Introduction

Whose peace is it anyway? connecting Somali and international peacemaking

Mark Bradbury and Sally Healy

For two decades Somalia has defied all foreign diplomatic, military and statebuilding interventions. None of the governments that have emerged from internationally sponsored peace processes have been able to establish their authority or deliver security and law and services to the Somali people.

Since 2001 international engagement has served to deepen the humanitarian and political crisis in southern Somalia, leaving more than three million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in 2009.

In the absence of government, however, Somali people have employed their own resources and traditions of conflict resolution to recreate security in many communities. Somali-led initiatives have succeeded in establishing political and administrative arrangements that in some places are proving to be stable.

The northern polities of the Republic of Somaliland and the Puntland State of Somalia are evidence of what Somalis can achieve. Even in volatile south central Somalia, there has been evidence of the positive impact that Somali approaches to reconciliation and security management can have.

Somalia’s protracted crisis has received intermittent international attention. In the early 1990s a major humanitarian and peacekeeping intervention – the UN Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM) – was mounted. When it failed to revive the state the wider international community largely lost interest and Somalia’s neighbours – Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya – increasingly led the search for solutions.

After 9/11 international attention inevitably swung back to Somalia because of the perceived link between failed states and international terrorism. The brief emergence of an Islamist administration in the capital Mogadishu led to Ethiopian military intervention in 2006 and the subsequent deployment of African peacekeeping forces that have been trying to protect the transitional government. Regional involvement by the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) is now a permanent feature of efforts to restore peace to Somalia.

This publication examines the multiplicity of international and Somali-led peace initiatives of the past two decades. It has been a challenge to produce a study of Somali peace processes against a backdrop of continuing conflict. Violence has intensified in south central Somalia during the lifetime of this project, begging the question whether there has been any peace to study. It is a reflection of the pernicious violence that three authors in this publication requested anonymity. But we believe there are important lessons to be drawn from experiences of Somali peacemaking. We hope that this publication can help to inform the development of more complementary and effective peacebuilding strategies.

A collaborative project

This issue of Accord has been produced in collaboration with Interpeace, whose Somali partners have undertaken pioneering work on recording, analyzing and supporting Somali-led peace processes. The insights gained from the work of the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) in south central Somalia, the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) in Puntland, and the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Somaliland are integral to this study. It draws on their work in 2007 in mapping Somali-led and internationally-sponsored peace processes. www.interpeace.org, situating it within a broader comparative field of international conflict resolution approaches in Somalia. In doing so it brings Somali perspectives on conflict resolution to a wider international
audience and deepens the debate about how endogenous peacemaking methods can be better aligned with international conflict mediation.

**Structure of the publication**

The publication is divided into four main sections. In the introductory section we trace the history of the crisis, from a civil war in the 1980s, through the period of state breakdown, clan factionalism and warlordism in the 1990s, to a globalized religious and ideological struggle in the new millennium.

The second section covers internationally-led peace processes, the third deals with Somali-led peace processes and a fourth section looks at efforts to build local structures of government. A final section draws policy lessons for the future. We have sought throughout to include the views of Somalis and practitioners and participants in developing a critique of the various processes.

**Lessons of international engagement**

The first article by Ken Menkhaus asks why intensive diplomatic interventions have failed to end the Somali crisis. His critique of six Somali peace conferences identifies lack of political will, misdiagnosis of the crisis, confusion between statebuilding and reconciliation and poor mediation skills as factors that have contributed to failure. It concludes with some constructive lessons, above all the need to ensure greater Somali ‘ownership’ of the peace process.

Jeremy Brickhill develops the critique of international involvement. He explores how security arrangements have been handled, arguing that the habitual international strategy of building a state with a monopoly of violence has not worked. Brickhill points out that security arrangements are central to endogenous Somali peace processes and demonstrate that, given the right conditions, Somalis are capable of managing security outside the framework of the state.

Another intractable problem that international mediators have faced is who has the right to represent the Somali people in formal peace talks and in government. As Abdulaziz Xildhiban and Warsan Cismaan Saalax discuss, political factions have multiplied at every international peace conference since 1991 creating a recurrent dilemma of how to determine legitimate and authoritative representation.

In Somali society political representation is a complex issue related to notions of descent and perceived and self-ascribed power, size and territorial control of clans. Markus Hoehne’s article examines Somali notions of ‘belonging’ and reviews representation in internationally-mediated peace conferences, and local political representation in Sool region. He concludes that a delegate’s legitimacy is tied to their ‘accountability’ to the people who select them.

Lee Cassanelli’s contribution deepens the critique of international engagement further with an emphasis on economic factors. He identifies in private sector-led economic recovery the potential to alter Somalia’s current political trajectory through entrepreneurship and economic development. He questions the international focus on politics and statebuilding as prerequisites for economic recovery and suggests focusing instead on Somalis as economic actors and building on what they do best — namely, responding to economic opportunities.

To provide an international perspective on the Somali conflict and how to resolve it, we are pleased to have secured four contributions from international practitioners. Three are senior diplomats from international organizations whose mandates charge them with responsibility for managing the Somali crisis.

Charles Petrie, UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), reflects on the changing character of the conflict and the role of international mediators.

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of UN intervention and the importance of partnership with Somalis and with other international organizations. H.E. Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD, explains how and why Somalia’s neighbours have shouldered responsibilities to restore a functioning government and calls for more international support for IGAD’s initiative. Nicolas Bwakira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, discusses the role that the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is playing in support of Somalia’s transitional government.

A fourth article by Meredith Preston McGhie describes the tactics employed by the UN as mediators in the 2008 peace talks in Djibouti between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS).

**Owning the peace: learning from Somali peace processes**

In part three of the publication we present a series of articles that explore how Somali communities have achieved reconciliation, managed their security and reconstructed viable ways of life. Several of these articles draw on studies by Interpeace’s partners in south central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland. Although little known beyond their immediate setting, more than 90 local peace processes have been catalogued in south central Somalia since 1991, more than 30 in Somaliland between 1991 and 1997 and eight in Puntland.

As Pat Johnson and Abdirahman Raghe explain, these locally-managed processes have proved more effective than internationally-sponsored national reconciliation initiatives. In Somaliland and Puntland they have led to the creation of government structures that enjoy more public consent and are less predatory than the highly contested ‘national’ authorities produced by internationally-sponsored processes.

Articles by Ibrahim Ali Amber ‘Oker’ and Abdulrahman Osman ‘Shuke’ describe how local peace processes draw on traditional practices of negotiation, mediation and arbitration conducted by clan elders using customary law as a moral and legal framework (see glossary for a description of clan, elder and customary law).

This section includes interviews with three senior Somali elders from south central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland who are practitioners in reconciliation. The authority of elders is derived from being delegates of their communities and accountable to them. Hajji Abdi Hussein Yusuf, Sultan Said and Malaq Issaq discuss the qualities that Somali elders are expected to possess and the role they play in maintaining peace.

Formal public peace processes are only one way in which Somalis manage conflicts. Articles by Faiza Jama on women and peacebuilding and Jama Mohamed on ‘neighbourhood watch’ and on security schemes for Mogadishu’s Bakaaro market demonstrate that peacemaking is not the sole preserve of elders. Civic activists have mobilized groups in Mogadishu and elsewhere to reduce violence and create conditions for dialogue by demolishing checkpoints, demobilizing militia, monitoring human rights and interceding between belligerents.

Women in particular, who have very limited opportunities to participate in formal peace processes, have provided critical leadership in such civil society peace initiatives. Another ‘non traditional’ actor is the decentralised local authority of Wajid, whose endeavours to manage competing clan interests and maintain access for humanitarian assistance in the midst of violent political changes in south central Somalia are described in a further article.

A final contribution in this section explores how social and cultural components of Somali life can impact on peace and security. Maxamed Daahir Afrax’s article discusses how Somali poets, singers and actors have responded to the long crisis. He explains the importance of understanding war and peace in the Somali regions through a cultural lens and the power of culture in influencing attitudes to both.

**Frameworks for stability**

The fourth section of the publication discusses some of the efforts, successful and unsuccessful, to create more enduring systems for the maintenance of peace and order.

Ulf Terlinden and Mohamed Hassan chart the history of Somaliland’s political development from indigenous grassroots peacebuilding processes in the early 1990s to the development of a democratic political system from 2002. Notwithstanding the issue of contested sovereignty over the eastern regions and the stalled presidential elections in 2009, Somaliland has emerged as one of the most peaceful polities in the Horn of Africa.

Hassan Sheikh’s article on Mogadishu describes the many attempts made since 1991 to establish an administration in the capital, ranging from political deals between faction leaders to community initiatives on local level security. The brief authority of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006 that brought security to the streets of Mogadishu for the first time since 1991 gave a glimpse of what could be possible. But external interests prevented this from developing further.

The challenges of constitution-making illustrate the contested nature of statehood. Three linked articles by Kirsti Samuels, Ibrahim Hashi Jama, and Ahmed Abbas Ahmed and
Ruben Zamora explore the varying experiences of drawing up constitutions in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland. In Somaliland and Puntland this has helped to consolidate peace and create structures of government, but the lack of a political settlement in south central Somalia has made progress impossible.

Islam is a fundamental pillar of Somali society and provides an important moral compass in Somali peace processes. An article on Islam explores this, discussing the rise of the Islamic Courts and the impact of Islamic militancy with which Somalis are currently grappling. The violence perpetrated by militant Islamists in Somalia obscures the fact that peace and reconciliation are fundamental tenants of Islam.

The Somali diaspora has been one of the most important drivers of economic recovery in Somalia. Khadra Elmi’s article explores the complex ties of Somali diaspora youth in Britain to their home country. Their social milieu in the UK, compounded by generational issues and events in international politics, has ‘radicalized’ some of these young people although many more are constructively involved in responding to humanitarian needs in Somalia. This positive engagement is something that can be harnessed to bring new and fresh approaches to Somali peacebuilding.

Somalia has one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world. Anna Lindley observes that while Somali elite in the diaspora do exert an influence on Somali politics, the voices of the displaced and other marginalized people in the country and overseas need to be heard.

Peacebuilding and statebuilding
The name Somalia remains synonymous with conflict, violence, warlordism, famine, refugees, terrorism, jihadism, and piracy. As this report shows, despite this image, it is not a lawless and ungoverned land, but one where Somali people over the past two decades have forged systems of governance to manage conflict and provide security and law.

With minimal international assistance, Somalis have also rebuilt their cities and towns, built new schools, universities, medical facilities, developed multi-million dollar enterprises, created efficient money transfer systems and established some of the cheapest and most extensive telecommunication networks in Africa. It is this Somali talent and capacity that the international community needs to foster and tap into.

At the heart of the Somali crisis is an unresolved problem over the nature of statehood. Since the collapse of the state, power and authority has been fractured and radically decentralized among the clans and political elites. While international diplomacy continues to adopt a statebuilding approach aimed at restoring a sovereign national government, Somalis themselves have been re-establishing systems of governance.

What sets Somali and internationally-sponsored peace processes apart is that they are locally designed, managed, mediated and financed; in other words ‘Somali-owned’. They work with the grain of the clan system, are based on consensus decision-making and focus on reconciliation and the restoration of public security.

Somaliland and Puntland demonstrate the potential and sustainability of ‘home-grown’ peacemaking and reconciliation. They show the desire among Somalis for government and a capacity for self-governance given the right conditions.

Local reconciliation has proved much more difficult in south central Somalia, where a combination of local structural inequalities and greater international attention has made conflict more intractable. Even here local initiatives have achieved a great deal, but they are vulnerable to national and international dynamics. The demobilization exercises organized by women, the neighbourhood security arrangements that flourished in Mogadishu and the security brought briefly by the ICU to parts of south central Somalia all foundered as a result of national and international pressures.

No single factor can explain the causes of the conflict and there is no consensus among Somalis on how it should be resolved. The nature of the crisis has mutated and efforts to resolve it have been frustrated by a host of domestic and external actors. Islamist militancy has brought a new dimension to the twenty-year conflict and has become one of the most pressing issues for international actors. Somalis are themselves grappling with how to respond to this as much as the international community. It is time for the international community to find more effective ways to move the country out of this protracted crisis and to develop methods that are more responsive to Somali realities.

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