

Liberal Peace building and its Pitfalls in the Horn of Africa: A Critical Appraisal against the Somalia and Somaliland Experiences

*Biruk Shewadeg**

College of Social Science & Humanities, Addis Ababa Science and Technology University, Ethiopia.

*Corresponding author Email: biruk.shewadeg@aastu.edu.et

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to reflect critically on the conceptual tenets of liberal peace building and its limitation against the backgrounds of Somalia and Somaliland. In the immediate aftermath of the cold-war era, with the ideological pronouncement of Fukuyaman ‘End of History,’ the west undisputedly declared the ontological and epistemological supremacy of liberal peace. It further declared liberal peace as having a universal relevance and a panacea for post-conflict societies across the globe despite the critics. This study with the help of analysing intensive relevant literature and deployment of a discursive reasoning approach explores peace building processes of Somalia and Somaliland and adds to the critique. With the end of Siad Barre’s rule, central state institutions virtually disintegrated and two divergent peace building mechanisms were employed by the regions thereof. Somalia, with a hefty involvement of the international community has gone through more than a dozens of normative peace building process. But, they all, perhaps arguably, doomed to fail. Somaliland, a self-claimed but largely unrecognized state, by contrast, conducted consecutive peace building processes which were predominantly homegrown and led by the guurti—elders’ council, achieved relative peace and order with a concomitant viable state. This empirical evidence suggests a rethink of normative and hegemonic concepts that creates an intellectual space to explore the anomaly of such a subaltern perspective.

Key Words: *Liberal Peace building, Somalia, Somaliland*

Introduction

Multidimensional perspectives can be used to approach the ontological concept of

peace. However, the ontological query for “What is peace?” often falls under contemporary orthodoxy in favor of liberal peace (Richmond, 2008). Liberal peace is

fundamentally anchored in the enlightenment discourses of Immanuel Kant and his colleagues. Long before the Enlightenment, liberal peace has been discussed among social contract theorists. Locke (1993), for instance, argued that individuals can only enjoy their natural rights of life, liberty, and property so long as they live in a sovereign that protects these natural rights. The sovereign *via* the social contract avoids the tragedies of the state of nature. Therefore, peace is an outcome of establishing a sovereign authority. The Enlightenment thinkers later pronounced this idea of peace along with sovereign power.

The enlightenment *weltanschauung*¹ seeks to uncover the inherent and universal structure of the physical and social phenomenon. This is triggered by a universal and ahistorical matrix in determining the nature of truth and reality. The presumption is that a common denominator can be founded for all beliefs and value systems since the world is taken unified and can be explained by a single system. The world is supposedly obtained to use Hegel's '*Geist*' i.e., highly systematic

whereby regularities, constancies, uniformities, and absolute principles are its kernels. Thus, it is speculated that applying rationality leads us to extract the universal rules that underlay the surface features of the world, amounting to possible overarching theories and methods to understand and address problems the world encounters (Burr, 2003). Relying on such universalist aspiration, the advocates of liberal peace believe its worldwide applicability in building durable peace despite differences. One of the influential Enlightenment thinkers, Immanuel Kant (1991) would further contend that republicanism is an essential prerequisite to guarantee peace in the global context. For otherwise chaos and instability, he argues, would be logical consequences.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold-war era, with the ideological pronouncement of the Fukuyaman '*End of History*'² the West undisputedly declared the ontological and epistemological foundations of liberal peace. Liberal peace fundamentally resulted from the liberal camp's' triumph in the cold war,

¹ A notion that represents a holistic conception or comprehension of the world: worldview.

² In his influential work, "End of History and the Last Man" (1992), Francis Fukuyama argues that history need to be approached as an evolutionary process, and that the end of history, as Fukuyama termed is that liberal democracy should be the final form of government for all nations.

declared a universalizing rationality and a panacea for post-conflict societies across the board. Contemporary mainstream peace building is called liberal peace building and its theoretical foundation is liberal peace. The scholarship asserts that democracy, perhaps with only a purely liberal lineage guarantees peace and stability in states' domestic politics. Indeed, global democracy was assumed to provide a firm foundation for global peace as Woodrow Wilson justified the American involvement in World War I in 1917. This brought the notion of 'dyadic democratic peace', claiming that democracies cannot fight each other. Bill Clinton's strategy of 'Democratic Enlargement' also supplemented the liberal peace building project by focusing on democracy and security symbiosis. It was further legitimized humanitarian interventions of the US in countries like Haiti and Kosovo.

Liberal peace building entrenched itself following the proposal of *an Agenda for Peace* (1992) and *The Supplement to the Agenda for Peace* (1995) by Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The proposals, with their intrinsic liberal peace building strategy, have played a central role in the subsequent international peace building projects (Craig, 1998). Subsequently, peace building

interventions were propelled under the patronages of the UN and other affiliated agencies in fractured societies with disproportionate liberal enthusiasm (Millar, 2017). It could be argued that liberal peace building is grounded in three basic assumptions. First, it argues that democracies will endure to engross peacefully with one another; second, that trade and economic liberalization inspires democratic norms - concomitantly peace; and finally, that developed must support war-prone countries on a large scale to achieve these aims.

The Critic of Liberal Peace building

With the end of the Cold War, the liberal peace building model assuming the task of transferring Western epitomes of human rights, democracy, and market fundamentalism to post-conflict territories predominantly prevailed. However, while enjoying the predominant position in peace building enterprise, it faced growing criticism. Chief among these is the propagation of a Eurocentric hegemony.

This global hegemonic project tacitly subjecting post-conflict societies to bring into conformity with the international system's prevailing standards of domestic governance is strongly challenged by the diversity and uniqueness of each post-

conflict circumstance. The liberal peace building process, rather than reflecting local preferences and needs, merely serves as an instrument of imposing an external, hegemonic agenda that integrates the peripheries into the global canons of politics and economics. This obtained a resultant effect of providing powerful global actors with the self-righteousness of direct or subtle forms of interventions. Put otherwise, in liberal peace building, the very concept of peace becomes social Darwinist, where Western models of social, political, and economic institutions as universal method into conflict-shattered states so that liberal-economic and political governance is established.

The other critique of liberal peace building emanates from its emphasis on top-down approach undermining its viability and sustainability. As it is entrenched in its standardizing, universalistic airs, and the concomitant failure in negotiating with the local practices of peacemaking, liberal peace building is rather viewed decontextualised among the subalterns. Such ignorance of local engagement and avoidance of consultation with local actors further challenge its legitimacy and validity.

Peace building in the Horn of Africa: Examining the Somalia and Somaliland Experience

The Horn of Africa, for so long has been characterized by entrenched inter and intra-state conflicts and instability. With the demise of the Cold War, international interventions have ever more been arrayed to deal with internal strife. Liberal peace building remained a guiding principle for many of these interventions, particularly in those deployed by the UN. Since the overthrow of Siad Barre's regime in the early 1990s, central state institutions disintegrated, triggering the international community's intervention. Observable divergences, however, have been practiced in Somaliland and Somalia's peace-building process in terms of experiences, actors, and interventions. While the former promoted traditional authorities and political actors to come together at a time the situation was very critical and devastating, the latter is known for salient liberal peace building features coupled with external interventions while deploying peacekeeping forces contributing to an insignificant solution for the longstanding quagmires.

The Somalia Experience

In 1991, following years of political mayhem, Mohamed Siad Barre was ousted

from power by a coalition of armed clan factions. The demise of Siad Barre's regime left a power vacuum in that rival clan militias could not manage to have full control all over Somalia. Neither the factions could come to a compromise on who would claim the sole monopoly over violence. Since then, Somalia lacked an effective government or any central political system capable of prevailing peace. This led the Somalis to receive regional and international attention. Consequently, Somalia Republic, for about three decades, has received enormous support for peace and state-building from the UN, US, and several other actors. However, even after the announcement of a post-transitional federal government in 2012, pacification remained problematic still.

Operation Restore Hope

The UN Security Council authorised the first of a series of peace-keeping operations to Somalia in April 1992 almost a year after the demise of Siad Barre's rule. This realized the launching of UNITAF (Unified Task Force), with an estimated 37,000 personnel of whom 26,000 were American. The mission started under the optimistic title '*Operation Restore Hope*'. The negotiators,

primarily "Aideed and Ali Mahdi"³, agreed to form an interim government whereby ceasing hostilities through a national reconciliation conference in May 1992. The mission was tasked in with brokering national reconciliation, demobilizing and disarming the country's "many militias, and the revival of national and local governance structures" (Lewis, 2008:79).

The Somalis owned a tradition of taking enough time so that issues to be debated for a long and consensus would follow. While the mission promised positive outcomes, the execution particularly with time has made the effort to be destined to fail. The mission's weak political capacity made the process challenging and made it worse by an exceedingly idealistic timeline. Furthermore, it lacked pragmatism in terms of executing its plans. This has been clearly observed when the mission envisioned accomplishing reconciliation, drafting a new constitution, selecting the district and regional council, holding a provisional national assembly, holding a referendum on the constitution, having a census, undergoing voter registration, and respectively hold elections within two years only. It presumes, as it's

³ The two contenders to claim presidency. Both belong to the Hawiye clan with claiming different sub-clans.

anchored on the conceptual tenets of liberal peace building that the establishment of a central authority, albeit top-down, would be culminating the Somali's predicament. Thus, it sought to bring a quick power-sharing deal among the strongest warlords.

However, dissatisfied with the missions' mechanism, General Aideed resented and made attacks on the UN leading to the pronounced "Black Hawk Down"⁴ disaster. This led the UNOSOM's (United Nations Operations in Somalia) withdrawal in early 1995, leaving Somalia still in a state of war and state collapse. This marked the first failure of international engagement to bring peace to Somalia.

Arta Conference

Claiming that lessons were drawn from the previous peace building processes, Djibouti, under the auspices of the local regional organisation the IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) proposed an

⁴ It was an incident where two US helicopters were shot down and eighteen US soldiers were killed. In response to this crisis, the international community largely withdrew from Somalia, leaving behind a small and slowly dwindling number of United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations.

initiative aimed to promote a bottom-up, building-block approach in May 2000. It was held at the hillside resort of Arta. Egypt and the UN for their cause were enthusiastic supporters. The conference of Arta established the formation of the TNG (Transitional National Government) and Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, a former enabler of Barre's regime became the president.

The innovative character of the Arta process had been observed among the delegates that made a departure from faction and militia leaders to clan elders and civil society leaders (Menkhaus, 2007). Unlike previous efforts, this was billed as a grassroots endeavor where some convergences were observed with the efforts in Somaliland. The 'delegates' and 'representatives' across the clan spectrum and embraced all the social categories of what was optimistically called 'civil society'—traditional elders, religious scholars, 'intellectuals', artists, and women (Lewis, 2008:81). With the UN assistance, it was claimed; this wide array of people could assume responsibility as protagonists in the peace processes.

As a continuation of the previous peace conferences and intrinsically embedded in the liberal peace building mechanism, however, the Arta conference believed that a simple power sharing arrangement and

forming a strong central government would be a panacea and the instrument for sustainable peace. It thus introduced the “4.5 formula”⁵ into Somali politics.

The Arta process also marked the Revival of a unitary Somali state. But what the Arta Accord did not produce was a true national unity government that sustains peace. Clans and factions that felt underrepresented formed, the SRRC (The Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council), deterring the TNG’s advancement in the hinterland. Mogadishu-based warlords appeared another armed rival against the TNG to hamper its operation and finally made irrelevant (Menkhaus, 2007).

The Mbaghati Conference

A further attempt to stabilize Somalia occurred through the January 2004, Mbaghati

⁵ a system of fixed proportional representation by clan in both negotiations and transitional governments. The formula allocates an equal number of seats to each of the four main clan-families (Darood, Dir, Hawiye, and Digil-Mirifle) and apportions half of that number for Somalia’s many ‘minority groups’, which include the Bantu, Benadiri and low caste groups. However, the formula did not solve conflicts over representation.

Peace Conference in Kenya. The conference, sponsored by the IGAD and Western allies, encouraged a building-block approach. Those talks as was the case in the preceding peace building efforts were aimed at bringing peace only through the establishment of a new transitional government to succeed the TNG. The Kenyan peace process, following the Arta conference again adopted the ‘4.5 formula’ of fixed representation by clan (ibid). It was attended by traditional elders, civil society leaders, political and military leaders.

The initiative led to the formation of a new government in October 2004, called the TFG (Transitional Federal Government) with the presidency of Abdullahi Yusuf. But persistent divisions among Somali and regional actors stalled the process. The TFG, in a similar accusation against its predecessor could not function as a government of national unity. A narrow clan coalition appropriated much power and majority of Somalis perceived it “as a client of Ethiopia” (Menkhaus 2007:38). Various actors including the TNG defunct leaders, a Mogadishu-based coalition, warlords, and Islamists opposed the TFG together and challenged its consolidation in Mogadishu. According to Menkhaus (2014) post 2001 securitization of institution building strategy

served as a driving impulse in the attempts to revive the central Somali state by the UN and the donor community as a way of building peace. This in part reflected a new global understanding that state weakness was the underlying cause of both underdevelopment and conflict, leading to persistent efforts towards reinvigorating failed states. For this reason, the TFG was formed in 2004 with heavy international pressure. Foreign aid for instance was steered at strengthening this central government. As a means to legitimize the central government, i.e. the TFG members of parliament and those of the security sector received direct payments and salaries regardless of several accusations of human rights abuses by the latter.

The Implication of the Peace building Efforts

The implication drawn from the consecutive high-level peace building efforts is multi-dimensional. The significant one, however, can be situated in the premises of liberal peace building and its limitation in bringing durable peace. The attempts built on the presumption that the formation of a state, more in the sense of the *Weberian* sense, i.e. one that could claim the sole monopoly over violence, has faced a recurrent failure. The failure can further be attributed to several

factors. The most critical one is the erroneous “one-size-fits-all approach” principle anchored on the liberal peace building mechanism. This approach is fully negligent of the idiosyncrasies of local realities and centuries-old traditions and institutions where the allegiance of the wider public resides. It could not at least leave a little space where the local institutions work in hybridisation approach so that peace would have prevailed much in a better way. Accordingly, the respective state structures followed from the giant peace building conferences of the Arta and Mbaghati, respectively the TNG and the TFG, perhaps including the current Federal Government of Somalia, are all but characterised by alienated underpinnings. It couldn’t effectively exploit the potentials of local institutions that could have reversed its recurrent failure.

Currently, a regional peacekeeping mission under the supervision of the African Union – AMISOM (the African Union Mission in Somalia) was established to help with peace building in the approval of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council). It was launched with an initial six-month mandate on February 2007 but lasted for nearly 15 years until replaced by the most recent African Union Transition

Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) on 31 March 2022. The mission was mandated to support the Federal Government presuming that it is only a strong state that is able to prevailing peace. Thus, the Federal Government of Somalia's forces highly relied on the AMISOM in their battle against Al-Shabaab militants.

Despite the efforts, all parties to the conflict perpetuated the instability and hampered the peace building effort IN Somalia. All are claimed to commit violations of international humanitarian law to the extent of some amounting to war crimes. Indiscriminate and targeted attacks on civilians and forcible recruitment of children have been conducted by Al-Shabaab.

The continued peace building efforts in Somalia remained reflective of the liberal underpinning. As the aforementioned peace building conferences suggest, the establishment of an *a priori* central state institution concomitantly assures sustainable peace. Thus, rather than engaging the age-old resilient traditional institutions, it is assumed that a mere power-sharing arrangement among the contenders would effectively pacify the war-torn Somalia and the result remained one that is ghastly to contemplate.

A very different method of peace building has been maintained in northern Somalia-Somaliland where the traditional institutions are intricately intermingled with the 'modern' state apparatus to sustain peace. This Somaliland effort is subsequently described as anomalous not simply because the region is a sole exemplar in terms of instrumentalising indigenous knowledge or traditional institutions in Africa as was the case in *Ubuntu* in South Africa and *Gacaca* in Rwanda. The anomaly rather denotes the ability of the traditional institution as part not only of peace building rather its ability to be an essential part of the state apparatus in Somaliland that resulted from a relatively durable peace.

The Somaliland Anomaly: Customary Institutions as Building Block for Peace Building

In a milieu of the crisis and inter-clan ferocity in Somalia, a self-proclaimed republic in the North West, Somaliland emerged as a relatively peaceful and functional polity in the past three decades. The majority of its people come from three main clan families - the Isaaq, Dir- primarily the *Gadabursi* and *Issa* clans, and *Daarood* - specifically the *Warsangeli* and *Dolbahante* clans - of whom the Isaaq are the largest (Lewis, 2008).

Contrary to the faction-ridden and unstable territory of Somalia, Somaliland, had restored a functioning government and maintained a considerable degree of peace. It's however crucial to address how and explore the enigma.

Peace building in Somaliland cannot be seen in isolation from the role played by customary institutions. The customary institutions and particularly the *guurti*⁶, appeared vital in the post-Siad Barre era of reconciliation, institutional building, and conflict resolution in Somaliland. It was instrumental in the consecutive conferences since the end of Siad Barre's rule with the view to restore relations between communities affected by the war, mediate and resolve conflicts between various post-war factions, and build the institutional

⁶ The *guurti* represents an elders' council providing a governing structure that acted as a means of enforcement of law and judicial decisions. These councils were also the decision making body within the non-hierarchical clan structure and it is through them that contractual agreements are made concerning everything from marriage practices to resource allocation, trade agreements, punishment for crimes and movement of the clans or sub-clans.

foundation of the state. The objectives of the conference varied per the tenacity of the time. Some were made for the reconciliatory purpose, others for resolving conflict, and some others again for synchronizing the above two simultaneously. Most of the conferences were held between the elders sitting under a shadow of a tree. A glance at *Borama* conference is quite important for understanding the indispensable role of customary institutions in peace building.

The *Borama* Conference

The *Borama* conference, often referred to as "the height" of all the clan conferences and times a 'make or break event' in the creation of the Somaliland republic, was held from January to May 1993. Peace building was made in concomitance with state building. It was organized in the principal town of *Borama*, the town of *Gadabursi* clan, the elders insisted on the hybrid institutional framework of the state. The *Gadabursi* had helped to mediate the conflict within the *Issaq* in 1992.

Borama provided a relatively secure environment away from *Hargeisa*, *Burco*, and *Berbera* where security was still flimsy. It was also a town of the non-*Issaq*, which gave non-*Issaqs* a relatively better role in shaping the future of Somaliland. It also substantiated the earlier attempts at

inclusion in the formation of Somaliland. Its strength emanates from the fact that it was largely homegrown and principally sponsored by communities in Somaliland though modest support from external sources of Community Aid Abroad, the Mennonites, Life and Peace Institute, Somali communities abroad, and the French and US embassies in Djibouti; was secured (Janine, 2012).

Peace-making is a long, painstaking process. The *Borama* conference was the culmination of earlier peace conferences at *Sheikh* and *Hargeisa* in 1992. It succeeded partly because time was allowed for issues to be thoroughly debated and for flashpoints to be dealt with in a way so that consensus could be achieved. The conference had two agenda items: reconciliation and security; and state formation.

The *Borama* conference was pivotal where issues of representation and power sharing were settled via the institutionalisation of clans and the customary institutions into the system of governance. It endorsed the formal institutionalization of the national *guurti* as the upper house of the parliament and the highest organ of the state. The national *guurti* supervised the peaceful transfer of power from the SNM (Somali National Movement) administration to a

civilian government led by Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal⁷. The conference also produced an interim Peace Charter based on the *xeer*⁸ until a constitution was promulgated. The conference is known for its establishment of a political system that became known as *beel*. The system is fundamentally a fusion of indigenous forms of social and political organisations with modern institutions of government. It was described as a vigorous hybrid of Western form and traditional ingredients.

The *Beel* System

The *beel*, aka hybrid system of government, recognised kinship as the *raison d'être* of Somali society. The government essentially became a power-sharing coalition of Somaliland's main clans. The structure aimed at nurturing popular participation in governance might best define the essence of democracy devoid of necessarily encumbering Western connotation. Executives are by maintaining clan balance.

⁷ a widely respected Isaaq statesman who had been Somalia's last civilian prime minister before Siad Barre's 1969 coup

⁸ *It* is a Somali customary law involving a socially constructed set of norms established to safeguard security and social justice for Somalis in Somalia and in the diaspora.

Seats, both in the upper and lower houses of parliament were proportionally allocated to clans as per the formula the SNM (Somali National Movement) initiated.

Somaliland, instead of partaking democratic model of governance imposed from the outside, opted for synchronizing Western-style institutions of government with its cultural substratum. This of course played a great deal in peace building as well. An important feature of the *beel* system lies in its inclusiveness in terms of clan representation.

This inclusion was vigorous for the modern to be successfully implemented as it formed a peaceful atmosphere in which a new form of governance could be introduced (Kaplan, 2008). It allowed the Somali population to identify with the new state structure and to get accustomed to democratic governance, thus helping it to achieve greater cohesion. More importantly, the system granted the Somaliland administration a popular legitimacy that Somalia's former regimes lacked. This helped peace prevail for so long.

Critique of the *Beel* System

The *beel* system is generally ascribed to helping to preserve peace and build a workable state in Somaliland. The system however has been also subjected to various

criticisms. The criticism includes clan representation, women exclusion, the *guurti* replacement, the undemocratic nature, and politicization of the *guurti*.

Complaints on clan representation

The *beel* system made a selection of officials to the executive in compliance with clan balance. Seats for the upper and lower houses of parliament were proportionally allocated to clans as per the formula the SNM initiated. This seemed to have, as some would argue limited the development of a fully representative and effective democracy and has given rise to the marginalization of some clans, creating a sense of alienation among members of those clans. The 1993 *Borama* Charter used the 1960 Council that made seats to be roughly allocated for the House of Representatives, even though it faced widespread disagreement. The major clans of *Habar Awal*, *Habar Awal*, *Habar Jalo*, *Garhajis*, *Gadabursi*, and *Dhulbuhante* secured ten parliamentary seats each, while the smaller clans retained less under the formula that the charter used. The *Garhajis* confederation comprising the *Idagalle* and the *Habar Yunis* felt uncomfortable with the arrangements of the *Borama* Conference, which captured the confederation as one clan rather than two. While losing the

presidency to a member of the contending clan that they were in a fight they believed they were also being slighted within the House of Representatives (Phillips, 2013). Similarly, the newly formalised *beel* system perceived by the *Harti* clans (*Dhulbuhante* and *Warsengeli*) as a mechanism undermined their historical level of influence. They were considered second only to the *Isaaq* under British colonial rule, in terms of population and influence. However, the settlement at *Borama* gave the vice presidency to a member of the *Gadabursi* clan, a Parliamentary Speaker - the less prestigious position was allocated to the *Dhulbuhante*. Though the *Harti* clans approved the settlement thereof, the feeling of being sidelined in an 'independent' Somaliland deepened and remained intact (Mesfin, 2009). The *beel* system also had been critiqued for its failure to consider the geographical location of the clans whereby clan representatives are selected disproportionately from one region. This eventually led to the disenfranchisement of clan members settled outside. Accordingly, the *Harti* clan members located in 'middle' Somaliland tends to be favored in selection for office than the others.

Women Exclusion

Contrary to the constitutional provision that denounces any act of discrimination against women and guarantees multi-dimensional equality, there is, some argue the prevalence of structural male favoritism in areas of authority and power. Only men are traditionally entitled to lead and represent their clan in the *guurti*. The upper house exclusively comprises the men.

The inherent patrilineal clan system made women excluded from representative politics, justified by the fact that they would be represented by their husband's clans or that of their father. But, this representation is passive and hinders the active role of women in decision making. The word *guurti* itself connotes a male elder and this causes a threat to women's participation.

The Challenge of *Guurti* Replacement

The replacement of the *guurti* remains a highly contentious issue. The constitution vaguely puts the laws that are supposed to guide this process. In dealing with replacement issues, Article 58 of the Constitution, for example, claims that the House of Elders shall select its members based on a procedure that would be determined by law. This law however has never come into reality. Contradictory constitutional provisions are observed concerning to whether the *guurti* ought to be

replaced via ‘election’ or selection. The replacement today is made only through heredity, unlike the commonly held presumption that when a *guurti* member dies, the replacement would be made by another elder who would belong to the same clan. The practice however is different in that deceased member is replaced only by selecting a member of the same family, i.e., son or grandson.

The counterargument justifies the above allegations arguing that disputes would arise if the heredity procedure is not followed strictly. Thus, this will happen for avoiding conflict with the families. Moreover, though the constitution claims the minimum age for *guurti* membership shall be 45 years; deceased members of the *guurti* are often replaced by individuals who are too young.

The major challenge that the upper house faces is that most of its founding members have passed away. Such a loss is presented as a factor accelerating the decline of the House’s potential. Furthermore, there has never been a mechanism through which their experiences could be documented, therefore they die with all the knowledge that they possess. This loss appeared something that the house cannot afford.

The challenge at hand now, therefore, is how the current *guurti* can be refreshed.

The *guurti* has never been elected. Whenever a clan elder dies or retires, the seat will be claimed by one of his descendants. This, many feel, is perpetually undermining the legitimacy of the body.

Partly, the problem is found in the constitution as it failed to provide no direction on the replacement of the *guurti*. It only claims "*the members of the House of Elders shall be elected in a manner to be determined by law. A law governing this decision has yet to be drafted.*"⁹

Undemocratic nature

Another critic of the *guurti* has been associated with its undemocratic character in making some of its key decisions. It has also been accused of aligning itself with the executive demands. Equivocally, the executive accuses the *guurti* as an anachronistic institution that rejects policies even when it is useful to the wider public. Moreover, contrary to what the constitution says, the *guurti* has remained in office for around three decades. The constitution stipulates that the House of Elders shall assume office only for six years starting from the date of its first meeting.

In addition to a continuous extension of its term in office, the *guurti* has also

⁹ the Somaliland Constitution Article 58.1

corroborated when the executive extended its term. However, the counter argument reads the corroboration of extending the term of the executive as a sacred act of saving and salvaging the country.

Politicisation of the Guurti

Formalisation of the role of a certain type of clan leader in Somaliland's political system was made possible by the Borama conference. This included formalisation of their responsibilities beyond clan leaders' 'traditional' functions as mediators and peacemakers (Lewis, 2008:147). Such a mechanism ascended the *guurti* members to the forefronts of national political confrontations where they did not have natural reserves of social capital to draw from, and where they were often physically detached from the communities they were ostensibly representing. The politicisation of traditional positions altered the nature of their legitimacy and exposed them to charges of corruption and political self-preservation, something that successive presidents have exploited as a means of increasing their power *vis-à-vis* the *guurti*. The *guurti* members have done little to nothing in subduing such criticism, on the contrary being keen to be seen as acquiescent of patronage, recurrently extending their term, and siding with the

government of the day. The *Borama* conference represented the zenith of the political power of the *guurti*, but the tension between political authority derived from grassroots contexts and political authority derived from proximity to the apparatus of the 'state', has since undermined its moral authority. The upper house members are becoming political and/or are getting involved in politics. They pointed to the current chairman of the *guurti* who they said is a well-known politician who contested in a previous election.

Furthermore, some of the *guurti* members have loyalties to various political parties. This would in turn allow politicians to intervene in the functioning of the elders with a resultant effect of negatively impacting the credibility of the House. In the same vein, there are comments among the respondents that some *guurti* members have been seen attending political rallies.

Conclusion and Recommendation

When the Cold war was over, international interventions led by the ideological premises of liberal peace building have sought to be instrumental in solving internal conflict. As part of its peace building effort, it has gone through enormous international support for rebuilding states in conflict-prone areas. However, its approach to peace building

remained dominant for so long that it faced recurrent failure due to its inability to comprehend cultural nuances and idiosyncrasies. Indeed, liberal peace building may not be claimed to categorically fail across the board as it marked success stories in states like the former Yugoslavia. However, its failure to bring lasting peace in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia, suggests the rethink of hegemonic peace building strategies.

Accordingly, peace building efforts in Somalia have largely been dominated by international intervention anchored on the ideological supremacy of liberal peace building. As the grand international conferences of Arta and Mbaghati would suggest, the (re) building of central state institutions and the concomitant creation of safe havens for realising liberal doctrines has been taken a panacea. Contrary to presumed, those attempts to the least appeared unsuccessful at other times become counterproductive.

A very different trajectory toward peace building has been observed in Somaliland. In the post-Siad Barre period, customary institutions in Somaliland were on guard to bear their traditional duty of reconciliation and peacemaking. As an institution primarily relying on traditional Somali

customs, the government must adhere to the traditional values that offer the *guurti* legitimacy, perhaps with all its limitations and drawbacks. Primarily, the relative success in peace building and the apparent accomplishment in establishing a rudimentary but functioning state structure may not be seen in isolation from the role played by the *guurti*. Apparently, the distinct colonial history of Somaliland may attribute to the continuities in the authority of the *guurti*. The Britain's indirect rule in Somaliland, as opposed to the more pervasive and direct Italian colonial rule in Somalia, made it less intact the power of traditional institutions.

It is highly recommended that peace building in Somalia needs to offer a wide space for local institutions such as *guurti*. It plays a critical role in Somaliland's peace-building efforts. It has been instrumental in promoting sustainable peace by bridging the gap between the local communities and the government, ensuring that all voices are heard in decision-making processes. Indigenous institutions possess the knowledge, trust, and legitimacy needed to resolve conflicts, promote reconciliation, and build social cohesion.

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