Evidence from an alternative path to reconciliation:
the case of Somaliland

Abstract

The International Community’s work in conflict management and peace-building in Africa has usually been associated with a double regime of responsibility: protecting humanitarian rights and enforcing democracy. However, existing research suggests that these attempts have rarely improved the humanitarian conditions of conflictual societies, or either encouraged their democratic aspirations. Following the pitfalls met by traditional conflict management, alternative approaches have been advanced and scholars have explored to what extent the transformative power of conflict (Väyrynen, 1991; Azar and Burton, 1986) can actively reduce the level of violence in ongoing conflicts. Hence, this paper presents the case-study of the grassroots peace-building in Somaliland, where an alternative approach to conflict management has achieved more interesting and sustainable results than those pursued by the traditional diplomacy in Somalia. The empirical part of this paper introduces first the failures of the international intervention in Somalia and afterwards it describes the Somaliland alternative route to reconciliation, focusing on three aspects: the resort to traditional methods of conflict management; the gradual and preparatory nature of this peace process; the codification of traditional peace-building into a process of institution-building. This paper argues that the community-based approach adopted in Somaliland has been most productive than the traditional mechanisms adopted by the International Community in Somalia, given the ability of the ‘community’ to bypass two fundamental dilemmas that affect the top-down methodology: the ownership and the legitimacy dilemma.
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The topic of UNOSOM was discussed a long time ... One elder, ‘Aaqil Ali Muse Egal, was confused about the meaning of UNOSOM and which clan they represented. So he asked in the meeting where the Chief of UNOSOM is based, assuming it stands for a clan. Everyone started laughing’ (Walls, Mohammed, & Ali, 2008: 75).

Introduction

For most of the post-bipolar history, the absence of peace in Africa, and in the Horn of Africa in particular, has been a major challenge for scholars and policy makers (Bereketeab, 2013). Despite over a decade of sustained international engagements with the idea of exporting western institutions, standards and patterns of governance, the escalation and perseverance of intractable conflicts has remained one of the most urgent challenges to the possibility of stabilizing the African political spectrum. While across the continent externally driven efforts at conflict mitigation have often performed poorly, in the Horn of Africa the International Community agenda for peace has also actively contributed to the conflict intractability and spiralling of violence (Bereketeab, 2013; Cliffe, 1999). Many scholars have pointed out that foreign intervention in Africa may be controversial (Ramuhala, 2011), both therapeutic as well as destructive (Smock, 1993), or simply detrimental to the cause of peace given the probability of the external interests to alter the internal balance of power, and hence to foment larger conflicts (Schmidt, 2013). However, traditional theories and tools of conflict management have usually failed to reconfigure possible alternatives to the top-down approach: scholars have paid little attention to the viability of community-based peace-building but a growing number of bottom-up reconciliations in Africa and elsewhere have raised the theoretical quest for indigenous way of understanding conflict resolution (Haider, 2009; Mahamoud Abdi Sh. Ahmed, 2011). Following the pitfalls met by traditional styles and strategies, alternative approaches have been advanced and scholars have widely explored to what extent the transformative power of conflict (Azar & Burton, 1986; Väyrynen, 1991) can be more effective in stopping or reducing the level of violence. In order to shed more light on the alternatives to top-down conflict management in Africa, this paper seeks to make a
twofold contribution. On the theoretical side, it develops an argument for delineating the principles, actors and mechanisms involved inside a traditional process of indigenous peace-building. On the empirical one, the paper provides evidence from an alternative path to peace-building and state rehabilitation occurred in Somaliland with the aim of understanding to what extent, and in which manner, the pacification at the community and grassroots level can be more effectively in realizing peace.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. The first part (1) reviews the main theoretical directions and troubles framing the traditional approaches to conflict management. Afterwards it presents the theoretical alternative to the power-based approach moving along the basic assumption elaborated by the transformative approach. The second part (2) presents the empirical evidence drawn from an alternative path towards reconciliation: it introduce first (2.1 and 2.2) what went wrong in the intervention pursued by the United Nations in Somalia between 1991 and 1993, and then it explore (2.2 and 2.3) the manner in which, in the same period, a community-rooted mechanism in Somaliland has paved the way to an alternative path to pacification. The last part (3) concludes by summarizing the most important continuities issues stimulated by this analysis.

1. Traditional and Alternative Approaches to Conflict Resolution

The theoretical literature dealing with conflict resolution and management presents two key strands, the power-based approach and the behaviourist approach.

Among the authors and schools who advocated the power-based approach both realist and neo-realist scholars presupposes that power distribution is the factor better explaining the outbreak and the relative resolution of conflicts. According to the realists (Morgenthau, Thompson, & Clinton, 2005) in fact, the roots of conflict stem from group competition on power and resources. Whether the neo-realists have emphasized that the anarchical and competitive nature of the International System foments tensions between actors (Waltz, 2010), the possibility of resolving this competition depends on the capacity of the most powerful party to annihilates the rivalries. Among this perspective, conflict management corresponds to an adjustment process essential to determine a new balance
of power able to deter the outbreak of new tensions and maintaining peaceful relationships, where the idea of peace mostly corresponds to the rudimentary absence of war.

Since the realist and neo-realist approaches have been radically criticized for focalizing too much on systemic or macro factors (Cunningham, 1998), other contributors to this literature have specified range of micro or subjective conditions that may predispose or prevent the resolution of conflicts. The behaviourist approach, seeking to explore conflict resolution by social behaviours has tended to investigate in which manner the human nature and behaviour affect both the process of conflict escalation and resolution. This contribution lists a set of factors which may shape and transform the parties interest and identities (Checkel, 2011): the internal causes of conflict, the social identity and legacies, the long-standing ethnic differences or the territorial ambitions of separatist groups. Psychologists, anthropologists, economists and political scientists have extensively debated on the agency-level determinants of unresolved conflicts that hamper or facilitate conflict resolution (Azar & Burton, 1986). As consequence, in much of the literature alternative to the power-based approach, two elements have been operative.

On one hand, social psychologists have emphasized to what extent subjective reasons may influence the way in which the different parties understand the same conflict. Morton Deutsch has theorized that conflict resolution depends on the possibility to shift the attitude of belligerents from hostility towards cooperation. Deutsch build on this conceptual claim to make a further argument in favour of common perception - ‘perception of shared beliefs or similarity, size of conflict, availability of threats and weapons, and power difference’ (Deutsch, 1983)- as instrument for promoting collaborative strategies.

On the other hand, constructivists have pointed out that cultural and ideological factors may influence the way in which the conflict is meant and symbolized. Observing that the agent-structure dichotomization is not sufficient to account for conflict resolution, constructivists have argued that the socially constructed nature of the actors may essentially shape both the nature and the course of the armed fighting (Jackson, 2008). From another perspective indeed, other scholars have pointed out that barriers to
conflict resolution might arise from organizational or institutional factors (Crocker & Hampson, 1996; Zartman & Touval, 2010); in particular, procedural elements, attaining both to the institutional and ideological sphere, may erode the correct employment of instruments of reconciliation and mediation. As recognized by the World Bank and UNDP joint report on rebuilding post-conflict societies (2007: 6):

Frequently, even well thought-out strategies and transition frameworks can be undermined by a lack of attention to the operational requirements and the implementation challenges that exist in post-conflict environments. Underestimating or neglecting these can delay transitions, or even catalyse new sources of tension and conflict, both of which threaten the overall transition and state-building project. For this reason, managers of transitions require not only strategic vision but also the technical knowledge and capacities required to address the operational challenges.

1.1. Criticisms...

Although the literature on conflict management covers a wider territory where generalizing or differentiating trends, approaches, dynamics and results, might be controversial, a fundamental difference has emerged between advocates of conflict resolution¹ and conflict management² theories (Miall, 2004). While the firsts point out that the issue of ‘managing’ conflict entails as a top-down mechanism oriented to control conflicts and not to search for solutions, the second approach conversely, has been criticized for emphasizing the root causes of conflicts without paying attention to the processes and interactions able of transforming the original conflict.

The traditional approaches to conflict resolution, have been criticized for a wider set of reasons. The power-based approach, attributing higher relevance to structural conditions has tended to see conflict as a static event, determined almost exclusively by the asymmetries existing on the power-based relationships. Third party intervention, in particular, is one of the most conventional tools sponsored by the International

¹ According to Miall, conflict resolution theorists sustain that ‘it is possible to transcend conflicts if parties can be helped to explore, analyse, question and reframe their positions and interests. Conflict resolution therefore emphasises intervention by skilled but powerless third-parties working unofficially with the parties to foster new thinking and new relationships’ (Miall, 2004:3).

² ‘Conflict management is the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence. Rather than advocating methods for removing conflict, [it] addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict: how to deal with it in a constructive way, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, how to design a practical, achievable, cooperative system for the constructive management of difference’ (Bloomfield and Reilly, 1998: 18).
Community that has been sharply criticized for its ambiguous results and methods. The capitulation of the international forces in Mogadishu in the mid ‘90 triggered an acronymous debate between scholars and practitioners intended to derive insightful lessons from the Somali case. Several scholars have began to argue that third party intervention might be affected by exogenous pathogens which create an ownership dilemma. When actors that are not directly affected by conflict lead mediation or efforts at peace-building, the third party’s agenda may exert an influential power on the internal equilibrium. Third parties might juxtapose their own interests inside the internal dilemma, deteriorating the possibility of resolving conflict in a short time, such us they can persuade the contending parties to negotiate and cooperate. In any kind of scenario, as argued by Rothchild,

the mediator transforms the bargaining encounter from a dyadic to a triadic relationship, persuading or inducing the parties to alter their attitudes on the issues at hand. The third party reconfigures the conflict, legitimizing the way that the parties transform it. To the extent the third party allies itself with one of the parties against the other/s, it becomes part of the encounter itself (Rothchild, 2008:102).

On the opposite side, the sociological analysis has tended to envision conflict as the mythological snake Uroboros, which eating its own tail reproduces its own existence, assuming quite indirectly that conflict may be merely fomented by the parties’ internal capacity to reproduce the same tensions. Scholars who have addressed the negative impact of procedural factors indeed have attributed a genealogical power to technical aspects sponsoring a sort of partition between political and technical difficulties. As argued by Menkel and Meadow (2003) the techniques of dispute resolution are not ‘neutral’, especially when externally imposed dispute resolutions are deliberately designed to colonize conflicts: here, the form of managing conflict is perceived as an external imposition, thus also the procedural elements may constitute an obstacle to the foundation of a constructive approach.
1.2... and alternatives

During the ‘90s the traditional approaches of IRs have encountered serious constraints to explain the protracted and unravelling conflicts, the escalation of new wars or complex emergencies (Duffield, 2001). These difficulties have encouraged several scholars to employ the term ‘transformation’ with the aim of attributing major relevance to the idea of conflict as a dynamic process necessitating new diagnostic and therapeutic tools. Many scholars began to explore the conflict’s transformative power emphasizing the possibility of transforming conflict into a constructive practice.

Burton and Azar (1986) through the theory of the deprivation of essential needs, have questioned why conflicts might be prolonged and they have noted that tensions tend to persist if the incumbent parties do not satisfy basic demands. The provision of essential needs is indeed indispensable to grant pacification, otherwise, the people’s unyielding drive to satisfy unmet needs on the individual, group, and societal level push belligerents to continue fighting (Azar & Burton, 1986). This theory affirms that only a partitioned process designated to employ different strategies (power-bargaining or problem-solving) for managing different needs and interests may stimulate the conflict resolution. Azar and Bruton in their influential writing on conflict, describe the process of conflict management as a delicate bargaining system where there are some value-based interests that are non-negotiable and needs that might be treated, following this, conflict persists when needs are transformed into interests that the traditional negotiation is unable to settle.

Galtung, Kriesberg and Väyrynen and have made important contributions to the idea of conflict transformation. Väyrynen has argued that ‘the issue of transformation means that the political constellation supporting the previous agenda will have to change’ (Väyrynen, 1991: 5), hence transformation, in turn, depends on the parties’ willingness to negotiate. Galtung’s argument indeed is based on the preposition that because conflicts may experience a variety of transformational processes (1996), competition may be eliminated by ‘transcending the contradiction’, as well by ‘associating or dissociating the actors’ (Galtung, 1996). Kriesberg indeed, has clarified

the causal relationship linking conflict resolution with conflict transformation operationalizing the transformation as the independent variable able of de-escalating conflicts. Kriesberg’s argument is based on the assumption that the possibility of transforming the conflict into a pro-active and positive construction is more a prerequisite for de-escalation, rather than an outcome (Kriesberg, Northrup, & Thorson, 1989).

Conflict transformation has received important contributions also from the field of area studies: many scholars have addressed and explored the fundamental principles (Lederach, 1997), institutions (Agbaje, 1989; Ayittey, 1991) and mechanisms (Zartman, 2000a) able of restoring social relationships and thus promoting effective reconciliatory mechanisms in African as elsewhere. Zartman’s influential work, *Traditional Cures for Modern African Conflict: African Conflict ‘Medicine’* (Zartman, 2000a), has provided one of the most compelling and systematic understanding of the traditional conflict management in Africa. In *Ripeness: The hurting stalemate and beyond* (Zartman, 2000b) Zartman points to the idea that before transforming conflicts into a positive engagement some preconditions must be satisfied: on one hand, conflict may not be settled unless the contending parties are ‘ripe for resolution’⁴. Since perceiving a stalemate is crucial for deciding to continue fighting, ripeness is also diametrically crucial in de-escalating this propensity. On the other hand, a reliable negotiation must be granted for both the parties: the possibility of pursuing an effective and substantial ‘way out’ for both the parties is essential for encouraging parties to stop fighting and starting ‘sincere negotiations’.

### 1.3. The Grassroots peace-building

The proposal of this paper is that in order to evaluate the process of peace-building in Somaliland, we need to pay closer attention to what kind of guiding principles, knowledge and actors play a role inside an alternative path to conflict management. To provide a more in-depth understanding of the traditional methods of peace-building this paper follows and sympathizes with the insights provided by Hart and Saed (2010) and Mahamoud Abdi Sh. Ahmed (2011) to employ the model of ‘peacebuilding from below’

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⁴ The ripe moment represents a particular form of deadlock that contending parties perceive as a mutually satisfactory moment to achieve their own goals (Zartman & Touval, 1996).
elaborated by Lederach (1997; 2003) for understanding the case of Somaliland peace-
building.

Inside *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, Lederach
proposes a theory of traditional peace-building that represents one of the compelling
models of peace transformations advanced by the contemporary literature (Lederach,
1997). Lederach’s argument focuses on the idea that ‘Transforming individual and
community consciousness and attitudes regarding ethnic issues and violent behaviours
may allow the emergence of a critical mass of people to advance ethnic relations,
reconciliation, and tolerance’ (Lederach, 2003). He observes that effective mediation
needs to create incentives for cooperation, more than for coercive commitments: ‘A
transformational approach begins with two pro-active foundations: 1) a positive
orientation toward conflict, and 2) a willingness to engage in the conflict in an effort to
produce constructive change or growth’ (ibidem). Lederach then argues that, in light of
this, the willingness to turn conflict into a constructive engagement is informed by the
willingness of a ‘critical mass of individuals’ both the conflicting parties and the entire
society, to be actively and directly engaged with negotiation.

In the words of Miall (Miall, 2004:6), Lederach envisions peace-building as a
‘long-term transformation of a war system into a peace system’ with a crucial multi-
dimensional character: this community-rooted peace-building practice is based on the
interaction of political leaders with key traditional actors who pursue ‘trust and
confidence’ policies of reconciliation within the entire society. Since the lenses of the
conflict transformation focus on ‘potential’ for constructive changes, Lederach argues
that traditional approaches to peace-building increase the sustainability and durability of
the peace process, because the empowerment of local communities in solving disputes
bypass the ownership dilemma affecting top-down approaches, and thus enforces the

5 According to Lederach ‘Conflict transformation is accurate because the core of my work
is indeed about engaging myself in constructive change initiatives that include and go beyond the
resolution of particular problems. It is scientifically sound because the writing and research about
conflict converge in two common ideas: conflict is normal in human relationships and conflict is
a motor of change. And transformation is clear in vision because it brings into focus the horizon
toward which we journey, namely the building of healthy relationships and communities, both
locally and globally. This process requires significant changes in our current ways of
relating’ (Lederach:2003).
legitimacy of the peace process on the eyes of both the society and the conflicting parties. According to the author, the human relationships, and not the distribution of power, lies at the core of the idea of transforming conflict into a positive construct: following this, peace-building must be conceived as a society-building enterprise.

Two factors are crucial within this theory. First, Lederach categorizes the stakeholders participating inside the community-based peace-building using the metaphor of the pyramid where the elite leaders and the decision-makers are positioned at the Top-Leadership level; leaders of the social or religious organizations compose the Mid-Level Leadership; and grassroots community leaders are located at the Grassroots Leadership. Second, this multi-dimensional composition is not synchronic but diachronic: conflict transformation implies the simultaneous interaction between four agency dimensions (the personal, the relational, the structural, and the cultural) whit the pyramid of stakeholders. For instance, national conferences may not proceed without village and community-based meeting: all the levels of conflict and relative types of actors must be involved inside the peace-building activity. This mechanism entails the presence of the entire set of stakeholders across all the three frameworks indispensable for pursuing peace-building: the diagnostic, the operational and the tactical framework (Lederach, 1997). Each framework necessary for escalating the conflict presents a multidimensional composition and a comprehensive peace process addresses complementary changes at all these agency-levels.

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6 ‘We need to develop capacities to engage in change processes at the interpersonal, intergroup, and social-structural levels. One set of capacities points toward direct, face-to-face interaction between people or groups. The other set underscores the need to see, pursue, and create change in our ways of organizing social structures, from families, to complex bureaucracies, to structures at the global level. This requires a capacity to understand and sustain dialogue as a fundamental means of constructive change’ (Lederach:2003).
2. Evidence from an alternative path to reconciliation: the case of Somaliland

For understanding the empirical implications of the theoretical background above delineated, this paper presents the case-study of the grassroots peace-building in Somaliland where an alternative approach to conflict management has achieved more interesting and sustainable results than those achieved by the international mediation and military intervention in Somalia.

The Somaliland’s experience with state and peace-building represents an important challenge to the traditional theories of conflict management and political development. On one side, the international mediation efforts in Somalia have proven to be ineffective and crucial to foment and protract the civil war. Conversely, many analysts have ignored these implications, and sustained that conflict in Somalia has been protracted by the existence of clan divisions that have definitively splintered the society along lineage contrapositions (Wam and SarDesai, 2005; Rotberg, 2011). Many have posited the clan-based organization as the catalyst of the enduring conflict, many others falling into traditionalist and primordialist positions have speculated about the immature, conflictual (Fearon & Laitin, 2003) or anarchical (Kaplan, 2002) essence of the clan organization. However, even recognizing the role played by clanship within the Somali crisis, this approach raises one fundamental problem. If we accept the claim made by Lewis according to which ‘the segmentary lineage system or clan structure remains the bedrock foundation of the pastoral Somali society, and the primacy of clan interests is its natural divisive reflection at the political level’(Lewis, 1999), it is therefore ‘scientifically unacceptable’ the pretence of emphasizing a constant factor as explanatory variable for the intractability of the Somali conflict (Laitin, 1997).

The Somaliland experience offers in fact interesting insights to confute the hypothesis according to which the clan organization, per sé, might be considered a hostage of bloody-minded forces as the mainstream literature has widely tried to suggest. In order to confute the validity of this hypothesis the remaining parts of the paper evaluates the different paths to conflict management undertaken in Somalia (2.1 and 2.2) and Somaliland (2.3 and 2.4) in the same historical period comprised between 1991 and 1993.
2.1 Civil war and UN Intervention in Somalia (1991-1993)

The revolt against Barre escalated in northern territories in 1988, when the Somali National Movement (SNM) launched an offensive against the governative troops in Hargeisa and Burao. The Somali Army responded with air bombing which destroyed the two northern cities, but without hampering the advance of the rebel militia. In August 1990, the national resistance forces (SNM, USC and SPM)\(^7\) agreed to coordinate operations against Barre. In December 1990, troops loyal to the government were pushed back to Mogadishu and militias of the USC entered the capital in January 1991, forcing Barre to flee to his clan stronghold in the South. However, early after Barre’s departure from Mogadishu, separatism began to impinge the opposition front and central and southern Somalia has been embroiled into a protracted civil war.

In February 1991, conflict escalated between the USC and the SPM-Harti: the defeated SPM was forced to flee south to Kismayo, where it established an alliance with Barre’s clan militia. The temporary alliance between USC and USC/SNA forced Barre to withdraw again: at the end of April 1991, the SPM/SNF alliance was pushed south of Doble, but with the removal of the common enemy the cooperation also suddenly disappeared. Since January 1991, the USC has split into two factions for the conquest of the legitimate political authority: the United Somali Congress/Somali Salvation Alliance (USC/SSA) led by Ali Mahdi Muhammad, and the Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA) headed by Mohammed Farah Aidid. The inter-clan tensions early emerged were exacerbated by the unbalanced role played by the UN diplomatic activity (Stevenson, 1995). On 29 January 1991, two days after Barre withdrew from Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi was prematurely elected interim-president. In June 1991, Djibouti proposed a reconciliation conference and, on 14 July, Ali Mahdi was formally appointed president of a transitional government: in October the government was formed, but the decision of establishing a provisional government without consulting the other parties escalated the factional tensions. Aidid did not recognized Mahdi’s authority and the 17th of November 1991, a second stage of the civil war escalated in Mogadishu between the two factions. In December 1991, the UN general secretary Javier Pérez de Cuélla issued for the first time the intention to take an initiative to

\(^7\) Respectively, the Somali National Movement (north), the United Somali Congress (centre) and the Somali Patriotic Movement (south).
solve the crisis, after that an informal recognition was attributed to the request issued by the new self-proclaimed government in Mogadishu: Omer Arteh Ghalib, proclaimed interim prime minister during the Djibouti conference, issued a letter to the UN Permanent Mission of Somalia to solicit an ‘effective action to end the fighting’ (UNOSOMI, 2013). A diplomatic delegation\textsuperscript{8} arrived in Mogadishu and in March 1992 consultations between Ali Mahdi and Aidid agreed on implementing the cease-fire and accepting a UN monitoring mechanism. However, in the meantime the UN diplomacy began to follow its own course without respecting what was going on in the field (Mohamed Diriye Abdullahi, 1995): when Jonah’s delegation returned to Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi claimed that only the presence of a large peacekeeping contingent would be able to secure aid delivery. In April 1992, without respecting the concerns already expressed by Aidid, the UN expanded the military capacity of the mission and the cease-fire was subordinate to the urgency of deploying a peacekeeping operation\textsuperscript{9}.

As result, the UN planned a small-scale peacekeeping operation that was gradually transformed into a large-scale operation (United Nations, 1996) and the peacekeepers were deployed without an effective cease-fire. The continuous redefinition of the aims of the mission because of the requests advanced by Mahdi, made Aidid extremely suspicious about the UN’s neutrality. On 28 October, Aidid declared that UN troop deployments in Kismayo and Berbera was not acceptable, and in November he officially demanded that UNOSOM leave the airport where the operation was positioned.

The UN initiative was trapped inside a dissonant orchestration: during this second stage of the civil war all the attempts made by the special representative Mohamed Sahnoun to forge a semblance of accountability into the UN have been nullified by the diplomacy of the headquarters, in particular by the Secretary General Boutros Ghali (Sahnoun, 1994; Hirsch & Oakley, 1995). While Sahnoun was trying to ‘close the communication gaps among the UN relief agencies the Somalis and the NGOs’, the ‘UN was struggling to put a

\textsuperscript{8} The mission was led by the UN Secretary General for Political Affairs, James Jonah and composed by members of the UN, the Arab League, Organization of African Union and Organization of Islamic Countries.

\textsuperscript{9} On 24 April the SC adopted another resolution (751) that authorized the United Nation Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), establishing the deployment of observers and ‘adequate security personnel’ (500 infantry) to safeguard the activity of the observers (UNOSOMI, 2013)
peacekeeping force on the ground’ (Hirsch & Oakley, 1995). The deployment of 500 peacekeepers was the object of an extenuate negotiation between Sahnoun and Aidid. In the middle of this negotiation, the SC approved another amendment\(^\text{10}\) to the material capacity of UNOSOM through the resolution 767 (UNSC, 1992). The decision taken by Boutros Ghali to enlarge the mission to 3500 troops, without consulting Sahnoun, caught both Aidid and Sahnoun unaware (United Nations, 1996; Sahnoun, 1994) and Aidid obtained the confirmation of all its suspicion when Sahnous was forced to hand in his resignation.

Following this course, UNOSOM did not reach significant results. In November 1992, Boutros Ghali informed the Security Council about the existence of an anti-UN feeling, an ‘invasion syndrome’ and ‘disturbing developments’ that were undermining the capacity of the mission to be effective (United Nations, 1996). The Pakistani soldiers who arrived in September were unable to become operative, and the expected 3000 troops have never been deployed.

2.2 The impact of the UN intervention

The UN intervened in Somalia with a clear power-based approach in mind, that of sustaining the weaker party (the USC/SSA led by Ali Mahdi) considered the legitimate ruling party, and to isolate the stronger, faction (the USC/SNA led by Aidid). But contrary to the cases in which intervention serves to curb the rebellion by culminating in the defeat of the insurgents, in Somalia the opposite has been the case. This first stage of intervention has generated the legitimation of the clan factionalism. The UN’s lack of material basis for peace, in fact, has had a paradoxical and negative transformative power, turning the warlords into peacelords (Menkhaus, 1997). The necessity of pursuing nation building and conflict resolution made the UN prone to legitimize the existing factions, while traditional leaders played no role in these proceedings: ‘in attempting to bring the warlord together for national-level negotiations, the UN and US also effectively legitimated their authority and gave them added leverage in their local wars for land’ (Besteman & Cassanelli, 2003). As a result, the UN increased the legitimacy of militia factions that perceived the participation in

\(^{10}\) The amendment concerned the deployment of four additional security units, each with 750 troops around Berbera, Bosaso and Kismayo.
the national conferences as an instrument for gaining domestic legitimacy. The UN undersecretary James Jonah had recognized Ali Mahdi as the interim president, without considering that the base of his authority (The Djibouti II Accord) was largely unrecognized by all the other factions (United Nations, 1996), while the UN special representative Sahnoun increased the foreign reliance on Aidid’s control of Mogadishu. Quite paradoxically, UNOSOM enhanced the legitimacy of the clan fighting, ceding authority to one of the parties or another. The factional conflict within the Hawiyye for the control of the capital city obscured the fact that ‘one of the driving forces behind the civil war in southern Somalia was the competition for access to natural resources’ (Besteman & Cassanelli, 2003). Land allocation and compensations have been completely excluded by the UN reconciliation agenda, since the operations monitoring land grabbing would require a deep knowledge of the Somali society that UN advisers would not be able to provide (ibidem).

Therefore, UNOSOM failed to address the real causes of conflict, contributing to expand rather than contain the civil war. As consequence, the Somali civil society has been completely excluded from the attempted peace process and the diplomatic activity has taken place among the oppressors, rather than the victims of the conflict. When in 1993 the conflict erupted between SNA and UNOSOM II, the fragile equilibrium between the neutrality of the UN/US’s role and the Somali willingness to accept the foreign intervention definitely deteriorated. The UN and US informally declared war to Aidid, taking a precise side in the conflict, and failing to establish a secure environment. Four months of fierce confrontations culminated in October 1993, when the Somali fighters shot down two U.S. Blackhawk helicopter in Mogadishu, forcing the International Community to withdraw.

2.3 Peace-Building in Somaliland (1991-1993)

In parallel to the unravelling civil war escalated in southern and central provinces, since the early 1991 in the northern provinces the local elders and the SNM inaugurated a set of meetings to reconcile their combatants. The history of the Somaliland peace-building can be explained though a set of crucial factors.
The first important element has been the resort to *traditional methods of conflict management* (I). ‘When the state collapsed, the traditional system of governance was reactivated bringing the elders back as key players in local politics’ (Walls et al., 2008). Local mediation committees were created for solving land conflicts, though the use of customary law (xeer)\(^{11}\) and other traditional mechanisms. The centrepiece of this process was the principle of reciprocity: the process was not oriented towards obtaining justice, rather to re-establishing an equilibrium acceptable to all the parties\(^{12}\).

Elders have been the most important protagonists of this mechanism: both communities and parties directly approached local authorities for conflict management because they were perceived as ‘more familiar, fair and knowledgeable than state institutions and therefore better qualified to arbitrate in land-based conflicts’ (Walls et al., 2008). Elders have been crucial both in stopping conflict and in demobilizing armed groups. According to Ali Waran Ade, ‘Every clan, form different side, has pacified its own specific area of the city’\(^{13}\). In an attempt to persuade militia to stop fighting, the clan system has sponsored the civil reconversion of the former-combatants into members of the new army\(^{14}\). Women also played a significant, but often shadow\(^{15}\) role in conflict mitigation (Nagaad 2002, 2008), through their median position between two separate clan structures: the paternal clan and the marital clan\(^{16}\).

\(^{11}\) Customary law has been crucial for the promotion of dialogue and mediation because facilitators have used instruments familiar to the population, usually employed for regulating the justice (systems of punishment and payment for crimes, compensatory system for property rights) and civil administration (marriage, access to resources, property rights).

\(^{12}\) *Diya* (blood compensation), *Dyo bixin* (blood compensation, payment for a person’s life) and inter-clan marriage represent three of the most important rules guiding the solution of conflicts. Author’s interview with Abdillahi Ibrahim Habane, General Secretary of the Guurti, House of elders, 18/10/2011.

\(^{13}\) Author’s interview with Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister 17/10/2011.

\(^{14}\) ‘We have tried to collect weapons because it was too dangerous having still armed people. The formation of a national army was indispensable to limit the risks associated with the arms proliferation. We have tried to give them a salary, food, to put them in a separate place, and we have convinced them that this was the best way they could live and survive. It was a way to offer them an incentive for stopping conflict’. Author’s interview with Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister 17/10/2011.

\(^{15}\) Author’s interview with Farah Mohamoud Jama, Nagaad, 23/10/2011.

\(^{16}\) According to Faisal Ali Waraabe: ‘We went around for 20 month making dialogue between militias and governments. It was easy to make peace because there were not external influences. In Somaliland there are main 4-5 clan. We strength the cohabitation with Intermarriage. So we know each other. It was more easy to make peace because we were more homogeneous. It was a political struggle, not an ethnic one’ (Walls, 2008).
The second element peculiar to the Somaliland way of pacification, as noted by Walls et al. (2008) was the *preparatory nature of this process* (II): conferences of national reconciliation in Berbera, Borame and Hargeisa have been preceded by a series of local meetings and inter-clan negotiations, oriented to promote the participation of social, traditional and religious leaderships. The first important meeting held in February 1991 in the city of Oog, between the SNM and the Dhulbahante delegation, established the necessity of addressing a conference in Berbera with the other clans. Meanwhile, the SNM and the Gadabursi group negotiated a ceasefire inside the western territories of Tulli and Borama. On 15 February 1991, delegations from all the clans took part to the first national conference in Berbera that confirmed the ceasefire established during the preliminary meetings. In April, a second conference was organized in Burao for continuing the process of ‘confidence building’: the chair of the SNM announced the independence of the Republic of Somaliland and that the SNM would run the government until May 1993.

The entire process was not immune from inter-clan fighting (Walls, 2011): in May 1992, tensions escalated between Habar Je’lo and Habar Yoonis for the succession inside the SNM Central Committee. But local meetings were able to settle the disputes: the Sheekh Conference, in October 1992, terminated the conflict in Burao and Berbera but it also introduced the idea of forming a National Assemble of Elders (*Guurti*), representative of all the northern clans (ibidem). In 1993, the Borama conference was inaugurated to assure the transition from a military government towards a civilian one: representatives convened on the necessity of establishing a new constitutional structure. In 1993, fifteen inter-clan meetings in the region of Sanaag (SDRA, 1994) culminated with the preparation of a mid-level conference in Erigavo. As summarized in Table 1, a total of 34 *sub-national* conferences between 1990 and 1997 preceded and followed the 3 *national* conferences held in Berbera, Burao and Hargeisa.
<table>
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<th>Place</th>
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<td>Borama</td>
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<td>5-9 November 1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Dhulbante, Habar Jeclo, Habar Yoonis</td>
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The third important element in this process has been the codification of the traditional mechanisms of pacification into a process of institution-building (III). During the elders’ meeting held before the Burao Conference (June 1991), the introduction of methods and criteria of reconciliation shared amongst all the clans (such as the choice of attributing to each territorial authority a pacification function) has granted the participation of the entire community to the peace process. The conference established the ‘responsibility of each clan for the security of their territories and the control of their militias’ (Mahamoud Abdi Sh. Ahmed, 2011: 93), and during the Sheekh conference, the principle of clan responsibility (‘ama dalkaa qab, ama dadka qab’) assumed a universalistic relevance,

17 Author’s interview with Abdillahi Ibrahim Habane, General Secretary of the Guurti, House of elders, 18/10/2011.
formalized inside the ‘Somaliland Communities Security and Peace Charter’ presented in Borame\textsuperscript{19}.

The fourth peculiar factor to this pacification was the restoration of the Somaliland independence (Somaliland’s claim to sovereign status, 2003). The idea of establishing a separate administration following in the footsteps of the independency gained by the former British Protectorate, enjoyed and strong and populist support\textsuperscript{20}. Somaliland had scarified its own sovereignty to pursue the dream of a unified Republic of Somalia, but this enthusiasm was lost amid Somaliland’s marginalisation and subordinate status inside the union (Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland, 2001)\textsuperscript{21}. The subsequent feeling of betrayal motivated the entire civil war against Barre, even if the SNM had never included a claim for independence in its agenda. The major catalyst of the northern independence was the perception that southern allies (mainly the USC) would never be share power with the northern parties\textsuperscript{22}. According to Wall et all (2008) ‘the most critical immediate catalyst (of the Somaliland independence) was Ali Mahdi’s declaration of the formation of a government in Mogadishu’ (1998:38).

In summary, the establishment of affordable mechanisms for managing inter-clan conflicts in Somaliland has effectively paved the way to a concrete reconciliation. This process was entirely reliant on the capacity of traditional practices to stop the conflict and consolidate peace. The clan lineage system has played, in this process, an undeniable peacemaker function.

\textsuperscript{19} Other principles, belonging to the traditional system, mixed with the adoption of Sharia, were codified inside the Chart, as for example the return of confiscated lands, the exchange of war prisoners, the demobilization of armed militia and their return in each designated clan area (Bradbury, 1994).

\textsuperscript{20} Author’s interview with Mahamoud Abdi Sh. Ahmed (Lecturer) and Abdullahi Odowa (Chair) of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Hargeisa.

\textsuperscript{21} Author’s interview with Abdillahi Ibrahim Habane, General Secretary of the Guurti, House of elders, 18/10/2011.

\textsuperscript{22} Author’s interview with Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister 17/10/2011 and Rashid Hassan, State minister for International affair, 31/10/2011.
2.4 Institution-Building (1993-1997)

For understanding the impact of the alternative approach towards peace-building undertaken in Somaliland, the further phase of institution-building must be considered. The stage of institution-building may be conceptualised as the immediate stage following the pacification of the major inter-clan fighting, analytically defined by two national conferences oriented to establish a new constitutional structure: the Borame (1993) and Hargeisa (1997) conferences.

The Borame conference is considered the centrepiece of the Somaliland formation:

- On one side, it formalized the principles of grassroots peace-building inside the ‘Somaliland Communities Security and Peace Charter’. On the other side, it proposed a hybrid system of government, a mixture between a presidential system, based on the tradition of western political institutions, and elements of the Beel system which recognizes kinship as the organizing principle of the Somali society (Bradbury et al 2003). The Parliament, in fact, consists of the House of Representatives and the House of the Elders. This last one, known as Guurti, is a National Council of Elders, reuniting all the elders of northern clans who are entrusted with safeguarding peace and stability (Somaliland Upper House of Parliament, 2007). The phase of institution-building culminated in June 1993 with the election of the first Somalilander president, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal.

A short period of peace endured until October 1994, when new fighting arose around the sovereignty’s formation. During this phase in fact, clash of interests between opposed political forces generated a rampant factionalism and clan politicking that unravelled the Somaliland political scene. An intense political conflict involved the Egal administration and its local opponents. Two main conflicts must be mentioned: a first discontent had arisen from one clan, Habar Yonis, that refused to cooperate with the Egal administration (Walls et al., 2008) and declared its support for the SNA in Mogadishu. Major fighting erupted when the Egal administration attempted to keep control of the Hargeisa airport, where two ex-

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23 Author’s interview with Abdi Yusuf Bobe, Academy for Peace, 25/10/2011.
24 Based on clan system.
25 ‘Enacting laws concerning security and stability, religion and culture; and reviewing laws passed by the House of Representatives with the exception of budgetary laws’ (Somaliland House of Peace, 2012).
26 Author’s interview with Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister 17/10/2011 and Rashid Hassan, State minister for International affairs, 31/10/2011.
SNM militia units (composed of ‘Iidagalle and Habar Yoonis) were refusing to be integrated into the national army.

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\textsuperscript{27} militia erupted again (Bradbury, 2009). These conflicts were part of a struggle for political advantage, not clan revenge\textsuperscript{28}, because the contention concerned the process of negotiating administrative rules inside the emerging process of institution-building, as well as the control of crucial resources located in areas where specific clans were situated. The political nature of this new contention, in fact, was immune to the cure of the community-based conflict management and tensions were only partially mitigated by the efforts of the ‘Somaliland Peace Committee’ to create conditions for a ceasefire. A national conference, the Hargeisa Peace and Reconciliation Conference, held in October 1996 indeed settled these conflicts. This conference presents a fundamental difference with the conferences previously envisaged because it was entirely organized by the government and it was respondent to a clear attempt of the Egal’s administration to centralize the process of institution-building (Walls et al., 2008). Even if this initiative met many discontents, the political strength of the Egal administration was able to impose a cease-fire and to manage the fighting surrounding the institutional process. In the aftermath, the conference inaugurated the period of ‘democratization’ introducing a multi-party system, and establishing a period of peace that has been consolidated during the last 15 years.

Since 1997, Somaliland has accomplished renewed and constant efforts to build a ‘complete democracy’ oriented towards convincing the International community of its ability in conquering the requirements for statehood (Somaliland’s claim to sovereign status, 2003)\textsuperscript{29}. This phase of the Somaliland’s recent history illustrates that institution-building has not been subject to the externalization of political authority that has traumatized the process of reconciliation in Somalia. In contrast, Somaliland has

\textsuperscript{27} Sub-clan of Habar Yonis.
\textsuperscript{28} ‘For many ‘Iidagalle, 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’ (Walls, 2011: 142).
\textsuperscript{29} On 31 May 2001, a national constitution was approved by public referendum. In December 2002, the first local council elections occurred, while in April 2003 half a million Somalilanders voted for presidential elections.
inaugurated a process of indigenization of the political authority (Somaliland Upper House of Parliament, 2007), where the respect for western criteria of statehood has been accompanied by attempts to bridge forms of democratic governance with traditional consensus and clan representation.

3. Conclusion

This analysis was undertaken with the aim of illustrating an alternative path to conflict resolution pursued by the community-rooted peace-building in Somaliland. The comparative analysis between the Somaliland’s and Somalia’s experience has enabled the identification of two important elements of discontinuity.

Firstly, a fundamental discontinuity concerns the conflict management styles and strategies: whereas the South has been tormented by incessant phases of regional and global interventions, the North has been immune to the imposition of diplomatic and military initiative sponsored by the International Community. This absence represents the most important ingredient of the Somaliland indigenous recipe for peace-building\(^{30}\), where the multi-level interaction between political leaders (SNM) and key traditional actors belonging to clans hostile to the SNM (Gadabursi in the West, Harti Dhulbante and Warsangeli in the east) has granted the pursuing of ‘trust and confidence’ policies of reconciliation. The adoption of traditional rules of pacification has encouraged the societal reliance and commitment with the agenda for peace, the willingness of the combatants to approve and recognize the proceedings of the reconciliation process\(^{31}\), and thus the legitimacy of the entire process.

In Somalia, indeed, western methods of conflict management have privileged the imposition of external security agendas and strategies oriented to achieve the cessation of hostilities by the means of coercitive commitments. Both the military and diplomatic enterprises undertaken by the United Nations in Somalia have failed to address the real

\(^{30}\) Author’s interview with Abdi Yusuf Bobe, Academy for Peace, 25/10/2011, Ali Mohamed Waran Ade, Civil Aviation Minister 17/10/2011 and Rashid Hassan, State minister for International affair, 31/10/2011.

\(^{31}\) Author’s interview with Muhaydin Saed, Hargeisa October 2011.
causes of conflict (Besteman & Cassanelli, 2003) and to promote the societal adherence to the peace process. As result the legitimacy of the intervention has remained scarce.

Secondly, another important discontinuity concerns the process of state (re) making. In Somalia, attempts to re-build the state have been pursued without the establishment of the two preconditions indispensable for stopping the civil war, identified by Zartman with the conflict ‘ripeness’ and availability of enabling an affordable negotiation (Zartman, 2000b). As result, the outsourcing of sovereign functions (in military, economic and political terms) has been essential for the weak Somali factions to bolster their status as new political authorities. Since the UN military intervention has been operative during an unresolved phases of the civil war, foreign actors have actively, and more or less directly changed the equilibrium internal to the factional conflict in favour of one part or the other (Stevenson, 1997; Clark and Herbst, 1997; Hirsh, 1995). In the constant vacuum of a central political authority, the top-down path of conflict management has been turned into a partisan instrument pivotal to establish a monopoly on the use of violence on behalf of the fragile ‘aspirant’ authority. As result, the International Community in Somalia has been entangled inside a ownership dilemma and rather than promoting the state (re)making, or stimulating transformative politics, has encouraged the outsourcing of sovereignty functions. In Somaliland, instead, the process of institution building has been anchored in a clear domestic basis, where the cease-fire established during the Burao conference has been fundamental to inaugurate the institutionalization of the emerging political authority.

The Somaliland community rooted peace-building disconfirms also the hypothesis attributing to clanship an innate conflictual connotation. The most important element of continuity between the northern and southern Somalia relates in fact to the existence of the similar societal organization, based on the clan system, that per sé, cannot be reasonably and logically (Laitin, 1997), considered the variable explaining the Somali unravelling crisis. From a spatial perspective, both the northern and southern societies are equally organized around the kinship element; from a temporal view, the clan system has established a long-term relationship with the process of state formation. At the beginning of the XX century, the political communities organized around the Somali society have formed indigenous states (the Ifat/Adal and the Ajuuraan Sultanates) that endured for long
time, without being entangled in dysfunctions similar to that performed by the post-colonial state\textsuperscript{32}.

To conclude, the Somaliland’s experience with peace-building raises fundamental issues related to the validity of the traditional methods of conflict resolution to provide sustainable solutions to intractable conflicts. This paper has argued that the community-based approach adopted in Somaliland has been most productive than the traditional mechanisms adopted by the International Community in Somalia, given the extraordinary ability of bypassing two fundamental dilemmas that affect the top-down methodology: the ownership and the legitimacy dilemma. Alternative ways of conceptualizing conflict management are promising, but the International Community has been reluctant to appreciate the Somaliland’s third way to peace, given the refusal to recognize the Somaliland compliance with the basic requirements for statehood. No country has yet recognized the Republic of Somaliland as a sovereign state\textsuperscript{33}, and the traditional theories of IRs have been equally reluctant to envision the challenges launched by these sovereignty and conflict transformations to the reliability of the traditional conflict theories. So far, even if major challenges remain for the Republic of Somaliland to consolidate its institutions and to realize the wellbeing of all the Somalilanders, its experience with peace suggests that further researches on conflict resolution should necessarily address a serious reconsideration of the western approach to conflict management and capacity building.

\textsuperscript{32} According to the analysis conducted by Walls (2011: 155) ‘a series of indigenous states did establish themselves over a period of history beginning in about the twelfth century, and continuing through until the start of the colonial era. Two early examples, the Ifat/Adal and the Ajuuraan Sultanates endured for long periods of time, demonstrating the existence of meta-institutional arrangements that were sufficiently robust to allow the transfer of power from one sovereign to another’.

\textsuperscript{33} Indirect forms of recognition have been advanced by Ethiopia and UK.
References


