

**REVIEW PAPER of "[Cultivating Consensus Exploring Options for Political Accommodation and Promoting All Somali Voices](#)"<sup>1</sup>**

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This briefing, "*Cultivating Consensus: Exploring Options for Political Accommodation and Promoting All Somali Voices*", focuses mainly on Somaliland and Somalia, it does not include all the Somali voices; or in other words, it excludes Somali voices in present day Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. It is divided into four major parts, apart from the introduction and conclusion. The briefing includes theoretical (and structural), description (of existing arrangement), scenarios, and crosscutting themes for political accommodation between Somaliland, Somalia, and Puntland. The intended objective of the briefing as stated is "to illustrate approaches that would prove politically accommodation", and as the authors emphasized the aim is not about providing political "recommendation" (Tamaru *et al*, 2014: V).

Tamaru, et.al, have applied the concept of political accommodation that is well-stretched. Hence, they set a framework that could enable the accommodation of diverse opinions in a round table. The political spectrum they adopted stretches from recognizing Somaliland's independence and self-determination to re-instating of the former unitary state. In addition, following the tradition of positivist and problem solving approaches the Briefing presented several levels of the state apparatus, which are constitution, electoral systems, executive and legislative powers, to identify points of convergence among Somaliland, Somalia, and Puntland. It is an organized and well-presented paper.

We argue, it is imperative to attract international intellectual attention to the on-going issues related to Somaliland and Somalia. However, we believe this particular briefing has not done justice both for the title it holds as well as to what it claims to achieve as stated in the beginning pages. We would like to present our critical review of the briefing from two vantage points, i.e. thematic discourse analysis and historical perspectives. Based on these angles, we will highlight the off beam and marginal representation of Somaliland in the Briefing. In doing so, we will render Somaliland's narrative in integrated (with our critique) and succinct manner.

Thematic discourse analysis and historical approach are useful tools to appraise representation and narrative, respectively, in a text. As a text, in its representation, Tamaru, et.al Briefing, gives primacy to Somalia at the expense of Somaliland. The thematic discourse

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<sup>1</sup> NanakoTamaru, Paul Simkin, Mukhtar Ainashe, Kirsti Samuels, and Roger Middleton's "*Cultivating Consensus: Exploring Options for Political Accommodation and Promoting All Somali Voices*", Governance and Peace Building Series Briefing Paper no. 6 February 2014. Conflict Dynamics International

analysis as applied here examines not only what is stated, but how and where the words, concepts and concerns are situated in a text. In almost all its statements, the Briefing, prioritized Somalia over Somaliland. Although it is Somaliland that enjoys prior historical existence the document repeatedly treated Somaliland as a secondary actor. In addition, the concerns and aspirations of Somaliland were relegated as a subsidiary topic. For instance, the so-called "six options" were presented and prioritized in a way that does not represent Somaliland and its people. Likewise, when the authors' are comparing the three constitutions, viz. the 2001 Somaliland Constitution, the 2012 Provisional Somalia Constitution, and the 2012 Puntland Constitution, they give not only textual priority, but they examined the Somaliland Constitution as a text that could be simply inserted into the young transitional Somalia's constitution.

Unlike, Somalia's Provisional Constitution, the making of the Somaliland Constitution has undisputed and strong indigenous origin, according to many, a model for the entire region. In addition, the Somaliland's constitutional making process has proofed empirical record of ensuring peace for the last nearly a quarter of a century. On the contrary, the so-called Provisional Constitution is in the making with heavy outside presence. Moreover, it has been struggling to bring the people and actors in Somalia together. Sadly, large parts of Somalia are still war zones. And the presence of foreign forces has cast doubt over the implementation of the Constitution across the state.

Furthermore, in their analysis sections (and in the boxes) (Tamaru, et.al, 2014: 12; 17; 20; and 30) where they narrate after a brief description of the constitution, legislature, executive, and election, direct comparison is only made between the 1960 Republic of Somalia Constitution and the 2012 Provisional Federal Constitution. This appears that it is intended to suppress Somaliland's voice and its call for independence. It is designed to force Somaliland to fit into a system that it is not part of and has not been working in much of Somalia.

We know that TFG, Putland, Galmudug and Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a have been the key players of the shifting from transitional period to current situation Somalia and even only those players have approved the constitution of Somalia and Somaliland Republic is nothing to do with that process. In addition, it disregards Somaliland's achievement in the last twenty-three years. Although the briefing is not intended as recommendation such portrayal will push away the possibility of using such a detailed paper for any political dialogue between Somaliland and Somalia.

The briefing also appears to give lesser importance to Somaliland's political experience and legitimate concerns. The expectation of the authors to see a political change enacted via well sorted out documents and systems seems anachronistic. First, the African political discourse, including Somaliland's and Somalia, has been shaped mainly by political factors outside of the constitutional provisions. In addition, since the early 1990s the African political landscape has been infected by pseudo-democracies and semi-democracies.

According to Larry Diamond (1999), pseudo and semi-democracies continue to hold superficial elections and adapt whatever political structure presented to them to secure legitimacy and financial aid from outside at the expense of public satisfaction (65-69). Hence, the overall attempt to foresee the future through legal and narrow definition of the political is shallow. We argue, the just and proper analysis to Somaliland and Somalia could be deeper and intellectually helpful if it incorporates a historical approach.

The authors' presented their arguments and set out the options based on very limited temporality. The political temporality that they established their analysis is based on the last three-years of political development in Mogadishu. The historical narratives that led to the present political situation between Somaliland and Somalia has not been treated sufficiently enough; henceforth, the scenarios ('the options') could not be taken seriously as recommendations to facilitate dialogue between the actors.

The historical approach enables us to see two major developments that strengthen the Somaliland's and its people's position vis-à-vis Mogadishu's claim. These positions have been neglected by the authors; however, they have been the cornerstones of Somaliland's foreign policy for recognition. First, Somaliland had a separate and distinct existence. It was a British colony until 1960 and it gained independence prior to what was Italian Somaliland days before. It was the merger of Somaliland and Somalia that created the collapsed state of the Republic of Somalia. The Somaliland's quest for recognition has been part of its historical and contemporary sovereign existence as an independent state. On the other hand, Somaliland has been de facto state in the last 23 years although it did not get de Jure one and the recognition of Somaliland's independence should enjoy primacy to enable the continuation of peace and stability.

Second, the contemporary independence of Somaliland is a result of the amalgamation of numerous political and security arrangements that involved the whole of Somaliland. Somaliland has been politically successful despite limited or negligible international support because its political process has been people-centred and major political players recognized the belief system and culture of the land in contrast to the top down approach of Somalia that has failed to resolve the root cause of the problem which existing in Somalia. Because Somaliland peace and state making process has been done through series of grass-root negotiations and consultations.

Above all, critical analysis focuses on people centred analysis. Tamaru *et al* gave primacy to elite, regimes, and documents over the people of Somaliland. What Somaliland has experienced in the last quarter of a century, is so unique in the sub-region, it earned it a nickname "the hidden pearl of the Horn of Africa" or "African best kept secret" (Jhazbhay, 2003). Its achievements are supported by the solid empirical existence of full self-sufficiency for last twenty-three years. It has conducted referendum and four-competitive elections where incumbents accepted defeat. This is a record in the Horn of Africa, where the

democratic experiment is almost out of truck. This is a result of genuine grass-root state and nation-making process. Of course, Somaliland has a long way to go, but what it is so far achieved needs support and recognition. Any narrative that regards the people of Somaliland's aspiration as secondary is not contributing to peace.

In conclusion, we share the authors' conviction that "long-term stability requires the continuation of dialogue and reconciliation within and between Somalia and Somaliland" (Tamaru *et al*, 2014: 73). In addition, the briefing has set out a wide enough framework that can accommodate a range of political views and actors. However, the order and structure of the briefing and its limited historical approach set a limitation on its power of analysis. Moreover, its primacy on regime and high politics failed to enrich the arguments presented with essential empirical evidences.

Reference:

Diamond, Larry (1999). *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. The Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore.

Jhazbhay, Iqbal, "Somaliland: Africa's best kept secret, a challenge to the international community?" *African Security Review* 2003, 12(4), pp. 77-82.

Tamaru, N. Paul Simkin, Mukhtar Ainashe, Kirsti Samuels, and Roger Middleton, "*Cultivating Consensus: Exploring Options for Political Accommodation and Promoting All Somali Voices*", Governance and Peace Building Series, Briefing Paper no. 6 February 2014. Conflict Dynamics International, pp. 1-87.

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