

The Somaliland-Somalia Talks in 2012-2015: A Critical Appraisal



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Abstract

In the 2012 London Conference on Somalia, the international community proposed a plan for Somaliland and Somalia to hold talks in order to clarify their future relations and thus promised to provide a negotiation platform. Since then, the Government of Somaliland and the Federal Government of Somalia held six round talks in London, Dubai, Ankara, Istanbul (twice) and Djibouti. However, the seventh round (Istanbul III) failed in January 2015 and then, the collapse of the entire dialogue process followed. This article examines the dialogue process and probes the factors that led to the collapse of the process, as well as proposals for future successful talks and how to decide the future relations between the two sides.

Keywords: Somaliland, Somalia, negotiations, secession talks, peace talks.

1. Introduction

The former Somaliland British Protectorate and the former Italian Somaliland united on 1 July 1960, after gaining their independence from Britain and Italy on 26 June and 1 July 1960, respectively, and thus forming the Somali Republic. After a 30-year long union, the central government of Somalia collapsed in 1991 when armed rebel groups ousted the late military regime. On 18 May 1991, the people of the former British Somaliland declared that they broke away from the rest of the country and restored their independence and hence, become a country known as “The Republic of Somaliland”. In 2001, Somaliland held a referendum on a draft constitution that affirmed Somaliland's sovereignty and independence from Somalia as a separate state and 97.1% of the voters voted in favor of the constitution.¹ Ever since, Somaliland took her different pathway and became *de facto* separated state.

However, Somalia opposed all these decisions and considered it unilateral and then illegal steps and repeatedly adhered to its territorial integrity.

Above all, Somaliland did not get international recognition from a single nation as well as the regional and international organizations such as the African Union, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations which reiterated in their resolutions the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia.

From then on, there were no direct negotiations between the two parties and they both emphasized that their positions are unnegotiable and their constitutions support this notion.²

In the 2012 London Conference on Somalia, the international community proposed a plan for Somaliland and Somalia to hold talks in order to clarify their future relations and thus promised to provide a negotiation platform.

Following the London Conference Communiqué, Somaliland and Somalia held their first dialogue in Chevening House, London on 20-21 June 2012. This was followed by talks held in Dubai, Ankara, Istanbul (twice) and Djibouti. The dialogue process collapsed in early 2015 in Istanbul and the process came to stalemate.

This study examines the dialogue process that started in London in 2012 and collapsed in Istanbul in 2015. It explores each round and probes the factors that led to the collapse of the process. In addition, it proposes several recommendations for future successful talks and how to decide the future relations between the two sides. This study, being an in-depth research on this issue, elucidates the talks in a broad way.³ Most of the narratives are extracted and developed from the master thesis by the author titled ‘Somaliland-Somalia Talks: Historical Background, Process and Prospects’ in Istanbul Aydin University in 2017.⁴

2. Six Rounds with Little Achievements: From London to Djibouti

Since 1991, Somaliland government did not attend any conference on Somalia until the London Conference in 2012. The London Conference on Somalia took place on 23 February 2012 at Lancaster House, London.⁵

Given the presence of Somaliland, paragraph six of the London Conference Communiqué stated that “*The Conference recognized the need for the international community to support any dialogue that Somaliland and the TFG [Transitional Federal Government of Somalia] or its replacement may agree to establish in order to clarify their future relations*”.⁶

In order to move the process, Somaliland government removed the legal obstacles from their side by passing a resolution allowing the Somaliland Government to engage in talks with Somalia in February 2012.⁷

The talks started and undergone six rounds, as follows: Chevening House, London (20-21 June 2012), Dubai (28 June 2012), Ankara (13 April 2013), Istanbul I (7-9 July 2013), Istanbul II (16-19 January 2014), and Djibouti (21 December 2014).

2.1 Chevening House Round, London

Following the London Conference, two technical committees from the two sides – Somaliland and Somalia – met on 20-21 June 2012 at Chevening House, London. Hosted by the UK and co-hosted by Norway and the EU as per request of the two sides, this preparatory dialogue aimed to pave the way, and establish an outline and agenda for the future talks.

The two sides highlighted the necessity of adopting a common method to avoid anything that could undermine the talks; expressed their commitment to the continuation of the talks; called the two presidents an urgent meeting to review the progress and, also, called the international community to keep supporting and facilitating the talks and providing legal, economic and security experts.⁸ The two parties agreed to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, piracy (both at sea and on land), maritime crime, illegal fishing and toxic dumping.⁹

2.2 Dubai Round

In accordance with the Chevening House meeting, the President of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, and the President of Somaliland Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud “Silanyo” met on 28 June 2012 in Dubai and hosted by the United Arab Emirates. The two presidents officially endorsed the process and directed the two committees from the two sides continue the dialogue.¹⁰

2.3 Ankara Round

The Turkish Government hosted a presidential-level meeting between Somalia and Somaliland held on 13 April 2013 in Ankara. Among the purposes of this meeting included resuming the dialogue process after a regime change in Somalia; President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud came to power and replaced the previous president, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. Moreover, the transitional period in Somalia came to an end and the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia was replaced by the Federal Government of Somalia which gained an international recognition the preceded transitional governments did not have; this recognition might have affected the talks. With the presence of the Turkish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, the two sides agreed upon and jointly produced a communiqué with seven articles.¹¹

(1) The two sides committed to the continuation of the dialogue; (2) agreed to accept and act in accordance with the London and Dubai agreements; (3) stated that the Dialogue is between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Government of Somaliland, and the international community that is supporting this process will only provide facilitation when needed; (4) agreed to share the aid received from the international community, and to encourage and facilitate aid provided to Somaliland; (5) agreed to cooperate in security sector and share related intelligence, training and scholarships for security sector professionals in order to become more effective in the fight against terrorism, extremism, piracy, illegal fishing, toxic dumping, maritime crime and serious crimes; (6) the two parties agreed to meet in Turkey within 90 days; and finally, (7) the two sides agreed to avoid any inflammatory words and actions that would undermine, or put at risk, the continuation of talks.

2.4 Istanbul I Round

Shortly after the Ankara dialogue, the two sides met between 7 and 9 July 2013 in Istanbul. In this meeting, the two parties discussed a crucial issue – air traffic management. Since the collapse of the central government of Somalia, the Somali aviation and air traffic management was ran by the United Nations and established their base in Nairobi, Kenya. In this meeting, the two sides agreed to repossess the air traffic management from the United Nations and decided to establish a joint control body based in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The base was supposed to manage the whole air traffic control and to propose a mechanism for equitable revenue-sharing. Additionally, the two parties expressed their commitment to the process of talks and its continuation, and, also, agreed to meet again in Turkey within 120 days.¹²

2.5 Istanbul II Round

Delegations from the Federal Government of Somalia and the Government of Somaliland met in Istanbul between 16 and 19 January 2014 with the assistance of the Turkish Government. After making further clarifications on the dialogue process design, the two parties signed a communiqué with the following main agreements: the Turkish Government to regularly brief the international community; “to nominate Air Traffic Control Board to establish within 45 days”; “to appoint an ad-hoc technical committee composed of 4 members, (two from each party) to prepare the terms of reference of the Air Traffic Control Board” and the respective ministries to supervise the committee; and finally the two parties expressed that they “share the pain inflicted upon the Somali people by the military regime in Somalia ... [and] condemn all the atrocities committed by that regime throughout all Somali people [sic] particularly the people of Somaliland”.¹³ It is important to mention that, in this meeting, a government of Somalia officially acknowledged the state-

sponsored crimes against humanity conducted in northern Somalia (later Somaliland) in the late 1980s for the first time.¹⁴

2.6 Djibouti Round

A presidential-level meeting between Somalia and Somaliland took place on 21 December 2014 in Djibouti. In this meeting, the two sides agreed: to implement the previous agreements and “take bold steps on future political relations”; to “avoid the politicization of humanitarian and development programs”; to “engage the Government of Djibouti in the dialogue whenever needed”; to hold the next round in Istanbul on 26 and 27 February 2015.¹⁵

According to the agreements of the above six rounds, the two sides did not touch on the ‘*major issue*’ of their future political relations although the Djibouti round called for them to do so. It seems that both sides have no appetite to discuss this intractable point.

3. The Collapse of Round Seven (Istanbul III)

The seventh round of the process was planned to take place in January 2015 in Istanbul. The two delegations came to Istanbul in January 2015 but could not directly commence discussing the issues on the agenda due to certain barriers. They, however, blamed one another for the responsibility of the failure of the meeting. Somaliland delegation argued that a number of people who are originally from Somaliland were deliberately added to the representatives of Somalia in this meeting which, as they argued, was against the previous agreements, and rejected to talk to them. They also accused Somalia of violating the aviation agreements and the regular schedule (Yonis, 2015).

On the contrary, the delegation of Somalia argued that any side cannot influence the list of the representatives of the other side and stressed that

the conditions put forward by Somaliland were inappropriate and unacceptable. They accused Somaliland of the failure of the meeting (Hayir, 2015). Unfortunately, the two sides could not figure out a way to resume the process.

Given the arguments of the two sides, what were the underlying factors behind the failure of Istanbul III? In 2012, two members of Somalia delegation was rejected by Somaliland and argued that those members were originally from Somaliland and therefore rejected to attend the talks unless the two members were removed from the list (VOA, 2012). Somalia, back then, accepted the request of Somaliland and removed those members from its delegation. This incident reveals that there was an understanding between the two sides (politicians who are originally from Somaliland cannot be part of the delegation of Somalia in the process) which may support Somaliland's claim that Somalia is responsible for the process collapse.

Nevertheless, evidence exposes that Somaliland was not serious about this understanding as it originally claimed. In the Dubai round, the former Defense Minister of Somalia Hussein Arab Isse, who is originally from Somaliland, attended the meeting. Likewise, the former Foreign Minister of Somalia Abdirahman Duale Beyle, who is also originally from Somaliland, attended the Djibouti round, not to mention some politicians from Somaliland argued that the Djibouti round does not count as it was not an official round (Horn Cable TV, 2015a).¹⁶ Nonetheless, since Somaliland did not express any concern on the presence of these two ministers in Dubai and Djibouti rounds, Somaliland should not have made the issue a big deal in Istanbul III.¹⁷ Be that as it may, there is the argument that even if this understanding had existed, the government of Somalia should not have considered it to avoid barring certain citizens from engaging in the national decisions (Sed, 2015).

Prior to Istanbul III, there was another failed sideline meeting. Two technical committees from the two sides met in April 2014 in Istanbul to further discuss the Istanbul I and Istanbul II agreements on the aviation and air traffic management. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare the terms of reference for the work of the joint committee. However, it became futile as the two sides could not agree on the terms of reference. The aviation minister of Somaliland Mohamoud Hashi Abdi blamed the technical committee of Somalia for coming up with a different understanding of Istanbul I aviation agreements (Abdi, 2017).

Given its later attempts to solely regain the air traffic management of the former Somali Republic, Somalia was not apparently willing to move the air traffic management base to Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. Paradoxically, they signed this agreement of establishing air traffic management joint committee based in Hargeisa and, at the same time, began reclaiming the air traffic management from the United Nations and had talks with the respective institutions solely. The Minister of Aviation of Somalia, Mohamed Abdilahi Salad confirmed to the VOA Somali that the Air Traffic Management of Somalia will be moved from Nairobi to Mogadishu in late October 2017 (Salad, 2017). Eventually, Somalia declared that it officially reclaimed the Air Traffic Management from the United Nations on 28 December 2017 (BBC, 2017).

4. Big Challenges in the Process

Notwithstanding that six rounds took place since the beginning of the talks, it is discouraging that the process achieved very little until it came to deadlock; moreover, non-implementing of that *'little'* is another setback, inflammatory words were not avoided, and air traffic management board was not established. Somaliland often blames Somalia for undermining the talks (Yonis, 2015). The Federal Government of

Somalia, on the contrary, constantly expressed their willingness to continue the process.

The talks were unsuccessful due to cumulative innate challenges as well as technical factors that emerged during the process, and expect to accompany during the process until adopting new options and strategies to deal with it.

Furthermore, lack of commitment from both sides contributed to the breakdown of negotiations. In addition, misarrangements and weak preparations, because of lack of joint technical committee, were apparent in the process.¹⁸

4.1 Divergent and Non-Negotiable Political Positions

Somaliland's breakaway was in May 1991, it failed to achieve recognition from a single country. As a result, Somaliland eventually accepted to talk to Somalia about its secession. Although Somaliland accepted to hold talks with Somalia, it nevertheless underscored that its independence and sovereignty are unnegotiable. On the contrary, Somalia considered the proposed talks as an opportunity to convince Somaliland to remain in the union. It always stressed that the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia are unnegotiable. Constitutions of both Somaliland and Somalia underline that the territorial integrity of each of them is unnegotiable.¹⁹ As a result, it was expected that the talks will become very hard and face big challenges as soon as they start discussing the '*major issue*' of the future relations. In the Djibouti round, the two sides agreed to take bold steps on the future political relations. Even though both sides did not demonstrate the courage of discussing the principal issues, Djibouti round unveiled that the time to decide on the principal issues has arrived. Divergent and non-negotiable political positions, therefore, jeopardized and hindered the process. These political positions determine what each side wants to

achieve in the process. The then government of Somaliland, for instance, engaged in the talks as a means of achieving recognition. On the other hand, Somalia sees the process as a chance to bring Somaliland back to the union. Apparently, the two sides were poles apart, and therefore, little achievements could be expected from the talks. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile mentioning that the pressure from the international community, in the London Conference, in particular, played a major role for the two sides to engage in the process as the international community is a major and influential player in Somali affairs.

How the dialogue process is viewed by the two sides also matters. Somaliland considered the talks as an external issue; mandated the talks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and its delegations were always led by the Foreign Affairs Minister of Somaliland. On the contrary, Somalia considered it as an internal issue; the Ministry of Interior Affairs represented the government of Somalia and the Minister of Interior Affairs always led its delegations. Changing political situations and different internal pressures in both Somaliland and Somalia challenged the talks as well (Muxumed, 2018).²⁰

4.2 Unaddressed Grievances

During the colonial era, the two sides were under two different colonial powers and received their independence on two different dates. Somaliland received its independence on 26 June 1960 from the British Empire, while Somalia received its independence on 1 July 1960 from Italy (being under UN Mandated Italian Trusteeship). Four days after its independence, Somaliland voluntarily united with Somalia and gave up its sovereignty in the hope of realizing the dream of Greater Somalia.²¹ Unfortunately, the people of Somaliland were marginalized after the union which led to the skepticism and disappointment of Somalilanders

towards the union. In Bulhan's words, "unity without condition turned out to be unity on unequal terms" (Bulhan, 2008: 59).

Moreover, what added insult to injury were the crimes against humanity and atrocities committed in the late 1980s in northern Somalia (later Somaliland), in which, the "Isaaq Clan" was targeted by the military regime of Somalia. In 1980s, the Isaaq civilians were particularly targeted because of their clan affiliations or political positions. Thus, cruel counter-insurgency led to the indiscriminate massacre of innocent civilians, total destruction of cities and towns, killing livestock, destroying water pools, wells and dams, and numerous harsh and cruel activities (Africa Watch Committee 1990). As a result, around 100,000 people are believed to have been killed, while over 500,000 were forced to flee from their homes (Ingiriis 2016). This also included the mass destruction of Hargeisa and Burao cities; Hargeisa was about 90 percent destroyed and Burao about 70 percent was destroyed (International Crisis Group 2006: 5). These destructions, ICG report (2006: 6) describes as:

Although the Barre government also targeted other rebel groups and their supporters at different times between 1978 and 1991, no other Somali community faced such sustained and intense state-sponsored violence.

Jasiira beach massacre in Mogadishu in July 1989 is another indicator of atrocities against the Isaaq clan, the only incident of its kind occurred in the capital in the dictatorship era. Kapteijns (2013:105) captures this incident as:

The government's violence was directed at all civilians suspected of support for the opposition. However, the most well-known gruesome incident, which became public because one man accidentally survived, involved forty-six middle-class men, professionals, businessmen, and teachers, whom their captors believed to be

Isaaq. These men were taken from their homes in the middle of the night, transported to Jasiira, a beach outside Mogadishu, and summarily executed.

In Istanbul II, the two sides affirmed that they “...share the pain inflicted upon the Somali people by the military regime in Somalia before the year 1991...[and] condemn all the atrocities committed by that regime throughout all Somali people [sic] particularly the people of Somaliland”. This issue resulted in an outrage in some public spheres in Somaliland and the representatives of Somaliland in this round were criticized.²²

Due to the above mentioned mass atrocities and grievances, it is unlikely for the two sides to reach a sustainable decision on their future relations unless these grievances are addressed. Mistrust yielding from these grievances will always, as expected, jeopardize the outcome of the talks. Whatsoever, the Somaliland-Somalia talks cannot be fruitful unless these mass atrocities are dealt with acquiescently and openly. Addressing these grievances is necessary in the case of possible reunion, though unlikely in the near future.

4.3 External Role

This dialogue process was imposed on the two sides by the international community in the 2012 London Conference on Somalia.²³ Since both sides were in need of the international community’s assistance, they had no choice but to accept the proposed talks. To emphasize more, the international community financed and still finances all efforts – maintaining peace, peace building and state building, among others – of restoring peace and stability in Somalia.²⁴ Initially, the responsibility of the process was assumed by the United Kingdom, which hosted that same

conference; the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Djibouti hosted it later. Nonetheless, the process ended up as a mere Turkish project.

The UK's involvement in the Somali affairs endured since the colonial era. They are among the supreme foreign players in the Somali affairs. Their policies are not limited to the Federal Government, but they have a decent relation with Somaliland as well and directly deal with Somaliland, though they do not recognize it officially as an independent state. Thus, although they are more deeply involved in Somalia as part of the efforts of the international community to restore peace and stability.

Turkey, the principal host and organizer of the talks became deeply involved in the Somali affairs lately. Turkey's involvement dates back to 2011 when the former Prime Minister and the current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Mogadishu. Turkey's presence in Somalia has been growing ever since.

The United Nation's role in the talks is not apparent. Nicholas Kay, the former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, whom was asked to give updates on the talks while speaking at the International Peace Institute (IPI) in June 2015 said “[A]t the moment, it is not going anywhere. The last round of talks broke up in Turkey, without the two sides meeting, and I have not seen a date set for any further resumption of that. Obviously, we are keen to encourage a process, but this is a process that the government of Turkey has been hosting and organizing” (Kay, 2015).

In short, as could be expected according to the realist theory in international relations, conflicting, interest-based roles of foreign states challenge the process. Therefore, the mediation efforts must be more inclusive and add relevant countries and organizations, a step which may minimize the potential conflict. Actually, Somaliland requested more

inclusive mediation and Turkey accepted this notion and working to expand its coordination with others in its recent attempts to resume the talks in 2019 (Abdi, 2019).

5. Towards a Successful Dialogue

To revive the talks and reach tangible results, I propose the following recommendations:

a- Inclusive Mediation Efforts

The mediation efforts must be more inclusive and add relevant partners (countries and organizations). These mediators better to take effective role and exercise pressure on the two parties to revive the talks, deal with the big issues, accomplish their obligations towards the process and ensure the implementation of what has been, and will be, agreed upon.

b- Strong Commitment

Commitment is an essential element in any negotiations. Unless both sides are characterized by political will and strong commitment, the talks cannot be fruitful. As the old saying goes, 'if there is a will, there is a way'. If there is no will to solve this issue, negotiation teams will show up in the hosting countries pretending to talk, time and other resources will be wasted, and at the end of the day, there will be no result at all. Both sides need to learn lessons from the previous failed round talks.

c- Addressing the Past Atrocities

It is necessary to consider the past mass atrocities and grievances. Addressing these atrocities is a suitable way for both '*dealing with the past and preparing for future stability*'. There are a range of responses to these mass atrocities, including, among others, judicial mechanisms, truth

commissions and compensation (Khayre 2016: 10-26). However, acknowledging these atrocities and other relevant grievances and addressing them openly will pave the way for productive talks.

d- A Joint Technical Committee

It is necessary, also, the two sides to establish a joint technical committee which arranges agendas and schedules, and regularly reviews the previous agreements and their implementation.

e- A Referendum after a Transitional Period

The two parties, Somalia and Somaliland, still hold their '*constitutionalized*' unnegotiable positions. This constitutes the biggest challenge in the process. To continue the process necessitates addressing the '*major issue*' which needs a new initiative to break this deadlock and overcome it. A possible agreeable option is to agree on a transitional period under one state and then, after agreed period, hold a free and fair referendum from the people of Somaliland on whether they will remain part of Somalia or secede;²⁵ and the result will be accepted amicably. In the transitional period, Somaliland will remain autonomous as its now. For this option, it will be necessary to provide a suitable environment and necessary arrangements for the referendum; as well as post-referendum arrangements (whatever the outcome of the referendum is) and any other relevant issues.

This is one of the possible solutions in which the seceding state (Somaliland) and the parent state (Somalia) are expected to decide their future relations and move towards a sustainable solution. Instead of politicians or governments, this procedure gives the final self-determination decision to the people of Somaliland. It is common that such decisions are made on the bases of a plebiscite. Although conditions

are not the same, this option is similar to the cases of Sudan-South Sudan²⁶ and Ethiopia-Eritrea.²⁷

6. Attempts to Resume the Talks

Since the collapse of the talks, politicians from both Somaliland and Somalia reiterated their willingness to resume the talks as soon as the elections are held on both sides (in the years of 2016 and 2017).²⁸ However, there are no apparent efforts by the two parties; Turkey, nonetheless, seemed the most concerned party. Following the failure of the talk rounds between the politicians of the respective sides, the government of Turkey reshaped its role and attempted to create a role for non-state actors, particularly intellectuals.

In 2015 an issue of targeted the traditional elders came to light when certain elders told the press that they were approached to be part of the Somaliland-Somalia talks process by the Turkish Consulate in Hargeisa. Then the opposition politicians rejected this approach (Horn Cable TV, 2015b); and later the Turkish Consul General in Hargeisa denied the existence of such a plan in the first place (Horn Cable TV, 2015c).

In April 2016, a meeting of six intellectuals – three from each side – was held in Ankara, hosted by the Center for Foreign Policy and Peace Research, İhsan Doğramacı Peace Foundation. Turkish intellectuals were present as well in the meeting including the Ambassador Ahmet Riza Derer, the Special Representative of Turkey for Somaliland-Somalia Talks. The intellectuals discussed the history of the political differences between Somaliland and Somalia and the current situation. Moreover, they exchanged views on how intellectuals can cooperate and the role they can play in the current political stalemate of the two sides (Omer, 2016). Nevertheless, the exact role of the intellectuals has never been elaborated.

That Turkey's role in the process was just offering a platform, but seemingly, after the deadlock it reshaped its role and upgraded to mediate and generate possible solutions and strategies for the major issues. The former Turkish Ambassador to Somalia, Dr. Olgan Bekar, was appointed Turkey's special envoy in the Somalia-Somaliland talks in December 2018 and begun contacts and tours to revive the talks (Hiiraan Online, 2018).

As affirmed by President Muse Bihi Abdi, Somaliland was too reluctant to engage in talks solely organized by Turkey and, thus, requested more inclusive mediation. Turkey considered the demand of Somaliland and invited several partners including the UK, USA, EU, and Sweden, who all accepted to be part of the process (Abdi, 2019). Despite all these efforts, President Bihi Abdi of Somaliland expressed his concern about the commitment of Somalia (Abdi, 2019).

7. Conclusion

Since the beginning of the Somaliland- Somalia Talks in 2012, six rounds took place in the UK, the UAE, Turkey, and Djibouti. All these meetings have had little achievements before the whole process collapsed in 2015.

The study projects that this dialogue process may resume sometime in the future (near or distant). This is because of two reasons. First, politicians of both sides have promises to keep the talks. Politicians of Somaliland need to show their people that they are working through all means to achieve recognition including talking to Somalia. They may argue, as they already did, that there are no other opportunities and other doors closed except to talk with the parent country, Somalia, to obtain their consent to independence. On the other side, there are increasing voices in Mogadishu and beyond pressing the Federal Government to end the current stalemate and restart the Somaliland-Somalia talks and achieve a complete political reconciliation in order to conclude the federal structure

of Somalia (Ahmed, 2019). Second, a foreign pressure is likely and both parties can be influenced and pushed to resume the talks.

The author proposed five recommendations, thought it necessary to establish a way forward for the dialogue and achieve a meaningful result, which are:

- a) More Inclusive mediation efforts by engaging relevant countries and organizations.
- b) Political will and strong commitment from both sides
- c) Addressing the past atrocities and grievances with a range of possible options including, among others, judicial mechanisms, truth commissions and compensation.
- d) Establishing a joint technical committee which arranges agendas and schedules, and regularly reviews the previous agreements and their implementation.
- e) A referendum by the people of Somaliland after transitional period of time and the result must be accepted agreeably.

Nonetheless, these talks, given their nature and the attitude of the negotiating parties, faces great challenges since there are neither ‘strong political will’ nor proposals on the table. Therefore, it is likely that the current political standstill between Somaliland and Somalia may continue in the near future. However, state-building project in both sides will be limping unless final conclusion is reached on the Somaliland and Somalia future relations.

Notes

- ¹ On 31 May 2001, Somaliland held constitutional referendum at which 97.10% of the voters approved the constitution and 2.90% rejected it. The election result is available at <http://africanelections.tripod.com/somaliland.html> [African Elections Database] accessed on 16 April 2019.
- ² The Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia, article (1), clause (3) says ‘The sovereignty and unity of the Federal Republic of Somalia is inviolable.’ whereas the constitution of the Republic of Somaliland, article (1) say: (clause 1) The country which gained its independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 26th June 1960 and was known as the Somaliland Protectorate and which joined Somalia on 1st July 1960 so as to form the Somali Republic and then regained its independence by the Declaration of the Conference of the Somaliland Communities held in Burao between 27th April 1991 and 15th May 1991 shall hereby and in accordance with this Constitution become a sovereign and independent country known as “The Republic of Somaliland”. (clause 3) The territory of the nation is inviolable, and shall not be trespassed upon.
- ³ In general, the Somalia-Somaliland issue, with its apparent significance, did not get adequate attention in Somali studies academia.
- ⁴ The author is grateful to Prof. Deniz Yüksek of Istanbul Aydin University for comments and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) for funding his MA program in Turkey.
- ⁵ London Conference on Somalia: Communiqué (2012) from Foreign and Commonwealth of UK. Accessed June 8, 2017: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/sede/dv/sede_200312londonconference_/sede200312londonconference_en.pdf
- ⁶ London Conference on Somalia: Communiqué (2012) from Foreign and Commonwealth of UK. Accessed June 8, 2017: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/sede/dv/sede_200312londonconference_/sede200312londonconference_en.pdf
- ⁷ In October 2003, Somaliland passed a law prohibiting, from any person and entity (state and non-state actors) of Somaliland, any participation in meetings or any other matters concerning discussions of settling disputes between

various Somalian factions or between all of them. In a joint resolution passed on 5 February 2012, the two houses of the Somaliland Parliament amended, on the recommendation of the President Ahmed Mohamed 'Silanyo', their previous resolution and have added the following two clauses: (1) The Somaliland Government may attend any meetings which are considered as being of interest (benefit) to Somaliland and which do not conflict with the existing sovereignty and constitution of Somaliland. (2) The two house support the participation of the Government in the London Conference (to be held on 23 February 2012). Available at http://www.somalilandlaw.com/Law_Prohibiting_Participation_in_Somalia_Meetings_2003_as_amended_in_2012.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2eTayubvAH-rsJwb9XA-GaKBI70z5TwwMwsXRS3JQyIV2fgqDEfY5vT8s, accessed on 20 April 2019.

- ⁸ Furthermore, the two sides emphasized their commitment and agreed to share experience on working with the international community on the use of development and humanitarian assistance for the benefit of people in both Somaliland and Somalia, and at the same time, requested the international community to increase that aid.
- ⁹ Chevening House Declaration (20-21 June 2012). Received a copy of the declaration from Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation.
- ¹⁰ Dubai Statement (28 June, 2012). Received a copy of the statement with the signatures of the two presidents of Somaliland and Somalia from Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
- ¹¹ A copy of the Ankara Communiqué from the Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs was received from United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Hargeisa Office.
- ¹² A copy of the Istanbul I Communiqué (7-9 July 2013) was received from United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Hargeisa Office.
- ¹³ A copy of the Istanbul II Communiqué (18 January, 2014) was received from United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Hargeisa Office. This communiqué was an extended one with a number of sub-headings including dialogue process design, code of conduct and declaration of principles.

- ¹⁴ There was a strong argument between the two sides in this round on which term to use for these crimes. However, the Somali government side rejected to consider those crimes as genocide. Even, there were debates in the media outlets in Hargeisa on the term selected. For more details about these crimes, refer to section 4.2 “Unaddressed Grievances”.
- ¹⁵ Djibouti Agreement (21 December, 2014). A copy of Somaliland-Somalia Agreement signed by the two presidents in Djibouti was received from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Hargeisa Office.
- ¹⁶ In a debate hosted by Horn Cable TV, the former advisor of the President of Somaliland on the elections and the current minister of the Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development, Mohamed Ibrahim Adan, argued that the Djibouti round was unofficial.
- ¹⁷ From a focus group discussion with several journalists and intellectuals held in Hargeisa in April 2017 by the Author. Others, like Dahir M. Dahir, political officer at UNSOM also argue the same.
- ¹⁸ For more details, refer to Muxumed, 2018 (Kala-Maan) pp. 138-140.
- ¹⁹ For more details, refer to note #2
- ²⁰ For more details, refer to (Muxumed, 2018). Kala-Maan: Bilowgii iyo Burburkii Wadahadallada Soomaalilaand iyo Soomaaliya, pp. 102-140.
- ²¹ Greater Somalia ‘*Soomaali Weyn*’ refers to the vision of forming united country for all five Somali territories (namely British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, Northern Frontier District- present North Eastern Kenya, French Somaliland – present-day Djibouti, and Western Somalia – present Somali State region in Ethiopia). In 1960, the British Somaliland and the Italian Somaliland were united and formed the Somali Republic.
- ²² They argue that the article generalizes the crimes committed by the military regime against all Somalis but what happened in Northern Somalia (Later Somaliland) was different and incomparable. Hence, the public sphere in Hargeisa was engaged in heated debates of this topic.
- ²³ Somaliland accepted the invitation of the UK and attended the 2012 London Conference alongside Somalia, but both sides did not expect the article on the talks. That is why many argue that the process was imposed on the two sides.

- ²⁴ The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) was established for the mentioned purpose in June 2013 and subsequently was renewed its mandate yearly by Security Council, and the current mandate is valid until 31 March 2020. In Somaliland issue, UNSOM is engaged in contacts with relevant sides to foster dialogue and a spirit of continued engagement and reconciliation. For more details, refer to the official website of UNSOM [<https://unsom.unmissions.org/>].
- ²⁵ The referendum in May 2001 in Somaliland was a unilateral, accordingly did not coordinated with the parent state (Somalia) which led to its rejection of the result; but this proposed one will be with the consent of both sides, the seceding state (Somaliland) and the parent state (Somalia).
- ²⁶ In March 1972, through the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, South Sudan was granted regional autonomy. Unfortunately, the Ja'far Numayri regime revoked the peace agreement in 1983, which resulted in the beginning of a 21-year-long civil war between the two sides. Finally, South Sudan managed to claim self-determination and convince the North to accept their right to self-determination under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in January 2005 in Kenya. This peace negotiation was facilitated and organized by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In this agreement, South Sudan was awarded a six-year transitional period (from July 2005 to January 2011) before a referendum was held. South Sudan eventually achieved independence through a self-determination referendum on 1 January 2011, in which the Southern Sudanese voted in an overwhelming majority of 98 percent for independence (Malwal, 2015).
- ²⁷ After a 30-year long armed struggle with Ethiopia, Eritrea seceded in 1991. Following an UN-supervised referendum, Eritreans voted for independence in April 1993 then declared its independence. The Government of Ethiopia supported the process and accepted the result of the referendum, and a separation was effected amicably.
- ²⁸ In late 2016 and early 2017, parliamentary and presidential elections were held in Somalia respectively. On the other hand, the presidential election of Somaliland planned to take place in 2015 was postponed at least twice, and finally took place in November 2017.

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Published by Institute for Somali Studies

Hodan District, Near Km4 Square

Website: www.isos.so

Email: isos@mu.edu.so

Tel/Fax: +252 1 858118

Mogadishu, Somalia