

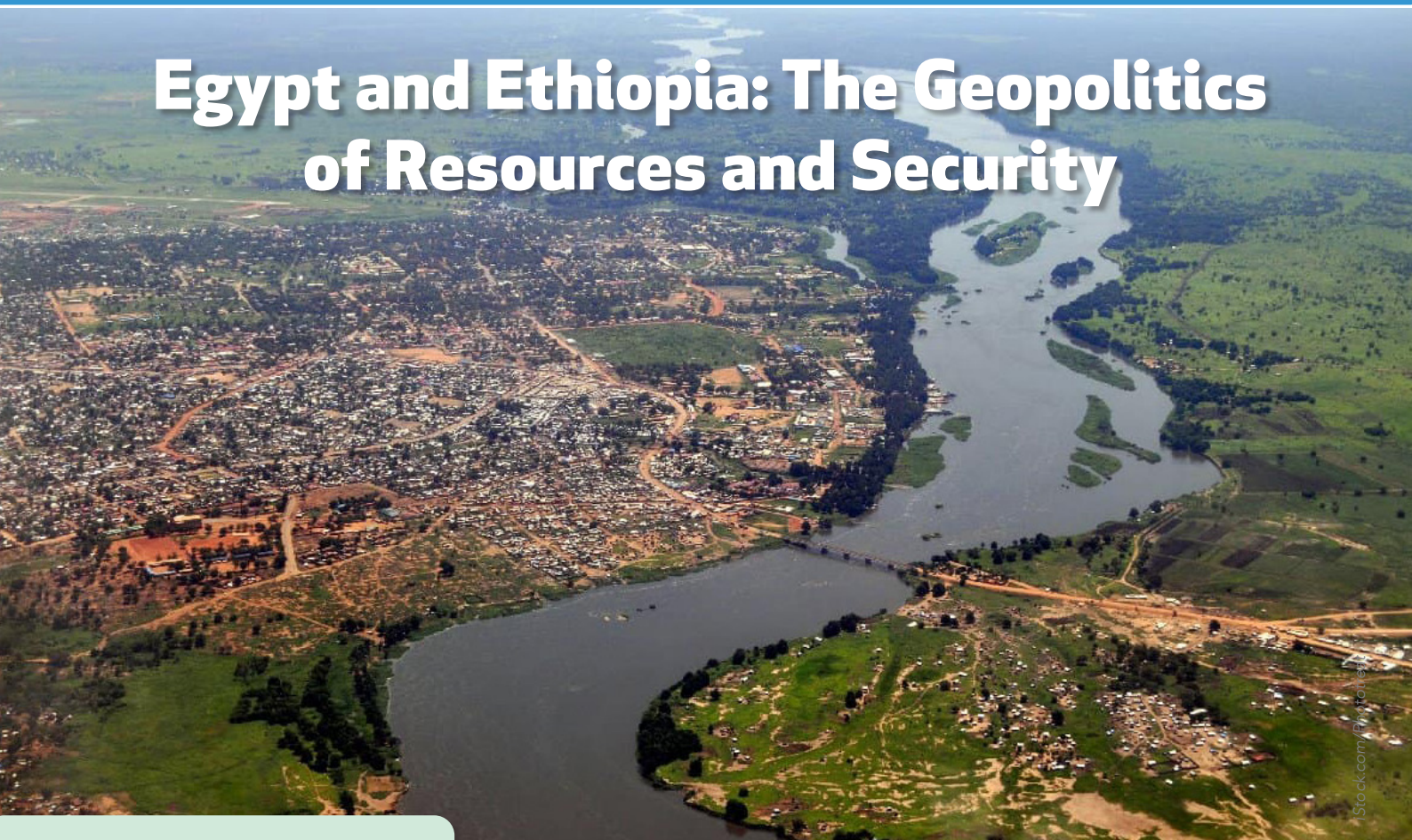
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Volume V | Issue VI | November-December 2022

# HORN

Bulletin

## Egypt and Ethiopia: The Geopolitics of Resources and Security



The HORN Bulletin is a bi-monthly publication by the HORN Institute. It contains thematic articles mainly on issues affecting the Horn of Africa region.

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### Abstract

Egypt and Ethiopia are undeniably two important middle powers in northeastern Africa with distinct identities. They have a long history of interactions that have varied between cooperation and contention. Culturally, their respective populations share two religions – Coptic Christianity and Islam of the Sunni sect – while geographically, they share the resources of the Nile River Basin. These connections have facilitated mutually beneficial trade, but also have led to periodic confrontations or at the very least disputes. Fluctuating borders and control of trade routes and resources led to conflict during the nineteenth century. As independent African states during the



first half of the twentieth century before the period of decolonization, Egypt and Ethiopia cooperated in the process of modernization in the latter country. Since then, while the Ethiopian church achieved autocephaly, the Cold War, the Arab-Israeli conflict, droughts and population growth have at times negatively affected bilateral relations. In recent years, the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the lack of an agreement on a timetable for filling the dam's reservoir and on water release in the event of droughts has created a potentially dangerous situation in northeastern Africa.

## Introduction

Egypt and Ethiopia are undeniably two important middle powers with distinct identities located in northeastern Africa within the Nile River Basin area. Egypt is the most populated Arab state with a population of over 104 million, composed of 90% Muslim (predominantly Sunni) and 10% Christian, with a majority of the latter being Coptic Orthodox. Ethiopia is a multiethnic, multilingual country with the second largest population in Sub-Saharan Africa after Nigeria at just under 118 million,

composed of approximately 44% Ethiopian Orthodox (Coptic), 31% Sunni Muslim, and the remainder predominantly other Christian sects and traditional faiths (World Bank, 2021). Approximately 95% of Egypt's population lives within 20 kilometres of the Nile River and its delta and only 2.8% of its land is arable (CIA, *World Factbook*, "Egypt," 2022). In 2021, annual rainfall in Egypt was just over 21 millimetres (or 0.8 inches), the lowest in Africa (Trading Economics, 2022). Approximately 80% of Ethiopia's population lives in rural areas and is concentrated in the northern and middle parts of the country, while 15.2% of the land is arable (CIA, *World Factbook*, "Ethiopia," 2022). In 2021, annual rainfall in Ethiopia was 927 millimetres or 36.5 inches (Trading Economics, 2022). As can be seen, both countries have sizable rural populations, with Egypt's being more concentrated and more dependent upon the Nile as a source of water, especially for agriculture and, in recent decades, as an important source of electrical power. It accounts for 90 per cent of Egypt's water needs. However, at the same time, Ethiopia has had a history of recurring droughts. While sharing the Nile River



Ethiopians protesting against Egyptian interference with Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) (Photo Credits: AFP)

Basin is a commonality of geography, one of a social nature is Coptic Christianity, which originated in Egypt and became the state church of Ethiopia under that country's monarchy.

The two countries have had a long history of interactions. In recent centuries, upon which this article will concentrate, that initially involved military conflicts as the respective territories under their rule, which fluctuated, bordered one another. Unlike many other territories in Africa, neither country became a European colony during the nineteenth century. However, both Egypt and Ethiopia did fall under the direct influence of European powers for periods of time. In the case of Egypt, which had become autonomous from the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, Britain established a protectorate over that country, first informally and later formally from 1881-1922, and still had influence over certain issues in that country until 1936. In the case of Ethiopia, it was occupied by Italy, either in part or in full, from 1935-1941. Otherwise, Egypt and Ethiopia engaged in relations that have varied between cooperation and contention, given the nature of the world and regional politics at the time – including the Arab-Israeli conflict – and/or disputes over water usage in the Nile River Basin. Currently, the most important concern is how will the operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) located on the Blue Nile – where about 85 per cent of the waters of the Nile originate – which began generating electricity in 2022, affect water flow to downstream neighbors, Sudan and Egypt.

### **Egyptian-Ethiopian Relations: From Earliest Times to the Present**

According to Ethiopian church tradition, the Coptic sect of Christianity was brought to Ethiopia by two Syrian boys who became slaves in the court of the King of Axum, Ella Amida, at the end of the third century C.E. When Ella Amida's son, Ezanas, who converted to Christianity, came to power early in the fourth century, one of the slaves, who had been freed by the King's mother travelled to visit the Patriarch in Alexandria, upon which he was appointed Bishop of Axum to further his evangelism (Marcus, 1994, p. 7). Axum thus became politically and religiously linked to Byzantine Egypt until the Arab conquest of that country during the mid-seventh century; afterwards, despite generally cordial relations with Egypt, both Muslim civil and Coptic religious authorities refused to allow the Ethiopian church the right to appoint its own metropolitan (archbishop) and bishops (Marcus, 1994, pp. 13-14).

“the construction of GERD and the lack of an agreement on a timetable for filling the dam's reservoir and on water release in the event of droughts has created a potentially dangerous situation in northeastern Africa

The kingdom of Axum fell to the Zangwe dynasty in the tenth century, which subsequently in 1270 gave way to the last royal line of Ethiopia, the Solomonic dynasty under Emperor Yekuno Amlak from Shewa; in order to enhance legitimacy, he and his followers promoted a fictitious story about his descent from King Solomon and Makeda, the Queen of Sheba (known as Saba in Ethiopia). As Yekuno Amlak subsequently conquered Muslim-populated areas adjacent to Shewa, Mamluk authorities in Cairo refused to send a new bishop to Ethiopia (Marcus, 1994, p. 20). This form of leverage was possible until the Ethiopian Orthodox Church achieved autocephaly (their own patriarch) in 1959. Yet a successor of Yekuno Amlak, Amda Siyon, who quashed Muslim rebellions in Ethiopia and threatened to divert the waters of the Blue Nile in response to the persecution of Egyptian Copts, forced Mamluk authorities to restore a bishop to Ethiopia in 1337 (Marcus, 1994, pp. 21-22; Pankhurst, 1997, p. 40).

As mentioned earlier, during the nineteenth century, Egypt, autonomous from the Ottoman Empire, and Ethiopia came into conflict over the possession of territories on their common border. From 1769 to 1855, known as “the time of the princes,” powerless Ethiopian emperors were dependent upon provincial warlords. The Egyptian governor Muhammad Ali invaded the interior of Sudan in the early 1820s in search of slaves and gold, having earlier established control over the Red Sea ports of Suakin in Sudan and Massawa in Eritrea. During the campaign, his troops were pushed into gold-bearing areas claimed by Ethiopia. However, with having to conduct simultaneous military operations in Greece and Arabia, the Egyptian presence in Sudan was somewhat overextended, and the border area in Mordechai Abir's words, became “a vast no man's land ... between the most forward posts of the Egyptians and what Ethiopian lords considered to be their territories” (Abir, p. 447) Fighting along this frontier continued on and off, and in May 1842, Muhammad Ali told the French consul-general in Egypt that “hostilities between the population of Ethiopia

## In 1929, Egypt and Britain signed an agreement stipulating that “no irrigation or power works or measures are to be constructed or taken on the River Nile or its tributaries, or on the lakes from which it flows in so far as all these are in Sudan or in countries under British administration

and the Egyptians were never serious,” but that military actions in the area disturbed the caravan trade and Egypt wanted to protect it (Abir, p. 447). By the end of 1848, the Egyptians were unable to defend the Red Sea coast and evacuated Massawa and surrounding areas. Yet as for the “undefined and contested border” between the two countries, “Rebels, highwaymen and malcontents of different sorts were using each side against the other” (Abir, p. 460).

The conflict would heat up again in the 1870s when Egypt was ruled by Khedive Ismail, Muhammad Ali’s grandson, and Ethiopia by Emperor Yohannes IV (reigned 1871-1889). In 1865, Egypt regained control of Massawa, and seven years later occupied lands between Massawa and Sudan. In 1875, the Egyptians captured the important trading center at Harar and consolidated their control over the Somali coast. However, despite having good relations with King Menelik of Shewa – who would later be crowned Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia in 1889 – the Egyptians were defeated handily by Emperor Yohannes’ forces, four times larger in number, at Gura, located in present-day Eritrea southeast of Asmara, in March 1876 (Yohannes, 1991, pp. 37-38; Marcus, 1994, pp. 74-75). The Egyptians would hold on to parts of Eritrea into the early 1880s when they abandoned Sudan, which fell under the control of the Mahdi, and Italy invaded Eritrea. In 1899, Britain set up the Anglo-Egyptian condominium in Sudan, which despite its name, was essentially run by the British governors-general until Sudan was granted independence in 1956. In May 1902, an Anglo-Ethiopian treaty was signed – the negotiation over which Egypt was not a participant and a treaty was never ratified by either the British Parliament or Ethiopia’s Crown Council – demarcating the Sudanese-Egyptian border (Hanna, 2019, p. 2902). Also, Emperor Menelik II agreed not to construct or allow it to be constructed and works across the Blue Nile, Lake Tana or the Sabot [meaning the Sobat River, now located in South Sudan, but has tributaries originating in Ethiopia] which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty’s Government and the Government of Sudan (Kendie, 1999, p. 146).

Meanwhile, Emperor Menelik II, who would rule Ethiopia until his death in 1913, instituted a process of modernizing his country. Infrastructure was either improved or built anew in Addis Ababa; schools (which employed Egyptian teachers), hospitals and a government press as well as a national postal system – which also offered telephone and telegraphic service – and a bank were established.

In March 1905, the last institution, known as the Bank of Abyssinia, was created as an affiliate of the National Bank of Egypt (Marcus, 1994, p. 107). This financial institution, which issued bank notes and engaged in commercial banking was a fifty-year concession with shares in the operation owned by British, French and Italian groups, and conducted most transactions in Maria Theresa thalers, even though world banking was based on the gold standard. It began operations in Addis Ababa in February 1906. In 1930, Emperor Haile Selassie, who at one time was a member of the Board of Directors, nationalized the bank and provided adequate compensation to the shareholders. It was chartered as the Bank of Ethiopia in August 1931, with private shareholders participating in a joint-stock company, though operations were fully controlled by the Ethiopian government; however, the company was liquidated by the Italians in 1936 (Mauri, 2010, pp. 104-106, 108-110, and 114-115). When the Bank of Ethiopia was reopened in 1943, Egyptians were invited to provide technical assistance, in addition to Ethiopia’s Department of Mines, Coal, Customs, and Factory Management (Hanna, 2019, p. 2903). Besides the national bank, Menelik created a Ministry of Education with an Egyptian educator in charge until 1936 (Hanna, 2019, p. 2903).

Luckily, Ethiopia avoided participation in the First World War as all its European colonial neighbors were members of the Entente, though Menelik’s grandson, Emperor Iyasu V (reigned 1913-1916) flirted with the Ottoman Empire, a member of the Central Powers (Bishku, 2022, p.3); he was replaced by Menelik’s daughter Zewditu (reigned 1916-1930), who was succeeded by Haile Selassie, though the latter, as heir apparent, wielded a certain amount of power over Ethiopia’s internal administration and foreign

policy during Zewditu's reign. Egypt, however, was pulled into the war effort, being forced to provide labor and commodities for the British army; Britain's policies provoked nationalist fervor throughout the country following the war and forced the British to concede Egypt's independence in 1922 with four reservations: 1) the maintenance of security for Imperial communications; 2) influence in defense matters; 3) protection of foreign interests and minorities in Egypt; and 4) administration of Sudan. In 1936, Egypt gained the right to make treaties with foreign countries, while the British relinquished their reservations withdrawing their military forces to the Suez Canal and allowing Egypt some influence over Sudanese affairs. The following year, Egypt joined the League of Nations.

Egypt and Ethiopia established formal diplomatic relations in 1927, with Egypt opening a consulate in Addis Ababa (Egypt, State Information Service, 2019). However, in 1924, one year after Ethiopia joined the League of Nations, an organization which Haile Selassie mistakenly believed would provide Ethiopia with adequate collective security, the heir apparent to the Ethiopian throne visited Egypt. His main goal was to meet with the Coptic patriarch and convince that official to have the current old bishop in Ethiopia (Matewos) be replaced with an Ethiopian upon his death – which happened in 1926 – and to allow his successors to appoint other bishops in Ethiopia, requests that were denied as was a demand to have the keys to the Jerusalem monastery of Deir al-Sultan at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Erich, 2002, pp. 97-98); the first set of issues were eventually settled with autocephaly being granted in 1959, while the second issue, was decided by the Israeli government in favor of the Ethiopians in 1970 ("Deir es-Sultan Monastery's," 2018). Haile Selassie also visited the Delta Barrages, built during the mid-nineteenth century and repaired during the British occupation of Egypt to provide irrigation for agriculture (Erich, 2002, p. 97).

In 1929, Egypt and Britain signed an agreement stipulating that "no irrigation or power works or measures are to be constructed or taken on the River Nile or its tributaries, or on the lakes from which it flows in so far as all these are in Sudan or in countries under British administration, which would entail prejudice to the interests of Egypt." As Ethiopia was never a British colony, once again restrictions did not apply to that country (Kendie, 1999, p. 147). Meanwhile, Egypt and Ethiopia engaged in trade with the former exporting food products, while importing

coffee, fabrics and shoes (Hanna, 2019, p. 2903). In April 1935, just six months before Italy invaded Ethiopia, an Ethiopian delegation unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate a treaty of friendship with Egypt. The Italian legation in Cairo informed the Egyptian government that such would be regarded as "an unfriendly act towards Italy," even though Egypt could not have taken such action until the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of August 1936. Yet it was the Italian invasion of Ethiopia that influenced Egypt and Britain to arrive at that agreement. While some Egyptians volunteered to fight against the Italians or to serve in Red Crescent medical teams on the battlefield, there was also a small segment of ultranationalists who disliked Ethiopia due to their perception of its treatment of Muslims in that country and/or the fact that Italy might pose a useful threat to eliminate all British influence in Egypt (Arielli, 2013, pp. 54-58).

In April 1942, Ethiopia demanded that Britain, which had established a military administration over Eritrea, turn over to its control of that territory based on historical and ethnic arguments and as a form of reparation for Italy's aggression against Ethiopia. Egypt, for its part, submitted a memorandum to the victorious Allied countries in 1946 laying claim to Eritrea on historical and economic grounds, the latter due to the importance of the port of Massawa for the external trade of inland Sudan (Yohannes, 1991, pp. 73-76). In 1952, the United Nations under pressure from the United States, approved Eritrea being in a federation with pro-Western Ethiopia. Eritrea was to have autonomy on all matters except foreign affairs, defence and currency, but Ethiopia proceeded to weaken the territory's status and character, including, in 1957, replacing Tigrinya and Arabic with Amharic as the official language. In 1962, Ethiopia annexed Eritrea, one year after conflict ensued with Egypt's Arab nationalist President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who had overthrown the

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The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), established in July 1960, was dominated by Eritrean Muslims and had a military training base near Alexandria, Egypt (Erich, 1994, pp. 130-133) until 1963 when the group moved to Syria. Beginning in 1962, Nasser concentrated on the war in Yemen against the royalist government there, the event which prompted Ethiopia to annex Eritrea (Erich, 1994, p. 139). Also, the ELF base was closed so that Nasser could join host Haile Selassie in the opening ceremony for the Organization of African States' (OAU) headquarters in Addis Ababa (Erich, 2014, pp. 139-140). Yet the ELF's inspiration had been formed when its leaders were in exile in Egypt as it "depicted the rebellion in Eritrea as part of a pan-Arab revolution and Ethiopia as a satellite of colonialism and Zionism." Indeed, one of its founders, Ibrahim Sultan, stated the following at an Arab League summit in Cairo in 1964: "We the Eritreans are Arabs no less than the Palestinians. We fight against the Jews of Africa as personified by the emperor and his government – the offspring of Solomon, the Lion of Judah, just like the Palestinians fight against the Jews in Palestine" (Erich, 2002, p. 147).

Yet when the Ethiopian emperor visited Cairo in June 1959, Nasser praised Haile Selassie, revealing that he met the emperor in 1940 as an army officer stationed in Khartoum and had admired him since then, while Haile Selassie "was less gracious," but as Haggai Erlich points out the visit "highlighted the contradiction between the two leaders' rhetoric and mutual suspicion in which each held the other" (Erich, 1994, p. 137). Indeed, the suspicions had merit as Egypt and Sudan signed an agreement on water usage of the Nile in November 1959 with a unified approach to any consent for its use by other upstream riparian states, much to the displeasure of Ethiopia and all the latter countries (Shapland, 1997, p. 74). Also, Ethiopia was developing an alliance with Israel,

which, as part of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was in rivalry with Egypt for influence in Africa.

Although Ethiopia had abstained in the 1947 United Nations vote to partition Palestine and did not grant de jure recognition to Israel until 1961, it became part of Israel's secret Peripheral Alliance, in 1958, which also included Turkey and Iran and whose purpose in Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's words was: "to stand up steadfastly to Soviet expansion through Nasser" ("Ben-Gurion to Eisenhower," 1958). Israel established an embassy in Addis Ababa in 1962 and assisted Ethiopia in intelligence and security matters, but Haile Selassie kept the relationship very low-key even after Nasser died in 1970, and never opened up an embassy in Israel until it broke off relations in October 1973. Yet as late as December 1972, Haile Selassie "expressed sympathy for Israel in private and shared his fears with the Israeli ambassador [Hanan Aynor] that the Arabs would penetrate Central Africa and turn Islam into a subversive movement" (Erich, 2014, p. 237). Also, before Ethiopia broke relations with Israel, in July 1973, Egypt's President Anwar Sadat, whom Haile Selassie had visited two years earlier and had built a trusting relationship with, tried unsuccessfully to get Syria and Libya to stop supporting the Eritreans while suggesting that Ethiopia should grant autonomy to Eritrea (Erich, 2014, p. 250).

With the overthrow of Haile Selassie in September 1974 by the military, whose leadership was known as the *Derg*, and the increasing radicalization of that group, geopolitics in the region substantially changed. Mengistu Haile Mariam became its undisputed leader by 1977 and subsequently developed close ties with the Soviet bloc. Meanwhile, the ELF was challenged and superseded by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), which eventually led Eritrea to independence in 1993, while eventually abandoning Marxism and Arab nationalism. Egypt, during Sadat's tenure, unlike other Arab states, did not get involved in the Eritrean conflict. It did, however, develop an adversarial relationship with Mengistu's regime in part by providing support to fellow Arab League member Somalia, which also developed close ties with the United States. During the Ogaden War of July 1977-March 1978 – which began with Mogadishu's invasion of that Somali-populated province of Ethiopia, but ended with significant Soviet military assistance in the form of advisors and armaments as well as Cuban troops coordinating together with their Ethiopian counterparts to drive the Somalis back across the international border

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*Western Somalia Liberation Front guerrillas at a military camp in Somalia in 1977 train for the control of Ogaden (Photo Credits: Alain Nogués/ Sygma via Getty Images)*

– Egypt sent Somalia, in the past well equipped by the Soviets, armaments worth US\$30 million and expressed the concern that the Ethiopian revolution might spread to Sudan (Mekonnen, 2018, pp. 280-281). Mengistu accused Sadat of “fueling the invasion,” while Ethiopia’s government-controlled press compared the Egyptian leader to Khedive Ismail, who was defeated attempting to control the Nile Basin, as well as pointing out that Ethiopia could cut off the flow of the Blue Nile. (Erlach, 2002, pp. 166-167; Mekonnen, 2018, pp. 281-282). Following the war, in 1979, when Sadat proposed piping water from the Nile for irrigation in the northern Sinai, Mengistu threatened to retaliate by reducing the flow of the Blue Nile; Sadat responded by issuing the following warning: “If Ethiopia takes any action to block our right to the Nile water, there will be no alternative for us but to use force” (Swain, 1997, p. 687).

Sadat’s assassination facilitated better relations between the two countries. In 1983, Egypt’s ambassador to Ethiopia, Samir Ahmed, delivered a series of lectures at Addis Ababa University compiled in a book titled *Egypt and Africa: on the Road to Cooperation*, which in part emphasized: “the desire to put the historical thorny relations between Ethiopia and Egypt aside” (Mekonnen, 2018, pp. 287-288). Yet nothing was done to address matters concerning usage of the Nile River, and in 1988 Egypt blocked a loan from the African Development

Bank that Ethiopia sought for the construction of the Tala Beles Project, which would take water from Lake Tana to the Beles River through a series of five dams to generate hydroelectric power and provide irrigation (Kendie, 1999, p. 158). Nevertheless, between 1981 and 1985, Egypt did propose scholarships to Ethiopians in the fields of agriculture, mass media, water engineering, nursing, maritime transit, industrial development and higher education as well as joint projects such as exhibitions and workshops and invitations for Ethiopian officials to visit Egypt, but all offers were turned down. In 1984, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had been Sadat’s Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and felt that Egypt’s greatest security threat came from the south, met with Mengistu twice as did Egypt’s Foreign Minister Ismat Abdel-Maguid once, thus facilitating a visit to Mengistu in Ethiopia by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) in July 1985; the two leaders got along well on a personal level (Erlach, 2002, p. 170). A few months before, a trade agreement was signed providing for Ethiopia to export agricultural products to Egypt, while Egypt would export processed industrial goods to Ethiopia, but no action was taken on implementation (Yihun, 2014, p. 77). Mubarak participated in the OAU summit in Addis Ababa in July 1986, and when there invited Mengistu to visit Egypt, while Egyptian Foreign Ministry officials apologized for Sadat’s supplying Somalia with weapons in the Ogaden War (Yihun, 2014, p. 78). Mengistu made an official visit

to Egypt in April 1987, mostly because he was dissatisfied with financial assistance from the Soviet Union (Erlach, 2002, p. 176); during his time in Cairo, it was agreed to establish a Joint Ministerial Economic Commission, but the famine of 1983-1985 and a radical policy of resettlement in the countryside had alienated much of the population, while Mengistu was unable to defeat militarily the Tigrayans, who dominated the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and the Eritreans of the EPLF; Mengistu's days in power were numbered.

By July 1993, with Mengistu gone from the scene having fled into exile in Zimbabwe in 1991, Mubarak and Ethiopia's then-President (later prime minister from 1995 until his death in 2012) Meles Zenawi, who had been the leader of the victorious EPRDF, signed a treaty in which for the first time Egypt acknowledged Ethiopia's right to share in the Nile Basin's water, while both countries committed not to engage in any activity which might harm the interests of the other country. However, three years later, Ethiopia built two dams on the Blue Nile

without consulting Egypt, while in 1997, Egypt began plans on the New Valley Project, a system of canals from Lake Nasser, created with the construction of the Aswan High Dam (1960-1970), to irrigate the Western Desert, without informing countries upriver (Lawson, 2016, p. 97-98). Writing in the mid-1990s, one knowledgeable observer noted "Given that Ethiopia is projected to have more people to feed by 2025 than Egypt, [this happened earlier than predicted] the Government is obviously going to maintain the nation's sovereign right to develop all resources within its borders (Swain, 1997, p. 689). Yet in February 1999, in Dar-es-Salaam, representatives from nine countries – Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – agreed on the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), whose purpose was "to achieve sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile basin water resources" (Tawfik, 2016, p.71).

Negotiations subsequently commenced for a Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), but



*Aerial view of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River in Guba as of February 15, 2021 (Photo Credits: Adwa Pictures/AFP)*



disagreements developed between Egypt and Sudan on one side and the upstream states on the other side over the wording of one proposed Article concerning the issue of water security. Egypt opposed a decision by a two-thirds majority vote unless such included downstream states; when six of the seven upstream countries involved in the NBI (all except the DRC) signed the CFA by February 2011, Egypt and Sudan froze their participation in the NBI (Tawfik, 2016, pp. 72-73). By then, Egypt was in the midst of the Arab Spring that forced Mubarak to resign from the presidency. However, back in 2010, a high-level official close to Mubarak wrote in an email published by *WikiLeaks*:

*The only country that is not cooperating is Ethiopia. We are continuing ... the diplomatic approach. Yes, we are discussing military cooperation with Sudan. If it comes to a crisis, we will send a jet to bomb the [proposed] dam and come back in one day, simple as that. Or we can send our special forces into block/sabotage the dam (Abebe, 2014, p. 33).*

In April 2011, Ethiopia announced the beginning of construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which had been in the planning stages for some time, about 40 kilometers east of the Sudanese border. It is the largest dam in Africa and the tenth largest in the world. Negotiations took place periodically beginning in 2013 between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. Under Prime Ministers Hailemariam Desalegn (2012-2018) and Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia has claimed its "right to utilize one of its resources for national development under international law of equitable use of transboundary water bodies,"

while Egypt's President Abel Fattah al-Sisi has claimed its rights to water usage under previous international agreements (Maru, 2020). In 2015, the three countries signed a declaration of principles under which Egypt and Sudan agreed that Ethiopia had the right to develop GERD and that an agreement needed to be reached on a timetable for filling the dam's reservoir and on water release in the event of droughts (Soliman, 2021; Mbaku, 2020); however, no such agreement was completed before the first filling of the dam's reservoir in 2020 despite mediation attempts by the African Union and the United States.

## Conclusion

Egypt and Ethiopia have a long history of interactions that have varied between cooperation and contention. Culturally, their respective populations share two religions, Coptic Christianity and Islam of the Sunni sect, while geographically they share the resources of the Nile River Basin. These connections have facilitated mutually beneficial trade, but also have led to periodic confrontations or at the very least disputes. Fluctuating borders and control of trade routes and resources led to conflict during the nineteenth century. During the first half the twentieth century, Egypt and Ethiopia, two of only three independent African states – Liberia being the other one – despite periodic cooperation, still faced political pressure from the European powers. Since then, while the Ethiopian church achieved autocephaly, the Cold War, the Arab-Israeli conflict, droughts and population growth have at times negatively affected bilateral relations and there is currently a dangerous deadlock over usage of the Nile waters.

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# The Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) Technology and Food Security in Africa

By Mariah Faridah Muli

## Abstract

Biotechnology comprises the exploitation of biological processes for industrial and other purposes, especially the genetic manipulation of microorganisms. Genetic engineering has been credited for delivering higher yields of crops, reducing the need for chemical inputs such as fungicides and pesticides, and increasing tolerance to drought, salinity, chemical toxicity and other adverse circumstances. Countries such as India and Brazil are keen on the genetic engineering of crops as a solution to food security and wealth development. Out of the 54 states in Africa, only two states, South Africa and Sudan, are growing and commercializing genetically engineered crops today. This article seeks to understand the extent to which the global politics of biotechnology has influenced the adoption of Genetic modification technology in Africa. The analysis focuses on how foreign intervention by both state and non-state actors has influenced the domestic policies of biotechnology in African states.

## Introduction

Agriculture accounts for approximately 35 per cent of the continent's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employs 70 per cent of the labor force and is regarded as a key catalyst in the overall economic development of African economies (Juma, 2011). Food insecurity affects nearly one-third of African countries despite the fact that agriculture employs 70 per cent of the African population, the continent continues to import 25 per cent of its food (Paarlberg, 2008). Farm production continues to decline (it was 20 per cent lower in 2005 than it was in 1970), but less than 30 per cent of African farmers have access to or use improved seeds (Paarlberg, 2008).

Since 2020, Africa has faced significant food safety and security challenges and it is projected to worsen in the coming years. The United Nations (UN) World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that 20 per cent of Africa's 1.2 billion people are malnourished, a situation that has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Insecurity and conflict, poverty, climate change, and population growth have all been identified as major contributors to the continent's food security challenges. (WFP, 2020). Biotechnological research on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) offers a variety of opportunities for addressing hunger, malnutrition, and food security (such as increased crop yields, resistance to pests and diseases, improved nutrient composition, and food quality).

South Africa and Sudan were among the first to capitalize on the trend more than two decades ago. The two countries were hopeful that GMOs would provide a path to food security in a region plagued by droughts that have led to the destruction of crops and left the countries starving. South Africa began growing genetically modified maize in 1996, followed by cotton the following year and soybeans a few years later. Planting of GMOs in South Africa has increased over time, and armyworm, a pest that attacks crops, has decreased dramatically. Because of its superior performance, 98 per cent of cotton farmers in Sudan have adopted the GMO variant, Bt Cotton. Despite their success in South Africa and Sudan, many African countries prohibit the cultivation or importation of GMOs. It wasn't until drought-stricken Zambia and Zimbabwe faced severe food insecurity that bills were passed and GMO foods were imported.

Governments in developing countries especially African countries are debating whether genetically modified organisms should be used to address a variety of issues related to agriculture, nutrition, and climate change. GMOs have drawn criticism for their effects on conventional farming practices, their effects on the environment and human health, their use of seed patents, and the dependence of farmers on large companies. Since many regions of the continent are





*A farmer watering his maize plantation. (Photo Credit: Food tank)*

vulnerable to drought or civil conflict, which can result in starvation or situations that are very close to famine, African countries in particular have taken center stage in the discussion. The African governments are responding to these issues in a number of ways, with some outright forbidding GMOs, some welcoming them, and yet others attempting to strike a compromise between the interests and concerns of all parties.

### **Brief History of Genetic Modification (GM) and Statistics of GM use around the World**

Agricultural biotechnology has its origins in the selection of the best plants and animals for breeding by farmers as early as 10,000 BC. Soon after, Sumerians in Mesopotamia employed yeast, a kind of fungus, to produce beer and wine. Farmers and early plant breeders would look for varieties with valuable traits that could be crossed with other types to generate offspring that combined the features of both, as the process of plant breeding became better understood (Rangel, 2015). Gregor Mendel crossed different pea plants to generate offspring with red or white blossoms and wrinkled or smooth peas in the 1860s in order to carefully document the transmission of traits from one generation to the next. He established the inheritance laws and signaled the start of traditional

agricultural biotechnology. After Mendel's discovery was made public, plant breeding made significant advancements. Breeders applied their newly acquired genetics knowledge to the age-old practices of self- and cross-pollination. (Morse S, Mannion, 2008).

The first transgenic crops were commercialized in 1944. The global area of transgenic crops has grown from 2.8 million hectares to 90 million hectares since then. Between 1977 and 1988, the global area of approved biotech crops grew at a rapid pace. In recent years, growth rates have hovered around 15 per cent. In 2005, 8.5 million farmers in 21 countries planted biotech crops, with industrialized countries accounting for roughly 75 per cent of the total. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Paraguay, India, South Africa, Uruguay, Australia, Mexico, Romania, the Philippines, Spain, Columbia, Iran, Honduras, Portugal, Germany, France, and the Czech Republic are among the countries represented (Clive, 2005).

### **Agri-biotech and African Development**

Biotechnology was identified as a potential contributor to the achievement of global sustainable development goals at Agenda 21, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992, four years before the release of the first commercially available genetically modified (GM) plant varieties. Recently, the

Bio-resources Innovations Network for Eastern Africa Development (Bio-Innovate) program has identified modern biotechnology tools as essential components for the development of a knowledge-based global bioeconomy (Bio-Innovate, 2010). The founders of Bio-Innovate believe that a dynamic, knowledge-based agriculture sector will be necessary to (1) develop resource-efficient and productive agriculture systems for climate change adaptation; (2) reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy, resulting in lower greenhouse gas emissions; and (3) revitalize rural economies by expanding the production base for value-added products and (4) reuse energy and material flow to reduce environmental degradation. Biotechnology is regarded as a critical tool for achieving these objectives.

In terms of Agri-biotech, the global picture is one of adoption rather than the rejection of the technology. Africa, which faces the most serious food security challenges of any region on the planet, lags far behind and, to date, has maintained cautious rhetoric similar to that of its major historical trade partner, the European Union (EU). Developing trade and investment opportunities with major new adopters (such as Brazil, China, and India), as well as the potential for inter-African trade in GM food and feed crops, may affect this dynamic in the future and catalyze much-needed regulatory harmonization, but attitudes in the EU appear to be the dominant influence for the time being.

Global numbers of GM crops planted and rates of technology adoption have been steadily increasing in recent years, with the most impressive growth seen in developing countries among small-scale farmers. Nearly 15 years after the first commercial planting of a GM crop, the technology's safety record suggests that the GM process itself poses no significant risk to human health or the environment. Meanwhile, Africa's approach to Agri-biotech has been cautious, despite continued low agricultural productivity in most of the region and high-stakes pressure to reverse a legacy of poor agricultural performance. Only four countries Burkina Faso, Egypt, South Africa, and Sudan have commercially planted GM crops, with a few others following suit but in confined field trials Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The majority of the continent is devoid of the biotechnology research and development (R&D) activity required to meaningfully address the current agricultural production restrictions, either in terms of volume or

intensity of effort and resources. A number of obstacles that African countries have not been able to overcome include a lack of technical expertise and political will, contradicting attitudes of regulatory bodies, feeble and ineffective regulatory frameworks, trade concerns, and public disinformation or misconception. These issues are quite real for many people, and while some of them do apply to agricultural innovation in general, the overall attitude of controversy surrounding agricultural biotechnology raises the barriers to acceptance and implementation even more.

## The Astounding Food Challenge in Africa

Africa saw population growth that was greater than that of any other region of the globe between 1980 and 2003, expanding by more than 50 per cent. This trend is expected to continue through the middle of the century, though at a slower pace than the present 2.3 per cent per year (UN, 2009). Africa's population will consequently increase from roughly 1.1 billion in 2013 to 2.4 billion in 2050 (FAO, 2014b). Along with this enormous population boom, which would more than double Africa's present total population, there will be significant structural changes that will cause Africa to become mostly an urban area.

Additionally, anticipated are changes in urban lifestyle (Nelson et al., 2010) and low but increasing incomes (projected growth rates in per capita gross domestic product [GDP] of around 3.5 per cent per year), which will result in significant shifts in consumption, such as an increase in demand for meat and fish and consequently for animal feed, for wheat and rice, oil and sugar crops, and for higher-value fruits and vegetables (FAO 2011b, 2012). Between 2000 and 2050, Africa will effectively need to triple its food production, and it will need to set even higher goals if it wants to improve nutrition on a continent where over 30 per cent of the population is malnourished

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## Africa's farmers will need to intensify production at a rate and level of resource usage efficiency unheard of in human history, with the help of governments, institutions of public and commercial research and development, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others

(FAO, WFP, & IFAD, 2012). It is anticipated that this significant rise in food demand, along with expectations regarding Africa's capacity to increase output, the effects of climate change, and potential competition for land used for energy crops, will halt the recent decline in real food prices and usher in a new era of food price increases (Nelson et al. 2010; Msangi & Rosegrant, 2011).

Africa's farmers will need to intensify production at a rate and level of resource usage efficiency unheard of in human history, with the help of governments, institutions of public and commercial research and development, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others. Existing strategies, such as traditional plant breeding and agronomic methods, have shown that many of these problems are insurmountable. Productivity has historically been restricted by biotic and abiotic pressures, a lack of food and water availability, and inadequate nutritional composition—many times rendered worse by the new risks posed by climate change. Abiotic and biotic restrictions in Africa may now be addressed thanks to biotechnology, and GM biotechnologies in particular. The wide range of opportunities provided by biotechnology, particularly GM biotechnologies, can enhance the standard of living for local farmers. These possibilities can also benefit urban and rural consumers, improving both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors of the rural economy.

An additional perspective on the immense problem of changing African agriculture in a way that not only meets the continent's future food needs, but also promotes sustainable production by preventing the destruction of the continent's biodiversity and water resources. The possible prevalence of just one pest, the maize stem borer, serves as a proxy for drought, pests, and diseases, while the soil's high levels of phosphorus fixation serve as a proxy for soil fertility restrictions (phosphorus deficiency is a major soil nutrient constraint on the continent). Additionally, the use of GM technology offers a selective advantage for the development of "tailored" varieties to accommodate changing agroecological

conditions because it has the potential to significantly shorten generation times for new varieties and can draw on advantageous traits present in other species but is difficult to introduce via conventional breeding.

### The Impact of GM Technology in Africa - Emerging GMO-Focused countries: South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda

Many African nations have previously opposed GMO research and production. But both the pace and rate of adoption are accelerating.

#### South Africa

In 1996, South Africa introduced GM maize, followed by cotton in 1997 and soybeans in 2001. Although adoption was a slow process, the outcomes of the choice to proceed are undeniable. According to a recent study, during the past 20 years, genetically modified (GM) maize has significantly increased food security in South Africa, decreased environmental harm, and assisted smallholder farmers in realizing considerable increases in income. Given that South Africa was the first GM subsistence crop producer in the world after adopting the cultivar in 2001–2002, this establishes the country as a success story in the production of insect-resistant Bt white maize.

According to a study published in Global Food Security by a joint team from the University of Arkansas and Kansas State University in the United States, the Agricultural Research Council in South Africa, and Ghent University in Belgium, the total welfare benefits attributable to GM white maize in South Africa are USD694.7 million for the years 2001 to 2018 (Maina, 2021).

South Africa commercially produced approximately 1.1 million hectares of GM varieties for direct human consumption in 2017, representing an adoption rate of 85 per cent. Overall, the study found that the use of GM white maize resulted in an additional 4.6 million annual rations, with a high of 7.4 million in 2017 and a low of 29,215 in 2001. Between 2001 and 2018, the adoption



of GM white maize contributed 83.5 million additional rations of maize.

As evidence of its political commitment, the South African government initiated a program that supported the establishment of Biotech Regional Innovation Centers (BRICs) under the Department of Science and Technology to drive the growth and advancement of biotech platforms, with an initial commitment of USD75 million (Cloete, Nel, and Theron, 2006). In 2008, a parliamentary act resulted in the establishment of the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), which effectively merged the seven smaller BRIC agencies into a single entity to support the commercialization of locally developed R&D. The TIA's mandate extends beyond biotechnology to include the commercialization of technologies in health, agriculture, energy, and manufacturing.

## Uganda

In 2017, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni talked at a congress on agricultural research about his openness to technology that supports food security, including GMOs.

He stated, "Africa has a chance to convert its agriculture into a force of food security and economic progress." There have been several developments in science, technology, and creativity across the globe that give Africa the new resources it needs to support sustainable agriculture. Strengthening investments in groundbreaking technologies like conventional and genetically engineered crops and livestock that are resistant to disease and climate change is where our efforts must start.

Later that year, the Ugandan parliament passed the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, 2017, allowing for the commercialization of GMOs — but the president sent it back in January, citing concerns about the bill's impact on the environment and indigenous communities. The country has been considering developing a genetically modified banana that is resistant to bacterial wilt and contains Vitamin A, but critics are concerned about safety and farmers being forced to buy new seed season after season. Uganda will have to weigh such criticism against rising national



*Uganda farmers experience losses as prices of bananas drops drastically. (Photo Credit: Dispatch Uganda)*

hunger and food insecurity as it considers adopting commercialization legislation.

Uganda has shown the political will to support biotechnology. Yoweri Museveni, Uganda's president, opened the National Biotechnology Centre in Kawanda in 2003 and declared his support for biotechnology as long as safety concerns were addressed. The country's cabinet approved the government policy on biotechnology and biosafety in April 2008. The cabinet recently approved the principles of the Biosafety Bill, and the attorney general has been directed to draft the bill. Though Parliament has yet to debate the Biosafety Bill, the progress being made in GM crop research and the established regulatory capacity are clear indications that Uganda is ready to use modern biotechnology.

## Ghana

Ghana has advanced its research on GMOs after enacting the Biosafety Act in 2011, and the Biotechnology cowpeas anticipated to be the first GMO crop to be made available for sale in the country in 2018. The Maruca bugs, which have decimated cowpea harvests, are resistant to this strain. Food Sovereignty Ghana and other organizations have petitioned the government to ban the use of GMOs due to a lack of sufficient scientific evidence supporting their safety. Concerns regarding the impact of multinational corporations and other foreign influences on domestic food systems have also been voiced by anti-GMO activists. Despite ongoing legal action against the use of GMOs in the nation, the government of Ghana is pushing for further investment in GMOs with a food security focus, which will be led by the Ghanaian NBA.

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government of Nigeria prioritizes food security, as well as fostering a sustainable environment and sustainable textile industry, when it comes to the adoption of GMOs. This is similar to the government of Ghana. In 2015, new legislation and the founding of the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) were followed by agricultural growth in the GMO region. One of their focus seeds, along with cotton, maize, soybeans, and a GMO version of cowpea would enable Nigeria to access a USD1 billion market in India.

In 2008, legislation was passed that gave the National Biosafety Committee the authority to review and approve confined field trial (CFT) applications for genetically modified (GM) crops. As a result of this action, CFT applications for GM cowpeas, rice, and sweet potatoes were initiated. In December 2011, the Ghanaian Parliament passed formal biosafety legislation to allow the commercialization of GM crops. This will undoubtedly increase international partners' interest in locating their product development projects in Ghana.

## Kenya

Despite restrictive legislation that restricts the introduction of GMOs into the East African nation, former president Uhuru Kenyatta declared his support for GMOs a number of times. William Ruto, the current president, is a fervent supporter of biotechnology and has previously stated his desire to repeal the 2012 GMO prohibition. Previously serving as Deputy President Ruto, he described GM as a "breakthrough technology that is going to get more people, especially the 1 billion or so people in the world... who are faced with hunger, the majority of them in Africa, a better quality of life" on the sidelines of the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Japan.

Despite prohibiting all GMO goods and imports due to health concerns in 2012, Kenya is also witnessing a tremendous surge in corporate and public interest in GMO research, and the commercialization of production is predicted. When announcing the ban in 2012, the minister of public health and sanitation, Beth Mugo, stated, "The Minister of Public Health and Sanitation has noted, with considerable worry, the growing discussion on the safety of GMO food." As a result, "the government has determined that all GMO food imports are fully blocked until an informed political position is made." However, by the end of 2017, GAIN reported that the Kenyan National Biosafety Authority had authorized 13

GMO crops that were expected to be sold commercially between 2018 and 2021, including commercially viable baby breath flowers, cotton, and maize.

Consequently, on October 3, 2022, still fresh from being sworn in as President of Kenya, Dr. William Ruto chaired a special meeting of the cabinet, in which a raft of resolutions was passed, paving way for GMO cultivation and imports into the East African nation. This received a mixed reaction from the public and policymakers and only time will tell to what extent biotech agriculture would be implemented in Kenya.

Due to strong political will and commitment, Kenya has been able to embrace modern biotechnology. In the year 2000, Kenya became the first country in the world to sign the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB). Former presidents presided over the establishment of biotechnology and biosafety facilities at KARI and the BecA-LRI biosciences hub. In Parliament, the former prime minister also expressed his support for modern biotechnology. In July 2011, Kenya's cabinet approved the importation of genetically modified maize to help alleviate the country's severe food insecurity.

In Kenya, several public awareness and participation mechanisms have been used to raise awareness and support for biotechnology adoption, including the African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF), the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), and the National Biotechnology Awareness Creation Strategy (BioAWARE) under the National Council for Science and Technology. Despite these previous advances, a ban on GM commodity imports was imposed in November 2012, creating uncertainty among various stakeholders despite the fact that this ban has not been formally gazetted.

### South-South Collaboration

Growth in recent years between Africa and other emerging economies (for example, Argentina, Brazil, China, India, and the Philippines) presents intriguing opportunities to explore South-South R&D, capacity building, and policy relationships in biotechnology. Many of these countries have already commercialized GM crops (for example, Bt cotton, herbicide-tolerant [HT] soybeans, and Bt/HT maize). Furthermore, several are developing novel GM food, feed, and livestock products that, like rice, beans, sugarcane, and bananas, may have specific relevance for many African economies.

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An intriguing case in point is the Brazilian Agriculture Research Corporation (EMBRAPA). A model for African R&D organizations, EMBRAPA has a strong portfolio in agbiotech and a stellar history of public-private cooperation. In order to aid, promote, and stimulate social and economic development through technology transfer and the exchange of information and expertise in the field of agricultural research, EMBRAPA opened an Africa Office in Ghana in 2006. In order to provide the necessary technical assistance, EMBRAPA Africa coordinates and monitors activities and projects in collaboration with other African nations works with local and national governments to identify priorities and needs and collaborates with EMBRAPA's headquarters and research centers during the planning and execution of projects and activities. The production of cassava or its processing, cashew production, biofuels, conservation agriculture, and biotechnology are a few examples of the training initiatives that are now being supported by USD2.8 million in funding from the Brazilian Cooperation Agency. The experimental station in Sotuba, Mali, has also been given USD1.35 million for short-term initiatives and USD1.5 million for the implementation of a long-term project to promote the modernization and bolstering of cotton production.

African nations and top scientific institutions in Argentina, China, India, and the Philippines might explore similar parallels and model efforts. China has pledged support for the development of 20 agricultural technology demonstration centers under the auspices of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), and the China Africa Development Fund is considering a partnership with African development banks to increase investments in agriculture, which could include support for R&D.

Along with R&D cooperation, it would be beneficial to pursue South-South collaborations in the areas of policy





*Women argue over the distribution of yellow split pea in northern Ethiopian town of Agula, by the Relief Society of Tigray, May 8, 2021 (Photo Credit: Associated Press)*

(biosafety, intellectual property, and national capacity-building policies), as these tend to be more comparable than those of the United States, for instance, in terms of crop emphasis, challenges, and agroecological climates. Study trips to India and the Philippines have already been organized for African regulators. To aid Africa, policy workshops in important areas (IP, biosafety, and commercialization) may be organized. These workshops would draw on the knowledge and experience of these growing economies.

### **The African Model Law on Safety in Biotechnology**

Since its creation in Organization for African Unity (OAU) expert workshop held in Addis Ababa in June 1999, the African Model Law on Safety in Biotechnology, now known as the African Union (AU) Model Law on Safety in Biotechnology (African Union, 2001), has served as the foundation for biosafety regulatory policy in Africa. The African Group's submission to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat during the Third Conference of the Parties of the Biosafety Protocol, held in Buenos Aires in 1996, served as the foundation for the first draft of the African Model Law. An OAU working group composed of 50 delegates from 28 African states, 34 from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and the biotechnology sector, as

well as 5 from the OAU and United Nations Environment Programme-Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF), finalized the first draft in Addis Ababa in May 2001. It was delivered by the AU Commission at a meeting of the AU Executive Council held in Maputo, Mozambique, in July 2003.

The African Model Law has drawn much criticism for being overly restricted, with particular attention paid to the dangers of Agri-biotech vs its advantages. Paradoxically, the AU has stated that its member nations must use a balanced approach when evaluating and applying the African Model Law. Despite the fact that the African Model Law's adoption has brought biosafety to more people's attention as a concern for the introduction of GM crops in Africa, it is obvious from the above description that some aspects of the law may actually impede progress for nations looking to use GM technologies.

### **The Role of African Public Institutions, Universities, and Scientists**

It stands to reason that a competent and credible scientific community capable of communicating with policymakers and the general public is critical to the success of any communications and outreach initiative (Cooke & Downie, 2010). For instance, Former Agriculture Secretary Wilson Songa called for all scientists to become more

active in the conversation in Kenya, where the debate about technology has once again become polarized, to counteract the positions of some politicians who have very little scientific knowledge and have only stalled the process (Waruru, 2011). More importantly, African scientists, particularly those in countries with functional regulatory systems, have gained the experience required to answer the most pressing questions that remain today. Biotechnology is being used on crops of importance to Africa by African scientists for Africans. Bridging the gap between scientists' technical knowledge and that of some policymakers, particularly the general public, has been a challenge.

In addition, there is a fundamental difference between how scientists think and communicate and how policymakers and the general public think and communicate. The majority of media consumers rarely read beyond a story's headline. However, scientists are taught to provide supporting evidence before reaching a conclusion. Without training, this could result in more misinformation and decreased confidence among decision-makers.

### The Role of the Media

The role of the media in shaping the public and policy debate on biotechnology in Africa is undeniable. However, a more thorough examination of how to target resources within this outreach mechanism is required. Decision makers, policymakers, and the general public in any given population or country obtain information about innovations such as biotechnology through various media. For example, a study in Kenya (Kimenju et al., 2011) discovered that rural and urban populations, respectively, seek information from radio and newspapers. Although

this is not a novel concept, media outreach in Africa has been largely untimed in terms of when the country and products are ready and untargeted to date to audiences and the media that matter.

### Conclusion

Impacts on food security have only recently been observed in a small number of specific cases, especially in Africa. With further GM crops and traits becoming accessible in the future, the nutritional advantages could rise even further. The sustainability of many developing worlds can be assessed by looking at their agricultural practices, technological advancements, and methods of harvesting. Hunger and poverty may be caused by organizational and systemic issues. Inequitable commodities markets and volatile prices, low access to capital, a lack of a balanced diet leading to malnutrition, the displacement of the poor onto marginal lands and the depletion of fertile land due to export-oriented policies are a few of these. It is believed that GMOs may in fact exacerbate food insecurity in situations where GM crops are not tailored to regional economic and dietary requirements. Finally, genetic engineering is being utilized to assist organisms in adapting to rapidly changing climatic conditions. Rice, maize, and wheat strains that can tolerate longer droughts and wetter monsoon seasons are being developed by scientists. Extreme temperatures are exposing crops to new pests and fungi, which is what inspires scientists to genetically modify cacao, potatoes, and cassava to be disease-resistant. The same genetic engineering techniques that were employed for adaptation to climate change are now being applied for mitigation.

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# Role of Formal-Informal Institutional Dialogue in Enriching Devolved Governance in Kenya: 'Negotiated Democracy' in North Eastern Kenya

By Mumo Nzau, Ph.D.

## Abstract

For at least four decades after independence, Kenya, like many other African states was governed within a highly centralized system of administration. This structure was blamed for skewed and inequitable development in the country because it was not people-owned. Indeed, when the time came for the Kenyan public to decide on their political future during the constitutional reforms that followed the contentious 2007 General Elections, Kenyans overwhelmingly endorsed the 2010 Constitution, particularly because it introduced a devolved system of governance. Subsequently, 47 county governments formally come into existence after the March 2013 General Elections which saw newly elected representatives ranging from Governors, Senators, County Women Representatives (Women Reps) and Members of County Assembly (MCAs) elected. This article interrogates the role of formal-informal institutional dialogue in enriching devolved governance in Kenya with specific reference to the experience of counties in the North-Eastern region, under what has been termed 'negotiated democracy.' Based on systematically gathered and analyzed survey data, the article examines the extent to which clan-based traditional prescriptions to do with 'negotiated democracy,' have found a place within the mainstream socio-political and administrative processes of county governance in northeastern Kenya; and the implications of this outlook for devolved governance in Kenya, going into the future.

## Introduction

A decade after it formally came into place, devolution has become a buzzword in Kenya. Many Kenyan citizens have continued to exude confidence in devolved governance since it came into existence with the advent of the 2010 Constitution. Indeed, following the March 2013 General Elections newly elected representatives ranging from Governors, Senators, County Women Representatives (Women Reps) and Members of County Assembly (MCAs) assumed public office. Another round of elections took place in August 2017 where some of these elected officials were re-elected, while many were also replaced by new entrants. Two election cycles later, there is general agreement among the Kenyan populace that devolution was a good idea, and on the whole, it continues to hold a lot of promise in bettering the quality of life among Kenyan communities as well as affording them the opportunity to have a more direct and participatory role in undertakings and/or processes pertaining to their development especially at the local grass-roots level

(Bosire, 2014). However, many Kenyans also contend that devolved structures have generally underperformed mainly due to corruption, nepotism, and exclusion; and unhealthy competition and conflicts among various Kenyan ethnic groups and/or communities at the local level (D'Acry & Cornell, 2016; Nzau, 2021).

One suggested remedy for this state of affairs is the building of stronger, more functional institutions through locally-owned and driven institutional dialogue. Against this backdrop, this article interrogates the role of formal-informal institutional dialogue in enriching devolved governance in Kenya with specific reference to the experience of counties in the North-Eastern region, under what has been termed 'negotiated democracy.' Based on systematically gathered and analyzed survey data, the article examines the extent to which clan-based traditional prescriptions to do with 'negotiated democracy,' have found a place within the mainstream



*Members of the Nairobi County Assembly at City Hall attending a Special sitting on January 22, 2020. (Photo Credit: PHOTO | FILE)*

socio-political and administrative processes of county governance in northeastern Kenya; and the implications of this outlook for devolved governance in Kenya, going into the future.

### **Formal-Informal Institutional Dialogue and Devolved Governance: A Theoretical Lens**

There is a wide body of literature that examines conceptual, theoretical and empirical dynamics of institutions as a predictor variable for many outcomes ranging from (among other things) leadership, governance and human development. For the most part, there is wide agreement as to what institutions are. Put simply, institutions are stable and predictable patterns of behaviour relating to a particular issue area (North, 1990). Further, a distinction is also made between formal and informal institutions. On one hand, formal institutions represent the mainstream state-centric domain of instruments, structures and processes that guide specific social domains, sets of human activity and/or undertakings. On the other hand, informal institutions consist of those socially constructed norms, values and processes that fall within the mainstream domain of the state but which are widely accepted reference points that equally that guide specific social domains, sets of

human activity and/or undertakings (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006, p.5). The idea of formal-informal institutional dialogue is borne out of the realization that both sets of institutions can, (depending on the context at hand) be complementary and supplementary to each other; and hence, more often than not, lead to more yielding and/or positive outcomes in as various aspects of governance and human development, in general, are concerned (Casson, Guista & Kambhampati, 2010, pp. 137-138).

In this regard, a number of theoretical explanations have also been made regarding the impact and/or implications that formal-informal institutional dialogue can have on local governance processes in general, and in more specific terms, for devolution. Devolution is a form of decentralization in which various governmental administrative structures, functions and governance processes are formally transferred from the centre (or central and/or national level) to various sub-national and/or local structures, functions and governance processes that enjoy a constitutionally anchored degree of political, fiscal and administrative autonomy. In most cases, the devolved unit can elect its leadership and is entitled by law to specific domains of legislation, taxation and public expenditure (Wanyande, 2021, p. 24). A number of strong cases have been made as far as the utility that formal-informal institutional dialogue can have on

devolved governance. True enough, informal institutions can consciously and deliberately navigate, moderate, negotiate, supplement and complement various issues, difficulties, requirements and dynamics associated with the formal domain of institutions to the general and desirable advantage of the population in question (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2016; Cheeseman, 2019).

In other words, the formal institutions and informal institutions need not supplant, undermine, undercut and/or circumvent each other but rather uniquely jelly (hence dialogue) in a manner that ends up adding more value to the functionally specific realms they are meant to serve and/or benefit. Nonetheless, this not always be the case. In fact, some studies opine that in some cases, blurred boundaries and loose-ended application of the idea of formal-institutional domains, especially in the hands of ill-informed and/or ill-meaning actors at different levels (whether elite, traditional, national or local) can in fact work against the dictates of good governance and participatory development (Meagher, 2007, p. 413).

Be it as it may, however, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' has been presented as a form of formal-informal institutional dialogue in a number of respects. For starters, the use of the term 'negotiated democracy' needs a proper definition as well as contextualization herein. It follows, therefore, that 'negotiated democracy' is a concept that is loosely used to refer to the use of informal actors and institutions to navigate certain formal requirements in the democratic process to attain acceptable levels of confluence and consensus; and thereby avoid systematic exclusion, divisive contestation and deadly intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts in the processes of not only when it comes to matters of selecting local leadership, but also the administration of local governance and development (Barnett, 2014; Daud, 2021, p.108-109).



... formal institutions represent the mainstream state-centric domain of instruments, structures and processes that guide specific social domains, sets of human activity ...

Against this background, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' made entry into the Kenyan political landscape in the wake of the 2010-2013 period, as the country was preparing itself for the first-ever General Elections under the 2010 Constitution, which was held in March 2013. It is noteworthy that this was a time that the country was emerging from a background of highly contentious and potentially violent campaign and electioneering periods, more so, the 2007 General Elections, which resulted in the infamous Post-Election Violence (PEV) thereafter (Nzau, 2016). In this way, 'negotiated democracy' came into play through negotiated power-sharing arrangements within and between various communities in Kenya especially within the context of the new era of devolution. Subsequently, negotiations were set in motion in a number of counties where communities, through elders and other local community actors agreed to make purposive compromises on how to share certain elective posts as well as the outcomes thereof, in as far as county governance was concerned. This took place in counties such as Nakuru, Busia, Migori, Isiolo and Marsabit (Masese, 2015; Mitullah, 2017; Lind, 2018; Ochieng, 2021, p. 225-227).

Since then, the practice of 'negotiated democracy' appeared to have gained more popularity in the northeastern region than in the rest of the country, and it has since attracted the interest of not only academics but also policy practitioners in Kenya and beyond. As such, the main theoretical assumption herein is that (other factors held constant) the application of the concept of 'negotiated democracy' in the three Counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera is a variant of formal-informal institutional dialogue, that holds the potential to translate into positive outcomes for devolved governance.

## Data and Methods

This article heavily relies on credible, authentic and systematically gathered secondary data. Ideally, empirical research seeks to make meaningful patterns of the interaction(s) among specific variables in order to develop, test and explore certain theoretical stances, conjunctures and/or explanations behind any given phenomenon in question. Nonetheless, this chapter does not claim causal inference as this is not the intentional premise on which it is anchored. Rather it adopts a critical, analytical and evaluative approach to the likely impact of 'negotiated democracy' in North Eastern Kenya (as an informal institutional domain) has had on devolved governance therein. As such, it relies heavily



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on secondary data where books, book chapters, journal articles and other academic works, as well as current and credible professional policy-oriented works and authentic media reports are systematically examined in analytical prose fashion. To supplement these secondary sources, interviews were conducted from a purposively identified sample of 10 informants from each of the three counties (Garissa, Wajir and Mandera) to make a total of 30 interviewees, who would serve as primary sources for the survey component of the study.

### The Governance Outlook in North Eastern Kenya: A Background

It would be true to argue that the northeastern is a historically disadvantaged region in Kenya. The cultural outlook as well as the harsh geomorphologic and climatic conditions of the region was not attractive to the British colonial government. Neither the Crown nor the Settler was quite interested in the largely arid part of the Kenya Colony. Subsequently, the region, then known as Northern Frontier District (NFD), remained underdeveloped and suffered general neglect. During the early post-independence period in the decade of 1960s, the odds increased for the region, especially following the *Shifita* War which pitted Kenya against its neighbour, Somalia. At that time, the regime in Somalia was in support of the irredentist idea that all ethnic Somali people, wherever they were in the sub-region, would all secede to form a greater Somalia. Affected countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya, which had many Somali citizens within their territory, were unhappy with this policy as it threatened their sovereignty and territorial integrity as independent states (Wario, 2021, p. 164).

Furthermore, for at least four decades after independence, northeastern Kenya, like the rest of the country was governed by a highly centralized system of administration. Under this setting of central-local government relations, the northeastern region was further marginalized in many aspects of national development (Kanyinga 2016, p. 162). Before the advent of devolution, the vast region fell under the North Eastern Province, which was further divided into

three Districts, namely Garissa, Wajir and Mandera. With the new era of devolution, the three districts become counties, hence the County of Garissa, the County of Wajir and the County of Mandera. According to the National Population Census of 2019, Garissa County has a total population of 841,353, while Wajir has a total population of 781,263. The 2019 Census also established that the County of Mandera has a population of 867,457. The Somali are the predominant community in the three counties, though there are members of several other ethnic communities who live and work in the region.

There are six sub-counties in Mandera County namely Mandera East, Mandera West, Mandera South, Mandera North, Lafey and Banisa. These sub-counties are also constituencies hence Mandera East Constituency, Mandera West Constituency, Mandera South Constituency, Mandera North Constituency, Lafey Constituency and Banisa Constituency. Together, these constituencies hold a total of 30 wards (IEBC, 2017; Mandera County CIDP 2018-2022). There are eight sub-counties in Wajir County. These are Habaswein, Tarbaj, Aldas, Buna, Wajir East, Wajir West, Wajir North and Wajir South. These sub-counties are further divided into smaller administrative units that include 29 divisions, 42 locations and 174 sub-locations (IEBC, 2017; Wajir County CIDP 2018-2022). On its part, Garissa County consists of six sub-counties namely Garissa, Lagdera, Fafi, Mbalambala, Fafi and Ijara. Collectively, these sub-counties hold 23 divisions, 83 locations and 30 electoral wards (IEBC, 2017; Garissa County CIDP 2018-2022).

The advent of devolution was heralded as a great opportunity and a timely blessing for the northeastern region. Due to the fact that every county in Kenya is entitled to a constitutionally anchored share of the national budgetary allocation each financial year, each of the County Governments in Garissa, Wajir and Mandera have been receiving financial resources to run various legislative and executive functions as devolved entities. True enough, thanks to devolution, the region experienced many firsts in comparison to the rest of

Kenya. For the first time, tarmac roads, hospitals, schools, piped water, electricity and many other social amenities and governmental services made entry into these counties. Yet despite this highly promising outlook of things, the new age of devolved governance did come with its own share of both general and context-specific challenges and the counties in northeastern Kenya are no exception. Like in other parts of the country, from time to time qualms, controversies and serious conflicts have occurred within devolved units where accusations of exclusion, corruption, nepotism and abuse of office have featured strongly (Haider 2020, p. 48; Nzau & Mitullah, 2021, p. 368).

### 'Negotiated Democracy' and Devolved Governance in North Eastern Kenya: Interrogating the Formal-Informal Institutional Dialogue Nexus

Despite exhibiting a highly homogenous character, partly due to the Somali language and culture, and partly due to the high predominance of the Islamic faith among

the people of the northeastern; there are many spheres of conflict therein. Somali people are identified by and organized under a system of clans, sub-clans and clans-defined lineages and extended families. These critical reference points of in-group and intra-group identity do also get highly controversial, contentious and conflict-ridden. In the broadest sense, there are five clans among the Somali (including Somali speakers in the Greater Horn, majorly in Somalia, Djibouti and Ethiopia). These are the *Daarod*, *Dir*, *Digil*, *Rahanweyn*, *Isaaq*, and *Hawiye*. The dominant clan in Kenya is the Hawiye to which four main sub-clans (*Murule*, *Garreh*, *Ajuran* and *Degodia*) belong. Further, there are other sub-clans that belong to other major Somali clans as well, the main one being the *Ogaden*. It is noteworthy these that we refer to as 'sub-clans' herein, are normally regarded as 'main clans' in their own right within the Kenyan context. The *Garreh*, *Degodia* and *Murule* are the major clans in Mandera County, while the *Ogaden*, *Ajuran* and *Degodia* are the major clans in Wajir County. The *Ogaden* are the dominant clan in Garissa County.



Negotiated Democracy in part during the August 2022 General election in Northeastern on June 12, 2022 (Photo Credit: Kulan Post).



More often than not, however, deep-seated differences, as well as deadly intra-clan/sub-clan and inter-clan/sub-clan conflicts and unhealthy competition (say over land, pasture and water at community level among other resources), have existed among the Somali. Subsequently, during the 2013 campaign and electioneering period, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' was promoted in the region in order to avoid conflict and unhealthy intra-clan and inter-clan competition especially when it came to party nominations. Traditionally, Somali clan affairs are administered by councils of elders. These elders are also referred to as 'Sultans.' It is critical to note that the idea of 'negotiated democracy' within and among Somali clans is not a recent phenomenon. It was always applied among the Somali, depending on the issue at hand. It was always used at different levels, say at the sub-clan, lineage and/or even the extended family level as a tool for avoiding unhealthy competition and/or undue rivalry and hence preventing conflicts, better managing common resources and in the process; saving wastage of material and financial resources and ultimately engender intra-clan unity and cohesion.

As such, 'negotiated democracy' as an informal institutional platform was not an invention of the era of devolution, and it was only applied in this new context because it had worked in the spheres of Somali life. Nonetheless, it is critical to underscore that the so-called 'consensus' among clans is not as "inclusive" (in the strict sense) as the picture may be painted especially when it comes to the level of the major clans (say, *Garreh*, in relation to *Murule* and *Degodia* and others and vice versa). In Madera for instance, it is not unusual for one clan, say the *Degodia* to claim that the *Garre* and *Murule* 'had come together' to exclude it. In other words, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' need not be seen as a 'one fits all' solution in all manner of contentious issues and so on. During the 2013 elections in the Madera for example, clans negotiated the process of deciding on which clan would vie for whichever seat ranging from Governor, Deputy Governor, Senator, Woman Representative and Member of Parliament. The outcome was such that the *Garreh* (the largest clan in Madera County) would go for the seat of Governor, while the *Murule* would go for that of Deputy Governor. The clan elders across various sub-clans among the *Garre*, *Murulle* and *Degodia* also selected the contenders for Senator and Woman Representative in addition to the Members of Parliament for Madera East, Madera West, Madera South, Madera North, Lafey and Banisa Constituencies respectively. Further, sub-

During the 2013 elections in the Madera for example, clans negotiated the process of deciding on which clan would vie for whichever seat ranging from Governor, Deputy Governor, Senator, Woman Representative and Member of Parliament

clans also employed 'negotiated democracy' to select candidates at the ward level.

Following the peaceful deals and compromises brokered by elders in counties in northeastern Kenya during the 2013 General Elections, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' generated much interest in the rest of the country. Within the *Garreh* clan, for instance, the council of elders (which normally consists of about 21 of them) had gone as far as making an arrangement in which each of the four *Garreh* sub-clans (*Furkesha*, *Adola*, *Assare* and *Tuff*) would be afforded a chance to field a candidate for the seat of Governor, every five years. Nonetheless, the 2017 general elections, five years later, played out as a critical litmus test for the practice. Governor Ali Roba, who had been selected by the *Garreh* council of elders to vie for the seat of Governor and succeeded in 2013, was the first one to challenge the clan elders' idea that he could only serve for one term of 5 years, even though the Constitution of Kenya 2010, allows a governor to serve 2 terms of five years each, to make 10 years in total. Governor Ali Roba insisted (against the *Garreh* elders' prescription at the 'Banisa Declaration') on seeking re-election. In a similar fashion to the 2013 Elections, the *Garreh* clan elders selected a candidate (Hassan Noor) to challenge Governor Ali Roba.

In a bid to retain his seat against the elders' wish, Governor Ali Roba mobilized supporters from all the other clans (*Murule* and *Degodia* among other smaller sub-clans such as the *Marehan* and the minority non-Somali locals) in the county over and above his own *Garreh* clan, and he put up a spirited campaign and won the 2017 General Elections, and ultimately retained his seat as Governor of Madera County. This development in Madera appeared to water down the effectiveness



of the 'negotiated democracy' as practised through clan elders' negotiated outcomes. Nonetheless, close scrutiny reveals otherwise. The decision by Governor Roba to vie the second time round in order to retain his seat is provided for in the formal institutional outlook. This was a typical clash of formal-informal institutional that perhaps the clan elders' mechanism (being an informal institutional process) had not thought through, possibly because it was the very first time, they had to be confronted with such a reality. This was a missed opportunity for formal-informal institutional dialogue in Mandera County. Ideally, the clan elders would have been encouraged to decide (and possibly rule) that a governor would only vie once or twice and seek the wider community's consensus on the same. But this proved to be a tough cookie.

In Wajir County, the three main clans (*Degodia*, *Ajuran* and *Ogaden*) too were also embroiled in serious disagreements amongst themselves in the run-up to the March 2013 General Elections. Subsequently, clan negotiations were initiated to enable the *Degodia* to front a candidate for the seat of Governor, while the *Ajuran* and *Ogaden* would present a candidate to vie for the seat of Deputy Governor and Senator respectively. That arrangement worked, save for a few exceptions. In 2017 the major clans agreed such that the *Degodia* went for the seat of Governor while the *Ogaden* presented a candidate for the seat of Deputy Governor. The *Ajuran* clan presented a candidate for the seat of *Ajuran* while the Women Rep was fronted by the *Ogaden* clan. During the 2017 General Elections, clans employed 'negotiated democracy' to select candidates at the ward and constituency levels. For example, among *Degodia* sub-clans such as the *Mantan* (or the *Fai*, among others) several candidates from the same sub-clan had presented themselves for nomination during Party Primaries, and then clan elders would initiate negotiations towards a consensus outcome. This would also save on financial resources such that aspiring candidates from the same

clan (and from the same political party) wouldn't have to spend a lot of resources competing amongst themselves, yet after the primaries, one of them would still face yet another candidate, say from another sub-clan (who belongs to a rival political party) during the main election.

'Negotiated democracy' too, was applied in the context of the competition for elective posts that came with devolution in the 2013 general elections and again in the 2017 polls. While the main clan in Garissa County is the *Ogaden*, several *Ogaden* sub-clans exist, with several lineages and wider extended families therein. From time to time, vicious intra-clan and inter-lineage conflicts flare up in the county. The main *Ogaden* sub-clans in Garissa County include the *Abdulwaq*, *Aulian*, *Abdalla* and *Samawathal*. Garissa, and more so the Garissa sub-county in which Garissa Town belongs, is also fairly cosmopolitan such that there are also non-Somali locals from different ethnic communities such as the Kamba, Munyo Yaya, Kikuyu and Luo among others. 'Negotiated democracy' does feature very strongly, especially at the ward level, and to a considerable extent also, at the constituency level. At the county level, at times some sub-clans normally form loose compromise-driven and/or negotiated alliances in order to outnumber or match up to others in light of the main seats including that of Governor, Deputy Governor, Senator and Woman Representative.

When it comes to matters of administration and development administration at the local level, opinion appears to be divided as to what the role and/or impact of 'negotiated democracy' (as a manifestation of the informal institutional domain) has had. On one hand, local administrators at the county level have argued that 'negotiated democracy' has at times served to help prevent and resolve intra-communal disputes and actual violent conflicts through the traditional avenues provided through clan-based alternative dispute resolution (ADR). At times also Somali elders have also been called in to aid the governmental authorities at the devolved level to midwife, promote and shape local agendas regarding specific governmental policy issues and projects. In this way, they (clan elders) act as a crucial go-between and hence a conduit for formal-informal dialogue, between governmental authorities on one hand, and the people on the other. However, there have been concerns among many residents of the three counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera that 'negotiated democracy' only ends up benefiting members of the 'negotiated' clan, sub-clan, lineage and extended family alliances that end up at the

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helm of county leadership at various levels; while the rest are left to their own devices.

In a nutshell, therefore, the practice of 'negotiated democracy' was also hailed for saving time and financial resources, while also building communal consensus, social cohesion and integration. It was therefore expected that following the first-ever elections under the age of devolution, 'negotiated democracy' would serve as a convenient doorway to better inclusion and wider participation not only in leadership but also in popular participation and consultation in administration and local development. However, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' has had its own share of critics and criticism in northeastern Kenya. The research revealed that the system has been blamed for encouraging pervasive patron-client relationships at the local level. It has also been called out for encouraging circumvention of public scrutiny and subverting the due process. Further, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' has been criticized for abating corruption, nepotism and social exclusion as far as local leadership, local governance and development administration are concerned.

### Analysis

Negotiated democracy in northeastern Kenya, is a clan-based power-sharing and electoral consensus which helps to balance the clan political matrix between majority and minority clans. In normal competitive elections, the majoritarian principle of democracy favours the majority sections of the society which bear the majority votes. In a context of ethnic or clan plurality, the majority clans are therefore poised to win a majority of seats or candidates supported by majority clans or tribes are poised to win over minority-backed candidates.

Devolution in Kenya created 47 counties as devolved units across the country based on the former 47 colonial districts, which were more or less ethnically homogenous. However, the ethnic factor complicated politics especially the power matrix in ethnically heterogeneous counties

such as Migori (majority Luo and minority Kuria), Busia (majority Luhya and minority Iteso), Embu (majority Embu and minority Mbeere), Nakuru (majority Kikuyu and minority Kalenjin) among others (Nzau, 2020). Negotiated democracy began to emerge to settle ethnic or clan power and resource rivalry in the heterogeneous counties to ensure inclusion, unity, political stability and peace. The heterogeneous counties, therefore, adopted a power-sharing formula which allowed the Governor candidate to pick a Deputy Governor candidate from a minority ethnic group. Such a formula also allowed sharing of county executive power between ethnic groups to avoid dominance by majority groups.

In northeastern Kenya in the ethnically homogenous Somali counties of Wajir, Garissa and Mandera, the clan and not tribe are the basic levels of political organization. Majority clans are therefore poised to win power at the county level at the expense of smaller clans, hence the need either for clan alliance or negotiated power sharing to temper with majoritarian or popular aspects of electoral democracy. Subsequently, negotiated democracy was born in the northeastern counties of Wajir, Mandera and Garissa.

It is worth noting that the Somali community is a pastoral community which has robust cultural structures of leadership and arbitration especially the councils of elders. Each clan is represented in the councils of elders in each county. The councils of elders settle local disputes, facilitate and enforce peace agreements and are largely revered as politico-judicial institutions at the community level. The elders are therefore an important element of negotiated democracy as they facilitate, seal and popularize outcomes of negotiations for the community (clans) to implement in elections. A community youth leader in Garissa, Birik, explained the process of negotiating democracy as follows:

*Every clan is represented by its elders and largest (in terms of size, wealth and influence) families in negotiations... this is once a clan comes up*

*with a list of its candidates to enter negotiations with. The elders mid-wife the process as powerful negotiators alongside representatives from largest families...once an agreed list of candidates for general elections for every ward, constituency and county seat is developed from the negotiations, the elders endorse it and popularize it. The negotiations are for us, the primaries.*

An official of a local civil society organization in Garissa, the Al Ihsan Peace and Development Organization, Abdisalam Sheikh, describes the purpose of negotiated democracy in the northeastern as "clan-based political consensus of sharing power, resources and positions". At this level, negotiated democracy serves to ensure equitable resource distribution across clans, fair political representation for clans and an inclusive county government structure. Abdisalam Sheikh further adds that:

*through negotiated democracy majority clans bargain with minority clans to ensure inclusivity... or else, minority clans would be excluded from power and politics...negotiation ensures that minority clans are represented from the ward, constituency to county levels and reduces the outright dominance by majority clans.*

Negotiated democracy also acts as a mechanism for conflict management in the Somali counties which were characterized by inter-clan conflicts in the pre-devolution era, with the fear that devolved politics would exacerbate the conflicts.

*We feared that since elections cause a lot of conflict due to its competitive nature, in such an environment where clans big or small already compete viciously among themselves for resources and power, devolved governance was going to escalate local conflicts .... so, local elites and the elders embraced the idea of negotiated*

In northeastern Kenya in the ethnically homogenous Somali counties of Wajir, Garissa and Mandera, the clan and not tribe are the basic levels of political organization

*democracy, as a mechanism to entrench local consensus and stabilize inter-clan relations. The feeling of inclusion by minority clans and the consensus among majority clans mitigates competition and rivalry which can stoke politically related conflicts. (A civil society leader in Wajir)*

Competitive elections and democracy are an expensive enterprises and processes in Kenya and globally, especially as a result of campaign financing needs, and political party primaries. While it is a pervasion of democracy, voter bribery in Kenya further escalates costs for running for any political seat in the country. Negotiated democracy has a two-stage process. The primaries which are actually negotiations between clans and dominant families is the first stage. The outcome of the negotiations is a consensus list of candidates who are popularly endorsed by elders and clans for general elections. The second stage is the general elections in which voters from different clans vote along the consensus list across the ward, constituency to county seats. In essence, once endorsed at the negotiations stage, a candidate is popularly embraced by the electorate hence they do not need to raise funds for campaigns, they just wait to win general elections as clans honour their commitments to the negotiated settlement.

*Yaani, negotiated democracy inasaidia kupunguz costs for campaigns [so, negotiated democracy helps to cut costs for campaigns on the part of the candidates] .... one does not need to spend a lot on campaigns once the [negotiated] list is out, they just spend on visibility and maybe on clan agents to popularize their bid at clan and inter-clan levels (Abdishakur, Mandera county).*

However, negotiated democracy is not a perfect system, since it is faced with support and accountability challenges. First, candidates opposed to negotiated democracy challenge it by remaining in the race using formal democratic processes and political party processes. Candidates who may have popular support and are not endorsed by the inter-clan negotiations refuse to step down for candidates backed by negotiations. In such cases, 'non-negotiated democracy' candidates defeat the 'negotiated democracy' candidates as voters follow their own preferences in the general elections.

*Not always does negotiated democracy succeed by the way...it is just a 50-50 Chance affair... Sometimes other candidates reject negotiations by clans and run their own campaigns banking on the support of individual voters and personal*





*A section of Mandera residents listen attentively to a call for a peaceful general election campaigns and lobbying in the just concluded August 2022 General Elections (Photo Credit: Adan Mohamed)*

*appeal and capacities to win... for instance, our former Governor Ali Roba, he was endorsed by the clans in 2013 and won but in 2017, he rejected the clans' request for him to step down for another candidate in what was a one-term rotational agreement among clans. He went on to win in 2017 and now he has formed his own party, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) which is growing in this region and on which he was elected Senator in 2022 elections (Hassan Noor, Wajir county).*

Second, other clans or sub-clans renege on the negotiated agreements and vote for other candidates. "While oaths are administered by the elders to have the clans honour the negotiations, other sub-clans go back on the agreements and vote differently in the general elections... this is why you will see 'rebels' like Ali Roba being elected and candidates endorsed by clans losing elections" (Abdisalam Sheikh, Garissa county). Third, majority clans and wealthy families (and candidates) control the outcomes of negotiations through numbers and money respectively.

*The system [negotiated democracy] is abused by majority clans and the moneyed. It is now the majority and the moneyed versus the minority and the poor...in such an environment, it is difficult to*

*negotiated in good faith since the big clans hold the advantage of swaying voters to their preferred candidates anyway, and the moneyed families influence delegates at negotiations. So, it is the wishes of the major clans and those families with money that are mostly endorsed in negotiations (Abdisalama Sheikh).*

Negotiated democracy also lacks other tenets of democracy such as accountability and popular participation. The individual right to determine their political choices is usurped by the clan elders who select candidates for the clan rather than individual voter preferences. The individual voter, therefore, votes not for their preferences but for clan interests, which suppresses the agency of the voter in the democratic process of elections in northeastern counties of Kenya.

*The common person does not get to participate in the negotiations of course...he or she awaits the decision of the elders and other delegates and has no other choice when it comes to general elections...so, it is not a perfect democracy since the clan interests seem to supersede individual right to choice (Hassan, Wajir county)*

The question of accountability is yet another missed aspect of negotiated democracy. Understandably

perhaps, the lack of an institutional framework to check the elected once in office, and the lack of capacity of the key structures such as the councils of elders and other negotiators to oversight the elected, ruins the element of accountability.

*There is absolutely no accountability mechanism to hold those elected through this system (negotiated democracy) to account...when you look around, there is little development, poor service delivery and practically unresponsive leadership...our problems are the same ones we had before devolution despite the funds that this region has received .... and corruption as you know, this region is leading, public funds are diverted to private businesses and bank accounts or family businesses...the elders have no capacity to demand that leaders perform and deliver and the people have left decision-making to the elders... (Mohamed Abdullahi, Wajir county)*

Therefore, it is safe to infer that negotiated democracy in the northeastern counties of Kenya, is a product of the intersection of local culture and politics. The system is a balance on which the struggle between society and the state rests in the northeastern counties. The system ensures that the Somali political culture which submits to the clan and clan elders as political organization units and decision-making institutions thrives. Similarly, negotiated democracy is used as a system of conflict management given the existing conflict-ridden pastoral environment and clan-tribal fragmentation. As such, the need for political consensus to avert vicious inter-clan competition drives the counties to negotiated democracy. While the model maintains peace, it fails to perform in terms of accountability and its support is challenged by the

alternative formal democratic processes. Poor service delivery, rampant corruption and the election of 'rebels' is testament to the limits of negotiated democracy. However, negotiated democracy has more time to perfect and strengthen its edifice.

## Conclusion

This article set out to interrogate the role of formal-informal institutional dialogue in enriching devolved governance in Kenya with specific reference to the experience of counties in the North-Eastern region. The main theoretical assumption herein is that (other factors held constant) the application of the concept of 'negotiated democracy' in the three Counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera is a variant of formal-informal institutional dialogue, that holds the potential to translate into positive outcomes for devolved governance. The research established that the practice of 'negotiated democracy' was also hailed for saving time and financial resources, while also building communal consensus, social cohesion and integration. While it was expected that under the age of devolution, 'negotiated democracy' would serve as a convenient doorway to better inclusion and wider participation not only in leadership but also popular participation and consultation in administration and local development; research findings also revealed that the system has partly been misused and misapplied to encourage pervasive patron-client relationships at the local level. To this extent, it has been called out for encouraging circumvention of public scrutiny and subverting due process at the county level. Further, the idea of 'negotiated democracy' has been criticized for abating corruption, nepotism and social exclusion as far as local leadership, local governance and development administration are concerned.

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# Engaging in Meaningful Mediation by Third-Party Peace Partners in the Horn of Africa to Create Stable Transitional Governments

By Raudhat Sayeeda Saddam,

## Abstract

This article examines peace agreements and the resulting transitional governments in the Horn of Africa region, focusing on Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia, to determine how mediators can prevent peace guarantors from frustrating peace agreement processes and the resulting transitional governments. This article establishes that while the function of peace agreements is to outline the means toward inclusive state-building, the lack of political will to follow through with these agreements has created a series of unstable transitional governments, which is detrimental to long-term peace and stability. Additionally, it found that in the case of failed transitional governments, there was a distinct lack of further resolution-gear engagement among the political actors, and between them and third-party actors who were not included in the initial peace agreements. This article recommends improving the capacity of mediators to enable them to use the carrots and sticks at their disposal to foster political will among peace guarantors, facilitating the establishment of nationally-owned long-term institutions during the transition period, capable of stabilizing governance such as constitutions and the establishment of independent electoral bodies.

## Introduction

Transitional power-sharing governments are not new to Africa and can be observed in several administrations across the continent in Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. They are often used in crisis management and as a mechanism of peace. The Horn of Africa unfortunately is inhabited by states whose history is marred in conflict and has left fragile states in its wake.

Sudan for instance is currently in a crisis. On January 3, 2022, Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok resigned from his post. This came after the military imposed a nationwide state of emergency and arrested Hamdok and his cabinet secretaries. On November 21, 2021, the military and the civilian government reached a political agreement, a 14-point Agreement that led to the release of Hamdok and reinstated his government. However, this move led to anti-military protests, forcing PM Hamdok to resign from his position (BBC, 2021). It has been one year since the military led by Lieutenant General Abdul-Fattah al-Burhan staged a coup d'état which stalled Sudan's

political transition towards democratic rule (Clingendael Institute (Netherlands Institute for International Relations), 2021). This coup brought to a halt the political transition that began after former President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in 2019.

The coup has left the country's economy in crisis, in addition to the devastating effects of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis on the global economy, international efforts to help restore Sudan's economy have halted

“On November 21, 2021, the military and the civilian government reached a political agreement, a 14-point Agreement that led to the release of Hamdok and reinstated his government”



*Sudanese Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (left) and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok hold up documents during a signing ceremony in Khartoum, Sudan, on November 21. (Photo Credits: AFP via Getty Images)*

(Gavin, 2022). After the coup, the World Bank announced that they would be suspending all aid to Sudan and its operation within the country (Radio Dabanga, 2022). This is worrying as it was similar to economic slowdowns that inspired the uprising against the authoritarian rule of former President al-Bashir. Security challenges have also emerged with a noted increase in activity by paramilitary groups in Sudan. In the peripheral areas of the state, violence intensified at the beginning of the year 2022, especially in Darfur and the disputed area of Abyei (Africa Confidential, 2022). There has been an effort to resolve the political turmoil, however, the leftist factions such as Resistance Committees and the Sudanese Communist Party have refused to participate in any mediation process if the military will not step down from power (United Nations Security Council, 2022).

South Sudan is also currently going through its own political crisis at the moment. South Sudan's transitional government was scheduled to be phased out by the end of February 2023 with the General Elections would be held in December 2022. However, in August 2022 President Salva Kiir announced that the transitional government would be in power for another two years due to the lack of progress on the provisions of the *Revitalized Agreement for Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan* (R-ARCSS) (Redaction Africanews, 2022). The

transitional government has continued to suffer from personal rifts and the fracturing trust between the two principals, President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar (Liaga, 2021). The heads of mission of the US, UK, and Norway, boycotted the announcement by the South Sudanese government, stating that the unity government did not consult all parties before the decision was announced (Radio Tamazuj, 2022). Stakeholders within South Sudan have also come out calling for the reversal of this decision. Calling themselves "Like-Minded Stakeholders for a New Political Dispensation in South Sudan", they released a statement with the press saying that the "transitional government term had already been extended twice in the pre-transitional period and "failed to achieve sustainable peace" (Sudan Tribune, 2022). An appeal to the member states of the East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Government Authority on Development (IGAD), Africa Union (AU), United Nations (UN), and all friends of South Sudan to persuade the government to revert their decision to extend the transition period.

Earlier this year in May 2022, Somali legislators successfully selected former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the head of the executive arm of the government. This was a momentous political step in the country given that the election had been delayed by two years (Stigant,

2022). President Hassan Sheikh returns in times of turmoil in Somalia, the state is currently faced with a drought-induced crisis, with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reporting that between January 2021 and September 2022, an estimated one million people in Somalia had abandoned their home in search of water, food, and aid (Hujale, 2022). Somalia just like the majority of the countries in the Horn of Africa is faced with a food security crisis, following the successive failure of rains in the region. Consequently, seven million of the 15 million in the country currently are faced with severe hunger (Hujale, 2022). President Hassan Sheikh has been faced with many complex challenges to contend with in his formative years in power. Some of these issues he identified himself as top priority during the preliminary interviews include climate change, dialogue with Somaliland, reforming the economy, finalizing the constitution, and reconciliation of the polarized nation (Stigant, 2022).

Prior to this Somalia was also dealing with a political crisis. In 2018, the AU endorsed the transitional plan that was proposed for the state, which was aimed at overcoming the differences between parties through dialogue (PSC Report, 2021). However, its efforts to spearhead international efforts in Somalia were rejected, when the Somalia government refused to engage the AU Special Envoy former President John Dramani Mahama of Ghana. Tensions were mounting between the government of Somalia and the federal state following attempts in April 2022 to extend the term of former President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo) by two years (PSC Report, 2021). Clashes broke out between the country's forces loyal to Somalia President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo" and those in the opposition to Somalia's deepening electoral crisis (Mahmood, 2021). The election crisis emerged due to the inability of the Somali elite to agree on the best way to hold an election. The clash also brought to the forefront the challenges that still plague Somalia as the state attempts to rebuild towards sustainable peace. The Somali National Army, despite numerous donor-backed reforms, splintered along clan lines (Sperber, 2021).

This was worrying as the Somali National Army is expected to have transformed into a professional army that would be capable of taking over from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), which would hand over security responsibilities in accordance with the mission's exit strategy (PSC Report, 2021). The lack of a functional defence force in Somalia presents a threat to Somalia and its surrounding states. Troop-contributing states in the Horn of Africa, and other partners supporting the fight against Somalia are also affected by any lack of capacity or inadequacies within the Somali National Army.

### Transitional Governments in the Horn of Africa Region – Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan

Sudan's transitional government was formed when the representatives of several armed groups signed the *Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan* on August 31, 2020. This Agreement was widely celebrated, as it paved way for militant and civilian actors, to come together under a joint transitional government. This was a key engagement with the country's periphery, (the civilians) in drastically expanding representation during the interim period before elections (International Crisis Group, 2021). The peace agreement sought to address the historical imbalance that was present between the state's centre and the periphery, the military and civilians respectively. However, the agreement did not work out as anticipated, as the military forces were more interested in maintaining power, as can be observed with the return of members of the National Congress Party (NCP) to power since the October 2021 coup (*Aljazeera*, 2022). This military coup set off a political crisis (Harshe, 2021). The military suspended crucial sections of Sudan's Constitutional Charter (2019) and dissolved the government and Sovereignty Council. The coup has disrupted the establishment of a democratic state and continues to undermine the transition process.

In Somalia, a similar case of transitional stagnation can be witnessed. Somalia's first transitional government

... President Salva Kiir announced that the transitional government would be in power for another two years due to the lack of progress on the provisions of the Revitalized Agreement for Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS)



came into power in 2004 and was created through a comprehensive peace process that took place in Djibouti and Kenya, and was supported by international partners (Bryden & Thomas, 2015). The peace process aimed at creating stability in the state through the restoration of national institutions, following the collapse of the government in 1991. The successful creation of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2012 from the Transitional Federal government (TFG) was expected to define the culmination of the transition period. The FGS is a good case study as it is recent enough to be relevant, and allows for an examination of what follows a transitional government that does not facilitate power-sharing or decision-making by multiple parties in the conflict. The Federal Government with the help of the AMISOM – now African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) – and neighbouring states such as Kenya, was successful in degrading al Shabab and considerably weakening it. The government was able to force the jihadist group to the defensive. Additionally, several regional administrations emerged in parts of the country (Bryden & Thomas, 2015). However, the mismanagement of the political transition resulted in political stagnation in Somalia.

South Sudan is a young state having gained independence from Sudan in 2011. The state enjoyed relative internal peace before large-scale violence broke out in 2013. This was a result of the friction between President Salva Kiir and his Vice-President Riek Machar. The violence escalated from Juba to the rest of the state, fuelled by unresolved grievances among varying ethnic and identity groups (Liaga, 2021). The region as well as international partners intervened in several ways in attempts to broker peace but none of their efforts was fruitful. Both the High-Level Revitalization Forum organized in 2017 by IGAD, and an initiative organized by the UN, and Troika countries (Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States) failed. Consequently, in 2018, the Revitalized Agreement for Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan

It should be noted that the peace agreement outlined both the creation of the Somali Federal Government as well as the authoritative rule of the state government in Somalia over any future emerging federal governments

(R-ARCSS) was signed. This peace agreement represents a possible means by which the young nation will be able to establish constitutional governance.

The Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) which was formed in February 2022, is already falling behind on most of the intended objectives in the agreed timeline, for instance setting an electoral institution (*The East African*, 2021). This is increasingly frustrating both the South Sudanese people and key stakeholders because while state executives have been established such as state ministers have, the unification of forces, the establishment of an independent judicial arm of the government, has yet to be accomplished in preparation for the General Elections, which were to be held in 2023 but have been consequently pushed forward. There is no consensus in the R-TGoNU on what to prioritize. President Kiir has maintained that the country will be ready for the elections in 2023, due to the pre-transition tasks that still remain unfulfilled: merging security forces, making judicial reforms, and writing a new constitution as stipulated in the R-ARCSS. The first Vice-President Machar insists that elections cannot happen without the proper security reforms, while the fifth Vice-President Rebecca Nyandeng rationalizes that the elections should not be prioritized, instead resources ought to address the humanitarian crisis facing the state (Mayen, 2021). She directs the government to focus on returning the people of South Sudan from refugee camps and settling those in displacement camps. Provisions for inclusive representation and participation have not been satisfied in the executive of the R-TGoNU. Women have only received 26 per cent representation in the Council of Ministers and 10 per cent among the deputy ministers (Liaga, 2021). This is below the 35 per cent threshold that was agreed upon.

It should be noted that the peace agreement outlined both the creation of the Somali Federal Government as well as the authoritative rule of the state government in Somalia over any future emerging federal governments (Bryden & Thomas, 2015). The Juba Agreement was key in crucially amending the 2019 Constitutional Charter, while also predetermining much of the yet-to-be-drafted constitution (Al-Ali, 2021). While peace agreements are fundamental to the formation of the transitional government, their implementation is challenging. The political alliances between the rebels and Sudanese Security Forces make it difficult to facilitate conflict resolution within the transitional period (HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019).

## Challenges Associated with the formation of Transitional Governments in the Horn of Africa

Transitional governments are components of peacebuilding and peace-making efforts. These forms of government are put in place to facilitate power sharing. This guarantees that each stakeholder in the conflict participates in the decision-making process towards establishing future long-term arrangements which are essential in state building (Papagianni, 2008). More than two decades of international practice suggest that power-sharing is among the dominating approaches favoured by third-party mediators for building state capacity and legitimacy amongst deeply divided societies (McCulloch & McEvoy, 2018).

The transition period is designed to facilitate the resolution of disputes not resolved during the initial mediation phase, which allows for civil societies and minority groups who are not engaged during the initial peace talks to garner representation in the transitional

process. The Horn of Africa region has experienced a number of transitional governments in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. However, these governments have faced challenges from the associated political actors who have either prolonged the transitional process or whose transitional governments have collapsed. This failure can be attributed to the challenges of power-sharing and the lack of strong third parties who can ensure that power-sharing does occur. Third parties have been shown to have a crucial role in incentivizing contending groups to adopt, maintain, and reform power-sharing institutions, this has happened in Bosnia, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia (McCulloch & McEvoy, 2018).

In the case of Somalia, the engagement of third-party non-signatory political players was lacking. For instance, in 2009, at the request of the Transitional Government under Sheikh Sharif, civilians and militias began to be trained by the Governments of Ethiopia and Kenya. This was geared toward the formation of a regional administration and to undercut the aspirations of Ras Kamboni militia,



*Jikany Nuer White Army fighters holds their weapons in Upper Nile State, South Sudan. Picture taken on February 10, 2014. (Photo Credit: REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic)*





*The Somali based insurgent group, al Shabab, has been causing havoc in Somalia for the last 3 decades (Photo Credit: AFP)*

which was fighting in Kismayo and Gandhi (Bryden & Thomas, 2015). Unfortunately, the SFG was mistrustful of this initiative and ordered that it end. This order was followed up by a proposal from Mogadishu to have a 'bottom-up' process. This was perceived by the Jubaland and their foreign backers as a testament that SFG was hostile to federalism and was looking to impose its rule. The dispute was not engaged, and a resolution was not reached, resulting in the Jubaland initiative coming to an end with the declaration of a regional administration that was headed by Ahmed Madobe. The SFG denounced this administration, calling it unconstitutional, yet not citing what section of the constitution they were acting against (Yusuf & Elder, 2013). Such actions by political actors within a transitional government do not facilitate peace and alienate third-party entities.

South Sudan on the other hand, there has a distinct lack of continued conflict resolution, which can be attributed to a lack of political will to establish the needed institutions to facilitate a general election. As the brief highlights in the background, the transitional government in the past has been unable to agree on what the government should prioritize. President Kiir and First Vice-President Machar have not been successful in carrying on with conflict resolution during the transition period, and have not facilitated some amount of trust to

grow in their relationship. Sudan has also been faced with the same problem; the transition period has been marked by a military coup that resulted in a political crisis that has undermined the legitimacy of the government as highlighted by the IGAD's Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu in his Statement of the Region Address (IGAD, 2021). The situation is indicative of the way actors are able to take advantage of peace agreements. In the most recent development, the military has come up with a 14-point agreement that allows them to retain power after the transition period for an undisclosed amount of time (Aljazeera, 2021). This has been followed by protests from the public as the path to a democratic government has been disrupted.

This is the point where an active and strong third-party mediator comes in. When power-sharing arrangements lead to such political immobilism, mediators step in. They respond through a number of methods such as carrots and sticks, assisting in clarifying the sticking issues, as well as streamlining, or renegotiating the aspects of the original deals (McCulloch & McEvoy, 2018). In Bosnia, for instance, the Dayton Accords were successfully signed and implemented due to the presence of a strong mediator. Both the United States (US) and Europe were actively involved in the peace process and even helped present a framework for peace (Brittanica, 2022). The US, through



NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), conducted air strikes against the Serbs when they launched an attack in Sarajevo in the middle of negotiations (McCulloch & McEvoy, 2018). This pressured the Serbs back to the negotiating table. Following the peace process, further support was offered by nations across the globe. 26 states helped implement the peace plan by participating through a force of 60,000 troops who were placed in the Balkans (Brittanica, 2022). Since the signing of the Dayton Accords peace has endured in the region.

Mediators have varying skills. Mediators from the United Nations have different strengths (global scope, moral authority) compared to those in regional organizations such as the AU (local knowledge, trusted figures in society). Of course, these parties also have their set of shortcomings. There has been increased engagement by regional organizations in the conflict resolution space (McCulloch & McEvoy, 2018). While the peace process must be locally owned, having mediators who exemplify the strengths of meditative bodies at the international and regional bodies is key.

## Conclusion

Decisive action by mediating parties is imperative if power-sharing through transitioning governments is to succeed. During the initial peace process it is key that a mediator is capable of influencing conflicting parties positively towards a peace agreement. For power sharing to work, this means that the mediators have the ability to call on regional or international accountability mechanisms that can call out any actor who frustrates the transition process (McCulloch & McEvoy, 2018). Thus, ensuring that the peace process, following the signing of a peace agreement, is fluid and allows for inclusive engagement in state-building activities such as implementing long-term institutional arrangements.

## Recommendations

- It is important that mediation bodies ensure that political and military actors in the conflict do not utilize long-term institutional arrangements to take away from the power-sharing element. This can be achieved through the engagement of a group of mediators from the regional and international levels or one who is legitimate at both levels.
- Have a more robust international community such as the United Nations (UN) or African Union (AU) in the Horn of Africa, that push for peace agreements that do not give any political and military actors overwhelming power over each other or third-party actors. These can be done through the continuous engagement of deployed staff to observe the implementation of the agreement, the undertaking of conflict analysis and internal assessments to advise the transition government on how to adjust accordingly.
- Conflict actors are required to be at the helm of the peace agreement processes, and their will is key to ensuring smooth implementation; it is critical that mediators and third parties, such as peace and development partners (neighbouring countries, or the donors backing the transition process) utilize their influence to keep this political will engaged. For instance, coercion may be crucial in this case, especially at an individual basis can be very effective. Freezing aid that is directed at a particular state can help create domestic pressure for the continuation of the transitional process, however in extreme cases when this measure has failed, it is more effective to cut off the personal wealth of those in leadership in order to garner cooperation.

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## Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are excited to release our 28<sup>th</sup> bi-monthly issue of *The HORN Bulletin* (Vol. V, Iss. VI, 2022). We bring to you well-researched articles and analysis of topical issues and developments affecting the Horn of Africa. We welcome contributions from readers who wish to have their articles included in the HORN Bulletin. At HORN, we believe ideas are the currency of progress. Feel free to contact the Editor-in-Chief for more details at [communications@horninstitute.org](mailto:communications@horninstitute.org).

Hassan Khannenje, Ph.D.  
Editor-in-Chief, The HORN Bulletin

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The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is a non-profit, applied research, and policy think-do tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. Its vision is a progressive Horn of Africa and the African continent, served by informed, evidence-based and problem-solving policy research and analysis. Its mission is to contribute to informed, objective, definitive research and analytical inquiry that positively informs policies of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and spaces.

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HORN Bulletin ISSN: 2663-4996



2663-4996