

## Post-Conflict Peace Construction in Somaliland

### Analysing the Internal and External Dynamics

Abdalgani Aid Almi<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract:

The Horn of African region has witnessed a prolonged conflict, and Somaliland has grabbed its share. This article explores and finds answers for the questions related with the blockage factors of post-conflict peace construction in Somaliland, analyses and assesses the internal and external dynamics of peace blockages, including but not limited to; constitutional gaps, individuals and interest groups, media and donor approaches. Moreover, other challenges to peace construction are examined, with the understanding that many times to reach a peace agreement or to conclude a peace dialogue is more important than its sustainability. Somaliland peace construction is a viable critique to the entire established peace building and state formation models, including; Liberal, Republican NEPAD's Model. The study is exploratory and intends to present and assess internal and external blockages of post-conflict peace construction. It made use of an in-depth review on the existing literature as a method of data collection under the qualitative approach to research. It is found by the study that a number of internal challenges are faced by Somaliland in its post-conflict peace construction which are; constitutional gaps, individual and group interests, as well as the media which could play a clear role towards peace building, but also can exacerbate the tensions and mistrust, external challenges include without limitation the lack by donors to invite the Somaliland government to participate in fundraising and sectoral allocation.

#### Keywords:

Peace blockage; conflict; post-conflict; peace construction; blockage dynamics; Somaliland.

---

<sup>1</sup> Researcher and research fellow at Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Hargeisa, Somaliland. ORCID: 0000-0002-2013-5012; qanoeid@gmail.com.



## Introduction

Somaliland is a *de facto* independent state in the Horn of Africa. It gained its independence on 26 June 1960 from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Soon after its independence, it united with Italian Somalia. Some claim the unification was backed by a sense of Pan-Somali nationalism among Somalis inhabiting the Horn of Africa, which were to form a Somali state, consisting of Ogaden and Reserve Area, Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, French Somaliland and Northern Frontier District of Kenya (NFD).

The idea of Pan-Somali nationalism long prospected to outdo the colonial division and unify Somalis under one state. However, British Somaliland and Italian Somalia's unification and formation of Somali Republic was troublesome to include any of the other three (French Somaliland, Ogaden and Reserve Area, and Northern Frontier District of Kenya) to the unification.

The Somali Republic existed for almost nine years, although the claim of British Somalilanders being marginalized prevailed, yet the Republic ruled its land peacefully and democratically. But in late 1969, a coup d'état overthrew the democratically elected government of Sharmarke, and years of dictatorship and brutality started in the Somali Republic. In the 1980s a flow of insurgents started to fight with the dictatorial regime and a decade long civil war erupted which finally led the Siad Barre rule to be ousted in 1991 (Hirsi, 2018).

The collapse of Barre's regime was the beginning of decades' long efforts of state formation in Somaliland. Traditional leaders with senior Somali National Movement officers laid the foundation stone for the creation of a new, independent and democratic state. With indigenized bottom-up peace formations, Somaliland has attained and existed peacefully since then. At the very first years the capacity and legitimacy of Somaliland over its territory were questioned. Yet, that was not a reason to hinder Somaliland's democratization process, locally managed elections were held, and rivals transferred power peacefully many times. However, from state and peace building to democratization, the international community turned their back to Somaliland in reference to acknowledging their commitment or recognizing it as a state even.

The International Community was not involved in peace construction and state formation of Somaliland from the very beginning, although their efforts and commitments towards capacity building and institutional de-centralization is undeniable, and widely acknowledged by the people of Somaliland. In addition, recent developments in the region and in the globe in general put Somaliland in a place to rustle with multiple issues that stood out on its way of post-conflict peace construction, and to strengthen institutional capacities. In this article, the internal and external dynamics of peace blockages will be critically analysed.

### ***Background of Post-Conflict Peace Construction***

The traditional appeasement diplomacy of Somalis to solve any conflict or even to prevent any dispute from escalating into conflict is called Xeer. “Xeer” is an unwritten code of conduct agreed upon by Somali clans in each area. It is a way in which elders and traditional leaders gather in regard to solving a dispute, or a conflict, and as a last resort, the judgment will be based on their knowledge on the traditionality of unwritten previous judgments. Furthermore, any “Xeer” will be dependent on the deliberation of elders who foregather to resolve a particular problem within a clan or between clans (Ali et al., 2007). The “Xeer” played a great role in post-conflict peace construction as it was the intermediate on which clans communicated through.

After the collapse of Barre’s dictatorial regime, the Somali National Movement (SNM), with internal and external support, started a movement to form some sort of governance in the northern region of former Somalia (current Somaliland). A number of clans reside in this region, some of which had hostilities with SNM. Hence, in May 1991, the first inter-clan conference on state-construction was held in Burao. This conference is known now as the one in which all inhabited clans in the northern region of former Somalia gathered to declare the restoration of Somaliland’s state sovereignty (Ali et al., 2007).

The second conference took place in May 1993 at Borama, which is known as the most important National Reconciliation Conference. According to Lewis, the delegates adopted the country’s first National Charter (A framework agreement countersigned by the stakeholders, which gave rise to the Somaliland’s longtime peace, political stability, social cohesion, and *de facto* statehood (APD&IPP, 2021). The period between Burao and Borama conferences was marked by a sense of jubilation, economic growth, and social stability.

Moreover, there were many other conferences held parallel with the national conferences of Burao, and Borama, but comparatively less important, since the matters the other conferences dealt with were on specific location and with a narrowed scope. For instance, the Sheikh Conference of Tawfiiq in 1992, and Erigavo Grand Conference in 1993 dealt with issues of governance and inter-clan accommodation.

### ***Post-Conflict Peace Frameworks and Models***

Post-conflict is a term used to describe the period immediately after a conflict is over. According to Cunningham, a post-conflict is the transitional period between a past war and future peace, in which a number of challenges are introduced (Cunningham, 2017). Post-conflict is conceptualized as the intricate, holistic, and



multifaceted method comprising of efforts to improve – at the same time – the security for the sake of the rule of law, governance and rehabilitation of the economy and development (Tzifakis, n.d).

The end of Cold War brought an increase of intrastate conflicts, Smith categorized 100 out of 118 vicious conflicts around the globe between 1990 and 1999 as intrastate conflicts (Almi&BinWasi, 2013). Hence, post-conflict peace construction has been on the United Nations agenda, as well as the scholars in the years following the end of the Cold War (Filipov, 2006). For Elizabeth, the concept of peacebuilding is being approached either inductively or deductively; “Deductive” delineates peace building as tools and approaches available to the international communities, whilst “Inductive” relates to the conflict itself, its nature, depth of social support and intensity (Cousens&Cater, 2001). Thus, a logic and more realistic framework will be interweaving these two dimensions as the most preferable model for a post-conflict peace construction.

The liberal peace model emerged at the end of the 1980s. It is advancing democratization, market-based economic reforms and a variety of other organizations linked with modern states as a driving force for peace (Newman et al., 2009). The main argumentation of this model is that promotion of democracy and market-oriented economy in post-conflict states will furnish the way for lasting and sustainable peace. However, there is a question as to whether the liberal peace building model has been successful in addressing the challenges faced by post-conflict societies. According to Kurtenbach, Central American post-conflict societies do not provide proof for self-enforcing cycle of democracy and peace as predicted by liberal peace-builders, but instead pose negative outcomes of weak governance, development and social exclusion. While the wider goal of liberal peace building is to convert war-shattered nations into liberal market states, peace-construction/building strategies lack the ability to build effective institutions before liberalizing any market. Somaliland’s peace construction is a viable critique to liberal peace building, as well as its beyond state-building; the dominant narrative in Somaliland is that of the absence of external actors who are at the centre of the liberal peace-construction critiques (Nijeri, 2019).

The republican peace building can be a viable alternative to the Liberal post-conflict peace model. According to Barnett (2006) republican peace building asserts the importance of institutional mechanisms of representation, constitutionalism and deliberative processes to encourage groups to express their views. Liberal and republican models have many commonalities, such as prevalence of liberty, constitution, election and representation. Moreover, the republican model relies on the core doctrine of deliberation (*this process furnishes the way for a public engagement, as it encourages individual units to express their ideas and be tolerant to the opposing ideas*). For republicans, period to the conflicts of unelected

representations, such as transitional governments are supported until holding an election is possible. Yet, this kind of representation must satisfy three key standards; inclusivity (*combining different groups and views*), and publicity (*stating out the reason behind any decisions and their intentions*), and constitutionalism (*this provides a justifiable power-sharing and limitation of authority to restrict exercising arbitrary power*). However, it is regarded that republican post-conflict peace building is way better than the liberal post-conflict model'. This is because republicans present a viable solution to the challenges faced by post-conflict state building, which include accepting indigenous circumstances to encouraging local accountability and promoting gradual approach to peace building.

Despite criticizing the liberal peace model, a successful alternative model is yet to emerge. There are many types of centric peace-construction/building between the continuum of typical liberal and illiberal peace construction. In illustration, Jihad Al-Bina was adopted by Hezbollah's reconstruction wing aiming to reconstruct the nation after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. The reconstruction efforts of Jihad Al-Bina and the Gulf States do not constitute a full-flagged alternative approach to liberal peace building, yet it reveals some limitations (MacGinty, 2007). A key divergence is that Gulf States and Jihad Al-Bina relied on unconditional cash flows to the needy and affected families. This was regarded to be beneficial as it was immediate and unencumbered by bureaucracy (Goodhand&Walton, 2009).

According to Eaton, states have to utilize what power they have to name and shame war economy profiteers for the purpose of weakening their local legitimacy, which is critical to their survival (Eaton, 2018). In the African continent, another approach has emerged to promote peace-- the African Union (AU) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have distinguished taking apart exploitative war economies as a priority for African peace construction. To localize the model of post-conflict peace construction, NEPAD articulated the "African post-conflict peace construction framework". For NEPAD, post-conflict reconstruction phases are three, namely; the emergence phase (this stage starts immediately after the end of hostile confrontations, and encompasses of two stage, namely; setting up a safe and secure environment and facilitating an emergency response to the dire consequences of the conflict); the transition phase (this stage derives its name from an appointed and interim government, which is a period that focuses on developing a legitimate and durable internal capacity), and lastly, the development phase (this period is aimed at supporting the newly elected government and civil organizations with a set of programs and projects intended to foster reconciliation and socio-economic developments). According to this articulation, externally driven post-conflict reconstruction processes lack sufficient local ownership and participation in them are unsustainable (NEPAD, 2005). Furthermore, the



framework provides a common conceptual frame of assessing, planning, coordinating and monitoring post-conflict reconstruction systems across Africa.

In conclusion, Somaliland peace building is not only a viable critique to the liberal peace building and its beyond state formation, but it is a critique to the entire established peace building and state formation processes. Somaliland is the prime example to present that externally driven peace processes, whether it is liberal, republican, or even NEPAD processes, are not the sole typical way to generate social order-. Somaliland has become an example of indigenous and bottom-up form of peace construction and state formation.

### *Internal Dynamics*

Somaliland's "bottom up" approach of peace construction is completely indigenous without external interventions. Thus, the bottom-up indigenous peace construction that emerged in Somaliland consisted of fusion of local institutions, practices, values and social hierarchies (Njeri, 2019). Those fusions are both contributors of peace construction and sometimes blockages to peace sustainability. Somaliland indigenous approach encompasses three complimentary institutions, namely; the president(executive), lower house of parliament and upper house which consist of traditional clan elders called "Guurti", -the house of elders which consists of 82 members selected by clan representatives. The main principle of the Guurti is its inclusivity, in that all clans are included without-considering their number or social status. However, this institution's major statutory mandate is to facilitate mediation and resolve disputes (Gatimu, 2014). According to Fadal, the early role of the Guurti as peace makers is well recognized by Somalilanders as well as outsiders, yet since it has become a legislative body, it is argued that it has become a partisan political institution, which is accused of aligning with the already powerful executive to make it more powerful against the already weaker branches of the government; the lower parliament house, and the Judiciary (Fadal, 2012). Claire Elder and Cedric Barnes state that the Upper House of Elders worries Somaliland's international partners and risks causing a dangerous political and clan polarisation by announcing a two year extension – without consultation with the National Electoral Commission (NEC), government or political parties– for the Silanyo's government term, including a further postponement of the presidential and parliamentary elections (Barnes&Elder, 2015). Although election postponement was more an exception than a rule, yet it was unconstitutional, and acts of this nature trigger the re-occurrence of a conflict. New constitutions have always followed conflicts (Ladley, 2011), and any unconstitutional act may cause new forms of conflict.

Interest groups or pressure groups are any association of individuals or organizations, commonly organized on the bases of one or more shared concerns. Some sort of cooperation between interest groups is needed in the public interest (Hettlage, 1984). It could be a coin of two sides; if interest groups are cooperative, only then would it be a positive initiative, for many times when there are inequalities, specifically economic inequalities, interest groups tend to resort to violence rather than seeking to resolve differences through political negotiation (Stewart, 2002). Although there are zero or very few interest group conflicts in Somaliland history due to the multi-party system, yet in every election there is a great danger of some groups not accepting the outcome.

Governments and social stability are preserved to be a result of a social contract; that is, people will accept state authority so long as the state delivers services and provides reasonable conditions (Stewart, 2002). According to Rusten (2022), political legitimacy of Somaliland comes from contributing to peace. Thus, the foundation of the mutual consent is to sustain the peaceful coexistence and any act of the government, an individual or a group perceived by others as compromising the mutual consent could lead to conflict. Moreover, in many peace agreements just to conclude a peace agreement was more important than its implementation. Therefore, generating a sense of mutual trust and implementable agreements, should be a central goal of a peace agreement.

According to Höhne (2008), although some may doubt the importance of media in post-conflict peace construction, the role media plays in post-conflict is clear. The wider they (media) present to the public the diverse viewpoints, the greater the opportunity for competing parties to realize what they have in common. However, local media could exacerbate the tension and mistrust of the public, which at the end could cause a violent conflict. Höhne argued that newspapers printed in the capital city of Hargeisa strongly contributed to the establishment of a democratic political system, yet some propagandist reports on the conflicts in the Far East have the potential to contribute to serious political tensions and escalation of violent conflicts.

### ***External Dynamics***

It's important to acknowledge the resilience of Somaliland people who initiated and supported various peace constructions, without any external interventions. Post-conflict peace construction coincided with Somaliland's state formation process. This has legitimized the dire need for relief aid and it was high time the external actors aligned themselves to these needs. According to Njeri, Somaliland's first ten years was community driven, but since then it has been donor driven, with



donors such as the DFID, Danida, EU, with a number of other organizations, engaging with Somaliland to provide institutional capacity building. Yet direct funding cannot be transferred to Somaliland due to non-political recognition and can only be possible through partnership with the UN Development Program (Njeri, 2019).

Although Somaliland's tireless efforts to gain international recognition, it has not yet been fully successful, this could be regarded as positive and negative trends at the same time, because otherwise there could be direct cash flow which in some point could cause a conflict of interest, since there is no strong central government with powerful forces to keep the rule and deter any conflict of interest due direct cash follows, donors and agencies are increasingly aware of the potential of Aid to do harm, on the other hand (Goodhand&Atkinson, 2001). Moreover, it could be regarded as negative because even currently the Somaliland government is unable to deal with international donors.

Although the importance of aid for peace-construction is clear for global development, yet troubling critiques have been made about its overall impact and effectiveness (Goodhand&Atkinson, 2001). According to one report, Somaliland views aid as unpredictable and donor-driven, which does little for a Somaliland to be able to undertake its own post-conflict development agenda. Somaliland government mentioned the lack by donors to invite them to participate in fundraising, and sectoral allocation of funds, which undermines Somaliland's efforts (Renders, 2012), such as; allocating sufficient budget for conflict prevention mechanisms and enhancing capacity for conflict resolution-related institutions.

## **Conclusion**

International donors and external mediators were not involved in the peace construction of Somaliland, at least from the foundation, yet their efforts and commitments towards institutional capacity building are undeniable and widely acknowledged by the people of Somaliland and their government. However, the effectiveness of donor-led fund allocation sabotages Somaliland's efforts of peace construction and institutional capacity building.

Somaliland peace building is not only a viable critique to the liberal peace building and its beyond state formation, but it is a critique to the entire established peace building and state formation processes. Somaliland is the prime example to present that externally driven peace processes, whether it is liberal, republican or even NEPAD processes are not the sole typical way to generate social order. Somaliland has become a prime example of deliberate discussions (bottom-up approach) which as a result outlawed the war without international engagement.



Somaliland could be the prime example to present a viable critique to most of the known peace-construction models such as the Liberal, Republican or even the NEPAD process of peace building. Yet, it is facing a number of internal challenges in its post-conflict peace construction, which are – but not limited to – constitutional gaps, individual and group interests, as well as the media which could play a clear role, but also could exacerbate the tension and mistrust of the public. Moreover, external dynamics of post-conflict peace construction in Somaliland include without limitation the lack by donors to invite the Somaliland government to participate in fundraising and sectoral allocation. Thus, its efforts for post-conflict peace construction could be undermined.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### **Bibliography**

- Ali, M. O., Mohammed, K. and Walls, M. (2007) *Peace in Somaliland: An Indigenous Approach to State-Building*. Interpeace and Peace and Development.
- Almi, A. A. and BinWasi, M. A. (2013) *Conflict and Ethnicity*. Somalia.
- APD and IPP (2021) *A Vote for Change: Somaliland's Two Decades Old Electoral Democracy*. Academy for Peace and Development and Institute of Public Policy.
- Barnes, C., and Elder, C. (2015) Somaliland's Guurti Sparks a Crisis. *International Crisis Group*.
- Barnett, M. (2006) 'Building a Republican Peace: Stabilising States after War', *International Security*, 30(4), pp. 87-112.
- Cousens, E. M. and Cater, C. K. (2001) *Toward Peace in Bosnia: Implementing the Dayton Accords*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Cunningham, A. J. (2017) 'Post-conflict Contexts and Humanitarian Organizations: The Changing Relationship with States', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 2(7) [online]. DOI: 10.1186/s41018-017-0022-3.
- Eaton, T. (2018) *Libya's War Economy: Predation, Profiteering and State Weakness*. Chathamhouse.org. Available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2018/04/libyas-war-economy-predation-profiteering-and-state-weakness> (Accessed: 30 August 2022).
- Fadal, M. (2012) 'A Gap in the Somaliland Constitutional Process: Reforming the Guurti House' In *Reflections and Lessons of Somaliland's Two Decades of Sustained Peace Statebuilding and Democratization: Presentations at the Second Annual SORADI Conference Held on 8-9 November 2011*. Somaliland Development Series, 2. Hargeisa.
- Filipov, F. (2006) *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Strategies and Lessons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador and Sierra Leone*. ECLAC.



- Gatimu, C. (2014) *Traditional Structures in Peace and Security Consolidation: The Case of the House of Elders (Guurti) in 'Somaliland'*. Occasional Paper. Nairobi: International Peace Support Centre.
- Goodhand, J. and Walton, O. (2009) 'The Limits of Liberal Peacebuilding? International Engagement in the Sri Lankan Peace Process', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3(3), pp. 303-323.
- Goodhand, J., and Atkinson, P. (2001) *Conflict and Aid: Enhancing the Peacebuilding Impact of International Engagement: A Synthesis of Findings from Afghanistan, Liberia and Sri Lanka*. London: International Alert.
- Hettlage, R. (1984) 'Interest-Group Conflict, Consensus-Building, and "Cooperative Bargaining": The Swiss Industrial Peace Agreement As a Model', *Zeitschrift Für Die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft/Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, 140(3), pp. 475-499. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40750718>.
- Hirsi, M. F. (2018) *State Fragility in Somaliland and Somalia: A Contrast in Peace and State Building*. Commission on State Fragility Growth and Development
- Höhne, M. V. (2008) 'Newspapers in Hargeysa: Freedom of Speech in Post-conflict Somaliland', *Afrika Spectrum*, 43(1), pp. 91-113.
- Ladley, A. (2011) *Constitution-building After Conflict: External Support to a Sovereign Process*. Stockholm: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- MacGinty, R. (2007) 'Reconstructing Post-War Lebanon: A Challenge to the Liberal Peace?', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 7(3), pp. 457-482.
- NEPAD (2005) *African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework*. NEPAD Secretariat: Governance, Peace and Security Programme. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/5E073F808CE6409CC125739800345264-nepad-jun2005.pdf> (Accessed: 30 August 2022).
- Newman, E., Paris, R. and Richmond, O. (2009) *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*. United Nations University.
- Njeri, S. (2019) 'Somaliland: The Viability of a Liberal Peacebuilding Critique Beyond State Building, State Formation and Hybridity', *Peacebuilding*, 7(1), pp. 37-50.
- Renders, M. (2012) *Consider Somaliland: State-building with Traditional Leaders and Institutions*. Brill.
- Rusten, C. (2022) 'In Somaliland, Political Legitimacy Comes from Contributing to Peace', *World Bank Blogs*, June 5. Available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/selling-my-ears-a-glimpse-of-the-future-in-somaliland> (Accessed: 30 August 2022).
- Stewart, F. (2002) 'Root Causes of Violent Conflict in Developing Countries', *BMJ*, pp. 324-342. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.324.7333.342.
- Tzifakis, N. (n.d.) *Post-Conflict Economic Reconstruction*. Encyclopedia Princetoniensis. Available at <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/586> (Accessed: 30 August 2022).