The liberal myth of neutrality and the Local Peace Process in Somaliland

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Paper Prepared for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops 2015, Warsaw
Workshop Number 3: Pragmatic Approaches to Peacebuilding

Abstract
While the liberal peace theory considers humanitarian intervention a shortcut to the Weberian state, many peace operations undertaken in the last decades have performed poorly. Alternative practices and theorizations have emerged so far, but little attention has been devoted to deconstruct the pillars of the liberal peace doctrine. The essence of the liberal approach is built upon the assumption that external forces are neutral peacemakers, and that peace could be enforced because of the moral superiority of the intervener. Yet, the liberal doctrine ignores the resistance that pragmatic approaches to peace offer to it. Neutrality, and impartiality, indeed are not actually working on the empirical ground either of the liberal or pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding. The UN-US led intervention in Somalia, has been an instrument of division and externalisation of the peace process. It was a partisan intervention, which subverted the equilibrium internal to the factional conflict in favour of one faction. Also the autonomous, peace process pursued in Somaliland counters the narrative of neutral liberal peace. The local nature of the process represents the most innovative ingredient of the Somaliland recipe for peacebuilding. But clan leaders and political elites have been the most important protagonists, of a non-neutral process of state formation and conflict termination.

This paper aims to explore the non-neutral rationale of the pragmatic peacebuilding undertaken in Somaliland between 1991 and 1997. The article first theoretically frames how supporters and critics of liberal peace elaborate on the principle of neutrality. Drawing on fieldwork and archival research conducted in Somaliland between 2011 and 2013 this paper maps how the Republic of Somaliland has inaugurated a process of indigenisation of the political authority. This case study is extremely helpful to identify how pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding contrast the conceptual key of neutrality.

Keywords: liberal; conflict transformation, peacebuilding, Somalia, Somaliland, neutrality
Introduction

The failures of liberal peace intervention in Africa and Middle East have raised a number of controversies and questions either for the doctrine, and practice of international peacebuilding. While the liberal peace theory considered humanitarian intervention a shortcut to the Weberian state (Ottaway, 2002) the results of liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding have been disappointing. As reaction, alternative approaches to liberal peace have emerged and gained greater attention in the last two decades. Scholars have approached a number of normative challenges related with the doctrine of liberal peace (Mac Ginty, 2008); great attention has been dedicated to traditional cures (Zartman, 2000) and indigenous peace processes (Brock-Utne, 2001; Mac Ginty, 2008; Wolf, 2000). Critical scholars have defined under which conditions local agency (Ahmed, 1999; Gizelis & Kosek, 2005; Gordon, 2014), and everyday mechanisms (Moe, 2011; Richmond, 2009) constitute better vehicles for peace, in terms either of legitimacy and effectiveness. Many efforts have been made to define to what extent local-based approaches at peacebuilding have done better, but few accounts have defined how to empirically disentangle pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding from the normative benchmarks and standards settled by the new humanitarian consensus (Chandler, 2001). To what extent, for instance, pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding are not neutral or impartial exercises?

The liberal peace intervention is built upon the janus faced principle of neutrality and impartiality. While the concept of neutrality still continues to serve as provider of legitimation and normative consensus, the practice of liberal intervention during the ‘90s has lost its realistic function (Goetschel, 2011) and credibility. With the end of the cold war, the UN faced the dilemma of dealing with the traditional principles of sovereignty, neutrality, and democratic peace (Donald, 2002). In reaction to these challenges, the principle of impartiality has been elaborated in order to expand the possibility of the UN to enter into those conflicts where strategic interests could not be clearly distinguished from humanitarian principles. By doing so, the practice of liberal peace has adopted on the operational level the criteria of impartiality, while the discourse of liberal peace remained anchored to core meaning of neutrality as nonpolitical action, through the idealization of the International Community as the tertium super partes.

After the mid ‘90s, the principle of neutrality has become more politicized, but the ‘retreat from neutrality’, i.e. the transition from a ‘nonpolitical approach of traditional humanitarian
organizations [towards] the development of more politicized human rights-based humanitarianism (Chandler, 2001, p. 679), has attracted so far limited attention.

Critical scholars of liberal peace have defined neutrality a myth of contemporary liberal interventionism (John Paul Lederach, 1998), a way of depoliticising peacebuilding ‘from its socio-political setting constitutes’ (Jabri, 2006, p. 5). However, alternative accounts on indigenous or local processes have often risked emphasizing the nonpolitical rationale of the peacemaking process. For instance, the emphasis on cultural and societal factors as vectors of sustainable peace (John Paul Lederach, 1995; Morris & Fu, 2001), the neutrality of traditional mechanisms (The Peace Committee for Somaliland, 1995), as well the homogenizing function played by civil society organizations (Donais, 2009; Lewis, 2002; Orjuela, 2003; van Tongeren, Brenk, Hellema, & Verhoeven, 2005), have gradually promoted an abstract and romantic vision of the local (Paris, 2010), as the ideal place of not-controversial decision-making, not influenced by partisan interests. The depoliticisation of pragmatic peacebuilding also risks to generate a sort of simplistic and manicheist vision that depicts the local agency as neutral instrument of (good) peacebuilding, as opposed to international (bad) peacebuilding. To what extent, indeed, does the pragmatic approach to peacebuilding deal with the question of political partisanship? And how political needs and strategic means are negotiated in pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding?

This paper departs from an empirical observation derived by the Somaliland ‘homegrown’ peacebuilding. Far from deriving generalizable conclusions, the paper claims the necessity of reassigning to the Somaliland peace process a proper political, power-based dimension. Based on fieldwork¹ and archival researches conducted in Somaliland between 2011 and 2013 the article explores to what extent the peace initiatives undertaken between 1991 and 1997 have not been neutral operations. The paper proceeds as follows. The first section locates the neutrality dilemma within the theoretical debate: it first defines how the liberal peace intervention elaborates on the principle of neutrality; then it explores how classical theorists and critics of liberal peace confute this assumption. Taking as its departure point Lederach’s observation that neutrality is more a myth (Lederach, 1998) of contemporary liberal peace than a tangible reality, the second part explores the pragmatic approach to peacebuilding in Somaliland, and its relationship with the paradigm of neutrality.

¹ Primary sources include individual interviews with traditional leaders (aqils and elders), state ministers and officials, scholars (University of Hargeisa, Observatory of Conflict Prevention) and members of local (NAGAAD) and international NGOs (ActionAid).
The paradigm of neutrality

Many peace and liberalising peace operations undertaken by the UN in the last decades have performed poorly, and the neutrality of the intervening forces is one of the most interesting arguments able to account for both the limits and potentialities of liberal peace operations.

Neutrality, in classical terms, relates to the possibility to conduct military operations without necessarily altering the internal balance of power, i.e without favouring one contending party over another. During the cold war, interventions undertaken by third parties into external civil wars were openly directed towards political partisanship. After the end of the bipolar competition indeed, the janus faced principle of neutrality and impartiality became one of the pillars of the UN peacekeeping (United Nations, 1991). Liberal peace theorists build upon this principle the idea that peacebuilding operations can be justified and legitimated on the ground of immaterial interests, such moral, normative, and legal principles (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004).

Within the UN Guiding principles to humanitarian operations, the General Assembly claimed that ‘Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality’ (United Nations, 1991). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defined neutrality as the capacity of acting ‘without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature’ (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2004, p. 15). Especially after the criticisms raised by the UN inaction in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the latent trend towards a more politicised interpretation of neutrality has taken place. In the words of Annan, the principle of neutrality was overcome by the necessity to deal with humanitarian crises in a more active way: ‘Impartiality does not - and must not - mean neutrality in the face of evil’ (Annan, 1999).

Since the mid’90s the UN has attempted to draw a conceptual distinction between neutrality (passivity) and impartiality (non-partisan role). The United Nations General Guidelines for Peacekeeping Operations (of 1995) states that ‘Impartiality must not promote inaction. Peacekeepers must discharge their tasks firmly and objectively, without fear or favour. Neither side should gain unfair advantages as a result of the activities of a peacekeeping operation.’ The emerging concept of impartiality indeed encompassed a not-discriminating principle, i.e. the possibility to act inside an internal conflict, ‘without discrimination as to ethnic
origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion’ (ibidem). However, this conceptualisation did not consolidate neither in the doctrine, neither in the practice of peace operations (Anderson, 2004; Astor, 2007; Donald, 2002; Weil, 2001). Because of the grey area surrounding the concept of impartiality (Anderson, 2004; Boulden, 2005), as well the ‘longstanding confusion about the meaning of the terms’ (Donald, 2002), the confusion between neutrality and impartiality persists within the theory and practice of contemporary peace operations (Anderson, 2004).

Especially in consideration of these empirical challenges, the principle of neutrality has also attracted growing criticisms (Diehl, 1994, p. 13; Siqueira, 2003; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). Both classical scholars of IRs and critics of liberal peace are sceptical about the neutral presumptions of liberal interventions, but for opposite reasons. Realists and neorealist claim that third party interventions are unlikely to succeed when no power or strategic interests are threatened (Morgenthau, 1962; Buchanan, 1990; Tucker, 1972). Visualising peace building like ‘nothing less than the relocation of political power’ (Bertram, 1995), for realists intervention satisfies a peace-making function only when the defence of vital national interests determine the decision to intervene (Burton & Sandole, 1986). Hence, the intervention holds a chance to be successful only as part of a foreign policy strategy oriented to facilitate a winner, incumbent or insurgent, modifying the internal distribution of power. Following this perspective, the lack of national interests helps to explain the Kosovo tragedy (Gray, 2000), the mission creep of the UN enterprise in Somalia, as well the NATO’s political failure in Yugoslavia (Mandelbaum, 1999; Steinberg, 1999).

From the opposite perspective, critics of liberal peace raised scepticisms about the possibility to effectively separate the sphere of neutral, humanitarian ideals and strategic interests. In reaction to the increased numbers of failures faced by the International agenda for

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2 The realist tradition comprehends, however, different positions. While classical realists as Morgentau and structural realists afforded pivotal importance to the relationship between ethical and coercive factors, neorealists like Waltz and Maersheimer emphasise that changes inside the international systems (like the one from bipolar to post/cold war) are not sufficient to remove the relevance of structural factors from the understanding of war. But reacting against the democratic peace thesis, Waltz illustrates why neo-realism counters the adoption of moral arguments to frame the dynamics of war and peace: if the structure of the international system remains anarchic (and then structurally competitive) war cannot be avoided, even if all the member of the IS became democracies (See Waltz, 1979). A change inside the unit of the International System cannot change the nature of the system itself: hence, the resolution of wars still depends on a number of structural conditions such as the distribution of power.
peace, scholars have sought to question a number of aspects related with the doctrine of liberal peace. Some have questioned the normative assumptions of liberal interventions; explored the transformative power of conflict (J P Lederach, 2003; Reimann, 2004; Rupesinghe, 1995; Väyrynen, 1991) as well the function of political violence in the construction of the political and social order (Väyrynen, 1991). Great attention has been dedicated to indigenous peace processes (Brock-Utne, 2001; Mac Ginty, 2008; Wolf, 2000), traditional cures (Zartman, 2000) local agency (Charbonneau, 2012; Paffenholz, 2013; Richmond, 2009) and everyday mechanisms (Richmond, 2009) Within this framework, the claim for neutrality has been approached either as a fiction of the liberal peace approach (John Paul Lederach, 1998), either as part of the positivist attempt to depoliticise conflict analysis (Jabri, 2006). This depoliticisation is based on ‘the extraction of conflict from its socio-political setting constitutes’ (Jabri, 2006, p. 5). In the words of Chandler, ‘the modern human rights approach sees conflict in non-Western states not as a consequence of economic, political, and social tensions to be ameliorated by aid, but as a relationship of abuse. For every act of abuse, there are victims to be supported and abusers who must be punished’.

As Lederach suggests, the idea of neutrality is a myth of contemporary liberal interventionism (John Paul Lederach, 1998) based on the assumption that the capacity of the intervener to be external, impartial and detached is pivotal to gain the trust of both the contending parties. On the contrary, critical scholars point out that ‘Peacebuilding activities are not neutral in their normative orientation or impact’ (Jabri, 2006, p. 5). Countering the problem-solving approach (Wall & Callister, 1995) embedded with the liberal peace doctrine, pragmatic approaches have complemented the focus on impartiality with a sociological analysis of the relationship between state and violence. Lederach, for instance, has theorised about the transformative power of conflict (John Paul Lederach & Maiese, 2003a) i.e. the potentiality of turning violence into a constructive mechanism, where peace and war have not fixed shapes. Considering violence the structural component of the political and social order, conflicts can be transformed, but not abolished (Deutsch, 1994). This transformation depends on parties’ willingness, and active participation in ‘transcending the contradictions’(Galtung, 1996). Here, the effectiveness of the negotiation does not rely on the ability of the intervener to promote an impartial process. Local mediators are considered more legitimate than international third parties to understand conflict and undertake negotiations. Hence, the capacity of bargaining between
divergent interests constitutes the basic recipe for advancing successful local peace processes (Gizelis & Kosek, 2005; Gordon, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2011; Menkhaus, 1996). While the polarisation between local and international peacebuilding might (even accidentally) have contributed to promote a manicheist vision of the local as nonpolitical instrument of peacebuilding, this article elaborates on the necessity of reassigning to peace a proper power-based dimension. Departing from Lederach’s identification of a pyramid of stakeholders, this paper aims to reconstruct the politicised nature of the Somaliland peace process.

**Grassroots Peacebuilding in Somaliland**

The Somaliland’s experience with state and peacebuilding represents an important challenge to the classical theories and practices of liberal peacebuilding. While in central and southern provinces of Somalia the civil war proliferated, in the north-west, the local elders and the SNM inaugurated a grassroots process of reconciliation, formalised with the self-proclamation of the independent Republic of Somaliland, in May 1991. Without the intercession of the international diplomacy sponsoring liberal peace initiatives, the Republic of Somaliland proved its capability of delivering on primary, core state functions, such the distribution of public goods, and security. Many have emphasised the role of clan and traditional authority as *tertium super partes*, able to establish stable channels of communication, and negotiations between belligerents (Yusuf Farah, 2001) because of their traditional profile, but even because of their neutral behaviour during the liberation war (Feyissa & Hoehne, 2010)

Many alternative efforts to orient peace process in Somaliland have emphasised the importance of neutral spaces of dialogue (“Dialogue for Peace Somali Programm,” 2013), non-partisan approaches in peacebuilding (Interpeace, 2010), as well the role of independent organizations in granting neutrality (Mohmoud H. Qodah, 2015). The principle of neutrality is often used referring to the quality of intermediaries\(^3\) (Bryden & Farah, 2000): within the Somaliland experience neutrality refers to the fact that negotiations between inter-clan fighting have been addressed by elders belonging to a clan not involved inside the conflict\(^4\). However, the

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\(^3\) ‘Individual members of the team should have reputation for fairness, intimate knowledge of the problems producing armed conflict, neutrality to the warring parties and commitment to peace’ (Bryden & Farah, 2000).

\(^4\) Interview by author with Muhaydin Saed, Hargeisa, October 2011.
neutrality of the agents in a particular stage of the reconciliation should not be confused with the neutrality of entire process. If we disaggregate the Somaliland case study into its strategic and operational components, the empirical analysis shows that the peace process in Somaliland was a contested terrain where divergent interests have been negotiated. Even if this process was facilitated by the involvement of local and traditional actors and mechanisms of negotiation, the local actors have not been immune from nurturing divergent political interests. To better evaluate the partisan nature of the Somaliland peace process, three main factors should be distinguished: the role played by the local agency and traditional mechanisms; the preparatory nature of this mechanism; the process of institution-building.

Engagement and Local Agency

Looking at the agency level, and following Lederach’s pyramid of stakeholders (John Paul Lederach & Maiese, 2003b) three kinds of actors have been operative in Somaliland. On the Top level, there were party leaders reunited inside the Somali National Movement and the highest traditional leaders of the social or religious organisations, like the Garads, Ugaas and Sultans. The Mid-Level was composed indeed by Aaqils, the heads of each clan. The Grassroots Level indeed, was populated by the elders, the clan authorities located at the community base.

The Somali National Movement (SNM) has been of the main important catalysts of the Somaliland peace process. Located at the top of Lederach’s pyramid, the SNM has been one of the parties inaugurating the civil war against Barre, in 1988. The first challenge to Barre’s regime occurred on 27 May 1988, when the SNM decided to occupy the northern cities of Hargeysa, Berbera and Burao, escalating a major offensive against the government troops. During the first stage of the Somali civil war, the SNM coalesced with other opposition forces in the south, forcing Barre to withdraw. When the Republic of Somalia formally collapsed in January 1991, the SNM established full control on the northern territories, and in collaboration with Issaq and Dhubbante elders promoted a process of conflict resolution leading to the proclamation of the independent Republic of Somaliland.

After the civil war, both the community and the leaders of the SNM appealed to clan authorities to resolve the conflicts between clan militia (Walls, Mohammed, & Ali, 2008). The elders have been crucial both to solve the conflict between clan militia and to demobilise armed
groups. During the peace process, the elders and the Aaqils of the three major clans (Issaq, Dhulbante, Garood) reinforced their authority, since they were entrusted to settle the conflicts concerning the militia of their own clan, or territory. The elders were involved with intra and inter-clan negotiations, in order to rebuild confidence and restore justice between communities whose relations had been compromised by the war.

Yet, the role of traditional authorities did not emerge in the post-conflict scenario. Before the civil war, the elders were engaged with the resolution of land-based disputes, and the Aaqils were dealing with blood payments (diya), indispensable to secure peaceful relations among the community. Since the mid ‘1980s, a council of elders played an advertisement role within the Somali National Movement. As result, the infrastructure for peace resulted from the extension of the political infrastructure build during the years of the political opposition to Barre.

The Preparatory Nature of the Peace Process

The longstanding preparatory nature (Walls et al., 2008) of the Somaliland peacebuilding is one of the most important factors illustrating the negotiation of different political interests at stake during this peace process. The conferences of regional or national reconciliation (between clans) in Somaliland have always been the result of a series of local meetings and negotiations (within clans). As illustrated in Table 1, the three ‘national’ conferences held in Berbera, Burao, and Hargeisa (between 1990 and 1997) have been preceded by 34 sub-national conferences.

The Berbera conference was the first meeting attended by all the Northern clan delegations that confirmed the ceasefire established during the preliminary negotiations held between the SNM, the Dhulbahante (Oog Conference), and the Gadabursi (in Tulli and Borama). The Erigavo conference better illustrates the gradual and preparatory character of the Somaliland peace process. By June 1991, in the region of Sanaag all the clans organised bilateral or multilateral negotiations between them. Fifteen major conferences culminated in 1993 with the Erigavo conference, when all parties meet together after they reached a sufficient preliminary agreement.

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5 Interview by author with Muhaydin Saed, Hargeisa, October 2011.
6 Interview by author with Ali Waran Ade, Hargeisa, 2011.
7 Interview by author, Hargeisa, 2011.
Table 1. Peace Conferences in Somaliland (1991-1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Conference name</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Somaliland, Oog</td>
<td>2-8 February 1991</td>
<td>Oog conference</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibahante and Issaq</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Somaliland, Tulli</td>
<td>Somaliland, Borama</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Somaliland, Burao</td>
<td>27 April – 4 June 1991</td>
<td>Shirweynaha Walaalaynta Beelaha Waqooyiga, Brotherhood Conference of Northern Clans</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Somaliland declaration of independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Somaliland</td>
<td>February 1991 - December 1993</td>
<td>Guul Alla, Danwaadaag-Beri,</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>SNM; guurti; elders; Clans: Gadabuurwi, Issaq, baha samaroon, Jibril Abokar, reer Nur, Jibril Abkor;</td>
<td>Somaliland independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ceel-Qoxle</td>
<td>10 May 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Warsagali, Habar Jeclo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>7 Yube</td>
<td>18 June 1991</td>
<td>Yube 1</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Wasangali, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>8 Yube</td>
<td>6-9 October 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Wasangali, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>9 Oog</td>
<td>30 October 1991</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Yoonis, Habar Jeclo, Dhuibante</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Yagoori</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Jeclo</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Kulal</td>
<td>1-22 June 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Jeclo</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Shinbirale</td>
<td>11-18 August 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jeclo, Warsangali</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Shinbirale</td>
<td>16-22 August 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jeclo, Warsangali, Gahayle</td>
<td></td>
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<td>14 Xudun</td>
<td>1 September 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Jeclo</td>
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<td>15 Jideli</td>
<td>6-9 October 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Wasangali, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>16 Hargeisa</td>
<td>4 October 1992</td>
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<td>Local</td>
<td>Ilisa, Musa, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>17 Borama</td>
<td>17-19 October 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Baha Samaron/Jibril, Abokor</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Jiidali</td>
<td>5-9 November 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Somaliland, Erigavo</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Erigavo meeting</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Clans of Sanaag region</td>
<td>Peace-building</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Somaliland, Sheekh</td>
<td>28 October-8 November 1992</td>
<td>Tawifiq</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Yoonis, Cilsa Musa</td>
<td>Peace consolidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Jiidali</td>
<td>5-9 November 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Khaatumo</td>
<td>2-5 January 1993</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Somaliland, Boorame</td>
<td>24 January – May 1993</td>
<td>Allaa Madadleh, Boorame Conference</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Guurti, clan, scholars, interim government</td>
<td>State-building; Transitional government; NationalCharter</td>
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<td>24 Somaliland, Daraweyn}e</td>
<td>2 January –5 February 1993</td>
<td>Khaatumo</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Somaliland, Garadag</td>
<td>23 November-1 December 1993</td>
<td>Danwadaag-Beri</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhuibante, Habar Jeclo, Warsangali, Gayale</td>
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<td>27 Kaam Abokor</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Ciidagale, Peace committee</td>
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<td>28 Gaashaamo</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>29 Baallidhaaye</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>30 Duruqui</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
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<td>31 Beer</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
<td>Agreement of Garhajis</td>
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<td>32 Gabilay, Somaliland</td>
<td>26 May -1 June 1996</td>
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<td>Local</td>
<td>Reer Nuur, Jibril Akobor</td>
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<td>33 Beer, Somaliland</td>
<td>September 1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Habar Jelo, Garhaja</td>
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<td>34 Somaliland, Hargeisa</td>
<td>October 1996- February 1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Government of Somaliland, clan, women and minority observers</td>
<td>State-building; cease fire in Hargeisa and Burao</td>
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The entire process, however, was not without contradictions and inter-clan fighting. In May 1992, major tensions escalated between Habar Je’lo and Habar Yoonis for the succession inside the SNM Central Committee, as well for the control of the Berbera port. On the one side, the Xeer was crucial to find short-time solutions. The Gadabursi Guurti decided, in fact, to mediate the conflict between Issaq clans. The Sheekh Conference, in October 1992, terminated the conflict in Burao and Berbera but it also introduced the idea of forming a National Assembly of Elders (Guurti), representative of all the northern clans (ibidem), in order to negotiate and defend the interests of the northern clans. On the other side, the re-emergence of conflicts shows also that the Customary Law was not able to completely transform the clan tensions, neither to prevent future conflicts (Hart & Saed, 2010).

The ability to conjugate the multi-level proceeding of the peace process is one of the most important differences with the international peacebuilding held in Somalia. While the UN efforts in Somalia were constantly undermined by the incapacity to harmonise the local and the international diplomacy, in Somaliland indeed the success of the peace process was granted by the capacity to formalise inter-clan meeting (hence regional or national conference) only after that intra-clan negotiations had been successful pursued. Local negotiations were considered indispensable to formalise the process of ‘confidence building’, as well ‘to settle the scene’ (Walls et al., 2008) of national conferences.

*Institution-building*

Although the Somaliland peace process has been basically rooted on the capacity of local agency to positively react against the impasse of classical forms of conflict resolution, this process was also deeply intertwined with the attempt of developing a centralised structure of government. The Somaliland peace building held the transformative power of converting the elements of war into the foundations of a modern state formation. In May 1991, the clan elders and the SNM convened at the Burao Conference declared the independence of the Republic of Somaliland. The restoration of Somaliland independence (granted by the British government in 1961 to the

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8 Habar Je’lo and Habar Yoonis are both Issaq clans.

9 Interview by author with Abdi Yusuf Bobe, Academy for Peace, (25/10/2011), Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister (17/10/2011) and Rashid Hassan, State Secretary for Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Republic of Somaliland, (31/10/2011).
Somaliland Protectorate\textsuperscript{10} has been one of the peculiar factors of this peace process ("Office of the Chief State Law Advisor, International Law.," 2003). However, the major incentive to the northern independence was the perception that the southern allies would never agree to share power with northern parties (Walls, 2011, p. 38). According to Walls (Walls, 2011, p. 38), ‘the most critical immediate catalyst (of the Somaliland independence) was Ali Mahdi’s declaration of the formation of a government in Mogadishu’. The hybridisation between the state- and peace- building constitutes one of the most important ingredients of the indigenisation of the Somaliland political authority. This hybridisation can be evaluated in the consideration of two important factors.

On the constitutional side, some of the customary principles and traditional mechanisms\textsuperscript{11} of pacification have gradually been formalised inside the institutions of the Somaliland Republic\textsuperscript{12}. Considering the infrastructure of peacebuilding in Somaliland, this article agrees with Hart and Saed (Hart & Saed, 2010), according to which the Somaliland peace process can be located at the critical juncture between two trends: conflict transformation and resolution. On the one side, the negotiations pursued were based on a set of traditional elements that consist of both sharia, and customary law (Xeer). The Somaliland customary law is a social contract made of traditional and oral code of behaviour (Walls et al., 2008) that regulates the relationship between different lineages. But the application of the Xeer, in fact, did not eradicate the causes of the conflict. The integration between customary law, conflict transformation and restorative justice was indeed essential to elaborate short-term solutions able, at least, to establish a ceasefire (ibidem) among contending factions.

During the preparatory meeting of the Burao Conference, the parties convened that each clan should be responsible for the security of its own territories and militias.\textsuperscript{13} During the Sheekh conference, the principle of clan responsibility (\textit{ama dalkaa qab, ama dadka qab}) gained a formal recognition and broad relevance once it was included inside the ‘Somaliland Communities Security and Peace Charter’. During the Borame conference, considered the

\textsuperscript{10} Interview by author, Hargeisa, October 2011. See also ("Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland,” 2001)

\textsuperscript{11} Customary principles include, for instance, the collective responsibility of paying for homicides. Customary methods include indeed, the way in which compensation is achieved, i.e. mainly by arbitration or by courts.

\textsuperscript{12} Interview by author with Abdillahi Ibrahim Habane, General Secretary of the Guurti, House of Elders (18/10/2011).

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
centrepiece of the Somaliland formation\textsuperscript{14} the participants agreed to build a hybrid system of government, mixing elements of a presidential and \textit{Beel} system.\textsuperscript{15} In Borame, all the representatives convened on the necessity of establishing a new constitutional structure with a bicameral parliament, formed by the House of Representatives and the House of the Elders (\textit{Guurti}). The \textit{Guurti} represents one of the peculiar crystallizations of the hybridization between the peace- and institution-building (Somaliland House of Parliament, 2007; Somaliland House of Peace, 2012).

On the military side indeed, the clan system sponsored the civil reconversion of the former-combatants into members of the new national army.\textsuperscript{16} Violence was considered an element of transformation; and the formation of a national army, accompanied by the creation of a police force, acquired a national character indispensable to dispel the risk that the clan-based security forces could provoke new conflicts.\textsuperscript{17}

The formation of a new military authority, however, was only one of the aspects of the institutionalisation of the Somaliland peacebuilding. The process, on the contrary, held a strong social character, enforced by the active participation of a number of actors usually excluded by the traditional forms of political representation (i.e. women and religious leaders). Women, in particular, reinforced the agreements achieved by the elders carrying out a communication function between clans (Walls et al., 2008), but even seeking to influence the contending parties, given their median position between two separate clan structures (the paternal, and the marital clan). Formally excluded by participating to the peace process, women have been indeed indirect instruments of transformations, protagonists of combined marriage across clans with the purpose to change warlike into peaceful relationships. Whereas this role was indispensable to fortify the cessation of fighting reached by the elders, the practice also reflects (and increased) the women’s subjection to clan\textsuperscript{18} and men control (Hart & Saed, 2010).

\textsuperscript{14} Interview by author with Abdi Yusuf Bobe, Academy for Peace (25/10/2011).
\textsuperscript{15} The term \textit{Beel} refers to a kind of government based on clan system. See also Bradbury, 2009).
\textsuperscript{16} Interview by author, Hargeisa 2011.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Interviews by author, Hargeisa 2013.
The political nature of the Somaliland peacebuilding

Both the monopolisation on the legitimate use of violence, as well the creation of new economic and administrative structures resulted from the ongoing political fighting. This process was not immune from violence. In October 1994, fighting arose around the formation of the emerging state infrastructures, and intense political tensions antagonised the Egal administration and its local opponents. The first national government in Somaliland in fact was built around the leadership of the SNM, and contending conflictual interests between opposed political forces generated a rampant factionalism and clan politicking. Two main conflicts must be mentioned. A first discontent had arisen from one sub-clan, Habar Yonis, which once refused to cooperate with the Egal administration, declared its support to the United Somali Congress /SNA in Mogadishu. A second tension broke out in 1995 when Egal decided to extend control on the area of Burao where Habar Yonis militia were situated, and clashes between government troops and Garhajis militia erupted again (Bradbury, 2009).

These conflicts were part of a struggle for political advantage, not clan revenge. The contention concerned the negotiation of administrative rules and crucial recourses. The efforts made by Somaliland Peace Committee to stop this stage of fighting in fact were useless. The political nature of this contention neutralised also the power of the Xeer, as well the capacity of the community-based conflict management to work properly. This political contention also demonstrates that the Somaliland peace process was not immune to political divergent interest, and as such, was built upon a balanced orchestration of both traditional and non–traditional methods of political bargaining. A national peace and Reconciliation Conference, held in Hargeisa in October 1996 settled these conflicts. This conference was the first negotiation organised by the government, and also the first clear attempt made by the Egal’s administration to politically centralise the emerging process of institution-building (Walls, Mohammed, & Ali, 2008 p.142). But it also revealed that local instruments for peace were not the only protagonists of the Somaliland’s success story. While the elders have been largely considered the neutral

19 Interview by author, Hargeisa, October 2011.
20 Interview by author with Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister (17/10/2011) and Rashid Hassan, State Secretary for Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, 31/10/2011.
21 Sub-clan of Habar Yonis.
22 ‘For many ‘Idagalle, their struggle was not with the Sa’ad Muuse, but with the Government, and a similar situation pertained for the Habar Yoonis: they were also fighting the Government rather than Habar Je’lo’. See also (Walls, Mohammed, & Ali, 2008 p.142).
granters of the Somaliland peace process, the SNM and the Egal’s administration, were the political forces driving Somaliland towards its stabilisation.

**Conclusion**

The pragmatic approach to peacebuilding adopted in Somaliland has proved to bypass many of the prescriptions, practices and related limits of the Liberal Peace paradigm. However, the notion that local participation in post-war recovery enhances the effectiveness of the peace process has often been used to depoliticise local peace building.

Neutrality, and impartiality, indeed are not actually working on the empirical ground either of the liberal or pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding. The case of Somaliland illustrates to what extent the term *local* is not synonymous of *neutral and impartial*. The interconnection between peace and state formation in Somaliland has enabled local stakeholders to sustain the political transformation of the conflict into a stabilisation prospect. Departing from Lederach’s pyramid of stakeholders, the paper defines the Somaliland peace process as a multi-scale activity where political, traditional and community-based authorities have been involved into the negotiation of divergent political interests.

The community-level reconciliation succeeded in Somaliland, not because of the neutral behaviour of the local agency, but because the process was built upon a balanced orchestration of traditional and non-traditional methods of political bargaining. As result, the peace process has not been subject to the externalisation of political authority that traumatised the internationally led peacebuilding operations in Somalia. On the contrary, the Somaliland experiment launched a process of indigenisation of the political authority (Somaliland House of Parliament, 2007). Reconceptualising this political architecture helps to clarify the roles and functioning of a multi-scale of actors in local peace operations. This paper aimed to map to what extent pragmatic approaches to peacebuilding empirically go beyond the core principles of the Liberal Peace paradigm. In doing so, it also helps to disentangle contemporary peace and war studies from the mythology of the liberal, and *neutral*, intervention doctrine.
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