confirms that inter-clan politics significantly influences border security outcomes ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 55.5% of the variation in border security.

Qualitative findings provide rich insights into the mechanisms through which inter-clan politics influences security, with respondents highlighting how political elites marshal informal militias during elections, how marginalised clans resort to violence when excluded from governance, and how transboundary clan loyalties undermine formal security cooperation between Kenya and Somalia. The study finds that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are often overlooked in formal frameworks, limiting their potential to contribute to peace. The findings support Conflict Theory, explaining how competition for scarce resources and unequal power relations generate conflict among clans. The study recommends inclusive governance structures, integration of traditional mechanisms into formal security frameworks, enhanced cross-border cooperation, and equitable resource allocation to address structural grievances and achieve lasting peace along the border.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that inter-clan politics is a fundamental driver of insecurity along the Kenya–Somalia border. The significant positive relationship between inter-clan politics and border insecurity demonstrates that communities experiencing higher levels of clan-based political competition face greater security challenges. The findings reveal that clan-based political competition, clan alliances, political mobilisation of clan loyalties, and disputes over clan-based representation all contribute to insecurity along the border.

While border communities demonstrate resilience and have developed indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, significant challenges remain in addressing the structural inequalities that underpin inter-clan political competition. The limited integration of traditional governance structures into formal security frameworks represents a missed opportunity for leveraging community-based approaches to peacebuilding. The study reveals that state-centric security interventions, while important, have limited effectiveness without addressing the underlying clan dynamics that drive insecurity.

The findings reveal that effective border security management must address both structural and proximate causes of insecurity. Structural causes include historical grievances, unequal resource allocation, and political exclusion of certain clans. Proximate causes include electoral violence, manipulation of clan loyalties by political elites, and the proliferation of small arms. Addressing these causes requires a comprehensive approach that integrates formal security



institutions with traditional governance structures, promotes inclusive governance, and ensures equitable resource allocation.

The study concludes that inter-clan politics is not merely a localised phenomenon but a structural feature of governance in borderland regions that has significant implications for bilateral relations between Kenya and Somalia. The transboundary nature of clan politics complicates security cooperation and requires coordinated approaches that engage stakeholders on both sides of the border. Without addressing inter-clan political dynamics, efforts to enhance border security will continue to face significant challenges.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, two crucial recommendations are proposed to address the root causes of conflict and enhance long-term stability in border regions. First, governments must strengthen inclusive governance by establishing formal frameworks that guarantee proportional clan representation in political and administrative structures, ensuring marginalised groups have a genuine voice in decision-making while transparent resource allocation processes address grievances through official channels rather than violence. Second, and equally important, authorities must address structural grievances through equitable resource allocation, investing directly in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for border communities while ensuring funding is distributed transparently based on objective criteria rather than clan patronage. This economic development will directly counter the conditions that make communities vulnerable to radicalisation and conflict, and when combined with inclusive governance, will contribute significantly to sustainable peace by building trust among clans and reducing the inequalities that fuel instability.

8.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future studies should employ longitudinal and comparative designs to examine the evolving relationship between inter-clan politics and border security across different border regions. Research should also investigate the roles of women, traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms, inclusive governance, and economic drivers of conflict to generate evidence-based strategies for strengthening sustainable border security in Kenya.

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