

## THE FAILURE OF PEACEBUILDING IN SOMALIA: THE 'MYTH' OF THE NATION-STATE

Igba Ajogwu Samuel\*, Cori Wielenga\*\*

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### Abstract

*There is a growing consensus in International Relations that the sovereign nation state, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, is a 'myth' because of the several nations that can be found within one sovereign entity, made so by the Berlin conference of 1885 that partitioned Africa. Regardless of this consensus, international peacebuilding theory and practice is biased towards maintaining these sovereign arrangements. Through a decolonial lens, peacebuilding in Somalia is explored as an example of how these biases affect peace in a multiethnic, multiclans, and diverse society.*

**Keywords:** Somalia, peacebuilding, liberal peacebuilding, decolonial peace, indigenous

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\* Samuel Ajogwu Igba is a student in the Masters of Diplomatic Studies programme at the University of Pretoria. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Peace and Conflict Transformation from Daystar University in Nairobi. He has worked at intergovernmental organizations in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. His research interests are on sovereignty and peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan African States.

Contact: [u18336762@tuks.co.za](mailto:u18336762@tuks.co.za)

\*\* Cori Wielenga is a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Sciences and the Deputy Director of the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation. She holds a PhD in Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies from the University of KwaZulu Natal. Her research interest is in the intersection of formal and informal governance and justice systems during transitions. This has led to in-depth research on Rwanda's gacaca courts, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and comparative projects on the informal justice systems in Burundi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia.

Contact: [Cori.Wielenga@up.ac.za](mailto:Cori.Wielenga@up.ac.za)

## Introduction

The end of the Cold War brought about a drastic change in international relations and practice, as conflicts changed from interstate to intrastate.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of intrastate conflict became common predominantly in Africa and other parts of the global south. These conflicts also attracted interests and concerns from the international community, as peace interventions in Africa became part of the global agenda.

In the past few decades, critique of these peace interventions has emerged, while at the same time, a broader critique of the very knowledge systems that inform the global system emerged. This latter can be described as the 'decolonial turn'. The decolonial school of thinking argues that knowledge was colonized through epistemecides and appropriation of other ways of knowing which included the assumption that the only valid knowledge comes from Europe and North America. Power was colonized by usurping, and 'theft' of world history and its rearticulating through the prism of hellenocentrism, eurocentrism and westernization,<sup>2</sup> This is the colonial matrix of power that decolonial scholars such as Mignolo (2007), Grofoguél (2011) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) refer to.

With sovereign states in Sub-Saharan Africa in mind, increasingly more International Relations thinkers, including decolonial thinkers, agree that the idea of the sovereign nation state on the African continent is mythical.<sup>3</sup> This is because the concept of a sovereign nation state does not consider the several nations clustered together by the Berlin Conference of 1885 which led to the colonization of Africa after the imperial scramble for

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<sup>1</sup> Anaud Blin "Armed groups and intra-state conflicts: the dawn of a new era?" in *International Review of the Red Cross*, 2011, p, 293-294; Muzaffer Yilmaz "Intra-State Conflicts in The Post-Cold War Era" in *International Journal on World Peace*, no. 4(24), 2007, p 11.

<sup>2</sup> Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *The Decolonial Mandela: Peace, Justice and the Politics of Life*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2016, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Englebert, *Africa: Unity, Sovereignty, and Sorrow*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2007, pp. 62-63.

Africa.<sup>4</sup> This is an epistemological shortcoming that arguably influences the success of peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In many Sub-Saharan Africa states, peacebuilding is marred with a recurrence of conflicts, largely due to the disregard for this epistemological shortcoming (in this case, our particular interest is the definition of a sovereign nation state) by International Relations scholars, peacebuilders, and the international community in general. Approaches to peacebuilding usually centre on liberal peacebuilding processes that are aimed at holding democratic elections and building liberal democratic states. Decolonial scholars, on the other hand, suggest other approaches such as drawing on values shared by parties in conflict, allowing indigenous practices and knowledge systems to guide interventions, and transforming colonial legacies.<sup>5</sup>

This article considers the case of Somalia to better understand the implications of the epistemological shortcoming that contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War. Particularly, it explores the effects of the epistemic coloniality embedded in the concept of the sovereign nation state and its effects on Africa societies such as Somalia. Somalia is considered an ethnically homogenous society compared to other African countries.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Jackson, "Negative Sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa" in *Review of International Studies*, 12(4), 1986, pp. 247-264; Ali Mazrui and Francis Wiafe-Amoako, *African Institutions: Challenges to Political, Social, and Economic Foundations of Africa's Development*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016; Abou Jeng, *Peacebuilding in the African Union: Law, Philosophy and Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 3; Siphmandla Zondi, "African Union Approaches to Peacebuilding: Efforts at Shifting the Continent Towards Decolonial Peace" in *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, no. 17(1), 2017, pp. 105-131.

<sup>5</sup> Abou Jeng, "Peacebuilding in the African Union", *loc. cit.*, p. 283; Jacqueline Nakaiza, "A Case for African-Promoted Peacebuilding Strategies with Specific Reference to AMISOM, the Juba Peace Process and IGAD's interventions in South Sudan" in *AfSol Journal*, no. 1(1), 2016, pp. 127-142; Guy Banim, "Conflicts in Africa: Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Beyond – A Personal Perspective" in *European External Action Service*, 2017; Severine Autesserre, "Constructing Peace: Collective Understandings of Peace, Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding" in *Critique Internationale*, no. 51(2), 2011, pp. 153-167; Africa Union, "Peace and Stability" <<https://au.int/en/au/priorities/peace-and-stability>> accessed on 12 June, 2019.

Despite this fact, conflicts between the various clans, marginalization and inequalities that followed independence in the 1960s as well as the merging of two former colonies of British Somalia (present day Somaliland) and Italian Somalia (present-day South-Central Somalia) culminated in the events that led to the outbreak of the Somalia Civil War that lasted for 22 years, between 1990 and 2013.<sup>6</sup> It can be observed that despite these effects, today's peacebuilding by the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and other members of the international community, and peacebuilders in Somalia is focused on re-establishing Somalia as one sovereign entity.

This article proposes that in Somalia, liberal peacebuilding has dominated the peacebuilding process because of the epistemic coloniality of knowledge regarding the definition of the sovereign nation state. The sovereign nation state here refers to the diverse ethnic and cultural groups within the continent who were superimposed on each other into a legal and internationally recognized entity by the Berlin conference that partitioned Africa.<sup>7</sup>

The trend is for conflicts to end with little or no "milestone" changes in agreements, rather, governments are restructured within the same sovereign confinements, and liberal democracies are put in place to replace military dictatorships. This pattern is referred to as the liberal peacebuilding in this article. Somalia represents an example of this, as several clans and sub-clans have been left out of agreements and a federal government was put in place in 2013 to end the country's Civil War. The result is an opposition from clans which have now reconstituted as terrorist organizations, stagnating the peacebuilding progress of the country. It is uncertain whether the Somalia Federal Government (SFG) can retain its

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Camacho and Ibrahim Mohamed Abukar, "Somalia's Security the Reconstruction of the Somali National Army" in *Center for Policy Analysis & Research*, Mogadishu: Center for Policy Analysis and Research, 2017; Afyare Elmi and Abdullahi Barise, "The Somali Conflict: Root Causes, Obstacles, and Peace-Building Strategies" in *African Security Review*, no. 15(1), 2006, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> P. Englebert, *op. cit.*, p. 245; A. Mazrui and F. Wiafe-Amoako, *op. cit.*

authority if the AU mission, which provides it with security, should withdraw from the country.<sup>8</sup>

Opposition to liberal peace by decolonial thinkers is based on arguments on the need for a decolonial peace that emphasizes unity, finding common ground, drawing on shared values, and transforming the sovereign state from its colonial legacy. But it can be argued that even these propositions perpetrate the liberal peace objectives, as they are all geared towards keeping respective sovereign nation states of Sub-Saharan Africa together<sup>9</sup>, as opposed to addressing the “myth” of the sovereign nation state all together. The myth of the sovereign nation state here refers to the belief that sovereign states in Africa are not sovereign nation states, because, even though there are territorial borders and internationally recognized legitimate governments, the absence of a common language, ancestral decent, and common history makes them sovereign states and not sovereign nation states.<sup>10</sup>

### **Liberalism and the limitations of the notion of the ‘state’ for peacebuilding**

The dominant approach to peacebuilding practice around the world today is that of liberal peacebuilding; perhaps this is partly because liberalism dominates international relations today. According to Meiser “we currently live in an international system structured by the liberal world order built after the Second World War (1939–1945)”.<sup>11</sup> This conclusion is reached as a result of the fact that “international institutions,

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<sup>8</sup> Haldun Canci and Yerima Magudu, “Impact of the Global Arms Trade in Somalia (2000-2014): A Descriptive Analysis” in *International Journal on World Peace*, no. 4(32), 2015, pp. 35-62.

<sup>9</sup> G. Banim, *op. cit.*; S. Autesserre, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-167.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: and Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1977, p. 339.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Meiser, “Introducing Liberalism in International Relations Theory”, in Stephen McGlinchey, Walters Rosie and Scheinpflug Christian, eds., *International Relations Theory*, Bristol: E-International Relations Publishers, 2017, p. 23.

organizations and norms (expected behaviors) of this world order are built on the same foundations as domestic liberal institutions and norms (of specific state); the desire to restrain the violent power of states.

But the same liberal peace that has been able to stabilize societies in Europe and North America has not been very successful when applied to the African context. This can be tied to the fact that African, and specifically, Sub-Saharan African states such as Somalia, have different ontologies compared with European states. One common ground on this matter between various thinkers in International Relations is that the concept of a sovereign nation state fails to consider the diversity of cultures that exists within sovereign entities in Sub-Saharan Africa, and this accounts, in part, for the failure of the liberal peace approach to peacebuilding.<sup>12</sup> Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa often leads to silencing the guns,<sup>13</sup> but fails to achieve long lasting peace because due attention is not given to structural issues such as ethnicity, marginalization, and exclusivity.

Structural peacebuilding refers to that which is aimed at transforming society and underlying causes of conflict through dismantling, constructing and reconstructing concepts and structures. 'Structure' in this research is used following Martin and Lee (2015:713) and Haslanger's (2015:2) description of the term as "abstract organizations of reciprocally defined social categories that are seen as part of some social whole" and as "theoretical entities, postulated to do work in a social theory". Structures are also used in this study to identify and critique structural injustice nested in the colonial matrix of power that forms a central part of decolonial thinking.<sup>14</sup> It is also used to provide the context for human agency; and more importantly, it is used following Galtung's

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<sup>12</sup> Englebert, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63; Mazrui, Wiafe-Amoako, *op. cit.*; Jackson, *op. cit.*.

<sup>13</sup> Zondi, *op. cit.*, 2017, p. 109.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Mignolo, "Delinking" in *Cultural Studies*, no. 21(2), 2007, pp. 449-514.

(1969) definition of structural violence as relating to the inegalitarian distribution of power and resources.

Englebert (2007), discusses the consequences of the notion of sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa. He discusses why despite the nature of Africa sovereign states, (the diversity and “failure” since the decolonization period), there seem to be a shortage of secession around the continent. To him, sovereignty in African states is given legal command by international recognition, therefore, because Africa state sovereignty is juridical, Africa state power is *de jure*. i.e. the state is defined by its legality rather than its effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> Legal command endures in African states, and this has been the reason for African states existence today despite the many issues encountered with regards to conflicts, economic and social development.<sup>16</sup> Legal command affords these states the capacity to control, dominate, extract, or dictate through the law.

Englebert (2007) suggests three solutions he assumes are utopian. The first is to remove the sovereignty of African states completely by derecognizing problematic sovereign states, but this idea is likely to result in chaos. A case in point is the Israel/Palestine conflict, in which the international community refused to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state leading to age long conflict between Israel and Palestine. A second recommendation suggests liberalizing the supply of sovereignty in Sub-Saharan Africa. This entails the international community giving support to states that perform well as sovereign states. Thirdly, Engelbert (2007:257) suggests diluting sovereignty by providing the various nations within current sovereign arrangements autonomy and reducing the powers of central governments. This is a promising, but problematic approach in terms of operationalization, as peacebuilding in countries like Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo has failed to properly implement

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<sup>15</sup> Englebert, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

federalism and devolution of power, even though their constitutions suggests it.

Engelbert's suggestions can be faulted for still containing some biases towards sovereign nation states. He focuses on international legitimacy as the supplier of sovereignty, and therefore his suggestions are limited to international recognition and derecognition. This research, on a practical basis, is intended to transcend these constrains of sovereign arrangements, to develop ideas on how African indigenous nations can flourish without relying on sovereign arrangements for peace and development. This will be done by identifying how the meaning attributed to sovereign nation states practically affects the various warring clans in the case analysis of Somalia. This is in a bid to change the direction of peacebuilding initiatives regarding the sovereign bias.

### **The liberal peacebuilding framework and 'decolonial peace'**

The most common and dominant approach to peacebuilding is the liberal peacebuilding framework. It is composed of the several key components including democratization, the rule of law, human rights, free and globalized markets, and neo-liberal development.<sup>17</sup> The critique has included its hypocrisy, double standards, lack of local legitimacy, lack of broad, local participation, insensitivity to local needs, its 'technical' approach, its state-centrism, its elite-focus, and its attempts to fit one framework to many contexts.<sup>18</sup> Included in this is Zondi's introduction of

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<sup>17</sup> Oliver Richmond, "The Problem of Peace: Understanding the 'Liberal Peace'" in *Conflict, Security & Development*, Routledge, 2006, p. 292.

<sup>18</sup> O. Richmond, A. Björkdahl, and S. Kappler, "The Emerging EU Peacebuilding Framework: Confirming or Transcending Liberal Peacebuilding?" in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, no. 24(3), 2011, pp. 449-460; D. Roberts, "Saving Liberal Peace from Itself" in *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, no. 24(1), 2013, pp. 366-373; S. Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the Liberal Peace: External Frameworks and Local Alternatives*, Routledge, 2011; Chandra L. Sriram, "Justice as Peace? Liberal Peacebuilding and Strategies of Transitional Justice", in *Global Society*, no. 21(4), 2007, pp. 579-591; I. Taylor, "What Fit for the Liberal Peace in Africa?" in *Global Society*, no. 21(4), 2007, pp. 553-566.



the term 'decolonial peace' which speaks to the failure of peacebuilding to date as it does not explicitly address the effects of colonial legacy on current conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

Richmond identifies three models in liberal peacebuilding that he argues contradict each other.<sup>20</sup> These models include the conservative model, the orthodox model, and the emancipatory model. The conservative model is "associated with top down approaches to peacebuilding and development, tending towards the coercive and often seen as an alien expression of hegemony and domination, sometimes using force, or through conditionality and dependency creation". An example of this is the AU approach to peace in Somalia which focuses on installing a central authority.<sup>21</sup>

The second model is the orthodox model which is concerned with including local needs and cultures in peacebuilding initiatives. This model is still dominated by a focus on transferring methodologies, objectives and norms of western liberal peacebuilders. The third model is emancipatory and is "concerned with a much closer relationship of custodianship and consent with local ownership. It tends to be very critical of the coerciveness conditionality and dependency that the conservative and orthodox models operate through".<sup>22</sup>

Following his above critique of epistemological issues that plague liberal peacebuilding, Richmond clearly describes a liberal peace understanding of peace as a peace that is "stable and consensual, but within a cosmopolitan framework of governance which is both a representation of the individual, the state and the global".<sup>23</sup> This complex position on peace needs to be clearly elucidated before we can begin to

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<sup>19</sup> Zondi, 2017, *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> O. Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 300

<sup>21</sup> Zondi, 2017, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Richmond, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 307.

decide whether it has the potential to become ontologically stable and a positive epistemology.

Richmond's<sup>24</sup> description of peace falls short of a decolonial definition of the concept in that, although it accounts for diversity by recognizing that a cosmopolitan framework of governance is needed, practical operationalization of accepting diversity boils down to democratic elections and majority rule and thereby making it exclusionary to minority groups.<sup>25</sup> This partly leads to the epistemic bias of liberal peace approaches. It also presents an imperative to redefine the concept of peace in the context of current and historical realities of Sub-Saharan African states such as Somalia.

For this reason, Zondi emphasizes the need for a 'decolonial peace', a peace that "deals with the colonial continuities in the nature of the inherited state, with its underlying paradigm of war and violence, its colonizer model of the world and its colonial political economy".<sup>26</sup> He discusses the need for a decolonial peace that transcends colonial legacies and the inherited sovereign nation state, arguing that the AU's records show that interventions have been successful in ending violent conflicts, and restoring the authority of sovereign states, but have been unable to transform societies for lasting peace due to the neglect for transforming colonial legacies.

Zondi's approach can be faulted on the grounds that he suggests that a decolonial peace will entail building national unity, regional cohesion and continental integration.<sup>27</sup> These objectives bare striking resemblance to Richmond's description of peace within the context of liberal peacebuilding as a 'peace that is stable and consensual, but within a cosmopolitan framework of governance which is both a representation of

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>25</sup> Tony Leon, "The State of Liberal Democracy in Africa: Resurgence of Retreat" in *Centre for Global Liberty and Prosperity Institute*, no. 12, 2010, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Zondi, 2017, *op. cit.* p. 122.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*

the individual, the state and the global'.<sup>28</sup> This approach is still derived from a western Eurocentric assumption of universality and hegemony. Moreover, operationalizing this approach becomes problematic when consideration is given to building national unity within a diverse society. As attempts at this often led to the weaker nations within sovereign arrangements being marginalized due to ethnicity (clan rivalry in the case of Somalia), tribalism, greed, and corruption.

In similar arguments, Autesserre notes that peace interventions typically fail to capture micro-level antagonisms that continues to fuel the insurgencies that destabilized communities during implementation of peace agreements.<sup>29</sup> She suggests emphasis should be placed on identifying bottom up approaches that capitalizes on shared values and can bring about unity between communities. Micro level antagonisms here refer to local agendas at the level of the individual, the family, the clan, the municipality, the community, the district, or the ethnic group that partly drive the continuation of violence during peace agreement implementation. Citing examples of countries in which this has been the reality, Autessere mentions Somalia, where clan tensions are seen as the main source of violence and have contributed to the failure of the numerous peace agreements negotiated since 1991.<sup>30</sup>

However, focusing on micro level antagonisms, or shared values, does not address the challenge of epistemic colonialities either. It simply attempts to ignore them and reinforces the universalizing agender of liberal peacebuilding approaches to merge cultures and societies that are different in a bid to save the inherited colonial sovereign states.

From a decolonial perspective, a more radical rethinking of global 'heterarchical' systems "of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the

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<sup>28</sup> Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

<sup>29</sup> Severine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all of the other global power structures” is needed in order to challenge the problematic liberal paradigm.<sup>31</sup>

Decoloniality represents a line of thinking which argues that the history of the world has privileged western/European culture, knowledge and epistemology that is built on ‘inferiorizing’ these elements from other parts of the world.<sup>32</sup> This means that the world is built on the assumption that all other cultures, knowledge, and ways of generating knowledge are inferior to that of Europeans. This has consequences on ontologies, as it has resulted in the construction of today’s realities. This has arguably led to the application of non-compatible epistemologies to the multiple ontological perspectives that exists, by making other knowledge claims inferior and consequently excluding them.

In this context, Zondi argues for a decolonial epistemology for Political Science, International Relations, and Diplomacy, three broad disciplines under which international peacebuilding is located, an epistemology different from the monoculture of Eurocentric scientific knowledge that tends to generalize and declare other epistemologies inferior.<sup>33</sup> This would ultimately result in what he refers to as ‘epistemic disobedience’. Zondi suggests a decolonial ‘*meditation*’ different from that of traditional International Relations methods, which are aimed at ending “fixation with conventions that hide more than reveal, that complicate rather than simplify, deceive rather than explain, and that create formulae rather than ways of liberating our ability to understand phenomena deeply and broadly”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ramon Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality” in *Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, no. 1(1), 2011.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25; S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> Siphamandla Zondi, “Decolonising International Relations and Its Theory: A Critical Conceptual Meditation” in *Politikon*, no. 45(1), 2018, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

The coloniality of knowledge, such as that of the concept of the sovereign nation state, ontologically results in the continued existence of colonial legacies in arrangements where there is domination by an ethnic majority, it is facilitated by the failure to transform colonial legacies that are embedded in transferred colonial administrations.

### **The sovereign nation state and peacebuilding in Somalia**

Since the start of the Somalia Civil War, a plethora of studies suggest the best solution to the conflict, given the anarchic state of the country depends on the creation of a central authority to govern Somalia.<sup>35</sup> Since the breakdown of the Somalia society and the outbreak of the Somalia Civil War in 1991, several transitional governments had been established to guide the restoration of a central authority in Somalia with the help of the international community. There was a total of fourteen attempts at creating a functioning transitional government.<sup>36</sup> These transitional governments came under criticism for not being inclusive enough amongst other things. It was not until 2004, after the establishment of a Transitional Federal Charter, that a functioning and internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established in neighboring Kenya.<sup>37</sup> The TFG was established to lay the foundations for a transition to a permanent Somalia Federal Government. This was achieved in 2013.

Since the successful transition from a Transitional Federal Government to a Federal Government in 2013 however, the SFG has faced

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<sup>35</sup> William Ligawa, Godfrey Okoth and Frank Matanga, "Nature of AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Relation to Peace Building Strategies in Somalia" in *Open Access Library Journal*, no. 4(10), 2017, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Hanson Stephanie and Kaplan Eben, "Somalia's Transitional Government," <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/somalias-transitional-government>> accessed on 20 July, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Abdihakim Ainte, "Somalia; Legitimacy of the Provisional Constitution" in *Accord*, no. 25, 2014, p. 60; Andrews Atta-Asamoah, "Long Walk to Restoration: Lessons from Somalia's Transition Process" in *Institute for Security Studies*, 2013 <[https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166833/SitRep2013\\_9July-Asamoah.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166833/SitRep2013_9July-Asamoah.pdf)> accessed on 2 August, 2019.

critical challenges from different militia including a certain organization known as Al-Shabaab.<sup>38</sup> Al-Shabaab has been classified as a terrorist organization by most European governments, noting that its fundamental objectives are aligned with the global terrorist group Al-Qaida.<sup>39</sup> Al-Shabaab members are composed of descendants from the various clans around Somalia who are disgruntled with political, social and economic injustices and inequalities that existed before and during the Somalia Civil War.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the Somalia Civil War broke out as a result of these injustices that were exacerbated by Mohammed Siad Barre's authoritarian and military regime which lasted from October 1969 – January 1991.<sup>41</sup>

Peacebuilding in Somalia since 2013 has taken the form of a military operation supported by a political one. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISON) is the military operation that has been given the mandate to keep the peace in Somalia. It has been present since 2007 after the defeat of the Islamic Union of Courts (IUC) and the subsequent departure of Ethiopian military forces. The AMISON operation in Somalia is supported by the United Nation Assistant Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) which provides political support for the Somalia Federal Government (SFG) as well. Unilateral acting states such as the United State, and European Union countries also participate indirectly through financial assistance to peacebuilding NGOs in Somalia, and recently through the financial aid to the SFG as well.

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<sup>38</sup> Mohamed Haji Ingris, "Building Peace from the Margins in Somalia: The Case for Political Settlement with Al-Shabaab" in *Contemporary Security Policy*, no. 39(4), 2018, p. 513.

<sup>39</sup> Matt Bryden, "Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somalia Federal Government" in *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 2013, p. 12 <[https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/130819\\_Bryden\\_SomaliaRedux\\_WEB.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130819_Bryden_SomaliaRedux_WEB.pdf)> accessed on 12 August, 2019; "Home Office" Country Policy and Information Note Somalia (South and Central): Fear of Al Shabaab <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/somalia-country-policy-and-information-notes>> accessed on 11 August, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> M. H. Ingris, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>41</sup> Nina Fitzgerald, *Somalia Issues, History, and Bibliography*, Noah Science Publishers Inc, 2002, pp. 4-6; A. Elmi and A. Barise, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

The first Federal Government of Somalia was meant to carry on the state building project initiated by the international community, which was focused on steering the country towards democratization.<sup>42</sup> This required a constitutional review, the preparation of a constitutional referendum and the holding of general election scheduled for October 2016. Implementation of this transition lacked the political will from the ruling elites who seemed more interested in personal economic and political benefits than they were in establishing “effective, transparent and accountable government institutions or initiating a wider reconciliation process”.<sup>43</sup> In this article we argue for the limitations of this kind of critique as it fails to acknowledge the underlying challenge of the very idea of the Somali nation state, blaming leaders when state building fails rather than the state building project itself.

For example, some scholars argue that the fact that there is no unified national vision amongst the political leaders of Somalia makes it very difficult for state building to occur.<sup>44</sup> In his observation, there are observable patterns of political clashes between the different governments that came into power since 2002. The IUC and the TFG leadership disagreed even though there were many IUC members who were nationalists. Turmoil between Abdullahi Yusuf and his second Prime Minister Nuur Hassan Hussein led to the demise of President Yusuf’s TFG in 2008.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, during President Sharif Sh. Ahmed’s tenure from 2009-2012, the Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi (Farmaajo) was forced to

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<sup>42</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation (BTI) Index, Country Report, Somalia, 2018, p. 3 <[https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI\\_2018\\_Somalia.pdf](https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Somalia.pdf)> accessed on 30 June, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Berouk Mesfin, “The Political Development of Somaliland and its Conflict with Puntland” in *Institute of Security Studies*, 2009, p. 4 <[https://www.academia.edu/5723967/Post-Transition\\_Somalia\\_Ingredients\\_for\\_Peace-building](https://www.academia.edu/5723967/Post-Transition_Somalia_Ingredients_for_Peace-building)> accessed on 5 August, 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Ahmed Mohamed, “Somali president quits” <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-president/somali-president-quits-idUSTRE4BS0TG200812292008>> accessed on 3 September, 2019.

resign after the Kampala Accord was signed in June 2011, his resignation was met with angry protests across the Somali capital Mogadishu.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, between 2013 and 2017, fights between the executive and legislative continued and by 2015, the SFG admitted that universal elections were not possible, instead, there would be an indirect electoral process. The process would involve 14,000 delegates selected by clan elders, who would elect 275 members of the Lower House of Parliament, and regional assemblies would nominate the Upper House.

There have been a variety of peace agreements and reconciliation conferences in Somalia aimed at bringing lasting peace. These peace agreements and conferences have failed for not being inclusive enough because politicians have used them as avenues to further personal interests.<sup>47</sup> Since the outbreak of the Civil War, reconciliation conferences have also become a goal in itself because prominent leaders develop out of these conferences and are seen primarily as representative of their clans. Others have used the conferences to create factions simply to generate support and increase the number of participants in peace conferences and thereby prolonging conferences. Some have simply participated as spoilers focused on blocking the ambitions of their rivals.<sup>48</sup>

Between 1994 and 2004, when the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia was formed, there were several agreements and reconciliation conferences which failed to be implemented. In October 2002, a reconciliation conference held in Eldoret, Kenya produced a ceasefire agreement signed by 24 faction leaders. The agreement stipulated the need to create a federal structure, reversing unitary structures established in previous agreements. Three hundred delegates were present during this

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<sup>46</sup> Voice of Africa News, "Somali PM Defies Kampala Accord, Refuses to Step Down" <<https://www.voanews.com/africa/somali-pm-defies-kampala-accord-refuses-step-down2011>> accessed on 25 August, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Warsan Cismaan Saalax and Abdulaziz Ali Ibrahim 'Xildhiban', "Somali Peace Agreements Fueling Factionalism" in *Accord Conciliation Resources*, no. 21, 2010, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.



process that eventually led to the agreement which brought on a Transitional Federal Charter and the selection of 275 members of parliament who in turn elected Abdullahi Yusuf as President of the TFG in October 2004.<sup>49</sup>

After the Somalia Transitional Federal Government was created, the international community, through the United Nations, the African Union, and unilateral acting member states provided the needed support in order to ensure that the transition took place and a Federal Government was installed in 2013. Peacebuilding since then has been focused on the establishment of a solid central government through regaining the monopoly on the use of force.<sup>50</sup>

What has been largely ignored in the peacebuilding landscape is the array of local peacebuilding initiatives which have proven successful in some regions of Somalia, including in the Puntland administration, and self-declared independent state Somaliland. Such peacebuilding has been described by some scholars as more successful in building durable peace than the more publicized and financed international peacebuilding activities.<sup>51</sup>

## **Background to the Somalia Civil War**

Somalian society is made up of kinship formations based on a lineage type known as a clan. In the clan system, identities of individuals are defined by genealogies. This means that an individual is identified based on the ancestor she/he can be traced to.<sup>52</sup> The clan can act as a

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<sup>49</sup> W. C. Saalax and A.A. Ibrahim 'Xildhiban', *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>50</sup> Stefan Brüne, "Baffled in Mogadishu? Europe, the USA and the International Community in Somalia" in *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Pat Johnson and Raghe Abdirahman, "How Somali-Led Peace Processes Work" in *Accord Conciliation Resources*, no. 21, 2010, p. 46; Ibrahim Ali Amber 'Oker', "Community Peace Processes in South Central Somalia", in *Accord Conciliation Resources*, no. 21, 2010, p. 55.

<sup>52</sup> Joakim Gundel, "Clans in Somalia" in *Australian Red Cross*, 2009, pp. 7-8.

corporate political unit and have territorial exclusiveness.<sup>53</sup> A unique feature of the Somali society is that clan members are identified by their common agnatic descent as opposed to identification by territorial locations. There are little religious or ethnic crises in Somalia, but clan clashes have resulted in some of the worse crises in the country.<sup>54</sup> Somalia society has experienced conflicts based on clan and sub-clan rivalry that lead to the marginalization of some clans even before the outbreak of the Somalia Civil War.<sup>55</sup>

The Somalia Civil War broke out as a result of the authoritarian rule of former president Muhamed Siad Barre inter alia. Barre ruled with an iron fist between 1969 and 1991, in a regime based on a monolithic totalitarian structure.<sup>56</sup> “The divide-and-rule tactics of the Barre regime pitted clans against each other and led to a competition for resources in an already resource-scarce environment”.<sup>57</sup> Literature and collective memory of Somalis suggest that clans have always clashed over resources such as water, livestock, and grazing long before Somalia became a sovereign state.<sup>58</sup> These conflicts were however resolved using a Somali traditional legal system known as *Haar*, where traditional leaders were responsible for settling disputes. The emergence of the sovereign nation state however brought a different reality when large populations migrated to urban centers and the type of resources changed from livestock and water to other government resources including foreign aid.<sup>59</sup> This gave the political elites the incentive to control the state as a means to controlling the nations

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Abdullahi Adan, “Clan Politics in Somalia: Consequence of Culture or Colonial Legacy?” in *Somali Think Tank*, no. 12, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Belachew Gebrewold, *Anatomy of Violence: Understanding the System of Conflict and Violence in Africa*, Surrey, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Ingiris, *op. cit.*,

<sup>57</sup> P. Camacho and I. M. Abukar, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Elmi, Barise, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

resources, leading to widespread corruption in the civil service, police, and other government institutions.

General Siad Barre's regime further exacerbated the issue, as he was fixated on controlling and consolidating his power to the benefit of members of his clan.<sup>60</sup> This became clear to all Somalis; opposition groups were outlawed, and no one could criticize the military leaders. As a result, several military officers, predominantly from the Majerteen clan attempted a coup against Barre. These events led to the beginning of the Somalia Civil War as other clans such as the Isaaq, Ogaden, Hawiye and Digil and Mirifle also started opposition groups in order to seize power.

The Somalia Civil War is an armed conflict that lasted 22 years, from 1991 to 2013. At the wake of the Civil War, the Somali Army and all other military forces disbanded, and personnel from these institutions reconstituted as clan militia and regional forces all battling to protect their respective interests.<sup>61</sup> During the same period, north eastern Somalia was not left out of the fighting, the entire country was divided, though Mogadishu was the main battlefield, farmlands were destroyed, and this resulted in starvation of Somalis. Somalia had remained in this state which has been described by Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index as the most protracted case of statelessness in the world.<sup>62</sup>

Militias which have been categorized as terrorist organizations were also formed along clan lines during the Civil War, amongst them include Al-Shabaab, Hizbul, Raas Kaambooni Anoole/al-Furqaan. A Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was formed in 2004, in neighboring Kenya, and entered Somalia in 2005. The TFG received heavy opposition from the Islamic Union of Courts (IUC). The IUC first appeared in north Mogadishu in 1994. Founded by Islamic clerics of the Abgal sub-clan of Hawiye, a clan

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>61</sup> N. Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6; B. Gebrewold, *op. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> "BTI", Country Report, p. 3.

described as the largest and currently most powerful clan in Somalia.<sup>63</sup> It was created to bring order to Somalia as a result of the absence of a central authority and the consequent anarchy that resulted from the outbreak of the Somalia Civil War.

The IUC consisted of several courts governed by Sharia laws. The violence that followed the arrival of the TFG to Mogadishu “dramatically underlines the benefits of the brief period of ‘Islamist’ authority in southern Somalia which already seems like a ‘Golden Age’<sup>64</sup> within the period between 1994 and 2006 when it was defeated by the TFG. Regional actors attempted to unite the TFG and its opposition the IUC but talks led to a deadlock. With the assistance of Ethiopia, which believed that the IUC clamored for Jihad (Holy War), and the international community, the TFG defeated the IUC. The IUC’s defeat in 2007 eventually led to the creation of Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab remains the strongest opposition to the SFG today.

#### *Al-Shabaab*

The stabilization of Somalia, including the defeat of Al-Shabaab is primarily a political problem.<sup>65</sup> This is because Al-Shabaab’s strength lies in its ability to exploit its enemies’ weaknesses. Between 2007 and 2009, Al-Shabaab exploited widespread outrage, and nationalist rejection of Ethiopia’s occupation of southern Somalia. This boosted its membership and support from the Somali diaspora. Ethiopia and the former Democratic Republic of Somalia had been in conflict over the disputed Ethiopian region of Ogaden during the Cold War period in the Ogaden War offensive that occurred between July 1977 and March 1978.<sup>66</sup> The Ogaden region in Ethiopia is composed of a sizable Islamic and Somali ethnic group. Ethiopia

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<sup>63</sup> Cedric Barnes and Hassan Harun, “The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu’s Islamic Courts” in *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, no. 1(2), 2007, pp. 151-160.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>65</sup> M. Bryden, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Gebru Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somali War of 1977 Revisited” in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, no. 33(3), 2000, p. 635.

feared an Islamic authority in Somalia could radicalize its sizeable Muslim population.<sup>67</sup> This warranted Ethiopia's involvement in the Somalia Civil War, and its resultant invasion of southern Somalia in support of the TFG which was able to defeat the IUC in 2006. After Ethiopia withdrew in 2009, Al-Shabaab lost its appeal, but was able to continue raising funds from its control of the southern economy. The organization raised hundreds of millions of dollars between 2009 and 2012.<sup>68</sup>

It can be observed that the United States, Ethiopia, and other unilaterally acting European and neighboring state's fear of Somalia becoming a Jihadist state and breeding ground for terrorists, as well as the consequent creation of Al-Shabaab from the defeated IUC was informed by negative perceptions formed about Islam. Ethiopia's invasion was too early because even though the IUC had managed to bring more peace within its six months of ruling southern Somalia, its introduction of harsh Islamic laws was bound to reduce its popularity in the eyes of many Somalis.<sup>69</sup> This is because the very nature of Somalia's society makes it improbable that the country would become united as a Jihadist nation.<sup>70</sup>

There are varying views concerning Al-Shabaab however, and while typical views from outside describe the organization as strictly a terrorist organization, a variety of sources provide a more complex dimension to the group.

The narrow view of Al-Shabaab is rooted in the fear of Islam which arguably developed as part of the colonial matrix of power described by Grosfoguel,<sup>71</sup> which created a spiritual hierarchy that privileges Christians over non-Christians and is operationalized, according to Cardinal, through

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<sup>67</sup> C. Barnes and H. Hassan, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>68</sup> Bryden, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>69</sup> Said Samatar "The Islamic Courts and Ethiopia's Intervention in Somali: Redemption or Adventurism?" Chatham House, 2007 <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/250407samatar.pdf>> accessed on 25 August, 2019

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>71</sup> R. Grosfoguel, *op. cit.*

a “*power to narrate*” that exists in the structure of the international sphere which gives hegemonic superiority to the European, modern, and liberal. As a result, the ‘Other’ as well as the ‘Other’s’ fate is defined through these epistemic and historical narratives<sup>72</sup>

Even though terror attacks by Somali Jihadists have been relatively few, the Jihad community from Somalia is reported as a high-profile Jihad, as a result, the broad perception remains that Somalia is a Jihad country. This stereotype is backed up by the fact that Somalia has one of the largest Jihad organization in Africa (Al-Shabaab). The result of the prevalence of this perspective is a disregard for the main purpose for the formation, and predominance of the organization by majority of European scholars, states, and peacebuilders engaged in Somalia. This view also informs peace operations and why the focus has been on eliminating Al-Shabaab and creating a central government with the monopoly on the use of force, thereby neglecting a political solution outside the notion of a sovereign nation.<sup>73</sup>

Other views about Al-Shabaab see the organization differently.<sup>74</sup> Like the Taliban, Al-Shabaab was focused on bringing order to a war-torn and anarchic society through Islamic laws.<sup>75</sup> The feeling in war-torn southern Somalia is that “insecurity under Al-Shabaab is far better than security under the SFG because of the organization’s ability to create

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<sup>72</sup> Pierre-Alexandre Cardinal, “Islam Between Modernity and Coloniality; An International Legal History of Iran from the Late Qajar Period to Pahlavism” in Faculty of Law, McGill University, Montreal, 2016, p. 6 <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&current\\_base=GEN01&object\\_id=145363](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&current_base=GEN01&object_id=145363)> accessed on 29 July, 2019; Grosfoguel, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> W. Ligawa, G. Okoth and F. Matanga, *op. cit.*; S. Brüne, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Sarah Graveline, “AMISOM and Peace Support Operations: Lessons Learned”, Institute for Defense Analyses, 2016 <<https://www.ida.org/idamedia/Corporate/.../africawatch-November-9-2016-vol13.pdf>> accessed on 21 June, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Ingiris, *op. cit.*; Solomon Hussein, “Somalia’s Al Shabaab: Clans vs Islamist nationalis” in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, no. 21(3), 2014, pp. 351-366; Andrew Harding, *The Mayor of Mogadishu: A story of Chaos and Redemption in the Ruins of Somalia*, London: Hurst, 2016.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 167.

security, even in the areas controlled by the SFG".<sup>76</sup> Al-Shabaab uses the idea of Islamic nationalism to unite Somali clans by referring to the SFG as *daba dhilif* (meaning a government set up for a foreign purpose).<sup>77</sup> This perspective has gained some degree of traction among Somalis as Ingiris argues; the government authorities struggle on daily basis and are unable to shield themselves and civilians under their territories from Al-Shabaab's suicidal and ambush attacks.<sup>78</sup> The Somali President, like his predecessors, cannot freely leave the villa without heavy protection from foreign security forces. This has been argued to demonstrate to the Somali local population that the government derives its authority from external powers and not from the Somali public.<sup>79</sup>

### **Successful Local Peacebuilding**

Since 1991, and in the absence of a central government, many successful reconciliation agreements have taken place at local and regional levels within Somalia.<sup>80</sup> These agreements have proven more sustainable than the better resourced and publicized national reconciliation conferences sponsored by the international community. From micro-level traditional peacebuilding and reconciliation between clans, and within small interclan communities in south-central Somalia, to remarkable peacebuilding in the Puntland administration and the seceded Somaliland region, traditional mechanisms have proven effective and credible in the eyes of many Somalis.

Although Southern Somalia has remained relatively unstable compared to northern parts like Puntland and Somaliland, there has been some considerable successes with regards to local peace processes which

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<sup>76</sup> Ingiris, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

<sup>77</sup> S. Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

<sup>78</sup> Ingiris, *op. cit.*, p. 525.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*; Brüne, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Pat Johnson, and Raghe Abdirahman, "How Somali-Led Peace Processes Work" in *Accord Conciliation Resources*, no. 21, 2010, p. 46.

have proven effective in managing security in some parts of south-central Somalia.<sup>81</sup> However, hard-won local peace accords reached through traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in this region were always vulnerable to being undermined by armed factions, business leaders and other powerful local actors.

For example, earlier in the Somali Civil War, a 1993 Bardhere peace conference was initiated by elders of the Digil-Mirifle clan in Bay and Bakool regions, and the elders of the Marehan clan, in a bid to end fighting over pasture and water resources. These communities have continued to co-exist harmoniously and the Bardhere agreement has been referred to whenever conflicting matters arise between the communities.<sup>82</sup> Another example of successful micro level peacebuilding is that brought about by the conflict of territory in the 1990s over the village of Kulan Jareer, near Baidoa, and its surrounding grazing land. The land was traditionally shared by the Jiron and Hadame sub-clans of the Digil-Mirifle clan.<sup>83</sup> The clash between both groups ended in 1994, after traditional and religious leaders came together to support a reconciliation process to restore harmony. Between February 2006 to February 2007, a peace agreement between Sa'ad and Saleman sub-clans ended the protracted violent conflict between the two groups in Galgudud and South Mudug.<sup>84</sup>

#### *Peacebuilding in the Puntland Administration*

Puntland State was formed in 1998 and claims a wider territory than the historical "Northeast Regions".<sup>85</sup> It incorporates parts of Sool, Sanaag and Togdheer to the west, but its claims to these western territories are

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<sup>81</sup> I. A. Amber 'Oker', *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>85</sup> Interpeace and the Puntland Development Research Center, "The Puntland Experience: A Bottom-up Approach to Peace and State Building, Peace Initiatives in Puntland 1991-2007", 2008, p. 22 <[http://www.interpeace.org/images/pdf/the\\_search\\_for\\_peace\\_pdrc.pdf](http://www.interpeace.org/images/pdf/the_search_for_peace_pdrc.pdf)> accessed on 25 August, 2019.



contested by Somaliland. The Harti clans also inhabit areas of southern Somalia, notably in the Lower Juba region and Kismayo, the regional capital, where they migrated in the 19th century, as well as the adjacent area of Wardheer in eastern Ethiopia. According to the Puntland's Five-Year Development Plan, "Puntland's vision is a strong and secure Puntland State within the Somali Federal System, preserving its Islamic and cultural heritage, developing human resources, preserving the environment, and exploiting natural resources equitably and sustainably".<sup>86</sup>

A number of factors aided stabilization in the northeast region of Somalia known as Puntland, these factors include; the reversal of the brain drain to the south over the previous two decades since the start of the Civil War.<sup>87</sup> Many people who had fled to the northeast brought professional experiences with them, they were known as "Dowlad Ku Noo" meaning government dependents, because they were formally technocrats and military personal of the former Somali administration. Their experiences in governance helped in the evolution of local government structures in Puntland. Secondly, despite the conflicting factions, clan politics, and the booming unregulated economy, Puntland remained relatively calm.

#### *Somaliland and Indigenous Peacebuilding*

In all this, northern Somalia has developed differently after declaring its independence in 1991. This region has developed a modest capacity to govern and strive to reach democratization, but it has not been given international recognition.<sup>88</sup> Somaliland was the former British colonized part of Somalia which merged voluntarily with Italian colonized Somalia to form the Democratic Republic of Somalia in a union that led to

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<sup>86</sup> Ministry of Planning & International Cooperation, "Puntland Five-Year Development Plan. Puntland State of Somalia" <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/3095184/PuntlandFiveYear-Development-Plan-20072011>> accessed on 25 August, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

<sup>88</sup> B. Mesfin, *op. cit.*

Somaliland being excluded from governance.<sup>89</sup> According to Mesfin one reason for the breakdown of Somalia's society is that the civilian democracy of greater Somalia was poorly adapted to the clan-based nature of Somali politics and as a result, southern Somalia still remains comparatively unstable, and this provided the incentive for Somaliland to seek its independence.<sup>90</sup> In 1991, Somaliland emerged as an autonomous entity after unilaterally declaring its independence from the rest of Somalia. Over the years since its independence, Somaliland has managed to display a measure of peace and stability achieved through successive clan conferences that have been able to establish relatively viable institutions which paved the path for reconstruction of an entity mainly employing local resources.<sup>91</sup> In all this local peacebuilding success, there has been little help from the international community in terms of financial assistance. "With the exception of some very limited logistical support for the Borama conference, the UN and other agencies did not provide support for (in fact opposed) many successful local level initiatives."<sup>92</sup>

Some of the notable locally developed institutions that were significant for Somaliland's relatively peaceful transition include the participation of clan elders in politics through the council of elders called the *Guurti*, the *Guurti* participated in a political system established in 1993 known as the *Beel*, meaning clan or community. This was regarded as a fusion of traditional and western governance structures into a hybrid structure. Somaliland clan elders were chosen by "virtue of their personal attributes such as age, expertise in the political arts of compromise and

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<sup>89</sup> Ismail Ahmed, "The Heritage of War and State Collapse in Somalia and Somaliland: Local-level Effects, External Interventions and Reconstruction" in *Third World Quarterly*, no. 2(1), 1999, p. 116.

<sup>90</sup> Mesfin, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> I. Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

persuasion, powers of oratory, skill as a poet, religious knowledge, piety, wealth, generosity, courage and reputations for fairness".<sup>93</sup>

There was also the entrenchment of the use of *Xeer*, a traditional and unwritten law of social conduct among the clans of Somaliland in accordance with their traditions and Islamic principles as the basis for law and order.

Despite this relatively successful indigenous peacebuilding, the international community has failed to recognize Somaliland as a sovereign state. The Africa Union fears recognizing Somaliland because recognition might result in the opening of a Pandora's box of secessionist movements across the continent.<sup>94</sup> The "established premise for the international recognition of secessionist states is that they must first be recognized by regional bodies", and the African Union is the regional body that Somaliland considers.<sup>95</sup> The Africa Union's fear of a backlash of secessionist across the continent can be linked to what Zondi<sup>96</sup> described as a lack of imagination, courage, and revolutionary consciousness by Africa political elites to transcend the concept of the sovereign nation state.

## Conclusion

Peacebuilding in Somalia today is focused on restoring a central authority to a federal sovereign state of Somalia through creating a monopoly of the use of force.<sup>97</sup> For this to be successful, the SFG would need to first gain the trust of the various clans in Somalia and build a Somalia National Army and other law enforcement agencies that would be loyal to it. It also requires a strong national identity that supersedes that of

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.

<sup>94</sup> David Shin, "Somaliland: The Little Country that Could" in *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, no. 9, 2002, p. 6; Fadal Filsan, "Challenges to Somaliland Independence" in *Social Research and Development Institute*, 2013, p. 43.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>96</sup> Zondi, 2017, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>97</sup> "BTI Index" Country Report, Somalia.

the clan identity that defines Somali politics.<sup>98</sup> The SFG however faces difficult challenges in this regard, as the legitimacy of the government is in doubt by Somali citizens.<sup>99</sup> This is apparent in the fact that AMISON is the major security force standing in the way of militia forces from taking over Mogadishu.<sup>100</sup> The unrepresentative nature of peace agreements is one probable reason for this,<sup>101</sup> as it has led to the establishment of the Somalia Federal Government, which many Somalis, including the Islamic militia group Al-Shabaab believe is a government installed by foreigners with a foreign agenda.

The above can be epistemologically linked to a bias of peacebuilders towards maintaining sovereign arrangements. It can be observed that the epistemic bias towards maintaining sovereign arrangements by peacebuilders manifests practically in several ways; firstly, through stereotypes held about Somalia, fixation on establishing a central authority, the dominance of the 'victors' peace', the Africa Unions lack of imagination to identify solutions outside sovereign arrangements and Somalia nationalist approach for a united Somalia which is based on the concept of Westphalia sovereignty.

It is the position in this research that epistemologically, coloniality of knowledge and knowledge production led to the definition of "sovereignty" and subsequently that of the "sovereign nation state" following Europe's 30 years' war and the subsequent imperial conquest of the world and theft of world history.<sup>102</sup> The historical implications of these are manifold, as it led to formations of heterarchical structures described as the colonial matrix of power. In Sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically Somalia, several manifestations of epistemic colonialities on peacebuilding

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<sup>98</sup> Camacho, Abukar, *op. cit.* p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> Ingiris, *op. cit.*, p. 513; Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

<sup>100</sup> S. Graveline, *op. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> Saalax, Ibrahim 'Xildhiban', *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>102</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

can be observed. In this section this will be explained further in relations to the colonial matrix of power.

Colonialization did not start or end with colonial administration, it brought several heterarchical structures with it. He described them as *heterachies* because they “move us beyond closed hierarchies into a language of complexity, open systems, entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies, structural levels, and structuring logics”.<sup>103</sup>

Grosfoguel (2011) described fifteen different hierarchies, but for the sake of this study, those relevant and affecting peacebuilding in Somalia include, inter alia; epistemic hierarchies that privilege western knowledge over nonwestern knowledge, a global media hierarchy that privileges western media over others, and spiritual hierarchy that privileges Christians over non-Christians.<sup>104</sup>

Because of the colonial matrix of power, which privileges everything European, there is a neglect for indigenous methods and ideas to conflict resolution in Somalia. Neglecting indigenous methods and ideas for peacebuilding leaves a void, therefore giving room for a focus on modeling the liberal democratic system and replicating the central authority that exist in liberal democratic states. This is regardless of the ontological realities that are present in Sub-Saharan Africa, and specific to this research, Somalia. The kind of liberal democracy that is intended to be created is likely to lead to several side effects, as a result of its exclusionary methodology of objectivity and majority rule.<sup>105</sup>

Although liberal democracy is meant to be racially and ethnically inclusive, it works best in political units that are homogenous.<sup>106</sup> Liberal democracies in Africa are problematic because loyalties to ethnic groups (clans in Somalia's case), “have inhibited democratic consolidation and

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<sup>103</sup> Grosfoguel, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>105</sup> T. Leon, *op. cit.*

<sup>106</sup> Jerry Muller, “The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism” in *Foreign Affairs*, no. 87(501), 2008, p. 18.

political accommodation of minorities, as a result, politics of identity ends up trumping politics of interests"; interests becomes collective interests of one ethnic group against the other.<sup>107</sup> This makes it easy for political parties who enjoy overwhelming majority to change constitutional edifices that are meant to counter overconcentration of power and marginalization. The breakdown of Somalia in the first place came about because the Somalia clan-based politics could not adapt to democratization.<sup>108</sup> Long after the break down of Somalia's society in 1991, politics remains marred by a lack of unified national vision between Somali politicians and leaders observable in the clashes between the different governments that came into power since 2002.<sup>109</sup> There is also a large population of Somalis that are disgruntled, and more confident in Al-Shabaab and militia groups than they are in the SFG.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to challenges that accompanies liberal democracies, the heterarchical structure created by the colonial matrix of power leads to several implications for international aid and support. It results in artificially created central authorities that become attractive for individual material benefits and not for the good of society. The emergence of the sovereign nation state of Somalia brought a different reality when large populations migrated to urban centers as resources changed from livestock and water, to natural resources and foreign aid.<sup>111</sup> Foreign aid and concentration of political powers in the center gives political elites the incentive to control the state and this leads to corruption and mismanagement of funds.<sup>112</sup>

On the other hand, without international intervention, aid or assistance, Somaliland, different from South Central Somalia has been able

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<sup>107</sup> Leon, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>108</sup> Mesfin *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>110</sup> Ingiris, *op. cit.*

<sup>111</sup> Elmi, Barise, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*; Tony, *op. cit.*, p. 11

to chart a path towards long term peace.<sup>113</sup> Even though it has not been given recognition by the international community, through indigenous administrative formations and contributions of local businessmen who have arguably minimum other interests besides developing their state, Somaliland has been described as relatively stable compared with South Central Somalia and other parts of Somalia as a whole. Puntland has also been able to develop local administrative structures that have proven effective. Somaliland and Puntland's successful peacebuilding leaves an imperative for further probing and research into the impact of international aid and interventions in conflicts because these two entities have achieved peacebuilding success with minimum international support, whereas, most of southern Somalia with all the international intervention and support has remained in a volatile state.<sup>114</sup>

Decolonial scholars suggest a decolonial peace that takes into account the colonial legacy and challenges the fixation on maintaining sovereign arrangements created by a history of colonialism and coloniality.<sup>115</sup> These scholars suggest a transformation of colonial legacies but fail to go further than suggesting this transformed colonial legacy.

This research argues that what is required in terms of transforming colonial legacies is a construction of a term different from the 'sovereign nation state' that can best describe what Sub-Saharan Africa's current realities are. Bearing in mind the diversity of Sub-Saharan Africa, and that sovereignty is given legality by the international community, a term that best describes current realities is a starting point to developing a decolonial system that transcends colonial legacies. Decolonization of knowledge would require us to take seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South

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<sup>113</sup>Mesfin, *op. cit.*, p. 1; "BTI Index" Country Report, Somalia, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*; Bryden, *op. cit.*

<sup>115</sup> Zondi, 2017, *op. cit.*

from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies.<sup>116</sup> An approach like this has the potential to diversify peacebuilding approaches of international interveners from the status quo of establishing central authorities that are not representative irrespective of them being 'democratic'. Therefore, this research suggests a bottom up epistemic construction of a term to describe African societies as a starting point to decolonial peace in Somalia and Sub-Saharan Africa at large.

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<sup>116</sup> Grosfoguel, *op. cit.*, p. 29.



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