# Grassroots to Government: Examining Peacebuilding, Conflict, Traditional Leadership, and Security Dynamics in Somaliland and the Horn of Africa

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## Abstract

This paper investigates into the complex path of peacebuilding and conflicts in Somaliland, a self-proclaimed sovereign state without international recognition, situated in the volatile Horn of Africa. Through rigorous secondary data analysis and a detailed review of relevant literature, it investigates the contributions of Traditional Leaders, Political Leaders, and Community Participation to the processes of achieving peace and reconciliation after periods of conflict. Indigenous mechanisms and grassroots initiatives are shown to be pivotal in establishing stability and governance, wandering significantly from neighboring approaches. Somaliland's peace and security approach is divided through an exploration of its historical context, clan dynamics, and local customs. The paper discusses conflict-contributing factors like clan rivalries, resource competition, and colonial legacies. Innovative strategies leading to stability and democratic governance are outlined. Findings disclose a unique blend of traditional conflict resolution and modern state-building efforts. This study advocates for context-specific peace processes, particularly in regions lacking formal recognition and conventional state-building. It enriches the discourse on peace and conflict resolution by providing a detailed case study of Somaliland's navigation from post-conflict recovery to relative peace and stability. The insights from Somaliland's experience contribute to a nuanced understanding of peacebuilding and conflict resolution globally.

**Key words**: Conflict, Peacebuilding, Security, Traditional Elders and Political Elites

## Introduction

Somaliland, is a sovereign state yet internationally unrecognized, offers a unique story of independence, peace, and traditional ways of solving conflicts. Unlike its troubled neighbors, Somaliland shows a special ability to keep relative stability and create its own systems of governance, making it a very interesting example to look at in peace and conflict studies. Somalilandlocated in the Horn of Africa, claimed its independence from Somalia in 1991 after a very harsh civil war. Even without official recognition from other countries, it has built its own government, currency, and security system. Clan relationships, and a continuous effort to be seen as a legitimate nation, all of which have shaped how it governs and solves conflicts.

This study looks closely at how Somaliland mitigate conflict, peacebuilding, factors determine peace and security, focusing on the importance of traditional leaders, involvement of the community and how the political system works. It tries to understand how these parts work together to keep peace and stability, especially looking at how traditional elders and local governing bodies help solve conflicts and keep the community together.

Understanding the special way Somaliland deals with peace and security is very important not just for the future of the region but also for the wider field of peace and conflict studies. What we learn from this case can help with strategies in other places that have gone through conflict and add to the theoretical discussions about how to build peace in places that are not officially recognized. Looking at Somaliland's experiences also gives us a more detailed view of how local ways of solving conflicts, bring peacebuilding can help maintain peace for a long time. Conflict is undesirable. violent form, it claims the lives of many people, destroys property, and diverts human as well as financial resources away from development. (Alexander Attilio, 2002).

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The Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict-ravaged areas on the African continent. It is a region well known in African politics of being a violence, conflict, hostile and poor place due to numerous conflicts, war and colorizations. The populations of Horn of Africa have traced many clans armed conflicts respected their area of residence. Although the region's conflicts occur at several levels, including resource-based conflict, power conflict and Land conflict those conflicts bring civil wars and confrontation between clans settling in some geographical residence (Kidane M, 2011).

## Methodology

The study used techniques of data management through qualitative data analysis. The study used to obtain the information from secondary and primary data collection, the study tools wasinterviews and observations with the key prominent figures/interviewees involved in Somaliland peace, while the study elaborate in conflict mitigations, peacebuilding and factors influence security in Somaliland. The methodological process of the study was qualitative data with the secondary source of data including assessed a literature of historical records, policy briefs and articles those resource from the written documents of Somaliland peacebuilding. Including peace conference, peace negotiations and internal conflict resolution mechanisms in Somaliland.

The target population of the study was (30) people worked in the government and experienced the peace of Somaliland in the last 30 year, those people known information of Somaliland peace. The data was collected duration of 2 months with different locations of Somaliland regions.

## Theoretical Framework

The paper follows on the idea of Johan Galtung in peace and conflict. One of the founders of Peace and conflict discipline. The idea of Galtung expressed interconnected models of conflict, violence, and peace. Conflict is viewed as a dynamic process in which structure, attitude, value, and behavior are constantly changing and influencing in human being. It is important to explain the direct and indirect violence while the direct violence is ended by changing conflict behavior and structural violence is ended by removing structural inconsistencies and injustices, and cultural violence is ended by changing attitudes (Galtung J. 1969).

While conflict is dynamic,and result of conflict become violence. Most of Somali conflict origin from resource competition and power sharing based on politics. The paper presented, the role traditional leadership, Security dynamics, conflict mitigations and understoodpeacebuildingandfactors influence in security. Based on Galtung definition of peace and conflict. The paper looks at theoretical concept of peace and conflict in Somaliland. Because most of Somali conflicts resolved by traditional elders.

Most of the conflict of Horn of African based onclan politic, competition of resources, political instability, foreign intervention, terrorism and extremism. The paper intended to explore the role of traditional elders in peace and conflict, conflict mitigations, peacebuilding, and factors influence peace and security in Somaliland and in general the Horn of Africa.

## Source of Conflict and Insecurity of Somaliland and Horn of Africa

In the historical aspect of Somali clan there was clan affiliation and clan alliance according to the resident and settlement. Somaliland conflict intended internal clan conflict on basis of resource and land residents. Since origin of Somaliland people are nomadic with high privilege of traditional norms and culture. Then the civilization from the traditional characters converter clan-based politics and competition of resource. Sometimes conflict bring to erupted warswherethere is no strong peace and stability.

The respondent from the field were stated most of conflicts based on political power, border disputes, scarcity of resource. The constitution of Somaliland defined the framework structures of government. The people resident east regions of Somaliland (*party of Sool and Sanaag*) have a grievance of political administration. Since the population feeling that they are not taken their share of government administration and has no satisfied their representations in the government. Because the populationinhabitedthese locations are in the middle of two administration Somaliland and Puntland. According to the international border linesthis location is geographically party of Somaliland border.

Somaliland's society-led approach allowed for broad participation and bottom-up democratization, and establishment of locally relevant government institutions that have achieved a high degree of societal cohesion and

state legitimacy (Kaplan, 2008). At independence, Somaliland installed a SNM government, led by SNM[2] central committee chaired *Abdirahman Ahmed Ali Tu³ur*. Tuur's government was given a limited mandate to lead the first two years of post-war state reconstruction and was tasked with establishing security within Somaliland's borders, ensuring political accommodation of all clans, rebuilding government institutions, drafting a constitution, revitalizing the economy and restoring basic services (Bradbury, 2008)

During visiting the site and collected data, it was recognized the most factors contribute insecurity, instability and conflict is political power, border dispute, resource sharing and political administration

While the Horn of Africa become conflict of different interest and intervention I have collected and reviewed narrative literature of Horn of Africa thatcauses conflict related on resource and political power, the literature respects the prime causes of conflict and factors influence security.

Source of conflict proposed by the African scholars for the conflict in the horn of Africa. The factors leading to conflicts, such as Kaplan (1994), who perceived the African continent as wild and backward. Huntington (1993) explained conflicts due to the interaction of different cultures leading to clashes, radicalization and fundamentalism.

African conflict classifications can be traced as boundary and territorial conflict, civil wars and internal conflicts having international interventions and consequence, sequence conflict in territories administered by the colony which was not clear boundary line among some African countries and political conflicts. Collier and Binswanger (1999) classify conflicts into wealth seekers and justice seekers, classification which is based more on value judgment rather than analytical principles. Nevertheless, Binswanger use what they consider to be the objectives of the rebel groups as criterion for categorizing conflicts.

The related literature of Horn of Africa conflicts from the literature reviewed of conflicts it has been influenced by the winds of global political change the end of the Cold-War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union on following the disintegration of the Soviet Empire and its East European socialist allies that led to the birth of a number of ethnic-based states, the general tendency of scholars is to make ethnicity central to the discourse on the issue of instability in the developing parts of the world. This has significantly covered the root cause of conflicts that outbreak many regions of the world. The Horn of Africa is not an exception.

Conflicts have been fought in the sub-region under the name of nation and nationality, ethnicity, region, religion, or classes. But, in the light of the argument these are manifestations or activating factors, not the root causes of the conflicts. As Markakis (1998) notes, the state is the cause, the bearer of ultimate responsibility for outbreak of conflicts in two important ways competition for resources under the condition of great scarcity (*Economic Factor and Wealth*), and control of the allocation and monopoly use of the scarce resources. These two factors underscore the fact that politics is the major cause of the conflicts.

Mesfin (1999) emphasizes that the major conflicts in the Horn of Africa have not been fought horizontally between different ethnic or religious groups. They are rather politically motivated clashes between the state and society. As Markakis (1998) it is the outcome of incompatible interests in which the state and other actors that fight for its control are involved. To be more precise, while politics is the ultimate cause, ethnicity and religion are factors of mass mobilization that are given prominence by the discontented political elites fighting against what Elsenhans (1996) calls the "State Classes" For example, despite ethnic and religious homogeneity of the Somali society, what has transpired in the 1991[4] is the bloodiest conflict that ultimately led to state collapse and disintegration of the country.

Separately from the above factors contributed insecurity, instability and conflict. In Somaliland and Horn of Africa the researchers have categorized types of conflict which are clan conflicts, civil wars and ethnic conflict, all those types of conflict related on the value of resource and political power

## Peace and Security In Somaliland

Peace is the foundation of life and social progress in terms integration and development. There are several important issues of peace including stability and security. Authority and power are the determinants of Politics. Somaliland has

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[2]SNM- Somali National Movement (Movement against the dictatorship of Siyad Barre Administration in Somalia in 1991)
[3]The first president of Somaliland, and the chairperson of SNM- Somali National Movement
[4]This year represented Somalia central government collapse after Siyad Barre administration (Sayid Barre- former Somalia president before the collapse of central government in 1991)

long journey of peace building and peace negations from bottom-up approach. It is significant to discuss factors that attribute peace and security in Somaliland. Somalilandelite traditional elders and clan leaders, politicians, women and businesspeople were worked together in a series of peace reconciliation conferences between the clans in Somaliland.

Peace was started from bottom by reconciled clans and sub-clans to prevent fighting and address the grievances between the clans and hold series peace and reconciliation conference for all clans in Somaliland

After series peace process and reconciliations Somaliland *The First Conference (Berbera), Burao 1991 (The Grand Brotherhood Conference of Somaliland Clans), Borama 1993 (Grand Conference of National Reconciliation), Demobilization Initiatives 1993, Hargeisa Peace Conference 1997*started to build peace process which is the foundation of Somaliland government since all the clans had agree to peaceful, respect and forgive among themselves, in the next stage of this process was building fully functional government as executive, judiciary and legislative to fulfilled all basic facilities of government were established as civil service commission (CSC) and other infrastructural government including local government and regional administrations. During collectingdata was found the peace conferences and reconciliation process has been protracted all the rights of the people resident in Somaliland inclusive while there were some grievances among different clans in Somaliland which is from farmer government of dictatorship of Siyad Barre, they were agreed all the people of Somaliland has equal right under the constitutional government resulted by the inclusive peace conferences and other peacebuilding process among the clans of Somaliland resident. The first agreed a national chart including all the clans in Somaliland and inclusively agreed to participategovernmentdecision-making of the country with grant the rights of the citizens and political participation in all forms of decision making as regional and national governances

This section explores the importance of peacebuilding and peace reconciliation and the results from research participant and the research questions of the study. There are feature of Somaliland peace that are more concentrated than others Somali communities which hasgrass rooted traditional elders that leads in traditional norms and traditional structure of the people while society enclosedcluster of clans obeyed with the traditional elders, most of the elders was trace on monarchs and long terms traditional leadership from the ancestors or fathers, this was caused to bring peacebuilding and peace process and eventually bring governance of Somaliland government administration. This resulted free and fair elections in Somaliland with peace full transfer of power

Another important attribute of Somaliland peacebuilding is experienced recurrences of violence after the conference. The cause of those recurrent violence and peace conflict is among people those are agreed to have peaceful among them because there was an aggrievance intended from the peace conference delegates in the prior of peacebuilding conferences. It was organized several peace conferences between the clans initiated, including in Burao in 1993 and Beer in 1996but they were not able to end the violence. It was not until 1997, in the Hargeisa Conference, that the clans reached an agreement which brought peace to Somaliland and started a process of democratization, elections, peaceful transfer of power, Hargeisa conference in 1997 was the grant peace conference established modern state of Somaliland government and the clans were shared power into democratic way and pave the way to adopt current Somaliland constitution and other legal framework of Somaliland government system[5]

A country emerging from war continuously upholds traditional norms that push women out of the peacebuilding processes. Little progress has been made with an effort of NAGAAD women right umbrella organization of Somaliland to advocate for women equality, and the women mainstreaming the political arena, influencing the law, policy and practice for improved women equality and women human rights in Somaliland. However, women are sidelined in peace processes and representation in positions of power which makes it difficult for them to participate in peacebuilding processes.

Somaliland women's efforts to call for peace dialogues after 1991 when the country's major clans fought for leadership of the self-declared independent state did not win them any big support as they were largely granted observer status at the conferences rather than the right to vote, their participation was limited to more traditional roles such as providing food to peace negotiators (Rayale; Pomfret & Wright, 2015).

According to the practical evidence women in the Horn of Africa and Somaliland rarely participate in peacebuilding of their country (Jama,2012 and Carl et al., 2013). With the clan system of women's contributions to peacebuilding are limited by this reliance on the clan that is believed to be the conceptual foundation of peacebuilding in elders (Rayale, Pamfret and Wright, 2015).

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[5]https://www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/case-study-women-somaliland-1993-en.pdf

Somaliland women are largely excluded from participation in the peacebuilding initiatives. In peace processes, women are granted observer status, and their roles are limited to traditional roles such as serving food and drinks to male peacebuilders. This has disabled peacebuilding progress that does not achieve lasting peace. Somaliland women who would wish to contribute strategic ideas to peaceful progress are not even given a chance to do so because their culture dictates that women must never participate with men on peacebuilding table and thus limiting possibilities of sustainable peace in Somaliland

## Linking Somaliland Conflict to Horn of African

It is Important to trace the link between Somaliland conflict and the Horn of African conflict. there are similarity of Somaliland conflict and the Horn of African, including the structure of traditional clans, monarchs and traditional behaviors. Horn of African remains a region marked by persistent conflicts and the constant risk of instability. The unprecedented realities in the recent conflicts in Ethiopia indicate how the region is susceptible to state failure. Socioeconomic factors, historical ties and lack of proper governance leadership have specifically affected the rise of conflict within the region.This encourages the development of national, regional, and global based policies that can aid in its resolution and trying to bring peace and stability. Critical factors that are parties of those conflict and instability includingunproper administration of governance, border disputes and inter-clan land conflicts.

There should be more efficient and timely regional responses to conflicts to prevent huge human suffering and destruction. Thus, the past and current experiences in the area provide the regional countries, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), and global partners the opportunity to critically assess how distant their efforts helped to address underlining issues of those conflict and border dispute as result of destruction and backward development. One of the issues the study has recognized Somalilandis similar experience with conflict and insecurity of those countries in the horn of African, but the good thing is Somaliland passed critical issue of peace and insecurity under the construction of peace and coherence of community.

The study has acknowledged Somaliland peace is from bottom-up approach of peacebuilding participated all clans in Somaliland, the purpose was to restore peace, security, law and order.

During the data collection research participants agreed some resident in Somaliland inhabitant as well resident in the Ethiopia and Djibouti they have common traditional culture and norms asthey were doing same process during the setting peace and reconciliation among their clans and one important factors is their common feature is clan structure, some clans of Ethiopian and Djibouti resident in Somaliland they are common characteristics of tribe, clan and Lineage, as a researcher I was found that those people are in same process during peace conference, peace negotiations and peace activities, this is witness the commonality of Horn of African community specially Ethiopia, Djiboutiand Somaliland/Somalia are identical doing in peacebuilding and peace process since they have common characteristics of clans structure, clan tribes, Lineage and blood hood community structure.

## The Role Traditional Elders In Peace and Conflict

This section discussed the role of traditional elders forconflict and peacebuilding in Somaliland. The study identified some interesting role of traditional elders in peace, comparing to neighboring countries in the region. The study has further investigated the reason succeed to bring peace and stability in Somaliland comparing to the south Somalia, the difference is several factors including the Somaliland's model of peace and reconciliation was not external interventions. It was local made approach led by traditional elders, politician and businessman. Second point is the initiative from the local people together bringing peace conference after civil wars. Thirds point is the people of Somaliland has some grievances to Somalia central government and want to restore their independent from Somalia.

A robust traditional council of elders with credibility and moral authority can play a crucial role in bringing a sustained peace process to Somalia. In Somaliland, the traditional elders held numerous reconciliation conferences inside of the country and almost all produced peace. By contrast, Southern Somalia peacebuilding process responded to the conflict by holding several conferences outside of Somalia, but none of these yielded tangible results.[6]

One of the key questions of study was the role of tradition elders in peace, the study has identified the following

- ▪ The role of traditional elders in peace and conflict, is conflict resolution mechanisms for solving conflict among the society in a peaceful way. The traditional elders are close to the society and can understand the

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[6]*https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=social_encounters*

needs of the society in terms of peace and security, as well as the traditional elders are the heads and representations of the clan in way of traditional perspectives

- One of the roles of traditional elders is standing with the live of the community that the affects conflict. In most localities, they are closely tied to the parties through kinship. Resolving conflict is their priority and the elders seek no profit in return for their services because they work for the benefit and welfare of their people (Bradbury & Healy, 2010).
- Somali traditional elders do not have military power, so they utilize persuasion techniques and strategies (Elmi, 2015). Somali traditional elders possess considerable moral persuasion when they want to persuade clan members to accept a peace deal, come to the discussion table, or return looted property back to the rightful owner[7].
- Traditional elders act as role of mediators during clan conflict, Somali governance structure from traditional norms of nomadic community because the origin of Somali administration from nomads of collecting sheep, goats and camels. This clan cause that most of the conflict solved under the trees bring all the dispute parties to expose their feeling and other grievance and then the traditional elders bring durable solutions that brought peace and security
- Elders are part of conflict resolution processes in the Somaliland context because they are shared common lineage, heredity, kingship, blood and other norms, sometimes they put punishment those are not obeys their decision, there are traditional laws of Somaliland peace process those rules are the foundation of peace. Somaliland has long history of peacebuilding for example when the politician conflict on administrative issue in term of political administration and governance system of the government, elder immediately mediates conflict parties and come together to solve their difference and givepriority peace and security
- Traditional elders are official council in the clan structure, not government. They are the highest councils of traditional culture, negotiation and stability, since their power is based on the clan structure, in Somaliland context every clan has its traditional elders worked for peace and stability but not involved in the politics and administration of government.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this exploration into Somaliland's steps in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding paints a detailed picture of its transition from chaos to a beacon of stability in the Horn of Africa. By dissecting past conflicts, acknowledging the wisdom of traditional elders, and understanding the wider socio-political landscape, this study shines a light on the home growth peace strategies pivotal to Somaliland's conflict resolution narrative.

Somaliland emerges as a model of resilience and innovation, carving out a peaceful existence and governance structures despite its unrecognized status on the world stage. The grassroots, elder-led initiatives have been key in establishing both legitimacy and effectiveness in its peace endeavors. These endeavors celebrate inclusivity and honor local traditions, crucial in healing rifts and fostering a robust, democratic society.

The discourse highlights the critical role of embracing local contexts and valorizing indigenous insight and leadership in the realm of peacebuilding. Somaliland's trajectory illustrates that sustainable peace is attainable through a cooperation of traditional peacemaking and contemporary governance mechanisms, transcending the need for formal international acknowledgment. This approach adeptly navigates complex issues like clan dynamics, resource allocation, and political representation, essential in the multifaceted conflict landscape of the Horn of Africa.

Furthermore, contrasting Somaliland's peace narrative with the broader regional conflicts underscores the strength of local initiatives and cultural unity in sustaining peace and stability. Although hurdles persist, Somaliland's story provides invaluable lessons for other nations emerging from conflict, promoting a vision of peace shaped by a fusion of indigenous and modern methodologies.

Ultimately, this study enriches the dialogue on peace, factors determine peacebuilding, conflict, and security in post-conflict regions, advocating for approaches that are both culturally agreed and inclusive, involving all segments of society. As the global community confronts ongoing conflicts. Somaliland's journey offers inspiration and practical strategies for future peacemaking endeavors.

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[7]*Elmi, A. (2015). Interview with the author*

Finally, the study discussed the role of traditional elders to peacebuilding, conflict and peace restoration in Somaliland, the study stated elders are the most people involved in peace, stability and, conflict area in Somaliland apart from the responsibility of government intended to bring and restore peace and security.

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