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# Making Peace in Somaliland

In: Cahiers d'études africaines. Vol. 37 N°146. 1997. La Corne dans tous ses États. pp. 349-377.

#### Citer ce document / Cite this document :

Farah Ahmed Y., Lewis Ioan M. Making Peace in Somaliland. In: Cahiers d'études africaines. Vol. 37 N°146. 1997. La Corne dans tous ses États. pp. 349-377.

doi: 10.3406/cea.1997.3518

http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/cea\_0008-0055\_1997\_num\_37\_146\_3518



#### Abstract

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This paper reports the results of a brief anthropological field study, carried out in the summer 1993, on the organisation and progress of grass-roots peace initiatives in the Somaliland Republic. Fieldwork was supplemented by a literature survey and based on the joint authors' previous extensive research in Somalia. When President Siad's government was overthrown in Mogadishu, the Somaliland National movement, based on the Isaaq clans, set up an interim government in the North-West. This administration did not, however, have the authority or means to impose order amongst the country's unruly and abundantly armed clans. Starting in 1991, grass-roots peace initiatives gradually built up a national network of peace conferences. Using traditional institutions and diplomacy, they succeeded to a remarkable degree in restoring relative calm and normalising inter-clan relations on an impressively wide front. The results of this low budget, locally inspired process were much more impressive than those of the lavishly expensive high profile peace conferences engineered by foreign agencies in southern Somalia.

#### Résumé

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Cet article présente les résultats d'une brève enquête de terrain, menée au cours de l'été 1993, sur l'organisation et la progression des initiatives de paix se déroulant en Somalie, au niveau local. Ce travail de terrain, qui s'est accompagné d'une étude de la littérature sur le sujet, repose également sur les publications préalables des deux auteurs. Lorsque le président Siad fut renversé, le National Movement du Somaliland, qui s'appuyait sur les clans Isaaq, mit sur pied un gouvernement intérimaire dans le Nord-Ouest du pays. Cependant l'administration n'avait ni le pouvoir ni les moyens de faire régner l'ordre sur des clans surarmés et indisciplinés. Les initiatives de paix au niveau local, qui débutèrent en 1991, aboutirent progressivement, et à un niveau national, à l'édification d'un réseau de conférences de paix. Utilisant à la fois les structures traditionnelles et la diplomatie, elles réussirent admirablement à restaurer une tranquillité relative et à normaliser l'ensemble des relations sociales. Le processus de paix entrepris à la base, et à un coût minime, obtint des résultats bien meilleurs que les structures plus lourdes et à budget élevé mises en place dans le Sud de la Somalie par les organisations internationales.



# Ahmed Y. Farah & Ioan M. Lewis

# Making Peace in Somaliland\*

After the flight of Siad Barre from Mogadishu in January 1991, competing armed militias established clan fiefdoms in areas dominated by their respective social groups. This dismemberment of Somalia was most pronounced in Mogadishu city, where hostile warlords (Ali Mahdi and Aidid), who both belonged to the Hawiya clan-family and its political organization, the United Somali Congress (USC), divided the city into two halves—north and south—the north controlled by Ali Mahdi and the south under Aidid.

In contrast to the faction-ridden and unstable South, the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland (the former British Protectorate), formed in May 1991 until 1996, enjoyed relatively peaceful conditions in the turbulent post-military regime. Several factors can be surmised to account for this. The first is an environmental factor. The predominantly nomadic rural and localized dry farming subsistence agriculture flourished during this period; while some areas in the south were afflicted with drought that triggered the massive relief aid programme. The extortion of relief goods, and income derived from a monopoly of the import of certain goods needed by the relief agencies, further strengthened the war-effort of heavily armed and power-crazy warlords in the South.

Second, the bulk of the comparatively limited relief assistance donated to Somaliland during the Somali National Movement (SNM) interim administration, May 1991-May 1993, was largely looted by competing clan militias. This led to the termination of relief assistance and evacuation of most non-governmental organizations (NGO) in 1992. The cessation of relief supplies denied the armed clan-based militias of a major cause of contention—access to valuable relief goods.

Third, the social upheaval in the South appears to have degenerated into a war of attrition, mainly because the major warring parties are more or less equal in fire-power. No clan has the might to exert control over the others and impose or greatly influence the terms of settlement, with or without the consensus of the defeated parties. In contrast, in the north,

<sup>\*</sup> This paper is a shortened version of *Somalia: The Roots of Reconciliation* (London: Actionaid, 1993), based on a short fieldtrip to Somaliland in the late summer 1993.

the numerically largest group, the Isaaq, became militarily dominant. Though the SNM administration reproduced this dominance in the interim government to the chagrin of non-Isaaq groups, nevertheless the feared Isaaq subjugation of the other hostile clans that were associated with the previous government did not take place.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, is the 'bottom-up' approach to the restoration of peace and stability that has been pioneered in Somaliland by genuine clan leaders of the hostile clans. This comprehensive peace movement was first initiated at the local level by traditional political leaders, using conventional mechanisms of arbitration between disputing adjacent and affinally related clans.

Starting at the grassroots level, the elders' peace endeavour progressed to district and regional levels. It reached its height at the Boorama conference, where a hundred and fifty delegates (known as *Guurti*), comprised of clan councilors representing all the groups in Somaliland, managed to produce separate national and peace charters. And the elders moreover, for the first time in the post-independence period, extended their peace-making functions by acting as an institutional framework for the formation of executive interim government.

Except for this Boorama national conference which obtained generous international support (more than \$100,000, and excluding token aid provided by some of the NGOs to some of the conferences), clan reconciliation conferences in Somaliland were financed through community self-help. In contrast to the inordinate costs expended on the high-profile and widely publicised United Nations, and other peace and reconstruction forums organized by Somali diaspora abroad, the locally driven Somaliland peace forums produced, with little external contribution, results in terms of preventing overblown clan wars in the region, and in successfully reconciling some warring clans—at least for the time being.

In addition to the general interest of the security differences between Somaliland and southern Somalia, the British NGO Actionaid sponsored this study also because of its experience of working with the elders in Erigavo region. The *Guarti* has provided invaluable support to Actionaid's work of reconstruction concentrating on urban and rural water supplies and animal health. For instance, Actionaid has sought the advice of the *Guarti* in matters concerning equitable distribution of limited resources among the local groups residing in Erigavo district. It is, moreover, the *Guarti* which has guaranteed Actionaid's security, a duty the elders have taken seriously and discharged surprisingly satisfactorily, since the end of 1992.

Meeting place	Duration	Title of the meeting
Boorama	17-19 May 1991	
Boorama Hargeysa Sheikh	17-19 Oct. 1992 4 Oct. 1992 28 Oct8 Nov. 1992	Guul Allaa Tawfiiq
Dararweyne	2 Jan5 Feb. 1993	Khaatumo
Jiideli	6-9 Oct. 1992	
	11-18 Aug. 1992	
Garadag Boorama	23 Nov1 Dec. 1993 24 JanMay 1993	B Danwadaag Beri Allaa Mahadleh
	Boorama Boorama Hargeysa Sheikh Dararweyne Jiideli Garadag	Boorama 17-19 May 1991  Boorama 17-19 Oct. 1992  Hargeysa 4 Oct. 1992  Sheikh 28 Oct8 Nov. 1992  Dararweyne 2 Jan5 Feb. 1993  Jiideli 6-9 Oct. 1992  11-18 Aug. 1992  Garadag 23 Nov1 Dec. 1993

Table I. — Major *Guurti* reconciliation conferences in Somaliland, 1991-93

### Traditional Social Organization

The evocative power of kinship as the axiomatic natural basis for all social cooperation and as the ultimate guarantee of personal and collective security is deeply rooted in Somali society. For the weaker and less successful members of the Somali lineage, kinship is an indispensable source of protection and safety, readily manipulated by their stronger more politically ambitious clansmen for whom kinship is an elastic resource, conveniently and accessible and infinitely negotiable. "Our kinsmen right or wrong" is the basic motto of Somali social life. As the foundation of social cooperation, kinship enters into all transactions between and amongst individuals. There is no significant area of Somali social activity where the influence of kinship is absent' (Lewis 1994: VII).

The unyielding hold of kinship upon the Somali which this paragraph trenchantly illustrates, explains the need to start this paper with a summary of the significant features of the patrilineal descent system of the predominantly pastoral Somali.

The highest level of political grouping among the pastoral Somali has been designated by I. M. Lewis (1961) as 'clan-family'. Widely distributed in space across the Somali region in the Horn of Africa, and with populations sometimes in excess of a million (eg the Daarood), clan-families are too unwieldy to act traditionally as political entities. The Isaaq clans joined forces against the military regime during the civil war, but fragmented into traditional rival clan factions after the downfall of the regime in 1991.

The symbolic link which binds members of the clan-family mainly

derives from links to a common remote ancestor, who is usually depicted as the central figure in the original creation myth of the group. Those members of the clan-family who are able to participate occasionally reinforce social solidarity by organizing large memorial feasts at the tomb of their ancestor. Most importantly, the loose ties which obtain at this level of social formation are established by an elaborate and extensive genealogy (20-30 generations) in which the living generations count to the founding eponym. This extensive genealogical reckoning, which acts as a device that defines social relations in the elaborately segmented patrilineal system of the Somali, is learned by rote by each Somali in early life under the instruction of his dutiful mother. Moreover, the extensive genealogy of the clan-family is sometimes eternally recorded in venerated texts by religious men literate in Arabic, and today in Somali by educated members of the clan-family.

The total Somali nation whose remarkable homogeneity is founded upon common language (Somali-written in Latin script since 1972), religion (Islam), and predominantly pastoral economy, is divided into six clan-families: Isaaq, Daarood, Dir, Hawiya, Digil and Rahanweyn. The four former powerful clan-families are primarily pastoral and widely dispersed, while the last two are largely agricultural, concentrated in the riverine region of southern Somalia, and speak a separate, Somali-related language—May-May.

Within the clan-family, the next most important social unit has been described by Lewis (1961) as the 'clan'. Traditionally, the clan marks the upper level of practical political action. Hence when the situation demands and the common interest of its members are at stake, a clan unites its forces against rival and often hostile clans. Its political importance is further enhanced by the clan's territorial tendency whereby each clan is associated with a particular area that is frequented by its members. Also the dry season corporate deep-wells and trading centres dominated by clan members occur in its sphere of influence that is delineated by reference to ubiquitous place names. The territorial interests of the clan are collectively defended if threatened by antagonistic rival units. The clan is further distinguished by the titular office of clan leader.

In descending order, the next important social segment has been designated by I. M. Lewis (*ibid.*) as 'primary lineage'. The sanctioned alliance-seeking tendency among kinsmen who belong to this unit, and also the predisposition among its members to identify themselves with this lineage in ordinary kinship discourse, are its essential sociological features.

Within this segmentary system of relatively mobilised groups, the basic political and jural unit is the 'dia-paying group' (from the Arabic dia meaning 'blood compensation', 'blood money'). Its strongly bound agnatic members commonly count from four to six generations to a common ancestor. Its strength varies from a few hundred to a few thousand persons.

Apart from the principle of close agnation which binds members of the dia-paying lineage, its enduring social solidarity is also further cemented by the collective obligation to pay and receive blood compensation and payments regarding other acknowledged delicts. Here both principles which define social solidarity and political action, agnation and contract (xeer in Somali) neatly supplement each other to produce a cohesive and stable political unit, which provides the protection and security of the pastoral Somali. The crucial importance of this unit appears to have led past colonial and successive independent governments to appoint stipended dia-paying lineage leaders as 'chiefs' or local authorities—Akils. These elders assumed the important role of maintaining law and order among their kinsmen, and acted as emissaries between them and the government.

This short review highlights only the structurally and functionally important points of cleavage within an all-pervasive agnatic context built of elaborate segments. Thus, it must not be considered that clan, primary lineage and dia-paying group constitute the only possible units of segmentation of the major Somali clan-families. In practice, the actual levels of bifurcation are much more extensive.

This ordered, but outwardly intricate, segmentary social system has the capacity to place each and every citizen in a corporate *dia*-paying lineage where his basic rights are guaranteed and obligations clearly defined. Moreover, it establishes social relations between *dia*-paying groups and other levels of political groupings, in a turbulent social environment where alliances need to be created to defend pastoral resources or to retrieve access to pasturage and water usurped by an opponent.

The eternal search for adequate pasturage and water, in a semi-arid or arid nomadic environment that is characterized by unevenly distributed and often scarce resources, provides uncertainty and generates fierce competition among members of different lineage groups. In practice, clans fight against clans, primary lineage groups of a particular clan and those of different neighbouring clans get locked into battle, and, in the same way, the *dia*-paying lineages of the primary groups confront one another in armed conflict.

This fluid social situation, which has been so ruthlessly manipulated by Somalia's power-mongering warlords, has been eloquently described by S. S. Samatar (1991: 25):

'Stripped of the scientific razzle-dazzle with which it is often presented, segmentation may be expressed in the Arab Bedouin saying: my uterine brother and I against my half-brother, my brother and I against my father, my father's household against my uncle's household, our two households (my uncle's and mine) against the rest of the immediate kin, the immediate kin against non-immediate members of the clan, my clan against other clans and, finally, my nation and I against the world! In lineage segmentation one, literally, does not have a permanent enemy

or a permanent friend, only a permanent context. Depending upon a given context, a man - or group of men, or a state, for that matter - may be your friend or foe. Everything is fluid and ever changing.'

# The Structure of Contemporary Peace Conferences

Current peace forums are described as *shir*, which is the traditional council of elders that deliberated matters of common concern at all levels of grouping. In spite of the urban bias of present day elders, political leaders involved in the peace process are built of a core of *dia*-paying leaders and other distinguished elders of the reconciling groups. The traditional informal method of conducting peace and other socio-economic affairs has adopted modern conference techniques. Thus, most peace forums are chaired by a selected committee which is assisted by a secretariat. A technical committee which often includes professionals who worked in the disintegrated Somali state, as well as military officials, is also appointed to prepare the agenda and a general framework for resolutions that are endorsed by the *Guurti*.

Quite commonly, conference resolutions are legitimized by unanimous consensus of the delegates of the reconciling parties. In addition to peace-making, the Boorama national conference tackled the building of an executive government of Somaliland. Therefore, it integrated both principles of legitimizing resolutions, that is traditional consensus and modern majority vote.

The most important elders' council, at present, is known as *Guurti*. Headed by sultans, the nominal political leaders of clans and large subclans, the *Guurti* is described as the highest traditional authority. A perceptive Warsangeli elder described *Guurti* as: waxgarad xul ah oo qabiil ama ummad laga soo xuley, which translates roughly as 'the most enlightened and judicious persons that are found in a group or a nation at large'.

The Somali name for the clan council, *Guurti*, <sup>1</sup> is not recorded in Lewis (1961: 207-208); however, he described a similar institution, which was reported to have occurred in the traditions on the past dynasties of Gadabursi and Iisa clans.

Echoes of a slightly more developed institution than that typical today occur in the traditions of the Gadabursi and Iisa. When a new Ugaas was appointed amongst the Gadabursi, a hundred elders, representative of all the lineages of the clan, assembled to form a parliament to promulgate new *xeer* agreements, and to decide what legislation they wished to retain from the reign of the previous Ugaas. The compensation rates for delicts committed within the clan were revised if

1. It seems likely that this noun is derived from the verb *guur*, to move, by the addition of the ending *ti*—this pattern of word formation being quite common in Somali. It would thus suggest a peripatetic council.

necessary, and a corpus of Gadabursi law, as it were, placed on the statutes for the duration of the new Ugaas's rule. This was called "the law of the Sultan and 100 men" (Xeerka boqorka iyo boqolka nin). This council formed a central legal court (guddi) to which all disputes which could not otherwise be settled should be taken. The Ugaas and his court toured the country, moving amongst the various segments of the clan settling disputes, and receiving gifts of tribute and hospitality. There is said to have been no standing army or specialized functionaries to enforce decisions of the Sultan's court other than the Midgans attached to the royal lineage who acted as emissaries. The Iisa had traditionally a similar arrangement with a permanent court of forty-four men attached to their Ugaas. But in both cases the Sultans were leaders on the egalitarian Somali pattern, settlers of disputes and arbitrators vaguely responsible for the prosperity and fortune of their clans, not heads of a Muslim state.

The Guurti is sometimes referred to as Ergo. However, the latter term designates usually a group of negotiating elders appointed to settle an important affair with a different group. An Ergo commonly consists of influential members of the Guurti of a particular group, but not exclusively of it. As delegates who are assembled as the situation arises, the Ergo can be distinguished from the standing clan council of elders. The Guurti not only participates in inter-clan affairs but also acts as the highest political and jural council of clans and large sub-clans.

The elder cited described *Ergo* as particular group of elders appointed to settle a matter between two clans or states. *Xeerbeegti* is another adhoc arbitration council of elders that is given the mandate to settle affairs between groups or members of a corporate group. Knowledge of tradition, not Islamic Sharia or modern law, is an important criterion for membership of this council. The *Xeerbeegti* and the *Ergo* are familiar Somali political and jural institutions. In contrast to the *Guurti* and *Ergo* whose mandates are to handle both practical and judicial matters, the *Xeerbeegti* acts as an arbitration panel of elders mainly assigned to adjudicate disputes according to customary law. *Ergo* and *Xeerbeegti* councils of elders did not entirely loose their traditional functions in modern times in Somaliland, but the *Guurti* appears to be an obsolete traditional institution which has regained current use because of the increased role of lineage leaders in peace-making.

# Composition of the Guurti

To illustrate the actual composition of a particular *Guurti*, we consider the case of the Habar Yonis clan in Erigavo district. Of the forty-two joint Habar Yonis and Habar Tol Jalo *Guurti* in this multi-clan district, thirty-three members are Habar Yonis. These comprised a core of eleven Akils representing the eleven Habar Yonis *dia*-paying lineages found in Erigavo district. Table II illustrates the proportion of councillors currently engaged in three major economic activities: herding, agriculture and trade.

33

Major occupation	Number
Herding	19
Trade	8
Agriculture	6

TOTAL

Table II. — Occupational status of the Habar Yonis *Guurti* (Erigavo District)

Of the eight *Guurti* members who identified themselves as traders, one was an ex-civil servant, while three were employees of the former military government.

The permanent residence of Guurti members is given in Table III.

TABLE III. — PLACE OF PERMANENT ABODE OF THE HABAR YONIS GUURTI

Place of permanent abode	Number
Erigavo Town	16
Other villages in the district	15
Rural agricultural settlements	2
Rural nomadic encampments	
Total	33

The limited time and regional perspective of this survey precluded the conduct of similar studies of other *Guurti* in Somaliland. In spite of the absence of sufficient data, the results of the case examined indicate several patterns.

There is an overwhelming tendency of the lineage leaders to reside in the major district town and villages: sixteen and fifteen respectively. The remaining two elders lived in settled agricultural areas; while none inhabited the relatively harsh nomadic wilderness. However, the majority of the urbanized elders (nineteen) still primarily subsisted upon income derived from livestock herded by their kinsmen in the interior. The apparent continuation of economic and social links between kinsmen in rural and urban settings exemplifies a widespread diversification strategy by which extended families seek to benefit from the economies of both domains.

The urbanization of the lineage leaders and other powerful social groups (e g traders), certainly shifted power from the rural nomadic pop-

ulace to important centres of trade and administration. However, it is erroneous to consider the *Guurti* as an urban clique lacking the interest and expertise to be able to offer a credible leadership service to their rural subjects. Despite the vital economic, agnatic and contractual ties that bind the urban *Guurti* and their rural kinsmen, the traditional leaders are recent migrants who are familiar with the pastoral tradition.

It is interesting to note that the Habar Yonis Guurti in Erigavo district consisted of a core of eleven dia-paying group leaders or Akils. These represent the corresponding eleven dia-paying lineage divisions of the clan. This fair representation satisfies the Somali egalitarian segmentary political matrix. The remaining twenty-two members of the Guurti of the clan are distinguished elders who are selected to assist the Akils. Supported by two assigned members, each Akil has primary responsibility in the affairs of his dia-paying group. In external matters that are of common interest to the clan, e g arbitration of disputes and reconciliation with other clans, the total Guurti act together to defend its collective interest.

In spite of the equitable distribution of political offices and other resources among the groups, in practice, stronger lineages dominate clan affairs. Thus, the twenty-one Gadabursi *Guurti* were distributed among its three major divisions in terms of their relative strength. The largest sub-clan, Makahil, was allocated nine members, while each of the remaining smaller groups, Mahad Ase and Habar Afan, were allocated six members each.

The attachment of the *Guurti* to the corporate and stable jural and political *dia*-paying group certainly affords it structural permanency. Nevertheless, in its normal functions, the *Guurti* of a clan or sub-clan often changes in its membership. In most *Guurti* meetings, some members fail to attend due to personal reasons, engagement in more serious duties, etc. Nevertheless, kinsmen of absent members are temporarily delegated during their absence.

A comparison between the *Guurti* signatures of the successive bilateral peace treaties, that act as legal contracts which tend to promote harmonious coexistence between estranged neighbouring clans in Somaliland, illustrates significant divergence between the signatures of the different accords. Moreover, the formal clan *Guurti* does not prevent a clan or clans from appointing a special committee, *guddi*, for particular purposes. For example, in the ongoing preparation for the Erigavo regional meeting, the host Isaaq clans, Habar Yonis and Habar Tol Jalo, found it fitting to appoint a new joint committee to attend to security despite the existence of a formal *Guurti*. This can be seen as an attempt to bury their differences and work together to guarantee the safety of the guest *Guurti* representing formerly hostile clans.

As the highest legal authority, the council of clan elders deliberates upon and arbitrates major conflicts between clans. The anticipated Erigavo

regional meeting was given the mandate to resolve outstanding complex property rights between regional clans in relation to land holding and urban property. These contentious issues were judiciously postponed in the earlier meetings for the benefit of building up confidence and trust between the hostile clans.

At the local level, particularly at the buffer-zones between reconciling clans, joint security committees are established to solve minor disturbances and prevent opportunistic banditry. Such grassroots committees are locally known as *Guddida turxaanbi*, literally 'the committee which uproots unwanted weeds from a field'. Here the act of weeding is employed as a metaphor for the pernicious effect of violent acts upon the mutually desired peace. Formed of dominant local elders, these committees respond rapidly to acts of violence and stock plunder, and also affect exchange of stray livestock between neighbouring groups. Moreover, they endeavour to see that the bilateral contracts are observed.

Apart from the participation in the peace conferences of politicians, military officials and professionals who served past regimes, and the adoption of techniques used in modern conferences, these assemblies can nevertheless, be defined as essentially traditional clan councils, *shir*. The organization and format of this remarkably informal meeting of elders was described by Lewis (1961: 198-199) in the following terms:

'The informal council (shir) summoned as need arises, at every order of segmentation, and attended by all the adult men, or their representatives chosen at smaller lineage-groups shir, is the fundamental institution of government. It has no formal constitution except that of membership of the lineage concerned, no regular place or time of meeting, and there are no official positions on it. All men are councillors, and all men politicians. Agreements are reached by majority decisions following the direction taken by the consensus of feeling at a meeting. Usually the participants sit in a rough circle in the shade of a tree, in the central clearing of a nomadic hamlet, or they may meet in a "coffee-shop" in a village or town. Where a large lineage with a male strength of several thousand is concerned, delegates may be chosen to represent each of the component lineages and sent to a central meeting-place. Sometimes, however, all those concerned, even if they number several thousand, attend the council and form a large loose ring. Representatives may then be appointed for the smaller units and sent into the middle of the circle to thrash the matter out while their kinsmen sit listening in the outerring. Men sit or squat on the ground at a shir and when they wish to speak often rise to their feet. Although there may be a great deal of argument and wrangling, all those present are expected to behave courteously and breaches of good manners may be punished. Thus at a large Habar Awal shir, which had met to discuss the rights of cultivators and pastoralists in the west of the Protectorate, members of two of the lineages represented insulted the elders of other groups present. The offenders were directed by the Sultan to pay insult compensation (haal) to the affronted elders."

Membership of a strong group and inherited status may increase the influence and status of some aspiring elders. However, factors that determine successful leadership are generally open and attainable to potential

candidates. Personal qualities and fortunes, including wealth, political acumen, strength and courage; cultural values such as expertise in traditional law and religious knowledge, generosity, fairness and impartiality, probity; seniority and skill in oral poetry and oral discourse in general, all constitute ideals that are associated with distinguished traditional leaders. These qualities which are possessed, in various combinations, by outstanding lineage leaders, indeed cause the opinions of more successful leaders to carry weight, and command a following among rebellious kinsmen and the public at large. Nevertheless, as Lewis (*ibid.:* 196-198) observed, it is difficult to rank leadership qualities in terms of their importance.

Notwithstanding the effects of natural demographic growth, this study found a further proliferation of political offices among the clans in Somaliland. Most probably, this is mainly fostered by the need of the clans and sub-clans to assert independence in a situation of turmoil and uncertainty; and, moreover, by the explicit tendency to search for solutions in the traditional lineage structure, given the absence of effective modern law and order authorities. A comparison of the following tables, which show the past and present distribution of Sultans among the clans inhabiting Somaliland, illustrates the point.

Finally, it is worthwhile to briefly consider the motivations of elders' active involvement in peace-making. First, it is a truism to say that the maintenance of peace has always been the moral obligation of lineage leaders; notwithstanding the fact that the existence of centralized law and order authorities had to some degree diminished this function in modern times. Second, the authority of the clan elders started to gain increasing significance during the civil war. In 1988, the repulsed massive offensive, launched by the SNM against the government forces in Burco and Hargeysa, effectively undermined the capacity of the SNM as a military organization. This led to the formation of an Isaaq Guurti of fifty-three members that took the responsibility of providing clan militias and logistical support to the impaired war effort. Held at Adarosh, near the Ethiopian border, this important conference was organized by elders. Because of the vital collaboration between the elders, who had influence on Isaaq groups and military leaders, the Isaaq Guurti was given recognition in the constitution of the SNM. In the same year, the Gadabursi clan conducted a general conference that deliberated on the defense of its land and people against the SNM at Qunujed.

The elders are certainly delighted by their increased peace-making role and its attendant benefits. For instance, the host group lavishly entertains the visiting *Guurti* functionaries during a conference. The generously supported Boorama conference continued for four months. During this period the elders were sumptuously fed. This led the meeting to be dubbed *buulo*, meaning the nursing and care provided for a sick person.

TABLE IV. —	DISTRIBUTION	OF THE OFFICE O	F SULTANS
AMONG THE C	TANS PRIOR TO	INDEPENDENCE	is 1960*

Clan	Number of Sultans
1. Gadabursi	0
2. Iisa	1
3. Habar Awal	Î
4. Arab	Î
5. Ilidagale	1
6. Habar Yonis	Ô
7. Habar Jalo	1
8. Dhulbahante	ż
9. Warsangeli	ĩ

<sup>\*</sup> Source: Lewis 1961: 204.

TABLE V. — CURRENT DISTRIBUTION OF SULTANS AMONG THE CLANS LIVING IN SOMALILAND

Clan	Number of Sultans
1. Gadabursi	5
2. Iisa	1
3. Habar Awal	4
4. Arab	1
5. Ilidagale	1
6. Habar Yonis	2
7. Habar Tol Jalo	1
8. Dhulbahante	4
9. Warsangeli	1

The hospitality and generous meals provided to the elders was alleged to have the effect of recuperating the elders from the consequences of the lean civil war period.

### Causes of War

# Disputes over Land and Pasture

Conflict is accentuated by the multi-clan composition of settled districts where land disputes are most pronounced. This is the case, for instance, where Isaaq and Harti (Daarood) lineages live together in disputed sedentarized areas of Erigavo district, while Isaaq and different Gadabursi

lineages live in Gabiley district. In general, at the height of the civil war, in these locations the Isaaq became displaced from their settled homelands which were taken over by rival residents. This process was reversed after the end of the civil war, which led to the return of the Isaaq to the mixed, sedentary areas. As a result, the displaced non-Isaaq groups are now largely absent from their areas of settlement.

Disputes over fixed agricultural land are more difficult to resolve than those over nomadic grazing resources. Presumably, two main factors are responsible for this trend. First, pastoral land is little developed, and the available pastoral resources are determined by environmental factors that are beyond the control of the nomadic groups. Apart from trading centres, valuable long-term developments are confined to the construction of underground water tanks, *barkado*. These are mainly built by wealthy nomadic families that undertake such ventures in order to ensure a reliable supply of water for family herds, and sell any surplus water to supplement the income earned from the herd.

The unreliable distribution of pastoral resources necessitates the sharing of fundamental pastoral resources across areas controlled by different clans. If a particular clan or lineage refuses other rival groups access to pasturage and water that occur in its sphere of influence, it will face similar treatment at a time of distress when exploitation of grazing controlled by others is indispensable.

Second, investments made by holders of arable land makes this fixed property valuable. Furthermore, this property is mainly scarce, particularly in Boorama and Gabiley districts that have a relatively prolonged history of settlement and cultivation (for details, see Lewis 1961: 90-126). Production of sorghum and maize spontaneously developed in these two districts at the turn of the century. This important economic tranformation of traditionally pastoral groups has been adopted from the neighbouring sedentary Oromo in Ethiopia. An important supplementary production of cattle, and sheep and goats, constitutes another significant feature of the agricultural economy of Boorama and Gabiley districts.

Outside these two settled districts in the north-west, Erigavo district represents a relatively sedentarized zone. Here, regulated small-holder dry farming and small-scale family irrigation agriculture, that were concentrated in perennial streams in the precipitous mountain complex, started during the British colonial period. In spite of this controlled agriculture, this district remained largely nomadic prior to the 1970s. Therefore, Erigavo district, at present, is one of the troubled areas in the north. In addition to disputes over arable land, conflict over pastoral land is also most pronounced—mainly because of the transformation of traditional pastoral land to grazing reserves and cultivated fields.

# Politically Motivated Conflict

#### • Burco Conflict

From February until September 1991, the euphoria precipitated by the downfall of Siad Barre's tyrannic military rule, led to a short period of tranquillity in Somaliland. The Isaaq thought that the change of government would bring them quick advantages, in which they were better placed to benefit most. Non-Isaaq clans were wary about what the victorious Isaaq might do to them. Some clans feared reprisals after the 'liberation'. In January 1992, deep suspicion between the clan militias in the mixed Burco town degenerated into open conflict. This hasty war, which continued for a few days, displaced the returnee population in Burco that was striving to reconstruct its life. Since the combatants were the two militias based in this town, it did not immediately implicate their clansmen outside.

The ability of the Isaaq Guurti to resolve internal differences was undermined by the polarization of the Isaaq into the two main political factions of the SNM (the military and civilian). Thus, the (non-Isaaq) Gadabursi Guurti elders in particular, and others, played a significant role in the settlement of this conflict and subsequent Isaaq wars. The neutral status of the Gadabursi and the embarrassment of the Isaaq's failure to resolve its differences facilitated a successful reconciliation.

#### • Berbera Conflict

The Burco conflict set a precedent for the second major clan conflict of the Isaaq, which took place at Berbera between the Habar Yonis and Isa Musa. It started in March 1992. Initiatives by the president's faction to centralize power, led the administration to attempt to place Berbera regional port under its control. The local Isa Musa clan opposed this move. Thus, the government organized a combined force to establish government control at Berbera. The Isa Musa there disliked the move, which they saw as an attempt of the Garhajis-dominated government to appropriate the revenue from this important town, and its resources because of their support for the last government and open clan conflict with the Isaaq.

The interim SNM administration disappointed the Isaaq people, and other clans which thought they were not fairly represented. In 1991, the SNM administration obtained some external assistance and their share of newly printed national currency from Mogadishu. But such limited resources were not invested in urgent tasks, like disarmament and demobilization of armed militias, or the creation of embryonic security forces. However limited, acquired resources were mostly appropriated by the corrupt civilian and military officials of the administration.

Competition for political dominance and control over limited resources, instigated hostility between the Isaaq clans. This also antagonized non-Isaaq clans which thought they were being marginalized. Such competition intensified the power struggle between the civilian and military factions in the SNM administration, a long-standing division in the organization. The new SNM administration was portrayed as being dominated by the civilian faction headed by the president and supported by his clan (Habar Yonis) and related Iidagale. The association of the SNM interim administration with Habar Yonis led the rival Habar Jalo to become the major Isaaq clan that pioneered opposition to the fragmented interim administration. The traditional rivalry between the Habar Yonis and Habar Jalo, which appears to have been contained during the civil war by common Isaaq cause, surfaced after the initial euphoria of victory over the Siyad regime.

As soon as the loose collective campaign to establish central government rule in Berbera started, the constituent clan militias, other than the Habar Yonis, withdrew their collaboration and left the joint force. This led to a war between the loyal Habar Yonis clan, which supported the president and his civilian faction, and the local Isa Musa. Compared to the limited upheaval in Burco, this strife widely implicated the two parties. Accordingly it caused extensive property and human loss, not only because of its comprehensive nature but also because it continued for an extensive period, from March to October 1992.

The sacking of five opposing ministers by the president in 1992 escalated the power struggle between the civilian and military factions. Many disenchanted members of the administration left the country. This aggravated the security situation in Isaaq dominated areas of Somaliland. The raging civil war and the security crisis which engulfed the 'Republic', shattered Isaaq expectations, particularly the much needed and elusive international recognition for their embryonic state.

Public disgust and the elders' relentless endeavour to restore peace led to a conference held in Djibouti between the political factions in the administration. This was followed by a return to Hargeysa where they formed a thirty-one man reconciliation committee, comprised of sixteen representatives of the dominant civilian faction and fifteen of the rival military faction. This joint committee was chaired by the distinguished religious elder, Sheikh Ibrahim Sh. Yusuf Sheikh Madar.

The joint resolution committee utterly failed to stem hostilities between the warring Habar Yonis and Isa Musa clans, let alone tackle the urgent security crisis in Hargeysa and other areas. Worse still, the opposed political and military leaders weakened and indeed undermined the sustained reconciliation effort of the Isaaq Guurti. The Isaaq Guurti visited Berbera six times in the course of the clan strife. On each occasion, the peace settlement arranged by the elders between the warring factions

faltered, mainly as a result of sinister manipulation devised by the hostile political and military factions.

The withdrawal of support by the other clans from the governmentorchestrated and bungled attempt to establish control over Berbera was considered as a betrayal by Habar Yonis. The ensued disenchantment was further aggravated by the chequered fortunes in the strife. The initial assault by Habar Yonis led to the capture of Berbera, but this short-lived victory was later reversed by a counter-attack that established control of the town by regrouped Isa Musa forces.

On their part, the Isa Musa regarded this as a government orchestrated attempt, whose ultimate aim was to rob them of their resource and impose Habar Yonis hegemony—a section of whom lives in the Berbera area. Thus, they refused reconciliation efforts arranged by Isaaq reconciliation groups. The victims of Habar Yonis, and Isa Musa, rejected an article in a peace agreement devised by the Isaaq peace groups. This relates to the control of Berbera by the government, which was associated with Habar Yonis.

# Techniques of Peace-Making: The Role of Women

One of the conundrums of Somalia's civil strife, is the fact that the protagonists are usually neighbouring clans who are affinally related. In addition to the Sharia which condemns fighting between neighbouring brethren groups, kinship morality also proscribes fighting between affines. Nevertheless the Somalis practice warfare, despite its discouragement by strongly adhered to Muslim beliefs and by important principles of social formation.

Traditionally and to a significant degree still among the pastoralists, the need for access at times of distress to basic resources, controlled by rival groups, led corporate groups to marry outsiders. However, this preferred alliance-seeking marriage does not transfer women's birth rights from their natal groups to those of the husbands. After marriage, a woman retains her kinship ties and property rights with her father's group. These rights are often denied due to Sharia inheritance bias towards men, and also because of patrilineal ideology which mystifies primary community properties as lineage wealth (camels and agricultural land).

As members of patrilineal corporate descent groups and as mothers of affinally related foes, women were most distressed by Somalia's tragic social upheaval. Because of their dual kinship role, they were also the only means of communication between belligerent clans at the height of the civil war. Material assistance and information between belligerent affinal groups was carried by women, who were allowed to cross clan borders. In Somaliland, this function led them to be labelled as 'clan ambassadors'. This label appears to have been strengthened by the alleged

'secret agent' role they are said to have carried out for their natal groups. They were frequently accused of passing military secrets obtained from their husband's to their father's groups.

Reconciling elders certainly made effective use in appealing to unifying cultural forces, eg affinal relations and Islam, so as to soften and exhort antagonistic groups to make peace. For instance, to break a deadlock in a peace process, eg the case of one group refusing to participate in a peace forum, distinguished elders who had affinal ties with the stalling group were usually sent to win their support. For twenty-four days, the Dhulbahante Guurti failed to appear at the site in the first major peace forum with the Habar Yonis at Dararweyne. This led Habar Yonis to send a delegation comprised of kinsmen born by Dhulbahante women. They succeeded in persuading suspicious maternal relatives to come and participate in the forum.

To seal a peace treaty between two parties, women were traditionally exchanged. This was done in some of the major peace agreements in Thus, the reconciling parties, Habar Yonis and Isa Musa, Somaliland. agreed to exchange fifty wives equally representing the two groups at the Sheikh conference. The practice has symbolic significance, for it illustrates a commitment to the matter at hand. You give a daughter to somebody whom you trust, honour and wish to maintain a mutual interaction with. And particularly where blood has been shed, Somalis regard the offer of a marriageable partner as a customary mechanism for alleviating the loss of life. Accordingly, a Somali proverb says meeshii xinjiri ku daadato xab baa lagu bururiyaa, 'the stains of blood should be cleansed with a fertile virgin lady'. As well as the reproductive service of wives, which may be said to compensate for the lives of the lost kinsmen, the symbolic significance of the practice as a gesture of reconciliation is significant.

Customary contracts are usually honoured by the Somali clans. This is partly because they are not rigid legal dogmas. On the contrary, they can be rescinded, amended or abrogated, as the situation arises. Nevertheless, deliberate violation of a *xeer* without formal declaration of intent to rescind is considered by a Somali as a treacherous act.

In July 1992, when Habar Tol Jalo and Dhulbahante were making peace, ten armed militiamen of the latter were found to have surreptitiously set out to raid stock from the former. At the time, it was still not safe for men to cross clan borders. Therefore, the Dhulbahante took two of their wives of Habar Tol Jalo origin with a military vehicle and transported them to the border area. The women were sent to warn their kinsmen of the anticipated raid.

The Dhulbahante raiding party seized camels and killed a Habar Tol Jalo man in the process. However, the seized stock were retrieved because the timely information passed on by the Habar Tol Jalo women to their kinsmen alerted both groups. This flagrant breach of peace was imme-

diately corrected by the Dhulbahante in paying a hundred and ten camels of homicide compensation and a wife. The additional ten camels (standard homicide compensation is generally hundred camels for a male and half of this amount for a female) and a wife acted as a public acknowledgment and appearement strategy to restore relations threatened by the brazen aggression.

In spite of the above mentioned peace-making contributions that mainly derive from their dual kinship, women did not take a direct role in the successive reconciliation conferences in Somaliland. Although in the high-profile Boorama conference, and in the much publicized southern conferences organized by the United Nations, women's delegations participated as separate groups, local Somaliland peace forums remain largely male activities. Nevertheless, northern women enthusiastically supported local forums, and most importantly provided traditional domestic services. They prepared food for the assembled peace delegates, and attended to the hygienic and cleaning tasks of the meeting and accommodation facilities.

### Settling Outstanding Issues

The grassroots peace-making endeavour in Somaliland can be described as a collective business. Certainly, the arbitrating clan councils assume a central role, but they also make effective use of the services of the other traditional leaders, most important of whom are religious men and poets. Other than the central *Guurti*, participating elders, ex-professionals, politicians and military officials, religious figures and poets are described as distinguished guests. They may offer advice and make suggestions in open bilateral peace talks, but the endorsement of the agreements is carried out by the *Guurti*. To supplement the moral authority of the elders with religious sanctions, many of the contracts also bear the signatures of religious elders.

To avoid futile and protracted opposing litigation, arbitrating *Guurti* strive to encourage direct negotiations between the disputing parties. Given the lack of instituted authority of the *Guurti*, which undermines its ability to enforce agreed resolutions, it is also practical to encourage disputing groups to reach bilateral agreements. This is important since the reconciling groups are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the agreements they have reached through consensus.

The rallied national *Guarti*, which comprised delegates representing the major clans in Somaliland, offered its reconciliation services in the serious Habar Yonis and Isa Musa conflict at Berbera. The latter group claimed that they were the victims of brazen aggression and accordingly asked for judgement on the actual culprit. However, the national *Guarti* 

repeatedly entreated the two parties to resolve their differences through direct negotiation. To the delight of the general *Guurti*, this was finally accepted on the third day of the conference. However, the general *Guurti* also selected a special committee that was assigned to arbitrate any issues the two sides failed to resolve. Fortunately, all issues were settled through direct negotiation. However, the general *Guurti* assumed the supervisory role of assessing the satisfactory completion of the accord and formulating penalties for violations of it. And to give weight and legitimacy to the agreement, they added their signature to the bilateral contract.

Sympathetic attention is given to opposing grievances held by the reconciling parties. Mutual interest and areas of consensus are dwelt on, in order to build trust and a wholesome atmosphere that can facilitate agreement on contentious issues. Judicious consideration is given not to upset the view of one party or the other, and the difficult side must be diplomatically handled. In effect, an informal and reconciliatory tone is preferred to the investigation and examination procedures that place blame upon one party.

Traditional elders possess extensive endurance and the patience that is required to tackle delicate, unpredictable and tardy peace business. The Habar Yonis *Guarti* anxiously waited twenty-four days for their Dhulbahante counterparts to attend the first joint meeting at Dararweyne. The opening meeting at Eil Qoxle, a pastoral area between Habar Jalo and Warsangeli territory, started with a prolonged, under-the-tree, elders' discourse that continued for about a month. The participants in this delicate initiative, in a situation tense with hostility and deep suspicion, had to continue seeking a breakthrough for such a long time in order to find an opportunity that gave hope of a peaceful outcome.

If an irreconcilable difficulty arises in the course of a peace session, the proceedings are discreetly suspended until such time as a consensus is arrived at informally. Thus, conventional peace conferences appear to act as no more than a rubber stamp for an informal consensus agreed between the reconciling parties outside the meeting venue.

If a contentious issue is found difficult to resolve in a particular forum, it is usually deferred so as to prevent disruption of the peace process. Given the scope of the matters adjudicated by the elders and their lack of instituted authority, in the absence of effective governmental law and order machinery, it is usually the case that outstanding issues between the groups (property issues in particular) fail to be settled at the time specified in the accords. However, this does not lead to disruption of the buoyant peace effort. Therefore, the next scheduled forum is not cancelled due to a failure of one party or the other to resolve outstanding issues that were agreed to be settled in the preceding conference. Current forums rearrange the settlement of accumulated outstanding issues.

### Re-defining Responsability for Penalties

From the very beginning, local clans in northern Somalia, made a significant concession that led to the unfolding of the peace process. In a spirit of conciliation, embattled clans agreed to bury the past and concentrate on the present and future affairs of mutual interest—the restoration of peace and stability. This was achieved by a common agreement which annulled events that took place in the past. Otherwise, it would have led to massive and futile litigation and recriminations, complicated by the practical difficulties on the actual computation of the considerable human and property loss sustained by the different groups during the protracted and intricate civil war which implicated clans and a military regime.

Faced with the immense security task in an explosive situation, the Guurti discerningly introduced harsh provisions that were designed to contain the cyclic plunder of property. To dissuade armed militias from seizing the herds of opposing groups, the elders decreed that the responsibility to pay damages inflicted by armed groups should be shouldered by the immediate family of a regular offender (the family of the offender, his father, brothers and uncles). This unprecedented ruling that placed the responsibility for acts of violence upon the family and the immediate kin of the villain undoubtedly discouraged the practice of blatant and opportunistic raiding of property. Instances of habitual looters killed by their immediate kin, who could no longer bear the burden of their violent acts, are cited by many clans in the region. The Warsangeli and the Dhulbahante clans further decreed that traffic accidents remain the responsibility of the drivers, who may be assisted by their close agnatic kinsmen. A Dhulbahante informant explained this deposition as primarily due to the increased reckless driving of the quat trucks that frequent the area.

In addition, the introduction of capital punishment appears to be gaining currency in northern Somalia as an effective instrument to curtail homicide. The Habar Tol Jalo and Habar Yonis sections in Burco, the Iidagale and the Warsangeli, all practice this punishment. In early 1992, the internal homicide rate alarmingly reached thirty-six people in one month alone. This led the Iidagale to impose capital punishment which reduced murder to nil.

# Constraints on Effective Peace-Making

# The Limited and Diffuse Authority of the Elders

Political institutions in the highly democratic, segmentary northern Somali society are invested with remarkably limited authority. Despite this, traditional political leaders at the various levels of grouping often managed, as they presently do, to establish precarious law and order in the pastoral

world and in recently sedentarized areas. In the absence of effective centrally directed law and order, northern elders braced themselves to attend to an expanded peace-keeping role that covers both rural and urban security requirements.

A widespread desire for peace and stability among the northern clans, which mainly resulted from war-weariness, enhanced these peace efforts. This dispensation and appeal for fairness and justice in which the elders are thought to deliver because of disillusion with past and modern political leaders appear to have facilitated their peace initiatives. This helped the *Guurti* to effect contractual legal accords between opposed clans. However, the practical application of the contents of the extensive treaties proved a daunting task for the elders.

The present case illustrates the difficulty encountered by clan elders in enforcing unpopular decisions upon their kinsmen. The arbitrating *Guurti* of Somaliland decided to witness the exchange of prisoners between the successfully reconciled Habar Yonis and Isa Musa clans at Sheikh. The exchange was agreed to take place at Burco town. The Habar Yonis failed to deliver the eight prisoners they held on time. Their captives were held by a Habar Yonis man at Gorgor near the border with Ethiopia. He seized the prisoners because his private truck was lost in the clan war.

It took Habar Yonis nine days to surrender the prisoners. The delay was caused by the holding kinsman, who demanded compensation for his truck and his expenses for feeding the captives, who were held for a period of five months. The Habar Yonis elders finally convinced their kinsman to accept repayment for the captivity expenditure only. Since a lot of property was lost in the civil war, compensation for the truck was rejected. To do otherwise would instigate similar demands that could not be settled due to the scope of property and human loss in the civil strife. Finally, the Habar Yonis handed over their prisoners, who were exchanged, under the supervision of the Somaliland *Guurti*, for the thirty prisoners held by the other side at Berbera.

The traditional system of governance that primarily relies upon the moral authority of lineage leaders and the good will of their kinsmen, has a limited intrinsic capacity to prevent the occurrence of crime and violence. Thus, northern elders aptly described the significance of their law and order functions as *dab damin*, which literally translates as 'extinguishing fire'—restricting the explosion of social upheaval.

Both the colonial and successive independent Somali governments reasonably employed the traditional system of rule in maintaining law and order in the rural areas. In the past, political leaders, most notably the Akils-Local Authorities, were supplemented by modern security forces and institutions, to enhance their peace-keeping duties. Indeed, during the British colonial administration, written contractual agreements between

the native clans in the Protectorate were acknowledged as a source of law. Thus, copies of clan treaties were kept at the offices of the district commissioner for use in settling relevant disputes.

### Freelance Militia Activity—the Deydey

The Somali word *deydey* means literally 'a thorough and avaricious search for something'. In its present context, it refers to the ransacking the *deydey* usually carry out after opportunistically plundering property. As some local authorities suggest, the word appears to have been borrowed from a 'Daalaley' poem composed by one of Somalia's most distinguished artists, Hadarawi. This poem depicts the freelance plunder and relentless terror launched against the public by some regular soldiers of the military regime, which became habitual at the final stage of its existence.

The *deydey*, in northern Somalia, are portrayed as prototype miscreants and villains. Isaaq informants are quick to retort that normal SNM militias relinquished military service, after the liberation of the North from the military regime. Disenchanted with the failure to create the expected opportunities for the victorious forces, they reluctantly returned to their areas of origin to resume their previous occupations. This widespread proposition presumably holds true in general, and implies that the active armed clan militias largely consist of a residue of the voluntarily dispersed militia forces.

Mostly composed of teenage boys and unmarried adult men, the *deydey* dislike the older generation in general, and the *Guurti* in particular. They label elders as *koofiyad bacle*, a derogative term which means literally 'those wearing plastic hats'. Traditionally, Somali elders wear hats as a symbol of moral authority. The negative implication, here, appears to derive from the fact that urban Somalis carry cash in plastic bags. Therefore, the elders are allusively accused of being corrupt by making money from their positions of authority which is symbolized by the hats they wear.

To disarm and demobilize the clan-based and heavily armed militias is the expressed wish of every person in Somaliland. Without the restoration of peace, it is realized that the so far elusive international recognition of Somaliland as a sovereign state will remain wishful thinking, or a remote dream. This makes urgent the demobilization and disarmament of the militias who pose the biggest threat to peace and stability. Yet, despite the improved relations between clans which reduced the risk of warfare, inter-clan suspicion still lingers. Therefore, each clan would like to see its rival disarmed first, and, most probably, would prefer to be the last one to give up its weapons. Assistance offered by neutral friendly countries to the lineage leaders and to the ineffective central

administration with disarming militias would be appreciated by the general public in Somaliland.

The armed militias commonly operate in the areas controlled by their groups. At the time of our survey, fourteen militia-manned checkpoints were found to exist on the Hargeysa-Boorama road, and twenty-six along the Burco-Laas Caanood route. The present table indicates the Hargeysa-Boorama checkpoints, and the clan origin of the controlling militias.

TABLE VI. — CLAN MILITIA CHECKPOINTS

Name of the checkpoint	Lineage of the controlling militias
1. Hargeysa	Husein Abokor
2. Maqaxida Inanta	
3. Ararso	
4. Ararso	Baha Sa'ad (Abdalla Abokor)
<ol><li>Aabidla</li></ol>	Abdalla Abokor
6. Arabsio	Jibril Abokor
7. Gabiley	Jibril Abokor
8. Kalabeydh	Jibril Abokor
9. Dila	Reer Nur
10. Tulli	Reer Nur
11. Eegi	Reer Nur
12. Goroyo Awl	Reer Nur and others
13. Goroyo Awl	Reer Nur and others
14. Boorama	Mixed Gadabursi

Acts of banditry that are perpetrated by opportunistic freelance armed militias are constant threats to peace and stability in both urban and rural areas of the North. Organized plunder of trade goods, private property and nomadic stock, which appear to be decreasing in this region, are not only committed by militias that are loosely recognized as the armies of the clans, but occasionally also by armed kinsmen operating in the areas controlled by their lineages. In a sense, armed militias look after the general interest of their own groups. For example, if a member or members of a particular clan seize property of a different clan, armed kinsmen of the victim launch a counter raid. This often leads to a cycle of violence.

Checkpoints manned by clan militias are apparently concentrated along trade routes frequented by *qaat* trucks (Nabadid-Hargeysa, Burco-Laas Caanood, etc.). Driven at a frighteningly fast speed, those trucks held the past record of reckless driving, and epitomized the madness associated with drug operations in the West. Militia gun-mounted trucks, *tiknika*, have replaced the dreaded *qaat* traffic in terms of reckless driving. The

trigger-happy militias that ride the dreaded *tiknika* menace the dauntless *quat* traffic and the public at large.

Different clan militia squadrons, scattered along the major roads, extort mainly cash from passing private trade trucks, and levy a tax in kind from quat trucks. Since the checkpoints run through different lineage territories that are controlled by different militias, traders are forced to pay each and every armed unit in exchange for safe passage. Thus, Berbera quat dealers actually found it more economical to use light aircraft for transporting this stimulant from Nebedid to Berbera town, in an attempt to avoid this extortion on land traffic. However, the bulk of the quat trade is still transported over land, which has led to an arrangement between the dealers and the militias at the checkpoints. Armed trucks are recruited as escorts to protect quat vehicles.

Militias refer to the imposed levy on trade as legitimate taxation and a compensation for their unpaid services. Sometimes, unruly militias fight over the spoils, particularly over the distribution of qaat. In June 1993, the administration of president Igal succeeded in its first step of centralizing important sources of revenue by placing Berbera town under the control of the state. This measure needs to be expanded throughout the country as early as possible to terminate the existing system of extortion, and replace it with a credible form of taxation. Thus, militias constitute a major obstacle to the establishment of legitimate national security forces. Moreover, sometimes they get away with the mindless murder they commit collectively, although, if one of them is killed, it can lead to a demand for compensation by his group.

### Size, Time, Protocol and other Constraints

The strength of the relatively successful peace effort of the traditional leaders in the North lies in the fact that it is anchored in the fundamental social segmentary order. Hence, representation in the inter-clan peace forums is based upon the actual lineages of the clans concerned. In addition, the organization and conduct of peace conferences, mainly depends on the resources and facilities provided by the local groups. Given the absence of external resources that can allow planned and effective functioning of the peace conferences, they are run the way the traditional *shir* is administered—tardy and timeless, unwieldy and massive, in effect difficult to organize and manage.

Despite prior agreement among the peace-making parties, on the size of the essential delegations, peace conferences often expand into a large assembly by the attendance of uninvited kinsmen who belong to the reconciling groups. One hundred and fifty *Guarti* members representing all the clans in the North, and one hundred observers were planned to

participate in the Boorama national conference. The actual number of participants, who regularly feasted and sheltered at the venue of the meeting, Sheikh Ali Jawhar secondary school, was estimated at slightly less than seven hundred persons. The participants in the Garadag and Dararweyne local conferences were equally very large, seven hundred and twenty, and five hundred respectively. Modelled on the traditional ad hoc council of elders, where all adult males of the groups concerned had the right to participate, many men, who are not included in the official Guarti of the reconciling parties, take part in the present peace conferences.

The duration and starting dates of the peace conferences often defy fixed schedules. The need to attend to important matters that effect the interest of one party or the other, or failure to complete the necessary preparations, etc., hinder timely initiation of conferences and cause delays. Once started, a conference continues, rather slowly, until a satisfactory consensus is reached by the parties. The Boorama conference was set to start in January, but was delayed until February. To discredit the government, which was against it, the elders declared it open on February 24th with virtually no preparation. It was opened with seven days devoted to reciting the Koran so as to give time to effect arrangements. The actual business started on March 3rd. The regional Erigavo meeting was scheduled to start on April 10th. However, it had not started during the survey period (June and July). This disappointed the researcher, who had hoped to observe this event, and anticipated that it would take place sometime during the field survey.

Disagreement between the Habar Yonis and Warsangeli over the chairmanship of the conference stalled the initiation of the Jiideli peace conference. Since the other clan assumed this position in the preceding Yube conference, the Habar Yonis insisted that it was their turn. The Warsangeli argued that their present Sultan was the only available clan leader. This was said to automatically qualify him for the chairmanship. Agreement to lower the level of the conference from high-profile clan level to dia-paying group level broke the status deadlock. Thus, after eight days of discord over status issues, the conference finally started under the chair of an eastern Habar Yonis Akil.

We have seen that the Habar Yonis Guurti anxiously waited for twenty-four days for their Dhulbahante counterparts to attend the first conference at Dararweyne. The stalling Dhulbahante did not like the site of the conference, which was located just across Erigavo regional border in Sool. This selection of the site was thought a cynical tactic devised by the Habar Yonis to deny them land rights in Erigavo region, which is dominated by the Habar Yonis but is also inhabited by the Naaleeye Ahmed group of the Dhulbahante.

### Peace-Making Results

The formidable constraints on the traditional peace-making process that spontaneously unfolded in Somaliland certainly undermine the establishment of a comprehensive peace there. These also hinder the practical implementation of many useful matters that are formally agreed upon by reconciling parties at different levels of grouping. Surprisingly, however, these latent constraints, so far, have failed to derail the impetus for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among the local communities.

Driven by a nationalistic endeavour to salvage the self-proclaimed state of Somaliland from unprecedented and senseless ruinous turmoil, and to escape from the shame and disgrace that ensues from failure of a cause supported by the public at large, traditional elders strive to maintain peace, under considerable pressure and against arduous difficulties. This grassroots local level approach to peace started with a series of inter-clan reconciliation conferences as early as 1991. Then it gradually progressed to district, regional and national levels in which the collective service of the Guurti of the major clans reconciled particularly difficult cases that failed to be resolved by the parties concerned. The Sheikh reconciliation conference represents the turning point of the elders peace effort, which reached its height at the Boorama conference. In the latter, a national peace charter was formulated that incorporated the provisions of the series of agreements between the local clans. Realizing that their peace functions cannot effectively succeed without the support of a modern administration. the elders expanded their peace functions to tackle the complex task of building an interim executive government, and a national charter—an unprecedented event in modern Somali history. Considering these laudable achievements, it is no wonder that the elders installed themselves in the structure of the interim government, which consists of three councils: the council of elders, constituent assembly (elected council), and council

The sustained effort of lineage and clan leaders has thus firmly established an encouraging tendency, in which peaceful dialogue is favoured as a means to settle legitimate grievances in lieu of the use of force. Individual acts of violence are constrained not only by the legal ruling which places responsibility upon the offender, but also by the predictable condemnation of agnatic kinsmen and opposition of implicated social units. Legal contracts promulgated by a series of peace conferences define political and socioeconomic relations between local clans in northern Somalia.

Some tangible achievements of the peace-making process, that are notable among the predominantly pastoral clans in particular, are:

- Exchange of stray animals.
- Exchange of looted livestock, trucks and trade goods.

- Gradual return to harmonious relations between clans. This reduced the traumatic pressures of the warfare situation such as vigilant preparedness to defend livestock and human lives in a situation of perpetual conflict.
- Effective exploitation of scarce and widely distributed pasturage and water. This enhanced, though still constrained, free migration and mobility.
- Dispersion of herds and herdsmen which can reduce the spread of communicable animal and human diseases that troubled concentrated nomadic encampments during the course of the civil war.
  - Increased trade and social interaction across clan boundaries.
- Coordination of the prevention of acts of violence through the exchange of information relating to the activities of freelance banditry.

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High profile peace-making initiatives in southern Somalia, involving costly conferences in and outside the country, have received world attention but have produced few positive results. In contrast, in northern Somalia between 1991 and 1993, the local clan elders organized a series of remarkably successful peace-conferences, using traditional procedures, to secure a level of inter-clan understanding which surpasses anything yet achieved in the South. There has been very little foreign intervention, except for some help with logistics and conference food supplies.

Our conclusions suggest that the slow, local, traditionally based Somali diplomacy is the most effective process of peace-making, and that external 'conflict resolving techniques' should be tried on a pilot basis before being widely used in Somalia. The ethnocentric assumptions which underlie these exotic procedures may make them less effective than existing local techniques. To facilitate and strengthen the expanding circle of inter-clan understanding, it may be preferable to extend the range of existing local facilities. Helping local-level communications (through, for example, local broadcasting) might be beneficial. Our conclusions also point to the way in which aid resources, unless distributed in ways which local groups consider equitable, are apt to stimulate conflict.

Our study, for Actionaid, was limited by time and budgetary considerations to a short field survey and literature review. Using the same anthropological techniques which we consider essential for understanding rural Somali society, it would be desirable to extend our research to include the North-East where local leaders seem to have achieved parallel results. There is also, of course, scope for a more intensive, longer study of the field we have surveyed here.

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This paper reports the results of a brief anthropological field study, carried out in the summer 1993, on the organisation and progress of grass-roots peace initiatives in the Somaliland Republic. Fieldwork was supplemented by a literature survey and based on the joint authors' previous extensive research in Somalia. When President Siad's government was overthrown in Mogadishu, the Somaliland National movement, based on the Isaaq clans, set up an interim government in the North-West. This administration did not, however, have the authority or means to impose order amongst the country's unruly and abundantly armed clans. Starting in 1991, grass-roots peace initiatives gradually built up a national network of peace conferences. Using traditional institutions and diplomacy, they succeeded to a remarkable degree in restoring relative calm and normalising inter-clan relations on an impressively wide front. The results of this low budget, locally inspired process were much more impressive than those of the lavishly expensive high profile peace conferences engineered by foreign agencies in southern Somalia.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les résultats d'une brève enquête de terrain, menée au cours de l'été 1993, sur l'organisation et la progression des initiatives de paix se déroulant en Somalie, au niveau local. Ce travail de terrain, qui s'est accompagné d'une étude de la littérature sur le sujet, repose également sur les publications préalables des deux auteurs. Lorsque le président Siad fut renversé, le National Movement du Somaliland, qui s'appuyait sur les clans Isaaq, mit sur pied un gouvernement

intérimaire dans le Nord-Ouest du pays. Cependant l'administration n'avait ni le pouvoir ni les moyens de faire régner l'ordre sur des clans surarmés et indisciplinés. Les initiatives de paix au niveau local, qui débutèrent en 1991, aboutirent progressivement, et à un niveau national, à l'édification d'un réseau de conférences de paix. Utilisant à la fois les structures traditionnelles et la diplomatie, elles réussirent admirablement à restaurer une tranquillité relative et à normaliser l'ensemble des relations sociales. Le processus de paix entrepris à la base, et à un coût minime, obtint des résultats bien meilleurs que les structures plus lourdes et à budget élevé mises en place dans le Sud de la Somalie par les organisations internationales.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Somaliland/Somaliland, militia/milice, grass-roots conciliation/ négotiation à la base, clan elders/aînés de clan.