

## Rethinking the Role of Traditional Institutions to Building Lasting Peace in Africa: Lessons Learned from Somaliland, Horn of Africa

Review Article

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**Abstract:** The African traditional governance institutions had faced serious challenges by the arrival of European colonial powers that undermined the existing local institutions. The colonial powers weakened local institutions and introduced their own top-down governance system. Thus, the aim of this study is to revitalize the African traditional institutions to build sustainable peace and democracy in the Horn of Africa considering the Somaliland bottom-up peacebuilding experience. In this study, qualitative research method was used while the data were collected through document analysis. For this article, the discourse data analysis method was used. The findings of this study revealed that revitalizing traditional institutions have potential value in peace building process. Hence, internally designed bottom-up peace building process was able to create relatively a peaceful and stable Somaliland state in Horn Africa. Besides, a hybrid governance system which integrated both traditional and modern governance institutions used as a vital tool for lasting peace and promoting democracy in Somaliland. Furthermore, the participation and high respect for local elders in peace building process has played a crucial role in creating stable society. Finally, based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that any stakeholders, either politicians or policy makers, should recognize women's role in peace building process, revise the educational system to incorporate traditional knowledge with modern one, open more political spaces so that competent parties can engage with alternative thought and win-win peace building approach while interacting with external actors.

**Keywords:** Bottom-up approach; Hybrid democracy; Local elders; Traditional institutions; Xeer

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## 1. Introduction

African communities were rich in traditional governance systems prior to the arrival of European colonizers to the continent. These traditional institutions were based on consent shared values that helped to make proper decisions on the fundamental issues that affect the normal life of the communities. In this regard, Nketsia (2013) elaborated as “Before contact with the European colonizers, all African communities had governance structures that were built on the idea of people governing their own affairs”. Hence, African society has had its own unique traditional governance system before it had been undermined and destroyed by the new colonial administrative system.

The importance of a traditional governance system would be to preserve the customs and the ways of life of the people to manage conflicts that are happening between members of the community. Customary institutions enjoy unconditional soundness and appropriateness within a specific community setting and maintain social cohesion for generations (Damptey, 2017). Thus, the traditional governance system is crucial for building peace within the community because it laid its foundation in the indigenous knowledge system.

According to Kelbessa (2001) “Traditional knowledge refers to as traditional and it is rooted in culturally-based values, ethics, customs, rituals, and community practices”. Thus, traditional knowledge is developed out of social needs and constant interaction of people with the nature of the physical environment. Similarly, Warren (1991: 9) explained indigenous knowledge as:

Traditional knowledge provides a ground upon which communities make key decisions and communicate at inter-generational and intra-generational levels. Moreover, traditional knowledge would mean knowledge, skills, and values that have been inherited partially or wholly by successive generations.

In general, the traditional or local governance system had been used as vital instruments for maintaining peace and stability between or among communities in Africa in general in Somaliland in particular based on African philosophy that has been termed as Ubuntu, the Bantu language meaning “I am because of you” or “I am because we exist” (Osei-Hwedie, 2005: 54). This philosophy put humanity at the heart of the peacebuilding process. This was evidenced in the Horn of Africa during the Somaliland peace-building process that had been conducted in a series of peace-building conferences after the destructive civil war and resulted in creating a relatively peaceful state in the region since 1991.

Before the arrival of European colonial powers, the societies of African Continent had their own governance systems, and problem-solving mechanisms and institutions. However, these traditional institutions were undermined by the European colonial rule, which imposed their own structures over that of the African societies (Abernethy, 1988; Warner, 2001). After the end of the colonial rule in Africa, the newly emerged independent Africa states has inherited externally imposed European colonial governance system and western derived constitutional principles. The western oriented new African leaders, after independence, assumed the traditional indigenous customary institutions as anarchic, uncivilized and obstacle to development (Warner, 2001). However, recently some African states like Botswana, South Africa, Ghana, and Somaliland have begun to revitalize the traditional institutions as vital tools to build sustainable peace in Africa.

For instance, Western democratic values and institutions (e.g. multi-party political system or parliamentary democracy) appear to be functionally not pragmatic in sub-Saharan African countries. Hence native scholars nowadays tend to seek an alternative model to restore distinct African democratic values and institutions (Ayittey, 1991). Accordingly, some African states have come to understand the role of traditional system in peace building and democratization process and had begun to recognize them constitutionally and accommodate them into the modern political systems. In line this, Botswana, South Africa and Namibia are typical examples in southern parts of Africa, in revitalizing traditional governance system and incorporating it with modern system. Hence, these countries in Africa currently have been entertaining peaceful and more stable political system (Sklar, 1999).

Likewise, Horn of Africa region had been challenged by the arrival of western colonial powers, and African traditional vital institutions were undermined and devalued. Consequently, almost all states in the region had experienced protracted conflict and war as the result of being exposed for alien cultures of peace building and governance system. To mention a few among these traditional institutions in the Horn of Africa are the Gada system of the Oromo community in Ethiopia, which is explained by many scholars as one of the best indigenous African democracy; the Xeer, customary law in Somali society in general, Somaliland in particular (Sirna, 2012). Having the above mentioned realities in mind, the current study has focused on Somaliland experience for the Somaliland has been enjoying a relative peace and stability in the region while the others are struggling still to build a peaceful and stable states in the region.

The research revolves on two contending peace building approaches, Top down and Bottom up. The top-down peace building approach is designed by external actors and imposed as the last resort to bring lasting peace against local reality. In this approach, external intervention in peace building process is paramount and the local people have no chance to express and decide freely in their issues. Sometimes, the top down peace building is regarded as to liberal peace building process that directly designed by external powers to bring sustainable peace (Brons, 2001). The problem of top down peace building process is lacking to recognize the existing traditional peace building institutions that has vital role in building lasting peace in a certain society (Endale, 2012).

On the contrary, the Bottom-up Peace Building Approach starts from the grassroots level based on the traditional knowledge and it gives high recognition for the local elders during the peace building process. The bottom up peace building is mainly focusing in internally designed peace process by valuing indigenous knowledge. Such type of peace building approach is also known as indigenous approach where the internally designed peace building process is practiced based on the existing traditional institutions including all concerned bodies in the peace process (Brons, 2001).

In the bottom up peace building approach, external intervention is viewed as having a great risk of undermining local governance structures and replacing them with new, less sustainable and less legitimate organizations. The role of international actors should only be assisting rather than leading the situation for the process of peace building by understanding the interests of local people and let them to decide on their own affairs (Endale, 2012).

Among these peace building approaches as theoretical framework, the current study employed the bottom up peace building approach for the approach has brought a relative peace and stability to Somaliland, Horn of Africa. Therefore, this article explored the Somaliland bottom up peace-building conferences. The study, particularly, intended to:

1. analyze the role of traditional institutions to build sustainable peace in Somaliland
2. explore types of peacebuilding approaches used in Somaliland peacebuilding process
3. describe the newly established hybrid governance system in Somaliland

### **The Birth of Somaliland**

Somaliland, which is found in the northern tip of the Horn of Africa, is bounded by Djibouti to the north, Ethiopia to the west, and 'Puntland State' of north-east Somalia to the east, facing Yemen across the Red Sea. The people of Somaliland are ethnically Somali and overwhelmingly adhere to the Sunni school of Islam. They have historically led a largely nomadic pastoralist way of life, with camels the most prestigious form of wealth. The process of state formation in the colonial period can be divided into three periods. These were from 1827-1960 witnessed the Horn of Africa colonized and Somalis divided between five different political entities. 1960-69 was regarded as independence, unification between the former Italian and British territories, and civilian government under the Somali Republic. Finally, from 1969 until 1991, Siyaad Barre's military dictatorship held power (Walls, 2011: 12).

The reign of Siad Barre's regime was harsh and oppressive for northern Somalia (Somaliland) since his coming to the power in 1969. His regime was so brutal to northern Somalia region that has

resulted in the establishment of the Somali National Movement (SNM) by the Isaaq clan, the dominant clan in northern Somalia to challenge the regime in 1981. The protracted war against Siad Barre's government by SNM resulted in the victory of the northern regions of Somalia over military regime in 1991 (Bradbury, 2008: 78). Finally, the Barre regime came to an end in 1991, and that marked the establishment of the new State, the Republic of Somaliland.

After declaring its independence in 1991, Somaliland had been conducting various peace building conferences to establish a stable and peaceful state in the Horn of Africa. Basically, the peace conferences that had been conducted in Somaliland were based on the indigenous peace building approaches by revitalizing the elders' council (Gurti) in peace talk process. In sum, the Somaliland bottom up peace building experience can be taken as a model in Africa based on their context. Hence, today the Republic of Somaliland is enjoying relative peace and stability in Horn Africa against its counterparts, though it is yet not recognized as a sovereign state by the international community.

## 2. Research Methods

As this work is an article review based on desktop analysis, the author has employed a pure qualitative research approach. To substantiate the collected data, various literature review were conducted. In this regard, books, articles, journals, and seminar papers were analyzed. This method is supported by researchers who argued that document analysis is one of the vital tools for qualitative study, narrating findings through words.

## 3. Result and Discussions

### 3.1. Traditional Peace Building Institutions in Somaliland Society

The Horn of Africa is considered as one of the richest regions in Africa with its traditional governance system that has been rooted in local knowledge for generations. One of the good examples of these institutions is found in Somali society in general and in Somaliland in particular. Accordingly, this study describes Somaliland's traditional institutions that used as building blocks of peaceful Somaliland state in the Horn of Africa since 1991. Such local institutions are the *Xeer*, *customary law*, and the *Shir*, *elders' meetings* among the others.

Xeer is the essential element of the Somali social and political order as a whole and specifically in Somaliland. It is an informal social contract between two groups or parties within the Somali kinship system. Lewis (1961: 16) explained Xeer as follows:

The Xeer is a customary code and procedure founded upon contractual agreement and denotes a body of explicitly formulated obligations, rights, and duties. It binds people of the same treaty (Xeer) together and defines their collective responsibility in external relations with other groups.

What we understand from this, *Xeer* is a vital indigenous institution that served as vigorous instrument in sustaining justice and peaceful order in Somali people in general, especially in the Somaliland peacebuilding process. Brons (2001: 120) has consolidated the above-mentioned idea by stating:

These social contracts often outline specific rules pertaining to compensation for injuries or damages (both inflicted by and occurring within a group) or future relations between two conflicting parties. It can be described as unwritten but formal political contract including the statement of common responsibilities and norms of conduct as well as fixed penalties for crimes.

Hence, the importance of Xeer agreements in Somaliland tradition is to minimize conflict between different communities and it creates mutual dependence and reciprocity between the two parties in order to ensure the survival of both communities. One interesting feature of this customary law, *Xeer*, is its flexible nature, meaning it could be reformed or amended as the situations needed by society to settle immediate problems. This was well stated by Lewis (1961: 171) as follows: "As the need arises the terms of contracts are abrogated, existing treaties modified or withdrawn, and new agreements made. The majority of Xeer agreements binding groups relate principally to collective defense and security and to political cohesion in general". In short customary law in Africa in general, and in Somaliland in particular has had a potential feature if it has been used properly in the peacebuilding

process. This was realized in Somaliland's peace and nation-building process and used as a model for the rest of the conflict-ridden in Horn of Africa.

Another crucial traditional institution in Somaliland is the *Shir*, an assembly of elders in Somali society. During conflict resolution which would happen between or among communities, all concerned bodies come together to reflect on their own issues before starting a discussion or dialogue under the big trees. The process has been more democratic in nature because all individuals have equal chances to be heard and explain their problems openly to the selected elders before the decision has been made. Walls (2011: 98) has elaborated on the feature of *Shir* as:

A democratic and consensus-driven community forum, *Shir* is a diffuse, decentralized and broadly participatory system of rule. A majority opinion is necessary to obtain a verdict on any issue and consensus is mobilized through lengthy discussions between all participants. Gatherings are assembled on an ad hoc basis and can last from a few hours to many months, depending on the complexity and gravity of the debate.

In the *Shir* institutions, the central components are the local elders who are well respected and trusted in the society with high knowledge and prophecy. Thus, these local elders have the responsibility to settle the conflict, though it was how much complex and inconvenient at the time of discussion and debate. Here, the primary goal of the elders is to build sustainable peace between the conflicting groups in the community. Lewis (1961: 161) explained such situation in the following manner:

When inconvenient to have all men formally participate in the *shir*, local communities nominate unofficial representatives to speak on their behalf. While not bestowed with any additional political powers, these leaders can often mobilize the most support amongst their kin. *Shir* is called to address any major decision that would impact a community, whether it concerns the distribution of resources, creation of laws, or most importantly, resolving conflicts.

To sum up, the indigenous institutions in Somaliland have had vital roles in peacebuilding and creating a stable society in the Horn of Africa.

### **3.2. Somaliland Experience in Peace Building Process: Bottom-up Peace Building Approach**

This part of the article discusses the series of peacebuilding conferences in Somaliland, valuing indigenous institutions at the heart of the peace building process. The Somaliland peace dialogue was rooted on traditional social values in which the elders have played a significant role with their institution *Shir*, elders' assembly. As it is slightly mentioned in the introduction part of this article, there are two types of peacebuilding approaches. These are Top-down and Bottom-up peacebuilding approaches. The Top-down peacebuilding approach is designed and financed externally and aimed at bringing sustainable peace in the post-conflict countries. However, this externally designed and imposed peacebuilding approach failed to bring peace to many developing countries in general and in African countries in particular. The best example of this failed top-down peace-building attempt has been observed in the Southern Somalia/ Republic of Somalia where many interested groups had been involved in the name of peacebuilding.

The second type is the bottom-up peacebuilding approach. It is based on locally initiated and designed, putting local elders at the center of peace building process. The intention of using bottom up approach is to bring sustainable peace and stability by revitalizing indigenous peace building institutions. To revitalize the indigenous peace building process, the author has made a brief revision on the series of Somaliland conferences that had been conducted from 1991 to 1997. The reason why the author has been motivated to review and investigate the Somaliland peace conferences thoroughly due to the country is currently enjoying relative peace and stability in the Horn of Africa while its counterparts are facing serious security challenges.

The first Somaliland peacebuilding conference was the Berbera conference. In February 1991, a conference of the Guurti (the council of traditional clan leaders) took place at Berbera, the main port of Somaliland. This conference was taken as the first step to lay the base for the next peace building process using a unique approach by vitalizing indigenous values of the Somali society. The February 1991 Berbera peace process had been conducted to bring an end of hostility among Somaliland clans

to establish a peaceful new Somaliland state in the Horn of Africa. The objective of this conference was explained by Bradbury (2008: 98) as:

The objective of the Berbera conference was to restore trust and confidence between the Isaaq and then on-Isaaq clans, and the start of this reconciliation process was the most obvious outcome of the Shir, elders' meeting or assembly. The main achievement of this conference was the Somali National Movement, SNM's conciliatory policy of peaceful co-existence between all the clans, and at Berbera, a surprising degree of peace was secured, largely through the efforts of the traditional clan elders. The meeting established a cease-fire and fixed the date for another conference to be held in Burco in April and May.

Here, the important lesson to be learned is the peacebuilding process started from the grassroots level valuing the local institutions and local elders as vital tools. The knowledge of local elders about the problems during the peacebuilding process is taken as crucial to bringing last long peace in Somaliland. This paper has credited from the Berbera conference that the peacebuilding process was initiated and designed by the local people to provide the right solution for their own problems. The local elders have played a vital role in the peacebuilding process because they had indigenous knowledge and wisdom to solve ongoing conflicts.

The second peacebuilding conference of Somaliland was undertaken at the Burco town. Following the Berbera conference, the Grand Conference of Northern Clans was held at Burco in April and May 1991. The purpose of the conference was to consolidate the cessation of hostilities as it was agreed at Berbera and to discuss the future of the north Somaliland. As the conference was not sponsored by donor countries, there was no foreign intervention in the peacebuilding process. Hence the outcome of the conference was more progressive and helped for the next step with courage. Rebecca (2009: 14) highlighted the achievement of the Burco conference as follows: "reconciliation of the warring parties to the conflict, declaration of the creation the Republic of Somaliland and the establishment of a transitional two-year rule by the SNM (which included a role for non-Isaaq clans during this period."

The above quotation clearly explained that the locally sponsored and designed peacebuilding process are more effective than externally funded and designed peacebuilding approaches. Which meant there is no room for foreign intervention in internal issues to impose their own political interest. The lesson learned from this conference is that the peacebuilding groups had understood the danger of foreign intervention in the peace process, so they were able to avoid such obstacles from the beginning of the conference being processed.

The third national peace and nation-building conference of Somaliland was held at Sheik town in 1992. As time passed from one stage to another, the Somaliland peacebuilding process got its political maturity and experiences to reach expected goals. For good move, the main role was played by local elders' commitment and their immense knowledge that has been passed from their ancestors. Various conflicting Somaliland clans have developed the common shared value to decide on their common issues. Hence, the 1992 conference was a good example in this regard because various warring groups agreed to give up fighting each other and to solve problems by negotiation to create stable Somaliland. Cabdi (2005: 96) stated this conference: "It was the conference of 'understanding' or 'consensus in which the conflicts over Berbera was brought to an end. The conference was supported by the Somaliland business people and vocal lobby of women."

In addition to this, several important political agreements were reached at the Sheik conference of 1992. As Farah and Lewis (1993: 84) explained at this conference, the following political agreements were reached:

First, in resolving the conflict over the Berbera port, its status as a public asset was reaffirmed. Second, the conference was a defining moment for the role of elders in Somaliland and their participation in governance. Third, the conference made progress in addressing the challenge of insecurity, by acknowledging the clans' responsibilities for controlling their militias, for preventing acts of aggression against other communities, and defending Somaliland.

Thus, it can be concluded that the people of the Somaliland had given due attention to national peace, consensus and reconciliation, by placing dialogue at the heart of the peacebuilding process using the wisdom of local elders. The other vital point here is that their wonderful vision for future

Somaliland prosperity by securing Berbera port as a national asset to extract revenue to solve the economic problems of the society of Somaliland. From this data, one can understand that indigenous knowledge is invaluable to solve problems smoothly.

The Fourth Somaliland peacebuilding process had been conducted at Borama. The Borama conference was regarded as a very crucial among the others in that it set the foundation for the future political process. The Conference of Elders of the communities of Somaliland had been opened at Borama on 24 January 1993. This conference of elders has clearly addressed that the indigenous peace building institutions plays a vital role in the peace and nation-building process among the Somali society if the institutions are managed and used properly. As it allowed both Isaaq and non-Isaaq clans equally to participate in peace building process, Borama conference laid a promising hope for the establishment of Somaliland as independent stable country (Jhazbhay, 2009: 8)

As a Gadabursi town, Borama provided a neutral and secured setting and gave non-Issaqs a role in determining the future of Somaliland. At the Borama conference, all clans and diaspora of Somaliland clans participated to discuss the issues of the future fate of the country. The Borama conference was a watershed event in Somaliland because the agenda prioritized reconciliation, security, and state formation. Accordingly, the following significant outcomes were achieved: a framework for managing security, advanced vision for independent Somaliland, define the political architecture for the government, and oversaw the peaceful transfer of power from the SNM government to a civilian government (Bradbury, 2008; Walls, 2011: 13).

In addition to the above-mentioned outcomes, in the Borama conference there were sound decisions made by the local elders. This was it produced a transitional national charter, which confirmed the sovereign independence of Somaliland and defined the political and institutional structures through which the country would be governed. Besides, the Borama conference could provide a solution to the challenge of a form of government that accommodated the clan system within a modern structure of government (Jimcaale, 2005: 17).

In conclusion, the 1993 Borama elders' conference had made significant decisions that were used as a pillar for the current political structure of the country. Hence, the local institutions became a building block in Somaliland's peace and nation-building process and it would be more effective than the well-designed modern peace and nation-building structures. To consolidate this Bradbury (2008) outlined "The national charter defined three branches of government: an executive comprising a president, Vice-president and Council of Ministers; a bicameral Parliament consisting of an upper House of Elders and a Lower House of Representatives; and an independent Judiciary"

Lastly, the Hargeisa Conference took place in 1997. It was the continuation of the previous peace and nation-building processes to reach the final agreement, and negotiate the traditional and modern governance system in the newly established state, Somaliland, by bringing various fighting clans together. As Rebecca (2009: 183) explained:

The Hargeisa conference, is a means of bringing together the fragmented population as well as the divided government. Whilst previous conferences were clan-based conferences with the responsibility being on the Guurti for reconciliation and beginning the creation of a state, the Hargeisa Conference was a political conference that was labeled as a national conference rather than a clan conference.

Following the decisive discussion and negotiation that had been conducted almost for five months, the Hargeisa Conference resulted in significant changes for Somaliland. Hence, a peace agreement was signed and brought an end to the fighting. Most of all, the very crucial outcome of the Hargeisa conference was the start of a transition from the clan-based (beel) government system to a multi-party democratic system. An interim constitution reflecting this was established and the process of creating a permanent constitution was began. It was under this constitution, ratified in 2001, that the current position, powers, and responsibilities of the Guurti were established (Academy for Peace and Inter peace, 2006).

To sum up, the 1997 Hargeisa conference was concluded in establishing the hybrid governance system in the Horn of Africa by substantiating the local institutions as a building block of Somaliland,

and at the same time established modern constitutions to incorporate it with the traditional governance system. Consequently, today Somaliland is regarded as a relatively peaceful and democratic state in the region because it valued both traditional and modern governance systems within its constitution that had been ratified in 2001 and is functioning until this article is written.

### **3.3. Hybrid Political System in Somaliland: Integrating Modern and Traditional Institutions**

At the end of the series of Somaliland peace and nation-building conferences from Berbera to Hargeisa conferences, peace and stability were realized in the northern region of Somaliland. This situation facilitated the establishment of a hybrid governance system integrating both local and modern institutions. To reach at this level, the Somaliland peace building process had passed many ups and downs including clan-based conflicts. However, local elders who had played a great role in Somaliland peace building process were able to manage and use their mediating experience based on existed indigenous knowledge. One of the reasons for the success of Somaliland peace building process was the little intervention of external actors in the process (Daniel, 2011). They had vitalized inclusive and participatory method based on the bottom-up peace building approach.

After realizing the establishment of relatively peaceful Somaliland state in the Horn Africa, the power sharing arrangements established by the Hargeisa Conference proved sufficient to quell further uprisings. From this point forward, political conflict in Somaliland shifted to the electoral arena. In 2001, a constitutional referendum was held, and the provisional constitution created in Hargeisa was replaced with a new constitution. This constitution was finalized in 2000 by a committee composed of individuals nominated by both the legislative and executive branches, was ratified in a national vote in 2001. The hybrid form of political system was introduced and comprising both traditional and modern elements (Eubank, 2010 and Walls, 2011)

The new political system after 1997 Hargeisa conference well explained by Renders (2006: 153) as follows:

After a more stable peace was finally established in the late half of the 1990s new political aspirations started to burgeon. The beel- the system was taken up for revision. In 1997, a new constitution was drafted, which spelled out the steps for a transition from a clan-based system to a multi-party system. The proposal of the constitution, to start a transition from the traditional/beel-system to a modern/multiparty democracy. Hence, the constitution is regarded as introducing a modern political system based on traditional Somaliland values incorporating local elders into the modern political system.

Finally, after seven years journey from 1991 to 1997, the Somaliland peace and nation-building process was effectively accomplished by producing the ruling guideline of the country, the constitution. The draft of the constitution was sent for public discussion and debate later to referendum. The Somaliland constitution comprised both modern democratic governance elements like multiparty political competition and traditional or local elders (*Gurti*) council in a balanced manner to sustain peace and democracy in the country. This was consolidated by Bradbury (2008: 19-20) as:

In 2001, the final draft of the new constitution, which illuminated a commitment to multi-party politics as well as to an independent Somaliland, was sent to the referendum and endorsed. Accordingly, the political system based on power-sharing along clan lines was replaced with a system in which the head of state as well as the members of the House of Representatives and of the District Councils are elected through the ballot. Yet, the institution of the Guurti, the traditional elders remained in place and the seats in this Upper House of Parliament are still distributed on the basis of clan representation.

The hybrid form of governance that had been adopted in Somaliland's constitution of 2001 has created a conducive environment to exercise multiparty democracy in the country. Accordingly, from 2002 to 2017, Somaliland has held almost six popular elections. These are two locals, one parliamentary, and three Presidential elections. It was clear that almost all of these elections were free, fair, credible, and peaceful because the democratic system has been laid on consensus from the grassroots level including the local elders (Mohammed, 2017: 4).



In summary, the hybrid form of Somaliland's experience in the peace and nation-building process has had a lot to tell us about the significance of giving credit to local institutions for the rest of the Horn Africa states those yet waiting and struggling for peace and stability as core issues. In line with this, many Horn of African States in general and the Republic of Somalia, in particular, have witnessed today as a place of war, conflict, instability, shelter for terrorism, and lack of viable central government while its counterpart, Somaliland is enjoying relative peace, democracy, stability and happy life for its citizens. The reason that Somaliland has created a relatively peaceful and stable democratic state in the Horn of Africa is, because the country has given high value to local institutions and local elders in the peacebuilding process using customary law, *Xeer*.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1. Conclusions

The original African traditional governance institutions were disrupted by the arrival of colonial powers. These powers had negatively affected the existing traditional African institutions. Thus, there is need to revitalize the existing institutions to build peaceful and viable states in Africa. In this regard, some African countries began to revitalize their traditional institutions to overcome the current socio-political challenges that have been imposed by externally designed governing system. The Somaliland experience would be taken as a good instance in this regard, where the bottom up peace building approach has intensively been used since its independence from main Somalia in 1991. Almost all of the Somaliland peace building conferences were internally designed and funded by local Somaliland communities as well as Somaliland Diasporas. Somaliland's bottom up peace building approach allowed for broad participation that have achieved a high degree of societal cohesion and state legitimacy.

### 4.2. Recommendations

Assessing the case of Somaliland in the Horn of Africa has a paramount significance to draw the lessons for the rest of the conflict and war-ridden Horn of Africa region. Finally, based on the review of Somaliland Peace Building Process, the following recommendations were forwarded for any concerned body:

**Recognizing the women's role in peace building process:** the potential of women is vital in peace building process. Thus, the role of women needs to be equally considered to those of male when the problem of peace related issues raised. Also, the role of women needs to be recognized in political participation and decision making process.

**Revising educational system:** there is need to revise an educational system to incorporate the existing indigenous knowledge with modern one so that students can easily understand their past experiences and the current situations. To this end policy makers should consider the existing knowledge to pass to next generation by incorporating with in curriculum.

**Opening more political spaces:** the established constitution does not allow more than three competing political parties to take state power, in the current Somaliland political system. So, there is need to open more political spaces by reforming the existing political system.

**Win-win approach is recommended:** in the globalization era, it is impossible to live alone without interaction with other world. Closing door to external interaction is not recommended and Somaliland needs to balance its relation with external world based on win-win approach.

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