



# **Galmudug Reconciliation:** Processes, Challenges, and Opportunities Ahead

**February 2021**





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# Contents

To navigate through this document, click on any title of this table of contents.

To return to this page, click on the page footer.

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|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Acknowledgements</b>  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Authors</b>   |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Abbreviations</b>   |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Executive Summary</b>   |
| <b>12</b> | <b>1. Research Methodology</b>   |
| <b>14</b> | <b>2. Context</b>  |
| <b>14</b> | <b>2.1 Reconciliation in Somalia: An Overview</b>  |
| <b>15</b> | <b>2.2 Reconciliation in Galmudug and the Trajectory Towards State Formation</b>         |
| <b>21</b> | <b>3. Key Findings and Discussion Points</b>   |
| <b>21</b> | <b>3.1 The Galmudug Reconciliation Process and the National Reconciliation Framework</b> |
| <b>22</b> | <b>3.2 Key Actors in Galmudug Reconciliation</b>   |
| <b>23</b> | <b>3.3 The Galmudug Social Reconciliation Process</b>                                    |
| <b>25</b> | <b>3.3.1 The Huurshe-Xeraale Case</b>  |
| <b>26</b> | <b>3.4 Active Conflict Flashpoints</b>   |
| <b>28</b> | <b>3.5 The Political Reconciliation Process</b>  |
| <b>32</b> | <b>4. Challenges to Social and Political Reconciliation</b>                              |
| <b>35</b> | <b>5. Lessons Learnt: Successes and Failures</b>   |
| <b>37</b> | <b>6. Conclusion</b>   |
| <b>39</b> | <b>7. Policy Considerations</b>  |
| <b>39</b> | <b>7.1 On Political Reconciliation</b>   |
| <b>40</b> | <b>7.2 On Social Reconciliation</b>  |
| <b>42</b> | <b>8. References</b>   |

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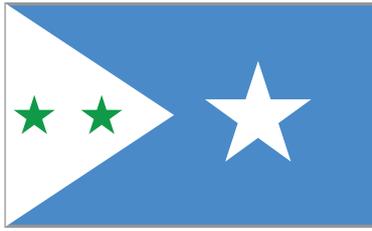
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**Somali Public Agenda** is a non-profit public policy and administration research organisation based in Mogadishu, Somalia. Its aim is to advance understanding and improvement of public administration and public services in Somalia through evidence-based research and analysis.

**Interpeace** is an international organisation for peacebuilding that has been working in Somalia and Somaliland for over 25 years, supporting peacebuilding and democratisation processes. Interpeace’s mandate is to 1) strengthen the capacities of societies to manage conflict in non-violent, non-coercive ways by assisting national actors in their efforts to develop social and political cohesion; and 2) assist the international community to play a more effective role in supporting peacebuilding efforts around the world.

**Cover photo:** The Somali acacia tree is historically known as the location in which Somali traditional reconciliation & negotiations takes place.



Modified Map by Interpeace • Original map by United Nations, Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section.

# Abbreviations

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>ASWJ</b>   | Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a                                     |
| <b>FGS</b>    | Federal Government of Somalia                             |
| <b>FMS</b>    | Federal Member State(s)                                   |
| <b>IGAD</b>   | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                |
| <b>MoIFAR</b> | Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Reconciliation |
| <b>NIS</b>    | Nordic International Support foundation                   |
| <b>FCA</b>    | Finnish Church Aid  |
| <b>SAMO</b>   | Somali-African Muki Organization                          |
| <b>SDM</b>    | Somali Democratic Movement                                |
| <b>SNA</b>    | Somali National Army                                      |
| <b>SNDU</b>   | Somali National Democratic Union                          |
| <b>SNM</b>    | Somali National Movement                                  |
| <b>SNU</b>    | Somali National Union                                     |
| <b>SPA</b>    | Somali Public Agenda                                      |
| <b>SPM</b>    | Somali Patriotic Movement                                 |
| <b>SSDF</b>   | Somali Salvation Democratic Front                         |
| <b>TFG</b>    | Transitional Federal Government                           |
| <b>TNG</b>    | Transitional National Government                          |
| <b>UNDP</b>   | United Nations Development Programme                      |
| <b>UNSOM</b>  | United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia              |
| <b>USC</b>    | United Somali Congress                                    |
| <b>USP</b>    | United Somali Party                                       |

# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

Somalia has seen considerable instability since the downfall of the military regime in 1991. Violent clashes between rival clans have been commonplace throughout the country, primarily caused by a scarcity of water and pasture resources. Such conflicts have led to long-lasting feuds that have in large part proven difficult to resolve. One prime example is the central region of Galmudug, formed by the merger of Galgadud and part of Mudug, having historically been the site of bitter political rivalries and frequent fighting, with multiple groups claiming dominion over various subsets of its territory over time. Indeed, the period 2015-2019 saw Galmudug split in two, with separate administrations based in both Dhumasareb and Adado. Nonetheless, after repeated failed attempts of reconciliation by various parties, the latest process seeking to bring about peace and the establishing of a stable state has been met with a measure of success.

This report presents the findings from a field study looking into the characteristics of the political and social reconciliation process in the Galmudug region. The study was conducted between July and September 2020 by Somali Public Agenda, with support from Interpeace. Data were obtained in the form of in-person and online interviews with 21 key stakeholders and were complemented by wider literature.

Results show that the relative success of the latest reconciliation efforts in Galmudug are due to a combination of factors. The state's current president, Ahmed Abdi Kariye "Qoorqoor", elected in February 2020, not only enjoys support from the Federal

Government of Somalia, but also reached agreement with opposition candidates even before his inauguration, despite them having boycotted the election itself. He has appointed a cabinet that is seen by local stakeholders as politically diverse and inclusive, seeking to better represent broader Galmudug society. It is this inclusivity that gives the state presidency legitimacy. Before the election, a social reconciliation was organised by a technical committee established by the Somali Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in mid-2019. This committee convened a meeting of over 700 representatives of all 11 clans in the region to build trust and confidence in the process. The defeat of Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ) by government forces and the start of its former members' returning to the mainstream Galmudug fold are also thought to have been key to the current situation. Thus, Galmudug is seen as an emerging influencer on the national political stage with much promise for the future.

However, the state of play is fragile, and many challenges remain. These must be overcome if Galmudug is to continue on its current path towards sustainable peace. The root cause of the clan-based violence is a lack of water and pastureland, which causes groups to move around the region in search of better conditions, bringing them into conflict with each other. The infrastructure needs of the state are thus considerable. It also lacks many other basic economic resources from which to generate its own revenue.

At a national level, the management of Somalia's upcoming indirect federal elections is a delicate issue.

Both positive and negative lessons learnt from Galmudug's recent state election may well prove essential to the success of this process. As such, these lessons must be heeded by all stakeholders if they are to have an impact.

The future administration of two specific areas remains to be settled. First, there is the city of Galkayo, which sits on the border with and is jointly run by the neighbouring state of Puntland, with which Galmudug has historically had difficult relations. Second, the Galgadug sub-region presents many questions, having been controlled for many recent years by ASWJ.

Indeed, although the re-integration of former ASWJ members has begun, it is far from being a straightforward process. Indeed, the security situation in Galmudug remains tense, with checkpoints found in close proximity to each other still under differing chains of command – some ASWJ, some federal.

Continuing to merge these forces is seen as vital to maintaining peace in the region.

In addition, eight areas within Galmudug are currently concerned by active conflicts. Also, three districts in the region (Xarardheere, Ceelbuur, Ceeldheer) remain under the control of al-Shabaab. People living there may feel disengaged from the peace process taking place in the rest of their state. If and when these areas are returned to Galmudug government control, there is a chance that clan tensions currently suppressed by the al-Shabaab occupation may re-erupt. Further sustained reconciliation efforts therefore remain necessary, now and for the future.

Galmudug leaders and other parties seeking to address the remaining challenges and build on the existing achievements may benefit from the recent history of the region, the lessons learnt, and potential solutions reviewed in this report. o

# 1.

## 1. Research Methodology

# 1. Research Methodology

This study was carried out by researchers from Somali Public Agenda using qualitative methods. The primary data consisted of interviews with key stakeholders at both federal and Galmudug state levels. These were conducted in Mogadishu and Dhusamareb between 16 July and 20 September 2020. Stakeholders living outside Somalia were also interviewed online.

21 stakeholders were interviewed, including:

- the former Prime Minister of Somalia who has led the federal government effort to re-establish Galmudug;
- the former President and the former Vice-President of Galmudug;
- the former Somali federal minister who played a key role in the establishment of Galmudug in 2015;
- a representative from the UN;
- current Galmudug ministers and MPs;
- advisors to the current President of Galmudug;
- notable members from civil society;
- reconciliation experts who worked with the Federal Minister of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in drafting the National Reconciliation Framework (NRF);

- key members of the Galmudug social reconciliation committee;
- Somalia federal MPs and senators;
- representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister of Somalia; and
- clan elders in Dhusamareb.

The interviews were complemented with news reports and the broader literature.

While this study's findings are based on a rich source of primary interview data, there are also some limitations to its impact. First, several of the stakeholders whom the researchers wanted to interview turned out not to be available. Indeed, when the researchers started the interviews, many of the hoped-for interviewees were in Dhusamareb for a meeting of federal and state leaders on federal elections. In July, the researchers travelled to Dhusamareb. At that time, the Dhusamareb II federal election meeting between the federal government and Federal member State leaders was underway, making access to stakeholders for interview difficult. Second, while there had been plans to visit other districts in Galmudug, the researchers concentrated their field interviews in Dhusamareb and Mogadishu as it was in these cities that most key stakeholders could be reached. Third, although the researchers examined the Huurshe-Xeraale social reconciliation process and interviewed elders who had been involved, they did not visit the villages in question because of security concerns.

# 2.

## 2. Context

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Reconciliation in Somalia: An Overview

Following a failed attempted coup in 1978, Somalia's military regime used coercive force against rebel groups and the communities seen to be supporting them. This caused death, displacement, and lasting psychological effects. Ultimately, the combined efforts of various rebel groups led to the fall of the regime in 1991 and a subsequent disintegration of the country into new cycles of violence within and between clans across the country.

As violence gripped the country – a result of the fighting and lack of consensus among armed groups – a reconciliation effort was launched by the Djibouti government. This was led by the then-president Hassan Guled Abtidoon in an attempt to save Somalia from further destructive violence.

The 1991 peace conference under the auspices of the Djibouti Government was the first such conference to steer the country away from the path it was on. The Djibouti government invited the various competing armed groups that had split the country into clan fiefdoms to the conference to halt the conflagration and strike a deal that would lead to a unity government. Djibouti hosted the leaders of six armed factions – the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), the United Somali Congress (USC), the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), the Somali-African Muki Organization (SAMO), the Somali National Union (SNU) and the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) (Menkhaus et al 2009). However, the Somali National Movement (SNM) from north-western Somalia refused to attend, having declared unilateral secession a few months earlier.

These conferences, known as Djibouti I & II – held in June and July 1991 respectively – ushered in the appointment of Ali Mahdi Mohamed as interim president of Somalia for two years. However, General Mohamed Farah Aidid – a prominent USC leader and former Somalia ambassador to India – rejected the outcome (Menkhaus et al 2009). This development resulted in the bifurcation of the USC into two rival factions led by Ali Mahdi Mohamed and General Mohamed Farah Aidid. It also led to a hard-fought battle in Mogadishu known as the “Four Months War (November 1991-February 1992)”. The war entailed death, destruction, and the pillaging of property (Menkhaus 2007). It also divided the city into parts – North and South – under the separate control of the two fighting factions of the USC.

Over subsequent years, numerous externally-driven peace conferences followed the Djibouti conferences, seeking to find a solution to the fighting within and between armed groups and clans. These included, among others, conferences in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1993; Sodere, Ethiopia in 1996-7; Cairo, Egypt in 1997; Arta, Djibouti in 2000; and Eldoret-Mbagathi, Kenya in 2004 (Menkhaus et al 2009). These conferences did not yield any tangible or sustainable outcomes to de-escalate the situation in Somalia, with the exception of the Arta, Djibouti conference in 2000. This conference achieved a measure of success by establishing a Transitional National Government (TNG) headed by Abdikasim Salad Hassan. However, the TNG failed to restore order. The 2004 Eldoret-Mbagathi Conference in Kenya culminated in the establishment of the Tran-

sitional Federal Government (TFG) led by Col. Abdullah Yusuf Ahmed, taking over from its TNG predecessor.

Each of these conferences – except Arta – had features in common. First, armed warlords were invited, side-lining and overshadowing the role and contributions of civil society. Second, these conferences were organised and financed by foreign countries. Thus, the inclusion and invitation of participants was influenced by the competing national interests of these external actors. This undermined any solutions to the conflict that the conferences might reach. Furthermore, rival counter-conferences were organised. These were attended by potential stakeholders who had not been invited to the main conferences and subsequently led to confusion and further division.

Therefore, most of these political conferences, were driven by foreign interests, which failed to find solutions. Alongside and in contrast to these, there were several key locally- and community-driven peace initiatives that found success in resolving feuds and establishing governance structures. These examples continue to have an impact today, providing models and lessons for any future attempts at genuine peace conferences.

Regions of Northern Somalia (present-day Somaliland) held a conference in 1991 after the collapse of the Barre regime to settle disputes within and between clans. This resulted in the declaration of Somaliland's unilateral independence from Somalia on 18 May 1991 (Balthasar 2013). Subsequently, a spate of violence erupted. In 1992, an inter-clan conflict broke out in Somaliland. In the period between 1994 and 1996, various clans in Somaliland fought over access to critical resources in Hargeisa and Burao, as well as over political representation within the new government. This was resolved in 1997 with the help of local efforts (Forte 2011). Somaliland has since achieved a significant degree of internal political stability.

The north eastern region of Somalia (present-day Puntland) is another case where locally-driven peace reconciliations have achieved success in re-establishing order in the aftermath of the civil war. On 23 July 1998, the clans in the north eastern region held a conference in Garowe attended by groups including the SSDF, the USP from the eastern region of Somaliland, the SNDU from the eastern part of the Galgadud region in central Somalia, and other community representatives (Refworld 2001). The convention led to the establishment of the semi-autonomous Puntland regional administration, and the election of Col. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as President.

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## 2.2 Reconciliation in Galmudug and the Trajectory Towards State Formation

While the north eastern region of Somalia has enjoyed relatively stable governance, the central regions have seen intermittent conflict within and between clans due to the weakness or absence of a consensual governing authority. The central regions, now under the administration of the state of Galmudug, were the epicentre of the rebellion led by the USC that led to the downfall of Somalia's central government in 1991. These central regions have been characterised by violence since the collapse of the military regime. This has therefore resulted from a lack of genuine reconciliation initiatives by elders that could have laid to rest conflicts within and between the belligerent clans and forged an administration that would promote the common interests of the communities concerned.

Although violence has engulfed the central regions as a whole, it is the city of Galkayo that has been the hardest hit, and scars of the war are still visible. While Galkayo has a history of protracted conflict dating back to the colonial era, this was exacerbated by the governance vacuum that followed 1991. Conflicts have sporadically flared up in Galkayo between the USC led by Gen. Aidid in the south, and the SSDF led by Col. Abdullahi Yusuf in the north. In the period between 1991 and 1992, twelve rounds of armed conflict took place between the two rival clans. However, the leaders of the USC/SNA and SSDF, Gen. Aidid and Col. Yusuf, signed a peace agreement in 1993 to end hostilities, agreeing that the south of Galkayo would be administered by USC while the north of the city in the Mudug region

would be under the control of the SSDF (Mohamed & Nur 2007). Today, the conflict has not been fully resolved and tensions occasionally re-ignite as the underlying causes are yet to be addressed.

By contrast, the southern parts of the Mudug and Galgadud regions have seen efforts to establish clan-based administrations with the aim of providing security to the population. Galkayo was the first place where (South) Mudug and Galgadud state rebuilding initiatives took place.

By 2006, in southern Galkayo, members of the Sa'ad (Habar-Gidir), Sheikhal, Dir, Madhibaan, and Hilebi (Murusade) sub-clans had formed the Galmudug regional state following committed efforts by the local community and the very same groups' diaspora. They (s)electd Mohamed Warsame Ali 'Kiimiko' as their first President, and Galkayo as the capital of the new polity.

In an attempt to further expand its own authority, the regional administration sought the support and inclusion of the other clans in the south of Mudug and Galgadud. This was when the name "Galmudug" was first used - showing a desire for synergy between the former Galgadud and Mudug regions (Abtidoon et al 2012). However, this did not materialise because of mistrust, animosity, and fear of domination between clans, many of whom interpreted and portrayed the exercise as a chiefly Sa'ad project. However, the administration did improve its relations with the neighbouring regional administration of Puntland, and both signed an agreement in 2011 to cooperate on security, economic, and social matters (UNPOS 2011).

As well as the former Galmudug regional administration based in Galkayo (itself a precursor of the current Galmudug State of Somalia), there was a patchwork of clan-based administrations in the Galgadud region, including Ximan & Xeeb and Ahlusunna Waljama'a. Ximan & Xeeb was an administration established by the Saleban, a sub-clan of the Habargidir, and which operated in the areas inhabited by the sub-clan. Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a came into existence in 2008 following its victory over al-Shabaab fighters in Guriel and Dhusamareb (Hassan 2009). The group administered Guriel, Dhusamareb, Abudwaq, Balanballe and Herale.

As part of the efforts to federalise the remaining regions, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (from 10 September 2012 to 7 February 2017) urged the Galmudug regional administration to merge with Ximan & Xeeb and Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a to establish a regional state, as stipulated in the provisional Constitution of 2012. Thus, on 30 July 2014, representatives from the Galkayo-based Galmudug, Ximan & Xeeb, and Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a signed an agreement in Mogadishu endorsing the new central regional state initiative (*Goobjoog* 2015), with the backing of the Somali government and international community in a ceremony held in Villa Somalia. The then-minister for the Interior, Abdullahi Godah Barre, appointed a 26-member technical committee to steer the formation of the new Galmudug state.

This development was not well received by the state of Puntland, whose authority issued a statement rejecting the agreement and preparations for the new state of Galmudug, arguing that it contravened a specific article in the provisional federal constitution and infringes Puntland's jurisdiction. Puntland's objection centred around the administration of the northern part of the Mudug region. The disagreement culminated in Puntland suspending its cooperation with Mogadishu. However, the international community, notably the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) envoys, issued a statement addressing Puntland's fears and indicating that the new Galmudug state would not affect the former's territorial jurisdiction.

On 14 January 2015, members of the Ayr sub-clan of the Habar-Gidir held a reconciliation conference in Dhusamareb, which was attended by eight clans from the Galgadud and Mudug regions (*Goobjoog* 2015). Other sub-clans, such as the Saleban, declined the invitation, because Dhusamareb and Adado were both competing to formally host the state formation conference and become the capital of the new state. The convened clans agreed that Dhusamareb would be the capital of the new administration. The community hailing from Ayr were eager to be assured of this, since it was the provincial city of the Galgadud region and a city inhabited by a variety of clans from the region. Somalia's President at the time, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, attended the closure of the conference. Prior to his attendance,

the president had made several trips to Dhusamareb to convince the Ayr sub-clan to agree to the proposal of holding the conference in Adado. However, they rejected the president's request until he promised that Dhusamareb would become the capital of the new administration. The president issued a decree announcing that Dhusamareb would become the capital city of the new state, while the state formation conference would be held in Adado.

On 16 April 2015, the state formation conference officially began in Adado (*Goobjoog* 2015). Delegates from the 11 clans in Galmudug were in attendance, and they selected 89 state legislators, who in turn elected Ali Ga'al Asir as the new Speaker of the Parliament. Later, they elected Abdikarim Hussein Guled, a former federal security minister, as the President of Galmudug.

However, while the conference was underway, a splinter group from Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a expressed its dissatisfaction with the agreement reached with the federal government in July 2014 on the formation of the central regional state (Asylum Research Consultancy 2018). They expelled the federal security forces from Dhusamareb and installed their own administration. This prevented the new administration from accessing the capital, thereby making Adado the interim capital of the new state. This divided Galmudug into two separate administrations: one based in Dhusamareb under Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ) and the other, "official" Galmudug administration, in Adado. This presented a setback to the formation of an inclusive administration for the central regions of Somalia that could solve long-standing problems affecting local communities.

The polarisation increased when 54 members of the Galmudug state parliament approved a motion to impeach Abdikarim Hussein Guled, Galmudug's president, in January 2017. The Speaker suggested that the process had not been undertaken on legal grounds. Although the vote was described as unconstitutional, the president nevertheless resigned, citing health reasons, on 25 February 2017 (*Goobjoog* 2017).

Following Guled's resignation, Parliament elected Ahmed Du'ale Gelle Haaf as President of Galmudug. He was inaugurated on 3 May 2017. This offered

renewed hope for reconciliation between the Galmudug administration and the Dhusamareb-based Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a faction. Haaf extended both direct and indirect overtures to Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, both before and after his inauguration, seeking to overcome the gridlock that had rendered the state dysfunctional.

Both parties came to the negotiation table and participated in three rounds of talks – one mediated by the FGS and the two others brokered by IGAD – seeking to reach a power-sharing arrangement. The FGS-mediated talks between President Haaf and ASWJ were unsuccessful.

By contrast, IGAD, using its diplomatic leverage, was able to bring the two sides together in Nairobi, Kenya, where they began discussing the issues in earnest. They met again at another conference convened in Djibouti under the aegis of IGAD, reaching an agreement in December 2017 (*Somali Affairs, 2020*). This was subsequently hailed as a landmark victory that could end the long-standing division in the central Somalia regional state. The signed agreement provided for a 14-point power-sharing arrangement, whereby, among others:

1. The assemblies in Dhusamareb and Adado would be merged.
2. A new post of Chief Minister would be held by Sheikh Shakir – the leader of ASWJ.
3. The Galmudug administration would relocate to Dhusamareb.
4. ASWJ would recognise the Galmudug administration as legitimate and the position of Chief Justice of Galmudug state would be filled by an ASWJ appointee.

Although the agreement was implemented, Galmudug did not reap the benefits expected from the improvement of relations between the two administrations. Indeed, it fell prey to the deadlock between the FGS and other Federal Member States that emerged following the establishment of the inter-state relations council in Kismayo in October 2017, which itself had come about following a meeting where FMS leaders had resolved to put pressure on the central government.

The breakdown of relations between the centre and peripheral regions had significant negative consequences. Nowhere was this more evident than in Galmudug (Mahmood 2018), where the state was again divided into two camps: one in Dhusamareb led by Haaf alongside ASWJ, and another in Adado led by the Vice-President and the Speaker. This was related to Haaf's persistent refusal to adhere to Villa Somalia's views.

The Adado camp elected Ahmed Basto as President, following a motion to impeach Haaf, removing him from office. At the same time, the FGS's adopted a punitive approach in attempting to subdue the Dhusamareb administration. This included cutting fiscal support to the FMS of Galmudug.

In the midst of this crisis, the Federal Ministry for the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR) issued a statement calling on Galmudug leaders to hold state elections, as the term of the administration was due to expire on 14 July 2019. This further exacerbated the situation. Haaf rejected the call for elections, instead stating that the leaders' tenure would be extended until 2021. This was based on the date AWSJ and Haaf had agreed in Djibouti.

The FGS continued to work towards its goal of organising state elections with the hope of unseating the (in the FGS' apparent view) "unfriendly" president and installing an amenable regional leader. To bring this about, the FGS secured a secret deal with ASWJ, whereby FGS officials were allowed to land at Dhusamareb airport without president Haaf's knowledge or consent. As a result, Haaf fled from Dhusamareb to Galkayo with some of his supporters. From there, he declared that he rescinded the Djibouti agreement with ASWJ and would accept the holding of elections, transferring that responsibility to the MoIFAR.

In preparation for the state elections, the MoIFAR tasked a 12-member committee with organising a conference on reconciliation efforts for Galmudug on 17 July 2019. According to Dr Abdirahman Abdullahi "Baadiyow", the committee chair, these efforts included prominent dignitaries from various Galmudug communities (Baadiyow, 2019). The conference gathered 720 delegates from the 11 clans in Galmudug and civil society organisations. The aim was to reach a common understanding among stake-

holders regarding the road map for conflict resolution (Baadiyow 2019). The reconciliation conference came to an end on 16 September 2019.

However, the process was overshadowed by friction between ASWJ – who in parallel appointed its own technical committee, that in turn selected MPs and (s)electd Sheikh Mohamed Shakir as President – and FGS on the one hand, and opposition groups on the other, some of whom had their own ambitions for the Galmudug Presidency. The opposition groups accused the FGS of manipulating the process to ensure a favourable outcome for their own candidate. The opposition groups thus boycotted the process, seeking to demonstrate to the Somali public and interested partners that it had not been conducted in a free and fair manner.

In parallel to the Dhusamareb reconciliation conference organised by the FGS, another important reconciliation conference began on 15 July 2020 in Hobyo. The latter was attended by the five sub-clans of Habar-gidir in an effort to overcome their differences. The meeting was intended to facilitate mutual forgiveness and forge a new united purpose for the divided clan. It was hoped they would then be able to live peacefully with each other and other neighbouring clans.

This conference was attended by traditional elders, intellectuals, politicians, youth, and women from the Habar-gidir sub-clans. The conference lasted two months and it concluded with the formation of a 68-member Council for Habar-gidir Leadership, which elected Prof. Abdulkadir Shirwac, a well-known figure in the education sector, over Gen. Mohamed Nur Galal. In addition, the Hobyo conference expressed approval for the Dhusamareb conference, urging those involved in the latter to adopt a similar method for engaging clans (*BBC Somali*, 2019).

The technical committee facilitated the respective clans to select their new parliamentarians. There followed a controversial presidential election, in which several prominent presidential candidates boycotted the process and opted not to contest the seat. The Galmudug regional MPs finally elected the FGS' preferred candidate, Ahmed Abdi Kariye "Qoorqoor", on 2 February 2020.

Galmudug, however, did not follow the trajectory many had expected. In February 2020, the Somali National Army (SNA), overpowered Ahlu Suna Waljama'a forces in Dhusamareb, expelling ASWJ's leadership from the city. President Qoorqoor then made an approach to Galmudug's previous president, Haaf. Following these negotiations, Haaf came to Dhusamareb and peacefully handed over power to Qoorqoor. Next, Qoorqoor established a Galmudug

cabinet of ministers. This cabinet was seen as inclusive as it accommodated members from a variety of opposition groups in Somalia.

This study provides a deeper understanding and analysis of the complex and protracted Galmudug reconciliation process and the factors behind its apparent success. ○

# 3.

## 3. Key Findings and Discussion Points

# 3. Key Findings and Discussion Points

## 3.1 The Galmudug Reconciliation Process and the National Reconciliation Framework

Reconciliation has been a key priority for Somalia since the total collapse of the central government in 1991 and subsequent violent conflicts. In Galmudug and other regions of Somalia, there have been local peacebuilding initiatives, government formations, and reconciliation efforts. However, there has not been an effective national strategy to harness such attempts. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR), with international technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Finnish Church Aid (FCA), the Nordic International Support (NIS) Foundation, and various embassies, has led the process of drafting a national reconciliation framework (NRF) for Somalia. After consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, the NRF was approved at a national reconciliation conference in Mogadishu attended by more than 300 participants in February 2019. The Council of Ministers then approved the NRF on 21 March 2019.

Although the NRF has not been made public as of the time of writing, it is known to consist of 5 inter-linked pillars:

1. **Pillar I:** Re-imagining a national social contract: Developing a shared vision of an interdependent, fair, and secure society

2. **Pillar II:** Acknowledging and dealing with the past
3. **Pillar III:** Restoring and transforming community relationships
4. **Pillar IV:** Building trust in government institutions and structures (rebuilding nationhood)
5. **Pillar V:** Supporting recovery and (economic, social, political) reconstruction

According to the interviewed stakeholders, the first pillar of the NRF has been applied in Galmudug by establishing an inclusive administration.<sup>1</sup> Although people living in the three Galmudug districts under al-Shabaab control – Xarardheere, Ceelbuur, Ceeldheer – might still feel that they are not fully part of Galmudug, it seems that the new state has succeeded in inspiring local clans and stakeholders to take part in the state-building process. This, according to one of the interviewees, is important for creating a shared vision and inclusive Galmudug.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with MoIFAR officer, 6 August 2020, Mogadishu.

Despite MoIFAR presenting the NRF to the over 700 clan delegates gathered in Galmudug as part of the social reconciliation process and provided some training,<sup>2</sup> the principles and guidelines of the NRF

have not come to fully constitute the guiding framework for the Galmudug political and social reconciliation processes. Therefore, progress remains to be achieved in this area.

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## 3.2 Key Actors in Galmudug Reconciliation

A host of actors are credited with contributing to the emergence of the new Galmudug state. The first was the Federal Government of Somalia, represented by the Office of the Prime Minister, particularly the former Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khaire. He took the initiative and risk to re-establish an erstwhile divided Galmudug. This went against the advice of his aides, who sought to dissuade him from getting involved in such a politically fraught issue. They feared that Galmudug would be a distraction from his other priorities or that he risked failing like his predecessor, and that such an outcome would result in his image being tarnished. This is what he explained in his interview for this study.<sup>3</sup> He shuttled back and forth and stayed in Dhusamareb for six weeks trying to persuade and convince the then powerful Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a to accept holding a reconciliation conference and the subsequent state formation process.<sup>4</sup>

The second actor was Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ). The group catalysed the FGS's access to Dhusamareb when Haaf put up resistance against the holding of Galmudug elections, arguing that his term was yet to expire. Although the relations between the FGS and ASWJ started deteriorating from the very beginning of their unpublicised negotiations, the latter was driven out of Dhusamareb after the FGS had achieved its objectives.

The third actor was the 12-member reconciliation committee appointed by MoIFAR. This committee laid the groundwork towards the reinstating of an all-inclusive administration. Its mandate was to bring together the various clans of Galmudug to

overcome their differences and launch the next stage of re-establishing a state. The committee faced many challenges during its four-month existence.<sup>5</sup>

The fourth actor was a set of federal MPs who were aligned with opposition groups campaigning against the projection of the FGS's power into the formerly unfriendly federal member state of Galmudug. This was a political move that was calculated to diminish any advantage for the FGS in its bid for re-election in the upcoming federal elections.<sup>6</sup> One interviewee, a member of the reconciliation committee, indicated that these opposition MPs termed the reconciliation process a "Farmaajo-Khaire project" in a bid to delegitimise the initiative.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, there was another group of FGS-aligned MPs who were working in favour of the process.

Furthermore, several international and regional actors played a considerable role in the emergence of a new, inclusive Galmudug. UN agencies such as UNSOM and UNDP made positive contributions. For instance, UNSOM, which has an office and staff in Dhusamareb tasked with elections, contributed to the process by consistently calling on all parties concerned to use non-violent means, along with backchannel diplomacy. They also issued statements to ease political tensions and urging parties to proceed uninterrupted.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, UNSOM supported the reconciliation process financially and technically through UNDP. Other important actors include IGAD, who provided some funding for the process. Also important was the African Union Mission in Somalia, specifically its Djiboutian contingent. Seen as a neutral entity, it played a role in

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2 Ibid.

3 Interview with the former Prime Minister, 27 August 2020, Mogadishu.

4 Interview with a member of the Office of the Prime Minister, 23 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

5 Interview with the reconciliation committee chair, 16 July 2020, Mogadishu.

6 Interview with Federal MP from Galmudug constituency, 23 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

7 Interview with the Galmudug reconciliation committee chair, 16 July 2020, Mogadishu.

8 Interview with UNSOM officer, 20 July 2020, Mogadishu.

providing security services. Norway supported the reconciliation process through its NIS foundation. Other international actors such as FCA supported the Huurshe-Xeraale reconciliation process, notably through compensation money paid to 79 victims of

internecine conflict.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the United States mission in Somalia provided support for arbitration between the parties and pushed them towards forming an inclusive administration.

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### 3.3 The Galmudug Social Reconciliation Process

On 18 July 2019, a new initiative to bring reconciliation to Galmudug was launched in the form of a 12-member committee, appointed by the federal Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Reconciliation. The members were representatives of constituent clans in Galmudug. They were selected on the basis of their experience in bringing together different clans to resolve complaints and moving ahead with power-sharing.<sup>10</sup>

To assemble clan delegates in Dhusamareb, the committee travelled to their respective cities and localities. An exception to this was made for clans in the "Group Four" districts under the control of al-Shabaab (Waaysle, Duduble, Murusade, and Saruur). The committee met with delegates of these clans in Mogadishu.<sup>11</sup> In addition, they made use of media outlets such as local radio and TV to communicate with their target audiences, and dispel rival messages from opposition politicians, whom the committee said were intent on derailing their efforts.<sup>12</sup>

Eventually, the committee assembled 720 delegates from various clans in Galmudug. As noted by one committee member, the ending of extended and complex inter-clan conflicts was beyond their mandate. Such large-scale problems could only be dealt with by a just and competent administration.<sup>13</sup>

The community reconciliation process was led by the 12-member committee, itself under the leader-

ship of Dr Abdirahman Baadiyow. The initiative encountered several challenges that threatened its survival. First, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ) expressed dissatisfaction with the social reconciliation process and actively sought to disrupt it.<sup>14</sup> For instance, ASWJ had three members in the reconciliation committee. One of them, according to an interviewee, rarely attended committee meetings and, when he did so, would leak committee secrets. This resulted in his dismissal from the committee. ASWJ's motivation for frustrating the process allegedly stemmed from an ingrained fear of being dissolved as an entity and a loss of power and privilege as a result.

Second, opposition groups depicted the committee as "Farmaajo-Kheire" associates and tried to give clan representatives a negative impression of the committee.<sup>15</sup> Third, some areas were in dispute over whether or not to welcome the committee. This reflected established divisions and the siding of certain clans with one or another of the competing forces.<sup>16</sup> Fourth, some clan elders disagreed over who had the right to nominate the delegates representing their respective clans. Some presented contradictory lists of delegates and others complained that their legitimate elder was intentionally changed.<sup>17</sup> Fifth, the Hobyoo conference of the Habargidir was initially perceived as seeking to derail the FGS-led process. As a consequence, the Dhusamareb conference was delayed. However, the positive outcome of

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9 Interview with UNSOM officer, 20 July 2020, Mogadishu.

10 Interview with the reconciliation committee chair, 16 July 2020, Mogadishu.

11 *ibid*

12 *Ibid*

13 Interview with an advisor at the Office of the Prime Minister, 31 August 2020, Mogadishu.

14 Interview with the reconciliation committee chair, 16 July 2020, Mogadishu

15 *Ibid*.

16 *Ibid*.

17 *Ibid*.

the Hobyo conference proved this widely-held assumption to be wrong.<sup>18</sup>

Despite these hindrances, the reconciliation process achieved relative success. According to a federal MP who was interviewed, this can be tied in large part to the Galmudug population's strong desire for a positive outcome and their considerable need for development. Another factor would have been the people living under ASWJ rule's desire for change. A notable outcome of the process was the ending of the fratricidal conflict between Huurshe and Xeraale. The Huurshe-Xeraale case is explained in detail below.

Another reconciliation conference facilitated by Interpeace was held in the city of Bandiiradley in Galmudug starting on 5 June 2020, bringing together the Sa'ad, a sub-clan of the Habargadir, and the Leelkase (*Radio Daljir*, 2020a). This conference was the first of three phases of conferences seeking to find a lasting peace settlement for a 40-year-old conflict between the two neighbouring clans. The theme of the conference was "*Nabad waarta oo wiilka wiilkiisu dhaxlo*" which roughly translates to "the sustainable peace that the father leaves to his son". This theme reflected the prevailing need for a peace that would ensure that lives be spared from violent conflicts (*Radio Daljir*, 2020b). The gathering of delegates from both sides was facilitated by Interpeace, an organisation with an engagement in the Somali region spanning over 25 years and that continues to be engaged in efforts to bring a lasting solution to conflict-ridden Galmudug.

After eight days of discussions, the 300 delegates wrapped up their conference with an agreement apparently ending their long-running conflict. This was witnessed by the Galmudug President and federal MPs. Before the Bandiiradley conference, there had been several unsuccessful efforts between 2007 and 2012 to end the conflict. Thus, the 9-point agreement was intended to stave off any new waves

of conflict. It included provisions for, among others:

- so-called "orphan rearing" payments of \$10,000 to be paid for each of the 25 people killed in the violence between the two sub-clans.
- setting up a religious council, with its 13 members to be selected from both clans based on their knowledge of Islamic Sharia and reputation in society, to reach a lasting solution to the widespread problem of arms in the hands of the youth;
- the 13-member council to judge any criminal offense between the two clans according to Islamic Sharia;
- the decisions reached by the council on criminal offenses to be executed by the different levels of courts of both Galmudug and Puntland regional states, depending on the location of the criminal act (unless the council were to agree otherwise);
- the 13-member council to determine where convicted perpetrator(s) would be imprisoned;
- the punishment of criminal offenses to be limited to those who committed the acts in question;
- anyone who incites, helps, organises, or is involved in any other ways in a criminal act to be sentenced to a prison term and fine proportionate to the criminal act being committed.

In the second phase of the reconciliation, the parties convened in Galdogob and, as planned, paid compensation money worth \$10,000 for each of the 25 victims – 24 men and a woman – who lost their lives during the violent conflicts. Both sides described the money as "wiping off tears" and "orphan rearing" (*Radio Daljir*, 2020c).

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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### 3.3.1 The Huurshe-Xeraale Case

The reconciliation efforts also achieved success in ending the five-year-long conflict between the Huurshe and Xeraale sub-clans. The conflict had claimed many lives and had resulted in destruction, displacement, and bitter grievances in the central Galgadud province of Somalia.

In July 2017, fighting erupted in Xeraale between two militias belonging to Fiqi Muhumed of the Dir clan. The fighting caused a high death toll (74), destruction of property, and displacement of civilians (*BBC Somali*, 2017).

There are two competing accounts as to what triggered the fighting in the first place. The first argues that the violence was connected to religion. Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a in Huurshe-Xeraale had split into two sects. As a result, Sufis in Huurshe shifted their allegiance to Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a leadership in Dhusamareb while the Xeraale group followed a revered local sheikh, Amaan Moallim Mohamud. To bring the latter back to the fold, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a assaulted Xeraale and bitter fighting broke out, claiming many lives – both belligerents and civil-

ians. Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a forces failed to capture the city and retreated to Dhusamareb.<sup>19</sup> In effect, the conflict was a clan factional conflict within ASWJ.

The second account of the violence relates it to a power struggle between politicians siding with Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a and the FGS. Thus, it was never a conflict over land or resources, nor religion.<sup>20</sup> According to the majority of those stakeholders interviewed for this study who were familiar with the matter, this latter account is more credible than the former.

Indeed, the Xeraale group was aligned with the Galmudug administration based in Adado, whereas the Huurshe camp supported Dhusamareb. Therefore, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a attempted to conquer Xeraale with force and expand its power beyond Guriel and Dhusamareb with a view to putting pressure on the Adado-based administration. But Xeraale militia countered the attack. Subsequently, relations between inhabitants of the two cities were non-existent until arrival of FGS-led reconciliation efforts in Galmudug.

#### **The Huurshe-Xeraale Reconciliation Process**

At the height of the Galmudug state reformation process, a group of politicians, intellectuals, and elders from the two warring sub-clans met with the then Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khaire, in Mogadishu, seeking to end the bloodshed.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by his Interior minister and the reconciliation committee, visited Xeraale and Huurshe separately, as part of a programme of shuttle diplomacy in various Galmudug cities. He pleaded with both sides to cease the hostilities that had divided families for five years.

Following that event, he met with delegates from both warring factions at Dhusamareb. However, the two families refused to greet each other with the customary Islamic greeting at their first meeting. The Prime Minister repeatedly entreated them to do so for his sake and out of respect for him – this convinced them, and they headed his plea.

This meeting yielded a much-applauded peace agreement to end the hostility. It provided for, among others, the return of looted property, the return of displaced people, and collective work on security.

In an unprecedented move in Somalia's reconciliation history, the FGS paid \$5,000 in compensation to the 37 families of the 74 people killed in the violence, along with 5 victims allegedly killed by FGS forc-

19 interview with the former Vice President of Galmudug, 12 August 2020, Mogadishu.

20 Interview with Galmudug state MP, 24 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

es. The FGS delegated the payment of \$395,000 total compensation money to the chair of the reconciliation committee, Dr Abdirahman Baadiyow, who paid it to the families of the victims, in the presence of the Galmudug President and Galmudug Interior minister.

To ensure compliance with the agreement, the then Prime Minister revisited Huurshe and Xeraale, accompanied by the federal minister of the Interior, Federal Affairs, and Reconciliation, and members of the reconciliation committee. They symbolically buried their past differences. A hole was dug. Then, the two generals who had led the fighting, the Prime Minister, the Interior minister, and the Galmudug social reconciliation chair threw a red cloth into the hole, burying, as it were, the conflict there. Since the residents in Huurshe and Xeraale are mainly Sufi, this symbolism and cultural practice made sense to them. It meant that whoever would restart the conflict would have to dig up the same hole and retrieve the buried red cloth.

In the same vein, another security agreement was reached in Xeraale by both sides, under the auspices of the FGS and the reconciliation committee (*Radio Daljir*, 2019). This agreement consisted of ten points and was signed by 12 signatories from both sides and the FGS. It also included four points that were part of the wider Dhusamareb agreement (*Radio Daljir*, 2019).

Among others, the agreement stated that (*Radio Daljir*, 2019):

- all arms would be stored;
- anyone deliberately killing another person would be executed by the FGS;
- anyone committing a criminal act such as inciting violence, undermining stability, disobeying orders from SNA forces, or pointing a gun at another person, would be apprehended by FGS

forces and detained outside the towns inhabited by the Fiqi Muhumed sub-clan and would be put through the national criminal process;

- anyone who fires at another person, their weapons will be confiscated and given to the victim;
- anyone refusing to lay down a weapon would be detained and have their weapon confiscated by the FGS;
- anyone injuring another person would have their weapon handed over to the injured person and would be made to pay commensurate compensation to the victim.

Despite these measures, the return and re-integration of displaced people are not yet complete, owing to the lingering mistrust between the two sides that persists to date.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.4 Active Conflict Flashpoints

Galmudug state has long had a reputation for perennial and sporadic violent clashes between clans. Damaging conflicts are widespread in the state. In several cases, a consensus on how to settle the original causes of the fighting is far from being reached. The ongoing conflicts can be categorised into two types: active conflicts and latent conflicts.

Active conflicts concern eight current hotspots, namely:

1. Omar Mohamud (Majerten) vs Sa'ad (Habargadir) at Galkayo;
2. Wagardhac (Marehan) vs Sa'ad at Gelinsoor (Mudug);

21 Interview with Galmudug state MP, 24 July 2020, Dhusamareb

3. Wagardhac vs Saleban at Gelinsoor (Mudug);
4. Ayanle (Ayr, Habargadir) vs Reer kooshin (Marehan) at Balanballe (Galgadud);
5. Saleban (Habargadir) vs Yabar-Dhowra kece (Ayr) at Qalanqale (Galgadud);
6. Marehan vs Ogaden at the Somalia-Ethiopia border;
7. Sa'ad vs Leelkase (Mudug);
8. Habar-aji (Ayr, Habargadir) vs Ali Madaxweyne (Hawaadle) (Hiiraan)

All of these will require separate reconciliation processes.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, conflicts between clans who live in al-Shabab-controlled areas are latent and remain simmering beneath the surface. They may appear at first to have been suppressed by al-Shabab. These conflicts could resurface if the rule of al-Shabab were to end. Future reconciliation processes should bear this in mind and address them as soon as these areas are liberated.

According to one interviewee, these localised conflicts between (sub-)clans are mainly triggered by, among other factors, the recurrent droughts in the state and competition over water and pasture resources.<sup>23</sup> During droughts, pastoralists migrate with their livestock *en masse* to distant, higher-yield destinations that offer better conditions than their points of origin, to save their livestock's lives and their own.

When migrant pastoralists arrive at their destination(s) and stay for months, they begin building water reservoirs. This is seen as a warning signal by the local clan that their guests do not intend to return to their original areas, but rather want to permanently settle on the hosts' ancestral land. This therefore often sparks clashes between the two sides. Furthermore, clans that hold past grievances against each other often settle their scores during the abundance of water and pasture.

To contain these conflicts, successive administrations in Galmudug – ranging from former president Abdikarim Hussein Guled through president Ahmed Duale Geelle Haaf to the current president Ahmed Qoorqoor – and the federal governments in Mogadishu have made earnest mediation efforts for the cessation of intermittent clashes between adjacent and/or co-inhabiting clans. During the tenure of the former president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the FGS intervened in clashes between Sa'ad and Omar Mohamud at Galkayo with the help of both administrations in Galmudug and Puntland. The FGS succeeded in deploying conjoined security forces drawn from both administrations to help gradually restore lost trust, the movement of goods and people to and from both places, and to sustain and prevent any breaches of the peace.

Moreover, the incumbent federal government carried out a mediation between the co-inhabiting clans in Balanballe – Ayaanle Ayr (Habar-gidir) and Reer Koshiin (Marehan) – and deployed forces from the SNA to prevent another cycle of violence. Similarly, the FGS settled the hostility that had been raging in Xeraale and Huurshe as detailed above.

Recently, the new Galmudug administration has made clan reconciliation a priority for the state. Thus, immediately following his ascendancy to power, president Qoorqoor mediated between two sub-clans fighting in Qalanqale and declared that no new constructions may be built, as these often trigger clashes in Qalanqale and other areas.

As mentioned above, Interpeace has a longstanding engagement in peacebuilding efforts within the Somali region. The organisation's engagement was on display again in its efforts to find sustainable peace in the conflict-prone Galmudug state. The state played a positive role in the cessation of the most recent hostility in Galkayo between the Sa'ad and Omar Mohamud and the subsequent deployment of security forces to guarantee that peace takes root. Additionally, it helped the Sa'ad and the Leelkase resolve their 40-year old conflict in two gatherings held in Bandiiradley and Galdogob, with a third phase planned to be convened in Galkayo to complete the reconciliation process.

22 Interview with veteran peace activist, 21 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

23 Interview with the former vice president of Galmudug, 12 August 2020, Mogadishu.

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## 3.5 The Political Reconciliation Process

After months of stalemate, federal and Galmudug leaders agreed on the formation of a new Galmudug state in July 2019 (*Somali Affairs*, 2019). The first political process was the formation of the new parliament. According to a current Galmudug minister, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a at the time demanded a large number of MPs.<sup>24</sup> This subsequently delayed the process as the number of MPs that would come from ASWJ could not be agreed. According to a member of the Office of the Prime Minister, ASWJ demanded 20 MPs. When they were offered 10 and then 15 MPs, they refused. Finally, they were given 20, representing a compromise by the federal government under the leadership of the then Prime Minister.<sup>25</sup>

The second step was the election of the Speaker of the parliament and his two deputies. This represented the second source of Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a grievances, because the FGS initially pledged that the slot of the second deputy speaker of the parliament would be reserved for them. This did not materialise during the election of the speakers. Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a's leadership, their MPs, and militia retreated to Inji Complex (the ASWJ base) signalling their dissatisfaction and withdrawal of consent from the process.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, most of the ASWJ MPs did not participate in the presidential election.

The election of the president was the most controversial political process in Galmudug. The various opposition politicians originally competing for the presidency boycotted the election, citing the way the federal government was managing the process. A former federal minister said: "What happened was that the president and government had the say and final word. No one else had a view."<sup>27</sup> The current President Qoorqoor and Vice-President Ali Dahir were both presidential candidates who were close to the incumbent federal government leaders. The winning tally indicated that there was no serious competition for the presidency and the result was a *fait accompli*. Ahmed Abdi Kaariye "Qoorqoor" won the presidential poll. He secured 66 ballots out of a total

of 77 voting MPs, defeating the three other contenders – Ahmed Abdullahi Samater (9 votes), Ahmed Shire (1 vote), and Abdirahman Ahmed Sabriye (1 vote) – in the first round (*Garowe Online* 2020).

One important distinction between the Galmudug presidential elections of 2015 and 2020 was that, in 2015, the then-incumbent federal government allowed opposition politicians to compete with the FGS-supported candidates. A former minister said that the competing candidates for the presidency in 2015 – Abdikarin Hussein Guled and Ahmed Moalin Fiqi – had representation and political support from the federal government, which made the election more competitive. Guled and Fiqi got the same number of votes in the first round. Moreover, the speaker of the Galmudug legislature was not the one supported by the former federal President.

Before declining to participate in the 2020 presidential race altogether, the opposition politicians had several candidates. Shortly after Qoorqoor emerged victorious, the federal government and US Embassy to Somalia recognised the outcome. On their side, the opposition politicians – save ASWJ – did not challenge the elected president, including those who had boycotted the contest. One of the presidential candidates interviewed stated that they had two options: either to challenge the legitimacy of the president, as had occurred in Jubaland, or to accept the result.<sup>28</sup>

Although individual presidential candidates welcomed the new president, former Galmudug president Haaf retreated to southern Galkayo and hastily established a new government there. Moreover, ASWJ state MPs unilaterally declared that they had elected Sheikh Shakir as the new Galmudug president. Within a week, Galmudug had had three "presidents" and three "parliaments".

Aware of his presidency's legitimacy deficit, and before appointing ministers for the new state, presi-

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24 Interview with Galmudug minister, 22 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

25 Interview with a member of Office of the Prime Minister, 23 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

26 Interview with Galmudug minister, 22 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

27 Interview with former federal minister, 16 July 2020.

28 Interview with a Galmudug presidential candidate, 23 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

dent Qoorqoor started three phases of political reconciliation. First, he succeeded in engaging and reaching agreement with the opposition politicians. Some important opposition presidential candidates either decided to work with Qoorqoor or, at least, publicly support him.

Second, the president started new talks and negotiations with former president Ahmed Duale Gelle Haaf. After sending delegates to Haaf and a round of shuttle diplomacy, Haaf eventually agreed to recognise Qoorqoor as the President of Galmudug. In mid-April, Haaf traveled to Dhusamareb, the capital city of Galmudug, and handed over power to Qoorqoor in a ceremony. This added to Qoorqoor's legitimacy.

Third, the state president approached ASWJ leaders in Dhusamareb. But this attempted *rapprochement* failed, leading to fighting between the Somali National Army and ASWJ forces in Dhusamareb. The latter were overpowered. Following their defeat, in a video shared in late February 2020 Moalim Mohamud (ASWJ's spiritual leader) and Sheikh Shakhir declared their disengagement from politics and their renewed dedication to the stability of the region (Kadiye, 2020). They both left the town a few days later via road, first to Garowe and then to Nairobi, Kenya.

Subsequently, president Qoorqoor announced his cabinet of ministers for Galmudug. Their composition was seen as more inclusive and representative than previous cabinets. He included two federal MPs who were staunch opponents to the incumbent federal government. This came as a surprise to many who viewed the new Galmudug state as a political extension of the federal government. However, this has now given more legitimacy and political relevance to the new Galmudug administration and many have started to see it as an inclusive Galmudug where no single party can impose its will.

Although these political reconciliations were led primarily by President Qoorqoor, there were also other contributing influences. In an interview for this study, a member of the House of the People of the Somali Federal Parliament contended that the

breakthrough was achieved through a combination of three main factors. First, the communities of Galmudug being in desperate need of an effective administration made efforts to establish one. Second, the Galmudug President became a leader who could unite disparate people as he chose the path of reconciliation over war. Third, notable politicians at the federal level such as MPs Sabir Shurie and Ahmed Fiqi helped change the widely held perception about Galmudug politics, i.e. that it is simply an extension of the federal government.<sup>29</sup> In summary, political reconciliation found success in Galmudug thanks to a combination of factors.

In late June 2020, Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni invited Galmudug President Qoorqoor to northern Galkayo. In addition to improving relations between Puntland and Galmudug states, the two leaders also discussed national politics. A week before the meeting of the two presidents, President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo had called all FMS leaders to a meeting to take place in Mogadishu between 5 and 8 July for a discussion on national elections, security, and Somalia's economy. However, the FMS leaders did not come to Mogadishu. According to interviews, Deni and Qoorqoor spoke in Galkayo about convening FMS leaders in Dhusamareb for a discussion on the electoral model(s) to be used in the national elections. This presented an opportunity for Galmudug to play a key role in national politics.

Initially, only the FMS leaders came to Dhusamareb to discuss the federal elections. They issued a *communiqué* asking the federal President and Prime Minister to join them. This was followed by the Dhusamareb II conference, which both President Farmaajo and then Prime Minister Khaire attended. The FGS and FMS leaders agreed to hold timely elections and to appoint a technical committee that would explore electoral models. On 25 July 2020, soon after the Dhusamareb II conference, the House of the People of the Somali Federal Parliament removed the Prime Minister in a controversial no-confidence vote.

The presidents of Puntland and Jubaland did not attend Dhusamareb III. They demanded the appoint-

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29 Interview with a member of House of the People of Somali Federal Parliament, 23 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

ment of a new Prime Minister before the beginning of the conference, among other concerns. However, President Farmaajo and the presidents of Galmudug, South West, and Hirshabelle as well as the Governor of Benadir region attended the conference. Attempts to get Puntland and Jubaland to join the meeting failed. However, the outcome of Dhusamareb III was nonetheless positive and impactful. Leaders agreed to an indirect election where 301 electoral delegates would vote on the membership of the House of the People; the National Independent Electoral Com-

mission (NIEC) would manage the election, and the Upper House members would be elected by state legislators of FMS. The three conferences were politically important for Galmudug, as they saw the state play a key role in national politics. However, the venue for finalising the agreement regarding the national election has subsequently been changed to Mogadishu. Nonetheless, Galmudug continues to play a pivotal role in the political reconciliation process thanks to its united state government. ○



# 4. Challenges to Social and Political Reconciliation

## 4. Challenges to Social and Political Reconciliation

Galmudug faces numerous political and social challenges. Some of these may be overcome in the short term, while others will take longer.

First, Somalia's federal and state leaders have agreed on an indirect electoral model for the country. How Galmudug leaders manage the election of the members of the 11<sup>th</sup> Somali Federal Parliament will be a litmus test for the state. Many politicians who work closely with the new Galmudug leaders are believed by the opposition groups to be preparing themselves to win the highly competitive and coveted parliamentary seats from Galmudug. Two districts (Dhusamareb and Galkayo) have been designated to conduct the indirect election. The neutrality, openness, manipulation (or lack of it), and control over the formation of the state election body will all contribute to the future political stability or instability of Galmudug.<sup>30</sup> Galmudug is the constituency of many influential Somali politicians. How the state manages the election of federal MPs will have either a positive or negative effect on Galmudug's future political stability and reconciliation processes. As an expert on indirect elections echoed, the Galmudug administration can avoid falling into an election trap by staying above electoral politics and advocating for the people to decide the winner.<sup>31</sup>

Second, the administration of the Mudug region and the parallel administrations in Galkayo city present

a challenge, both politically and socially. According to a former President, the political challenge will remain for some time, until the provisional federal constitution is completed and the boundary between Puntland and Galmudug states is defined.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, there is a community reconciliation process underway in Bandiiradley and Galdogob in Mudug region. This should be prioritised and promoted to address social conflicts there.

Third, the status of Matabaan district of the Hiiraan region was seen by some of those interviewed as a political challenge, albeit not a pressing one. The composition of the Federal Member States of Somalia is predominantly clan-based. Since the majority of the residents of Matabaan hail from the dominant Habar-gidir clan in Galmudug, the town became a peripheral district, getting less attention from both Hirshabelle and Galmudug. Moreover, there are recurrent clan conflicts around the district. A politician interviewed for this report suggested that this needs to be addressed and that Matabaan should be added to the jurisdiction of Galmudug.<sup>33</sup> However, this is politically challenging and would be a breach of the federal constitution. It would also set a problematic precedent and open a Pandora's box of territorial claims that would be difficult to address and contain in other regions of Somalia.

30 Online interview with former federal minister, 16 July 2020.

31 Interview with an advisor to Office of the Prime Minister, 31 August 2020, Mogadishu.

32 Interview with former Galmudug president, 06 November 2020, Nairobi.

33 Ibid.

Fourth, ASWJ militia members who joined the SNA constitute the greatest number among Galmudug forces. Moreover, the district commissioners of Guriel and Dhusamareb are from ASWJ.<sup>34</sup> Although this could be seen as progress towards integrating ASWJ forces within Galmudug, some of those interviewed had concerns that ASWJ may return as an entity, since their leaders fled Dhusamareb and have stated in several media interviews that they are still the leaders of Galmudug. Therefore, full integration of ASWJ would be crucial for wider reconciliation.

Fifth, there are three districts in Galmudug that are under al-Shabaab control. Some of the people interviewed see the liberation of these districts as an important part of Galmudug's reconciliation process. People in these districts have been deprived of access to humanitarian, infrastructure, and social services for many years. Since the establishment of the new Galmudug state, politicians from these al-Shabaab-controlled districts have wanted the state to retake control of these districts.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, there are several social reconciliation challenges that need to be addressed. According to a former Galmudug leader, there are notable factors that engender conflicts in Galmudug, which are persistent droughts and a scarcity of pasture resources.<sup>36</sup> There are currently many conflicts taking place on different fronts, and Galmudug needs to prioritise addressing the root causes of these clan confrontations.

Other challenges include Galmudug's lack of economic resources from which to generate local revenue. Furthermore, institutionalisation of Galmudug state bodies and their internal capacity-building is key to preventing a future situation wherein the regional state would need FGS intervention to solve its internal issues. Such problems need to be solved internally (without FGS mediation) and achieving this capacity is among the key challenges that Galmudug must overcome in coming years. ○

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34 Interview with Galmudug minister, 22 July 2020, Dhusamareb.

35 Interview with MoIFAR advisor, 08 August 2020, Mogadishu.

36 Interview with former Galmudug vice president, 12 August 2020, Mogadishu.

# 5.

## 5. Lessons Learnt: Successes and Failures

## 5. Lessons Learnt: Successes and Failures

Several lessons can be learnt from the recent establishment of the latest administration in Galmudug, as well as from past and ongoing reconciliation efforts. One is that unity brings power. For the first time, Galmudug has a single administration in control of its jurisdiction (except for the three districts controlled by al-Shabaab). The downfall of ASWJ and the political reconciliation process have given Galmudug renewed power and vitality. The unity and support offered to the new Galmudug leaders by local stakeholders allowed the administration to play host to federal and state leaders at a conference in Dhusamareb, thereby playing a pivotal role in national politics. This would not have been possible without a sense of unity and the reconciliation processes led by the current Galmudug President.

The second lesson is that if an administration and the people it represents do not participate in the functioning and delivery of services, then the viability, success and competence of that administration will be questioned. Thus, inclusivity beyond

political affiliations is an approach that can work well for Somalia. An administration should be inclusive and not restricted to a specific group. President Qoorqoor appointed diverse ministers, some of whom were known to be in opposition to the incumbent federal government whom Qoorqoor himself is close to. The accommodation of politicians with different views and a diverse state executive is an example that Galmudug can offer to the rest of the country.

The third lesson is that community reconciliation cannot work without enforcement capacity. The experience in Huurshe and Xeraale demonstrates that law enforcement forces are needed to implement and maintain social reconciliation agreements reached between clans.

Another lesson from Galmudug is that federalisation processes in Somalia can succeed if stakeholders at all levels participate and co-operate. ○

# 6.

## 6. Conclusion

## 6. Conclusion

The roads to reconciliation and state formation in Galmudug have been difficult. In 2015, smaller, fragmented states merged into one. However, at that time most of the Galgaduud region, including the Galmudug capital Dhusamareb, was administered by Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a as a stand-alone entity. Former Galmudug leaders failed to agree with this administration. The federal government – through the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Reconciliation – took the lead in establishing a new state for Galmudug in early 2019. It started with a 12-member social reconciliation committee that convened the 11 clans in Galmudug and helped them select the state legislators. The reconciliation of the Huurshe-Heraale conflict was a notable success of these efforts.

A controversial presidential election which was boycotted by most of the candidates followed reconciliation at community levels. However, the elected president Qoorqoor led the state in a positive direction by initiating a political reconciliation process. Before his inauguration, he reached agreements with opposition politicians who had been candidates for the presidency, and former Galmudug President Haaf. ASWJ leaders left Dhusamareb after the SNA overpowered their forces. A state cabinet seen by many as being inclusive was appointed, and within a few months Galmudug saw itself playing an important role in national politics by convening three conferences between FGS and FMS leaders on the subject of federal elections.

Notwithstanding these promising reconciliation efforts, the state is still fragile and the challenges it faces are numerous. Addressing the root causes of clan conflicts, managing the election of the federal MPs whose constituency is Galmudug, and security sector reform, among many others, will define Galmudug's future. ○



# 7. Policy Considerations

# 7. Policy Considerations

Several recommendations for political and social reconciliation in Galmudug arise from this study.

## 7.1 On Political Reconciliation

- **Upcoming federal elections:** Many influential Somali politicians hail from Galmudug state, and two districts in Galmudug will soon host the election of 36 seats of the House of the People of the Somali Federal Parliament. Many politicians are expected to contest each seat. How Galmudug leaders manage the election will have a significant impact on the future of the state. Galmudug leaders should avoid direct involvement and manipulation of the seats and should let electoral delegates decide the winners. Equally important will be proper management of the election of the eight Upper House seats representing Galmudug state.
- **Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a:** ASWJ has been a political force in Galmudug for many years. Former President Haaf managed to include them into the Galmudug administration and share power with them. Before the unexpected defeat of its leaders, ASWJ militias were integrated into the SNA. Going forward, members of ASWJ should be sufficiently integrated in government forces. Of equal importance is engaging ASWJ's leaders and continuing political reconciliation with the group.
- **Security sector reform:** There are a variety of police and military forces in Galmudug. In Dhusamareb alone, different forces operate in close proximity at various checkpoints that are under different commands. The command structure of security forces in Galmudug – military and police – should be prioritised. This will have implications for both political dynamics and the future of districts currently controlled by Al-Shabaab.
- **The future of Galkayo:** The capital city of the Mudug region – Galkayo – has been the epicentre of repeated conflicts. Politically, defining the city's status within a federal Somalia should be prioritised. Viable options include designating the city as its own federal territory or as a joint administration, among others. The clarification of the administrative status of Galkayo could bring lasting peace to the residents of Galkayo as well as to the Puntland and Galmudug administrations.
- **Democratisation and local elections:** The new Galmudug administration needs to be inclusive in terms of programming and local administrations. Communities in all districts should have representatives on local councils and district administrations. This can be achieved through democratic local council elections in Galmudug. Local elections where citizens elect their

own leaders would give more legitimacy to the Galmudug state government and local authorities. More importantly, local government elections would give citizens a much-needed civic

education and experience that would be important in the run-up to the nationwide 2024/25 elections.

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## 7.2 On Social Reconciliation

- **Strengthening the state-society compact:** In the state formation process, there is an emphasis on a compact with elites. While this is important, there is also a need to focus on fostering the state-society compact beyond the exercise of constitutional review. This cannot happen with Somalia's current political culture and electoral model. Grassroots reconciliation and addressing the main drivers of clan conflicts can be achieved by strengthening the relationship between Galmudug state, local authorities, and society at large. Monthly town-hall meetings where citizens and local authorities discuss priority issues could be organised in each Galmudug district. This would enhance state-society relations and would also create an opportunity to address issues that can trigger clan conflicts.
- **Investing in water resources:** The natural environment is an integral part of peace and conflict. Indeed, conflicts in Galmudug are principally related to water and grassland access. Digging wells strategically while engaging local communities could reduce resource-related conflicts. For instance, digging water wells in the areas stretching from Garacad to Galdogob could help prevent pastoral peoples from moving from their communal land to other areas in search of water and pasture to sustain their livestock and themselves.
- **Improving livelihoods:** One of the primary drivers of conflicts in Galkayo is the lack of resources. People in Galmudug have high hopes for their new state, with citizens in the various districts expecting better livelihoods and social services from the Galmudug administration. Collecting domestic revenue and providing basic services such as water wells, economic opportunities, and social services will increase Galmudug's legitimacy and will reduce the conflicts among communities in Galmudug. If the new Galmudug administration fails to improve community livelihoods, many local residents will be considerably disappointed.
- **Access to justice:** As is evident in almost all Federal Member States in Somalia, the judiciary remains weak. Access to justice is a priority for citizens in Somalia. Galmudug leaders should strengthen the judiciary sector and increase its capacity and competence. They should prioritise increasing access to justice and institutionalising the courts. An impartial, accessible, and just judiciary would significantly contribute to peace and stability in Galmudug and would address key issues that trigger clan conflicts. ○



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