

Chinese Humanitarian Diplomacy and Capacity-Building Programs in Facilitating State Reconstruction in Post-Conflict Somalia

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of Chinese capacity-building programs in enhancing State reconstruction in post conflict Somalia. This study adopted realism and constructivism as theoretical paradigms. Realism posited that states operate in an anarchic international system where national interests and power dynamics are paramount. Constructivism on the other hand emphasized the importance of social constructs, norms and identities that shape international interactions. This study took the form of an exploratory research design. The tools of data collection included questionnaires and structured interview guides. This study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify Chinese diplomats and officials involved in Somalia-related affairs, Somali government officials and policymakers, Representatives from Chinese humanitarian organizations and Somali nationals. A total of 384 respondents were identified for field interviews. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. This study established that Chinese humanitarian aid had positive impacts on the socio-economic development of Somalia. It was also observed that Chinese capacity-building programs were effective in enhancing Somalia's state reconstruction.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

China's foreign policy principles and historical context have shaped its methods for state restoration and humanitarian diplomacy. Unlike traditional Western donors, China adopts a development-focused approach to humanitarian assistance, highlighting the link between development, peace, and security (Hirono, 2018). This approach aligns with China's inclination towards bilateral aid channels and its policy of non-interference in foreign affairs. China often opts to bypass multilateral coordination bodies, choosing instead to provide assistance directly to the governments of recipient nations (Venturi, 2022). A significant portion of Chinese aid is directed towards infrastructure projects, reflecting China's broader agenda and economic development goals (Gong, 2024). Moreover, China adheres to a non-interference policy regarding the internal matters of recipient countries, which can attract criticism, particularly when aid is extended to contentious regimes (Marks, 2023). Additionally, China frequently integrates immediate relief efforts with long-term development initiatives, striving to tackle both urgent needs and the underlying causes of crises (China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA, 2023).

The United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany have established extensive histories of participating in humanitarian diplomacy and state reconstruction initiatives. Although their methods differ in detail, they generally exhibit several shared characteristics. Multilateral coordination is a common practice, as Western powers often collaborate through multilateral institutions and coordinate efforts with other donors and non-governmental organizations (Weiss, 2016). Typically, Western aid incorporates elements aimed at bolstering democratic institutions and fostering good governance (UNDP, 2024). Additionally, such aid is frequently contingent upon conditions related to human rights, democratic reforms, and economic policies (Fazzini, 2023). In certain instances, Western nations have merged military interventions with humanitarian and reconstruction initiatives (Qin, 2020).

Given this context, it is evident that significant differences exist between Chinese and Western methodologies regarding state restoration and humanitarian diplomacy. In accordance with the principle of non-interference, Chinese assistance usually lacks political or economic conditions, in contrast to Western aid, which may impose

such stipulations (Hirono, 2018). Furthermore, Chinese aid tends to emphasize infrastructure and economic development, while Western efforts are more inclined towards governance and institution-building (Marks, 2023). Moreover, China prefers bilateral agreements, whereas Western countries generally function within established international frameworks (Venturi, 2022). Lastly, China's approach often integrates humanitarian efforts with long-term economic goals, aligning with broader economic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (Gong, 2024). Consequently, this study examined the effectiveness of Chinese-led humanitarian diplomacy in the context of post-conflict state restoration in Somalia.

Statement of the Problem

Since the collapse of its central authority in 1991, Somalia has faced persistent instability and fragility. Despite numerous international efforts, progress in rebuilding the Somali state has been minimal, and the country continues to grapple with significant socioeconomic challenges. In recent years, China has emerged as a key player in Somalia's reconstruction, employing a humanitarian diplomacy approach that integrates economic cooperation, capacity-building initiatives, and aid (Fei, 2024). However, the effectiveness and impact of China's involvement in Somalia's state reconstruction remain largely unknown.

On a continental scale, China's engagement in Africa showcases various instances of its humanitarian diplomacy and state reconstruction strategies; for instance, China has participated in peacekeeping missions and provided humanitarian assistance. Additionally, it has invested in oil infrastructure and fostered economic development as a means of promoting stability (CIDCA, 2023). China has also supported industrialization and offered humanitarian aid across different regions of Africa, including Somalia (Qin, 2020). While there has been extensive research on China's role in Africa, there has been comparatively less academic attention on its specific contributions to the reconstruction of Somalia. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Chinese capacity-building programs in facilitating state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia.

Literature Review

In contexts characterized by fragility and post-conflict scenarios, capacity-building has emerged as a crucial tool for the reconstruction of states, often facilitated by humanitarian diplomacy. This approach recognizes that sustainable peace and development hinge on the reestablishment of governmental frameworks and capabilities (Gong, 2021). The tasks of reinstating governmental institutions, delivering vital services, and fostering economic recovery pose significant challenges for nations recently emerging from conflict. In this context, humanitarian diplomacy serves as a mechanism to engage various stakeholders in supporting capacity-building efforts, including donor countries, international organizations, and local entities (Cheng, 2022). This literature review examines the theoretical foundations, implementation strategies, and challenges associated with capacity-building as a means of state reconstruction through humanitarian diplomacy.

As noted by Hirono (2018), the essence of capacity-building in post-conflict environments lies in the understanding that strong state institutions and human capital are essential for enduring peace and development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines capacity development as 'the process through which individuals, organizations, and societies acquire, enhance, and maintain the abilities to formulate and realize their own development goals over time' (UNDP, 2024). State reconstruction encompasses the rebuilding of governance systems, the enhancement of public service delivery, and the stimulation of economic recovery.

Harrowf-Tavel (2024) notes that humanitarian diplomacy plays a crucial role in enhancing capacity-building by creating an environment that promotes both local engagement and international support initiatives. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) defines humanitarian diplomacy as 'a strategy aimed at influencing the parties involved in armed conflicts, including States, non-State actors, and civil society members,' to advance humanitarian objectives. This approach facilitates the negotiation of necessary support, resources, and access for capacity-building programs in vulnerable states. As a mechanism for state reconstruction, capacity-building encompasses various strategies and focal points. The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) identifies three critical areas essential for capacity-building in post-conflict and fragile states: addressing immediate needs, tackling the underlying political and economic drivers of conflict, and focusing on the reconstruction of financial and economic sectors (ACBF, 2024). These areas highlight the

intricate nature of capacity-building efforts in post-conflict environments.

Enhancing human capital through educational and training programs is a significant strategy. In post-conflict societies, Arthur (2024) emphasizes the importance of education and skill enhancement for individuals, noting that these initiatives are vital for rebuilding and promoting the developmental goals of these nations. This includes training for security personnel, civil servants, and other key roles in governance and public service delivery. Additionally, strengthening institutional capacity is a critical component. This involves improving coordination mechanisms, fortifying state institutions, and refining governance frameworks. The joint report by the UNDP and World Food Program (WFP) on South Sudan underscores the necessity for effective coordination—both horizontally and vertically—across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum, engaging all stakeholders from national to local levels (UNDP & WFP, 2024).

Despite its promise, the process of capacity-building through humanitarian diplomacy encounters numerous obstacles in post-conflict environments. A significant challenge is the insufficient availability of comprehensive data regarding capacity-building initiatives, especially in Africa, as noted by Hirono (2018). This deficiency in data complicates the ability to effectively assess the scale, extent, and influence of capacity-building activities on the restoration of states.

A significant concern is the insufficient understanding of local viewpoints and ownership in capacity-building efforts. Venturi (2022) highlights the necessity for further investigation into how communities in conflict-affected regions perceive and engage with capacity-building initiatives; this gap in knowledge leads to interventions that may not align with local needs and priorities, potentially diminishing the effectiveness of these initiatives. Additionally, a critical shortcoming is the lack of evaluation regarding the long-term consequences of capacity-building activities. Marks (2023) observe that most research on capacity-building through humanitarian diplomacy focuses on immediate outcomes, with scant attention given to the long-term socio-economic impacts of these interventions in post-conflict areas.

The relationship between capacity-building and political dynamics in post-conflict environments is an area that necessitates further investigation. According to the World Bank (2024), the evolution of state capacity is influenced more by internal shifts in trust and legitimacy than by financial incentives from external entities. This highlights the importance of conducting additional research on how capacity-building initiatives can navigate and potentially affect political processes in fragile states. Furthermore, integrating capacity-building with other aspects of state reconstruction, such as social reconciliation, economic recovery, and security sector reform, remains a challenge. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2019) underscores the necessity for further research on how to harmonize capacity-building efforts across various sectors and governance levels.

Theoretical Framework

This research utilized realism and constructivism as its theoretical frameworks. Realism asserts that states function within an anarchic international system where national interests and power relations are of utmost importance (Hans Morgenthau, 1948). The realism theory illustrates the interplay between humanitarian initiatives and national goals in international relations, particularly highlighting how China employs humanitarian diplomacy to create favorable conditions for its geopolitical ambitions. The realist viewpoint, highlights that China's humanitarian endeavors might be seen as a component of a larger plan to improve its international reputation and protect its national security, rather than just as selfless deeds. The theory also demonstrates how humanitarian efforts and national objectives interact in international relations by arguing that nations like China use humanitarian diplomacy to foster favorable conditions for their geopolitical goals.

Constructivism perceives the world and our understanding of it as a product of social construction. In the realm of international relations, constructivism posits that core concepts such as power and anarchy are not predetermined or inherent, but are instead socially constructed through collective beliefs and human interactions (Wendt, 1995). Constructivism underscores the role of social constructs, norms, and identities in influencing international interactions. It stresses the importance of social interactions and collective beliefs in determining state behavior, thereby providing a crucial perspective for a thorough understanding of modern international

relations.

Thus, study will employ the theory of constructivism in Chinese humanitarian diplomacy by recognizing that our understanding of humanitarian emergencies and relief efforts is shaped by social factors rather than being static. This suggests that shared values, traditions, and cultural contexts play a significant role in shaping our perceptions of needs, appropriate responses, and the credibility of humanitarian organizations. By acknowledging this, aid organizations can implement more inclusive and effective strategies.

Question	SA	D	SD	D	NS	TOTAL
Humanitarian diplomacy has contributed to capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia.	52	86	29	87	10	264
	19.70%	32.60%	11%	32.90%	3.80%	100.00%
Humanitarian diplomacy has been able engage various stakeholders in supporting capacity-building efforts	21	121	35	76	11	264
	7.90%	45.80%	13.20%	28.80%	4.20%	99.90%
Humanitarian diplomacy has been able to mobilize human resources for capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia.	22	132	32	68	10	264
	8.30%	50%	12.10%	25.70%	3.80%	99.90%
Humanitarian diplomacy has been able to mobilize financial resources for capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia.	31	131	27	67	8	264
	11.70%	49.60%	10.20%	25.40%	3.00%	99.90%
Humanitarian diplomacy has been instrumental in rebuilding governance structures, enhancing public service delivery, and fostering economic recovery.	30	128	21	74	11	264
	11.40%	48.50%	7.90%	28.00%	4.20%	100.00%
Humanitarian diplomacy has been effective in facilitating capacity-building efforts by creating a conducive environment for international support and local engagement.	26	143	18	68	9	264
	9.80%	54.20%	6.80%	25.70%	3.40%	99.90%
Humanitarian diplomacy has been effective strengthening state institutions, improving governance structures, and enhancing coordination mechanisms.	22	148	25	57	12	264
	8.30%	56.10%	9.50%	21.60%	4.50%	100.00%
Mean	1.1	4.8	1	2.7	0.4	10

Research Methodology

This research was conducted using an exploratory design. Data collection methods included structured questionnaires and interview guides. The study utilized purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify Chinese diplomats and officials engaged in Somalia-related matters, Somali government officials and policymakers, representatives from Chinese humanitarian organizations, and Somali citizens. Document analysis of official statements, policy papers, and diplomatic communications from both Chinese and Somali sources provided essential contextual information. Quantitative data was gathered through closed-ended questionnaires using drop-off and pick-up methods. Self-administered questionnaires, translated into Somali, were distributed to selected respondents via email. Additionally, some interviews were conducted through video and voice calls.

This research utilized both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. Thematic analysis was applied to

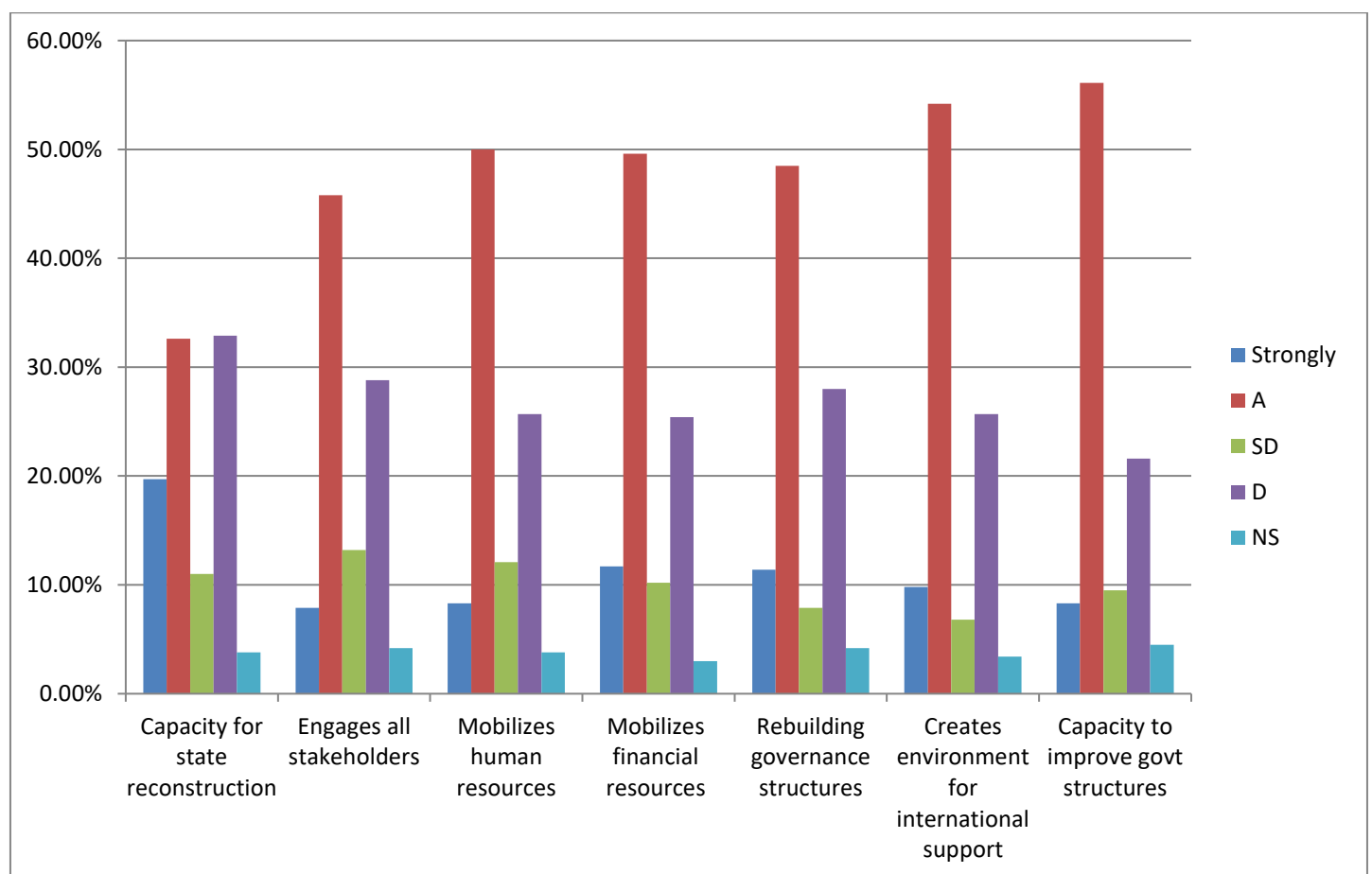
identify and examine patterns and themes within the qualitative data collected from interview schedules. Statistical analysis methods, including descriptive statistics, were employed to assess trends, correlations, and the overall impact of Chinese humanitarian efforts on local communities in Somalia. The study ensured validity and reliability by carefully developing research tools to effectively measure the intended components, thereby ensuring that the interview questions and survey instruments accurately represented the topic of Chinese humanitarian diplomacy. A total of 384 respondents were targeted, with 264 providing responses, resulting in a response rate of 68.7%, while 120 individuals or 31.3%, did not respond. This aligns with previous research findings, which reported response rates between 65% and 85% (Kiruthi & Mbataru, 2014).

Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation of Findings

Effectiveness of Chinese Capacity-Building Programs in Enhancing Somalia's State Reconstruction

Table 1.1 Effectiveness of Chinese Capacity-Building Programs

Figure 1.1 Effectiveness of Chinese Capacity-Building Programs



The main objective of this study was to examine effectiveness of Chinese capacity-building programs in enhancing Somalia's state reconstruction. To achieve this objective respondent were asked seven questions. The responses from the seven questions are presented in figure 1.1 below. To begin respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has contributed to capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 52 representing 19.7%% strongly agreed while 86 representing 32.6% agreed. Twenty Nine (29) representing 11.0% strongly disagreed while 87 representing 32.9% disagreed. Ten (10) representing 3.8% were not sure. Cumulatively, 138 representing 52.3% were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has contributed to capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia while 116 representing 43.9% were of contrary opinion.

The aforementioned findings align with the research conducted by Grozey and Bovadjieva (2004), which investigates the interactions between states, international organizations, and local authorities in the

implementation of the Dayton Accords for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their study emphasizes the importance of reassessing the operational frameworks of the international community and its post-war reconstruction initiatives, focusing on collaboration, the enhancement of current systems, and the establishment of a progressive vision.

Second respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been able engage various stakeholders in supporting capacity-building efforts. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 21 representing 7.9%% strongly agreed while 121 representing 45.8% agreed. Thirty Five (35) representing 13.2% strongly disagreed while 76 representing 28.8% disagreed. Eleven (11) representing 4.2% were not sure. Cumulatively, 142 representing 53.8 % were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been able engage various stakeholders in supporting capacity-building efforts while 111 representing 42.0% were of contrary opinion.

Chinese humanitarian diplomacy in Somalia is marked by the creation of relationships, the promotion of dialogue, and the pursuit of mutual understanding to advance shared interests and values. To achieve its goals, this diplomacy emphasizes negotiation skills such as active listening, relationship building, and adaptability.

Third respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been able to mobilize human resources for capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 22 representing 8.3%% strongly agreed while 132 representing 50.0% agreed. Thirty Two (32) representing 12.1% strongly disagreed while 68 representing 25.7% disagreed. Ten (10) representing 3.8% were not sure. Cumulatively, 154 representing 58.3 % were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been able to mobilize human resources for capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia while 100 representing 37.9% were of contrary opinion.

This research found that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has played a vital role in mobilizing essential human resources to improve capacity for the reconstruction of post-conflict Somalia. This approach involves leveraging diplomatic channels to secure resources and foster local skills, while also empowering local stakeholders to lead the reconstruction efforts.

Fourth respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been able to mobilize financial resources for capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 31 representing 11.7% strongly agreed while 131 representing 49.6% agreed. Twenty seven (27) representing 10.2% strongly disagreed while 67 representing 25.4% disagreed. Eight (08) representing 3.0% were not sure. Cumulatively, 162 representing 61.4 % were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been able to mobilize financial resources for capacity-building crucial for state reconstruction in post-conflict Somalia while 94 representing 35.6% were of contrary opinion.

The research results highlighted the significance of Chinese humanitarian diplomacy in securing financial resources essential for strengthening state reconstruction efforts in Somalia. This encompassed not only the acquisition of financial aid but also diplomatic strategies designed to sway influential decision-makers and facilitate access to affected communities, thus fostering sustainable recovery.

Fifth respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been instrumental in rebuilding governance structures, enhancing public service delivery, and fostering economic recovery. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 30 representing 11.4% strongly agreed while 128 representing 48.5 % agreed. Twenty one (21) representing 7.9% strongly disagreed while 74 representing 28.0% disagreed. Eleven representing 4.2% were not sure. Cumulatively, 158 representing 59.8 % were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been instrumental in rebuilding governance structures, enhancing public service delivery, and fostering economic recovery while 95 representing 36.0% were of contrary opinion.

This research indicated that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has played a vital role in rebuilding governance structures, enhancing public service delivery, and fostering economic recovery in the aftermath of civil conflict. This form of diplomacy has been instrumental in facilitating dialogue, building trust, and influencing policymakers to prioritize humanitarian needs and sustainable solutions.

Sixth respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been effective in facilitating capacity-building efforts by creating a conducive environment for international support and local engagement. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 26 representing 9.8% strongly agreed while 143 representing 54.2 % agreed. Eighteen (18) representing 6.8%strongly disagreed while 68 representing 25.7% disagreed. Nine (9) representing 3.4% were not sure. Cumulatively, 169 representing 64.0% were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been effective in facilitating capacity-building efforts by creating conducive environment for international support and local engagement while 86 representing 32.6% were of contrary opinion.

This research found that Chinese humanitarian assistance to Somalia has successfully laid the groundwork for enduring conflict resolution and peace-building. Humanitarian diplomacy has played a crucial role in fostering trust, enhancing communication, and addressing the root causes of instability.

Lastly, respondents were asked whether Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been effective strengthening state institutions, improving governance structures and enhancing coordination mechanisms. Out of the 264 respondents interviewed 22 representing 8.3% strongly agreed while 148 representing 56.1 % agreed. Twenty five (25) representing 9.5% strongly disagreed while 57 representing 21.6% disagreed. Twelve (12) representing 4.5% were not sure. Cumulatively, 170 representing 64.4% were of the opinion that Chinese humanitarian diplomacy has been effective strengthening state institutions, improving governance structures and enhancing coordination mechanisms while 82 representing 31.1% were of contrary opinion.

The aforementioned findings corroborate those of Minko (2025), who notes that humanitarian diplomacy has been instrumental in addressing the ongoing crisis in the Sahel region, which is exacerbated by extremism, displacement, and climate-related challenges. In countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, humanitarian organizations have actively negotiated with both government entities and armed groups to establish humanitarian corridors. These corridors have enabled the delivery of essential aid to communities ensnared in areas controlled by extremist factions. However, this endeavor is fraught with difficulties, as diplomatic efforts often encounter resistance from armed groups unwilling to engage in dialogue, as well as from governments reluctant to acknowledge non-state actors. Despite these challenges, successful negotiations have created vital support networks, underscoring the pivotal role of diplomacy in mitigating human suffering in conflict-affected regions (Ibid, 2025).

DISCUSSIONS ON FINDINGS

The role of capacity-building as a development strategy recognizes the importance of restoring state institutions and their functions for the attainment of sustainable peace and development. As Somalia moves away from conflict, it faces considerable challenges in rebuilding governance structures, delivering essential services, and fostering economic recovery. Humanitarian diplomacy has served as a means to engage various stakeholders, such as international organizations, donor countries, and local groups, in promoting capacity-building efforts in post-conflict Somalia. The significance of capacity-building as a tool for state reconstruction through humanitarian diplomacy in Somalia is crucial.

Initiatives have been undertaken to attract proficient professionals to senior executive roles aimed at revitalizing the public sector by enhancing technical and operational efficiency, while also infusing innovative ideas, diverse experiences, and a high level of professionalism to support reform initiatives. Highly skilled Somali nationals residing abroad, such as physicians, economists, engineers, and management specialists, have been encouraged to return to their homeland to contribute their acquired knowledge and expertise.

As Somalia transitions from conflict to peace, stability, and development, there exist considerable opportunities to nurture effective leadership and improve change management capabilities, especially within the public sector. The country's abundant natural resources have the potential to elevate the living standards of its citizens and promote human development. However, the extensive recovery and reconstruction efforts, coupled with the high expectations of a populace eager for visible improvements in their daily lives, exert substantial pressure on the government. The pervasive and systemic lack of capacity, a consequence of years of conflict and ineffective governance, further complicates this scenario. Insufficient capacity diminishes the state's effectiveness, obstructs

revenue generation, undermines the delivery of essential social services such as healthcare and education, and encourages corruption. Without strong and coordinated support for capacity development, the success of both current and future reform initiatives is at risk of being compromised. In conclusion, the significant capacity gaps present a challenge to the ownership, expansion, and sustainability of efforts and outcomes.

According to Tschirgi and Rienner (2003), the challenges faced by nations in crisis and post-conflict situations are complex and varied, shaped by numerous historical elements that lead to conflict, along with distinct political, social, and geographical circumstances. As a result, the strategies employed to address these issues and successfully steer a nation towards recovery, development, and enduring peace differ significantly. What may be successful in one country might not produce the same outcomes in another. Nonetheless, several universally acknowledged values, principles, and fundamental elements have been identified through various case studies as vital for promoting sustainable peace. These encompass, among others, the legitimacy and trust in governmental institutions; political commitment and strong leadership; security; an effective public service; the reliable delivery of essential services; adherence to legal frameworks; transparency and accountability; access to information; constructive engagement between the government and civil society; national mediation capabilities; and active involvement from communities and civil society.

It is essential for a wide range of stakeholders to engage in the formulation and implementation of effective prevention strategies and mechanisms that address the root causes of conflict within specific contexts. This requires a revitalized commitment to collaboration among both national and international organizations, alongside the development of shared tools and institutional frameworks to manage potential crises, while taking into account the perspectives of the involved parties (Bush, 2004). Complex processes of political and social dialogue act as both reflections and tools for fostering social inclusion, political participation, and social cohesion, which are vital for sustaining peace. Various strategies for power-sharing among groups with differing ethnic or religious identities have been explored, resulting in varied outcomes regarding their long-term viability. However, the establishment of a government founded on these principles, especially in societies where such identities are not clearly defined or where certain groups have faced unequal access to resources, can intensify divisions and lay the groundwork for tensions in socio-political relationships, ultimately leading to future conflicts.

CONCLUSION

This research indicated that Chinese capacity-building initiatives have significantly contributed to the reconstruction of the state in post-conflict Somalia. It was observed that these programs have played a crucial role in engaging various stakeholders in the reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, Chinese capacity-building initiatives have proven effective in mobilizing financial resources for state reconstruction. Additionally, it was noted that these initiatives have positively influenced public service delivery by enhancing governmental structures. Moreover, Chinese capacity-building efforts have fostered an environment conducive to participation from both local and international actors.

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