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Full Length Research Paper

The national peace building policy of Somaliland: Undoing what has worked?

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Part of the foundation of Somaliland's stability over the last three decades has been its localized customary, clan-based peacebuilding mechanism. This may now be at risk. The ongoing institutionalization of Somaliland's peacebuilding structures through the National Peacebuilding Policy (NPP) reflects many features of a liberal peacebuilding milieu and legitimizes state-building models shaped by international development partners rather than local conflict resolution actors. This article posits that the key policy objective of institutionalizing the peace building in Somaliland threatens to undermine an existing and dynamic tradition with proven efficacy. Rather than promoting peace, the NPP's layering of government peacebuilding capacities at district, regional, and national levels could endanger peacemaking efforts by truncating local capabilities and hitching these to governmental structures reliant on external funding. Rather than retaining proven localized practices, this institutionalization undermines volunteerism, creates unnecessary costs for the state along with new opportunities for political clannism, extraversion, and rent seeking, which threatens to undermine what Somaliland has achieved thus far.

Key words: Somaliland, peace building, liberal peace building, conflict transformation.

INTRODUCTION

In mid-2021, the self-declared Republic of Somaliland witnessed a rare occurrence for a post-conflict society. The ruling party Kulmiye suffered losses in local elections that saw activists for and members of socio-politically marginalized groups elected to mayorships and

parliamentary seats, and Kulmiye accepted the election results and went back to governing. Although preparations for upcoming elections are currently facing inner challenges, the local elections marked the latest iteration of democratic exercises that span an almost three-

decade-long peace- and state-building process. Far from complete, with a reduction in representation. for women, and followed by a controversial expulsion of displaced communities in its contested eastern regions, Somaliland's peace- and state-building nevertheless stands out among fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) and territories. It presents a crucial case to interrogate the efficacy of externally-led or externally-supported peace- and state-building undertakings (Njeri, 2019; Ingiriis, 2021; Walls, 2014).

This is not to say that the emergence of Somaliland as a political entity out of Somalia's state collapse and the internecine war was entirely bereft of outside assistance, but this assistance was actively and specifically sought after by local community and political leaders, and it did not constitute the principal influx of resources. These stemmed largely from Somaliland's business elite and diaspora and funded several peace conferences and the integration of militia fighters into emergent security and armed forces (Walls, 2014).

Past scholarly debates have oscillated between a greater emphasis on bottom-up processes to prevent escalation of violent conflict and establishment of a durable and self-sustaining peace, and a more state-centric amalgamation of peace- and state-building, sometimes with the explicit intent to establish Western-style liberal democratic government institutions. The latter gained further traction since the onset of the 'War on Terror' (Njeri, 2019). Somaliland is frequently presented as perhaps the purest existing version of a locally owned, bottom-up process in which peacebuilding preceded state-building, whereas the Federal Republic of Somalia is cited as an instance of the obverse. For Somalia, successive conferences intentionally coupled peace- and state-building and involved significant external involvement and funding (Njeri, 2019; Ingiriis, 2021).

The more recent developments in Somaliland are indicative of two key components of the state-centric vs. bottom-up debate which, in practice, has already begun to blur its distinctions. International partners approach state-building with growing focus on incremental institution building at the local level and accompanying, locally grounded peacebuilding to contain conflicts over who controls or is part of these institutions. The two components that are central to this gradual merger are representation and institutionalization and the former matters for the design of peace building processes.

Who is eligible to participate and who represents whom? This question is especially pernicious for externally funded processes in which international partners set the criteria for participation and often see elites and would-be elites jockey to qualify for a seat at the table, to access attendant resources and obtain a potential say in governance and resource allocation going forward (Menkhaus, 2003; Menkhaus, 2018). The choice of representatives also crystallises the distinction between locally vs. externally-driven processes, as well as their potential complementarity. Whereas international actors tend to stress the inclusion of 'civil society', which is important, communities may look to leaders who are idiosyncratic to each culture and community. In Somaliland, these comprise especially elders (*suldaan* or *aqiil*) and religious leaders (*ulama*).

The institutionalization of peace building is often part of the transition to or advance of state-building. However, where customary and state institutions are not necessarily compatible or are interwoven with power dynamics that are still conflictual, this linkage can compromise the sustainability of peace agreements. It is important to note that 'institutionalization' can be misleading. Customary and religious peacebuilding and peacekeeping practices are often *de facto* already institutionalized but may not be perceived as such for want of documentation, offices, or other paraphernalia external actors tend to associate with institutions that are part of state bureaucracies and governments.

Any actors setting up and overseeing the transition from peace- to state-building or prioritise one or the other must walk several tightropes. They must set the terms but ensuring participants' ownership. They must choose whom to include and which positioning to incentivize. And they must find a way to preserve locally rooted, legitimate, and understood peacebuilding mechanisms. They must embed these into an increasingly capable and complex state apparatus and ensure that funds are dispensed with adequate transparency and accountability. Finally, they must be mindful that this can conflict with systems of monetized patronage and patrimonialism that are often predominant in FCAS without a sufficiently diversified local revenue base (Schmidt, 2008; de Waal, 2014).

Somaliland has recently embarked upon such a tightrope as it introduced its National Peacebuilding Policy (NPP). The NPP sets out a hierarchy of peacebuilding bodies and demarcates roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures. This article examines process and policy outcomes after tracing the main literature and concepts of peacebuilding, as well as the development of peace and state-building in Somaliland. It sheds light on a critical juncture at which a fledgling government seeks to consolidate its democratic moorings and open itself to greater external influence, which may run the risk of undermining the locally appropriate and grounded peacebuilding that rendered this process possible in the first place. Seeing as this move from locally-driven peace and state-building to more 'classic' institution-building is largely unprecedented, the discussion both adds to the understanding of

peacebuilding and state-building as such, and informs policy and facilitation of the peace process in Somaliland.

METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

This article is based on several interviews one of the authors conducted as part of this case study, and a wide literature review, both academic and grey. Both authors work in the field of justice sector reform in Somaliland and have extensive knowledge of the available literature. This, as well as additional reading, has allowed the authors to contextualize, validate, and expand the limited scope of primary data, as well as to craft the transdisciplinary lenses through which Somaliland's National Peacebuilding strategy is assessed – spanning political science, international relations, peace and conflict studies, and Somaliland's history.

Although the authors, as practitioners, have both access to and knowledge of the grey literature on peacebuilding in Somaliland, there is one important limitation. At the time of research and to the authors' knowledge, no official records of the NPC's operations existed. The authors found no minutes of meetings, official statements, or any other publications by the committee or on its behalf. This renders any assessment of its efficacy rather difficult. Hence, this paper analyses the Somaliland Peacebuilding Policy architecture as it is intended rather than how it has performed in practice to gauge what the likely impact of this pivot on peace- and state-building in Somaliland will be.

This article proceeds by first providing an overview of the conceptual, theoretical, and historical scaffolding, discussing approaches to peacebuilding in theory and Somaliland's history with it in practice. Special attention is then paid to how Somaliland's communities balanced vertical exclusion (elite bargains vs. popular participation) with horizontal exclusion (relative participation of different social groups, that is women, youth, ethnic minorities, members of major/marginalized clans, elders, religious leaders, etc.), before mapping out the National Peacebuilding Policy and its institutions. The article then sets out three obstacles the new policy introduces, and argues that whereas Somaliland is at the point of transitioning its focus from peace- to state-building and expands the space for horizontal *in*clusion, the policy risks jettisoning the dynamism and communal grounding that have anchored its uniquely successful peacebuilding process.

Peace building: perspectives and approaches

The damage that conflict and violence inflicted upon trade, institutions, and wider human development is immense. The violent cataclysms of the twentieth century marked an apogee of such destruction. They also precipitated an eclectic and transdisciplinary effort to come to terms with the dimensions of suffering, poverty, and destitution, as well as refine the categories of groups that suffer violence and exclusion disproportionately (Autessere, 2010). The resulting paradigms—peace and conflict studies, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, reconciliation, and transformation—remain evolving spaces of debate, discourse, and contestation (Paris, 2012).

The first steps towards a more precise demarcation of 'peacebuilding' entailed Johan Galtung's distinction between 'negative peace' (the cessation of direct violence) and 'positive peace' (thriving social cooperation; Galtung, 1996), and the United Nations (UN) approach to peacebuilding, enunciated in 1992 and 2007. The UN distinguished peacebuilding from peacemaking and peacekeeping as aiming at, in the words of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali: "identify[ing] and support[ing] structures" to "[build] both human and institutional capacities" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: 204; Bellamy, 2010; Barker, 1990; Smith et al., 2011). Practitioner John Paul Lederach (1997) expanded the focus to transforming relationships in a bottom-up and context-specific learning process, which went beyond conflict resolution to engage post-conflict societies at multiple levels: grassroots, community leadership, and political leadership.

Conflict transformation looks to generate pathways and mechanisms for the disagreements, animosities, and contradictions that drive the conflict to unfold non-violently through deliberation or other innovative ways, anchored in pre-existing communal and social values, structures, and beliefs. It does not aim to remove contradictions but to remove the violence in their manifestation (Kelman, 2010). The emphasis on non-violent valves for conflicts is compatible with the reconciliation component of traditional conflict resolution, which pursues peaceful coexistence and even collaboration and cooperation among former enemies (Boutros-Ghali, 1992; Autessere, 2010). Both transformation and reconciliation seek to facilitate a human encounter "to express to and with one another the trauma of loss and their grief at that loss, and the anger that accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices experienced" (Lederach, 1997: 26).

In her discussion of Somaliland's trajectory, Njeri (2019:2) observes that, following the onset of the 'Global War on Terror,' international peacebuilding has taken the obverse approach: a state-centric, "formulaic universal template" that seeks to impose Global North-Western patterns of "civilized governance" onto societies in the Global South. In line with Ingiriis' (2021) comparison of

state-building in Somaliland and Somalia, she takes issue with this 'liberal peacebuilding' template focused on state institutions, democratic systems of governance, rule of law, and a market-oriented economy and therein echoes not only practitioners but also notable scholars in their critique of a "single paradigm-liberal internationalism" (Paris, 1997:63; Odendaal, 2012).

Brief consideration should be given to the exogenous pressures, obligations, and interests that cement state- and institution-centric peacebuilding and thus the global environment for peace processes. International donors, their foreign policy, and their political budget allocations processes tend to determine or at least influence peacebuilding policies and strategies. They are rarely driven by the needs and context of the fragile or conflict-affected society (FCAS) in question, but by domestic considerations, resource needs, and—at least among North-Western donors—the discursive might of "securitization, democratization and state-building, rule of law, human rights, civil society, and socioeconomic development" (Richmond, 2012: 327).

The central government in states that emerge from conflict, however, is either weak in institutional capacity or entirely absent. Although local resources, commitment, and social authorities can carry bottom-up processes for a while, further integration into international value chains and markets are prone to eventually prioritise external funds over domestic power-sharing, and leaders can be tempted by personal gains or start to rely upon rents from external funds for their political survival in a context of transactional politics. This asymmetry implies that the involvement of externals donors and international organizations can enable rent-seeking and dependency at the expense of local ownership and legitimacy – which, of course, are nonetheless prominent terms in each strategy and programme design (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016).

Along with Njeri, scholars, and practitioners increasingly question whether or not this peacebuilding policy package might be inappropriate for post-conflict contexts. It comes with predetermined processes, lists of stakeholders and local actors (Phillips, 2013), and the rule of law spectrum that includes a prefigured understanding of human rights and gender (Rigual, 2018). Yet, in these contexts, groups vie for relative rather than absolute power in a polycentric system of governance, and idiosyncratic religious and/or customary norms and authorities are often central (Weible and Sabatier, 2017; McFate, 2019; de Waal, 2014; de Waal, 2015). The conceptions of human rights and good governance that underpin liberal peacebuilding may be perceived as alien if introduced without consideration for existing beliefs and practices, be it human rights founded in Islam, such as the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights,

or the political independence of customary authorities. Ignorance of these circumstances and norms is likely to result in failure of process and loss of trust (Bulhan, 2004).

Somaliland provides an example of a peace process rooted in local beliefs and practices that, incidentally, gave rise to institutions more akin to those in the Global North-West than those built with external support. Following from Njeri's critique of Somaliland as a crucial counter-case to liberal peacebuilding, this article seeks to add further nuance by focusing on the selection of participants in Somaliland's formative peace process, and more recent state-building, the creeping in of 'formulaic' and state-centric elements, and the partial reproduction of exclusionary patterns inherent to liberal approaches to peacebuilding. Even more than a success story of bottom-up peacebuilding, this article argues that a closer look at Somaliland's 'homegrown' peacebuilding and its exposure to international peace and state builders can provide insight into its vulnerabilities, inescapable compromises, and potential for further inclusiveness and sustainability.

The foundations of the Somaliland peacebuilding architecture: a brief overview

With parliamentary and local council elections in 2021, Somaliland has strengthened its still-growing reputation of stability rather than internecine conflict (Bulhan, 2015; Al Jazeera, 2021). De Waal reflects that this state of affairs is driven by three factors: a shared experience of survival after quasi-genocidal attacks and mass displacement, a majority that shares kinship ties under the Isaaq clan umbrella, and a business community dependent on stable, uncontested management of Berbera port for exports and thus disinterested in funding multiple factions competing for rent and revenue (de Waal, 2007; de Waal, 2015; on the political manoeuvring that was part of Somaliland's state formation: Balthasar, 2013).

While state collapse in 1991 triggered a descent into civil war in southern Somalia, Somaliland's clan elders with support from diaspora and business owners took responsibility for peacemaking and clan reconciliation (Omaar, 2010).

They were able to gain the support of the various clan militias whose members had fought the previous government under the umbrella of the Somali National Movement (SNM) (Omaar, 1992). Crucially, they also succeeded in halting revenge killings and infighting, which, despite two intermittent relapses into armed contestation, allowed for the planning and implementation of wider peace building conferences (Bulhan, 2004).

These conferences accommodated discussions of governance, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and state-building, led by each clan's nominees. This reflects Somali customs of dispute settlement, during which the deliberation of issues at hand (*isaayo*, also *is-haysasho*) is used as a vehicle to build the goodwill and trust needed to tackle more deep-seated, intractable grievances and hostilities (*eed*) (Ware, 2021).

It is useful for contextualized understanding to briefly map out the peace process. The peace talks began in Burco, still under SNM leadership (Bradbury, 2009). The conference initiated a lengthy process of confidence-building among the Somaliland clans that met setbacks and renewed bouts of inter-communal violence along the way. It also established a space for clan leaders to negotiate what kind of governance and state structure would be best suited for their emerging *de facto* state of Somaliland. Here, the contrast to externally incentivized and convened processes already comes to the fore. Participation was voluntary, funded principally by local communities and Somaliland diaspora, with some smaller-scale support from INGOs and UN agencies during its later stages. Women played a logistics role (Walls et al., 2008).

The conference was led and facilitated by a committee largely made up of members of the SNM leadership, amended with traditional elders, religious leaders, and business owners to ensure broader clan representation (Ford et al., 2002).

In Burco, the committee announced independence, the first cabinet, and Abdirahman Ahmed Ali 'Tuur' as the first President of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland (Omaar, 1992). Two years later, another conference in Borama adopted a roadmap for the formation of state institutions, the guiding principles and framework of the Somaliland National Peace Charter and current constitutional structure of Somaliland, and paved the way for the transition of power to the new President Mohamed Ibrahim 'Egal' (Drysdale, 1994).

The hand-over from Tuur to Egal was not uncontested, both between the two leaders' major clans and by other clan groups who had already criticized the power-sharing and decision-making arrangements at Burco (Bryden, 2003). The first years of Egal's presidency were embroiled in recurrent clan conflicts that stemmed from these misgivings. Still, the relatively unanimous support from business owners allowed for comprehensive integration of clan militias into the nascent military and security forces (Walls, 2014). Egal was also able to draw on support from the region's major clan elders of the *Golaha Guurtida* (or, as it has become known in popular parlance, the *Guurti*, meaning 'council of elders', but referring to the second chamber in Somaliland's bicameral parliamentary system). These elders not only

side-lined other candidates at Borama (de Waal, 2015), but also decided to extend President Egal's term by another one and a half years to avoid violent conflict (WSP, 2005).

The Borama conference was followed by several smaller regional or intra-clan conferences to iron out lingering differences, and to involve representatives of not-yet included clans in the nascent institutions. The intermittent breakdowns and eruptions of violence had spurred the realization that uninvolved communities presented potential spoilers to an agreement that could not be permitted to fail. Rather than relying solely on the effort to integrate armed fighters into a sizeable security sector, peace committees were deployed to settle conflicts more efficiently (Bryden, 2003).

Whilst these processes were ongoing, the *Guurti* convened another national conference in Hargeisa. To avoid renewed conflict (Omaar, 1992), the Hargeisa Peace and Reconciliation Conference 1997 strived for and achieved greater participation and outreach than its predecessors. Although some clan representatives criticized the extent of government control over the selection of representatives and information sharing, President Egal was confirmed for another five-year term and Dahir Rayale Kahin was elected as vice president. Parliamentary membership and the Somaliland National Peace Charter were amended, and a draft provisional constitution was introduced (WSP, 2005).

Several observers credit these conferences with moving from *is-haysasho* to *eed*, some interim clashes between parties notwithstanding (Bulhan, 2004; Omaar, 1992). Especially in Berbera and Burco, these clashes triggered renewed displacement, destruction, and a cycle of revenge killings (Omaar, 2010). Although the government's reach remained thus limited, it now comprised a president and vice-president, two chambers of parliament, an appointed cabinet of ministers, and some early appointees to the new judiciary – as a result of a process with elders in the front seat – although it fell short of a conclusive peace and did not furnish clear provisions for peace enforcement (Omaar, 1992; Omaar, 2010).

Vertical and horizontal exclusion

Peace processes must generally balance elite-level bargains (vertical ex/inclusion) for effectiveness and broad social participation (horizontal ex/inclusion) for legitimacy and sustainability. Documentation and accounts available from this process testify to the extent to which the process was locally owned, which, together with the *Guurti*, makes Somaliland stand out as an example of a locally grounded pathway for the non-

violent deliberation of differences (Eubank, 2010: 13)[2] The armed conflicts in Berbera and Burco, as well as the successful de-escalation of disputes at the Burco, Borama, and Hargeisa Conferences, had highlighted the need to retain elders' mediation and reconciliation roles as part of the new government's infrastructure (MoI, PBCSP, 2012; Bradbury, 2009). This also meant that what Walls, Schueller, and Ekman identified as the principal barrier to women's inclusion, the clan system, was anchored more deeply. The passages are worth quoting at length: 1997 saw the end of a seven-year sequence of conferences that ushered in a period of sustained peace and has supported a series of popular elections. However, the patriarchal nature of this system remains entrenched, with women largely excluded from formal political decision-making (…). Somaliland's political settlement continues to be underpinned by clan, which in diverse ways has been incorporated into state-building and political decision-making processes. This dual governance system places customary kinship structures alongside local councils, and legislative, judicial and executive branches of 'formal' government (…). Our gendered analysis of the current Somaliland political settlement concludes that the clan system supports a stable but non-inclusive political settlement. This situation is sometimes supported by Islamic teachings on the appropriate role of women, although at other times, Islam offers an argument for greater gender inclusivity than is permitted by the customary system. Ultimately, it seems clear that the primary cause of the lack of gender inclusivity lies with the continued predominance of the clan system rather than with religious interpretation or some other causal variable. (Walls et al., 2017: 26)

In their analysis, the authors nevertheless stress that clan homogeneity and elder mediation were essential for the stability of the settlement. They cite Phillips' (2013) findings that Somaliland's 'vertical exclusion'—the focus on elites, excluding other social strata—was conducive to short to medium-term stability. They also note that Philipps did not employ a gendered lens and therefore does not highlight the extent to which this vertical exclusion contained aspects of 'horizontal exclusion'—the focus on one social group, such as men, at the expense of others, such as women. Focusing on clan elites meant focusing virtually exclusively on men.

This is not to say that women had not been involved at all. They played important roles in the organization and facilitation of talks, background negotiations, fundraising, and dispute resolution (Malito, 2017; Wall et al., 2017). They quote the chairperson of the now-governing Kulmiye party women's wing, Anab Omar Ileye, that it was the women involved in bringing opposing factions back to the table who first suggested an Upper House of Elders, modeled after the British House of Lords, which ultimately became the *Goolaha Guurtida.* Women were part of proposing such solutions, and were pivotal in rendering non-violent deliberations possible, but within these negotiations were relegated to observer status and excluded from decision-making entirely (Wiuff Moe, 2011; WSP, 2005). That no woman candidate in Somaliland's recent elections was successful illustrates the extent to which this gendered kind of horizontal exclusion has become engrained in Somaliland politics.

By tradition, elders are men. Decisions on behalf of the clan or inter-clan agreements are made by an assembly of male clan members. Less visible but equally exclusionary, the methods elders employ to resolve disputes disadvantage women, because they prioritise the avoidance of retaliatory violence between kinship groups over the safeguarding of individual and especially women's integrity. Women are traditionally denied access to customary justice proceedings or negotiations or require male representation. As survivors of sexual violence, women do not receive the compensation that is paid to their male relatives instead. In some cases, survivors may be forced to marry their rapist. Somaliland's courts, police, and Islamic Arbitration Centres are not yet in a position to effectively supplant elders as principal guarantors of peace and arbiters of grievances, and the *Guurti* has yet to reassess its mandate or composition (Gundel and Dharbaxo, 2006; Le Sage, 2005; Burcikova and Mydlak, 2020).

Such a reassessment may be overdue. Many new conflicts and sources of insecurity fall outside elders' traditional remit and entail a complexity that elders have little precedence to look to or provisions in the customary framework, the *xeer.* Sexual violence presents one such case, which elders are also legally barred from adjudicating, with limited practical implication. Growing urbanization, land price appreciation due to returning diaspora and sunk investments by elites, corruption, and mismanagement of land (Walls et al., 2017), and increasing extraction of minerals and rare earths, as well as potential exploration of hydrocarbons, along with pre- and post-election violence have all cast traditional mediation practices as ineffective and time-consuming and ultimately increase the demand for a functioning government-led approach (Bradbury, 2009).

Already in 2006, the *Guurti* issued the 'Elders

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[2] "The bottom-up hybrid peace that emerged in Somaliland consisted of the fusion of local structures, practices, values and identities that were a result of an 'inclusive' participatory process, which supports MacGinty's alternative conception of peacebuilding as one that explores indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and localised responses to conflict" from Njeri (2019, 6). For documentation, see: Eubank 2010.

Declaration' to prohibit revenge killings. Compliance would drastically reduce elders' socio-political relevance. As of now, however, the Somaliland judiciary is not sufficiently coherent and well-equipped to provide a reliable alternative. The resulting default to elders sustains the spectre of inter-clan conflict as it ensures that all disputes assume a clan dimension (MoI, PBCSP, 2012). This is because, in the above-cited assessment's words, the current "political settlement is based on male superiority, female subordination and, most importantly, a patriarchal clan-based system underpinned by patronage networks" (Walls et al., 2017: 52), but is still needed to stave off even more destructive direct violence as long as state security institutions are unable to contain it.

Yet, everyday dispute settlement by elders differs from peace conferences in that they remain at the level of *is-haysasho* and leave *eed* largely untouched. The continued primacy of this method paradoxically maintains the constant possibility of new clannist violence because each dispute, regardless of how mundane, that is brought to elders assumes a clan dimension.[3] The reliance on elders for conflict resolution thus perpetuates itself and the horizontal exclusion of especially women that comes with it.

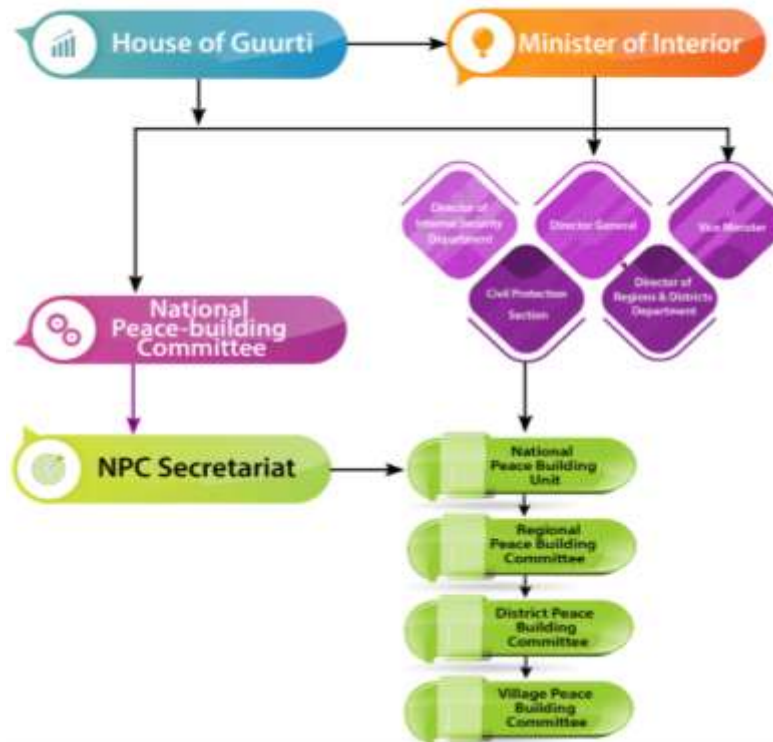**The Somaliland peace building policy**

The Somaliland government has set out a National Peacebuilding Policy (NPP) to surmount these obstacles and guard the progress made by successive democratic elections (ICG, 2015), a challenge beyond elders' expertise as peacekeepers (Fadal, 2011). Initially, this policy had envisioned an institutional framework and apparatus for more effective coordination at the village, district, regional, and national levels, as well as between resolution, prevention, and peacebuilding efforts. A deepening of coordination was also needed to solidify Somaliland's pluralist justice sector, which encompasses elders practicing the customary *xeer* sometimes with formal state sanction (Omaar, 2010), religious scholars (ulama and sheikhs) resolving family disputes according to *shari'ah*, and state courts nominally but not yet consistently applying state law. Finally, the NPP set out to establish guidelines and roles for conflict prevention and dispute resolution to overcome the *ad hoc* nature with which committees and elders had been operating, as well as to address the increasing involvement of multiple international partners in Somaliland's trajectories,

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[3] This observation is not the authors' alone but stems from one of the author's extensive work with Sif Heide-Ottosen and Juuso V.M. Miettunen, for which the author is immensely grateful.

organizations, and states (MoI, PBSCP, 2012).

Most policy formation processes span a period of years, especially in a politically fragile and infrastructure-poor place that requires high levels of sensitivity to context (Weible et al., 2012). The SPP, however, was developed in a short time, and consultations were limited to urban locations (MoI, PBSCP, 2012). It was prepared by a cross-ministerial government committee headed by the Ministry of the Interior's (MoI) Department of Peace building and supported by the United Nations Development Programme. The committee reviewed existing documentation, laws, policies, regulations, and directives, held public consultations, and conducted focus group discussions and key informant interviews with community leaders and civil society actors. But the process unfolded according to externally imposed project targets and deadlines that limited the scope of its outreach and the number of people able to provide input. Figure 1 shows the Somaliland peace building structures. The outcome covers a wide range of areas: capacity building for government branches, peace education for communities, and a conflict early warning system. At the core of the NPP are the institutions mandated to support, implement, and guide its components. These include joint committees of elders and government officials that are tasked with advising regional councils and mediating where needed (MoI, PBSCP, 2012). The new infrastructure is overseen by the National Peace Committee (NPC), which is chaired by the Minister of the Interior and comprises delegates from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Social Development and Labour, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Works, and the *Guurti*, including elders and religious leaders. The national, regional, district and village-level committees that fall under the NPC's and the MoI's auspices are intended as a two-way street, channeling information and input from the village level upward. Table 1 map out articular institutions of interest.

The NPP institutions and provisions complement the existing peacebuilding framework, notably Article 57 of the Somaliland Constitution, which delineates the responsibilities of the *Guurti* as the Upper House of parliament; Article 14 of the Local Governance Law No. 23/2001, which endows the Regional Governors with oversight over regional development and the in the preceding Article stipulated Regional Development Councils that also act as mediators; and the MoI's Peace building Unit, which oversees peacebuilding and security more widely. Successful coordination thus largely depends on the Peacebuilding Unit's capacity and commitment, and, if done effectively, presents considerable potential for improved peace- and thus also state-building (MoI, PBSCP, 2012). This is also because the NPP decentralizes peacebuilding and conflict

Figure 1. Somaliland peace building structure.
Source: Author

resolution to villages and communities, thus at least nominally harnessing the grounding in local, indigenous structures and norms that has been credited with the success of Somaliland's last decades.

Yet, the NPP has not been without challenges, starting from the day of its ratification. Most significantly, the implementation at the village and community level appears to proceed only slowly, with insufficient visible government commitment. Government response to local conflict remains slow and seem to bypass the NPP infrastructure. For instance, in April 2019, President Muse Bihi declared a state of emergency for three districts in the Sanaag region after one civilian and two soldiers had died in suspected revenge killings. In Ceel Afweyne in 2020, where armed conflict threatened to escalate with much wider political significance, the government was slow to react and mobilize its institutions and prerogatives (ICG, 2018).

The lack of local uptake may also reflect the limited consultations during the NPP's development, a mere five public consultations and three workshops, documented in reports. Communities in conflict show little awareness of the NPP and thus do not call upon it when seeking support or mediation. The lack of a comprehensive legal framework for the resolution or management of conflicts equally falls short of the Policy's aim to improve coordination among Somaliland's pluralist actors, ceding the stage to elders who continue to practice traditional methods (Eubank, 2010).

Another challenge that imposes urgency on the consolidation of Somaliland's approach to peacebuilding and its maintenance stems from rapid urbanization and is an economic one. Traditionally, communities support elders and fellow mediators with small payments and in-kind contributions, providing camels and goats for sale and food. As elders move to urban areas, expenses involved in mediation become more complex. At the time of writing, the NPP framework contains no provision for budgets to ensure that the mandated actors are able to fulfil their roles, which risks blunting the NPP's impact even if political will and social commitment were to ensure its purchase among conflicting communities.

Obstacles to peace building in Somaliland

Somaliland pursued a peace building project while Somalia insisted on state building project [*sic!*] before

Table 1. Somaliland peace building and conflict resolution structures (MoI, PBSCP, 2012).

Committee name	The Mandate	Jurisdiction
Somaliland National Peace Committee	The Somaliland National Peace Committee serves as a cross-ministerial steering committee to oversee the SPP's implementation. The NPC is chaired by *Guurti* elders and coordinated by the Minister of Interior. Its primary responsibility is to review the progress of the various ministries in implementing the National Peace building and Community Security Policy.	National
The Somaliland Peace Forum	The Forum is an annual meeting that convenes government officials and civil society organizations to review peace and community security in Somaliland. It is a platform for consultation, collaboration, cooperation, and coordination.	National
The Somaliland Peace building and Community Security Unit	Housed within the Ministry of Interior, under the Director of Internal Security, the Peace building and Community Security Unit is the principal government entity responsible for coordinating, implementing, as well as monitoring, and evaluating projects relating to peace and community security.	National
The Regional Peace Committee	The Committee's primary tasks are mediation and conflict resolution, complementing elders' intervention in clan conflicts and civil society or police and courts in their work on prevention and prosecution of serious crimes that cannot be resolved by families or elders.	Regional
The District Safety Committees	These joint government & civil society committees advise the District Council Executive Committees on policies and interventions to sustainably improve the perceived and real physical safety of the districts' residents, as well as their cooperation with police and local authorities.	District
Community Committees	These include village peace committees and community safety committees, established in support of peace building and community safety activities and required to share local information and best practices with the Peace building and Community Security Unit under the Ministry of Interior.	Village and Community Level

Source: MoI, PBSCP, 2012

anything else. (…) Somaliland now practices top-down political approaches, while Somalia has been shifted from a top-down to a bottom-up approach (Ingiriis, 2021:5-6).

Ingiriis' comparison of trajectories could be read as suggesting that Somaliland's peace process has laid the groundwork for the very state-building Somalia embarked upon at the Mbagathi Conference. There, Somali elites achieved a clan-based power-sharing formula and federal state-building model, with little to no popular participation.

After the 2020 parliament elections had been repeatedly postponed in Somalia and ultimately reverted to previous elder-delegate-selection models, the turn to the local and bottom-up programming appears to intensify.

However, Ingiriis intersperses this observation with a caution. Rather than Somalia simply being late to the proper sequencing, as a conflict transformation lens might suggest *prima facie*, he points out that: "when one starts with peace building, one ignores state building [*sic!*] and vice versa" (Ingiriis, 2021: 5). He does not comment on whether this implies that Somaliland is abandoning the thus far highly promising locally grounded approach that he, Njeri, and others extol, nor on whether it embraces instead the 'formulaic' template that they critique. This is the question posed in this discussion of the NPP framework, which follows and is divided into three arguments: the NPP not only falls short of buttressing customary methods but introduces non-constructive ambiguity; the NPP leaves both vertical and horizontal exclusion largely unchanged; and the NPP opens space for extraversion and other rent-seeking politics the general avoidance of which had been a key component of Somaliland's success story.

Obstacles to conflict transformation

Somali elders command social authority by two factors: they are elected by their community members based on integrity and skill, and they work voluntarily. Traditionally,

only expenses are covered for elders. Elder leadership in peace processes and peace committees, even if not entirely community-driven but established and funded by international (non-)governmental organizations, thus presents an opportunity for genuine local ownership of peace, development, and policy processes.

The concept 'local ownership' permeates the design of and rhetoric around peacebuilding, development, humanitarian interventions, and state-building or stabilization efforts. Its realization in practice is rare (Donais, 2009; McCann, 2015; Ebiede, 2020). Wong argues that a lack of definitional clarity is likely to blunt the concept's impact on policy, resource-allocation, and approach to conflict resolution or transformation within the liberal peacebuilding model (Wong, 2013). Recent experience has not assuaged these cautions. Instead, efforts to reformulate the field (Richmond, 2012) have been blunted by formulaic top-down approaches (especially a continuation of international donor-driven elite engagement) at the expense of meaningful bottom-up approaches. It stands to question whether 'the local turn' in state and peacebuilding efforts, such as that in Somalia, holds promise to achieve a more clearly defined and mapped out application of 'local ownership' and locally appropriate conflict transformation in policy and practice (MacGinty and Richmond, 2013).

The Somaliland National peace building Policy has not shown such promise. Instead of a 'local turn,' local context and customary practices appear subsumed under a top-heavy institutional structure, geared more towards improving public infrastructure and legal frameworks at the centre than to overcoming challenges to peacebuilding and its maintenance at the periphery (Richmond, 2011; Weible and Sabatier, 2017). Bradbury (1994), in one of the first explorations of ways out of the violence and fragmentation in Somalia, observed that international actors' emphasis on institutional and legal development in state-building was poised to pay insufficient attention to existing local community structures, arrangements, and norms, which Bradbury warned would undermine local purchase, slow down progress, and ultimately be ineffective at community and district levels. Twenty-seven years on, Mohamed Ingiriis' verdict appears to bear out this prediction: "The externally-directed state building project in southern Somalia is about building buildings in Mogadishu; it is not about changing people's lives for the better" (2021:14).

Recent and not-so-recent moves toward 'localization,' partnerships, between international and local actors, appear to address this quandary, but much depends on the execution and implementation. Without due consideration of context and how roles, relationships, approaches, capacities, and norms align, collaboration of international or state and local peacebuilding actors is likely to fail (Richmond, 2011; van Brabant, 2010). In Somaliland, context insensitive top-down institutionalization has direct implications for elders and their ability to act as genuine community leaders and mediators external to political processes.

An example of the important differences between superficial and nuanced understanding is the politicization of clan. De Waal (2020) argues that, having just lost a nationalist war against neighboring Ethiopia along with Soviet patronage, Somalia's military government moved to protect itself against potential coup attempts. Rather than an expression of a primordial segmentary group identity, the division of government and opposition into clan units appears thus as a deliberate undertaking by influential political entrepreneurs who were leveraging clan for influence, as well as to mobilize armed units to back up their gambits.

The rapid politicization of the clan also cast elders onto the political stage, in part reminiscent of some colonial policies but especially detrimental to elders' standing as community leaders and mediators. Different faction leaders 'appointed' elders who would galvanize clan members to support them or simply legitimate their claim to represent their clans or sub-clans. This blurred lines between customary mediation for local disputes and government-led processes (Boege, 2011). With clan now eminently political, even small, localized disputes now threatened to draw in government actors and their armed forces – precisely because elders' position as first responders immediately induces a clan dimension.

The long conflict between the federal member states Puntland and Galmudug over the important dry port city of Galkayo exemplifies this dynamic. The conflict's origin predates colonial times with competing claims to the area by the Hawiye-Habargidir-Sa'ad and Darood-Harti-Majerteen clans, and only recently a joint police force and committees have been able to prevent herder clashes in the city's rural surrounds from translating into full-fledged confrontations between state security forces (Interpeace and PDRC, 2017; Mussa and Hassan, 2020).

This is not to say that elders cooperating with government actors cannot improve mediation and enforcement of agreements, both of which have been part and parcel of Somaliland's origin story and early support for customary mediation (Bulhan, 2004; Gundel and Dharbaxo, 2006). Past reforms have aimed to supporting elders with conflicts or grievances that exceeded their expertise and precedence, reviewing and documenting local *xeer* agreements, and rendering customary forums more inclusive to better ground them in the communities they serve. The NPP, by contrast, lifts elders into roles of oversight in government institutions with somewhat ambiguous remit.

The NPP thus not only deepens elders' involvement in

politics but jeopardizes the very cohesion and local legitimacy that enabled elders to strengthen Somaliland's peacebuilding process. It also risks deepening political rifts among elders, and veers dangerously close to the many attempts to incorporate customary institutions into the official government architecture, and therefore to jettisoning a conflict transformation approach with genuine local ownership along with the dynamism, autonomy, and affordability that distinguish customary dispute resolution and mediation methods (Paris, 1997; Weible and Sabatier, 2017).

Obstacles to inclusive participation

We should recall here the earlier observation that their leadership alongside politicians, military officers, religious leaders, poets, and businessmen (and they were mostly men) who funded the gatherings and demobilization of fighters (Yusuf and Bradbury, 2012; Höhne, 2008) constituted the vertical exclusion that tends to strengthen settlements in the short to medium-term, whereas the implicit horizontal exclusion of women and members of vulnerable and marginalized groups reproduced the patriarchal and discriminatory nomadic legacy inherent in customary practices. It is crucial to understand why the primacy of elders and customary practices entails such horizontal exclusion.

Customary practices in Somaliland have their roots in the nomadic pastoralist livelihoods that endure today, in livestock as the principal export good, in the socio-political importance of elders, and in the social stratification by clan. Elders' role in the settlement and mediation of all types of disputes as well as during the peace and reconciliation conferences has been discussed at length (Bradbury, 1994). The customary *xeer* comprises countless locally negotiated procedures that govern relations between two or more clans in a given location, particularly access to resources in one clan's homeland (*deegaan*), and compensation catalogues for the more severe violations of the agreement. Although *xeer* translates to English as 'there is an agreement between us,' these agreements follow a general framework, derived from both Islamic and nomadic norms, in the southern inter-riverine areas of Somalia adjusted to the more sedentary agro-pastoralist traditions (Gundel and Dharbaxo, 2006; Cassanelli, 2015; Barnes, 2006; Mydlak, 2020).

The general guidelines include a catalogue for compensation payments that sets a woman's worth at half that of a man when killed, injured, or otherwise harmed, provisions that prevent women from approaching elders directly and deny their voice and vote in proceedings, and exclude certain groups almost entirely.

These comprise especially the 'occupational castes' – the Gabooye, Yibir, or Tumaal (Hill, 2010). Such groups and women, alongside children, are generally among the most affected by conflict and civil unrest globally, which the *xeer* reflects in drawing on Islamic principles and declaring them and the elderly as to be protected from violence during feuds, as *biri-mageydo*: 'saved from the spear' (WSP, 2005; Gundel and Dharbaxo, 2006).

Despite years of lobbying by women's advocates of the Nagaad Network or outstanding individuals such as former Minister Edna Aden Ismail and Minister Shukri Haji Ismail, this patriarchal power structure remains largely unchanged. The House of Elders, religious leaders, male politicians, and male business owners wield tremendous power, and social norms practiced in everyday life reflect it. The 2021 Parliament and local elections elevated a well-known campaigner for marginalized groups and youth to the position of Mayor of Hargeisa, and a member of the Gabooye was elected to parliament MP with the highest share of votes of all parliamentarians, but not a single female candidate obtained a seat.

Moreover, representation does not immediately change practice. Members of marginalized groups continue to face discrimination, barriers to land ownership, and resistance against any marriage with a member of one of the major clans. Horizontal equality or exclusion is lived, and institutions reflect them.

The NPP does little to nothing to change this. With mostly male ministers and elders at the helm, it offers no provisions that could bridge social caveats and lift thus far excluded groups into positions of responsibility and visibility. This is particularly surprising as support for elders struggling to mediate among shifting, displaced, mobile, urbanizing, and very young communities has highlighted the improvements in reach, traction, legitimacy, and efficiency that greater inclusion can bring (Gundel, 2020). Instead, it appears that the NPP projects and connects across the state, region, district, and village levels the very structures and relationships that elders and mayors considered insufficient in 2006 and called for external support to review and enhance them. Overcoming horizontal exclusion is not a mere advocacy issue. It also holds promise for peacebuilding's efficacy, which the NPP is designed to enhance, as increasing amounts of evidence show that greater inclusion correlates with success and sustainability of peace agreements (Yousuf and Newton, 2013).

Obstacles to voluntarism and encouraging external resource reliant practices

The spectre that has perhaps done the most damage to

state-building in Somalia and that Somaliland had initially bypassed successfully is that of extraversion (Menkhaus, 2003; Menkhaus, 2018). Tobias Hagman (2016:26) in his analysis of 'Stabilization, Extraversion and Political Settlements in Somalia' follows scholars Samir Amin and Jean-François Bayart in defining 'elite extraversion' as elites converting "dependence into resources and authority" via "coercion, trickery, flight, intermediation, appropriation, and rejection." The concept thereby expands upon its often usedoften-cited brethren rent-seeking and rentierism through its emphasis on the dependence that should disadvantage recipients of external support but is instrumentalized by political and business entrepreneurs for their own gain.

It would add unnecessary length to unpack each method of extraversion in detail given the focus of this paper. It should, however, be mentioned that this form of extraversion is a cornerstone of what de Waal (2014) calls the multi-level 'political marketplace' that characterizes governance in East Africa and the Horn: 'pervasive monetized patronage' for which conflict entrepreneurs turn public budgets and other rents and revenue into political budgets. These are used to purchase loyalty among other political entrepreneurs, business actors, and armed groups, the latter themselves a form of currency. The ability to invoke shared identity, such as clan or faith, acts as a discount, whereas multiple sources of revenue, such as regional patron states meddling in internal affairs and counterterrorism budgets in search of local partners, drive the price up.

The implications for stability and state-building are evident. De Waal goes so far as to speculate that state-building along liberal, North-Western lines may not be possible in such a marketized environment (2014:4). That Somaliland during its early formation had limited access to the regional political marketplace also poses the question (for further study) as to whether this was due to Somaliland's specific geopolitical position at the time or whether liberal peace and state-building inadvertently facilitate the capture of rents and institutions, and thus the creation of political budgets and marketplace dynamics.

It would be odd to claim today that Somaliland is not embedded in regional and international dynamics. The main streets in and between Hargeisa, Berbera, Borama, or Burco are seamed by billboards that attribute a clinic to one international non-governmental organization and a school to a Kuwaiti fund. The building of the Sheik district hospital, school, and large resting garden by a Kuwaiti businessman in the Sheik district also testify to the importance of external funds. Berbera port is leased to the Emirati firm DP World and the State of Ethiopia and is in the process of being linked to Addis Ababa by road. This expansion of outside influence and presence in

Somaliland poses a test to Somaliland's peacebuilding model and thus also to its much-heralded role as a counter-case to liberal peace- and state-building.

The logic of the political marketplace, extraversion, and rent-seeking, in general, are not only incompatible but inimical to customary mediation in Somaliland. Aside from some political co-optation during the colonial period (Gundel and Dharbaxo, 2006), elders' work is local and is voluntary. The *Guurti* already presents a challenge to this tradition, but its institution as Upper House and somewhat of a check on other branches of government does preserve elders' independence at least in principle.

The *Guurti* elders have also not had to face re-elections. Their involvement in the NPP architecture both deepens their institutionalization and increases the expenses involved in their work. For instance, committee members are required to travel to potential conflict hotspots to verify early warning alerts to the MoI and regional governors. Resources for such undertakings are not always available or affordable for local communities, who would be expected to contribute to any elder intervention. Whereas this could present an additional deterrent to engagement in armed conflict, its open questions on funding, possible projectization, and involvement of government budgets that risk turning customary mediation from a value-based activity into an income-generating one.

Scholars have already noted the role of external support in warping traditional peacebuilding methods from locally sustainable into time-limited activities dependent on outside support, pressed into funding cycles, and vulnerable to extraversion (inter alia: Odendaal, 2013). An interviewed elder involved in one of the peace committees voiced such discontent. He noted that one of the reasons he and fellow elders seldom received feedback or acknowledgment of their reports on early warnings was that the MoI's Department of peace building had been established with project funds, and the project had run out. This one-way flow of information, from the bottom up, reflects the state's operational style in matters of national security. Moreover, the institutionalization of the hierarchal one-way information flow reinforces the inequality of power between the state and non-state actors. It diminishes local agency in responding to conflict and insecurity.

The reporting chain thrusts elders into further ambivalence. Many community members approach elders to contain disputes and prevent them from reaching public, political, and potentially armed dimensions. This can contain localized disputes from spilling over but can also deny victims' access to justice, particularly survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. It stands to question if elders required to report to government institutions on localized disputes could disrupt the trust

that underpins these relationships. Some might even appear to no longer represent their own clans where government actors are affiliated otherwise. To then also be disregarded by their official interlocutors because of concluding funding cycles might add insult to injury for many elders' social authority.

It is also telling that the government-mandated peacebuilding architecture has not appeared to be meaningfully involved in mediation in Ceel Afweyne. This may have been a pragmatic choice and reflects the seriousness of the conflict. Interviewed representatives of the regional governors' office in Hargeisa explained that the NPP's architecture has proven cumbersome, weighed down by meetings and more meetings. These meetings include peace dialogues, forums, training, and a variety of workshops, all with a budget and technical support from international development partners.

This could suggest that the Somaliland government does not have full confidence in its own peacebuilding institutions yet. It is most certainly reflective of the transformation of dependence on outside funding into appropriation of resources and expansion of authority that is characteristic of extraversion. Meetings, trainings, and workshops provide a plethora of opportunities for external funds to be sunk. Investments into these sometimes-one-off events gravitate towards operational logistics rather than the design of more long-term courses. Interviewed Somaliland MoI staff members expressed their surprise that elder meetings under the NPP's umbrella are convened in expensive hotels rather than, as tradition would have it, under not-so-expensive trees.

Trainings in particular are a popular peacebuilding activity, not merely since the NPP's inauguration. A multitude of trainings are catalogued in different UN agencies and international organizations' project documentation.[4] The meeting held by elders and MoI representatives in Hargeisa in January 2021 did not differ fundamentally. Such meetings are not often at the elders' request and are not always thoroughly coordinated for timing and content. Past studies, such as that by Watkins and Swidler (2013), have argued that donors favour training as a budget item because the mere holding of training can simultaneously become a performance indicator: the programme said it would hold training and so it did. Content, impact, and relevance become secondary.

Such trainings furthermore move local ownership to the backseat. Staff members working in the regional

governor's office in Hargeisa indicated that most are designed, facilitated, and led by NGO program staff, often relatively young men with few years' experiences in actual conflict areas. It stands to question how appropriate this format is for elders and other senior community leaders who participate. Answering this question goes beyond the scope of this study, but it certainly presents an important line of inquiry. How, if at all, can such facilitation to bridge customary norms and state-building bypass the dissonance this is likely to create?

The final point here is a prosaic one. Interviewed MoI staff lamented that peacebuilding initiatives that rely on speedy engagement to pre-empt escalation into direct violence are vulnerable to delays under the NPP architecture because of slow disbursement of funds. Customary peace committees that dynamically and quickly respond to early warnings and report to the ministerial counterparts may find themselves waiting three to six weeks until funds and roadmaps are approved and fielded.

In sum, the confluence of increased external involvement (incl. UN agency support and other internationally-funded state-building programmes) and the formal incorporation of peacebuilding activities into the very same government infrastructure does not merely pose challenges to the very strengths of Somaliland's localized conflict transformation has exhibited. It also invites one of the most volatile aspects of well-funded internationalized liberal peace- and state-building. It risks embedding Somaliland, its elders, and its communities further into the local, regional, and global political marketplace.

Conclusion

Somaliland has reached a critical juncture that awaits FCAS and entities undergoing post-conflict peacebuilding and state-building. A closer analysis of the pressures on and potential pitfalls for Somaliland's transition is thus instructive for scholars and practitioners alike. One of the few areas in which liberal peacebuilding and substantive external influence were absent, Somaliland has already provided material for various studies into hybrid or localized peace building.

However, not only are peace and state-building in other areas incrementally turning towards localized, bottom-up engagement as top-down state-building stalls. Somaliland's own experience has not been without upsets or trade-offs, particularly the horizontal exclusion of women, youth, and members of marginalized groups, for its reliance on established but highly patriarchal social authority structures.

This approach has enabled political elites to rely on the

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[4] Reviewed training documentation for the period of 2007-2018 shows budget lines for transport, meals, training material, branding and communication costs, accommodation, and consultancy fees for the trainer.

nimble, low-cost, and familiar customary dispute resolution mechanisms, which combined with a strong political settlement has produced short and medium-term stability. Somaliland's subsequent exposure to external funds as it moves towards more advanced state-building poses a challenge to the traditional role of elders jeopardizes the efficacy of established peacebuilding mechanisms, and risks entrenching both vertical and horizontal exclusion rather than overcoming them.

The NPP illustrates several of these pitfalls. Customary leaders are further integrated into a resource-intensive and more bureaucratic structure. This slows their ability to respond as they depend on hierarchical processes, elements of which can become entirely dysfunctional as they rely on external funding – funding that may cease based on donor countries' funding cycles or political priorities beyond the control of Somaliland's institutions. It also exposes elders further to elite politics that elsewhere have proven vulnerable to rent-seeking when an influx of funds increases. Moreover, anchoring clan-based reconciliation more deeply in government-community interaction runs the risk of exacerbating the marginalization of those already largely excluded from decision-making processes.

In short, the NPP brings Somaliland closer to the pitfalls of traditional liberal peacebuilding, much-critiqued in literature, and increasingly moved away from in contexts where it has already stalled. Instead of decoupling locally grounded, legitimate, and dynamic, peacebuilding mechanisms from state-building that must be compatible with the global context administrations operate within; its design subsumes these mechanisms under cantankerous processes with competing priorities. The opposite may be needed. Preserving elders' ability to reconcile their communities and preserve peace and facilitating their collaboration with—rather than direct inclusion in—increasingly more inclusive and efficient state institutions.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

The quest of democratic governance for sustainable peace in Ethiopia: the case of Oromo Protest of 2014-2018

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This article examines the inexorableness of democratic governance in multinational states for sustainable peace by considering the essential questions of the Oromo Protests in Ethiopia from 2014 to 2018. Ethiopia adopted the policy of a 'democratic developmental state' in post-2000, which aimed to realize development initially and then democracy. However, the serious mass struggle was prompted in Ethiopia by the demand for a democratic type of government. And this imperative act became conspicuous in Ethiopia following the outbreak of protest in the Oromia National Regional State in 2014 and resulted in 2018 political changes within the ruling regime. The article was steered as a qualitative research in which both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions and secondary data were collected from literature through content analysis. Then, Oromo in Ethiopia have been raising the central questions of owning their land for three particular reasons; first, to develop themselves by effectively utilizing available resources, second, to respect human security (not to be displaced from their land, avoid massive human rights violation, and others); thirdly, the questions of self-governance or exercise political power within their territory. These serious questions are pressed on the demand for effective democratization in Ethiopia to reconcile it. Since democratic governance could answer all questions of effective development by averting unequal distribution of resources and averting the threats to human security by amending state-society relationships and it would pave the way to exercise power through democratic election.

Key words: Democratic Governance, Sustainable Peace, Ethiopia, and Oromo Protest

INTRODUCTION

African states are found in vicious circles of deficiency of development and sustainable peace, which in one way or another is connected with the questions of the democratization process in the continent after

independence (Wasara, 2002). Scholars identified the positive relationship between democracy, development, and sustainable peace (Sørensen, 1990). That means the status of democracy directly influences the level of development and security status of a given country. On contrary, following the emergence of China and other Asian countries the relevance of democracy for development and sustainable peace started to be questioned (Chan, 2002) and democracy has been considered secondary to development (Friedman, 1994). In Africa, several issues have been pinpointed as the causes for the worse-off situation of development like; colonialism, corruption, skill gaps, failure in policy orientation, etc. Above all, the political condition in Africa was stated as the bottle-neck to the development and security of the continent (Ake, 1996). The democratization process in Africa was approached in a different context. As described by (Andersen et al., 2007) democratization in some African countries is followed by devastating internal conflict and for others, it starts from the peace-building process (Nizigiyimana, 2015). Similarly, Ethiopia followed peculiar paths in the process of democratizing the country, particularly following the post-1991 political transition (Brietzke, 1995). The post-1991 political setting in Ethiopia was marked by changes from a highly centralized state or strong form of a unitary state to a multinational federal state or decentralized form of government, in which a devolved form of government came into existence (Norman, 2006) in the political history of the country. The political transition in 1991 resulted from serious armed struggle groups. These are; the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) those who defended the colonial thesis in Ethiopian state formation, the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) those who defended the national oppression thesis, and the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) with the intention of liberation or defense of a colonial thesis (Bach, 2014). And they had their objective of struggle and later through political bargaining they agreed to work together to oust the then military dictatorship (Micheau, 1996) and they established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia with the active involvement of superpowers, particularly the USA through May 1991 London agreement (Lyons, 1996).

In the transitional period, the Eritrean people voted for their independence (Micheau, 1996), and OLF was forced to leave the process. The OPDO replaced OLF to represent the Oromo people, and the process of ousting OLF from the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and replacing it with a puppet organization sowed the seed of serious political animosity between EPRDF and Oromo people. After endorsement of the 1995 FDRE constitution formally, the country was administered by the Ethiopian Peoples Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition form of government, which constitutes the Tigrian People Liberation Front (TPLF), Oromo peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), Amhara National Democratic

Movement (ANDM) and Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM) and affiliated with Somali Peoples' Democratic Party (SPDP), Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), Benishangul-Gumuz peoples' Democratic Party (BGPDP), and Gambela Peoples' Unity Democratic Party (GPUDP) (Lyons, 2011). The post-1991 political transition in Ethiopia came at a time when there were high hopes among Africans, civil society organizations, the international community, and scholars to further the processes of democratization in Ethiopia (Infosheet, 2010). Changing of state structure from a highly centralized unitary form of government to a federal form of state structure was considered a political breakthrough in post-1991. The commencement of the Federal Democratic Republic was politically recognized by diversified ethnic identities and intended to ensure equality among the multi-ethnic group in the country (Abbink, 2010). Besides, the coalition of different political parties under the umbrellas of EPRDF established democratic centralism, in which the executive branch of government plays a decisive role in all political processes and the internally absolute hierarchical network till the village level was established to maintain order at the country and ensure the continuity of EPRDF as a dominant political party in the country. The practice of democratic centralism in Ethiopian politics posed serious challenges in the democratization process and paved the way for approaching federalism without appropriate democratic principles. Then, the absence of appropriate democratic principles created a loophole to build responsible government institutions. Rather, it paved the way for the full politicization of even service sectors and it created tensions between the ruling regime and the citizen. The malfunction of administrative structures and the absence of democracy were articulated as serious threats to stability in the country (Lyons, 2011). Here, the matter of ensuring sustainable peace hanged on how far the government and any state apparatus have been working toward democratizing the state.

Democracy is the most needed principle in the federal form of state structure to realize peace and stability in one country. Thus, some scholars stated Democracy as a moral imperative, in the sense that it represents the permanent aspiration of human beings for freedom, and for better social and political order. And also, democracy was approached as a social process, in the sense that it is a continuous process of promoting equal access to fundamental human rights and civil liberties for all and as a political practice, it's based on the principles of power, sovereignty, rule of law, accountability and perception (Nizigiyimana, 2015). Accordingly, in this study, democratic governance is understood as how a society organizes itself to ensure equality (of opportunity) and equity (of social and economic justice) for all citizens and this factor contributes to the promotion of sustainable peace in the given country (Diamond, 2002). Similarly,

sustainable peace is another principal concept in this study. Different scholars forwarded different thoughts on the meanings of sustainable peace and the ways of getting it at the local, national, regional, or international levels. According to the description given by 'International Alert' to the term "peace", it is considered as the functional linkage among individuals, groups, or institutions by the existence of well-governing institutions, equal access to power economy, justice, and feeling safe from other threats and wellbeing (International Alert, 2015). Galtung 1967 further explained the concept of peace as positive and negative peace; in the sense that positive peace mainly lie with the presence of the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies or far beyond the absence of ferocity while negative peace indicated merely the absence of violence and he pointed out the sustainability of peace is grounded on justices (Webel, 2007).

In Ethiopia, several radical changes in the country different political changes had been introduced in post-1991 to treat the historical burdens of the state formation process through federal arrangements. The government restructured the country in line with ethnic-based federal states to endorse unity in diversity (Lyons, 2008). Federal state structure in any country has to be mindful of political and historical processes and in Ethiopia, establishing a federal state structure is part of answering 1960s questions of nationality and it was anticipated to rectify the processes of failed nation-building projects through assimilation and centralization with the federation. But, whenever federalism attempted to be put into practice without effective democracy, it may result in extreme polarization and test the pace of development and sustainable peace. The perennial nature of social unsteadiness in Ethiopia could be explained by the chief characteristics of the Ethiopian state like; the existence of political exclusion, the issues of the dominance of one over another, and social unrest which was decorated by class, ethnic and regional dimensions (Abbink, 2010). Though, the existence of such upheavals signifies the urgent need for a well-structured and appropriate governance system.

The interface of democratic governance and sustainable peace seems apparent in the sense that, democratic governance should promote sustainable peace, as well as the existence of sustainable peace, should be enhancing the process of building democratic governance as well. Therefore, this interlock of democratic governance and sustainable peace in Ethiopia attested to the highest degree after the outbreak of mass protest in the Oromia Natio

nal Regional state against the integrated master plan of Addis Ababa in 2014. As a result, Ethiopia faced an unbearable political crisis after the outburst of the Oromo protest. The Integrated Master Plan of Addis Ababa (Finfinne) is presented in different discourses. For

instance, for the government it meant to promote the development of the country followed by an integrated regional development plan in 2014; while the opponents (the public) counter-argue by considering the plan as a systematic method of grabbing land from local farmers and it is do nothing with development. Therefore, this article examines the interface of democratic governance and sustainable peace in Ethiopia with special emphasis on protests in the Oromia National Regional state since 2014. Specifically, this article addresses four basic questions: Why protest in Oromia National Regional State? What are the causes of the protest? What are the patterns and consequences of the protest? What makes democratic governance a serious issue in Ethiopia?

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was utilized with an explanatory research design to explain the possible relations between democratic governance and sustainable peace in the Ethiopian context. The research employed both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through interviews and focus group discussions and secondary data are collected from reports, journal articles, and books. To collect primary data, the researcher purposively selected four zones namely; West Guji, West Arsi, West Shoa, and East Wollega Zones in Oromia regional state conducted twelve interviews with communities and six interviews with the then government officials and also four focus group discussions with purposively selected participants. Conceptually, the research is delimited to describe protest, democratic governance, and sustainable peace in Ethiopia. Geographically, among the then nine regional states and two federal city administrations, the study focused on only Oromia National Regional State. As far as the duration of the study was concerned, the research mainly focused on the political upheavals in Ethiopia from 2014 to 2018. Therefore, the research didn't cover the post-2018 political changes rather it exhibited the preceding context of 2018 political reforms in Ethiopia.

DISCUSSIONS

Overview of Oromo Protest in Ethiopia from 2014-2018

The political questions of Oromo in Ethiopia date back to the late 19th-century resistance against territorial expansion by Abyssinian rules to Southern, Western, and South-Western parts of present Ethiopia. In Oromia National Regional State mass protest started in 2014 after the EPRDF government announced an Integrated Master plan of Addis Ababa with surrounding towns of Oromia National Regional State. The master plan was designed by the Addis Ababa city administration in collaboration with the government of Oromia Regional state and it covers 1.1 million hectares of land (approximately twenty-fold the current size of Addis Ababa); saying that, its implementation will result in the eviction of millions of farmers and families from their land

(EHRP, 2016). Ethiopian Human Rights projects of 2016 stated that the anti-integrated Master plan of the Addis Ababa protest was activated in April/May/June 2014 and re-erupted in November 2015. The protest was triggered to oppose the Integrated Master Plan of Addis Ababa with surrounding areas of Oromia National Regional State. Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) is historically, geographically, and politically considered as a core political ecology for Oromo and its epicenter for Oromia. In 1995 the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian constitution identified two cities located in Oromia, namely; Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) as federal cities, and recognized Addis Ababa as the capital city of the country. In 1995 FDRE constitution Article 49 the interface of Oromia and Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) stated five critical issues which confirm the specialties of Addis Ababa to Oromia. The constitution described; first, Addis Ababa shall be the capital city of the Federal State. Secondly, the residents of Addis Ababa shall have a full measure of self-government. Particulars shall be determined by law. Thirdly, the Administration of Addis Ababa shall be responsible to the Federal Government. Fourthly, Residents of Addis Ababa shall under the provisions of this Constitution, be represented in the House of Peoples' Representatives and fifth, the special interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia, shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law (1995 FDRE Constitution). The fifth point of this article clearly stated the special interest of Oromia in Addis Ababa and the location of the capital with the Oromia Regional State. Thus, the 1995 FDRE constitution accelerated the 'special interest' of Oromia in Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) as it is determined by the law and any law formulated in the country does not yet describe the particulars of special interests of Oromia in Addis Ababa (Finfinnee).

The outburst of protest in Oromia Regional State, reported by different international media like; Al Jazeera, The Guardian, Reuters, and The Independent, as a long-term project (for 25 years) of the Ethiopian government to expand the territory of the capital city of the country, (Al Jazeera, 2015; Guardian, 2015; Reuters, 2015; The Independent, 2015), Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) and the master plan was prepared in 2009 and aimed to implement major infrastructure to attract investors in the industrial zone. And, in the sight of the Oromo people the master plan has appeared as a threat to surrounding Oromo farmers for it could lead to the eviction of their homelands and leads to the deterioration of the socio-cultural values of Oromo people in the area. Then, by opposing the negative consequences of the master plan protest was started in different Universities found in the Oromia Regional State and then extended to the

grassroots community as a mass protest in 2014 and it was piloted under the hashtag (#OromoProtest#).

Causes and courses of Oromo Protest from 2014-2018

The protest in Oromia National Regional State was mainly triggered by the official launch of the integrated Master Plan of Addis Ababa. But, in social movement studies, there are different causes of conflicts, structural, intermediaries, and triggering causes. In this discourse of protest in the Oromia National Regional state different causes played the paramount role in the escalation of protest in the region. The researcher has discussed with key informants, Focus Group Discussion participants, and interviewees in diverse areas with different parts of communities and government officials and critically analyzed different literature on the issues of protest in Oromia National Regional State and identified structural, immediate, and triggering causes of this protest. The protest in Oromia National Regional State or #Oromoprotest was contextualized differently in different settings among government officials, grassroots communities, and different political parties. The government concluded the causes of this protest as the lack of good governance and external enemies trying to manipulate the internal population, especially the youth. And grassroots communities mainly argue in line with horizontal inequalities and other related factors, while different political parties considered the matter of protest as it emerged from the government policies and they claim ineffective or futile government system in the country.

The research participants in this study area forwarded important points on protests of Oromia National Regional State. The informant of an interview in the East Wollega Zone, Nekemte portrayed the causes of protest in the Oromia regional state as if mainly triggered by the integrated master plan of Addis Ababa that incorporated the Special Zone of Oromia around Addis Ababa (Finfinnee) to the capital city. Also, participant of this study said "… this year we passing through a serious time. Even if it's too difficult for me to tell you the concrete and substantive causes of this protest I know that there is a plan from the federal government what they called the 'Master plan of Addis Ababa (Finfinnee)". From this statement, we can understand how much the protest was considered as serious for the local communities even for those who live in the distant location of the capital city with a sense of nationalism and grassroots communities are critical of government policies, they don't have trust in the system.

In addition, an interview with one elder at East Wallagga Zone of Oromia (Naqamtee) clearly described the demographic changes he observed in Addis Ababa

when he narrates his earlier visit to the capital city and the present. He is very much concerned about the displaced Oromo people and the rampant expansion of the city. Respondents emphasized that the integrated master plan of Addis Ababa is the concern of all Oromo people across Oromia because it legalizes the eviction of farmers in their homeland. Besides, the other two key informants explicitly explained their opinion on the causes of this protest from the same study area when popular resistance reached its climax the government tried to appease demonstrators through force and coercive measures government fueled the mass grievance. From this response, the researcher pointed out that, the inappropriate response of the government is another factor that pushes people to continue their struggle. An ironic response from the government would be considered a cause for the second round of protest. Similarly, focus group discussion participants of the same study areas figured out the cause of protest as "the failure of the government system" and they tried to identify these failures of government institutions such as; providing job opportunities or the problem of unemployment, corruption, fail to give right response for the questions of people on time, failed to exercise absolute democracy. Hither, the causes deviated from merely referring to the integrated master plan of Addis Ababa and it touches on the service delivery of the government institutions and the nature of government in the country.

The government officials in this area explained the causes of protest as the deficiency of good governance and external foe of the country. In their arguments, they confirmed the problems of good governance such as; timely response to the questions raised by the community, timely executions of started projects, corruption, and others. In another way, they pointed at some external adversaries that they considered as potential national security threats in general and their specific areas like; OLF and Ginbot in alliance with Egypt and Eretria through social media Facebook, and TV (ESAT and OMN). Their arguments are deemed to be externalizing the internal problem of the country. When we compare it with the argument from the community it sounds different. Because the informant from local communities of the study area didn't say anything as far as external foes and political parties the government officials labeled as national security threats. The key informants of the research from the second site of the (West Shoa Zone; Ambo) of Oromia have explained the causes of protest as stemming from the dated back ineffective government policy that created deprivation among youth due to high levels of unemployment and economic exclusion or unfair resource distribution. The problem of unemployment and corruption was embedded in the government system. The participant stated that "such inadequate government system played a significant

role to push people to protest against the system" (emphasis added). Furthermore, the issues of equality and effective utilization of natural resources are described as the factor for protest. Other participants understood as the Oromo protest erupted from triple causes; the effects of the history of the country, the absence of real democratic practices, and the absence of trust between the government and the grassroots community. The government officials on their side confirmed the existing problem of good governance as the major cause of this protest. In addition, they pointed out some internal and external factors that contributed to the escalation of this conflict; "internally like, high rate of unemployment, corruption and the external enemies popularized the internal problems and distort the peace and development of our country".

The respondents from the third site of the study (West Guji Zone; Bule Hora) articulated the causes of protest in line with access to the resource of Oromia Oromo for the benefit of the Oromo people and they expounded on the problem of the government system. In detail to incorporate what has been said by research participants in the area; one of the key informants explained the cause of the protest in Oromia National Regional State in general and West Guji Zone in particular, there has been framed in economic, political, and social aspects of Oromo people. The Participant of the research portrayed how the natural resources in their areas were exploited by others without the benefit of local people and these facts pushed people to protest against the government system. He also described the political factors behind the protest in Oromia National Regional State this participant said that "…Oromo people need real democracy in this country; in which community elect their representatives freely and exercise regional autonomy in presence of real federalism". The argument brought an important point to reflect on the far-reaching hope of democratizing Ethiopia under a federal arrangement. Besides, participants disclosed that the social issues overdue the protest figured out by saying "the current government can't preserve the indigenous governance of Oromo people as it is and there are a lot of interventions of government in the social affairs of Oromo people. For example, during the festival of Irrechaa in 2016 hundreds of people died on a single day, and the government was directly or indirectly involved in the process of the Gadaa system by lobbying Abba Gadaa (the responsible person to exercise power in the Gadaa system) in this area" he said. Though, participants thought the immersion of the government in social affairs mainly the cultural practice of the community in this area considered the issue in the protest in the West Guji zone. Another informant in the West Guji zone elucidated the causes of protest concerning the violation of human rights in the Oromia regional state and labeled the government institutions as the potential perpetrators of human rights and unfair

natural resource exploitation in the area. As an example of natural resource exploitation in the area, for instance, 'Gidabo Gidib' displaced around 300 farmers from their lands without enough compensation, Gaara Eebbicha, Okkotee gold mining area was also targeted but not successfully controlled by investors because of people upheavals, Mio Beeki, Maddoo, Adoolaa and Qanxicha, Adoola forest, Baarii forest are handed over to 'EFFORT COMPNAY' (Endowment Fund For Rehabilitation Of Tigray), which owned by Tigray People Liberation Front and they extract resources without considering the sustainability".

On the violation of human rights in Ethiopia, this participant says "…it's difficult to endure the torture, jail and extremely inhuman acts (hanging, fixing bottle filled with water on the male's private part, etc.) on Oromo people; I tell you this from my experience at Makelawi". Another participant in the same said, "Guji people are protesting to ensure their survival". Again, the fourth participant explained the causes of protest as protest erupted because the government failed to provide needed service for the community and the fifth participant considered the causes of protest to change the regime in the country. The government officials in their side explained the causes of protest as the problem of good governance namely; corruption, giving responsibility for the community on time or in other words answering the problems of people, dealing effectively with the issues of natural resources in this area to grantee the interest of indigenous people or local community. In addition, the local government officials also mentioned the problem of an external enemy to insist the youth revolt against the government. The participant from West Arsi Zone (Shashamannee) explained the causes of the protest as mainly referred to the questions of full ownership of Oromia (in Afaan Oromo; gaaffii abbaa biyyummaa uummata Oromo) and in addition, they portrayed the horizontal inequalities among communities in Ethiopia and economic problem in Oromia National Regional State in general and their zone in particular. The government officials of West Arsi Zone considered the causes of the protest in a different dimension. They identified three significant causes of protest in their area; first, they mentioned the problem of radicalism or extremism in their area. They elaborate on the threat of extremism in the West Arsi Zone in which the Oromo Muslim-dominated area they claimed some social contentions they have experienced in past four or five years on religious issues and the upheaval in this area started before the outbreak of protest throughout Oromia by some individuals those who have connections with some individuals in the Arab States and later it was shadowed by the national question about Master plan of Addis Ababa and other questions of Oromo people. In addition, they reflect the problem of good governance as another cause of protest in the area like other areas.

Besides those primary sources of information on the causes of conflict, different secondary data described different causes of protest in the Oromia National Regional State. One critical writer on Oromo affairs Asafa (2016) considered the protest in Oromia National Regional State by saying "this popular movement clearly shows that, the Oromo people are the fulcrum for bringing about a fundamental political transformation in Ethiopia and beyond to establish sustainable peace, development, security, self-determination and egalitarian multinational democracy". His painstaking reflection on the protest in Oromia regional state as anticipated conveys fundamental political transformation in the Horn of Africa.

Besides, Asebe (2016) portrayed the rationale behind of Oromo people to protest against the integrated master plan of Addis Ababa revealing four important arguments; "first, memories and experiences of past evictions and dispossessions; second, response to the constitutional rights mainly Act 43 (2) of FDRE constitution, third, mistrust generated from lack of genuine participation; fourth, anticipated Repercussions on the identity, culture, and livelihood of the Oromo". Hence, the integrated master plan of Addis Ababa knocked into the social, political, and economic aspects of the Oromo people from the past to the present and future. Similarly, Ethiopian Human Rights Project (EHRP) acknowledges the democratic deficiency in the country as the cause of protest in the Oromia National Regional State (EHRP, 2016). As stated above, the government report revealed the problem of good governance in the country and higher government officials confirmed that such public protest emanated from the facts of missing adequate governance.

Patterns and consequences of Oromo Protest Between 2014 - 2018

On the Nature of protest, scholars argue in different ways. Violent protest is when the mass population participated in the courses of protest abstain to take any form of vehement actions and when reflects their needs and aspiration concerning the body and also government recognizes them as peaceful campaigners. Contrary, violent protest is when the mass population accelerated their grievances through violent actions (Garrett, 2006). The participants of the study argue about the nature of the protest as it started nonviolently and ended with violent protest. The participants of FGD in East Wollega Zone argued that "the majority of the people who participated in the demonstration don't have any aspiration to take any violent measures on properties or the government personnel mainly the cabinet, armed forces and other spices/spies of the government but this changed to violent automatically after the armed forces

tried to forced people to not demonstrate". Similarly, the in-depth interview participant from Western Shoa on the nature of protest says that "I observed when people demonstrated without taking any action of violence before the armed force intervene but after that course was changed and people started to take violent actions against government security forces with what they have at hand, which is stone". The FGD participants in West Arsi Zone and some key informants in West Guji Zone reflected that "the government take violent measures on nonviolent protest and changed the nature of protest". The government officials in all study areas shared the same views on the nature of the protest and they claimed the demonstration was started without the consent of the government and in its very nature, the protest was violent. Furthermore, the government officials argue on the protest as it happened without legal grantees because the government constitution allows peaceful demonstration but that demonstration was restricted from areas like the markets, around the government officials, and near different religious institutions the demonstration participants tried to demonstrate without considering these and the government intervened peacefully to protect peace and order in their areas.

Generally, the nature of protest in Oromia National Regional State participants of the study revealed that at the beginning the protest went as a nonviolent protest meaning that people accelerated their views through demonstration without participating in any acts of destruction either on the people or properties. Later on, the course changed after the government forces intervene in the ongoing demonstrations and people started to take violent actions and the nature of protest changed to violent protest. The protest in Oromia National Regional State followed different patterns. According to the EHRP report in 2016, the protest was shaped in different rounds. The first round of protests started in April/May/June of 2014 followed by the official announcements of the Integrated Master Plan of Addis Ababa. This round of protest concentrated on educational institutes and students at different levels participating and it was paused after the government officially announced to stop the plan until people have clear consent on the advantage of the project (EHRP, 2016). The second round of protest was started on 20 November 2015 at Ginchi Woreda of West Shoa zone in Oromia National Regional State. This protest particularly in this area started first when the local government officials gave the playing ground of students to the investment. Then, schoolchildren started protest while the government started to deal with people again on the issues of the Integrated Master plan of Addis Ababa with the surrounding special Zone of Oromia regional state and the issues of land became the leading question throughout Oromia National Regional State and the serious round of protest started (Ibid).

The protest was widely disseminated throughout Oromia National Regional State and according to the report of EHRP, it was held in 227 places in the region and reported death causalities in this second-round protest from November 2015 to January 2016 approximately more than 149 people were lost their lives (Bertelsmann, 2016). The report of EHRP stated the situation as "after all the killings and mass detentions, the protests continued and forced the government to finally scrap the proposed Development Plan on January 13, 2016. But, scrapping of the Master Plan was too little too late to stop the protests" (EHRP, 2016). The third plump of protest mainly targeted the questions of human rights and democratic rights in the country as well as the justice and compensation for the damaged parts of communities held from 14th January 2016 to 29th February 2016 (EHRP, 2016). The extent of this protest was broader than that of the previous rounds of protests in the region and it happened in around 188 areas and 81 people died during this protest (EHRP, 2016). Hence, the protest was not ended after February 2016 but continued in serious ways until the government announced the 'state of emergence' and command posts control the region especially selected areas to maintain order in the country. This can be considered as the fourth round of protest and after the government declared the state of emergency in the region the silence period in the region and no peace in other words after the state of emergency was declared in Ethiopia ended the protest in the region researcher consider those months as 'no peace no protest' in the region. On the policy which the government declared to maintain peace in the country called 'state of emergency policy' researcher conducted some discussions with a few individuals, mainly, scholars and they considered the state of emergency policy was inadequate to bring sustainable peace in the country but this policy reduced destructions of public properties. Specifically, one of the research participants argued that "the government legalized the acts of torture, killings and other brutal action on the people and I didn't think this can be significant role to bring peace in this country at expense of human life". Human rights violations during a protest in widely reported even by international media as government security forces committed an extrajudicial killing; while security forces time and again declined the claim against human rights violations. The perceptions of people towards perpetuated command posts were more pessimistic and they considered security forces not as public protectors but rather as perpetrators and this put into contestation the ownership of the military in Ethiopia; either regime or public. Grassroots communities thought of military forces as their potential threat. To scrutinize the issues in protest; the researcher employed the onion tool of conflict analysis mechanisms because; the Onion illustrates important layers and elements of protest that get built up throughout a contention. The tool might be

helpful to identify the dynamics and different layers of questions in the Oromo Protest as position, interest, and needs.

In the Conflict analysis model usually, Need is a non-negotiable issue, while position is an extreme claim. Therefore, it's important to know the appropriate interest and treat it wisely for lasting peace or to avert any issues in conflict. In the case of the Oromo Protest, it seems visible that, the Oromo people are not negotiating their needs which are exercising regional autonomy and equal access to economic and political opportunities at the federal level, while the extreme position of claiming for statehood is serious that the supposed to be treated wisely. Therefore, negotiating on interest which is democratizing the federal state structure is the only way to address the questions of the Oromo people in Ethiopia, that facilitates getting the needs and if the needs are denied the position or negotiating for statehood comes forward forcefully. To scrutinize the protest in Oromia National Regional State researcher utilized three theories and one relevant approach. From the perspective of participatory democratic theory, the protest stemmed from when the community abstained from the process of policy formulation and decision-making. Because people have a far better understanding of their issues and they know the way outs. Though, the government must have high concerns for the aspirations of the community. The protest in the Oromia National Regional State community heard the finished plan and react negatively because the ideas of the community were not incorporated into the project. This shows that in Ethiopia top-down approach to policy formulation and decision-making was not any more comfortable for the community (Figure 1).

Therefore, the absence of public participation in the process of establishing a plan created grievances and mistrust between the people and the government. Hence, let people participate in their affairs and the government has space for their desires and builds a sense of a bottom-up approach to policy formulation and decision-making process in Ethiopia. In perspective to relative deprivation theory, the protest was considered the result of horizontal inequality. Though, this theory was to assist us to emphasize horizontal inequalities in Ethiopia and assumed as the causes of social movement and conflict in different parts of the country. In the case of protest in the Oromia National Regional State, Oromo people feel deprived because of horizontal differences in access to the economy and political positions. Participants of the research repeatedly stressed the issues of discrimination to access the national economy in the country and they considered the economy of the country was handed over by few individuals and the majority of the population in the country was living under the line of absolute poverty. And people believed this economic variety was the result of government policies and programs. Feeling deprived because of horizontal inequalities among communities

leads them to protest against the government and it may also shrink the harmonious relationship between the communities through economic lines. In addition to economic inequalities in the country; Oromo people feel as if they are not represented in the government system and the need for absolute representation was another tough issue in Oromia today. Therefore, the existence of horizontal inequalities contributed to the current protest in Oromia National Regional State.

To grasp the historical facts in Ethiopia and its reflection in the protest of the Oromia National Regional State researcher used path dependency theory which emphasizes the trends of history in Ethiopia and helps us to understand the impacts of the past and the present and future. In Ethiopian history historians portrayed differently in the issues of politics, and social and economic facts in the country. Particularly, in the case of Oromo in Ethiopia, different historians claimed from different perspectives. In short, the fact in Ethiopian history was that Ethiopia was aged thousands of years or decades undeniable fact was people were mistreated by their superintendents mainly in the southern, southwestern, and western parts of Ethiopia. In short, the majority of the population in Ethiopia carried different yokes of dominance except for royal families. Though, the fact of Oromo history in Ethiopia was very important in this study. Mainly, the history that needed to consider in this inquiry was the process of Ethiopian state formation and after formed Ethiopia the way people were treated in the country played a paramount role in Ethiopia to have perpetual peace. For example, history revealed that Menelik II utilized modern weapons and European advisors against his opponents those who fought with spears, practiced devastating death on an enormous scale on the Oromo people and between 1868 and 1900, half of all Oromo were killed, around five million people from ten million total population of Oromo people (Asafa, 2007). In addition, people were mistreated on their lands even after the state's formation and they were considered slaves on their forefathers' lands. Hundreds of thousands of gunmen, known as 'naftanya-gebar' system, meaning gun carrier, were dispatched by the past Ethiopian governors into fortified settlements in the Oromo areas (Hasan, 1994). The gun carriers seized vast tracts of Oromo lands, on which the Oromo were forced to work as a laborer. Oromo place names were changed to Amharic and local language and culture were banned. Under the famous emperor Haile Selassie, who took power in 1930, Oromo lands were given to multinational corporations, expelling and decimating local populations. Again, after the Military regime overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie Oromo was continually mistreated by the socialist regime. And the radical change in 1991 brought some shine of hope in Ethiopia to recognize diversity and democratize the country in favor of all vulnerable Ethiopians in general and Oromo people in particular
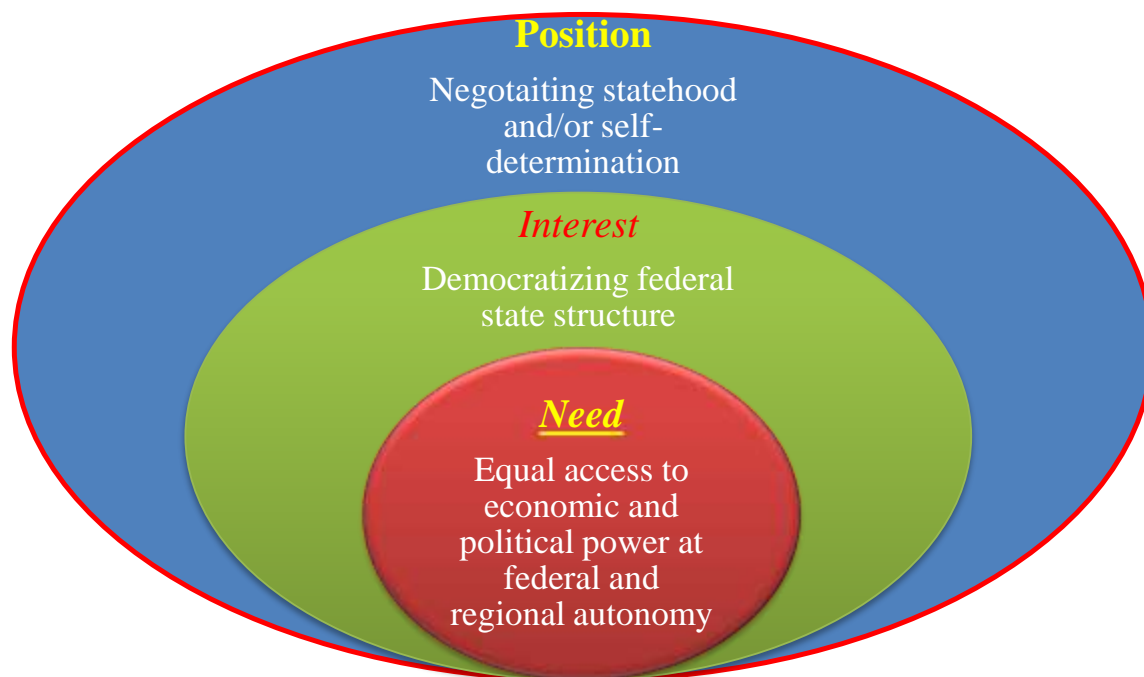
Figure 1. Identification of the issues or why Oromo Protest, through the Onion model.
Source: Researcher own construction, 2022.

even if the implementation process was still in contestation there was progress in the political structure of Ethiopia.

Consequently, those historical facts or past trauma of the Oromo people and people respond sensitively to the issues of land and violation of human rights and others. Oromo started to protest not merely against the present situation but was rooted in history. Therefore, the unhealed historical problem was reflected in the process of protest in the Oromia National Regional State, and the power of the past was a substantial factor in the protest of the Oromo people. In addition, the dynamics of contention approach was important in this study to understand the different cycles of protest in the Oromia National Regional State. The way the government responded to the protest and the result. Figure 2 displays a brief analysis.

Then, protest brought about observable political changes in Ethiopia. Following the outbreak of protest in the Oromia National Regional State, the government first took measures on individuals and tried to reform the system by changing individuals starting from the regional office to the kebele level. Then, the government continued to mend the system by public training at different levels, from higher government officials to local farmers which was called "deep reform" (or in Amharic; *tilq taddisow*) or *haareffama gad-fagoo* (in Afaan Oromo). In short, this protest alarmed the need of humanizing the government system in the country. Later, unstoppable public pressure through mass protest pushed the ruling regime to be open for reform, and in April 2018 new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power from the ruling regime came to usher in the democratization process in the country. Therefore, we can conclude that the protest forced the government to reform itself (Figure 2).

Why does Democratic Governance Matters More in Ethiopia?

The democratization process in Ethiopia after 1991 was subjected to the momentous theme in this inquiry to promote sustainable peace. The concepts of democratic governance were grounded on the notions of human development and directly affect the extent of peace in a given country. Though, protests in Oromia National Regional State can be considered a substantial indication of the linkage between democratic governance and sustainable peace in Ethiopia. The trend of democratic governance in Ethiopia was found in the downturn era. To assure this with the simple and observable election process in Ethiopia and Ethiopia experienced elections in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015. From all election periods, the 2005 election was nominated as more democratic rather than other periods of elections because
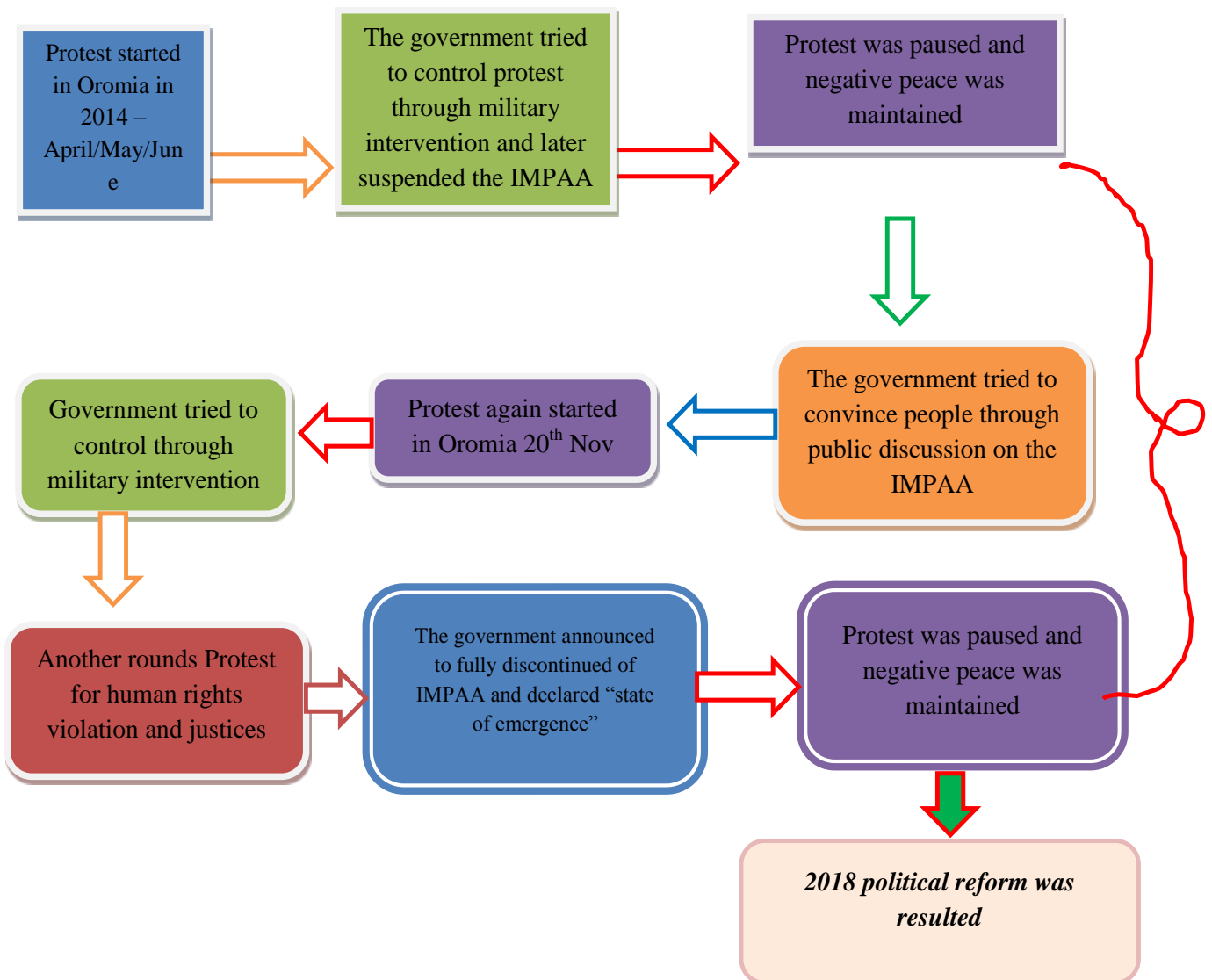
Figure 2. Dynamism of protest in Oromia National Regional State
Source: Researcher's own construction (2022).

different political parties participated and even if the result was left under question. In 2010 the ruling party won the political completion with 99% and in 2015 the ruling regime officially announced that controlled all sites in parliament and secured by 100% which was noble false in presence of the multiparty system. As the events of the pre-election period, the 2014 protest of Oromia National Regional state counted as a fact of event, and as the post-election events nearly after a few months, the government declared the result of the election protest started in Oromia National Regional State in November of 2015. Democratic governance was based on the universal value of the protection of human rights. Seeking development at the expense of human rights is not

development for the people. Similarly, the protest in Oromia National Regional State from 2014 to 2018 tested highly the ways the EPRDF dealt with the crisis. The violation of human rights during protests seriously triggered another round of protests unless the government goes further in democratizing the government institutions. The questions of accountability and transparency were also another important issue in protest of Oromia National Regional State. Participants in different areas claim that the government was not able enough to provide needed social services and corruption and other related problems were very much triggering people to protest. So far, the government considered this a problem of good governance and tried to perform bureaucratic

changes in the country. Though the steps of government were considered good they must be packed by well and concrete policy to sustain transparences and accountability in the country.

Democratic governance also constitutes public engagement in policy formulation and the decision-making process (Abdellatif, 2003). In the cases of protest, the study revealed that public participation in Ethiopia was not in the process but after policy, programs, and/or projects engineered by higher political officials it may go down to the public. But in a real democratic governance system, the exegesis of policy, programs, and the project started from the community and fostered by the highest political officials and ratified by the people, and implemented in collaboration. In addition, democratic governance encompasses equal access to political power and economy, spaces for political participation, the supremacy of the constitution in practice not merely in discourse, and other important issues which played a significant role in building sustainable peace in Ethiopia. Therefore, the protest in Oromia National Regional State reflected the high demands for democracy for sustainable peace in the country.

Conclusion

Realizing sustainable peace in sub-Saharan African countries has been a challenging issue for scholars, politicians, and other peace activists because of diverged political cultures, economic aspects, and other related social issues. Similarly, Ethiopia carried lots of discrepancies to maintain sustainable peace in the country. In post-1991, the government of Ethiopia launched ethnic-based federalism to resolve past problems and maintain peaceful order in the country. However, the country has faced peace and security-related problems. Though, protests in Oromia National Regional State since 2014 were considered a major national issue in Ethiopia and tested the overall political system in the country. Democracy in the developmental state, especially in Ethiopia, was considered as the end of development or in other words first access to development and then democracy will come. The protest in Oromia National Regional State provides special lessons for the government and also for all Ethiopian people regarding the urgent need for democratic governance to have sustainable peace in the country. This research revealed that there is no development without peace and there is no sustainable peace without democratic governance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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