Journal of the British Academy

Volume 10, Supplementary issue 1
2022

Everyday Peacebuilding and Practices in Kenya, South Sudan, Somaliland and Ghana

Edited by

Sarah Njeri

ISSN 2052-7217

CONTENTS

Everyday peacebuilding and practices in Kenya, South Sudan, Somaliland and Ghana: introduction **1**
Sarah Njeri

Narrating everyday peace and (in)security: Somaliland women's lived realities as sites of contestation **11**
Siham Rayale

Everyday peacebuilding among Ghanaian men: ambiguities, resistances and possibilities **35**
Isaac Dery, Cuthbert Baataar and Anisur Rahman Khan

A quest for sustainable peace in South Sudan: the role of everyday religious practices, ceremonies and rituals in robust peacebuilding **55**
Winnie Bedigen

Citizens' everyday media practices and peace activism in ethnically polarised societies **79**
Zacharia Chiliswa

Examining Mine Action's 'peaceability' potential through everyday narratives and practices in Somaliland **109**
Sarah Njeri

The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 1–9
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.001
Posted 15 March 2022

Everyday peacebuilding and practices in Kenya, South Sudan, Somaliland and Ghana: introduction

Sarah Njeri

Abstract: Through an 'everyday' lens, the articles presented in this supplementary issue draw together diverse discourses, experiences, theorisations and interpretations of everyday peacebuilding. This introduction seeks to locate peacebuilding as a policy agenda and centres the idea of the everyday lens that is useful in countering the dominant focus of liberal peacebuilding that privileges external actors. The authors do not engage in the philosophical dates of everyday but rather uses it as placeholder for 'the local'; more as a referent to a scale of analysis than a substantive characteristic of distinct phenomena in its own right. This, as presented here, is taken to mean quite distinct things to different scholars, as is illustrated in the collection of articles by the various authors in this supplementary issue.

Keywords: Everyday peace, peacebuilding, Kenya, South Sudan, Somaliland, Ghana, narratives, gender.

Note on the author: Sarah Njeri is a Research Fellow at Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI and a Research Associate of the African Leadership Centre, King's College London. She holds a PhD from the University of Braford, Peace Studies department and an MA in Conflict Resolution from the same department.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8757-4650
s.njeri@odi.org.uk

© The author(s) 2022. This is an open access article licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License

Peacebuilding was popularised by the then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's (1992) seminal work *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peace-making and Peacekeeping*. This work redefined peacebuilding by proposing a strategy for resolving conflicts and involved four components: preventive diplomacy—actions to prevent disputes from arising or escalating into conflicts; peacemaking—actions aimed at bringing hostile parties to agreement through peaceful means—usually invoking Chapter VI of the UN charter; peacekeeping—the deployment of a UN presence, and post-conflict peacebuilding—actions that identify and support structures that tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. However, the peacebuilding record since the *Agenda for Peace* has been mixed: there was recognition that the international response introduced then did not necessarily follow a neat, linear, chronological progression, and that in practice the various elements overlapped and interlinked, with some mutually supporting others and some even taking place simultaneously (De Coning 2012).

Similarly, such labels only related to programming, and thus did not have any relevance to the situation on the ground; they were an expression mainly of the need of donor administrations to give meaning to their programming efforts and to be able to activate different funding modalities. People within the society concerned obviously do not perceive the reality they experience in those terms. Even though this has been acknowledged, and it is commonly understood that such labels were only a guide to the administration of donor activities, they continue to impact on the actions and reality on the ground.

The concept of peacebuilding and its resultant set of practices collectively founded the academic literature commonly known as the 'liberal peace interventions' or the liberal 'peacebuilding consensus' (Crocker *et al.* 2001; Miall *et al.* 1999). Donais (2012) argues that liberal peacebuilding was one of two approaches to peacebuilding, the other being communitarian, which focuses on the importance of local traditions and culture. Liberal peace has dominated peacebuilding practice. The practices associated with it include the conviction that conflict management can be achieved through peacebuilding: the reform of institutions and governance; specifically identifying sovereignty as responsibility; highlighting of the interconnections between security and development; and addressing issues of reconciliation to address societal divisions. They are closely linked to the agenda of liberal internationalism which, when viewed in conjunction with liberal parliamentary democracy and liberal market capitalism, equates to the ideals of the 'liberal peacebuilding model'—a model that has become a description of what was intended as the outcome of applying the standard operating procedures (Hirst 2011). This set of practices includes both short- and long-term interventions organised by both local and external actors. It was also fronted by western nations, who were criticised as promoting liberal peace (Heathershaw 2008). Thus, other than implicitly claiming a formulaic universal template, the peace that the

Agenda for Peace had proposed was state-centric at heart and considered sovereign states to be the main actors (Richmond 2010). Thus, more frequently, peacebuilding and analysis of conflict were characterised by a state-bias, and therefore peacebuilding is associated with state-building (Körppen 2011).

Similarly, mainstream academic discourses on practices of conflict management overtly moved away from peace and reconciliation towards governance and state-building. The focus on 'failed states' or 'states in situations of fragility' was brought to the fore, thus creating a strong interest in the debates on 'state building', which had become an over-arching concept. The analysis also associated peacebuilding with state building and conflated the two (Newman *et al.* 2009). This assumption was mainly propagated by the view that those states that are defined as 'failed' had become a source of international insecurity by becoming a haven for terrorism, drugs, arms, human trafficking and so on.

The core ideas underlying the liberal peace approach adopted by western governments, according to Richmond (2006), remained democratisation, economic liberalisation, neoliberal development, human rights and the rule of law. Thus, following on from the *Agenda for Peace*, and the moral imperative to intervene in places like Somalia, Afghanistan and so on, 'liberal peace' became the dominant form of peacemaking and peacebuilding favoured by leading states, international organisations and international financial institutions (Mac Ginty 2010). This liberal peace approach is based on the assumption that a liberally constructed state will be more peaceful and developed and will have the capacity to reduce violence and prevent any relapse into chaos. As the number of interventions undertaken increased, in some instances they seemed to have been counterproductive, and by the end of the decade the 'liberal peace' model was increasingly called into question by critics who challenged its focus and ability to achieve the goal of promoting peace. Peacebuilders are accused of embracing the hoary 'liberal peace approach' uncritically, and consequently they have often designed peacebuilding strategies that actually destabilised fragile transitional polities. Sending (2011) acknowledges that these critical debates have brought to the fore the importance of issues on context sensitivity, local ownership, bottom-up and hybrid forms of peacebuilding; however, there are limitations to these critiques, for example critics engage in alternative conceptions of legitimacy that stress the need for political development to be grounded on the 'local'—though they do not engage in how the 'local' conceptualises their idea of peacebuilding and often assume that 'local' is not liberal. Even these critiques are not always contextually specific, as will be illustrated throughout this supplementary issue.

Thus, an 'everyday' lens as described by Millar (2020: 312) offers 'a space of local pro-peace activity distinct from elite-driven top-down politics which, for good or ill, is often considered disinterested in local processes (at best)'. As a lens, therefore, the notion of everyday peace is provided as one that facilitates the move beyond the state

and the formal institution (Richmond 2008) and calls for a re-examination of 'the taken-for-granted levels of analysis and to expand relevant issues beyond international relations staples' (Mac Ginty 2014 citing Lister & Jarvis 2013). The everyday peace literature has grown from a critique of liberal approaches to peacebuilding, which has been criticised for limiting attention to institutions, and the location of these activities are confined within an analytical framework that confines peacebuilding to post-conflict environments; and where within this, peacebuilding is presented as a state-building project. Thus, scholarship that has emerged from this is top-down institution-centric (Mac Ginty 2014), with scholars being resistant to perspectives that attempt to look beyond the state. Njeri (2019) argues that both the scholars and the emerging critiques are state-centric in approach. Such approaches have been labelled as sacrifice concern for community, local needs and everyday experiences by Berents (2015). The everyday in the liberal peace debates has been a methodological pathway to theorise peacebuilding's content and format. It has also served to contextualise the research, taking into account the more complex texture and depth of the processes societies go through.

The contributions in this supplementary issue focus on the concept of 'everyday' as gleaned through the empirical research undertaken by early career African scholars. Through their research these scholars aim to contribute to and widen the debate on the extent to which the 'everyday' lens allows for an analytical examination and interrogation of daily routines and common practices of communities. An everyday lens allows for engagement around how life-worlds and ecologies are constructed, reconstructed, and shape one another. The work presented here draws attention to diverse contexts (Somaliland, South Sudan, Kenya and Ghana); it includes diverse discourses (mine action; media practice during elections; religious practices, ceremonies and rituals; and gender) and it specifically examines people's lived experiences within these contexts and practices.

Thus, in this issue, the authors frame the everyday within the liberal peacebuilding debates and critiques which, as others have argued, provides a methodological pathway to theorise peacebuilding's content and format by contextualising the research and focusing on the complexity that is embedded within societies (De Heredia, 2017; Mac Ginty 2014). While the focus for everyday peace has emerged from the critical liberal peace, the sites of focus for this still remain 'deeply divided societies; while not the often pathologised liberal peacebuilding sites, the locations have remained predominantly post-conflict or conflictual societies that are mainly in the global south. Thus, as scholars who come from the African continent where a particular narrative

[1] Somaliland has been a peaceful, stable and democratic *de facto* state which broke away and declared independence from Somalia in 1991. While the initial post-breakaway period was characterised by conflict, Somaliland has been since been self-governing with an independent government, democratic elections and a distinct history, although no foreign power recognises Somaliland's sovereignty.

has dominated the contexts which we inhabit, and as critical scholars, we delliberately include contexts that are largely considered post-conflict (Kenya to a large extent), Ghana and, I would argue, Somaliland.[1] In doing this, we embrace an inclusive conceptualisation of contexts in which peacebuilding occurs and desist from pathologising some locations as the only sites where peacebuilding can take place. Peacebuilding is not only limited to post-conflict contexts, and that it is should be a facet of interrogation in any setting where there is potential for community discord. As recent events in the 'global north', for example the US (post-election violence) have demonstrated, peacebuilding is an endeavour that can be and should be pursued in contexts that deviate from the pathologised global south. As Dery *et al.* (2022) demonstrate and rightly argue in this issue, as researchers, we also need to pay attention to contexts where peace prevails. We therefore use the term 'everyday' as Millar (2020) describes it, as placeholder for 'the local'; more as a referent to a scale of analysis than a substantive characteristic of distinct phenomena in its own right.

Using everyday peace as an organising concept has provided for the incorporation of methodologies that highlight bottom-up indicators of everyday peace and security, an idea that Rayale (2022) engages with. Her article is an example that highlights the power of narrative as a methodology, thereby demonstrating how using the concept of everyday allows for different methodologies other than those that are traditionally utilised in International Relations. She uses this and shows how the lived conflict experiences of Somaliland's women as sites of contestation, and understanding of participation in issues of peace and security in the Somali territories, has meant taking women's lived experiences of conflict more seriously. The 'everyday' that Rayale's article focuses on reflects how cultural practices are enlisted by women to reappropriate their agency. Previously Bedigen (2017) has called for the conceptualising indigenous peacebuilding and the culturally constitutive nature of the Honyomiji institution; this article views indigenous women's 'visible and invisible' roles and practices as key in peacebuilding, even at conflict intensities. Rather than viewing the everyday acts as hidden or as evidence of resistance to the dominant peacebuilding approaches, this issue suggests the need for attention to the ways that these everyday practices, narratives and cultural forms of expression are made visible and provide meaning to the ordinary citizens of these societies.

While the dominant peacebuilding debates consider peacebuilding as a discourse of a singular liberal peace, disregarding the fact that peacebuilding is not a homogenous entity, for one to understand, one must explore the multiple discourses by shifting the analytical focus to multiple peacebuildings (see Heathershaw 2008). Thus in this issue we seek to demonstrate this idea of multiple peacebuildings—in a sense we explore ideas that do not fit within the orthodoxy that exists in most academic and practitioner literature, which usually refers to pro-peace actions in conflict-affected contexts. Thus a study such as Chiliswa's (2022), which brings to attention to the role

that everyday citizen-initiated media practices play in influencing various social/political causes finds as much a place as the study by Dery *et al.* (2022), which calls for the attention to and the need to engage with how 'everyday struggles and subjectivities of masculinity may shape peacebuilding and nonviolent practices at the local level', in peaceful contexts. Dery calls on emerging scholars (such as those contributing to this special issue—to be prepared to challenge the status quo, 'we should not only focus on the excesses, damages, and dangers of patriarchal masculinities to peacebuilding', rather, a critically sympathetic and culturally driven analysis of men in their multiple locatedness should sharpen our analysis of the everydayness of peace or peace in the mundane, especially at interpersonal levels.

Bedigen (2022) highlights how the political and economic initiatives that are fronted by external organisations are prioritised and presented as crucial in the planning, implementation and achievement of national peacebuilding strategies, yet, while scholarship exists that demonstrates that in South Sudan and or indeed in sub-Saharan Africa, religion (i.e., Christianity and Islam) is significant in conflict, the same is excluded in peacebuilding efforts (Ouellet 2013; Schirch 2015). Where these have been included, for example the NSCC's national peacebuilding processes,[2] the inclusion of Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions have remained at the peripheries, and within that, indigenous religious practices and ceremonies or rituals are largely excluded (Bedigen 2017; 2020; Hancock 2017). Such deliberate exclusion denies agency from communities that engage in such practices, and it privileges externally driven processes. Thus, as is indicative of the mainstream practice of peacebuilding and the discourse therein, the recipients of the practice of peacebuilding remain passive and voiceless, perhaps explaining why according to the critiques, peacebuilding is seen to have failed. As argued elsewhere, that this is partly because the actors and recipients may have contrasting views of what the end result is; and their conceptualisation is not taken into consideration (Njeri 2019). There is also a generalisation, and an underlying assumption, that because the peacebuilding arena is normally a post-conflict environment, then 'local' leaders and or indigenous everyday rituals and ceremonies have no place of local legitimacy, as argued by Bedigen who notes that the majority of these scholarship ignores the dominance of indigenous religions and their linkages to community every day ceremonies and rituals that contributes to peacebuilding, yet, political and economic initiatives by external NGOs are seen as crucial in the planning, implementation and achievement of national peacebuilding strategies.

This is further exemplified in the article focusing on Somaliland by Njeri (2022). The study demonstrates how clan elders commanded high levels of legitimacy as agents of

[2] New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) is an organisation formed in 1989/1999 and comprises six churches located in Southern Sudan: Roman Catholic Church, Episcopal Church of the Sudan, Presbyterian Church of Sudan, African Inland Church, Sudan Pentecostal Church, and Sudan Interior Church.

peacebuilding, both within the locally led peace process and in providing direction and leadership in the establishment of a local responses to the clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance that were scattered in the country after the war. As established in this study, the elders are continually seen by the Somaliland people as the custodians and the legitimate authority to engage in nurturing their version of peace. The central role played by local elders dominated the local conceptualisations of peace that this manifested. The study demonstrates that after international (liberal peace) actors took control of mine action, very different ideas and everyday practices associated with them diminished the intrinsic value of an activity that had been core to the peace process.

In conclusion, therefore, the articles presented in this supplementary issue collectively draw together diverse discourses, experiences, theorisations and interpretations of everyday peacebuilding. As a lens, the idea of the everyday offers scholars seeking to critique the liberal peace an opportunity, which is viewed as an unsympathetic and often ineffectual top-down bureaucracy. The articles serve to demonstrate that the everyday in this context is not necessarily linked with international peacebuilding efforts, which are usually externally led and limited in terms of duration, scope and geographical reach; and while the dominant argument is that conflict is rarely total, an everyday lens then becomes useful in contexts where peace is also not always total; an everyday lens allows us to question the fixity and homogeneity of categories and approaches.

References

Bedigen, W. (2017), '*Traditional Conflict Resolution: The Nilotic Lwo of South Sudan' (PhD thesis)*. (Leeds, Leeds Beckett University).

Bedigen, W. (2020), 'Significance of Societal Customs in the South Sudan Civil War Resolution', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 15(1): 3–17.

Bedigen, W. (2022), 'A Quest for Sustainable Peace in South Sudan: The Role of Everyday Religious Practices, Ceremonies and Rituals in Robust Peacebuilding', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 55–77. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.055.

Berents, H. (2015), 'An Embodied Everyday Peace in the Midst of Violence', *Peacebuilding*, 3: 1–14.

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992), *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-Keeping* (United Nations). https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/A_47_277.pdf.

Chiliswa, Z. (2022), 'Citizens' Everyday Media Practices and Peace Activism in Ethnically Polarised Societies', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 79–108. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.079.

Crocker, C.A., Hampson, F.O. & Aall, P.R. (2001), *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press).

De Coning, C.H. (2012), '*Complexity, Peacebuilding and Coherence: Implications of Complexity for the Peacebuilding Coherence Dilemma*' (*PhD thesis in Applied Ethics)*. (Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University).

De Heredia, M. I. (2017), 'Patterns and Practices of Everyday Resistance: A View from Below', in *Everyday Resistance, Peacebuilding and State-Making: Insights from "Africa's World War"* (Manchester, Manchester University Press), 50–74.

Dery, I., Baataar, C. & Khan, A.R. (2022), 'Everyday Peacebuilding among Ghanaian Men: Ambiguities, Resistances and Possibilities', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 35–53. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.035.

Donais, T. (2012), *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict and Consensus-Building* (New York, Routledge).

Hancock, L.E. (2017), 'Agency & Peacebuilding: The Promise of Local Zones of Peace', *Peacebuilding*, 5(3): 255–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1253604.

Heathershaw, J. (2008), 'Unpacking the Liberal Peace: The Dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36(3): 597–621. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298080360031101.

Hirst, C. (2011), 'How has the "Liberal Peace" Served Afghanistan?', *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security*, 1(2): 11–24.

Körppen, D. (2011), 'Space Beyond the Liberal Peacebuilding Consensus: A Systemic Perspective', in D. Körppen *et al*. (eds), *The Non-Linearity of Peace Processes: Theory and Practice of Systemic Conflict Transformation* (Opladen/Farmington Hills, Barbara Budrich Verlag).

Lister, M. and Jarvis, L. (2013), 'Vernacular securities and everyday life', *E-International Relations*, https://www.e-ir.info/2013/06/19/vernacular-securities-and-everyday-life/ (accessed 2 March 2022).

Mac Ginty, R. (2010), 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace', *Security Dialogue*, 41(4): 391–412.

Mac Ginty, R. (2014), 'Everyday Peace: Bottom-Up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies', *Security Dialogue*, 45: 548–64.

Miall, H., Ramsbotham, O. & Woodhouse, T. (1999), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Millar, G. (2020), 'Preserving the Everyday: Pre-Political Agency in Peacebuilding theory', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 55(3): 310–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836720904390.

Newman, E., Paris, R. & Richmond, O.P. (eds) (2009), *New Perspectives in Liberal Peace* (Tokyo, United Nations University Press).

Njeri, S. (2019), 'Somaliland: The viabilIty of a Liberal Peacebuilding Critique Beyond State Building, State Formation and Hybridity', *Peacebuilding*, 7.

Njeri, S. (2022), 'Examining Mine Action's "Peaceability" Potential Through Everyday Narratives and Practices in Somaliland', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 109–133. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.109.

Ouellet, J.X. (2013), 'Women and religion in Liberia's peace and reconciliation', *Critical Intersections in Education: An OISE/UT Students' Journal*, 1: 12–20.

Rayale, S. (2022), 'Narrating Everyday Peace and (in)Security: Somaliland Women's Lived Realities as Sites of Contestation', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 11–33. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.011.

Richmond, O.P. (2006), 'Emancipatory Forms of Human Security and Liberal peacebuilding', *International Journal*, 62(3): 459–78.

Richmond O.P. (2008), 'Reclaiming Peace in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36(3): 439–70.

Richmond, O.P. (2010), 'A Genealogy of Peace and Conflict Theory', in O.P. Richmond (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan), 14–38.

Schirch, L. (2015), 'Ritual, Religion, and Peacebuilding', in A. Omer, R.S. Appleby & D. Little (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 515–40. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199731640.013.0020.

Sending, O.J. (2011), 'The effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power', in S. Campbell, D. Chandler and M. Sabaratnam (eds) *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding*, (London, Bloomsbury Publishing), 55–68.

To cite the article: Njeri, S. (2022), ‘Everyday peacebuilding and practices in Kenya, South Sudan, Somaliland and Ghana: introduction’, *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 1–9.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.001

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 11–33
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.011
Posted 15 March 2022

Narrating everyday peace and (in)security: Somaliland women's lived realities as sites of contestation

Siham Rayale

Abstract: This article is a collection of Somali women's narratives during Somaliland's early peace and reconciliation conferences (1992–7) and their experience of the post-conflict reconstruction period (2000–12). Women's experience with violence, insecurity and prevailing gender norms highlights that peace is not the absence of gendered violence and that everyday peace is mired in political stability and physical insecurity. Twenty years on, women's narratives have helped to fill gaps by showing how women's contributions have been sidelined but also demonstrate their unique experiences of 'peace' and 'security'. This has been instrumental to framing Somaliland's political history as a region exempt from the civil strife manifest in other parts of the Horn. This article examines the sites of contestations and conflict that have emerged as a consequence of women's narratives being marginalised and its implications on how 'peace' and 'security' are practised and framed in the Somaliland context.

Keywords: Peace, security, gendered violence, Somaliland, narratives.

Note on the author: Dr Siham Rayale's research and advocacy in East Africa has focused on issues relating to women, peace and security with an emphasis on security-sector and legal reform in conflict and post-conflict contexts. While working on public and international policy issues in Toronto for non-profits and INGOs she is also a lecturer at the University of Toronto at Scarborough in the Historical and Cultural Studies department. She has a Masters in Development from York University, an LLM from Osgoode at York University, and a PhD from SOAS.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6602-5954
siham.rayale@utoronto.ca

© The author(s) 2022. This is an open access article licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License

Introduction: narrative inquiry

'What is termed as narrative inquiry is using the stories we tell about our lives or we hear about others' lives as a basis for analyzing broader phenomena' (Connelly & Clandinin 1990; 2000; Webster and Mertova 2007). It is a study of lived experiences through storytelling, oral histories, poetry and other forms of narration and how we understand those narrations. Narratives can be used to challenge meaning and transform them. As a research methodology, seeking coherence and generalisability through narrative analysis is difficult to maintain and I have found myself grappling with the inconsistencies present even in one sitting (during a single interview). The informant can speak about seeking to fight against patriarchy and to bring about radical changes for the Somali culture while also recognising and supporting other tenets that contribute to women's subjugation (i.e. clan elder authority). We can certainly view this as a series of negotiations dependent upon the context and conditions of one's lived experience (according to class, education and mobility for example), but what is more telling is that the narrative regarding one's lived experience can illuminate real and imagined desires. Apparent contradictions in this context may in fact be more reflective of both pragmatism and idealism—a reflection of the conditions that exist and those that the woman would like to see realised. And yet causality is important in interpreting data even when undertaking discourses analysis.

The narratives collected here not only describe what happens throughout informants' lives but are used as evidence for the ongoing challenges present in engaging women in post-conflict societies like Somaliland. Although narrative inquiry is adapted from the field of literary criticism, it is now used by a variety of social scientists as a potent methodology for analysing the role of stories and storytelling in any society (Clandinin 2006: 44). Consequently, attempts are made to craft a genealogy and typology for its usage as data collection and as a research method. Narrative inquiry (poetry, storytelling, oral testimonies) can be seen fundamentally as the study of human experience and when interposed with an analysis of exclusion, marginalisation and power, those everyday experiences can articulate and enact their desires. It is also understood to be a profoundly social experience and done in relation to the person asking the questions and the one telling the story. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) use a three-fold approach to the space of 'narrative inquiry' that is, how to analyse *where* narratives occur as well as *what* is being said. They suggest looking at 'the personal and social; past, present and future; and place' (Clandinin & Connelly 2000: 54).

Similar to the structures for developing storylines, it means that every narrative consists of dialogue, a plot line and a context. How do we, in that sense, establish truths or accepted facts derived from lived experiences? Even if we contextualise the context these experiences are embedded within and the use of literary tools like poetry,

myths and metaphors, they do not negate the validity of the data collected especially when field notes about the researcher's own experiences are incorporated (Connelly & Clandinin 1990: 5). The value of this lies in the capacity for narratives (including the researcher's) to give context to the larger image of women's lives before, during and after conflict in Somaliland. In this way, whether an informant uses poetry to express their recollections or conversation, the medium they use and what is being said can contribute to a greater understanding of how women use and politicise their everyday activities.

This paper looks at Somaliland women's narratives from their experiences of the Somali civil war through to their lived realities in Somaliland at present. It references the Somaliland peace process (1991–2000) and contemporary challenges to post-conflict reconstruction (2000–12). Interviewees included elderly women (60 years of age and older) as well as young women—born during and after the Somali civil war (1989 onwards). It begins with an exposition of the methods used to collect women's narratives and its limitations. It is followed by a brief outline of the ways that Somali gender norms have been shaped historically. This is done in order to contextualise the ways these gender norms and values are contested through the narratives presented in this paper. The subsequent sections highlight the role that oral history (life history) testimonies and Somali poetry played as a popular narrative style (for interviewing). They are largely referencing the early peace process (1991–2000) and legacies of the Barre dictatorship (1969–89). These types of narratives and their relevance are expanded upon in the next sections, which highlight Somaliland women's narratives regarding the post-conflict reconstruction period (2000–12). As the historical retelling of women's experiences traverses time periods and overlaps with contemporary processes, it is important to keep in mind that narratives are largely not neat autobiographical references. Rather, they offer an insight into meaning-making for Somaliland women who were, in many instances, telling their stories for the first time.

Method: collecting narratives

The fieldwork for this paper was conducted over a period of seven months from October 2011 to May 2012. I was based at the Somaliland Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Hargeisa, the capital city of Somaliland, for the duration of the fieldwork. Many of these narratives were collected largely through structured and semi-structured interviews in formal and informal settings and using other other ethnographic methods and tools. Interviews occurred in the cities of Hargeisa, Burao (Somaliland's second-largest city), Borame and Gabiley.

Many of the narratives collected are about and were given by women; this was done purposefully. Women's narratives regarding the conflict and post-conflict period

in Somaliland have been largely ignored in popular re-tellings of Somaliland's political history. Such narratives include detailed accounts about how women provided moral, financial, medical and humanitarian support during the outbreak of conflict in Somaliland. As I began my literature review on Somali women's involvement in the Somali civil war, it became apparent that Somali women's contributions were rarely viewed as grounded in political dimensions.

The fieldwork was ethnographic in nature with participant observation as the main entry point to facilitating access to individual women and their organisations. In some instances, I participated actively in the work of the APD and other organisations (NAGAAD Umbrella Organisation for Women, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]). I took part in events they organised as a facilitator, researcher or speaker. Nevertheless, I was very much a privileged participant. According to Zieman (2012), what is termed as privileged participation involves engaging in a capacity that facilitates learning for respondents and the researcher. This was done through my capacity as a lecturer in various universities throughout Hargeisa.[1] The opportunity to teach came as a result of interviewing some young women who asked whether I was interested in teaching a course at their university. I took up the opportunity to get to know more young women and talk informally about their experiences growing up in the aftermath of Somaliland's self-declared independence (post-1991). During classroom breaks, or especially relevant topics related to my research objectives, students provided valuable insight into their experience with Somali women's participation in peace and reconstruction efforts in Somaliland. Classroom sizes varied between 30 and 100 students.

While my identity was a limitation in some respects, it could also be an asset to my research. In some contexts, I found that once informants knew of my clan affiliation in many instances it helped to foster an environment of familial exchanges where some women sought to educate me about the importance of knowing one's clan and what it means to be a woman between two clans. I found myself in this position quite often when speaking to female informants who sought to taken on the role of 'teacher' imparting knowledge regarding women's proper roles in Somali culture and Islam while I listened patiently to ideas and practices. This is part of what Hampshire *et al.* (2014) sees as a part of the interview process being another form of *narrative ethnography* where 'self' (researcher) and 'other' (informant) are blurred on occasion. In essence, the interview process is a dialectical relationship where knowledge is produced jointly, creating a narrative unique to the participants in research (Hampshire *et al.* 2014: 215–16). In this light, where I was seen as an insider, friendships were formed and maternal affections exchanged. For example, I was introduced to my first interviewee by a third party as 'this is your paternal aunt' (figuratively).

[1] Hargeisa University, Admas University College Hargeisa, New Generation University College Hargeisa.

Informants were selected with the help of various individuals and organisations (APD and NAGAAD) but remained largely open-ended. As the research process developed I began targeting certain women to interview for their particular insights. The majority of informants were older women (aged 40 and above). As I engaged with younger women (aged 19–35) through teaching at the various universities, I sought to see how differing narratives of Somaliland's peace and reconstruction could produce different meanings of peace, security, violence and politics.

Narrative approach: life history testimonies

Life history interviews were conducted with many informants, largely in formal or structured settings. The interview usually centred on the start of the conflict in Somaliland (1991) to begin with, and many indicated that 1981 was a more realistic beginning of the conflict since wide-spread suppression of northern clans by the central government of Somalia was heightened and intensified during that year before the outbreak of civil war (1988). Some Somali women's narratives took this path to offer a perspective on what their hopes were as part of a fledging democratic state (1960–9) to the decline into civil war (1988–91).

Younger generations of women who have experienced Somaliland's political process through its self-declared independence and reconstruction process had a dramatically different perspective to offer. For some, 'conflict' referred to the 2003 passing of President Mohamed Ibrahim Igal as a tense period for clans and their militias. For others it was the 2008 bombing of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) compound, the Ethiopian government's trade office, and other buildings in Hargeisa. I understood this to mean that periods of insecurity, violence and peace are interposed with one another and I use these narratives to show different kinds of contributions made by Somaliland women to Somaliland's peace, security and reconstruction process.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) centred on creating safe spaces for groups of women (10 or more) to articulate their perceptions of issues ranging from governance to development and especially their views on clan politics. Women are often intimidated about publicly expressing their views on political processes or issues so women-only FGDs provided an opportunity for the older generation of women to relate their experience and indignation at having been excluded from formal political processes and institutions. These discussions allowed younger generations of women to address

issues that are seen by mainstream society as being outside of the scope of understanding for youth in general and women in specific. An FGD consisting of a group of 13 women was organised, whose participants had been active in the early peace conferences but also who had provided humanitarian assistance to Somali National Movement (SNM) soldiers during the war, supplying them with clean clothes, food, shelter and rudimentary health services.

Another FGD involved an organisation of Somaliland women lawyers entirely comprised of younger female graduates who related their experience of Somaliland's political process at a time where fragile livelihoods were the norm. With the assistance of international organisations, these young women related their views on participation in a political landscape that rarely concerns itself with gender-specific issues (rape, inheritance rights, domestic abuse) through political institutions (i.e. judiciary), entirely mediated through the clan structure.

During my fieldwork, workshops at the APD, dealing with women's participation in institutional politics, were organised for a group of 50 women in Gabiley and 50 women in Burao. The workshops were organised as a part of the APD's Decentralization Program seeking to enhance women's participation in the local council elections that were being prepared for by the Electoral Commission at the time (2012). I was invited to participate as the facilitator of the workshops tasked with setting the themes. In conjunction with the programme managers of the Decentralization Program, they agreed to let me use the workshop as an opportunity to incorporate elements of my research (questions and design) with the idea that the outputs would be shared with the APD. My role as facilitator included designing tools for participants and engaging in active learning of key issues relating to women's political participation (i.e. campaign financing, networking, clan politics). These workshops contributed significantly to my understanding of the strategies women employed to participate in what had become an exclusively male domain and how they confronted dominant discourses and practices that limit their participation in institutional politics, particularly clan.

The limitations of using a narrative approach

As a study about the narratives of women's lives before, during and after conflict in Somaliland this paper is limited in its scope and in its selection of female informants. Initially, those who had been a part of a generation that was educated during the Siad Barre dictatorship (1969–81) and were present during Somaliland's early peace process (1991–2000) were sought out. Some had passed away or were not available for interview at the time. As well, my efforts to uncover narratives that were deemed 'missing' required a conscious effort to select women who were active as organisers of peace campaigns and marches. This was quite difficult since many women operated

in 'informal' and therefore unseen ways for promoting peace/conflict resolution. I was told on numerous occasions that women who participated during the early peace process in Somaliland (1991–7) were few since many interpreted my request to mean women working in an 'official' capacity (as delegates during the early peace conferences). When I mentioned that I wanted to interview *any* individual they believed contributed significantly in visible/invisible, official/unofficial ways, the potential was opened up for interviews with diverse and previously unknown narratives to emerge.

Another limitation of the study was the concentration of interviews held in Hargeisa, which limited the possibility of interviewing local female activists in other parts of Somaliland. My access to transportation, logistical support and social networks concentrated with NGOs in Hargeisa were key reasons for the paper encompassing informants largely from Hargeisa. Finally, this thesis presents and is built upon only a fraction of narratives about Somaliland women's experiences of conflict, peace, violence and insecurity. My hope is to elevate how we approach these narratives as worthy of scholarly research and inquiry as well as viewing them as inherently political.

Somaliland: culture, tradition and women at a glance

Somali society and culture has historically been characterised as pastoralist and nomadic. Pastoralism is a mode of production that relies on livestock rearing (cattle, sheep, camels) and some other form of subsistence including cultivation of land, hunting and gathering (Hodgson 2000: 6). Kinship groups that form around this type of lifestyle provide and maintain social networks and define roles for each member of the family. Kinship as an ideology goes hand-in-hand with the construction of gender norms in Somali pastoralist society. Somalis are organised around an exogamous social structure where descent is traced patrilineally. While Somali lineage systems can trace ancestors fifteen or sixteen generations back, the most active and politically relevant sub-clan is the diya-paying group. This group is bound together by a social contract that is more popularly understood as a set of customary laws (*xeer*), which, for example, is responsible for blood-money payments and which share 'common political responsibility' (Lewis 1965: 127).

Women in this system have specific gender roles rationalised according to the communal needs and demands of pastoralist society. Girls and married women tend smaller livestock but the responsibilities of married women also include building and dismantling the *aqal* (house) taking care of the children and occasionally selling milk or ghee (Ibrahim 2004: 30). As a society that relies on labour as one factor in production, it is debated whether women's roles can easily be read as a source of inequality. Those who do characterise Somali pastoral society as patriarchal see marriage as the

site for which gender roles are cemented and reproduced (Kapteijns 1995; Gardner & El Bushra 2004; Hasan *et al.* 1995).

However, others insist that numerous examples exist of pastoral societies in East Africa where lineages are traced matrilineally, and women are independent economic producers and make decisions in male-dominated political arenas (Hodgson 2000: 4). This contrasts this with those that contend that, since authority (and therefore power) is conferred through the *xeer*, men's roles in the pastoral economy as 'autonomous producers' allow them to exercise authority over household decisions (Kapteijns 1995: 246). Even still, there are authors who suggest it is difficult to divorce the relevance of gender roles from the ecology of the land and its climate (Lewis 1999; Nakaya 2003). The context of women's roles in the pastoral economy and the symbolism of the *xeer* as a system of equitable exchanges made through marriage is a common logic dictating that marriage brings different responsibilities that are different but equally crucial (ibid: 138–9).

Suffice to say that the gender division of labour enables men to establish their own households, and women's productive labour has traditionally been subsumed for the benefit of the nuclear family and wider community. The 'paradigm' of kinship ought to be seen as a system of interdependencies where group relations are valued above individual relations (Lewis 1999). This nuanced account serves to demonstrate that women's roles in the pastoral economy are situated within a logic of 'corporate kinship' where an 'individual has a political status' (Lewis 1999: 2). It is through this paradigm, for example, that social protection through diya-paying groups can seek compensation for violence committed against Somali women.

However, the cultural production of 'power' and 'authority' is not entirely contingent upon the *xeer* in the pastoral society but is strongly influenced by Islamic principles of gender relations. Although Islamic principles can be interpreted to deny women access to property, the product of their labour, and power over their decision-making capabilities, women's roles are continually negotiated between *xeer* and Islam. Islam neither explicitly forbids women from seeking gainful employment outside of the household nor from maintaining property (Warsame 2002).

As opposed to *xeer* that is clan based, Islamic principles and traditions have been seen as a unifying force (Lewis 1999; Walls 2013). Although Somali cultural traditions and Islam are colloquially said to be similar, tensions do exist between the two, especially in relations to Somali women.[2] While a few informants highlighted the limitations placed upon their participation in politics and public spaces by Somali culture, the dominance of male authority is further entrenched by male Islamic scholars. The importance of Somaliland women/girls engaging indepth with the Quran (in Arabic) and the prophetic traditions (hadiths) is a challenge that is currently being taken up by

[2] Many Somali's follow the Shafi' school of thought in Islamic jurisprudence.

NAGAAD[3] (Walls 2013: 11). For Somaliland women, interpretive power over Islamic texts and the lack of education afforded to women in Islamic education is nowhere more apparent than in South-Central Somalia where militant insurgents adhere to a conservative interpretation of women's roles in public life. As conflict and insecurity increased in South-Central Somalia, women's propensity to seek to wear the veil increased as a consequence of increased violence but also stems from the presence of conservative preachers promoting what they considered to be appropriate female dress (Abdi 2007). In sum, the values that women and men uphold reflect the interdependencies of pastoral society and nomadic life *as well as* the influence of Islam on Somali traditions—allowing Somali culture to respond and change accordingly to different socio-political and economic contexts. Given this context, the transformation of Somali gender norms from the changes to pastoralist societies to socialist institutions can be gleaned through life history testimonies. During a period of intense animosity, civil strife and state-sponsored violence, the ensuing Somali civil war and its retelling can produce multiple perspectives and truths.

Oral narratives: universal representations of truths?

Narratives generally reference the past in an idealised manner of representing the 'self'. The role of oral narratives as a source of analysis points to the way social actors construct meaning from events and how these events are represented through their gendered subjectivities. Narratives that are systematically ignored or silenced can obscure the impact of gendered subjectivities and unequal power dynamics. These narratives can be seen as sites of contestation but also of violence when particular ones are chosen as universal representations of truths—essentially making narratives political projects as much as they are seen as re-telling of actors lived experiences.

The women and men whose narratives were collected often times related similar events but in dramatically different ways. For example, during interviews, when the question was posed: *what were women's contributions during the early peace process?*, female informants referred to women's political organising through rallies. They also recalled being expected to contribute through providing domestic labour towards the logistics of conference organising. Male informants during interviews (and colloquially) referenced the importance of women offering their domestic labour as evidence of the enduring nature of gender roles derived from Somali cultural norms (*xeer*). Invocations of tradition were part and parcel of how early peace conferences were

[3] NAGAAD Umbrella Organisation is an umbrella organisation that supports women-led and women-run civil society organisations in Somaliland. Their advocacy focuses on enhancing women's political participation in institutional spaces and capacity-building for Somaliland women.

framed in conversation, as these traditions were central to securing peace among warring clans in Somaliland.

Narratives are political and powerful in conveying grievances and building consensus around key events in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Wibben (2011) writes: 'narratives are profoundly referential and influential in their representation. They create phenomena and have a tendency to generalise, universalise, and decontextualise the particular'. Yet they also produce distinctions and are valuable at capturing what she considers 'incommensurable differences' between narrators including men and women (Wibben 2011: 100). Indeed, what is considered 'traditional/modern', 'political/apolitical' is actively reshaped by oral narratives demonstrating that gender subjectivities are another site of reproduction and contestation for prevalent norms in society. An upper-house senate member remarked at how pleased he was to offer support for women's rights as long as they stayed within what he considered to be an acceptable paradigm of Somali cultural norms (that are congruent with Islamic moral principles) but indicated that far more destructive discourses on women's rights are propagated:

> There is a national organization of women [in Somaliland]. Why is this so? This only segregates our society. This was begun by someone in the UNDP who admitted that this was just used as a front to gain funding ... [for example] we talk a lot about FGM/C [female genital mutilation/cutting] but men need to be a part of this discussion. If you know the religion and have scientific education [evidence-based] you can make other choices. We see women who fight for women's rights but are using it as a front to gain money. I agree, we need new means to verify a girls' virginity. We need new methods. (Abdullahi Ibrahim Habone – Upper House (Senate) member, Somaliland).

Oral history (life history) testimonies were a valuable method of inquiry and allowed informants to discuss their experiences of Somaliland's peace and reconstruction process in a linear, chronological manner. Many people began their life histories with where they spent their formative years and the various educational institutions they attended or when education was interrupted due to conflict. Among these narratives was Amal Haji Ahmed Misan who acted as the Somaliland President's National Advisor on Women. Amal began her career as a local campaign manager and organiser for the Kulmiye Party in Borame. Amal's narrative is as much about seeking to capitalise on her own political ambitions as it is about the generational gap in the women's rights movement in Somaliland:

> I was born and raised in Borame. I was not part of the Borame peace process (since I was a teenager at the time). The women that took part in that conference were just four women. At that time women were not organized enough to participate in these types of peace conferences.

While early female peace activists have contributed significantly to how the early peace conferences in Somaliland were operating, women who were present but not a part of major campaigns in the early-to-mid-1990s offer another perspective. Adding to the nuances in the campaign history of the umbrella women's organisation NAGAAD, Suad relates her perspective on the linkages between women's organising for peace in the early 1990s and contemporary campaigns to increase their visibility in institutions.

> Suad: Compared with women's struggles now [2012] they have a harder time because the political parties that arose at the time [1997] brought about a women's wing in each of those parties. These spaces were used to incorporate women into formal politics and help these parties build a base to garner ordinary women's support as opposed to dealing specifically with women's issues. It definitely lost momentum from the early peace processes. Institutional politics did this, I don't know if it is intentional. Men look at women as the means to securing campaigns, seats and votes. They don't talk about how to empower these women to have roles and positions within these parties.

Amal and Suad are recipients of this legacy of early female peace activists, although they were not present during much of NAGAAD's campaigns and advocacy for greater representation. Though these narrators supported the efforts of early female peace activists, others, privately spoke on their disappointment with these same activists at not being able to effectively link women's marginalisation from institutional politics to women's poverty and economic exclusion in Somaliland at the time.

Narratives are not universal representations of truths in every instance but the power to generalise women's achievements is a political and strategic endeavour. In an effort to establish a 'women's history' of political organising, the issues facing women's lack of representation are diverse. As such, different perspectives are certainly present, yet these differing views beg the question of how elites are organised around single narratives or histories. Many of the women described as elite were educated prior to the collapse of Somalia in 1991 and came back to Somaliland engaging in various forms of activism. In many ways, as one generation of female activists gives way to a new generation, the power of a single narrative will give way to a multiplicity of narratives.

Somali poetry: a popular narrative form

Narratives are an important part of unearthing women's everyday experiences of conflict and post-conflict processes, given that women are often excluded from formal peace negotiations as a consequence of their gender. Poetry allows us to incorporate a broader set of voices regarding different historical processes that would otherwise remain silent. In her work *Women's Voices in a Man's World*, Kapteijns (1999) discusses the use of oration and literary works (namely the emergence of pop songs,

plays and poems) to illustrate how the female characters in these works are situated within Somali 'tradition' and 'culture'. In a famous play by Hassan Sheikh Mumin (1968), *Leopard Among the Women* (*Shabeelnaagood*), the female characters are more assertive than women depicted in other Somali plays, where customary laws and pastoral traditions are invoked to guide the behaviour of men *and* women. Kaptjeins asserts that even this propagation of tradition is a far more 'specific and limited interpretation' than one envisioned or practised by Somali pastoral communities continually referenced in the pre-colonial periods (Kapteijns 1999: 148–9). Notions of culture were perpetually referenced as the backdrop to many of the conversations with interlocutors as *the* principle barrier to aiding women in their cause towards equality and rights. Annab, as an early peace activist, brings her experience to bear on women's exclusion.

> The culture is this: men used to make decisions under a tree. A man would consult his wife and whatever advice he gave sometimes he would take it with him to other men under this tree. Women now lack decision-making power. Men believe that God said they are better decision-makers than women. I used to say: 'can you bring life into this world on your own'? They said: 'no'. I said: ok, understand that if I gave you space to use your right hand, that I am the left hand. They would agree with me then.' Now what men bring out is that the laws and Islam does not prevent us but they are stuck on culture.

Yet women also propagated the ideas stemming from these same practices and norms.

> Annab: A woman said to me once: 'oh women we are like pots and pans, what is poured into us is also poured out of us.' I said: 'listen, since when did you pay attention to what men say and forget what God has said.' Women do not have grassroots mobilization support or organizing.

Reconstituting gender relations in the context of popular narratives (poetry) where women's voices have been sidelined in favour of men's orations has meant that women's experiences of and as active proponents of the conflict, their role in peace processes and ongoing post-conflict challenges and triumphs are discussed very narrowly. Somaliland women cite the importance of maintaining cultural values and norms that have helped generate peace but they do not seek to be limited to them in their aspirations for equality.

Asha Halgan, despite being a veteran of the SNM rebellion, remarks on women's exclusion propped up by men and women.

> Men rarely see the work we do and have done [speaking on her role as a combatant]. Yet women are still held hostage to the whims of men's demands and more because women hold each other back because of patriarchy. The culture holds women back but the religion is so freeing. Women have a high status in the religion and it has given women a sense of dignity through their manner of dress, speech and overall behaviour. But their [women's] minds are prisoners to patriarchy that mainly stems from culture.

The absence of women's voices in popular Somali poetry is not new. However, it is not merely the pastoral tradition that is referenced but also the status of women's rights (legally and discursively) during the Barre era that has contributed to the further erasure of women's roles in public and political deliberations (Kapteijns 1999; Gardner & El Bushra 2004). While Somaliland women's participation in the early peace processes is seen as progressive it is also complex since the acceptance of customary laws (excluding women from voting at the peace conferences) makes it difficult for women to suggest that they gained immensely from the peace conferences besides an end to warring clans and militias.

> Annab Omer Eleye: Before the conference began [Borame 1993], men and women would be outside. I was one of two women from an organization called [the] Somaliland Women's Organisation[4] that sought to take part in the conference. The elders when they saw us would be distraught at the sight of us at such a conference asking: 'My God, what is this? What do you want in a space such as this?' After when I spoke at the conference, those same men who were shocked that we came were now asking us to remain with them. They mentioned that they cried at the power of the words we spoke saying 'we wept into our sleep at what you spoke on the other night' and they asked to remain for the duration of the conference but we said we could not stay.

Women also recognised that their presence and the acceptance of the *Guurti* as one of two law-making institutions in Somaliland was significant enough to point to women's gains from these conferences—meaning their concerns were finally being addressed in a meaningful way.

A poem composed and sung by Dudi Ahmed Duale, a Somaliland woman who was part of the organisation Allah-Amin that was quite active in the early 1990s in Hargeisa, is one illustration of a less popular poem referring to women's experiences of the early peace process.

> *Be silent Ali, Be silent Asha*
> *Politics has instilled anger and sullied us*
> *Waiting for the weapons and the chaos to emerge*
> *And everyone running in panic*
> *Together we will all be left with nothing*
> *Be silent Asha, Be silent Ali*

This poem was sung during one of the peace rallies in Hargeisa. It was constructed prior to the Hargeisa Conference (1997) to lament the lack of reconciliation among clans and the presence of clan militias. While *baraanbuur*[5] and *sittaat* (religious songs) were popular among women, women's voices have been systematically silenced and erased, with very few means for 'memorisation and transmission' as compared with

[4] A grassroots organisation arising from women's participation during the peace process.

[5] Poetry specific to women and sung during celebratory events including weddings.

men's poetry (Kapteijns 1999: 21). Similarly, the poem at the start of this section, known only by Dudi and her colleagues at Allah-Amin, and its resonance is not captured in popular narratives on Somaliland's peacebuilding process. The author, its content and where it was recited can be seen as contributing factors for the lack of 'transmission' and retention of women-specific poetry drawn from the early peace process. Unlike other poems that were reiterated during peace gatherings and public forums organised by men and women, Dudi's was only sung during peace rallies organised largely by women.

Many of the poems that were referenced by informants were not popularised to the extent that many men and women could boast that they knew of these poems. Rather, the performance of the poems was localised to a select few organisers of the peace rallies; or those present during intense periods of conflict, especially after Somaliland ousted Barre's forces. Women said that was when the most personal instances of violence erupted. The inter-clan clashes in the early 1990s placed many women between their fathers, sons or husbands who belonged to warring and competing clans. We can see that narratives in their re-telling can express competing emotions, including those of women voicing their support for the SNM conflict with Barre's forces but also expressing their despair over the inter-clan clashes where one form of violence can be justified but the other is not. The latter involved more immediate family members as opposed to the former; however, the poems also disprove the assumption throughout the peace and conflict literature that women have an innate propensity to seek peace. Sahra Awe Usman Ige is a member of Allah-Amin and recited a poem during our conversation that she stated was among many to be sung during the peace rallies. She describes its origins and context below.

Gunshots went off in the middle of the streets and we saw women (dead bodies) lying there. After that we said to them [militias]:

If you do not want to earn honour
If a man who knows God gave birth to you
If you do not want to earn honour
Five have died today as well
If that is all you have to say about it
Is it not better for you to end this?

What is being described is women's vulnerability during a time of widespread (in) security as violence was ongoing. The way that women conceptualised peace and (in)security is a means to prevent women's relative vulnerability in cases of violent conflict. Considering that militias were clan-based it is no wonder then that women sought alternative ways of addressing their (in)securities.

Somaliland women and narratives of (in)security and violence

Experiences of insecurity and violence in post-conflict periods are not new (Enloe 1996). As evidenced from oral history testimonies and women's poetry, Somaliland women focused heavily on their experiences of insecurity during the early peacebuilding process in their advocacy. But not all narratives are equal, and many women's narratives of personal insecurity, sacrifice and violence are left untold. What can account for this? It is important to highlight the legacy of conflict on Somaliland women's lives during and after the early peace process. Post-conflict reconstruction and institution-building in Somaliland were in their infancy. Women's insecurities, including their experiences of personal violence, were some of the most compelling narratives collected. What Cockburn (2017) terms as 'the continuum of violence' is rife in Somaliland women's narratives when they speak to experiences of insecurity and violence. Peace, for many Somaliland women, is noted in many instances as the absence of violence and the conditions that lead to it.

Somaliland women, through their narratives, do not provide a single unifying definition of what security means but speak on it more broadly in normative terms—freedom from want or fear.[6] However, their narratives point to the formation of normative security actors (usually male) who operate sometimes within Somali traditional customs as well as outside of these customs. Awareness is growing though, through women's political organising of their need to participate in the operationalisation and conceptualisation of 'security' in post-conflict Somaliland. This is significant since many women saw limited gains from their participation during the early peace process but suffered uniquely during the following intra-clan conflicts in the mid-1990s. These experiences cannot be divorced from the broadening of women's political participation to include their activities in *all* spaces utilising their networks.

As noted earlier, narratives are representations of truths and constructs of meaning. Narratives also actively silence, universalise and randomise individual experiences, often simultaneously. The dominant actor in conflict and security narratives is the state, which is preoccupied with maintaining sovereignty as it seeks to organise its military and the policies it prioritises. The value of local narratives and the importance they play means that local narratives can reframe the notion of the state as the only force capable of maintaining peace and security. Often in direct conflict with militia or paramilitary groups (eg., Sudan, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone) local communities have pushed back against statist versions of authority. Rather, in conflicts in Sierra Leone, Libera and Rwanda, communities articulated, for the first time, the need to take control of their lives. The state has often responded by using brutally violent tactics to suppress local authority (Richmond 2010). However, local narratives do

[6] Not unlike human security pedagogies.

not diminish the presence of competing visions over *how* to ensure peace and security after conflict, with many international organisations having dominated the needs of local communities during transitional justice processes.

The task of re-imagining narratives on state security and peacebuilding by scholars is monumental when we take into account how ineffective states and international bodies have been in bringing women's concerns to the peace talks or the reconstruction process. The set of UN resolutions relating to women's lack of inclusion in the peace process and their unique experiences of violence and (in)security (particularly UN resolution 1325) has sought to remedy that but its capacity to enforce its mandate is limited. Prescriptions for transformative changes are not clearly outlined other than to mainstream 'gender' as an analytical category throughout government institutions, civil society and formal peace processes. This involves ensuring that a number of seats and leadership positions are set aside for women. Nevertheless, it does not diminish the role of violence (personal and systemic) from conflict and post-conflict contexts. Sexual violence and rape are an example of violence that operates across the public/private divide. Part of this stems from the difficulty in integrating a gendered approach to how security operates within and outside of states.

> The meaning of security has changed. In families, men were responsible for the family but now it seems that women are responsible for the family. The notion of security begins in the home. You see petty theft and violence throughout society. In the past, neighbours looked out for one another and security was a community concept. If something should happen to the child, the entire neighbourhood helped raise that child for you. This system is no longer in place. Security has to be a community-oriented concept. This child cannot just belong to his family he has to belong to the whole community since his mother is out working for him and his father is chewing khat somewhere outside the house. *(Shukri Haji Ismail Bandare, former Executive Director of Candlelight and Minister of Environment and Rural Development of Somaliland)*

Candlelight provided basic social services (basic education and health delivery), in the absence of effective state institutions. The issue though is that as narratives come to light that demonstrate the importance of security (physical, financial, economic), what is understood as 'protection, peacekeeping, or participation varies widely. Women see a diverse set of actors being responsible for each. Security, gender and Somali women's experiences (in Somaliland and Somalia) are limited and focused on violence against women in the form of sexual and gender-based violence (i.e. rape, FGM/C, domestic abuse). They do not consider Somali women's experiences engaging with security-sector institutions beyond the lens of addressing sexual and gender-based violence (which is still very important). As narratives by informants expanded on their experience with peace, reconciliation, violence and (in)security, the idea that (in)security is framed more broadly came into view.

Consider that among the narratives that is repeated throughout discussions with informant's involved widespread sexual violence against women in Somaliland (perpetrated by Siad Barre's forces) as a precursor to the start of the SNM's rebellion. Interestingly though, the links between sexual violence in the early 1980s, 1990s and into the 2000s present in Somaliland are decontextualised from the legacies of conflict as legacies of trauma that endure in times of peace. Members of the Somaliland Women's Lawyers Association engage with women/girls experiencing sexual violence and narrate the issues they are concerned with addressing in a time seen as 'peaceful' in Somaliland.

> Rape was rampant we were told, leading up to the civil war [on the part of Siad Barre's forces]. But we still deal with a lot of rape cases in Somaliland now [2012]. How they are dealt with is different. We have common law, but we also have customary laws. Before with customary law [*xeer*], if a woman said she was raped, the elders would come together from each clan and work to resolve it. But now she has a choice and if she's raped, she has a choice to choose between these laws [i.e. going through the courts]. There are cases where the community can intervene if the case goes to the courts. If she receives compensation the community of elders takes it from her. This happens a lot, and many women lose their rights over this. The men are released and the compensation is taken from her.

How can a state respond to women's security concerns if it fails to enquire about and acknowledge women's precarious social, political and economic status? Narrations on violence and (in)security draw parallels between the norms that states and security-sector institutions (military, police, judiciary) adhere to and the political and economic marginalisation that women experience, contributing to their vulnerable status in society. To that effect, it is worth asking whether women benefitted from ongoing processes to maintain peace and build security.

> [Physical] Security has definitely opened up public spaces. Back then, those women who worked were few but it was growing. The security of women in public spaces is precarious but for those especially who have little to no education means that they have to seek employment outside of the household. It's still a novelty for women to work en masse like this. This security and peace is vital to that.

Expanding upon notions of security and how it operates needs to be interrogated to recognise that gender identities/hierarchies impact men and women's lives on a daily basis. We cannot know the extent of how it prevents women from finding justice unless we recognise the connections between gender and the institutions responsible for protecting women from violence (Macklin 2004: 75–107). Asking the question 'security for and by whom?' allows academics/scholars to begin to politicise the issue of violence against women in a post-conflict context and points to how meanings are constructed and represented through narratives. Politicising the security and gender dynamics in post-conflict Somaliland lays out a framework whereby we can see the struggles for economic,

personal, physical and food security as not only a gendered experience but also a political one. It lays blame on policy-makers, politicians and the international community.

> How men and women in society relate to one another has changed yes. When we think of culture, for example, divorce is normal now for us. But back then, a woman would say, kill me before you divorce me. Can you imagine that? It's changed a lot now. Every generation afterwards, many things have opened up for women.

By far the largest impact of justifying women's activities in Somaliland is the need to take ownership over their lack of security as opposed to a pursuit of a women's rights agenda.

To ensure that these narratives are incorporated at least discursively into security-oriented institutions and policies, they need to be seen as politicised by the spaces in which (in)security occurs (including the household). Violence and insecurity, as experienced by many women, were legacies of post-colonial statebuilding, civil war and post-conflict processes. These processes and periods offer numerous sites of contestation with respect to the narratives that have so far been highlighted and many that remain largely unknown.

Understanding narratives as sites of contestation

Prior to the Barre regime, Somali women (comprising northern and southern clans) established the Somali Women's Association (1959) out of a growing frustration over the lack of political representation within the Somali Youth League. The organisation, led by middle-class urban women, transformed itself into the Somali Women's Movement (SWM) (1960). Both of these organisations were short-lived, as the dictatorship incorporated the SWM as a part of the 'Women's Section' within the 'Political Office' in the Presidency of the Supreme Revolutionary Council. The 'Women's Section' transformed itself in 1977 into the Somali Women's Democratic Organisation. It drew its members from the SWM and was led by Barre's wife Khadija Ma'alin. Its political and ideological project became less about women's socio-political and economic conditions than co-opting women's issues and serving as a monitoring outpost for maintaining the hegemony of state ideology (Gardner & El Bushra 2004: 176).

The Barre regime worked hard to advance the material conditions of women by first establishing the Family Law of 1975, guaranteeing women equitable distribution of property through inheritance and divorce (Kapteijns 2009: 118; Gardner & El Bushra 2004: 177). For the first time, women were provided with government scholarships to study abroad and incorporated into the formal labour sector. Opposition to the Family Law of 1975 largely came from religious leaders, who saw it as an affront to Islamic principles. Barre executed ten religious leaders who openly opposed the

changes to the Family Law and, as such, women's rights became closely associated with the Barre regime's oppressive practices (Kapteijns 2009). Consequently, women's rights occupied an ambivalent position in the public discourse on nationalism.

Somali women composed poems promoting, and later deriding, *Somalinimoo* as defined by Barre. They popularised their poetry through songs over the radio and discursively shaped the ambitions, as well as the eventual discontent, of Somali society in general from 1960 to 1990 (Kapteijns 2009). These songs also reinforced attitudes regarding women's roles and were layered with symbolism and hidden meanings. They had at least three characteristics: they were enjoyed and popularised mainly by urbanites; largely performed by youth; and they discursively shaped what it meant to uphold both morality and modernist attitudes and behaviours (Kapteijns 2009: 21). At the time, morality and conceptualisations of proper gender roles were both heavily influenced by Islamic principles and urban elites preaching socialist ideologies—that was in need of constant legitimising. Barre recognised this and in daily radio programmes inculcating listeners about the teachings of scientific socialism he often began with a Quranic recitation, followed by commentary on a particular issue, and then a Somali proverb, ending with speeches prepared by himself and his peers (Lewis 2010: 84).

The potential for narratives to transform the capability of women's voices on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction is important to change the way policymakers evaluate and include women in these processes. As conflict provides spaces for renegotiating gender relations and dynamics, women may be framed in terms of traditional/cultural gender norms that may not necessarily be easily facilitated in the post-conflict context, especially as it relates to women's security concerns stemming from personal and political violence.

The potency of a single narrative to dominate the collective memory of a society is evidenced by the death in 1975 of ten religious leaders by Siad Barre, and points to the importance of studying narratives and their impact. Consider the two narratives below and the informant's re-collection and relationship to government's policies on women's rights in the 1970s and how they resonate with opponents and supporters of women's rights in Somaliland today. Two different perspectives on the events reveal divergent views on the historical significance of Barre periods for women.

> Informant (a): It depends on how you define liberation. If someone defines it as coming out of the home [*for women*] then yes. If you define it in terms of freedom of speech or participating in mass rallies or sitting with men then yes they were more emancipated ... Barre was advocating that men and women were equal according to the law with the Family Law [1975]. Some *sheikhs* were opposed to this and were shot dead in 1975 (ten in total). The main support he [Barre] was getting was from women because he gave the right to participate in any activity that was going on and every village had an orientation centre [to help facilitate this]. They had literacy campaigns; they were in government offices and were like men. Then

> in big numbers they [women] came out to support him. [Back then] If you stopped your wife/daughter from going out she would accuse/report you to the security forces, so even husbands used to keep quiet.

The narrative below describes the same historical context in a different way. As a leading gender researcher in Somaliland, the informant was educated and participated in women's rights campaigns during the Barre dictatorship.

> Informant (b): If the dictatorship is with you then you are good. If they are against you it is a problem. Four of us were the research arm of the women's organization. But many of those members did not understand how to do this. They did not understand research. We had this huge women's organization and in that a lot of work was happening ... the dictatorship was behind us in helping to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation ... We mainly use the radio since it was the main means of communication. Women were using the *Family Law*[7] which was progressive at the time. It was a basis for our work and at the district courts we got a lot of female judges at the courts using those laws. The dictatorship was seen as highly progressive and it was good when you have a government behind you even if they are a dictatorship. It's not true that they just used us—we used them too.

The various identities of the state are demonstrated through these narratives. Men and women were equal supporters of the Barre regime and the speakers point to the historical nature of women's activism during this time. Till this day, the Family Law (1975) is seen as a contentious policy interpreted in various ways. It is worth mentioning that often little attention is paid to the role that masculinity played prior to the outbreak of conflict (i.e. during the Barre regime 1969–91) and its link to post-conflict violence (by men on against other men and women). During interviews, when respondents recalled Barre's promotion of women's rights, they often cited that discursively in Somaliland parallels were drawn between the rise of Somali women's rights through legislation and the execution of religious leaders in 1975.

This experience has put the campaign for women's rights in direct conflict with the campaign to ensure peace and security in Somaliland. Opponents reference this period as exemplary of the disastrous attempts to import ideas and ideologies seemingly alien to Somali culture and Islamic principles. What is rarely discussed in an analytical sense is the sublimation of women's rights for violent ends. The complex relationship of authoritarian regimes with their societies is not new in an African context, especially as it relates to advancing social rights. What is necessary is linking this obvious contradiction to different levels of analysis and approaches (Tripp 2004).

[7] The Family Law of 1975 guaranteed women's equality under the law and equal access to property inheritance. When ten religious leaders in Mogadishu banded together in opposition to what they saw as a direct contention with Islamic principles, they were publicly executed.

Conclusion

The narratives discussed here do not seek to entirely disassemble gender hierarchies but to demonstrate the need for a new dynamic altogether and to shed light on how interlocutors can be advocates *and* opponents of traditional gender norms or modernist discourses on women's rights. Feminist thinking has been significant to the study of violence and violent regimes. While researchers agree that oversimplified categories such as 'men as perpetrators' and 'women as victims' disguises men's and women's agency and participation in violence, nevertheless the focus still lies with masculine traits framed as aggressive, exemplified by the soldiers and police forces in any state, and femininity with docility and defenselessness, masking women's complicity and support of authoritarian regimes like Barre's (Enloe 1993). Moreover, work on gender inclusivity highlights the need to include analysis and evidence that suggests political violence is 'overwhelmingly directed at men rather than women' on the part of the state (as evidenced by the execution of the religious leaders by Barre's forces) (Jones 2009: 82). These perspectives are useful for establishing a distinction between 'violence' and 'conflict'. So while men and women can perpetuate conflict, violence is also about the power dynamics in a society (before and after conflict), which shapes how masculinity and femininity are expressed in a post-conflict society (Cockburn 2013). With narratives about conflict and violence, single events can have multiple meanings and perspectives, including who is considered the perpetrator/victim.

Consequently, subjectivities/identities are politically (re)shaped. The narratives in this paper are a small microcosm of a select few women and their experiences during the early peace process and subsequent post-conflict period. They illustrate that bargains are made on the basis of maintaining peace and security for communities as a whole in the hopes of reaffirming consensus on agreed-upon principles between men and women. Otherwise, women (or men) who singularly advocate breaking down traditional gender hierarchies are challenging widespread social structures. What has been a common feature is that peace and security are understood as the responsibility of the state but in the face of weak state capacity and infrastructure, many saw the re-emergence of violence (for example, the intra-clan conflicts of the mid-1990s). As such, security was now being thought of as much broader than merely the responsibility of the state but also the responsibility of social actors, including political elites, clan elders and ordinary men and women. Yet it was necessary to analytically situate these transformations into our understanding of peace, (in)security and violence from a gendered perspective to highlight the function of power, violence, masculinity and militarisation. While the myth of women as peacemakers or in need of protection is demystified, it does not solve the larger problem of violence against women in peace times or the structures in place that support their subordination (i.e. security-sector institutions).

These narratives do not point to a single definition for how Somaliland women view peace and (in)security. As social actors are produced by social processes, and as subjectivities emerge, no single narrative can capture a multitude of simultaneous processes at multiple levels (state to community). It is precisely because they are a part of the broader meta-narrative experience embedded in political act/actors. What these narratives offer is the emergence of an understanding by Somaliland women of their own agency and the tools at their disposal to frame their context, struggle and successes. As political processes have continued to shift, Somaliland women's experiences of violence, peace and reconstruction must be seen as an assessment of their relative power—power that we can see and is defined precisely at various sites of contestation, from the state to the community.

References

Abdi, C.M. (2007), 'Convergence of Civil War and the Religious Right: Reimagining Somali Women', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 33(1): 183–207.

Cockburn, C. (2013), 'War and Security, Women and Gender: An Overview of the Issues', *Gender and Development*, 21(3): 433–52.

Cockburn, C. (2017), 'A Continuum of Violence: Gender, War and Peace', in R. Jamieson, *The Criminology of War* (London, Routledge), 357–75.

Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D.J. (1990), 'Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry', *Educational Research*, 19(5): 2–14.

Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D.J. (2000), *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitive Research* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass).

Clandinin, D. J. (2006), 'A Methodology for Studying Lived Experience', *Research Studies in Music Education* 27: 44–54.

Enloe, C. (1993), *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley, University of California Press).

Enloe, C. (1996), 'Women After Wars: Puzzles and Warnings', in *Vietnam's Women in Transition* (London, Palgrave Macmillan), 299–315.

Gardner, J. & El Bushra, J. (eds) (2004), *Somalia—The Untold Story: The War Through the Eyes of Somali Woman* (London; Sterling, Virginia, CIIR, Pluto Press).

Hampshire, K., Iqbal, N., Blell, M. & Simpson, B. (2014), 'The interview as narrative ethnography: seeking and shaping connections in qualitative research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 17(3): 215–31.

Hasan, D.F, Adan, A.H. & Warsame A.M. (1995), 'Somalia: Poetry as Resistance Against Colonialism and Patriarchy', in S. Wieringa (ed.), *Subversive Women: Historical Experiences of Gender and Resistance* (London: Zed Books), 165–182.

Hodgson, D. (2000), *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa: Gender, Cultural and the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist* (Oxford, James Currey Ltd.).

Ibrahim, R.M. (2004), 'Women's Role in the Pastoral Economy', in J. Gardner & J. El Bushra (eds) *Somalia—The Untold Story: The War Through the Eyes of Somali Woman* (London; Sterling, Virginia, CIIR, Pluto Press), 24–40.

Jones, A. (2009), *Gender Inclusive: Essays on Violence, Men and Feminist International Relations* (London, Routledge).

Kapteijns, L. (1995), 'Gender Relations and the Transformation of the Northern Somali Pastroal Tradition', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 28(2): 241–59.

Kapteijns, L. (1999), *Women's Voices in a Man's World: Women and Pastoral Tradition in Northern Somali Orature c. 1899–1980* (Portsmouth, Heinemann).

Kapteijns, L. (2009), 'Discourse on Moral Womanhood in Somali Popular Songs, 1960–1990', *The Journal of African History*, 50(1): 101–22.

Lewis, I.M. (1965), *The Modern History of Somaliland: From Nation to State* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

Lewis, I.M. (1999), *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Lewis, I.M. (2010), *Making and Breaking States in Africa: The Somali Experience* (Asmara, The Red Sea Press Inc.).

Macklin, A. (2004), *Border Rights. From the Margins of Globalisation: Critical Perspectives on Human Rights* (New York, Lexington Books).

Mumin, H.S. (1974 [1968]), *Leopard Among the Women: Shabeelnaagood. A Somali Play*. Unesco.

Nakaya, S. (2003), 'Women and Gender Equality in Peace Processes: From Women at the Negotiating Table to Postwar Structural Reforms in Guatemala and Somalia', *Global Governance*, 9(4): 459–76.

Richmond, O.P. (2010), 'Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 38(3): 665–92.

Tripp, A.M. (2004), 'Women's Movements, Customary Law, and Land Rights in Africa: The Case of Uganda', *African Studies Quarterly*, 7: 1–19.

Walls, M. (2013), 'Women's Political Participation in Somaliland: A Case Study', in *Moving from Exclusion to Inclusion: Marginalized Women's Success in Overcoming Political Exclusion* (Stockholm, International IDEA), 164–97.

Warsame, A.M. (2002), 'Queens Without Crowns: Somaliland Women's Changing Roles and Peace Building', *Africa Portal*, https://www.africaportal.org/publications/queens-without-crowns-somaliland-womens-changing-roles-and-peace-building/.

Webster, L. & Mertova, P. (2007), *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method: An Introduction to using Critical Event Narrative Analysis in Research on Learning and Teaching* (London, Routledge).

Wibben, A. (2011), *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (New York, Routledge).

Zieman, G.A. (2012), 'Participant Observation', in *Action Research Methods* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan), 49–67.

To cite the article: Rayale, S. (2022), 'Narrating everyday peace and (in)security: Somaliland women's lived realities as sites of contestation', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 11–33.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.011

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 35–53
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.035
Posted 15 March 2022

Everyday peacebuilding among Ghanaian men: ambiguities, resistances and possibilities

Isaac Dery, Cuthbert Baataar and Anisur Rahman Khan

Abstract: Dominant peacebuilding scholarship and praxis tends to focus on African men's adherence to violent fragile masculinities in conflict prone-societies, and African masculinities are often approached, analysed, measured and theorised through externally derived standards and concepts. This article, by contrast, investigates the extent to which men can contribute to everyday peacekeeping. It does so by drawing on ethnographic interviews with men in northwestern Ghana. It illuminates how discourses and practices of male headship and breadwinner, as everyday masculine subjectivities, may contribute to creating fruitful possibilities for everyday peacebuilding subjectivities of men at the micro-levels. The article argues that approaching African masculinities through externally designed frameworks risks impoverishing critical understanding of the tensions, ambiguities, resistances and contestations of multiple configurations of masculinities beyond liberal, western-centric conceptualisations of masculinities. It further highlights that critical intervention seeking to address the systems and structures that may legitimise, and re/produce violence and social disorder must invest in carefully rethinking the everyday struggles of men within their locatedness. Peacebuilding scholars should invest in broadening discourses and representations of masculinities by offering nuanced understandings of how men can and are embracing peaceful and nonviolent masculinities in their everyday meaning-making.

Keywords: Masculinities, peacebuilding, Ghana, gender, male headship.

Note on the authors: Isaac Dery is a lecturer and researcher in the Department of African and General Studies at the Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Ghana. His research interest focuses on constructions of masculinity and femininity, gender-based violence, masculinities and everyday peacebuilding, and African feminism(s).
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0402-6075
idery38@gmail.com

Dr Cuthbert Baataar K.M. is a senior lecturer at the Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies. His research interrogates the question of culture, gender and development in contemporary Ghanaian society. He has published over 20 articles.

Anisur Rahman Khan is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. His research interests include sociology of suicide, men and masculinity, and violence against men.

Acknowledgement: This paper forms part of a larger project funded by the African Peacebuilding Network Individual Research Program.

© The author(s) 2022. This is an open access article licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License

What can we learn from peaceful men? How might such insights contribute to sustainable everyday peacebuilding beyond the peace/war dichotomy? In attempting to answer these questions, this article draws on feminist and critical masculinity studies literature to nuance ongoing conversation in understanding the challenges, opportunities and possibilities of fostering peaceful and non-violent masculinities at multiple levels. The authors focus on understanding how everyday peacebuilding could be imagined and made sense of, particularly at the interpersonal level, where armed conflict may be absent. The authors are of the view that everyday peacebuilding can be meaningfully understood and analysed when approached at different analytical, conceptual and epistemological levels (Mac Ginty 2014). The article contributes to feminist and critical masculinity scholarship that highlights that men's violence against women and other men tends to be gendered and exaggerated during conflicts (Shepherd 2016; Hudson 2019). Feminist activists and academics whose scholarly foci foreground the entanglement of toxic militarised masculinities with armed conflicts have critiqued mainstream liberal peacebuilding operations and initiatives for always pursuing a one-sided project—making war safe for women and girls. Rather than making war safe for women and girls, feminists have long maintained that the rights of women and girls should be protected and upheld irrespective of whether such women and girls are located in societies affected by conflicts or not.

While it has become increasingly necessary that the prevention of violence against women and girls during and after conflict situations is paramount to global peacebuilding discourses, conflict prevention measures, particularly in societies without violent conflict, have received relatively little attention in policies and development interventions (Shepherd 2016; Basu and Shepherd 2018). It makes sense to posit that development practitioners and peacebuilders often tend to invest huge resources and deploy personnel to societies that are embroiled in war (be it civil or political), while simultaneously neglecting to explore an understanding why certain societies are peaceful. It is not uncommon for peacebuilding scholars to draw on a 'one size fits all' assumption, applying definition and theory on peacebuilding to contexts, geographies and cultures that are not similar to the global north.

Compared to work on conflict, violence and peace, and their complex connections, there is relatively less work on understanding how peaceful, non-violent masculinities could be nurtured and promoted at the local, interpersonal level, especially in a global southern context. Most peacebuilding literature tends to focus on highlighting the aftermath of armed conflict and how fragile masculinities are discursively sustained and reproduced during conflict or post-conflict societies. For peacebuilding policies and interventions to truly contribute to restoring social life and justice to a sustainable and meaningful form (Mac Ginty 2014), such policies and interventions need to be informed by greater engagement with the local context and its cultural dynamics (Hudson 2019). It is important that peacebuilding interventions need to approach society—even those societies that are not at in armed conflict—as potential zones for different forms of conflict.

For example, there could be conflict between people with access to power and authority and those without power and authority. Even in societies that may be described as relatively peaceful, both men and women are likely to struggle for and contest power in their everyday interactions. Dominant forms of masculinity are often associated with power, authority, aggression and violence within and across institutions, such as family and interpersonal relations. The denial of power, especially among men can trigger intra- and inter-gender conflict and the outcome can be fatal. Scholars need to creatively engage the contextual complexities, struggles, ambiguities, resistances and contradictions inherent in configurations and performances of masculinities and femininities in peaceful and conflict affected settings. Against this background, there is a critical need for peacebuilding interventions in all societies irrespective of whether such societies are at war or not. This brings to the fore an important question that Howell and Willis (1990) grappled with a decade ago: 'what can we learn from peaceful societies?' We would further ask: do peaceful societies stand to offer anything radically different from societies that are suffering from armed conflicts? How might we leverage on such insights and narratives in ways that may promote sustainable and positive peace discourses? These are important questions that are central to our analysis in this article.

A growing body of studies across diverse contexts (both peaceful and conflict-prone societies) has highlighted how men as a gendered category may not only cause problems for women, but how dominant constructions of masculinity may undermine men's own interest in peacebuilding and nonviolence. Peacebuilding interventions and policies are likely to yield less dividend or even cause more harm than good if these contradictions in navigating dominant constructions of masculinity and men's pursuit of peace and justice are not attended to. Most liberal internationalist peacebuilding operations and interventions often failed to pay attention to the particularities and social conditions of the local context, especially in Africa (Hudson 2009). While it is clearly evident that men and boys are the main perpetrators of violent conflict and that women and girls are disproportionate victims of such conflicts, peacebuilding interventions may invest some time reflecting on the circumstance(s) that may encourage men to embrace and practice peace and nonviolence masculinities. In view of this, there is a need to shift attention from what seems to be unitary representations of men as a category that troubles peacebuilding discourses to understanding how, when and why different versions of masculinity may provide useful possibility for men to imagine peaceful ideals at the intimate level. Paying close attention to these contestations and contradictions is important in resisting deterministic and simplistic definitions of peace demonstrated in most peacebuilding literature. Understanding what it may mean to have peace at the intimate level in a context where there is no war or armed conflict, such as Ghana, is a potentially powerful resource in understanding why men may resist embracing peace or may express desires to pursue peace and social justice. Such understanding is important in any intervention aiming to work with boys and

men to imagine less hegemonic, nonviolent and healthy masculinities amidst contradictory demands on them as a social category.

The emergence of masculinities in liberal peacebuilding studies

The relationship between violent fragile masculinities and peacebuilding has been at the centre of much academic debate within mainstream feminist International Relations, peace psychology, and feminist peace and security studies (e.g. Theidon 2009; Eriksson Baaz & Stern 2013; Sjoberg 2014). One of the most closely discussed topics in contemporary peacebuilding discourses is patriarchy and its oppressive ideologies, including violence (Hudson 2009; Enloe 2005). Despite the strong focus on patriarchy among scholars and activists, how people gendered as men may relate and negotiate patriarchal masculine ideals in ways that may challenge and/or disrupt conventional reading of patriarchy remains poorly understood, especially from the global south. As we argue in this article, the notion of patriarchal masculinities is too often read with some kind of selective gaze using a liberal feminist normative agenda of gender equality, social justice and transformational peacebuilding (Hudson 2017).

Patriarchal masculinities have often been associated with dangerous ideologies, and practices, violence and exploitative norms. This approach to theorising the gendered practices of men, particularly in gender inequitable contexts, is perhaps understandable considering that patriarchy continues to frustrate feminists' commitment in imagining a world of sustained peace, of social equity, and a world without gender-based violence. Yet, the question of how men might negotiate patriarchal masculinities in positive, peaceful and nonviolent ways remains insufficiently theorised within the existing literature. Even as research on masculinities, especially from sub-Saharan Africa has nuanced global knowledge production on what it may mean to be a 'man' beyond Euro-American standards (Ratele 2013), most gender programmes continue to approach and engage men, especially from the postcolonial global southern context as an utterly problematic category in anti-violence initiatives and peacebuilding programmes. In particular, dominant liberal scholarship on gender transformative peacebuilding has offered an incoherent understanding of the complex tensions, struggles and contradictions embedded in men's everyday negotiation and meaning-making of, for example, male headship as a form of male subjectivity and agency. Our argument is that attempting to understand the everyday struggles of men in negotiating patriarchy, and the repertoire of agency available to men in such negotiations, allows us to grasp how different versions of masculinities may offer possibility for imagining local peacebuilding discourses and practices among men. We would further suggest that dominant liberal peacebuilding

frameworks have largely failed to properly situate, engage and theorise men's negotiations of patriarchal masculinities in ways that may promote locally grounded peacebuilding practices and dynamics. It is important to understand that the everyday struggles and meaning-making of women and men as gendered subjects are much more complex, even in communities in which there is no direct experience or active involvement in conflicts, especially from the global south.

Another critique of dominant liberal peacebuilding scholarship is that sexual and gender-based violence against women in wartime is often approached and treated as 'spectacular' violence disconnected from the everyday violence struggles of femininity in peacetime (Eriksson Baaz & Stern 2013). Our sense is that detaching the violent experiences of women from other zones of unequal power relations and gendered hierarchies in intimate relationships may impoverish critical interrogation of the broader social and political context in which violence against women easily becomes normalised. Violence against women committed by 'civilian' or 'unarmed' male partners, either in peacetime or after a conflict had ended, must be understood as being part of a broader continuum of violence that women navigate daily (Boulding 2000; Hudson 2009). Such understanding allows us to foreground the perpetration of violence by men against women as driven by complex intersecting factors, including economic and political struggles, social norms and patriarchal ideologies bound up in masculinities and femininities.

Adopting a culturally grounded approach in making sense of local peacebuilding practices and dynamics equips us to avoid the risk of falling back to the trap of discussing men's enactments and negotiations of masculinities as dislodged from other zones of structural struggles and gendered subjectivities. As researchers, we should not only focus on the excesses, damages and dangers of patriarchal masculinities to peacebuilding. Rather, a critically sympathetic and culturally driven analysis of men in their multiple locatedness should sharpen our analysis of the everydayness of peace or peace in the mundane, especially at the interpersonal levels. We suggest that researchers need to pay attention to how the everyday struggles and subjectivities of masculinity may shape peacebuilding and nonviolent practices at the local level. Without a critically sympathetic analysis of masculine subjectivities and everyday experiences of men, liberal feminist peace studies are likely to remain partially nourished in offering sophisticated alternative accounts on masculinities and local peacebuilding dynamics, especially in a postcolonial context. In order to promote liberatory Africa(n)-centred peacebuilding discourses, scholars and policymakers need to invest in understanding the complex entanglements of femininities and masculinities and what these entanglements may mean for local peacebuilding practices and dynamics within a specific cultural context (Hudson 2009: 289).

The present study

This study explores men's ideas and meaning-making of constructions of masculinity in ways that may offer possibilities in imagining everyday peacebuilding at the micro-levels. Studies on men and masculinities are not new in Ghana, yet there is little discussion on how constructions of masculinity may contribute to everyday peacebuilding, especially at the interpersonal level. The bulk of the studies are yet to adequately foreground men's understandings and negotiations of masculinity from northern Ghana broadly, and northwestern Ghana specifically, in promoting peace. northern Ghana is plagued by multiple stereotypes and misrepresentations. It is common to hear scholars and media analysts present inaccurate opinions about men from Northern Ghana as problematic, aggressive, nonpeaceful and violent people. When there is a public discussion on gender equitable masculinities, men from this part of Ghana are largely presented with a different lens. Such analysis continues to locate the identities of men from Northern Ghana as perpetrators of violence against women and 'enemies of feminist transformative agendas' (Dery 2020). As critical postcolonial scholars, we are concerned about how less accurate presentation and analyses of the embodiments of men from this part of the country may unintentionally perpetuate colonial discourses on African male subjectivities as dangerous, repressive and hyper aggressive. Our discomfort with less nuanced analysis, which easily tends to homogenise and pathologise men from Northern Ghana, provides important motivation for this study.

Northwestern Ghana is one of the sixteen administrative regions of Ghana. The region consists of eleven districts. Out of the eleven districts, the present study took place in the Lambusie-Karni district. Lambusie-Karni district was selected due to its fair representation of both Dagaaba and Sissala, the two leading ethnic groups in the region. Three communities were selected for the study due to their social characteristics and diverse economic activities. Due to historical and political neglect, northwestern Ghana is currently one of the poorest and under-developed regions of Ghana. Rainfed agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the indigenes of the region, although alternative sources of livelihood have emerged over the years. Even with deteriorating economic conditions, coupled with increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns, gender norms, expectations and roles, especially boundaries between masculinity and femininity are enforced and propagated over generations (Dery 2019). Through interactions with various socialisation agents within and outside the family, boys and girls are exposed to gendered practices and norms from an early age. As boys and girls grow and become adults, they are likely to endorse, (re) produce, contest and/or disrupt entrenched gendered norms and practices, particularly relating to masculinity and femininity.

Although gendered practices and behaviours have largely become individual-oriented (every family may have its own set of rules and norms on what it may mean to be a 'man' or 'woman'), such practices and behaviours are carried out in conformity with existing systems and structures which may enable or constrain what individual social subjects may choose to (re)produce. For example, men in patrilineal northwestern Ghana are widely believed to be the heads of the households, breadwinners and family decision-makers. On the other hand, women are considered to play supportive roles relative to dominant masculine roles and activities of men (Dery 2019). Although women in northwestern Ghana make important contributions to the marriage economy through their participation in agriculture and petty trading, pervasive gender practices and norms may deny women equal access to power and authority within and outside the family.

In order to gain a better understanding of how men make sense of their masculinities and how such understanding may shape everyday peacebuilding practices and strategies, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted by the first author between July and December 2019. Through organised meetings, potential participants were invited to participate in the study. The main inclusion criteria for the study were that participants needed to identify themselves with the male sex, and have grown up and resided in their respective communities for a significant duration of their lives. They also needed to be in an active heterosexual marriage with or without a child. To ensure that the inclusion criteria stated above were met, each participant had to be pre-screened with a set of demographic questions. Overall, 15 able-bodied men (5 in each community) between the ages of 25 and 30 were recruited and interviewed after the data collection process had reached a point of theoretical saturation. During the interviews, the following questions were used as guidelines: How would you describe a good husband? What qualities describe such people? Based on these qualities, how would you expect your peers to describe you? How would you describe families you perceive to be peaceful? How different are such families from your own family? How do you ensure that there is peace in your family?

All interviews were recorded in Dagaare, and subsequently translated/transcribed into English by the first author. After transcribing the interview data, participants were given the opportunity to cross-check and validate the transcripts to enhance validity of the data. Being mindful of the potential dangers of the positionality of the first author as a member of the same cultural group (a native speaker of Dagaare), the process of allowing participants to validate the transcripts contributed to maintaining the integrity of the data after translation. After transcription, the first author manually coded the data through a close reading and re-reading of the transcripts for meanings and patterns. Various codes were categorised into key and meaningful themes. Our analytical framework draws on Michel Foucault's reading of discourse, subjectivity, agency and power. Informed by a discourse analytical approach, our

analysis engages the different shades of masculine struggles, ambiguities, contradictions and tensions embedded in participants' narratives, and what possibilities these constructions may offer to the everyday peacebuilding strategies among men.

As a caveat, our findings do not aim to be representative of the larger population in northwestern Ghana. Rather, our findings are intended to showcase and articulate how men's narratives speak to the complex nuances, struggles and ambiguities of being 'men' in this part of Ghana, and what possibilities such articulations may offer to everyday peacebuilding dynamics and practices.

Ambiguities and struggles of masculinities

In all 15 interviews, participants frequently spoke about the discourse of a capable male breadwinner as an important measure of successful masculinity. For most participants, failure to live up to the expectations of a self-sufficient breadwinner is believed to emasculate men from their supposedly dominant and powerful position vis-à-vis the position of women. Yuorkuu explains this in the following account:

> Most men are happy to be called the men of the family, but few are able to shoulder what headship comes with because of the economic hardships. The situation has made some men irresponsible and even violent these days. They think that violence is the solution to their frustrations. That is wrong. As a teacher, I don't earn much, but I always ensure that I provide for my family. That is part of our culture. In our culture, a man brings in someone's daughter as a wife, and you must take care of her.

The narratives of Kuubeinie explain further the struggles of masculinity and the contest for social power in heteronormative relationships:

> These days, things are really hard. The crop yields are barely enough, but men have an image to protect as the breadwinners. When a man fails to protect this image, society sees him as a failure. You know my friend, Andy? People don't respect him the same way they would respect me. Andy is only a man with two balls in-between his legs [laughed]. It is a shame, you know. He cannot take care of his many children. His wife is always unhappy because she wears the same old clothes. So, Andy and his wife always quarrel a lot. There is no peace in their family.

Another participant, Yelfaa, thought that a man's failure to provide the material needs of his wife can incite violence:

> I am not bragging, but my late father would be happy in his grave. I have been able to put smiles on my family. As the man of the house now [the breadwinner], this makes me feel fulfilled. I walk with my shoulders high. I am not like other men who cannot provide for their families. We all know that there are economic hardships, but men need to maintain their manhood. Otherwise, your wife will become frustrated with you. She may start behaving in

> ways that will make you feel disrespected. This is the main cause of 'small small' quarrels in our families.

While the real topic in the accounts presented above speak to the struggles associated with patriarchal masculinity, these interlocutors co-construct a discourse to suggest that men have an implied responsibility to live up to the demands of their culture. Such demands encourage men to live up to their cultural mandate and embody true meaning of manhood by being diligent breadwinners, despite the economic hardships. For example, most participants believed that men who are unable to measure up to the standards of a self-sufficient breadwinner have lost their masculine dignity and respect in the eyes of society. Such men were often described as 'men with two balls in-between their legs'. In the Dagaaba parlance, such descriptions are metaphoric expressions to describe men who lack the basic credentials required for fulfilment of dignified masculinity. Literally, 'a man with two balls in-between their legs' could be interpreted to mean 'an incapable and unaccomplished man', 'an irresponsible man', 'a man without purpose', 'an emasculated man' or 'a man with low social profile'. It is derogatory, shameful and highly infantilising for a man to be described as only possessing two balls in-between his legs. This description speaks to low social profiling of a man vis-à-vis more hegemonic and respectable masculine constructions. For example, Kuubeinie discursively positions Andy to have performed far below the ruling standards that legitimise the preferred version of hegemonic masculinity such as a self-assured breadwinner. This is so because men, and not women, are tasked by their culture to meet the material needs of their families.

The struggle to attain a position of respectable masculinity is further complicated by cultural arrangements and economic performativities inherent in heteronormative marriages. Most participants constructed an essentialising discourse that positions husbands and wives as needing to occupy and perform clearly defined roles in the family and society at large. For example, Yuorkuu's use of the word 'must' in the following excerpt: 'In our culture, a man brings in someone's daughter as a wife, and you must take care of her' highlights how masculinity and femininity are directly linked to clearly defined gendered roles and expectations within the context of heteronormative marriage. Throughout the interviews, there seems to be a shared discourse that a man's ability to provide for his family affords such men greater cultural legitimacy, power, respect and credibility over men who fail to demonstrate command of traditional indexes of manhood. Even as participants complained of economic hardships, there seems to be a clear commitment in upholding dominant gendered practices associated with successful masculinity. For example, a man's ability to demonstrate command of his breadwinning mandate ensures that such men walk with their shoulders high. Even as it remains highly difficult to attain, this practice gives men who are able to fulfil their breadwinning duties the bragging

rights over other men, illustrated by Yelfaa's comment: by contending that 'I am not like other men who cannot provide for their families', he appears to be engaging in categorical allocations, where he tries to distinguish between 'good' and 'respectable' men from 'bad' and 'irresponsible' other. Yelfaa's commentary is torn between the difficulty in overcoming ongoing economic hardships and maintaining dignified masculinity. The interlocutor seems to offer basic understanding of gender equality and the need for men to always ensure that women are not frustrated by men's failure to be man enough by local standards.

The context in which Yelfaa thought that his late father would be happy with his accomplishments as the new breadwinner and head of the household in extremely important. The interlocutor draws our attention to the central role of the non-human world in enforcing specific practices and behaviours relating to masculinity. Additionally, how Kuubeinie tells the story of the shame and derisions associated with his friend's (Andy's) failed masculinity highlights hierarchies of masculinities with differential access to cultural privileges. The narratives of both interlocutors offer us a useful opportunity to grasp how multiple masculinities may jostle for dominance, cultural legitimacy and power within the social cultural context. Both interlocutors' accounts are illustrated with concrete examples of specific situations in which a man could easily have his manhood damaged. Yelfaa's categorical claim that 'I am not like other men who cannot provide for their families' allows him to distinguish himself from failed masculinity. The politics around Yelfaa's disclaimer should be noted as he was interacting with a male interviewer. Both Yelfaa and Kuubeinie did not only offer narratives that speak to the hierarchies of masculinities, but they moved on to detailing the possibility of peace and violence to coexist in the cultural space of marriage. Understandably, there is likely to be peace, happiness and nonviolence if men are able to put smiles on their family's faces. Despite the growing economic strains, it is important to focus attention in understanding how different categories of men may negotiate social conditions and material realities in ways that make everyday peacebuilding possible and meaningful. Drawing on the narratives of participants in this study, everyday life in northwestern Ghana is full of struggles and enormous ambiguities as men contend with the everyday subjectivities that make life meaningful. It involves a constant negotiation with entrenched gendered norms and practices, especially contending with poor crop yields and inadequate economic opportunities.

While most participants appeared to disapprove of intimate partner violence, there seems to be a shared perception that economically marginalised men have s higher tendency to be accepting of violence. Traditionally, a man's ability to provide for his family gives him a sense of self-fulfillment, adequacy, dominance, recognition and respect within and beyond the family space. Consequently, when traditional indications of respectable masculinities are far from the reach of men

or when men's positions as the breadwinners of their families are perceived to be threatened by economic stresses ('when you're struggling to remain relevant and things are not working in your favour'), violence may become a legitimate alternative to manage masculine reputation. This is so because men, by their cultural positions, are not supposed to feel disrespected either by social or economic circumstances. While such insights are very important in enhancing understanding of the potential causes and everydayness of intimate partner violence, they potentially excuse, diminish and even justify the violence of men against women, as explained by Naab: 'Personally, I don't sanction violence but sometimes, that can be shit, especially when you're struggling to remain relevant and things are not working in your favour. It can be highly frustrating'. Such a perception highlights that violence may be warranted and even predicted if a man feels that his wife has not respected and recognised him as the cultural figure of the family due to his economically marginalised status.

Taken together, there is clear evidence of most participants wanting to deconstruct masculinity as a result of pervasive economic hardships. However, participants' commitment in upholding traditional routes to successful manhood means that their everyday activities do not necessarily challenge hegemonic versions of masculinity rooted in a capable breadwinner persona. The narratives of most participants seem to deconstruct the violence of men which emanates from their patriarchal positions as holders of the seat of power in the home. Accordingly, violence and other problematic behaviours of men are wrong interpretations of men's cultural position and roles. Yet, a critical analysis of the transcripts reveals that such articulations do little to trouble gendered binary and stereotypes. Most of the men in this study reinscribe stereotypical views on respectable masculinity and femininity. In contending that 'In our culture, a man brings in someone's daughter as a wife, and you must take care of her', women continue to be positioned as being dependent on their husbands for their material needs. In situations in which such natural arrangements are weakened by economic stresses, men are likely to become violent.

Our findings are consistent with the work of Silberschmidt (2001); Sherman (2005); Groes-Green (2009); Jolly (2010); Gamlin & Hawkes (2018) and Dery (2019). These studies highlight that the struggles of men to perform respectable masculine ideals cannot be discussed outside of complex historical and contemporary structures and conditions. Combining many years of political neglect, colonial exploitation of labour, and constrains of neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programmes, the narratives of participants are shaped and constrained by hegemonic masculinity ideologies of neoliberal Ghanaian society.

In the next section, we provide a critical reading of the idea of the respected man as an incomplete subject. Drawing on the discourse of incompleteness and

interdependence as advanced by Francis Nyamnjoh, we attempt to unpack how men's talk of themselves as husbands, household heads and breadwinners may contribute to fostering meaningful peacebuilding at the family level.

'A family is like a forest': the incompleteness of men and women in marriage relationships

In many interviews, participants expressed the view that men and women are incomplete beings hence masculinities and femininities complement and influence one another. Since men and women are believed to be incomplete subjects, participants suggested that male headship should encourage men to accommodate and welcome the views of their wives as partners. In order for peace to prevail, men as heads of the home must always recognise their incompleteness. This recognition does not mean invalidating their position as breadwinners and heads of the households. Even though the rhetoric of male headship was largely taken for granted, participants suggested that the notion of marriage underscores the reality that men and women are by nature incomplete and interdependent beings. Yiryel explains this in the following excerpt:

> Growing up as a boy, we all know that men were considered the heads of the family. Men were in charge of taking decisions concerning the family, but as the man of the house now, I see a family to be like a forest; some trees are tall, and others are short. Each tree has its own strength. I have always believed that no one is superior to the other in marriage. However, some men always think that they being the heads of the family mean that men are superior to their wives. That is wrong. That is not marriage. Marriage means to cover [complement] the inadequacies of the other.

Dapilah thought that the true meaning of male headship should inspire men to embrace democratic notions of gender:

> In the absence of my father, I see myself as the leader of my flock. As such, I always welcome the views of everyone in the family. I unite everyone and do not discriminate. I do not see my wife as being inferior to me, but most men in this community often get this wrong. In those days, it was considered inappropriate to involve women in the decision-making processes. Times have changed and we [men] must change this mentality. It is the main cause of violence in our families. Personally, I used to control everything all by myself, but it was not helpful. Everything was falling apart. There was no peace. There were 'small small' quarrels here and there. It was such a shame.

For another participant, Yornye, men should aspire for gender-conscious ideals which have the potential to foster peace in place of practices of violence. He explains further:

> We all know that men are the heads of the family, but there is more to be done than just being breadwinners. I always tell my friends that knowledge is like medicine; it is found in different bottles. When I sell the farm products, I always ask my wife what we should use the money for. Maybe, she tells me to save it towards the children's school fees, renew the health insurance, buy some livestock, or buy a plot of land in the city. For me, this has been important for building peace in my family.

In families where men were perceived to be authoritative heads, it was alleged that such families were likely to experience crisis. Yelfoglo illustrates this as follows:

> You know my neighbor, Bobtuo? He is the kind of man who wants to dictate to his wife, hey you [wife], do this and she does it with no complaints. Personally, I don't think this is what being the head of the family means. When Bobtuo's wife tried advising him on any issue, he would rebuke her saying; 'I'm the man of the house'. Men like Bobtuo need to accept the fact that men, by their nature are incomplete. It is because of this incompleteness that a man marries a woman to make him complete.

From the excerpts above, the idea of male headship is constructed in opposition to male domination. Rather, the idea of male headship is used to criticise the excesses of male social dominance, oppressive ideals and violent performances of traditional masculinity. The idea of male headship does not necessarily imply male domination and female suppression. However, men's misunderstanding of their positions as heads and breadwinners of their families may encourage some men to abuse their cultural positions as men of the household. By framing men as 'leaders of their flock', men should be inspired to mobilise and welcome the diverse strengths and ideas of different family members towards a common goal of promoting peaceful and nonviolent relationships. These concerns are illustrated through a repertoire of proverbs and idioms such as 'Knowledge is like medicine; it is found in different bottles' and 'A family is like a forest with different trees ... Each tree has its own strength'. Going by the logic of these cultural proverbs and metaphors, and how they speak to the incompleteness and interdependence of social subjects, men in particular are encouraged to maximise the strengths and ideas of family members, including women.

On the contrary, when men misunderstand that they being the heads and breadwinners of the household means being the sole decision-maker ('I'm the man of the house'), this erroneous representation of male headship may indirectly invite problematic practices, including violence. For most participants, such misappropriation of the tenets of male headship is the main cause of intimate partner violence in the home. Most participants believe that there must be mutual understanding and healthy sharing of ideas between couples. Most participants draw on egalitarian notions of gender to encourage men to rethink the practice of male headship and the breadwinning role as constructive masculine ideals with some potential for peacebuilding at the interpersonal level. The comment, 'He is the kind of man who wants to dictate to his wife, hey you [wife], do this and she does it with no complaints. Personally, I don't

think this is what being the head of the family means', seems to offer a basic argument that invites men to adopt a women-centric, pro-feminist approach in performance of their duty as heads and breadwinners of the family.

The meanings of male headship and breadwinnerhood as articulated by participants in this study seem to be in sharp contrast to what are perceived to be traditional practices of masculinity and femininity in the past. While the narratives of most participants are far from being gender equal in the true sense of the word, their narratives do not quite fit the traditional patriarchal conceptions of male headship and the breadwinner figure. References were made to specific phrases as illustrations of the changing landscape of masculine identity constructions: 'This was not the case years back'; 'In those days'; and 'Times have changed'. Even though each of these phrases is accompanied by narratives of ambivalence and ambiguity, our attention is drawn to how these phrases represent attempts to reconfigure and redefine patriarchal male headship, pointing to the possibility for alternative imaginations of masculinities and femininities to emerge. For example, Dapilah reconstructed the meaning of male headship, emphasising its unifying and peaceful imperative over authoritative and violent dispositions. He recounted how his own misinterpretations of male headship undermined peace and development in his family: 'Everything was falling apart. There was no peace'. It seems quite clear from this illustration that Dapilah has an interest in redefining his position from a previously dominant, violent and authoritarian breadwinner to one who embraces peaceful and more egalitarian notions of gender.

While most interlocutors offered important accounts on the need for men to foster democratic ideals, feminist scholars would be very much concerned about their framing of masculinities and femininities overall. Their perceptions continue to position men and women, husbands and wives, as inherently different from one another, with different roles. Being predominantly farming communities, and by their patriarchal position as heads of the family, Yornye thought that men should sell farm produce, while women are consulted on the uses of the money derived from such sales. If participants such as Yornye truly mean and practice what they shared during the interview on the need for men to embrace democratic and gender egalitarian values, why did he not imagine allowing his wife to sell their farm produce? We would suggest that Yornye is less concerned about the possibility of allowing his wife to take charge of the sales of their farm produce because by cultural consideration, he is the man of the house. By this logic, Yornye makes a direct connection between male headship and authority. Such perceptions operate to fix men and women in inherently unequal positions and power hierarchies within marriage.

In most of the interviews, the patriarchal belief that men are naturally born to be holders of the seat of power in the home seems to be taken for granted. For example, most participants deployed the discourse of male headship in ambiguous and self-contradictory ways. The particular ways in which participants such as Yiryel and

Yornye deployed male headship seem to compromise their ability to scrutinise how dominant framing of male headship reproduces patriarchal assumptions, stereotypes and hierarchies between men and women. Through the discourse of 'we-ness', as deployed by most participants, it is pretty obvious that male headship is a bona fide position for male bodied people. In other words, male headship is something that society bequeaths on male bodied people as 'men' and 'husbands'. Yiryel and Yornye co-construct a discourse to personalise male headship and its associated power ('We all know that men are the heads of the family'). Ultimately, the notion of headship thus becomes a cultural construct whose legitimacy and meaning are at once structured and further enhanced by cultural socialisation and performativity over generations.

From the ongoing discussion, it is clear that some men are likely to imagine some elements of gender equality and democratic relationships. In view of this, interventions that aim to promote less oppressive, democratic, peaceful and inclusive ideals should target such men as critical change agents. Such interventions should tap into men's willingness to trade-off traditionally masculine ideals for emerging but important values such as involving women in the decision-making processes. Even as the narratives of most participants point to the emergence of democratic and less hegemonic masculine ideals, we need to be extremely careful in taking these changes at face value. We need to think about these emergent masculinities as not entirely gender equal or progressive, but rather ambivalent ideals that are gaining steady reception among some categories of men (Walker 2005; Ratele 2014). The promises of democratic masculinities may not necessarily disrupt traditionally hegemonic ideals on manhood. Instead, these emerging changes continue to mask complex forms of power relations and social hierarchies linked primarily to the male factor in society.

Concluding thoughts

This article explores the social construction of peace, particularly as it relates to men's experiences and negotiations of their identities as men and husbands. The article contributes to an understanding that building durable peace requires being sensitive to the everyday making of masculinities. It draws attention to dominant understandings among men in this study that a self-assuring and capable male breadwinner typifies respectable and successful masculinity. In conditions where men may struggle to remain relevant breadwinners and husbands, it may be difficult for them to formulate and imagine ideologically reasonable practices, actions and behaviours that promote peace and nonviolence. Needless to say, that when men struggle to become respectable husbands and breadwinners as dominant routes to validate their manhood, violence may be imagined as the solution to men's frustrations. Understandably, men earn their respect as heads of the household when

society (including women, children and other men) recognises and treats them beyond merely possessing 'two balls in-between their legs'. Possessing 'two balls in-between one's legs' does not in itself validate a man's identity as a respectable man of the house. When the economic conditions and cultural structures necessary for men to become respectable and responsible social subjects are lacking or non-existent, peace may mean nothing to ordinary men, even in settings where there are no active conflicts. In order for gender training and interventions to address the violence of men and promote peaceful masculine subjectivities, such interventions should not only focus on challenging and disrupting oppressive notions of masculinity in contexts with ongoing conflicts, but more importantly, there is a need to pay critical attention to the everyday struggles of men in becoming responsible and respectable husbands in the eyes of a relatively peaceful community. The everyday economic and cultural struggles of men must be incorporated in the design and implementation of transformation programmes that target working with men in progressing towards profeminist masculine subjectivities, including peaceful and nonviolent masculinities. Any attempt to analyse and understand the violence of men and men's everyday peacebuilding strategies outside of these struggles is likely to miss a crucial aspect of what it may mean to be a 'respectable man' within a postcolonial global southern context. Being sensitive and critically sympathetic to the meaning of peace and how everyday peace could be imagined among men who are not in situations of direct conflict, as the analysis has demonstrated, is a novel contribution to the peacebuilding literature. The findings contribute to the literature in ways that are different from non-intersectional political-economy and International Relations perspectives.

An important contribution of our findings that needs to be emphasised is that different men are likely to embody and embrace different discourses of masculinity based on their social locatedness. Even though different categories of men may not face the same difficulties in becoming responsible and respectable men and breadwinners due to their class identities, it emerged that there are varieties of masculinities to which men could aspire to. One of such models is the discourse of the incomplete breadwinner. The discourse of the incomplete breadwinner exposes men to the possibility of imagining alternative configurations of manhood, including the ability of men to be peacemakers in their homes. The results of this study suggest that male headship can have different interpretations and meanings among men. The possibility of different categories of men to make sense of male headship differently means the existence of different forms of agency for men. To some men, such agency may mean authority, violence and dominance. For others, male headship as agency may mean being responsible, egalitarian, nonviolent, peaceful and receptive to the views of other family members. To this strand of men, male headship may not necessarily mean that men are superior to women. Even though this notion has

emerged to be a central discourse in how men talk about their identity constructions, it remains taken-for-granted that only men are naturally born to be heads of the home.

The findings in this study suggest that achieving lasting peace should not only concern situations of violent conflict or societies experiencing direct violence as a result of war, but that achieving credible peace is central to achieving gender justice, development and social equity. Approaching peace as centrally connected to social justice allows peacebuilding interventions and programmes to attend to, for example, the problems of poverty and social inequalities that men circumvent daily. Such an approach allows us to problematise how unequal access to economic opportunities and resources may shape everyday peacebuilding among men. This way, building sustainable peace should be a matter of being critically sympathetic to the range of struggles that men negotiate daily in their position as men and husbands. Peacebuilding interventions are likely to be elusive or unsustainable in a global southern context, such as northwestern Ghana, if the everyday struggles and subjectivities of men are not foregrounded as part and parcel of development interventions. In efforts that seek to work with men, particularly economically marginalised men, in progressing towards profeminist subjectivities, including fostering peaceful masculinities, the everyday struggles of men in becoming better and respectable husbands should be taken seriously as a gendered socioeconomic justice issue. This way, interventions will not only focus on men as decoupled from their socioeconomic realities and everyday struggles. Instead, men should be approached as gendered subjects with different investments to local discourses of respectable masculinity. Additionally, this approach equips us to develop a perspective about the everyday practices of men as linked to ruling ideologies of masculinity which may (dis)encourage men from being peacebuilders. Men's everyday struggles to put smiles on their wives and children, and the social cost associated with failure to live up to such cultural mandate of breadwinnerhood, troubles mainstream liberal feminist understanding of peace, especially from a postcolonial global southern context. Achieving everyday peace may mean a man's ability to buy new clothes for his wife. This not only helps to validate his position as the man of the house, this practice plays a central role in minimising feelings of frustrations and violence among husbands and wives.

Based on the findings from this study, feminist peace researchers from a global southern context, such as Ghana, should take seriously how widespread economic hardships among men raise critical concerns about the meaning of peace for the ordinary citizen who is not exposed to direct conflict. Based on the findings, we argue that approaching men through an intersectionally driven analysis is necessary in developing a better sense of how the struggles of masculinity may offer possibilities for everyday peacebuilding practices, although such possibilities may remain ambivalent. From our analysis, the meanings of peace as imagined by participants in this study

are not necessarily tied to violent conflicts as it is often the case within mainstream feminist International Relations and liberal feminist scholarship. Peace is not a static construct tied to conflict situations, but a much more fluid, complex, context-dependent and dynamic construct, which is constantly in the making based largely on economic struggles.

References

Basu, S. & Shepherd, L.J. (2018), 'Prevention in Pieces: Representing Conflict in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda', *Global Affairs*, 3(4–5): 441–53.

Boulding, E. (2000), *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse NY, Syracuse University Press).

Dery, I. (2019), '"To be a man is not easy": Everyday economic marginality and configurations of masculinity among rural Ghanaian youth', *Masculinidades y cambio social*, 8(2): 171–194.

Dery, I. (2020), 'A situated, African understanding of African feminism for men: a Ghanaian narrative', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 27(12): 1745–1765.

Enloe, C. (2005), 'What if Patriarchy is "The Big Picture"? An Afterword', in D. Mazurana, A. Raven-Roberts & J. Parpart (eds), *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping* (New York, Rowman & Littlefield), 280–3.

Eriksson Baaz, M. & Stern, M. (2013), *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (London, Zed Books).

Gamlin, J. & Hawkes, S. (2018), 'Masculinities on the Continuum of Structural Violence: The Case of Mexico's Homicide Epidemic, Social Politics', *International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 25(1): 50–71.

Groes-Green, C. (2009), 'Hegemonic and Subordinated Masculinities: Class, Violence and Sexual Performance among Young Mozambican Men', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 18(4): 286–304.

Howell, D. & Willis, R. (eds) (1990), *Societies at Peace* (New York, Routledge).

Hudson, H. (2009), 'Peacebuilding Through a Gender Lens and the Challenges of Implementation in Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire', *Security Studies*, 18(2): 287–318.

Hudson, H. (2017), 'The Power of Mixed Messages: Women, Peace, and Security Language in National Action Plans from Africa', *Africa Spectrum*, 52(3): 3–29.

Hudson, H. (2019), *A (Wo)man for All Seasons: Amos Tutuola and the Gendering of Peace in Africa* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala Universitet).

Jolly, R. (2010), *Cultured Violence: Narrative, Social Suffering and Engendering Human Rights* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press).

Mac Ginty, R. (2014), 'Everyday Peace: Bottom-Up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies', *Security Dialogue*, 45(6): 548–64.

Ratele, K. (2013), 'Masculinity without Tradition', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 40: 133–56.

Ratele, K. (2014), 'Gender Equality in the Abstract and Practice', *Men and Masculinities*, 17(5): 510–14.

Shepherd, L.J. (2016), 'Making War Safe for Women? National Action Plans and the Militarisation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda', *International Political Science Review* 37(3): 324–35.

Sherman, J. (2005), *Men Without Sawmills: Masculinity, Rural Poverty, and Family Stability* (Corvallis, Oregon State University, Rural Poverty Research Center (RUPRI)).

Silberschmidt, M. (2001), 'Disempowerment of Men in Rural and Urban East Africa: Implications for Male Identity and Sexual Behavior', *World Development*, 29(4): 657–71.

Sjoberg, L. (2014), *Gender, War and Conflict* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Theidon, K. (2009), 'Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 31(1): 1–34.

Walker, L. (2005), 'Men Behaving Differently: South African Men Since 1994', *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 7(3): 225–38.

To cite the article: Dery, I., Baataar, C. & Khan, A.R. (2022), 'Everyday peacebuilding among Ghanaian men: ambiguities, resistances and possibilities', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 35–53.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.035

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 55–77
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.055
Posted 15 March 2022

A quest for sustainable peace in South Sudan: the role of everyday religious practices, ceremonies and rituals in robust peacebuilding

Winnie Bedigen

Abstract: Since 1955, South Sudan has had intermittent civil wars, and sustainable peace has been difficult to attain. There have been numerous attempts that include major international and national political and economic initiatives. Among the social initiatives, The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), perceived to represent all religious practices and people, was considered an essential tool in uniting all South Sudanese, ending conflicts and achieving sustainable peace both within the communities and nationally. However, the inclusion of the NSCC, which represents mainly Christianity and includes Muslim religious leaders, has not delivered sustainable peace. This article utilises ethnographic data to present a socioreligious perspective. It seeks to argue that other South Sudanese indigenous or cultural religious everyday peace practices of ceremonies and rituals can present a robust peacebuilding initiative in the region. It concludes that the inter-relationships of socioreligious practices, an aspect the NSCC peacebuilding processes ignored, are essential in delivering sustainable peace.

Keywords: Conflict, peacebuilding, sustainable peace, everyday peace, religion, ceremonies and rituals, South Sudan.

Note on the author: Dr Winnie Bedigen joined the University of Leeds in September 2017 as a Teaching Fellow and taught Global Development modules at both undergraduate and masters levels. Her research interests are in the areas of international development, peace, justice, gender, education, youth in South Sudan and the Horn of Africa. Her arguments focus on how these issues are understood in the context of African cultures.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2597-6865
w.bedigen@leeds.ac.uk

© The author(s) 2022. This is an open access article licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License

Introduction

A quest for sustainable peace in South Sudan calls for a robust peacebuilding initiative that includes existing indigenous or cultural religious everyday peace practices, ceremonies and rituals of South Sudanese. Since 1955, numerous peacebuilding attempts have included major international and national political and economic initiatives (Iyob and Khadiagala 2006) and are found to exclude indigenous religious practices (Abu-Nimer 2001; Avruch 1998; Bedigen 2017; Jabs 2014; Zartman 2007). Among these initiatives, for example, The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) was included as an essential part of national peace negotiations (Agwanda and Harris 2009; Zartman 2007). However, the inclusion of the NSCC, which majorly represents one aspect of South Sudanese religious practices—Christianity—has not delivered sustainable peace. While the NSCC includes some local and religious leaders, it excludes their everyday peace practices and focuses mainly on conventional peacebuilding norms and mechanisms such as negotiation and mediation. Therefore, this article supports the view that context matters, particularly where conventional methods have been challenged and African Traditional Religion (ATR), ceremonies and rituals remain instrumental in inter-ethnic peacebuilding (Munive 2013). It highlights that, where the national or international actors have adopted ceremonies and rituals, this has been minimally weaved into the formal peace process, thus offering a narrow view of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme (DDR) (Bedigen 2019). Yet, indigenous DDR includes post-conflict inter-ethnic cleansing rituals of healing in peacebuilding. With this in mind, this paper seeks to argue that the inclusion of other South Sudanese religious practices such as ceremonies and rituals within the NSCC or other peace agencies could present a robust peacebuilding initiative. The article concludes that inter-relationships of socioreligious everyday practices (i.e. religions, ceremonies and rituals) are essential and should be implemented along with other political and economic initiatives for robust peacebuilding in the region.

This study is important for many reasons. 1) South Sudan peace attempts have mainly included political and economic initiatives by regional and international governments and agencies but excluded socioreligious practices. 2) Where religion has been utilised, it is mainly the NSCC, perceived to represent others (so, Muslim, ATR, ceremonies and rituals remain largely excluded). 3) Conflicts damage social relations, and as Coe *et al.* (2013) indicate, religion can repair relationships. 4) Majority of South Sudanese live in rural areas, and socioreligious practices govern their everyday lives. Lederach's work (1997: 87) supports this by indicating that 'people and their cultural traditions for building peace are ... primary resources'. Moreover, most of these rituals are utilised in peer-to-peer, family, clan intra- and inter-ethnic peacebuilding—making them 'everyday' practices (Bedigen 2017; 2021; Mac Ginty 2014). Indicated by Mac Ginty (2014: 549), everyday peace is 'the routinized practices used by individuals

and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence'. Everyday peace involves coping mechanisms such as preventative and cleansing ceremonies and rituals. From the 1990s, their use has progressed beyond ethnic conflicts to some aspects of national DDR ceremonies (Arnold and Alden 2007; Bedigen 2019). Adding to this, Jabs (2014) indicates a few have been applied to the modern conflict and civil war situations at local levels and in ex-combatants re-integration. Examples include *Gomo Tong* ('Bending the spear'), *Cieng* ('To put together'), *Mabior* ('A young white bull'), *Gurtong* ('To blunt the spear'), *Mato Oput* ('Drinking bitter herbs') and *Nyono Tong Gweno* ('Stepping on eggs'). Yet, these customs remain alienated in the national politically-led peacebuilding processes (Bedigen 2017).

Hunt (2017: 110) indicates that in the UN, robust peacekeeping refers to 'political and operational strategies'. He argues that it involves the use of force in self-defence and defence of the local vulnerable. There was a call for UN peacekeeping strategies to be robust was after failed interventions in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tardy 2011). In sub-Saharan Africa, robust peacekeeping was implemented in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan; however, such interventions lacked a holistic approach to peacebuilding inclusive of locals and their customs—which is not sustainable. This article interprets robust peacebuilding to include cultural religious practices of ceremonies and rituals (the processes of the latter two bring people together), for example, in local mediation, community projects such as road/school construction. Moreover, the UN's interpretation of robust peacekeeping or peacebuilding revolves around the use of force, coercion and formal negotiations. As such, they exclude a 'wider set of relationships, activities and initiatives' crucial in the peaceful transformation and sustenance of political, social, religious and economic situations (Philpott and Powers 2010: 31).

In order to address the quest for sustainable peace in South Sudan, this article will briefly provide the methodology, the theoretical conceptualisation of religious practices, ceremonies and rituals, and analyses of indigenous ceremonies and rituals that have been utilised in inter-ethnic peacebuilding and in some instances of the civil wars (i.e. the NSCC, Christian and the Muslim Judiyya system). It suggests that such beliefs and everyday practices should have been fully included under the NSCC for robust peacebuilding.

Methodology

The study is based on field notes conducted by the author for her PhD research in conflict resolution between 2013 and 2016 among South Sudanese refugees in West Yorkshire, United Kingdom, and with others in the diaspora. Interviewees included

members of two religious groups—Muslims and Christians—and other ethnic groups, namely the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Acholi and Anuak. Field notes from 15 interviewees affiliated with these religious groups and 15 culturally knowledgeable individuals who do not necessarily practise these religions are included. The notes consist of interviewees' responses on their involvement in religious peacebuilding events and cultural peace ceremonies/rituals. Interviewees' views were paraphrased or quoted in discussions. Only those ceremonies and rituals that appear to have links to Christian religious beliefs and have been utilised in inter-ethnic conflicts are summarised and included. The reason being, Christianity, through the NSCC, has been the religion of choice in the South Sudan national peacebuilding processes. Therefore, by re-examining interviewees' views on their religious and cultural practices in peacebuilding, the author incorporated socioreligious literature to provide a deeper, contextual understanding of the topic.

Theoretical conceptualisation

There is a fair amount of literature on religious practices, ceremonies and rituals in sub-Saharan peacebuilding. However, the majority analyse religion as a separate element to everyday peace ceremonies and rituals, and these are largely excluded in national peacebuilding. Yet, authors such as Mac Ginty (2014) indicate that everyday peace practices of local communities can significantly contribute to bottom-up peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies. Abu-Nimer (2001: 686), whose work encourages interreligious peacebuilding and training, further demonstrates that religion contributes 'social, moral and spiritual resources to peacebuilding'. He argues that 'religion influences the cultural behaviours and perceptions of an individual or group in varying degrees' (Abu-Nimer 2001: 687). He further highlights that religious values, norms and behaviours are an integral part of human interactions, which help to construct members' value systems and worldviews. Other authors indicate that conflicts can damage social relations; however, religious and cultural practices, including ancestral spirits, kinship, and rituals of reconciliation, are essential in repairing such broken relationships (Coe *et al.* 2013; wa Thiong'o 1986). Also, work by Schirch (2015) shows that rituals and traditional religion are essential in peacebuilding because its symbolism, morals and reliance on cleansing help defuse tensions between disputants. Bedigen (2020) adds to these by indicating that religious cleansing rituals encourage conscience examination and forgiveness to enable sustainable peace.

Although religious practices have been found significant in national peacebuilding, they should be viewed in conjunction with community members' everyday cultural practices. Culture consists of members' learnt or created experiences organised by their owners and given interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations

to contemporaries (Avruch 1998: 17). In the context of this study, such cultures include ceremonies and rituals: *Gomo Tong*, *Cieng*, *Mabior*, *Gurtong*, *Mato Oput* (Bedigen 2017; Jabs 2014; Zartman 2000). In exploring their potential, both the literature and field notes reveal that they offer principles and values that can be applied in intra- or inter-ethnic conflicts or civil wars. At community level, they can be utilised in various disputes, such as cattle rustling, domestic, murders or massacres, as well as in post-war recovery, including disarmament (Bedigen 2020; Bradbury *et al.* 2006; Jeong 2005). The ceremonies may mark an end to peacekeeping and peacemaking, but further interactions and rituals contribute to peacebuilding. Ceremonies and rituals are particularly intended to appease the spirits, who, if angered, can afflict the community with invasions by others, deaths, diseases and droughts (Mbiti 1970; wa Thiong'o 1986). Such misfortunes can cause conflicts or civil wars in modern contexts—thus the need to provide an understanding of the significance of ceremonies and rituals in appeasing the spirits and averting calamities (Bedigen 2017).

Conceptualising religious practices, ceremonies and rituals in peacebuilding is significant because, in South Sudan, they have been utilised together in local or inter-ethnic peacebuilding but excluded from the NSCC's national peacebuilding processes. Also, religion, ceremonies and rituals are significant in robust peacebuilding because such practices are concerned with social life. In particular, the relationship of an individual/community to God/supernatural being believed to bring peace or disturbances to members (Evans-Pritchard 1953: 3). The belief in God through the South Sudanese indigenous religion, sometimes referred to as Animism or ATR, promotes morality and relationships between humans, God, spirits and the environment (Bedigen 2021). Such spiritual beliefs originating from members' religious experiences are inseparable from customary practices of ceremonies, rituals and peace (Bedigen 2017). In ATR, as mentioned earlier, evil spirits are believed to cause calamities such as drought, famine, plagues and intra-ethnic conflicts, all of which, including deep-rooted political and social divisions, have in one way or another contributed to South Sudan's intermittent civil wars. In local beliefs, calamities are shreds of evidence that the community lacks peace. Thus, the diviner is consulted to mediate and lead community members in the appeasement of spirits through cleansing ceremonies/rituals, leading to the eventual restoration of the community (Kamwaria & Katola 2012).

In inter-ethnic, and occasionally during the ethnic aspects, of civil wars, South Sudanese have approached peacebuilding through the Christian and Muslim religions. Examples include the Darfur Muslims who engaged in the *Judiyaa* (Muslim local justice system) and peace mediation (Bedigen 2020). In the Christian communities, such as East Equatoria, Christians' involvement in the Wunlit, Liliir and Abyei indigenous peacebuilding processes included biblical prayers and ATR practices of *Mabior* ritual cleansing. These peace deals, particularly Wunlit, lasted for a decade (Bedigen 2017; Coe *et al.* 2013). While these religious practices seem acceptable at inter-ethnic levels,

the NSCC has not incorporated them during national peace processes. Also, cleansing rituals have been significant in reintegrating ex-combatants, restoring public order and security in the Lord's Resistance Army inflicted area of Acholi, Northern Uganda, in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Bedigen 2017; Essien 2020). However, the NSCC, the body representing religious beliefs and practices, has continued to exclude these elements. Such pieces of evidence point to the need for the NSCC to include all religious practices, ceremonies and rituals of the locals. This article argues that doing so demonstrates the robustness of indigenous peacebuilding and its potential in delivering sustainable peace in the region. Next, it analyses indigenous ceremonies and rituals.

Indigenous ceremonies and rituals

The South Sudanese indigenous peacebuilding consists of everyday ceremonies and rituals significant in peacebuilding. However, a single ceremony or ritual may not address all aspects of peacebuilding; thus, disputing parties must engage in other associated rituals to accomplish the necessary peace processes. Indigenous peace processes start from exploring roots to conflicts, that is, story or truth-telling, confession, cleansing and re-integration ceremonies/rituals (Bedigen 2017; Lacey 2013). More generally, the purpose of ceremonies and rituals is to address four principles of indigenous peacebuilding (i.e. consensus, harmony, justice and restoration) (Focus Group Field Notes, December 2013). Ceremonies and rituals are diverse, unique to conflict types and are said to offer resolutions to local disputes (Gebre & Ohta 2017; Jok 2011). While some, such as *Mato Oput*, are robust and can be utilised in all conflicts, ranging from family to civil wars and overall management of the community's political, social and economic needs, the majority are specific or limited. For instance, *Ekisil* is for inter-ethnic cattle rustling, *Nyono Tong Gweno* is for cleansing, and *Cieng* is mainly for a reunion. It is recognised that their specificity to the context can render them efficient or inefficient in addressing modern-day conflicts and civil wars. Perhaps this is the reason why the NSCC did not engage them in national peace processes. However, the interconnectedness of the principles and values they hold (i.e. consensus, harmony, justice and restoration) can significantly contribute to the national peace processes by binging all individuals involved together for a common goal.

To gain more understanding of indigenous peace ceremonies/rituals and why this article considers them crucial and that they should have been embraced by NSCC at national levels of peacebuilding, the article highlights Kamwaria & Katola's (2012: 53) work, which indicates that such ceremonies:

> restore the broken relationship by appeasing the spirits of the deceased, and settle them in proper status in the ancestral world. This is a crucial means of preventing any anger and

> aggression by the spirits of the deceased. The rituals restore the health of the individual and the community by expunging the evils caused by the immoral acts of civil war ... The spirits of the dead are believed to interfere or intervene in the life of the living. If well propitiated, they protect and guide people, ensure harmony in the community, promote fertility of land and people, and give good agricultural yield.

As demonstrated above, cultures that embrace everyday ceremonies and rituals contribute to conflict prevention, building and making peace. Ceremonies and rituals help create harmony between people and spirits, subsequently minimising conflicts. In the light of Douglas' (1999; 2004) view of culture, the Nilotic utilisation of ceremonies and rituals is intended toward peace and social good. Bedigen (2017) indicate that international communities, including the US Agency for International Development, sponsored many indigenous ceremonies in the recent civil wars due to their significance. This act led to the re-integration of more than 12,000 ex-combatants from the Lord's Resistance Army and returnees into Acholi communities in Northern Uganda, unlike in South Sudan, where the NSCC mainly utilised prayers. On the other hand, scepticism surrounds the application of indigenous methods in stopping violence or conflict, for they are perceived to be weak (Gatkuoth 2010). For example, the Wunlit Dinka-Nuer peace conference of 1999 did not stop the violence until four years later (Bedigen 2017; Bradbury *et al.* 2006: 46). Also, it can be said that such negative perceptions contribute toward their exclusion and the prioritisation of international bodies such as the African Union and United Nations Missions to Sudan in South Sudan.

Yet, this work seeks to demonstrate that everyday religions, ceremonies and rituals should be regarded as core to South Sudanese peacebuilding, along with religious practices (i.e. ATR, Christianity and Islam). In this regard, because NSCC has been a tool in national peacebuilding, it is suggested that those ceremonies and rituals containing some aspects of Christian beliefs are discussed. They include *Gomo Tong*, *Cieng*, *Mabior*, *Gurtong* and *Mato Oput*. The discussions below will demonstrate that some of these ceremonies/rituals have been successfully applied in inter-ethnic and civil war situations by similar ethnic communities in Uganda. Moreover, these selected rituals have strong links to the Old Testament biblical scriptures from which the NSCC draws its peacebuilding values. Therefore this linkage justifies the need for the socioreligious approach and their inclusion by the NSCC in national peace processes (Bedigen 2017).

Gomo Tong ('Bending the spear')

> *Gomo Tong* prevents further wars and demonstrates weapons, destruction and forgiveness. Historically when spears were weapons, the Dinka and Nuer used them to resolve cattle raiding. However, in my village now a rifle can be exchanged for a goat cost the same price.

> Anybody can afford it for family protection. For some years now, the guns are dismantled to make garden tools. Maybe we can say original *Gomo Tong* has been adopted.

Interviewees indicate that *Gomo Tong*, which translates as 'bending of spears', is a weapons destruction and future conflict prevention ceremony (Focus Group Field Notes, December 2013). It is a symbolic ceremony historically utilised by the Acholi communities in intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts to mark the end of a bloody conflict. Weapons of war (e.g. spears, machetes, rods and so on), are literarily broken and burnt ceremoniously. The *Gomo Tong* practice aims at peacekeeping, peacemaking and the prevention of future conflicts. The ceremony requires that ancestral spirits are evoked, and vows are made by both parties never to go to war again. The *Gomo Tong* ritual is quite similar to the Old Testament scripture, Psalms 46: 9, 'He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire'. Nilotic Lwo people believe that if either party lifts a spear, once again, against the other, without justified cause, the tip of the spear will turn against the perpetrator, implying that the perpetrator will lose the battle or be killed (Bedigen 2017). Significant to note, in Nilotic upbringing of children, kindness and non-violence do not start with the *Gomo Tong* ritual; these values are instilled in children through stories that teach conflict avoidance (wa Thiong'o 1986). While the NSCC has registered some success in forging unity between militia and political groups, no evidence of their involvement in weapons destruction exists (Agwanda & Harris 2009; Bedigen 2019). Therefore, the NSCC could benefit from embracing the *Gomo Tong* ritual.

Before the ritual, elders (Christian and traditional chiefs) meet to discuss and establish conflict roots and who the perpetrators are (Lacey 2013). A verbal agreement is made to end the conflict in order to keep the peace. After which, traditional chiefs order their warriors to stop killing. Preventative measures for possible future conflicts are discussed. At the end of these discussions, a spear is broken, or its tip is bent ceremoniously. Following that, a bull is slaughtered, cooked and eaten/shared to mark the end of the ceremony. After the fall of President Idi Amin of Uganda in 1979, this ritual was utilised in 1984 to resolve Acholi-Madi intermittent conflicts (Bedigen 2017; Harlacher 2009). Had this ritual been included in the Wunlit (Dinka-Nuer) peace conference, it could have ended the ethnic triggers to the South Sudan second civil war in 1999.

As demonstrated above, breaking, bending or destroying a spear or weapon can be an effective traditional form of disarmament because it engages cultural norms. It is an indigenous form of DDR. Authors Takeuchi (2011) and Ingelaere (2008: 43) indicate that local DDR has a more restorative component, unlike modern disarmament attempts that ignore such norms and have sometimes triggered weapons replacement among South Sudanese warrior groups. For instance, an interviewee

tells a story that during the second South Sudan civil war, the government of South Sudan (comprising of mainly the Dinka ethnic group) was determined to disarm their rival ethnic group, Nuer, whom they believed to be the aggressors. When the Nuer heard they would be disarmed using military force, they suggested the inclusion of everyday cultural peace processes such as *Gomo Tong*. This request was declined. However, to ease tensions, the NSCC intervened to encourage an inter-ethnic peace dialogue. The NSCC's intervention was not aligned with everyday peace practices, causing the Nuer to hide all their weapons. 'A few months later, they used these weapons against their enemies, the Dinka' (Field notes from Opor interview, April 2013; Willems & Rouw 2011).

Whereas *Gomo Tong* principles (i.e. peacekeeping, peacemaking and conflict prevention) are more suitable in the South Sudan civil war and post-civil war disarmament process, on this occasion, this government initiative did not bear fruit. This failure could be attributed to the argument that it was not a community initiative and thus was not authentic to the ex-combatants or communities involved. Further, Harlacher (2009) supports this argument by indicating that there had been poor mishandling of the disarmament processes in the Jonglei conflicts, as communities and rituals were excluded. Jonglei region is occupied by the Murle, Dinka, Anyuak and Nuer ethnic communities, whose youth historically practise cattle rustling and are inclined to revenge by raids (Bedigen 2019; Gebre & Ohta 2017). It is suggested that holistic communities' involvement throughout *Gomo Tong* ritual and witnessing of symbolic bending of the tip of weapons or breakage of weapons is significant for the success of this ritual and eventual disarmament. Moreover, where authority and respect are given to indigenous structures, this ritual can deter members from restocking weapons and restarting conflicts.

Uniquely, this ceremony does not mark the end of the interaction because friendships that started during the ceremony continue. According to interviewees, 'interactions that lead to the rebuilding of relationships between disputants continue' through visits to each other's homes (Focus Group Field Notes, December 2013). Further, intermarriages between disputing communities are encouraged, followed by naming-of-children ceremonies and other initiation ceremonies. Significantly, apart from the re-establishment of social relationships, this ceremony enables the resumption of economic activities between warring communities. Therefore, *Gomo Tong* is a significant symbolic ceremony, which can be applied to weapons of war in modern conflicts to initiate sustainable peacebuilding outcomes. For example, it can be applied to cattle raids and banditry, the common types of conflict among Nilotic Lwo ethnic communities and their neighbours. Notably, this causes intermittent conflicts in the Jonglei region. These disputes are known to trigger intense inter-ethnic conflicts and civil wars (Bedigen 2019). Given the easy access to weapons and

cultural value attached to the protection of animals, as well as the sustenance of the environment, *Gomo Tong* could be the most viable disarmament method within NSCC peace processes (Ingelaere 2008; Takeuchi 2011).

Cieng ('to put together')

Cieng, a Dinka ceremony, is utilised in the re-integrating, purifying and cleansing of ex-combatants. Based on field notes, *Cien*g, as a word, translates as 'to put together', 'putting in order', 'reaching out', 'to look after', 'to live together', or 'togetherness' and it is an everyday cultural means of ensuring peaceful co-existence (Bedigen 2017). It captures the ideology of transformation, corporate responsibility and social cohesion (Mbiti 1970; Nyerere 1968). Its purpose is to restore the estranged relationship between people, God, spirits and nature destroyed by war. *Cieng* combines some other rituals, such as *Gomo Tong* and *Mabior*. When the ex-combatants return, they are believed to be inhabited by *Nueer*, an evil spirit that possesses a person who has killed or caused unspeakable atrocities in battle. Such persons must be cleansed of *Nueer* (evil spirit) to prevent them from causing harm while living in the community. The same ritual is believed to heal illnesses associated with evil, or abominable acts, committed while in battle. These acts include touching dead bodies, coming into contact with blood, and witnessing killing, among others. Those returning from war are believed to be haunted and unable to live a normal life unless they go through the ritual. Thus, *the Cieng* ritual, if applied within the NSCC peace processes, could benefit the spiritual and psychological rehabilitation of people in this conflict-prone region.

For example, during the 2013–15 civil war, this ceremony helped initiate and mobilise ex-combatants disarmed and demobilised by UN and African Union (AU) peacekeepers (Bedigen 2017). During the ceremony, *Mabior* cleansing took place, and some weapons of war were symbolically broken to mark the end of the war and deter the compiling of weapons. Some weapons were turned into farming tools, such as machetes, hoes and ploughs. *Cieng* bears similarities with the Old Testament laws where contamination by dead bodies and blood was forbidden, and forgiveness and unity are encouraged, yet the NSCC has not considered these benefits. While its benefits are commendable, *Cieng* has not effectively dealt with peacebuilding. *Cieng* is considered a Dinka ritual; thus, other ethnic communities' combatants did not show regard for its post-ceremony reuniting activities. This non-homogeneity across South Sudanese ethnic groups might explain its exclusion by the NSCC.

Mabior ('A young white bull' or 'A white heifer') ceremony

Both Dinka and Nuer cultures utilise *Mabior* sacrificial ritual as an everyday peace practice to reach out to each other, or communities with whom they are in conflict. Before this ritual, negotiations and mediation, which include airing grievances, should occur, similar to other ceremonies/rituals discussed earlier (Zartman 2007). Within this ceremony are rituals, such as feet washing and handwashing in a calabash. Washings are biblical practices, suggesting the NSCC could have incorporated *Mabior* in its national peace processes (Bedigen 2019). The ceremony includes carrying chiefs on the head and stepping over a sacrificed bull. These rituals symbolise disconnection from the undesirable past. In context, the rituals mirror an essential aspect of Christian teaching regarding forgetting the past and choosing to move on. Both communities share the sacrificial meat, and vows are made to end conflicts (local peace activist interviewed January 2014). Also, the *Mabior* ritual can be utilised in celebrations for good things that happen. For instance, the Nuer utilised it to celebrate the return of their old-time prophet Ngundeng's rod (Bedigen 2017). Kamwaria & Katola (2012: 53) describe *the Mabior* ritual in peacebuilding:

> If one engages in war as a fighter, one learns how to kill others and thus becomes afflicted by the evil. When such a person comes back to the village, he can hardly fit into the normal life. The angry spirits will haunt him throughout his life. He has to be treated to become his own self again.

As a cleansing ritual, *Mabior* is utilised as an urgent and necessary treatment for ex-combatants. Remarkably, some authors indicate it helps with the ex-combatants' psychological healing and social inclusion (Essien 2020; Stovel and Valiñas 2010). As many of them return to the community, they must fit in and resume their routine and socially accepted way of life. Returnees cannot choose to do this their way. They must go through these kinds of everyday community rituals, and they cannot rejoin the community without making their return known. It is argued that *Mabior* is one of the practical and culturally recognised forms of post-conflict ex-combatants and community rehabilitation ceremonies—thus is robust. It helps resolve complex inter-ethnic and civil war situations (Brewer 2010). Moreover, government rehabilitation programmes can be discriminative and take longer to implement due to delays in sourcing resources. Thus, if sustainable peace has to be realised nationally, faster and socio-cultural practices such as *Mabior* must be embraced by peace agencies.

After the *Mabior* cleansing ritual has taken place, elders assess losses and compensation or the return of stolen or raided property (animals) to victims. It is recognised that these conflicts have manifested extreme atrocities and untold suffering to the majority communities—thus, culturally, some victims cannot be compensated, but the chiefs recognise their plight. In so doing, the elders (traditional leaders) agree

on what is best for their compensation. This decision has to be in line with customary laws and what is acceptable to the community. For example, abductee wives can be married off to their abductor husbands when customary marriage requirements, which include dowry payments, are met. The *Mabior* sacrificial ritual was conducted in the Wunlit Dinka-Nuer reconciliation conference in 1999. After the Wunlit conference concluded, abductees' wives were married off, according to custom (Bedigen 2020). While these are everyday cultural practices that help carve peace within these communities, they can be classed as human rights abuses and therefore at odds with conventional terms and peacebuilding processes. Moreover, their non-holistic application by NSCC has furthered their ineffectiveness in delivering sustainable peace in the region.

Gurtong ('To blunt the spear')

Field notes from 'Opor', an Anuak interviewee, describe *Gurtong* as 'a phrase composed of two words: a verb gur meaning "to grind" or "to blunt" and a noun tong means "spear". "*Gurtong*" therefore means "to blunt the spear" by grinding the sharp edges of the spear against something hard (usually a stone) until it is blunt' (Field notes from Opor interview, April 2013). The *Gur Tong* ritual is followed by an acknowledgement of the guilt by the guilty party. Once this acknowledgement is given, the cleansing aspect is performed. The guilty party is expected to compensate or pay a blood price, for instance, in murder cases. Machar (2015) indicates that this ritual aims to bring forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and unity. It is suggested that the act of blunting the spear reduces its edges, a symbolic lessening of the victim's pain, anger, guilt and shame (Bedigen 2017; Essien 2020). Additionally, due to the Anuak deep belief in the spirits (Mbiti 1970), spear blunting reduces the fierceness of the wrath of the gods on the guilty party.

Similar to *Gomo Tong*, Opor implies the origin of this ceremony is in the Old Testament book of Psalms. The Psalmist says, 'He breaks the bow into pieces and snaps the spear in two' (Psalms Chapter 46 verse 9). '*Gurtong* is still a powerful conflict resolution tool among the Sudanese Anywa' who have had little interference from external actors due to their remote settlements in hostile environments. The chiefs or elders take the lead in investigating the incident, for example, killing, followed by conflict negotiation and mediation. *Gurtong* is traditionally utilised in resolving murder cases during reconciliation ceremonies. He further explains that *Gurtong* practice has been perfected over the years to suit both intra- and inter-ethnic peacebuilding. Essien (2020) indicates the significance of culture in post-conflict healing. Thus although it is an Anuak everyday peace ritual, this work suggests the symbolic grinding could benefit NSCC's efforts to ensure a national healing processes.

Gurtong is an outstanding example of symbolism in peacebuilding. Parties to the conflict take turns to participate in the spear blunting until it is blunt. This act is followed by a cleansing ritual, resulting in reconciliation. While there has been minimal recognition of such symbolic rituals by the NSCC in South Sudan national peacebuilding, this work argues that *Gurtong* demonstrates the crucial principle of cooperation that must be considered if sustainable peace has to be realised. Also, it emphasises the need for the recognition of all parties to conflict as equal, possessing equal level standards in moral peace norms and values suitable for national peacebuilding. However, this is not the reality in the NSCC's representation of South Sudanese socioreligious practices, mainly because the NSCC places conventional protocols above cultural norms, values, ceremonies and rituals.

Mato Oput ('Drinking bitter herbs')

Harlacher (2009) describes *Mato Oput* as the final ritual performed to reconcile disputants after a murder has taken place, and Bedigen (2017) indicates its use is diverse. Indicated by p'Bitek (1966: 104), *Mato Oput* is 'the oput-drinking peace-making ceremony' that takes place after a homicide. It is a ceremony and ritual that involves 'drinking' *Mato* of *Oput* ('bitter herbs') mixed with blood, in pairs, each from either side. It involves ritualistic eating or sharing of goat and sheep liver pieces, and other foods, in a secluded location (Baines 2007). Continuation of the ceremony involves the offering and sharing of foods and drinks in the disputants' homes. Most Acholi claim that this ceremony has religious origins. In support of this claim, items utilised in the ritual are like the biblical guidelines on peace offerings, sacrifices, compensation and reconciliation. When a conflict arises, this reconciliation ceremony must take place for normal family relationships to resume (p'Bitek 1966: 104). For example, Okot p'Bitek illustrates in a poem that Ocol should recognise the '*Oput*-drinking peace-making ceremony' because it is an everyday reconciliation ritual among the Acholi. He writes that:

> Ocol does not enter
> His brother's house.
> You would think
> There was homicide between them
> That has not been settled,
> You would think
> That the *oput*-drinking peace-making ceremony
> Has not yet taken place ...

In Acholi culture, when a premeditated or accidental killing occurs, the two disputing communities immediately suspend all socio-economic interactions purposely to

avoid the risks of violence, assault or revenge killing (Baines 2007; p'Bitek 1966). The Acholi believe that the spirit of the dead will torment the perpetrator, his family and his clan if the ceremony does not take place. When an incident occurs, the ceremony waits until the offender must narrate their version of the story to their family member or an elder. After, negotiation and mediation between victim–offender communities take place. The offender and his clan acknowledge and accept responsibility for the wrongs committed. This is demonstrated by showing a willingness to compensate. Lederach (1997: 26) supports this by indicating that guilt acknowledgement is decisive in the indigenous reconciliation process. This is because it is one thing to know; it is another to acknowledge—yet the NSCC's peace initiatives have not emphasised guilt acknowledgement in their negotiation and mediation efforts. Moreover, with *Mato Oput*, apart from acknowledging the crime, the perpetrator must demonstrate their readiness and ability to pay compensation—which, in indigenous peacebuilding, equates to justice.

Mato Oput could be incorporated within the NSCC peace processes. This is because it bears similarities to biblical texts: Numbers Chapter 5, Verses 6–7, says that 'When a man or woman commits any sin against another, that person acts unfaithfully toward the Lord and is guilty. The person is to confess the sin he has committed. He is to pay full compensation ... and give it to the individual he has wronged'. Like in the biblical texts, the strength of *Mato Oput* is in the promotion of forgiveness; however, it insists on compensation. Forgiveness is evident in the chief's end-of-ceremony statement, which says, 'let us end this bitterness and continue to live with clean hearts'.

Additionally, the symbolic drinking of the *Oput* brew in pairs demonstrates the willingness of disputing parties to share in their bitter past and future peace—a symbolic act that could, in reality, benefit the Dinka-Nuer historical amenity and counter-attacks. In addition, drinking in pairs symbolises the need to recognise mutual respect and partnership and reverence for the environment (i.e. plants, herbs and roots in the reconciliation process). While the *Mato Oput* principles of truth, accountability and restoration of relationships are aspects that could benefit the NSCC's efforts in South Sudan national peacebuilding initiatives, they have been minimally regarded. Thus, perpetrators continue to lead ethnic/militia groups and hold government political positions (Baines 2007; Bedigen 2017; Coe *et al.* 2013; Machar 2015). The inability of peace actors in ensuring that parties to conflict adhere to truth and accountability has meant sustainable peace remains elusive. Although hybrid forms of peacebuilding, which are inclusive and mainly similar to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, have been proposed as a means to achieving sustainable peace in the region, this idea remains impractical. The reason being that the diverse and unique nature of South Sudanese ethnic customs requires a local representation such as the NSCC. Moreover, unless the

NSCC's initiatives are mixed with socioreligious aspects (religions, ceremonies and rituals), sustainable peace will remain elusive (Gebre and Ohta 2017; Mac Ginty 2010; Millar *et al.* 2013).

In the following sections, the two religions utilised in national peacebuilding Christianity, represented by the NSCC and the Muslim (Judiyya) system, are discussed.

The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC)

After Sudan's first civil war, from 1955 to 1956, most South Sudanese or Christians did not want to remain under the oppressive sharia laws in the post-colonial Arab Muslim North/Khartoum government (Bedigen 2017). Therefore, the Addis Ababa agreement was held to forge North–South unity and end political/ethnic intermittent conflicts (Agreement 1972). The agreement provided for the Declaration of Principles (DoP) that was aimed at identifying essential elements necessary to a fair and comprehensive peace settlement in the nation and region. One of the items in the DoP was to include South Sudanese cultures and religious practices in peace negotiations, particularly Christianity. Thus, in July 1997 and at the peak of the Sudan second civil war, Churches in Southern Sudan (later known as The New Sudan Council of Churches, NSCC) were commissioned to establish and implement a chaplaincy programme mainly for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. Together with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the then recognised political group in South Sudan, they agreed to establish a secular, democratic government. The NSCC includes: Episcopal, Catholic, Presbyterian and African Inland churches, and Sudan Pentecostal Church, and community leaders, including Muslim leaders. Thus, the NSCC became a representative of all cultures and religions (Agwanda and Harris 2009; Leonardi *et al*. 2010). Since then, it is recognised as a neutral body with key responsibilities of facilitating community and national-level dialogues (Agwanda and Harris 2009). The groups' other purposes included fighting against marginalisation, supporting the liberation struggles, advocating for human rights, promoting unity, equality and peace among the diverse peoples of Southern Sudan (Gebre and Ohta 2017; Jok 2011).

Moreover, the DoP provision for inclusion of South Sudanese representative religion (Christianity) was violated by the Arab-North Khartoum government, whose mission was to convert the South Sudanese Christians to Islam. Also, everyday peace cultures and rituals were not mentioned. However, in 1998, the Khartoum government endorsed the DoP—furthering support to include South Sudanese local cultures in peacebuilding. Khartoum's delays in recognising the DoP and Addis Ababa's failure to reinforce the agreement meant that wars continued, giving room for the NSCC to spearhead national peacebuilding (Shinn 2004).

Meanwhile, decades of wars had impacted the country and its neighbours significantly. Thus, at the regional level, Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya utilised the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to pursue national and regional peace initiatives (Bedigen 2017). Nationally, the NSCC continued to influence much of IGAD's work (Agwanda & Harris 2009; Bol 2014). For instance, in inter-ethnic conflicts, the NSCC led and facilitated the process of peace and justice among pastoralist communities through dialogue and peace agreements (Agwanda & Harris 2009). However, rather than adopting local peacebuilding methods, the NSCC continued implementing conventional-style negotiations and peace agreements due to international preference, for example, the 1994 peace agreement between South Sudan and the Khartoum government. While such conventional approaches registered some successes (e.g. the signing of the DoP and the inclusion of NSCC), the socio-cultural influences of Sudan's conflicts made peacebuilding too complex for IGAD or NSCC; it never achieved much in its nine years of involvement. Mainly because not all religious and everyday cultural practices were part of the NSCC peace processes.

Further, the NSCC did not only get involved with IGAD but the AU—formed in 2002 to promote peace, security and stability in Africa. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) was established in 2004. The AU's specific function is mediation (African Union, 2004: Article 6, 3), a mechanism adopted from the UN Security Council. Since then, mediation has become a common mechanism within the AU and UN peacebuilding processes. Moreover, the NSCC helped bridge the gap between locals and these external mediation actors. For example, in Darfur, mediation was often utilised during the crisis in pseudo socioreligious processes (Gatkuoth 1995). This was evident when a PSC decision led the AU to undertake the political responsibility to mediate between the government of Sudan and militia groups, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (Bedigen 2017; 2019). However, this mediation process did not produce any tangible resolution. It is recognised that such processes and mechanisms needed strengthening through holistic inclusion of locals and their everyday cultural practices (i.e. indigenous peacebuilding ceremonies and rituals). This article argues that these indigenous practices can reduce South Sudanese political, cultural diversities and rebuild relations (Webel and Galtung 2007).

Overall, the NSCC's role as a religious leaders' organisation to represent all South Sudanese at national peace negotiations and provide mediation allude to Galtung's view that culture and religion play a significant part in peacebuilding. The NSCC put forward a political argument that South Sudanese culture (African) and religion (Christian) justified their separation from Sudan. Such calls and support from the international community eventually led to South Sudan achieving autonomy in 2005 and eventual independence in 2011. From the onset of the civil war in 1983, NSCC worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between the SPLM/A and other political/militia

groups, IGAD, the Sudan government and the international community. The NSCC's role in peacebuilding is commendable for the following reasons. 1) It brought to light the religious capability in peacebuilding. 2) It influenced other key conventional regional structures, namely, IGAD and AU. For example, the IGAD-led peace deal signed in Addis Ababa in January 2015 ended the worst humanitarian crisis in the region (Bedigen 2017). 3) It mobilised and incorporated some local religious leaders, including Muslims—thus reducing socioreligious tensions to some extent. 4) It successfully mediated the Wunlit People-to-People Peace Conference, organised in 1999 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 (Redekop 2007).

However, the NSCC's role in peacebuilding remains controversial. For instance, the majority of NSCC leaders belong to the dominant ethnic/political/militia groups (Dinka warriors and Nuer White army), and thus are not neutral in their 'inclusive' representation role (Bedigen 2019). For example, they selected only a few religious leaders from their own ethnic groups (Dinka and Nuer) or urban areas and largely ignored rural cultural leaders or failed to include ceremonies and rituals from other religious and ethnic groups such as the Acholi *Mato Oput*. Also, their way of approaching peace mainly through conventional-style agreements, such as Addis Ababa, has been known to further conflicts because it does not focus on addressing the ethnic conflict roots (Gurr 1995). Consequently, the NSCC's limitations have indirectly contributed to further deaths, lootings, rapes, raids, internal displacement and an influx of refugees to neighbouring countries (Shinn 2004). An inclusive socioreligious approach of ceremonies and rituals could prevent these and offer a more sustainable solution because they focus on victim, perpetrator and community rehabilitation or healing.

Judiyya

Among some Nilotic Lwo communities, such as Dinka communities and their neighbours (Darfurians and Kordofan), a common traditional institution for peacebuilding is the Islamic version, the Judiyya system. It refers to local negotiation (El-Tom 2012; Bronkhorst 2012) and typically utilises indigenous mediation mechanisms (Gatkuoth 1995; Zartman 2007). In most communities, Judiyya institution leadership comprises of chiefs, elders, community leaders, women, intellectuals, military and, at times, militia leaders. While it is currently utilised in protracted conflict mediation, historically, the judiyya system was utilised amongst ethnic pastoralist communities for natural resource sharing and management, notably, in situations of scarcity and conflict between and within groups of pastoralists and farmers. Also, it was helpful in the resettlement of refugees, usage of natural resources, ownership rights, deaths, injuries/damages and civil war crimes (Bradbury *et al.* 2006; Bronkhorst 2012). While Muslim Abyei and Jonglei regions of South Sudan have utilised protocols instituted

by international organisations to resolve similar instabilities, it is suggested that Judiyya system could offer a more sustainable solution, as it has historically done (Sudan Tribune 2018; Wahab 2017). Moreover, the Judiyya system was excluded from the NSCC peace processes, except for some of their leaders.

The South Sudan conflicts are mostly ethnopolitical (Gurr 1995), therefore requiring both ethnic and political solutions. The Judiyya system appears to provide both, for it includes various leaders and aims to restore peace in communities, making it a viable everyday peace practice that ought to be included within the NSCC (Bradbury *et al*. 2006). The elders are expected to be neutral at all times, and it is their duty and responsibility to ensure their decisions are followed. At times, this means putting pressure or coercion on the worrying parties to comply with the final decision. While coercion is not generally accepted in conventional peacebuilding, it is executed according to the binding societal customs and customary laws requirements in local contexts. This article argues that coercion can be useful, mainly where disputes are based on shared resources, which can positively impact livelihoods.

Bradbury *et al.* (2006) identify two types of Judiyya systems in South Sudan: government-sponsored (which is run by state-appointed elders) and communal (run by local elders). Unlike in Christian religious practices, in Judiyya, payment of compensation is central to peacebuilding. In resolving political-ethnic conflicts, for example the Zaghawa–Rizeigat conflict, the Khartoum government paid part of the compensation that the Rizeigat were supposed to pay (Bradbury *et al.* 2006). Such an act furthers the marginalisation of some communities and intensifies animosities between ethnic groups. The government's unfair involvement in the Zaghawa–Rizeigat peacebuilding was not taken lightly by the Zaghawa, as questions regarding the government's neutrality were raised. This example implies that sponsorship of indigenous processes by third parties could breed further conflicts or leave the other party dissatisfied with the process. This is because, in indigenous peacebuilding, the aggressor has to show sincerity and readiness to pay compensation. This manner of third-party involvement can have adverse effects, in that remorse and sincerity are overshadowed by the third party's actions or ability to sponsor the process. It is argued that the NSCC has been largely sponsored by Christian agencies and international governments such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom (Bedigen 2017), implying that its mode of engagement needed to reflect donors' ideas and practices. Yet, it suggested that third-party involvement should not obstruct indigenous justice or marginalise existing local systems but support societal norms of the peace processes. Also, it is highly likely that Judiyya's emphasis on compensation caused its exclusion from the NSCC's national peace processes.

While this article is critical of the NSCC failures in peacebuilding, South Sudan's situation has been more complex due to a combination of other factors, such as the existence of several disunited militia groups, regional and international actors inclined

to top-down approaches, and economic and leadership incapacities. The SPLM/A, who represent the ruling political party, government forces, and other militias have had major difficulties promoting national peacebuilding due to its Dinka composition and historical ethnic divisions (Bedigen 2019). For instance, whereas the majority of South Sudan delegates to IGAD (Iyob & Khadiagala 2006) are political leaders from the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, other minor groups (e.g. the Acholi, Shilluk and Lotuho) are excluded (Sudan Tribune 2018). In 2005, IGAD involvement led to the CPA, which granted autonomy to South Sudan and recognised customs as the basis of its governance, but this largely remained on paper (Bedigen 2020). Scholars indicate that South Sudanese political leaders' involvement provides an opportunity for them to draw from their customary peacebuilding cultures, yet they have continuously engaged in Western top-down negotiation and mediation approaches (Flint and de Waal 2008; Bedigen 2020). Moreover, national peace cannot happen unless a stronger sense of citizenship and unity of purpose exists. For example, the *Cieng*, *Mabior* and *Mato Oput* socioreligious practices include all community members (men, women, youth, children, and their customary practices) of peacebuilding (Jok *et al*. 2004). Thus, it is argued that the NSCC's consideration of other actors' failures and inclusion of socioreligious practices will likely provide robust peacebuilding.

Conclusion

The discussions above indicate that scholarship in South Sudan or sub-Saharan conflicts highlights the significance of religion (i.e. Christianity and Islam) in peacebuilding (Ouellet 2013; Schirch 2015). However, the majority ignores the dominance of indigenous religions and their linkages to community everyday ceremonies and rituals in peacebuilding. The discussions demonstrate that, in the NSCC's national peacebuilding processes, the inclusion of Christianity, Islam and ATR religions remain at the peripheries, while ceremonies or rituals are largely excluded (Bedigen 2017; 2020; Hancock 2017). Moreover, political and economic initiatives by external NGOs are seen as crucial in the planning, implementation and achievement of national peacebuilding strategies. Yet, this article argues that the implementation of religious and socio-cultural practices presents a robust means of contributing to delivering sustainable peace. As Munive indicates, context matters and, generally, conventional methods have been challenged in South Sudan; thus, this article argues for socioreligious inclusion (Munive 2013).

It is recognised that in South Sudan, religious beliefs and cultural practices are as diverse as the ethnic communities that practise them (Jok 2011). Also, they are specific to ethnic customs and may not be flexible or adaptable to protracted conflicts. Perhaps this led to the choice for a local representation by the NSCC in national peacebuilding

attempts. However, the discussions demonstrate that spiritual beliefs, derived from people's own experiences of divine revelations, are inseparable from everyday customary peace practices and crucial in delivering sustainable peace. Yet, the NSCC, an organisation that is religious-based excluded them. When conflicts occur, religious, socio-cultural ceremonies and rituals influence the examination of conscience, forgiveness and healing—attributes prevalent in Christianity (Bedigen 2020).

While religious practices (Christian and Muslim), cultural ceremonies and rituals have been implemented in inter-ethnic, and occasionally during the ethnic aspects, of civil wars, their implementation is usually an afterthought and sometimes incoherent (wa Thiong'o 1993). Also, these ethnic conflicts have political dimensions, making them complex for a 'one size fit all solution' (Gurr 1995). Examples are the Darfur Muslims, who engaged in the *Judiyaa* (Muslim local justice system) and peace mediation. In the Christian communities such as East Equatoria, Christians' involvement in the Wunlit, Liliir and Abyei indigenous peacebuilding processes included biblical prayers and ATR practices of *Mabior* ritual cleansing. Socioreligious inter-ethnic peace ceremonies, for example the Wunlit, lasted for a decade, highlighting their potential in national peacebuilding (Bedigen 2017; Coe *et al.* 2013). This article highlights that the complex interlinkages between ethnic and civil wars, indigenous ceremonies and cleansing rituals have been found significant in the disarmament, re-integration of ex-combatants, and the restoration of public order and security (Brewer 2010; Ingelaere 2008; Takeuchi 2011). For example, the *Mabior* and *Cieng* in the Dinka-Nuer reunion and *Mato Oput* in the Lord's Resistance Army inflicted Acholi communities in Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda. Such pieces of evidence demonstrate that the NSCC should have included South Sudanese religious everyday peace practices, ceremonies and rituals. Considering the past failed national peacebuilding attempts (i.e. international, national political and economic initiatives), it is suggested that socioreligious practices (i.e. cultural religious practices, ceremonies and rituals) are holistically represented for robustness in sustainable peace delivery in the region.

References

Abu-Nimer, M. (2001), 'Conflict Rresolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding', *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(6): 685–704.

Agreement (1972), *The Addis Ababa Agreement on the Problem of South Sudan*.

Agwanda, T. & Harris, G. (2009), 'People-to-People Peacemaking and Peacebuilding: A Review of the Work of the New Sudan Council of Churches', *African Security Studies*, 18(2): 42–52.

Arnold, M.B. & Alden, C. (2007), '"This Gun is our Food": Disarming the White Army militias of South Sudan: Analysis', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 7(3): 361–85.

Avruch, K. (1998), *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press).

Baines, E.K. (2007), 'The Haunting of Alice: Local Approaches to Justice and Reconciliation in Northern Uganda', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1: 91–115.

Bedigen, W. (2017), '*Traditional Conflict Resolution: The Nilotic Lwo of South Sudan' (PhD thesis)*. (Leeds, Leeds Beckett University).

Bedigen, W. (2019), 'Youth (Monyomiji) and Conflict Resolution in the South Sudan Civil War', *Journal of African Cultural Heritage Studies*, 2(1). https://www.jachs.org/articles/abstract/47/.

Bedigen, W. (2020), 'Significance of Societal Customs in the South Sudan Civil War Resolution', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 15(1): 3–17.

Bedigen, W. (2021), 'Honyomiji: the local women's peacebuilding institution in South Sudan', *Peacebuilding,* 9(4): 457–476.

Bradbury, M., Ryle, J., Medley, M. & Sansculotte-Greenidge, K. (2006), *Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study* (London, Rift Valley Institute).

Brewer, C. (2010), *Disarmament in South Sudan* (Center for Complex Operations, National Defense University).

Bronkhorst, S. (2012), 'Customary Mediation in Resource Scarcities and Conflicts in Sudan: Making a Case for the Judiyya', *Africa Dialogue*, 2: 121–45.

Coe, K., Palmer, C.T. and ElShabazz, K. (2013), 'The Resolution of Conflict: Traditional African Ancestors, Kinship, and Rituals of Reconciliation', *African Conflict and Peace building Review*, 3(2): 110–28.

Douglas, M. (1999), *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Douglas, M. (2004), *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London, Routledge).

El-Tom, A. (2012), 'From War to Peace and Reconciliation in Darfur, Sudan: Prospects for the Judiyya', *African Dialogue Monography Series*, 2(2): 99–120.

Essien, E. (2020), 'Cultural Rituals and Symbol as a Paradigm for Conflict Intervention and Peacebuilding in Africa: Experience From Nigeria', in *Handbook of Research on the Impact of Culture in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding* (IGI Global), 78–103.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1953), 'Nuer Spear Symbolism', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 26(1): 1–19.

Flint, J. and De Waal, A. (2008), *Darfur: A short history of a long war* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing).

Gatkuoth, J.M. (1995), 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Sudan', *The Ecumenical Review*, 47(2): 206–17.

Gatkuoth, R. P. (2010), 'The Nuer traditional time: Social life and culture', http://www.southsudannewsagency.com/opinion/articles/the-nuer-traditional-time-social-life-and-culture (accessed 19 December 2013).

Gebre, Y.G. and Ohta, I. (2017), *African Virtues in the Pursuit of Conviviality: Exploring Local Solutions in Light of Global Prescriptions* (Langaa RPCIG, Cameroon, African Books Collective).

Gurr, T.R. (1995), 'Transforming Ethno-Political Conflicts: Ext, Autonomy, or Access?' in K. Rupesinghe (ed.), *Conflict Transformation* (London, St Martin's Press), 1–30.

Hancock, L.E. (2017), 'Agency & Peacebuilding: The Promise of Local Zones of Peace', *Peacebuilding*, 5(3): 255–69.

Harlacher, T. (2009), '*Traditional Ways of Coping with Consequences of Traumatic Stress in Acholi Land: Northern Uganda Ethnography from a Western Psychological Perspective' (PhD Thesis)*. (Freiburg, University of Freiburg, Switzerland).

Hunt, C.T. (2017), 'All Necessary Means to What Ends? The Unintended Consequences of the "Robust Turn" in UN Peace Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, 24(1): 108–31.

Ingelaere, B. (2008), 'The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda', in Luc Huyse and Mark Salter (eds), *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences* (Stockholm, International IDEA), 25–59.

Iyob, R. and Khadiagala, G.M. (2006), *Sudan: The Elusive Quest for Peace* (Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers).

Jabs, L.B. (2014), 'No Monkey Destroys his Forest: A Review of Traditional African Interpersonal Conflict Management', *Journal of Global Peace and Conflict*, 2, 1–24.

Jeong, H.W. (2005), *Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies* (London, Sage).
Jok, J.M. (2011), *Diversity, Unity, and Nation Building in South Sudan* (Washington DC, US Institute of Peace).
Jok, A. A., Leitch, A. R. and Vandewint, C. (2004), *A Study of Customary Law in Contemporary Southern Sudan* (Rumbek, South Sudan, World Vision International).
Kamwaria, A. & Katola, M. (2012), 'The Role of African Traditional Religion, Culture and World-View in the Context of Post-War Healing among the Dinka Community of Southern Sudan', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2: 49–55.
Lacey, E. (2013), 'Restive Jonglei: From the Conflict's Roots, to Reconciliation'. Working Paper. (Cape Town, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation).'
Lederach, J.P. (1997), *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press).
Leonardi, C., Moro, L.N., Santschi, M. & Isser, H.D. (2010), *Local Justice in South Sudan (Peaceworks Number 66)*. (Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace).
Mac Ginty, R. (2010), 'Gilding the Lily? International Support for Indigenous and Traditional Peacebuilding', in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding* (London, Palgrave Macmillan), 347–66.
Mac Ginty, R. (2014), 'Everyday Peace: Bottom-Up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies', *Security Dialogue*, 45(6): 548–64.
Machar, B. (2015), *Building a Culture of Peace Through Dialogue in South Sudan* (Juba, South Sudan, The SUUD Institute).
Mbiti, J.S. (1970), *Concepts of God in Africa* (London, SPCK Publishing).
Millar, G., Van Der Lijn, J. and Verkoren, W. (2013), 'Peacebuilding Plans and Local Reconfigurations: Frictions between Imported Processes and Indigenous Practices', *International Peacekeeping*, 20(2): 137–43.
Munive, J. (2013), 'Context Matters: The Conventional DDR Template is Challenged in South Sudan', *International Peacekeeping*, 20(5): 585–99.
Nyerere, J.K. (1968), *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
Ouellet, J.X. (2013) 'Women and Religion in Liberia's Peace and Reconciliation', *Critical Intersections in Education*, 1(1): 12–20.
p'Bitek, O. (1966), *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol* (Oxford, Heinemann Educational Books).
Philpott, D. & Powers, G. (2010), *Strategies of Peace* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
Redekop, V.N. (2007), 'Reconciling Nuers with Dinkas: A Girardian Approach to Conflict Resolution', *Religion*, 37(1): 64–84.
Schirch, L. (2015), 'Ritual, Religion, and Peacebuilding', in A. Omer, R. S. Appleby, and D. Little (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
Shinn, D.H. (2004), 'Addis Ababa Agreement: Was it Destined to Fail and are There Lessons for the Current Sudan Peace Process?' *Annales d'Ethiopie*, 20(1): 239–59.
Stovel, L. and Valiñas, M. (2010), *Restorative Justice after Mass Violence: Opportunities and Risks for Children and Youth*, Innocenti Working Paper No. 2010–15, (Florence, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre).
Sudan Tribune (2018), 'South Sudan's Planned Election Violates Peace Process: Amum'. Retrieved 31 December, 2018, from http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article65259.
Takeuchi, S. (2011), Gacaca and DDR: The Disputable Record of State-Building in Rwanda. Jica-Ri Working Paper No. 32, July (Tokyo, JICA Research Institute).
Tardy, T. (2011), 'A Critique of Robust Peacekeeping in Contemporary Peace Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, 18(2): 152–67.
Wahab, A. (2017), *The Sudanese Indigenous Model for Conflict Resolution: A Case Study to Examine the Relevancy and the Ppplicability of the Judiyya model in Restoring Peace Within the Ethnic Tribal Communities of the Sudan* (Nova Southeastern University).
wa Thiong'o, N. (1986), *Matigari* (Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya).

wa Thiong'o, N. (1986), *The language of African literature* (pp. 435–55).
wa Thiong'o, N. (1993), *Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (Suffolk, Boydell & Brewer).
Webel, C. and Galtung, J. (eds) (2007), *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (London, Routledge).
Willems, R.C. and Rouw, H. (2011), *Security Promotion Seen from Below: Experiences from South Sudan* (Utrecht, Utrecht University).
Zartman, I.W. (2000), 'Conflict management: The long and the short of it', *SAIS Review*, 20: 227–235.
Zartman, I.W. (2007), *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and Practice* (Abingdon, Routledge).

Field notes:

Focus Group Field Notes (December 2013).
Local peace activist (interviewed January 2014).
Opor (interviewed April 2013).

To cite the article: Bedigen, W. (2022), 'A quest for sustainable peace in South Sudan: the role of everyday religious practices, ceremonies and rituals in robust peacebuilding', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 55–77.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.055

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 79–108
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.079
Posted 15 March 2022

Citizens' everyday media practices and peace activism in ethnically polarised societies

Zacharia Chiliswa

Abstract: In many regions of the world, increasing use of media technologies for activism is shifting dynamics of peace and conflicts, particularly in fragile societies. However, there has been an extensive focus on the practical use of these media platforms, ignoring the social processes by which the latter becomes significant for different people. This article examines how citizens' everyday media practices are helping shape the dynamics of peace and conflict in fragile societies. The study used mixed methods, administering 241 cross-sectional survey questionnaires to members of the public and 18 structured interviews to peacebuilding organisations in the counties of Nairobi and Nakuru, Kenya. This study finds that citizen media practices are influencing (peace) activism because they help shape patterns of information use and engagement in actions furthering or undermining peace. Therefore, the article argues that while the increasing use of media technologies for activism may expand opportunities for accessing information and engagement, there are specific ways in which they can undermine peace, that is, help shape the dynamics of salient social processes.

Keywords: Vernacularism, media practices, social processes, peacebuilding, peace activism.

Note on the author: Dr Zacharia Chiliswa is a media and peace practitioner with eight years of experience in research and project management within the charity sector. He currently teaches Media and Crime at KCA University, Kenya and is a Development Coordinator, Franciscan Missionaries of St Joseph—African region. His research interests span the fields of media and communication, and social movements and public policy, and he has over eight years of experience in peacebuilding in Eastern Africa.
zchiliswa@yahoo.com

© The author(s) 2022. This is an open access article licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License

Introduction

Across many regions of the world, the increasing use of online media platforms is helping shape both the way people can access information and engage in societal processes, and the conditions in which this information can be produced and disseminated (Rid & Hecker 2009: 5; Silver & Johnson 2019: 7; Vincent *et al.* 2017: 46). This widespread access to online media in many societies is enabling 'proliferation of opportunities for public expression for groups with conflicting worldviews and identities' (Waisbord 2018: 4). Besides this, the ease with which individuals and organised groups (co)-create and circulate unregulated contents implicates the functioning of social institutions, particularly in contexts where societies are fragile. McIntyre (2018: 42–3) terms this phenomenon post-truth: a situation whereby 'people seem prone to form beliefs outside the norms of reason and good standards of evidence in favour of accommodating their intuitions or those of their peers'. Thus, what individuals do with available media technologies, especially in an ethnically polarised context matters to the doing (conducting) of politics. Citizen media practices—what individuals do with available media platforms—can be viewed as symbolic markers of embedded social practices as well as expanding options for accessing, (co)-creating and disseminating ideas and content.

They are symbolic markers in the sense that media practices such as hashtags and microblogs can define the 'what', 'who' and 'how' of social causes. For instance, #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have become symbolic markers for campaigns against gender and racial injustices. Furthermore, the enduring media practices in ethnically fragmented societies can practically and symbolically influence 'who speaks and when; what and how they can speak; and the potential outcomes of their speech' (Ferree *et al.* 2004: 19). On the one hand, practically, identity-based media practices such as vernacular radios can influence how political candidates communicate with their constituencies, and in turn, the course of conflict dynamics. While on the other, symbolically, identity-based media practices create structures through which individuals can identify with others' concerns. For instance, the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter media activities make it possible for diverse individuals to co-create communities and strategies with which they 'display for each other the meanings of their social situation' (Alexander 2006: 32). Through these co-created communities and strategies, individuals and organised groups can, in turn, localise or vernacularise their social concerns, such as gender violence or political campaigns, to get intimate participation from members of the public. Thus, the influence of increased online media's use is in how they help shape the dynamics of salient social processes. In this study, such salient processes may include what individuals do with available media platforms (individualised media practices), why individuals forge ties with others' concerns (relatedness), and the outcome of the latter and former processes (localised issues).

For the purpose of this study, citizen media practices are mechanisms with which individuals and organised groups co-create and connect to others' concerns and causes. Hence, these media practices can shift the dynamics of options and level of conflict intensity people may experience. This is because individuals' options to (co)-create social spaces for peace activism are subject to negative media practices such as cyberbullying, hate content and online surveillance. In this study's context, vernacularisation is the use of vernacular as a linguistic strategy for localising political issues to arouse and manipulate cultural symbols and intensify hostilities in volatile situations. Thus, vernacularism in this study is applied in the sense that Hochschild (2016: 135) uses the term 'deep story'—'the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols—it removes judgments, facts and tells us how things feel'. In ethnically polarised societies, intended or unintended, vernacularised social conversations produce 'allusive narratives, in which people's political sense is shaped by their own experiences and by stories they read and hear from friends and acquaintances. These stories substitute memory for history and make others' experiences seem as if it is their own' (Polletta & Callahan 2017: 393–4). Thus, it is the political effect of vernacularism that helps explain the criticism levelled against news media, especially the vernacular radio's live phone-in shows for fanning ethnic hatred and polarisation during the 2007–8 political crisis and in subsequent general elections in Kenya.

A critical focus on media practices that enable individuals to co-create and disseminate personalised stories of negative ethnic stereotypes or cultural chauvinism reveals how such practices become politically significant during an election campaign (Ismail & Deane 2008a: 319; KNCHR 2018: 8). Moreover, vernacularisation also captures citizen media's impact on political campaigns because it helps shape the way people personalise others' stories to intensify antagonism and tensions.

This three-part article examines how the increasing use of online media for activism is helping shape peace and conflict practices, particularly in volatile situations. The study argues that while the increasing use of online media for activism may expand opportunities for accessing information and engagement, there are specific ways in which they can undermine peace—that is, help shape the dynamics of salient social processes. In a socially fragmented society, the opportunities for more people to co-create and disseminate unregulated content may immerse and intensify their everyday experiences of conflicts because of 'persistent contact and pervasive awareness' individuals have with events and issues from their locales (Hampton 2017: 127–32). Thus, these emerging citizen media practices reveal what is changing about the dynamics of peace and conflicts, particularly in conflict prone societies. In this study's view, the influence of online media on peace activism is defined by a dynamic relationship between what individuals do with available media platforms and why individuals forge ties with others' concerns. Hence, the influence of media platforms on activism

is not just about access to available platforms, but also resulting practices that may help shape the dynamics of everyday peace and conflicts.

Three points encapsulate why it matters to examine how citizen media practices are helping shape everyday peace and conflicts in volatile situations. First, online media have become critical sources of information and platforms for social engagement, giving individuals and organised groups 'capacity to act at a symbolic level in order to create discourses, meanings, and interpretations' of their social conditions (Mattoni 2012: 2). The implication for peacebuilders is that citizen-initiated media practices can exacerbate ethnic polarisation. For instance, the increasing phenomenon of online groups disseminating unregulated content has the potential to shape the 'newsworthiness of an issue more than the focus news media place on it', thus affecting levels of engagement (Rid & Hecker 2009: 210).

Second, online media platforms are increasingly being embedded in existing social practices, thus, shifting conditions in which such practices occur. For instance, because 'social division enables one's willingness to believe news confirming their biases' (Tandoc *et al.* 2018: 149), unregulated online media practices can intensify phenomena of false information, hateful content or bullying of opponents. In terms of social trust and the good of the order, polarising media practices pose a challenge to the credibility of public processes and institutions, management and transformation of social conflicts (Vasu *et al.* 2018: 4). Finally, these platforms are vast and allow for diverse modes of interaction, sharing and fluidity in the norms and practices for co-creating and disseminating news and information. The emergence of online media practices such as microblogging and online memes allows for the presentation of content and ideas in ways that are not constrained by established norms and practices. Therefore, it is valid to examine how these emerging media practices are intersecting with everyday peace and conflicts, transforming them, or reinforcing fault-lines of societies.

Thus, the first part of this article discusses and highlights pertinent social communication dynamics underlying everyday peace and conflict in Kenya.

The second part analyses empirical data to draw attention to individuals' practices in information and media use, and motivations for engaging in peace actions. The empirical data responds to questions about the ways in which citizen media practices can influence the dynamics of peace activism in fragile societies. The data analysed reveals that information and activities about peacebuilding are relevant, and most respondents search for and use it. However, the circumstances under which information and activities are sought may range from moments of political crises, such as violence before, during or after elections, and through activation by political campaigns. Therefore, this study shows that the emerging online media practices can help shape peace activism because they influence patterns of access and engagement in actions furthering or undermining peace. In practical terms, online media practices such as

hashtags, microblogs, or digital political and social memes can either enhance public engagement or exacerbate fault-lines of society.

The final part discusses and highlights the contribution of this article to the study of peace activism in ethnically polarised societies.

Background to the case study: Kenya's peace communication context

After the 2007–8 political crisis, Kenya saw a proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICT)-based peace initiatives such as Sisi Ni Amani, UWIANO Platform, Ushahidi,[1] Picha Mtaani, Umati and PeaceTech Lab,[2] which engage citizens in online conflict management and resolution practices. Thus, a critical analysis of these initiatives is needed about how individuals and organised groups engage with them. This study examines PeaceTech Lab Africa's *Kenya Election Violence Prevention and Response Programme* (KEVP),[3] which brought together a loose network of diverse actors—community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations and members of the public. The KEVP aimed to address the risks of political violence in Kenya during the 2017 elections in the counties of Kisumu, Nakuru, Nandi and Nairobi by supporting civil society groups and members of the public to engage in peace-promoting activities. KEVP was a joint initiative between Mercy Corp and PeaceTech Lab. The latter provided an online platform for local leaders to develop targeted peace messaging and for the public to report cases of election-related tension, rumours and early warning messages. By the time of the election in 2017, PeaceTech Lab indicated that the KEVP online platform had 200,000 subscribers[4] signed up from across the four counties.

Methodologically, the case study embeds two units of analysis—the peace activism within the network of civil society groups, and between the civic groups and the members of the public in the counties of Nairobi and Nakuru. The study conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with representatives of local peace organisations. It administered 241 cross-sectional surveys to respondents who directly participated in the KEVP before and during the 2017 general elections. The interviews and survey were simultaneously deployed in person between March and June 2019. During the 2007–8 political crisis, Nairobi and Nakuru counties witnessed widespread tribal clashes, displacement of people, deaths and property destruction (Waki *et al.* 2008: 106–201). The violence in these two counties was concentrated within low-income settlements—in Nairobi, the most affected estates included Kibera, Mathare, Dandora, Kariobangi,

[1] https://www.ushahidi.com/blog/2008/01/27/chronology-of-the-crisis.

[2] https://www.peacetechlab.org/home.

[3] https://www.peacetechlab.org/prevent-election-violence.

[4] https://www.peacetechlab.org/we-build-peace.

while in Nakuru, organised attacks and counter-attacks happened in Kaptembwa, Kwarhoda, Mwariki, Free Area, Githima and Kiti estates (Waki *et al.* 2008). Most humanitarian and conflict mitigation interventions are concentrated in these settlements. Because of simmering inter-ethnic tensions, cases of hate speech, incitement to violence, and the organisation of political gangs are recurrent during the election period (NCIC 2019: 29–32). Respondents (both peace organisations and members of the public) interviewed for this study were recruited from these low-income settlements with deprived social amenities and physical infrastructure. In Nairobi County, the respondents were drawn from the sub-counties of Kibera and Mathare North with a population of 185,777 and 206,564, respectively, while in Nakuru County, the respondents spread across three sub-counties of Nakuru North, East and West, which makes up the Nakuru urban centre with a combined population of 570,674 people (KNBS 2019). Also, most participants in the KEVP were concentrated in these two regions. Because of deprived infrastructure in low-income settlements, PeaceTech's use of online media platforms for conflict management illustrates the role civil society groups play in promoting the uptake of innovative communication interventions and bridging the technology access gap among grassroots groups.

According to the 2019 Kenya National Census, Nairobi's population is 4.39 million people while Nakuru is 2.16 million. Nationally, Nairobi County is the most populous, while Nakuru is third. In terms of access to ICT, of the 1.49 million households in Nairobi County, 53.4 per cent own a radio, 68.7 per cent have a functional TV, and 42.1 per cent have access to the internet. While in Nakuru County, of the 598,237 households, 61.1 per cent own a radio, 40.7 per cent a functional TV, and 20.9 per cent have access to the internet (KNBS 2019: 462–8). Although the state-funded Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) operated regional vernacular stations and programmes from the early 1950s, when Kenya was still a British colony, their programming was restricted to culture and entertainment. In post-independent Kenya, KBC continued with the restricted vernacular broadcasts until the early 2000s when a private broadcaster, Kameme FM Radio targeting Kikuyu, Meru and Embu ethnic groups entered the sector (Ogola 2011: 87). The burgeoning mobile phone sector gave Kameme radio the impetus to incorporate live-phone-in talk shows in its programming (Ogola 2011). Increasingly, these live-phone-in shows became famous for hosting debates with politicians and ethnic elites.

In the run up to the 2005 constitutional referendum and the 2007 general elections, as Ogola (2011: 90) argues, 'political elites used vernacular radio stations for mobilising their bases; and as a way of negotiating for space within the political centre'. However, these live-phone-in shows on vernacular media can also tend towards 'deliberation enclaves' (Sunstein 2019) because of the salience of ethnic identity on diversity of opinions. According to Sunstein (2019: 20), 'deliberation enclaves are influenced by three factors: the level of diversity of opinions (argument pool), participants desire

to maintain their reputation and self-conception (social influence), and validation of opinions (corroboration)'. To some extent, Kenya's social communication context may display these features. During elections, often political elites vernacularise campaigns, resulting in enclaves that insulate their bases from alternative perspectives. Vernacularised campaigns, in turn, can enhance campaigners' reputation because they manipulate and exploit significant ethnic symbols and meanings. Additionally, for participants, vernacularised campaigns may help validate their opinions about alternative candidates and outer groups. Furthermore, the increasing use of mobile phones and the re-emergence of vernacular media, it seems, helped shape communicative practices of many individuals and organised groups, because, nationally, five of the ten most listened to radio stations broadcasted in vernacular languages (MCK 2012: 3). Also, the widespread use of live phone-in shows seems to have altered the long-established media practice of listeners' fans-club (live radio call-in listeners' shows) to forums of political debates (Ismail & Deane 2008b: 4). For instance, monitoring reports singled out live phone-ins shows on vernacular radio stations and the surge in the use of short-text-messaging (SMS) to spread inflammatory and hateful contents during the 2007–8 violence (IRIN 2008; KNCHR 2008). This point is particularly crucial in understanding how emerging media practices are helping shape social communication contexts. By 2017, mobile phone subscriptions had reached 41 million users (CA 2017), up from 12.9 million users in 2008 (CA 2009). According to the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK), the increase in mobile voice and SMS traffic was because these services were being used for campaigns by various groups (CA 2017). In the CAK recent media performance report, talk shows, at 17.3 per cent, are the third most popular genre of local content behind religious (17.7 per cent) and music (38.8 per cent) programmes (CA 2018a: 31). Thus, live phone-in shows in vernacular media programmes, it can be argued, have affected how individuals and organised groups relate, discuss and engage with day-to-day social and political issues. Ogola (2011: 86) attributes the rise of vernacular media platforms to the de-politicisation of media spaces by urban-based Kiswahili-English news media. Moreover, the re-emergence of vernacular media can also be interpreted as a re-establishment of ethnicities to which individuals and organised groups are subjected (Nyamnjoh 2005: 26). Where vernacularised media spaces are used to (re)-create individuals' loyalties to their villages/locales and identities they entangle the users, and breach the boundaries of media and information systems based on the norms of objectivity, fairness, and balance (Nyamnjoh 2005: 27–8). This entanglement can help shed light on the extent to which the online media practices and spaces absorb individuals and organised groups into immanent conflicts and causes for peace (Bräuchler & Budka 2020: 18). Group polarisation, according to Sunstein (2019:19), occurs when 'deliberating group members predictably move towards a more extreme point in the direction indicated pre-deliberation'. Therefore, it is from this sense one can interpret the dilemmas and

immense political pressure the Kenyan news media have been under since the 2007–8 political crisis to propagate (negative) peace rather than take a critical stance on issues of justice for victims of historical injustices (Cheeseman *et al.* 2019: 95; Weighton & McCurdy 2017: 659). Thus, vernacularised media practice may help shape social communication towards group polarisation.

In Kenya during the 2017 general elections, GeoPoll and Portland reporting on the impact of false information found that 49 per cent of respondents regularly referenced online social media for news about the general election (GeoPoll & Portland 2017: 9). In an exposé, *Data, Democracy and Dirty Tricks*, Channel 4 News reveals how the discredited data company, Cambridge Analytica (CA) played a crucial role in influencing both the 2013 and 2017 presidential elections in Kenya. In an interview with a Channel 4 News undercover reporter, CA Chief Executive Officer Alexander Nix, and his Managing Director of Political Global, Mark Turnbull, are recorded explaining how they clandestinely aided Uhuru's The National Alliance, later rebranded Jubilee Party, to target and manipulate voters' fears along tribal lines (CA 2018b; Davis 2018). In conflict-prone contexts, these online media practices become even more critical because of 'group polarisation, which further fragments society' (Sunstein (2019: 20). Tandoc *et al.* (2018: 143) point out that 'if there are political, sectarian, racial or cultural differences, then people will be more vulnerable to fabricated news'. These social conditions can constrain and structure how individuals 'perceive their society and its problems' (Bennett & Entman 2005: 1). It is in this sense that one can interpret Floridi's (2014: vi) assertion that online media are not just tools for interacting with each other but have become forces capable of changing people's self-understanding and modifying how they relate to each other and themselves'. As the Cambridge Analytica cases illustrate, these changes have made it possible for invasive practices such as 'tethering of people to information and each other allowing for more powerful targeting and reach' (Schroeder 2018: 18). Indeed, it is online users' activities and their layered social relationships and sources that allow for their data to be used to construct predictive models to make targeted campaign communications more efficient (Nickerson & Rogers, 2014: 54). Therefore, what individuals do with available media technologies matters to the degree that it can symbolically and practically help shape salient social dynamics.

Citizen media practices and (peace) activism

Data analysed in this section focus upon dynamics helping shape the supply and demand for peace information and communication. To this end, it is crucial to map out, first, data on media and information use patterns to understand how and when specific media practices become significant to everyday peace and conflicts. Second, it

is vital to determine what peacebuilding may mean for different categories of people. Finally, data on the former and latter processes can reveal the emerging character of peacebuilding spaces. For the purpose of data analysis in this section everyday media practice may include texting peace messages or establishing online neighbourhood groups that can lead to 'creation of communities and transmission of values and beliefs' (Powers 1995: 199). The increasing use of media technologies produces media practices (such as hashtags, memes or automated message portals) that can transform the dynamics of how people engage in societal processes. So, data analysed in this section bring into sharp focus the dynamic relationship between the elements that make up communicative practices and its influence on everyday peace and conflicts, particularly in fragile societies.

The relevance of information and activities about peacebuilding

As displayed in Table 1, most respondents (80.5 per cent), have sought information or activities about peacebuilding within their towns and counties. However, 19.5 per cent of the respondents at the time of this study said they had never searched for information or activities about peacebuilding in their locales. Indeed, it is essential to note that the two variables in this question—information and activities—cover a range of actions: in the sense that searching for activities might lead to actual participation. In contrast, information-seeking behaviour might only be limited to individuals' desire to know facts about the peace situation in their localities and not necessarily participate in activism.

Therefore, when prompted further to list places that they sought this information or activities from (Table 2), a sizable number rely upon community social centres (26.1 per cent); followed by local churches and mosques (13.3 per cent) and local administration offices, including chief's office, county government and the police (13.3 per cent). Only 7.9 per cent of the respondents used online media platforms for information on peacebuilding. Both local and national news media emerged as places or channels respondents least depended upon for information and activities about peacebuilding at 0.4 per cent and 1.7 per cent, respectively. However, many parts of Kenya have peace committees comprising government representatives, local leaders

Table 1. Information seeking patterns.

Have you ever sought information and activities about peacebuilding?			
		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Yes	194	80.5
	No	47	19.5
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Table 2. Places/channels through which peace information is sought.

If yes, list the places/channels you sought this information from

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Online (internet/online groups/WhatsApp)	19	7.9
	Local news media (radio/TV)	1	0.4
	Local NGOs/activists	17	7.1
	Local churches/mosques	32	13.3
	Local administration (chiefs/county government or police)	32	13.3
	National news media (radio/TV/newspapers)	4	1.7
	Local groups (social centres/places/groups)	63	26.1
	Peace committees (alliances of CSOs & government)	17	7.1
	No response	56	23.2
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

and local community-based organisations; only 7.1 per cent of respondents reported to have sought information about peacebuilding from these alliances. Furthermore, peace information in this study means a process of organising actions furthering common understanding. It includes activities individuals and organised groups organise to promote dialogue and raise awareness about conflict resolution strategies and individuals' and communities' rights. Therefore, it is vitally important to examine the relationship between peace-information seeking behaviours and entities.

The places where respondents seek information and activities about peace are essential, but timing also seems a relevant determinant. As Table 3 indicates, many respondents (25.7 per cent), are more likely to be prompted by conflicts, violence or crisis in general to search for information on peacebuilding. Similarly, political campaigns (10 per cent), and public events (5.8 per cent), can also activate individuals' interest in peace information. Besides this, a sizable number of respondents said they look for information on peace at any time (24.1 per cent), others during their free time (9.5 per cent). Moreover, it is worth noting that some respondents attributed their need for peace information to places or organisations (9.4 per cent). The latter finding relates to the argument Dodds (2007: 5) makes about how, through speeches and policies, representatives of the state and civil society organisations (CSOs) 'generate specific understanding of places and communities residing in a region'. In Kenya, the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 justified the marginalisation of communities based on higher returns on investment in their regions (GOK 1965: 46). Thus, when some people attribute their peace-information-seeking behaviours to places or organisations, they highlight public discourse's consequences in constructing social orders. Moreover, in

Table 3. Trends in peace-related information-seeking behaviour.

When are you likely to seek information on peacebuilding?

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	During or after conflicts, violence or crisis	62	25.7
	Any time or always	58	24.1
	Others (names of places/offices/organisations)	22	9.1
	During political campaigns (before or during elections)	24	10.0
	During free time/holidays	23	9.5
	During public events (workshops/festivals)	14	5.8
	Living in conflict-prone regions	1	0.4
	No response	37	15.4
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Kenya, some government agencies and CSOs often produce reports mapping regions as potential political violence hot spots, particularly during elections (Wambui 2021).

Most respondents search for information and activities about peacebuilding, and do so through multiple systems of information and communication. There is a further need to determine how peace-related information-seeking behaviour compares with participation in peace actions. As shown in Table 4, 83 per cent of the respondents had participated in peace-promoting actions, while 15.4 per cent did not. As shown in Table 6, a further cross-analysis suggests a significant correlation between respondents who sought peacebuilding information and their participation in peace activism. For instance, a cross-analysis of information-seeking behaviour and participation trends (see Table 6) suggests that there is a significant relationship between respondents who sought information and activities on peace and the likelihood of them engaging in activism ($p<0.611$). Information-seeking behaviour can also be linked to patterns of engagement and the use of available media platforms. As Table 5 indicates, over half of the respondents regularly use online media for peace activism—daily, 18.3 per cent;

Table 4. Trends in individuals engaging in peace activism.

Have you ever participated in activities promoting peace?

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Yes	200	83.0
	No	37	15.4
	No response	4	1.7
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Table 5. Frequency of using online platforms for peace activism.

How often do you use online platforms for peacebuilding posts?

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	At least everyday	44	18.3
	At least once a week	54	22.4
	At least twice every week	23	9.5
	At least once in a month	62	25.7
	Cannot remember	40	16.6
	No response	18	7.5
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

twice a week 9.5 per cent; or weekly, 22.4 per cent. However, as illustrated in (Table 2 above), community-based information and communication intermediaries still play a vital role in grassroots peace activism. Indeed, if peace-related information-seeking behaviours are linked to one's engagement in activism, then it is also relevant to make sense of what peacebuilding represents for most participants, which the next section further explores. In the light of this study, the various ways individuals participate in actions either promoting or undermining peace can be interpreted as a negotiation and appropriation of positions, meanings, symbols or practices.

In Table 6, a cross-analysis of two variables, information-seeking behaviours, and participation in activism, sought evidence of correlation tending towards either stronger or weaker links. Here correlation analysis aims to reveal how two or more factors tend to change together—that is, the dynamic relationships between a range of specific factors. In this case, the cross-analyses applied throughout this study aim

Table 6. Link between a search for peace information and activism.

Correlations

		Information and activities about peacebuilding	*Have you ever participated in activities promoting peace?*
Information and activities about peacebuilding	Pearson correlation	1	0.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		**0.611**
	N	**241**	**241**
Have you ever participated in activities promoting peace?	Pearson correlation	0.033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.611**	
	N	**241**	**241**

to reveal how increased media technologies' use is correlated with the change people experience in their localities. For instance, the analysis in Table 6 shows that an individuals' information-seeking behaviour is correlated with their participation in peace activism. However, many factors may influence how peace activism is changing, including the increased access to available media technologies, extant social conditions and expanded options for individuals and organisations to co-create social spaces for common causes. Thus, a two-tailed test of how these factors are interconnected—that is, evidence for correlations. Therefore, a probability value or p-value of 0.611 indicates a positive correlation between information-seeking behaviour and participation in peace activism. To interpret empirical data presented in this article, the evidence for correlation helps explain how emerging media practices affect individuals and organisations, for instance, how fake information or cyberbullying can intensify the (in)-security that individuals and organisations experience.

Negotiating ideas and practices of everyday peace

In ethnically polarised contexts, I argue that a serious impediment to peacebuilding is how to communicate the demands of sustainable peace. That is, the consequence of prosecuting perpetrators of serious crimes, reparations for victims, and public truth-telling processes without construing it as ethnic persecution. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the United Nations Secretary-General, officially introduced the concept of peacebuilding into the international security discourse in his report, 'Agenda for Peace', to the 47th Security Council. In this report, he defines peacebuilding as actions of identifying and supporting structures that strengthen peace and promote a sense of confidence and well-being among people (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 212). He underlines structures as necessary conditions for consolidating peace. Before the 'Agenda for Peace' report, Galtung (1976: 297) had argued that 'peace has a structure different from peacekeeping and ad hoc peace-making' interventions. For Galtung (1976: 282), 'peacekeeping is dissociative. It aims to keep antagonists apart under mutual threats of punishment' but does not resolve conditions causing conflicts.

In contrast, peacemaking, Galtung (1976: 290–3) suggests, aims to resolve perceived sources of conflict, and can take different forms, including compromise, where antagonists accept: compatible goals; domination by one group through violence embedded in structures of society; or elimination through direct violence against the rival groups to preserve incompatible goals. Because of the limits of peacekeeping and peacemaking approaches, Galtung (1976: 298) advises that there is a need for establishing alternative structures capable of eradicating causes of wars. To which, Boutros-Ghali (1992: 212) concludes that successful peacekeeping and peacemaking must be anchored in structures that consolidate peace, and people's trust and well-being. In his analysis of practices defining peace, Richmond (2014: 5–6) argues that they can focus narrowly

on actions aimed at ending direct violence and ignoring its underlying causes, or on creating structures within which conflicts are resolved, such as institutions of democracy, law, human rights and development. However, at issue is how people interact with and experience these institutions: access to justice, public resources, and representation, especially in ethnically polarised contexts. As discussed in preceding sections, ethnicity is a salient base of political mobilisation in Kenya, and it extends into how individuals negotiate their dwellings and other social affiliations. As several public inquiries into election-related violence (Akiwumi *et al.* 1999; Kiplagat *et al.* 2013b; Waki *et al.* 2008) show, often, ethnic identities provide means with which elites mobilise support and violence against rival groups (Lynch 2011: 2). Where ethnic tensions dominate social processes, citizens can (re)make peace, as Galtung (1976) suggests, through domination by voting for one-of-their-own, and direct violence against rival groups. Galtung's assertion points to the need for a clear understanding of prevailing notions and peace practices—that is, how various actors, states and non-states define peace. More importantly, it is how peace is negotiated and practiced in the everyday vernacular of people. In this study, as shown in Table 7, there are at least three ways that respondents conceive peacebuilding. First, many of the respondents (55.2 per cent) describe peacebuilding as processes or actions geared towards community relations, understanding, or bringing people together. For instance, many respondents described peacebuilding as: 'a process of building relations in the community'; 'assisting people to eradicate conflict and maintaining unity'; 'a process of understanding the reasons as to why people associate themselves with conflicts'; 'a process of bringing people together and stopping tribalism'; 'a process of resolving injustices in the community in a peaceful way'; 'a process of finding a solution to a conflict'; 'a place where people negotiate about what might help the community and change their attitude' or 'a process of building relationships between our neighbours and us'.

Table 7. Ideas of peacebuilding.

Describe peacebuilding in your own words

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Peacebuilding as a state (harmony/absence of violence, conflicts or war)	46	19.1
	Peacebuilding as a process/action (non-violent approach)	133	55.2
	Peacebuilding as a platform, forum, or structure	51	21.2
	No response	6	2.5
	Others (no idea, not interested)	5	2.1
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Second, some respondents (21.2 per cent) conceive peacebuilding as a platform, a forum or a structure through which individuals can further goals of 'cohesion, reconciliation or harmony' within their local communities. They described peacebuilding as a platform for 'emphasising peace acts by sharing and posting peace information'; 'creating a platform for cohesion and reconciliation for people to live in harmony'; 'a group of people who work to bring unity and love in our community and county'; 'convincing those in conflict to dialogue and maintain peace'.

Third, 19.1 per cent of the respondents view peacebuilding as the absence or presence of harmony, conflicts or war. This category of participants describes peacebuilding with words and phrases such as, 'living peacefully with one's neighbours'; 'peace as calmness between two or more parties who were in a quarrel'; 'togetherness'; 'living without quarrels as brothers and sisters'; 'living in peace and unity with neighbours'; 'having a peaceful community'; 'living together without tension'; 'being in a cool environment away from war'; 'a conducive environment without violence'; or 'means to accept and maintain peace in our villages in all time'.

The following observations can be made from these findings: first, the various ways people describe peacebuilding imply locus of actions—that is, the presumed 'where', 'who' and 'what' of peace activism. So, the finding that many people understand peace as a process of building relations among communities reflects the UN's definition (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 212). Their concerns are about capacities to restore severed social relationships as structures for mitigating ethnic tensions for these respondents. Why does it matter? In this study's context, the increased use of online media for activism is helping shape some elements of communicative practices which are media by which communities reproduce their social integration (McCarthy 1984: xxv). Therefore, if elements of some social interactions are changing because of citizen media practices, it has consequences for emerging structures of peace activism. These findings further underscore the relevance of locus of change for peace interventions—that is, whose peace is disrupted and in what ways.

Second, for people describing peacebuilding as a platform or forum for furthering cohesion, this reflects Galtung's (1976: 292) definition of peacemaking as 'compromise, integration, disintegration or elimination of opponents'. For instance, when Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto created the Jubilee Alliance following Kenya's 2007–8 political crisis, they seemed to trade justice for the victims of the post-election violence against the harmony between their respective communities. In this sense, the Uhuru-Ruto alliance provided a forum through which their supporters could (re)-negotiate the understanding of justice (Lynch 2014: 94). However, since 2018, the Jubilee Alliance's parties started 'decoupling from each other' because President Kenyatta brought the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, into the alliance under the 'Building Bridges Initiative' (Galtung 1976: 292). So, peacebuilding, understood as a platform for promoting reconciliation can also undermine sustainable peace goals,

particularly in contexts where distrust pervades social processes. The final observation is about respondents concerned with the presence or absence of conflicts and wars. Richmond's (2014: 5) suggestion that the definition of 'peace can narrowly focus on ending violence' seems instructive. Furthermore, Galtung's (1969: 170–83) concept of negative peace is relevant in that these people's concerns are about their capacity to prevent direct physical and psychological violence against them.

Why does it matter to ascertain people's idea of peace? For peace communicators, mapping out the varied ways people describe peacebuilding can help determine socially or politically shared schemas about peace and conflicts, and the degree to which they are institutionalised: for instance, how different ways of understanding peace structure individuals' motivations and their engagement levels. This study shows a relationship between how respondents describe peacebuilding on one side and their motivations for engaging in peace actions and the kinds of initiatives they would associate peace with on the other. For instance, in Table 8, the need for peaceful co-existence, expressed by 38.2 per cent of respondents, seems to motivate many respondents' engagement in peace activism. Other respondents are prompted by cases of conflict (13.3 per cent for ethnic clashes or election-related violence) and political campaigns (5.4 per cent for elections or peace campaigns). Besides this, it is worth noting that 5.8 per cent of respondents view peace activism as a civic duty, or desire to bring change in their communities (4.6 per cent). These respondents' views can be contrasted with those who are either moved by personal gain, 8.7 per cent or peer influence, and 5.4 per cent (social groups). For instance, a cross-analysis of the varied ways peace is described and respondents' motivations, as Table 9 shows, suggests that for individuals motivated by the need for peaceful co-existence, peacebuilding is a

Table 8. Motivations for engaging in peace actions.

If yes, what motivated you to participate in peacebuilding activities

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Conflicts (post-election/ethnic clashes or violence)	32	13.3
	Political campaigns (elections/peace campaigns)	13	5.4
	Need for peaceful co-existence	92	38.2
	Civic duty (I am a peacebuilder/activist)	14	5.8
	Bring change in the community (development)	11	4.6
	Personal gains or growth	21	8.7
	No response	45	18.7
	Social groups (youth/women/peer)	13	5.4
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Table 9. Cross-tabulation of understanding of peacebuilding and motivations.

*Describe peacebuilding in your own words * If yes, what motivated you Crosstabulation*

			If yes, what motivated you								*Total*
			Conflicts (Post-election/ ethnic clashes/ violence)	Political campaigns (elections/ peace campaigns)	Need for peaceful co-exis-tence	Civic duty (I am peace-builder/ activist)	Bring change in the community (development)	Personal gains or growth	No response	Social groups (youth/ women/peer)	
Describe peace-building in your own words	Peacebuilding as a state (harmony or absence of violence/conflicts/war)	Count	5	2	16	4	1	3	10	5	46
		Expected Count	6.1	2.5	17.6	2.7	2.1	4.0	8.6	2.5	46.0
	Peacebuilding as a pro-cess/action (nonviolent approach)	Count	21	5	56	4	7	10	25	5	133
		Expected Count	17.7	7.2	50.8	7.7	6.1	11.6	24.8	7.2	133.0
	Peacebuilding as a platform/ forum/structure	Count	5	5	18	5	2	5	8	3	51
		Expected Count	6.8	2.8	19.5	3.0	2.3	4.4	9.5	2.8	51.0
	No response	Count	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	6
		Expected Count	0.8	0.3	2.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	1.1	0.3	6.0
	Others (no idea, not interested)	Count	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	5
		Expected Count	0.7	0.3	1.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.9	0.3	5.0
Total		Count	32	13	**92**	14	11	21	45	13	241
		Expected Count	32.0	13.0	**92.0**	14.0	11.0	21.0	45.0	13.0	**241.0**

process of non-violent actions (expected count, 50.8, actual count, 56). Similarly, for respondents prompted by incidents such as post-election violence or ethnic clashes to participate in peace activism for them, peacebuilding is a non-violent action (expected count, 17.7, actual count, 21). However, most respondents, regardless of their motivations, conceive peacebuilding as non-violent actions (expected count, 133, actual count, 133). Similarly, regardless of how respondents described peacebuilding, most are motivated by the need for peaceful co-existence (expected count, 92, actual count, 92).

The broad-gauge of motivations in the preceding section for why individuals engage in peace actions further points to the need for continual testing of different ways people conceive peace and how that might influence their social or political expectations and engagement. Also, a grasp of these motivations can indicate the kinds of actions people are likely to engage in and their effects. Table 10 shows an array of activities with which people experience peacebuilding. For instance, 22.4 per cent of respondents participated in cultural activities such as drama, sports tournaments or concerts; others (17 per cent), took part in community dialogue meetings. Still other groups preferred public demonstrations—peace walks or protests at 11.6 per cent; community clean-ups or tree planting at 5.4 per cent and participation in media campaigns—radio talk shows, distribution of posters or social media groups at 8.7 per cent. Additionally, other participants associated donation of foodstuff (5 per cent), civic education (4.6 per cent) or social groups (5 per cent) with peacebuilding. Therefore, given the numerous ways people engage in peacebuilding, it seems to open options for multiple voices

Table 10. Actions associated with peacebuilding.

List the kind of activities you engaged in

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Capacity building (seminars/workshops on peacebuilding)	11	4.6
	Others	9	3.7
	Cultural activities (sports/drama/tournaments/concerts)	54	22.4
	Public demonstrations (peace walks/rallies/protests)	28	11.6
	Community dialogue/meetings (forums/chiefs' town hall meetings)	41	17.0
	Environmental (community clean-ups/tree planting)	13	5.4
	Media campaigns (radio talk shows/posters/social media groups)	21	8.7
	Social groups (youth or women groups)	12	5.0
	No response	40	16.6
	Humanitarian outreach (food donations)	12	5.0
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

and engagement patterns. In turn, these multiple options for voices and action can indicate the numerous ways peace is performed, with potentially positive or adverse outcomes. In the most extreme cases, if ethnic animosity and tensions define an election campaign's contours, social identities could be constructed as a problem (Edelman 1988: 21–4). For a group's internal harmony, practices such as ethnic cleansing or evictions can become acceptable ways of (re)-making peace in a negative sense.

Spaces for peacebuilding

The competing meanings and numerous ways people engage in peace actions turn attention towards the dynamic relationship between media platforms with which individuals appropriate and negotiate ideas or practices and actions these platforms can enable and constrain. In ethnically polarised societies, it is crucial to understand the dynamics underpinning the causes for which people search for, produce, or circulate information, and their media practices. Therefore, it is vital to determine how the cause for peace defines the contours of individuals' media practices. As Table 11 shows, most respondents (80.1 per cent), have used online media platforms to share peace messages, and only 19.1 per cent have not. In comparison, Table 12 displays aggregated reasons for respondents appropriating online media for peace activism. Many respondents (18.3 per cent) are motivated by the desire to promote peaceful co-existence, particularly during elections, conflicts, or violence (7.5 per cent), while 18.7 per cent are motivated by shared mutual interests. Other participants find online media platforms convenient for creating awareness and advocacy (8.7 per cent), perhaps because it is an efficient means of communication (11.2 per cent). However, at least 10 per cent of the respondents who participated in PeaceTech,[5] the peacebuilding initiative, had no access to this platform. Seemingly, if they reside in settlements defined by poor social services, this category of participants might be excluded from

Table 11. Use of online media for peace activism.

Ever used online media to share peace messages to your friends or neighbours?

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Yes	193	80.1
	No	46	19.1
	No response	2	0.8
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

[5] PeaceTech Lab Africa's programme aimed to address the risks of political violence in Kenya during the 2017 elections by supporting civil society groups and members of the public to engage in peace-promoting activities.

Table 12. Motivations for using online media for peace activism.

If yes, explain your answer

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	During political campaigns (elections/conflicts/violence)	18	7.5
	Mobilising, awareness creation & advocacy	21	8.7
	Promote peaceful co-existence	44	18.3
	Straightforward & efficient means of communication	27	11.2
	Networking & sharing mutual interest messages	45	18.7
	Alerts & emergencies	10	4.1
	A platform for discussion & community outreach	18	7.5
	Others (not in online groups/no phone/not active online)	24	10.0
	No response	34	14.1
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

other functions that online media platforms play for those who have access to such service as community outreach (7.5 per cent) or emergency alert system (4.1 per cent).

Equally important is how individuals experience online activism besides the reasons they cite to explain their use. Table 13 shows an array of experiences for most respondents who use online media platforms for peace activism. While 36.1 per cent of participants described their use as good networking platforms, respectively, other groups of users, 23.1 per cent and 7.9 per cent said that online media provided access to diverse sources of information access and voices.

In short, this section's empirical data illustrates that media technologies' effects upon peace activism are a dynamic relationship between elements that make up routine social practices of individuals and organisations and emerging media practices. Routine social practices may include peer-to-peer online sharing of happenings in each other's locales, which can help shape the quality of their interactions because of the likelihood of intensified experiences of issues under consideration. If one agrees with this view, then the task at hand is to account for how citizen media practices apply to the logic of peace and conflicts in societies needing practical solutions. Accounting for these links can explain how and why particular media platforms become embedded in social actions, and reasons that motivate people to innovate and appropriate available media platforms for common causes. In the context of everyday peace, it is an analysis of how increased use of online media is helping shape the way members of the public and organisations interact. Consequently, a critical focus on individuals' and peace organisations' media practices points to a dynamic relationship between various causes for activism and available media technologies. Moreover, it suggests the vital role communicators can play in co-creating social practices strategic to peace activism.

Table 13. Users' experiences of online peacebuilding.

Describe your experience of using online media for peacebuilding

		Frequency	*Valid percent*
Valid	Good networking platform (wider reach/faster information relay/easy to organise or mobilise)	87	36.1
	Access to diverse voices/interactive/realtime feedback	19	7.9
	It can escalate conflicts, rumours/no privacy	11	4.6
	Access to diverse sources of information (easy access/affordable)	56	23.2
	Not accessible (many languages used)	8	3.3
	Others (Cannot tell, I do not use it. I do not have a smartphone)	18	7.5
	No response	42	17.4
	Total	**241**	**100.0**

Discussion and conclusion

This study found that individuals search for peace-related information and engage in activism for varied reasons, including during crises such as violence before, during or after elections and activation by campaigns. A cross-analysis between individuals' information-seeking behaviour and their engagement in activism found a significant relationship. Thus, peace activism can be looked at as a product of a dynamic relationship between reasons for individuals affiliating with groups or movements and appropriated media platforms. This conclusion is in line with Bourdieu's (1998: 19) argument about how 'invisible structures can determine what one sees and does not see'. In Kenya, during elections, political elites often vernacularise campaign messages into cultural fables, songs or sayings to mobilise their bases. Cultural fables or songs, as examples of invisible structures, localise political issues into a logic of everyday peace and conflict among groups. For instance, reports from both the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) and the Commission Investigating Post Election Violence (CIPEV) show how vernacular radio stations enabled individuals to make hateful statements. These reports single out live-call-in shows, music and coded terms as practices that intensified feelings of ethnic hatred and tensions. These vernacularised media practices mobilised everyday vocabulary of such terms as *madoadoa* (spots), *bunyot* (enemy) and *sangara* (wild grass) against outer groups (KNCHR 2008: 85; Waki *et al.* 2008: 295). In an ethnically polarised society, coded terms are designed to manipulate and exploit significant symbols and elements making up a vernacular, such as sayings, humour and fables. Thus, the KNCHR and CIPEV reports about callers on vernacular radio stations using coded terms show how citizen media

practices matter: they can help shape or entrench inter-ethnic biases and differences. More importantly, these media practices have consequences for the dynamics of media users' experiences, and they can intensify tensions among groups. In this case, polarised ethnic relations supplied reasons for which individuals were mobilised.

Furthermore, ethnic identities in themselves may have numerous meanings and purposes for different groups, but it is the power of these meanings when 'objectified that produce groups' (Bourdieu 1985). Vernacularised political campaigns aim to dissolve meanings of social identities into political causes—to the extent that identities of groups become synonymous with elites' political aims. This is the sense in which one can interpret the claim that ethnicity dominates multiparty politics and alliances across Africa, or multiparty politics has exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions (Anderson & Lochery 2008). Lynch (2014: 93) makes a similar assessment when describing how inter-ethnic relations between Uhuru Kenyatta's Kikuyu community and William Ruto's Kalenjin underlay the formation of their political coalition, the Jubilee Alliance—in the sense that both Kenyatta and Ruto traded the conflict of displaced communities, mainly Kikuyus in the Rift Valley, for an alliance of political expediency. The KNCHR (2008) and Waki (2008) reports about vernacular radio stations and dissemination of hate content illustrate how citizen media practices can impact the everyday logic of conflict and peace. However, within the communicative practice framework, individual media practices are embedded in the prevailing character of peace and conflict. In this case, inter-ethnic political alliances present a specific character of peace in which conflicts between groups change according to their affiliations. Thus, a critical focus on citizen media practices can reveal how they enable people to (re)-produce everyday peace and conflicts practices.

Ethnic-based political alliances produce a specific character of peace and conflict. Hence, in analysing the influence of increased use of online media on activism, it is vital to consider valued ends—what moves individuals to forge ties with others. Data analysed in the preceding section shows that the emerging web of social relations resulting from online activism has consequences for how people access and engage with information. This is because media practices such as cyberbullying, political incitement or false information undermine actions furthering peace goals. In situations where people have 'sustained awareness and constant connection' with false information or political incitement, it can undermine peacebuilders' abilities to influence peace (Hampton 2017). As Tandoc *et al.* (2018) point out, polarised social relations structure individuals' 'willingness to believe information confirming their biases'. Furthermore, the lack of access to available media platforms may undermine how people take part in common causes; however, it is not a sufficient condition for peace activism. Other mechanisms for stifling political dissent include 'prohibitive costs of accessing particular media platforms; lack of prerequisite media technologies or literacy levels' (Mutsvairo & Karam 2018:12). Although these barriers might

undermine social action, in themselves, they are not the causes for which people do not take part in public processes. If 'basic access' is emphasised without considering what individuals do with media platforms, it seems to suggest that people do not have the capacity for common causes—that is, public participation or acting in solidarity with others. Even more critical is how to account for the strategies by which individuals and organised groups relate to ideas or entities. Social action, Weber (2019: 101) argues, can be determined either by 'actions pursued because of external factors (purposive/instrumental rationality), actions pursued because of its intrinsic value (value rationality), actions motivated by emotions (affect), and actions triggered through ingrained habituation (traditions)'. Therefore, conflating enduring social problems with available media platforms or making technologies stand in for the reasons individuals or organised groups join common causes overlook the varied forms of social actions.

This study's empirical data showed that individuals are motivated by varied reasons and purposes to innovate and appropriate media platforms for activism. For instance, some participants are motivated by cases of violence, political crises or political events to search for peace-related information and engage in activism. These emerging patterns of engagement have consequences for peace activism if one follows the suggestion of Tandoc *et al.* (2018) that sectarian differences can make people more vulnerable to false information. This is because peace activism depends on the cooperation of diverse individuals and organised groups. Therefore, by emphasising a link between citizen media practices and everyday peace, this study highlights social processes by which individuals integrate into collective causes. For peacebuilders, this means indexing strategic media practices for activism. According to data analysed in this article, individuals and organised groups access peace-related information through diverse sources. Moreover, individuals' information-seeking behaviours are motivated by numerous factors and are linked to participation trends. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how individuals' acts of accessing and disseminating information relate to causes of furthering and undermining peace. Even more crucial is testing the extent to which emerging citizen-initiated media practices influence social action. In this sense, media practices such as cyberbullying, hate speech or intimidation, if they become part of routine social conduct, have consequences for the character of everyday peace and conflict.

The cited case of political incitement from vernacular radio stations in Kenya during the 2007–8 post-election violence shows how vernacularised election campaigns can corrode social trust, escalate tensions, and intensify hostilities (KNCHR 2008; Waki, *et al.* 2008). Just like vernacular radio stations are singled out for intensifying ethnic tensions, emerging online media practices can enable echo-chamber tendencies—reinforcing biases against outer groups (Benkler *et al.* 2018; Currarini & Mengel 2016: 15). Therefore, citizen practices impact peace activism only to the

degree that what individuals do with available media platforms relates to others' actions. This claim turns attention toward processes by which individuals and organised groups can further or undermine peace goals. This article also emphasises media practices by which individuals forge ties with others' causes. On this account, these media practices either reinforce or breach boundaries of how individuals and organisations (re)-produce their social worlds—social polarisation. In Kenya, often political elites vernacularise election campaigns to reinforce ethnic biases to affect voting patterns (Bratton & Kimenyi 2008). These vernacularised voting patterns also condition how political coalitions form and dissolve because of 'less predictable' inter-ethnic relations (Horowitz 1985: 28). Thus, the question of inter-ethnic distrust turns attention towards practices by which individuals and organised groups (co)-create spaces for negotiating and appropriating ideas and symbols for activism.

In this study's context, citizen media practices provide a basis for assessing these co-created social spaces. Therefore, widespread use of online media platforms raises concerns at two levels. On the one hand, emerging citizen media practices coincide with the problems of polarisation, dissemination of hateful content, false information and violence (Barclay 2018; Laub 2019; Müller & Schwarz 2020; Patton *et al.* 2014). On the other hand, there is a need to create an understanding of how these emerging media practices are helping shape peace activism. This study's finding contribute to these twofold concerns. Data analysed in this study showed that the emerging online media practices impact activism because they shape patterns of access and engagement in actions furthering or undermining peace. Social processes such as collective security, social interactions and public engagement structure how members of the public and peace organisations innovate with available media technologies.

The need for collective security and social interactions motivates and structures the degree to which available media platforms help shape dynamics of social situations. This is because the need for collective security or social interactions as social relations is defined by 'meaningful contents of mutual disposition and the arising comportment among people' (Weber 2019: 103). Thus, the need for collective security and social interaction is the 'meaningful content' that define how individuals and organisations appropriate and innovate with available media technologies. Collective security and social interaction are the basis of engaging in (peace) activism. Hence, the contents of mutual disposition (in this case, collective security) among the Kenyan people can include inter-ethnic political coalitions, peace activism or inter-ethnic conflicts, which set the parameters within which people participate in social processes. In this sense, social spaces, including inter-ethnic coalitions and peace activism are a product of polarised inter-ethnic relations—that is, ethnic tensions dominate most social processes. To capture state power, political elites and their respective communities co-create ideas, practices (coalition parties) and symbols that draw on prevailing ethnic relation structures, resulting in a specific character of peace and conflicts.

Political coalitions and parties can emerge for genuine common causes but also for opportunistic ends. For instance, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission concluded that pervasive inter-ethnic tensions in Kenya result from people's common experiences of access to public resources, perceptions of representation in government and attitudes towards rival groups—that is, negative ethnic and cultural stereotypes (Kiplagat *et al.* 2013a: 58–9). Similarly, peacebuilders can co-create peace ideas, symbols and practices for activism. However, embodied contents of polarised ethnic relations—distrust, exclusion and marginalisation—enable and constrain individuals' social actions. Thus, the fragile character of peace in Kenya is due to institutionalised distrust resulting from politics of exclusion, which impedes robust individuals' self-expression, development and justice. Institutionalised distrust has consequences for symbolic communicative practices as media with which individuals and organised groups (re)-reproduce their social worlds.

In Kenya, polarised ethnic relations have institutionalised ethnic-based political parties and coalitions. These alliances influence solutions to lingering social problems: how people vote; access to justice; public appointments; and resource allocation. For peacebuilders, it is crucial to understand how the dynamic of conflicts influences the character of peace. Lefebvre's (1991: 26–32) concept of social space—as a product of social relations that serves as a thought and action tool—is useful for understanding how people and organisations (co)create ideas and practices, embody them and enact them. In the context of the current study, respondents' description of peacebuilding as an absence of violence can be viewed as 'spatial practices' such as artefacts of government security apparatus or systems of information and communication—that is, community information centres or community media. In conflict-prone regions during elections, heavy police presence may stand in for peace for individuals worried about physical violence and forceful evictions. One interesting result in this study is that traditional information and communication systems such as community centres, chiefs' offices, and places of worship are relevant and intricately linked to the ways individuals search for and access peace-related information. This study considered these information systems as examples of spatial practices because they are products of grassroots social relations—they make visible dominant ideas and practices. More importantly, these results suggest that part of online media's influence is in how it transforms the communicative practices around these information systems.

Second, the various ways people define peace signals practitioners' role in communicating ideas, policies or programmes. Galtung's definition of peace illustrates how prevailing social structures such as ethnic-based political parties can influence the course of interventions to enduring social problems. In this regard, PeaceTech's KEVP can stand in for mechanisms by which diverse individuals and organised groups forge ties with ideas and causes. As such, one can cross-analyse the varied ways respondents described peace being related to their motivations and levels of engagement. Indeed,

this study showed that for individuals motivated by the need for peaceful co-existence, peacebuilding is a process of non-violent actions. Therefore, people's varied ways of describing peacebuilding reveal a complex reality: how peace is represented through everyday activities and interventions is not necessarily how it can be lived and performed by individuals in their locales (Lefebvre 1991: 40). Furthermore, the various ways people understand peace could reflect the dynamic relationship between the mechanisms by which they forge ties with others and their social situations.

In conclusion, how people think about peacebuilding and the mechanisms by which they engage have consequences for everyday peace and conflicts practices. For instance, in the most extreme form, if ethnic tensions define contours of an election campaign, and social identities are seen as a problem, then in order to maintain internal harmony, incitement to violence and evictions of or attacks against rival ethnic groups become excused from public concerns and are not liable to sanctions (Edelman 1988: 12). Therefore, these findings should be of interest to peace communicators because how problems and solutions are defined can either intensify or alleviate social problems. However, in Edelman's (1988: 15) idea, 'diversity of meanings in every social problem stemming from the range of groups' concerns can be a challenge to the communication of solutions. Thus, testing how individuals think about peace in societies prone to violent conflicts is critical when discussing peace communication. Peacebuilders' media practices apply mainly to the different mechanisms by which individuals seek to associate with causes, ideas, or political organisations' (Bennett & Segerberg 2013: 5).

Furthermore, if peacebuilders want to use online media for activism, they need to know how proposed mechanisms of engagement resonate with targeted groups, stimulate a response, and help shape the problems such as 'violent elections'. Thus, it can be concluded that citizen media practices, as mechanisms by which individuals and organised groups forge ties with others' concerns, provide a way of thinking about the dynamic relationships between media technologies and prevailing social conditions (Tandoc *et al.* 2018: 149). This is because in ethnically polarised contexts, citizen-initiated media discourses can have a bearing on on the 'localised doing of peace, safety and security' (Ginty & Firchow 2016: 1). This study therefore shows that citizen-initiated media practices contribute to or undermine actions furthering peace by transforming the dynamics of options and threats that people experience.

References

Akiwumi, A.M., Bosire, S.O. & Ondeyo, S.C. (1999), *Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Tribal Clashes in Kenya*. G. o. Kenya. http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/CommissionReports/ReportoftheJudicialCommissionAppointedtoInquireintoTribalClashesinKenya.pdf.

Alexander, J.C. (2006), 'Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy', in J. C. A. G. L. Mast (ed.), *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Anderson, D. & Lochery, E. (2008), 'Violence and Exodus in Kenya's Rift Valley, 2008: Predictable and Preventable?' *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2(2): 328–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531050802095536.

Barclay, D.A. (2018), *Fake News, Propaganda, and Plain Old Lies: How to Find Trustworthy Information in the Digital Age* (London, Rowman & Littlefield).

Benkler, Y., Faris, R. & Roberts, H. (2018), *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Bennett, W.L. & Entman, R.M. (2005), 'Mediated Politics: An Introduction', in W.L. Bennett & R.M. Entman (eds), *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Bennett, W.L. & Segerberg, A. (2013), *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalisation of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Bourdieu, P. (1985), 'The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups', *Theory and Society*, 14(6). https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00174048.

Bourdieu, P. (1998), *On Television and Journalism*, trans. P.P. Ferguson (London, Pluto Press).

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992), 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping', *International Relations*, 11(3): 201–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/004711789201100302.

Bratton, M. & Kimenyi, M.S. (2008), 'Voting in Kenya: Putting Ethnicity in Perspective', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2(2): 272–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531050802058401.

Bräuchler, B. & Budka, P. (2020), 'Introduction: Anthropological Perspectives on Theorising Media and Conflict', in P. Budka & B. Bräuchler (eds), *Theorising Media and Conflict* (Oxford, Berghahn Books). https://doi.org/https://www.berghahnbooks.com/downloads/intros/BudkaTheorising_intro.pdf.

CA (2009), *Sector Statistics Report: April–June 2008/09*. C. A. o. Kenya. https://ca.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Sector-Statistics-Report-Q4-2008–09.pdf.

CA (2017), *First Quarter Sector Statistics Report for the Financial Year 2017/18: July–September 2017*. C. A. o. Kenya. https://ca.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Sector-Statistics-Report-Q1-2017–18.pdf.

CA (2018a), *Annual Report, 2017–2018*. C. A. o. Kenya. https://ca.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Annual-Report-For-the-Financial-Year-2017-2018-min_compressed-min-min.pdf.

CA (2018b), *Case Studies: Kenya*. Cambridge Analytica. Retrieved 21 May 2020 from https://ca-political.com/casestudykenya2013/.

Cheeseman, N., Kanyinga, K., Lynch, G., Ruteere, M. & Willis, J. (2019), 'Kenya's 2017 Elections: winner-takes-all politics as usual?' *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 13(2): 215–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2019.1594072.

Currarini, S. & Mengel, F. (2016, 11 January), 'Identity, Homophily and In-Group Bias', *European Economic Review*, 90: 40–55. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2016.02.015.

Davis, A. (2018), *Here's How Cambridge Analytica Played a Dominant Role in Kenya's Chaotic 2017 Elections* C. New; Channel 4 News. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=mpbeOCKZFfQ&feature=emb_logo.

Dodds, K. (2007), *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Edelman, M. (1988), *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).

Ferree, M.M., Gamson, W.A., Gerhards, J. & Rucht, D. (2004), *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Floridi, L. (2014), *The 4th Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Galtung, J. (1969), 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3): 167–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301.

Galtung, J. (1976), 'Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding', *Impact of Science on Society*, 1(2). https://doi.org/https://www.galtung-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/galtung_1976_three_approaches_to_peace.pdf.

GeoPoll & Portland (2017), *The Reality of Fake News in Kenya*. GeoPall & Portland. https://www.portland-communications.com/pdf/The-Reality-of-Fake-News-in-Kenya.pdf

Ginty, R.M. & Firchow, P. (2016), 'Top-Down and Bottom-Up Narratives of Peace and Conflict', *Politics*, 36(3): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395715622967.

GOK (1965), *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya: Sessional Paper No. 10*. https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA/Resources/257994-1335471959878/Sessional-Paper-No-10-(1965).pdf

Hampton, K.N. (2017), 'New Communication Technologies and the Future of Community', in P. Messaris & L. Humphreys (eds), *Digital Media: Transformations in Human Communication* (Peter Lang).

Hochschild, A.R. (2016), *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (London, The New Press).

Horowitz, D.L. (1985), *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, University of California Press).

IRIN (2008), *Spreading the Word of Hate*. IRIN. Retrieved 16 August from http://www.irinnews.org/report/76346/kenya-spreading-word-hate.

Ismail, J.A. & Deane, J. (2008a, 7 January), 'The 2007 General Election in Kenya and its Aftermath: The Role of Local Language Media', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(3): 319–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161208319510.

Ismail, J.A. & Deane, J. (2008b), *The Kenyan 2007 Elections and their Aftermath: The Role of Media and Communication*, Policy Briefing No. 1. https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/kenya_policy_briefing_08.pdf.

Kiplagat, B., Wanjala, T.N., Chawatama, G., Dinka, B., Farah, A.S., Ojienda, T., Shava, M. & Slye, R. (2013a), *Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, 'Final Report – TJRC Report Volume 2B'*. https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=tjrc-core.

Kiplagat, B., Wanjala, T.N., Chawatama, G., Dinka, B., Farah, A.S., Ojienda, T., Shava, M. & Slye, R. (2013b), *Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission, 'Final Report – TJRC Report Volume 4'*. J. a. R. C. Truth, Kenya. https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=tjrc-core.

KNBS (2019), *2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census: Volume IV*. KNBS. https://www.knbs.or.ke/?wpdmpro=2019-kenya-population-and-housing-census-volume-iv-distribution-of-population-by-socio-economic-characteristics.

KNCHR (2008), *On the Brink of the Precipice: A Human Rights Account of Kenya's post-2007 Election Violence*. K. N. C. o. H. Rights. https://kenyastockholm.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/pev-report-as-adopted-by-the-commission-for-release-on-7-august-20081.pdf.

KNCHR (2018), *Still a Mirage at Dusk: A Human Rights Account of the 2017 Fress Presidential Elections*. K. N. C. o. H. Rights. https://www.knchr.org/Portals/0/CivilAndPoliticalReports/Still-a-Mirage-at-Dusk.pdf?ver=2018-05-23-123451-723.

Laub, Z. (2019), *Hate Speech on Social Media: Global Comparisons* (Council on Foreign Relations). https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hate-speech-social-media-global-comparisons.

Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (London, Blackwell).

Lynch, G. (2011), *I Say to You: Ethnic Politics and the Kalenjin in Kenya* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).

Lynch, G. (2014), 'Electing the "Alliance of the Accused": The Success of the Jubilee Alliance in Kenya's Rift Valley', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(1): 93–114. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2013.844438.

Mattoni, A. (2012), *Media Practices and Protest Politics: How Precarious Workers Mobilise* (Abingdon, Routledge).
McCarthy, T. (1984), 'Translator's Introduction', in J. Habermas (ed.), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the rationalisation of society*, Vol. 1 (Boston, Beacon Press).
McIntyre, L. (2018), *Post-truth* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press).
MCK (2012), *The Performance of Vernacular Radio Stations in Kenya.* Monitoring Report: Media Council of Kenya, Issue. M. C. o. Kenya. https://www.academia.edu/10293813/THE_PERFORMANCE_OF_VERNACULAR_RADIO_STATIONS_IN_KENYA_The_Performance_of_Vernacular_Radio_Stations_in_Kenya_Monitoring_Report.
Müller, K. & Schwarz, C. (2020), 'Fanning the Flames of Hate: Social Media and Hate Crime', *SSRN*. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3082972.
Mutsvairo, B. & Karam, B. (2018), 'Key Developments in Political Communication in Africa', in B. Mutsvairo & B. Karam (eds), *Perspectives on Political Communication in Africa* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62057-2_1.
NCIC (2019), *Annual report 2017–2018* (Scaling the Heights of Cohesion and Integration), Issue. N. C. a. I. Commission. https://www.cohesion.or.ke/index.php/resources/downloads?download=42:annual-report-2017–2018%C3%A5.
Nickerson, D.W. & Rogers, T. (2014), 'Political Campaigns and Big Data', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 28(2): 51–73. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23723484.
Nyamnjoh, F.B. (2005), *Africa's Media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging: Unbalanced News is also a Human Rights Abuse* (London, Zed Books).
Ogola, G. (2011), 'The Political Economy of the Media in Kenya: From Kenyatta's Nation-Building Press to Kibaki's Local Language FM Radio', *Africa Today*, 57(3): 77–91. https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.57.3.77.
Patton, D. U., Hong, J. S., Ranney, M., Patel, S., Kelley, C., Eschmann, R. & Washington, T. (2014), 'Social Media as a Vector for Youth Violence: A Review of the Literature', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35: 548–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.043
Polletta, F. & Callahan, J. (2017), 'Deep Stories, Nostalgia Narratives, and Fake News: Storytelling in the Trump era', *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 5: 392–408. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-017-0037-7.
Powers, J.H. (1995), 'On the Intellectual Structure of the Human Communication Discipline', *Communication Education*, 44(3): 191–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529509379012.
Richmond, O.P. (2014), *Peace: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
Rid, T. & Hecker, M. (2009), *War 2.0: Irregular Warfare in the Information Age* (Westport, Praeger Security International).
Schroeder, R. (2018), *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology and Globalization* (London, ULC Press).
Silver, L. & Johnson, C. (2019), *Internet Connectivity Seen as Having Positive Impact on Life in Sub-Saharan Africa: But Digital Divides Persist*. P. R. Center. http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/10/09/internet-connectivity-seen-as-having-positive-impact-on-life-in-sub-saharan-africa/.
Sunstein, C.R. (2019), *How Change Happens* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press).
Tandoc, E.C., Lim, Z.W. & Ling, R. (2018), 'Defining "Fake News"', *Digital Journalism*, 6(2): 137–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1360143.
Vasu, N., Ang, B., Teo, T.-A., Jayakumar, S., Faizal, M. & Ahuja, J. (2018), *Fake News: National Security in the Post-Truth Era*. S. R. S. o. I. Studies. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17648.
Vincent, K., Sarnelli, V. & Luguzan. (2017), *Youth and Social Media in Transition*. A. T. Project. www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14118.
Waisbord, S. (2018), 'Truth is What Happens to News', *Journalism Studies*, 19(13): 1866–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1492881.

Waki, P., McFadyen, G. & Kambale, P. (2008), *Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence*. G. o. Kenya. https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/kenya-commission-inquiry-post-election-violence-ci-pev-final-report.

Wambui, M. (2021), 'NCIC Warns Five Major Towns Possible Poll Violence Hotspots'. *Daily Nation*. https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/ncic-warns-five-major-towns-possible-poll-violence-hotspots/ar-BB1dKv8m.

Weber, M. (2019), *Economy and Society: A New Translation,* ed. & trans. K. Tribe (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press).

Weighton, L. & McCurdy, P. (2017), 'The Ghost in the News Room: The Legacy of Kenya's 2007 Post-Election Violence and the Constraints on Journalists Covering Kenya's 2013 General Election', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 11(4): 649–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2017.1378447.

To cite the article: Chiliswa, Z. (2022), 'Citizens' everyday media practices and peace activism in ethnically polarised societies', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 79–108. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.079

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

Journal of the British Academy, **10(s1)**, 109–133
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.109
Posted 15 March 2022

Examining mine action's 'peaceability' potential through everyday narratives and practices in Somaliland

Sarah Njeri

Abstract: The way in which societies conceptualise peace, and therefore peacebuilding, is dependent on various factors, including the society itself, its history, cultural and social foundations, the legacies of violence and peacebuilding initiatives. Drawing on interviews with various constituents in Somaliland, this article will demonstrate how bottom-up narratives and understandings of peace and peacebuilding have been shaped by the legacy of war and shared history of the reconciliation process, which was led by the elders. Similarly, this conceptualisation of peace defines what activities are considered as peacebuilding. However, the extent of this conceptualisation does not extend to mine action; an activity that was initiated by the elders during the post-war reconciliation process, and whose outcomes, such as facilitating mobility, safety and security, were outlined as peace indicators by those interviewed. Thus, while mine action has intrinsic peacebuilding potential, it is not conceptualised as peacebuilding by either international or local peacebuilders. This paper therefore seeks to critically examine this limitation. It employs Goodhand & Hulme's (2000) concept of a peace audit, an approach to critically look at the way in which an intervention is undertaken to assess how this has raised or lowered the probability of peace. Beyond the history, using the peaceability approach, the article analyses the extent to which there are endowments of 'peace capital' accrued or undermined by the sector's everyday activities. It concludes that the 'everyday' actions of the mine action actors contribute to the way in which local communities comprehended mine action interventions through the daily activities of the actors on the ground, their contrasting lifestyles, values and behaviour.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Somaliland, mine action, everyday peace, peaceability.

Note on the author: Sarah Njeri is a Research Fellow at Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI and a Research Associate of the African Leadership Centre, King's College London. She holds a PhD from the University of Bradford, Peace Studies department and an MA in Conflict Resolution from the same department. Recent publications include: (with E. Ikpe) 'Landmine Clearance and Peacebuilding: Evidence from Somaliland', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (2021) https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166211068324; 'Race, Positionality and the Researcher', in R. Mac Ginty *et al.* (eds), *The Companion to Peace and Conflict Fieldwork* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8757-4650
s.njeri@odi.org.uk

© The author(s) 2022. This is an open access article licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License

Introduction

Somaliland's post-conflict peacebuilding process centred around bottom-up, localised, and particularistic conflict-calming measures and people-to-people activities that moved the society towards conflict transformation. This corresponds to the liberal peace literature which agitates for 'bottom-up' and 'hybrid' forms of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond 2009). Somaliland provides evidence of this kind of bottom-up and hybrid forms of peacebuilding. Analysis on the same has been limited to the state building process and has disregarded other activities such as mine action, upon which initiation took the same approach. This is because of a state-centric approach, which limits their critiques to statebuilding (see Njeri 2019). These critiques challenge the standardised 'one size fits all approach' employed by interveners, yet they take the same approach, and in so doing apply a broad-brush across a diverse range of programmes, actors, issues and activities that are indeed peacebuilding contexts or activities. These critiques also neglect the multiple voices that may sometimes exist within these groups, be they local actors or international actors. Yet, these critics call for context specificity from peacebuilding interveners (Sending 2009a).

As a specialised activity and distinct sector within the broader humanitarian sector, mine action[1] is always listed as one of the peacebuilding activities—however, scrutiny of the academic literature re-affirmed that as an activity it was broadly conceptualised as peacebuilding by international actors and scholars (Harpviken & Isaksen 2004; Kjellman *et al.* 2003). As outlined later in this paper, several factors contributed to mine action being conceptualised as peacebuilding. However, within both the academic literature and in practice, it is only marginally acknowledged as part of peacebuilding because those directly involved within the sector, including donors, tend to limit mine action's potential narrowly within security domain rather than as an activity that supports a broader range of activities within the peacebuilding spectrum. Within academia and amongst critical scholars, mine action has escaped scrutiny all together.

For context, the underpinning research within which this paper is anchored sought to understand the extent to which the dominant critiques of the liberal peace agenda were relevant to Somaliland. To explore this, it examined the implementation of

[1] Mine Action is a collective term for 'activities which aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of landmines and ERW [explosive remnants of war], including cluster munitions' (United Nations Mine Action Service definition). These activities include advocacy, mine risk education, humanitarian demining or clearance, victim assistance, and the destruction of stockpiles. 'Mine action sector' refers collectively to the various organisations that engage in integrated approaches seeking to reduce the disastrous impact of mines and other explosive remnants of war on affected communities. The sector is not a homogenous entity; rather, each organisation maintains and performs their specialties or preferences.

landmine clearance programmes—(collectively referred to as mine action) (Njeri 2015; 2019; 2020). Some of the findings suggest that, while peacebuilding practices and narratives may place mine action as peacebuilding, research participants in Somaliland did not explicitly see this link. Yet, in response to the question on peace and peace indicators, the responses highlighted key indicators that are addressed by mine action such as mobility, security, stability, safety, freedom and lack of fear. Peacebuilding activities were articulated as the reconciliation process and the bottom-up community-led peace process. While mine action had also been initiated as part of this community-led process, respondents did not deem it as an activity linked to peacebuilding beyond the provision of employment and, even then, not necessarily because it addressed the demobilisation and employment to ex-combatants as outlined in peacebuilding doctrines. Therefore, the research questions that guide this enquiry are (i) 'why is mine action narrowly understood or seen as peacebuilding in Somaliland, yet it addresses the key indicators of peace such as mobility, stability, employment, safety and livelihoods? (ii) what limits mine action's intrinsic peacebuilding potential?

For the first question, an everyday lens was employed to make meaning of the peace indicators; in doing so, this research contributes to an empirical anchoring of the 'everyday' through the case study of mine action in Somaliland. It also contributes to the deepening of the analysis in my previous work—which demonstrates that critical scholars limit their critiques to statebuilding and institutions, thus leading to generalised critiques, devoid of context—by demonstrating that everyday bottom-up narratives may differ from those employed by international peace-support actors, and that bottom-up and top-down views of peace, and in this case peacebuilding, often rely on different sources of information.

For the second question, I acknowledge that beyond the intrinsic values of mine action's enabling potential for peacebuilding, it is not the quality of a single factor which reinforces a conflict or helps achieve sustainable peace; what counts is the way the different factors interact and the kind of context that they occur in. Therefore, I adopt a 'peaceability'[2] methodology (peace audit), whereby mine action achievements are conceptualised in terms of their role in increasing or decreasing probabilities for peace, rather than as precise cause-and-effect relationships. A peace audit therefore allows for the critical examination of practices of mine action actors, and also examines the way in which mine action is undertaken in Somaliland to understand how this has raised or lowered the probability for peace (Goodhand & Hulme 2000: 3). I posit that local communities show their resistance to this very idea when external actors take over the activity. They do this through meaning making and contributing

[2] This approach didn't seem to gain traction, but I encountered this earlier in my work and found it as a most relevant and useful as an analytical lens. See the *Peace Building and Complex Political Emergencies Working Paper Series* that introduced and used this approach.

to their own framing and understanding of notions of what they consider their everyday peace and/or peacebuilding.

The next section traces mine action within the peacebuilding discourse, highlighting how these intersect with policy and practice. This is followed by a description of Somaliland's post-conflict reconstruction context, focusing on the emergence of the reconciliation process in which mine action was identified as a critical activity. This demonstrates the intrinsic nature of mine action and demonstrates that both the reconciliation process and mine clearance processes were initiated from the bottom-up by clan elders, yet the bifurcation of the activities is demonstrated by the way in which the research respondents articulate and/or conceptualise the two activities. The third and final section examines the limitation of mine action's peaceability potential through the examination of the everyday practices of mine action actors.

Mine action and peacebuilding

Mine action is conceptualised as peace building through various process, including the normative framing through the mine ban movement, the intrinsic values of mine action as an activity and the institutionalisation of mine action within the work of the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross, among others. The UN, through the 'Agenda for Peace', explicitly called for the challenges of the presence of landmines to be addressed within a peacebuilding agenda (Boutros-Ghali 1992 paragraph 58). Thus, landmines were reframed as a humanitarian, rather than a military and security issue, linked to peacebuilding reform. Where contamination was acknowledged and accepted as a humanitarian problem, initiatives to address mine and unexploded ordinance (UXO) contamination formed an integral part of peace agreements and ceasefires.[3] The assumption being that this provided a potentially neutral platform from which parties can agree to meaningful measures. Moser-Puangsuwan (2009)

[3] As was the case for Nicaragua (1990), Cambodia (1991), El Salvador (1991), Mozambique (1992), Angola (1994), Croatia (1994), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995), Kosovo (1999), Democratic Republic of Congo (1999), Burundi (2000), Philippines (2001), Ethiopia/Eritrea (2000), Sudan (2004), Senegal (2004), Nepal (2006). Similarly in Guatemala, one of the agreements signed on 17 June 1994 was an Agreement of Resettlement of the Displaced Population due to the Armed Conflict. However, for the agreement to take effect, there was recognition of the necessity to address the problem of munitions contamination and this was highlighted and included in the agreement. A domestic approach was applied, and the Volunteer Fireman's Corps (CVB) were called to serve as a neutral actor to mine action and also as a liaison between government authorities. This was because the population was reluctant to trust the military and cooperate with it in providing information needed to conduct clearance to meet the needs of its particular post-conflict situation (Fiederlein 2005). More recent cases include Mali, Senegal and Niger where mine action projects have provided opportunities for former opponents from governments and rebel groups to cooperate to determine the extent of landmine contamination and clear the mines.

examined peace agreements and noted that indeed in contexts where the problem of contamination by mines was or is acknowledged by all parties to the conflict, this has served as a fruitful starting point for the development of joint solutions, therefore serving as a foundation for conflict resolution.

Other initiatives, such as the *1999 Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes from a Development-Oriented Point of View* (also known as the Bad Honnef[4] framework) had been developed by the mine action sector and called for the integration of mine action within peacebuilding and development. Harpviken and Skaešra (2003) suggest that this placed the framing of the sector as a component within the larger peacebuilding agenda and framed mine action as a key component within peacebuilding and development and its integration within national and local processes. While the guidelines conceptually framed mine action within peacebuilding, Jennings *et al.* (2008), took the peacebuilding palette as illustrated by the Utstein Study (Smith 2004) as a starting point and expanded it to a Humanitarian Mine Action Peacebuilding Palette as an alternative method of exploring mine action's peacebuilding potential. The 'palette approach' attempted to conceptualise the linkages between mine action, peacebuilding and development, which linked long-term developmental processes beyond outcomes, recovery and humanitarian concerns to mine clearance.

Therefore, in practice, mine action became an integral part of contemporary peacebuilding activities that collectively came to be referred to as liberal peacebuilding, a concept and practice of peacebuilding that is primarily influenced by the theoretical-political framework that is liberal peace theory (Richmond 2011; Chandler 2010; Pugh *et al.* 2008; Paris 2004). Like peacebuilding, mine action has been institutionalised in the work of the UN and international agencies, international financial institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the many actors engaged in conflict environments. It is mainly implemented by external actors based on standardised 'one size fits all templates', which are in complete collision with the contexts in which they operate. See (Njeri 2015 chapter 4) for an extensive debate on this.

The next section outlines the post-conflict reconstruction efforts that Somaliland underwent after its secession from Somalia, including the clan-led reconciliation and state building process and the efforts towards mine clearance, which were deemed critical to this process.

Somaliland's post-conflict reconstruction context

Somaliland is a non-recognised state that portrays typical characteristics of a liberal peacebuilding context, a post-conflict environment. Somaliland is 'very much

[4] Named after the venue of the conference where the guidelines were drafted: Bad Honnef, Germany.

a product of war' (Spears 2003). The immediate past closely intertwines with the history of Somalia and the armed resistance against the regime of Siyad Barre. In 1991, after the fall of Barre's regime, Somaliland made a unilateral declaration of independence and inherited some challenges, which are the legacy of the Cold and civil wars. This was followed by internal problems marked by episodes of large-scale violence. At the end of the civil strife, society became militarised not just in terms of the size of its military and the influx of the weapons into the streets, but also because of the tendency to which intergroup relations and conflict were defined in narrow military terms.

However, with the collapse of the Somalia state and its degeneration into a classic example of a 'failed State', Somaliland went through a process of state rebuilding, which saw the northern clans commence an internally driven process towards reconciliation as a means to community cohesion and state building. The clan elders (Guurti), together with hundreds of delegates and observers from across Somaliland, agreed on a peace charter that outlined the following: a transfer of power from the Somaliland National Movement interim government to a (*'beel')* community-based system; election of a civilian president (Maxamed Xaaji Ibrahim Cigal) and a vice president (Cabdirahman aw Cali), and adoption of a national charter and a peace charter.[5] The Academy for Peace and Development in Hargeisa, in collaboration with Interpeace, documented the process that brought peace and stability and they cite no less than 38 clan-based peace and reconciliation conferences and meetings between 1990 and 1997 (A.P.D./Interpeace 2008: 13; Ibrahim and Terlinden 2010). This process of reconciliation went hand in hand with the state-building process where grassroots peace negotiations served as the basis of constructing the state. According to Debiel *et al.* (2009: 41) 'under circumstances where the state gained a foothold, it increasingly became a central "arena" of governance with formal rules of the game gaining importance'.

Various factors are attributed to the success of the reconciliation process, not least that it was locally owned and materially supported by the communities and the diaspora Somalilanders; it involved voluntary participation from each clan with a broad-based consultation process; and agreement was consensual, meaning that resolutions were inclusive (Ibrahim and Terlinden 2010). This process did not have to adhere to any deadlines, such as those associated with liberal peacebuilding processes in Somalia (Phillips 2013). This process resulted in a hybrid system of government which incorporates an elected president and lower house of parliament with an upper house that consists of traditional clan elders known as the *guurti* (Walls and Kibble,

[5] These were intended to serve as the basis for efforts towards peacebuilding and state-building during a further transitional period of two years.

2010: 5).[6] The clan elders became the custodians of conflict management, including the application of customary law and negotiating political disputes. This has been widely viewed both within Somaliland and externally as a key ingredient of peace that prevails today (Menkhaus 2006).

At the onset of this locally led process, elders representing their clans acknowledged that mines and other unexploded ordnances and their extant challenges needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The government of Siyad Barre had bombarded the region with artillery and aerial shelling, reducing the region to rubble and leaving thousands of UXO, and dwellings and water points had been extensively mined (ICG 2003; Landmine Monitor 1999). Thus, the clan elders leading the reconciliation process unanimously agreed that mine clearance was a pre-requisite to any peace and reconciliation or rebuilding process (WSP International 2005). They also agreed that this was to be carried out by the ex-combatants from the Somaliland National Movement, who formed an indigenous mine clearance body, civilian clearance outfit called the Humanitarian Mine Clearance Pioneer Corps, commonly referred to as 'Pioneers' (Omaar *et al.* 1993).

This approach had two key advantages: as in other contexts where the problem of landmines is acknowledged by all parties to the conflict, it served as a fruitful starting point for the development of joint solutions between the conflicting clans; this decision by the elders was not conceived or conceptualised as a standardised Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme—which were to dominate the post-conflict peacebuilding interventions[7]—even though it was to be undertaken by ex-combatants. The approach did play a crucial role for the demobilisation of ex-combatants and provided an alternative employment to those who had largely been engaged in the rebellion—mine clearance presenting them with an opportunity of demobilising and reintegrating with their respective communities.

Formally working under the Somaliland Ministry of Defence on a voluntary basis, they operated with basic equipment that had been salvaged from the national

[6] Walls and Kibble describe a *guurti* as any individual or group who assumes a mediatory role. They argue that this term has, more recently, been institutionalised and, many would argue, politicised in the Somaliland context through its application to the upper house of the parliament. The etymology of the term refers to the necessary wisdom of any person or group responsible for mediating disputes and can be applied to individuals or groups at various levels (Walls and Kibble, 2010: 8).

[7] One of the Elders interviewed for this research, a former Pioneer himself and who had been involved in mine action work in parliament, argued that the response at the time was not informed and argues that this work predated the standardised DDR programs which were to later dominate post-conflict peacebuilding interventions, but had at its core the disarmament or arms management program, the facilitation of demobilisation and the reintegration of ex-combatants.

army. The initial team comprised of 60 volunteers[8] who had served as combat engineers (probably laying mines) during the war (Landmine Monitor 1999). While the challenge was daunting, the work of the Pioneers was commended for initiating and drawing attention to the huge challenges that contamination was causing. Their work was inadequate compared to the need, and 40 per cent of the initial group lost their lives or were injured, mainly due to the lack of proper equipment, but also because of the way in which the mines had been laid (Omaar *et al.* 1993: 54).

At the time there were only two[9] humanitarian mine clearance organisations globally and these had only just been constituted. It took the injury of two German nurses working with *Médecins Sans Frontières*, an aid organisation, for the challenges encountered by the Pioneers to come to the attention of the European Economic Commission (EEC) delegation based in the Kenyan capital. Following this incident, the EEC provided funding to a British commercial company called RIMFIRE to survey, support through training and equip the work of the Pioneers. This was a period marred by political upheaval as the Somaliland community was recalibrating after an intense period of armed conflict with Somalia. It was also a time when most of the reconstruction efforts by the international actors were being directed to the crisis in Southern Somalia. This means that there were limited resources available, and therefore communities associated the presence of demining with opportunities for employment and procurement of contracts, which were seen as more important than the removal of landmines. This led to problems with hiring and subcontracting for RIMFIRE. Menkhaus (2006: 6) notes that 'in some instances the lucrative business that demining contracts generated resulted in Somali communities actually planting new landmines in order to create new demining opportunities'. The different clans also viewed mine clearance assets and the cleared mines as their own resources, which could advance their cause, thus looting of vehicles and other assets such as radios, vehicle antennas, ballistic jackets and helmets belonging to RIMFIRE became a common occurrence. The politicisation of mine clearance eventually led to the breakdown of the relationship with the Somaliland government and their acrimonious exit (Njeri forthcoming 2022; Omaar *et al.* 1993).

Before RIMFIRE's exit, the United Nations Operation in Somalia II briefly took over the responsibility of demining in Somalia, including Somaliland and requested RIMFIRE to continue working in Somaliland while they developed their future strategies. This coincided with the UN's embrace of the DDR process as an essential

[8] More were recruited over time.

[9] These were HALO Trust, founded in 1988 in Afghanistan by a retired British military officer, and Mines Advisory Group UK, founded in 1989 in the UK initially undertaking assessment missions in Afghanistan and Cambodia in 1990 and 1991 with the intention that their findings would mobilise governments and international agencies about the impact of landmines on civilians. A report on Somaliland was also a key document that contributed to this discourse.

element of its multidimensional post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction function, with demining being part this (Boutros-Ghali 1992).

With the exit of RIMFIRE, no serious mine action programmes were carried out; this was also a period when there wasn't the expertise for carrying out humanitarian demining in the complex emergency; however, it was reported that almost 78,000 mines were removed and the number of civilians injured by mines dropped considerably (Research Directorate 1995).[10] The role of the Pioneers and their contribution in supporting RIMFIRE was seen as critical in facilitation reconstruction (as highlighted by the quote from a UN senior manager during an interview). To date, reference to the Pioneers elicits reflections of respect and admiration from the community.

> When we went in in the 90s, the whole security, the operational situation was very difficult. Even as late as 1999 it was bad so there is no doubt that the Pioneers worked on an incredibly difficult situation. Security was a lot worse than when we were there. And I think and I believe now, and I've said that I take my hat off to those guys. I think they did a great job. The NGOs subsequently spent a lot of time completing the clearance of several of those big mine fields down near the border that RIMFIRE and the Pioneers were not able to complete because of insecurity problems. And yes, they missed mines undoubtedly and I saw mines that went off, but the thing is they reduced the risk in those areas.[11]

When the security situation improved about mid-1999, various international humanitarian mine action NGOs, through funding from various donors, started mine action programmes in Somaliland. At the peak, Somaliland had at least five international organisations[12] coordinated by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to undertake various mine action related activities. Mine action continues to be undertaken by international actors to date.

In conclusion, both these activities were initiated by community leaders and occurred in tandem; however, reconciliation and state building has become an example that liberal democratic state building is not the only way to generate social order and has become a prime example of a bottom-up hybrid form of peacebuilding (Boege *et al.* 2009); it has been offered as an alternative approach for peacebuilders (Pugh *et al.* 2008; Richmond 2010). However, mine action was part of a bottom-up peacebuilding process, an activity that, while it was initially locally led, was also first to be taken over by external actors. Critical peacebuilding scholars have

[10] Accessed 7 January 2022 at https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=3ae6a8060.

[11] Interview in Nairobi, 13 September 2012, with senior mine action manager. The person had worked with various mine action organisations in various positions, including technical advisor, programme manager and regional director. At the time of the interview, he had left the Somaliland and was an independent consultant but still within the sector.

[12] Including Danish Demining Group, HALO Trust, Santa Barbara Foundation, Handicap International, Care International and Mine Tech (a commercial company hired by UNDP).

not engaged in examining mine action vis a vis peacebuilding, illustrating that their critiques are based on systems, structures and organisational values of international peacebuilding based on a single interpretation—liberal peacebuilding, that is, state building. These critics centre external actors as integral to this process and call for them to be more context-sensitive and supportive of local ownership in peacebuilding (Pouligny 2009; Sending 2009b). Doing this they sacrifice concern for community, local needs and everyday experience, thus their critiques are generalised and are a broad-brush over diverse contexts, which limits a nuanced contextual analysis. These critics fall short and skim over how communities in given spaces conceive of conflict and peace because this narrative is usually outside of the ambit of external observers. Therefore, an everyday peace lens is required as this seeks to interrogate this invisible 'hidden transcript' (Mac Ginty 2013: 425). As an approach, the everyday lens takes into account activities that are excluded and gives agency to those who are marginalised, using these experiences as the basis for a more responsive way of understanding peace. Similarly, reconceptualising and complicating a notion of 'everyday peace' as embodied recognises the Somaliland community as knowledgeable commentators and observers of their world, as the following section will illustrate.

Understanding peace and peacebuilding through everyday narratives

Instead of starting with a predefined concept of peace, an 'everyday peace lens' calls for and invokes investigating the notion of peace in a specific context. Of importance, is the awareness that the way in which societies conceptualise peace and therefore peacebuilding is dependent on various factors including the society itself, its history, cultural and social foundations and the legacies of violence it has as experienced. Similarly, Boulding (2000) argued that a basic process of socialisation of social groups is developed over time and is rooted not only in local culture, but also informed by the immediate environment and the historical memory of times of crisis and change. This is evident in Somaliland, where peace conceptualised narrowly of as an antithesis of war. This view dominated the way in which the interviewees responded to this question—'what is peace?' The absence of armed violence was articulated in comparison to the rest of Somalia—as expressed in the following excerpts.

> Peace is the absence of armed violence in everyday life. Hargeisa is not like Mogadishu. (Local NGO actor).

> To the Somaliland people, the indicator that the country is in peace is the absence of war. (Government official)

> As a nation coming from civil war, the usual indication for peace is that we are free from war (Former deminer).
>
> Somaliland people see peace by looking from their own perspective; even though the situation is bad, so long as people are not killing one another, then there is peace; the people do not care about poverty, this has always been there. (Academic, University of Hargeisa)
>
> On a more personal level, peace is being safe and the experience of safety in my country. (Somaliland mine action centre, official)
>
> The first thing would be that there are no raids or attacks. If there is for example a shooting in the village, it will be treated as an isolated incidence. So, people in the village may not say that they are not peaceful. So, I think absence of war may be considered as peace (Programmes officer—international NGO)

Peace was also framed in concepts such of mobility, safety, security, stability, freedom and lack of fear, which are all-encompassing conditions. This is relevant especially in the broader conceptualisation of peace as applied within what can broadly fit within the human security discourse. In this conception, peace is akin to security, which is associated with personal security and not the security of the country—thus, embracing the basic tenets of human security, where to be at peace is a matter first reflected in the lives of the people and not in the larger notion of the state. Peace was linked to personal levels and rarely at state level and this was mainly to the absence of fear and with mobility:

> People living free from fear and able to move freely. Mobility of the people is an important indicator for us a community that we are at peace. (Peacebuilding coordinator, government office)
>
> There is no conflict. When they see people working, business is open, movement of people. No conflicts with rivals, no fear of movement and can carry out all the operations they need to. (Government official)
>
> I wake up in the morning I can come to work safely, I can go to town and buy stuff, I can go with my girlfriend to public places such as restaurants without fear etc. I can also access facilities such as medical, education, mosques, etc; all this are the indicators for peace. (Local NGO interviewee)

According to one interviewee, peace is when there is physical security; and this relates with concepts of basic freedoms such as freedom from needs (such as hunger), and in a more restricted sense, that people should be free from fear (of war, for example). This conceptualisation was expressed within the comforts of the cultural explanations.

> Physical security is one (indicator of peace) and when I add 'milk' it is because of the other security which is the basic needs. Both are very important. The other thing is, because of the clan system social support system is involved and that is important for building peace. So having good relations with other is part of the peace. That is peace at all levels. (Programme manager—Local NGO)

Exploring the missing link between mine action and peacebuilding

The dominant narrative by international actors engaged in addressing landmine contamination tends to focus on demining as a peacebuilding activity because clearance, and to a certain extent mine risk education, contributes to safety and security for communities and facilitates mobility. The official lingua by the mine action sector continually justified mine action as peacebuilding because they argued 'it facilitated the nomadic way of life especially in providing an enabling environment for the free movement of livestock an important economic activity for the communities'. However, despite mine action directly facilitating mobility for communities and/or including livestock movement through improved infrastructure, at the time of this research mine action was not considered a priority by the majority of those interviewed, both international and local actors; and neither did the mine action practitioners themselves consider mine action as peacebuilding.

What the responses below demonstrate is that, as with peace, the immediate history also dictated what activities were considered under the peacebuilding umbrella. Peacebuilding was linked to the reconciliation process that the communities underwent.

> In the Somaliland context, when we talk about peacebuilding, we are talking about reconciliation among clans and political groups. (International actor, mine action organisation)

> Peacebuilding is both the reconciliation and conflict resolution process and also later on building on common interests. (Local NGO)

Beyond community reconciliation, peacebuilding was linked to the reconstitution of security, order and the state and the overwhelming view was that this activity was the reserve of the local communities in the absence of international actors.

> The peacebuilding in Somaliland did not have anything to do with international agencies here and I think that is a good thing. Peacebuilding is still local. (Local academic)

> Peace is what we have built from scratch. It's not peace that is coming from outside. It is not people coming to mediate or the international community coming to this. Peace is at the grass root level, house to house. (Women's rights activist)

As an activity, therefore, peacebuilding was seen as being outside the remit of any external actors and confined to the elders and government officials; this view was articulated by both local and international actors, including those from the mine action sector, as illustrated below.

> As you know, in Somaliland we do have our own perception of peacebuilding and I don't think our partner international organisation does see most of the post conflict reconstruction work as a part of peacebuilding except on issues of governance. The peacebuilding in Somaliland didn't have anything to do with international agencies here and I think that was a good thing. Peacebuilding is still local. (Senior academic & politician)

> We still have problems. The problems we have are the same ones we had before. Clan conflicts, land disputes. However, this is still not for the international community to sort out. It is for us, the elders, the parliamentarians, and Somaliland people. We have parliamentarians and elders from each of the two sides, they talk together and then talk to us. UNDP or other international actors have nothing to do with that. (Somali elder, previously engaged in mine action)

Similarly, while the majority of those interviewed indicated that freedom of movement, mobility of people and physical security were important indicators for peace, one would have expected, then, an activity whose outcome directly facilitated (which mine clearance does) would mean this would be included as such; however, very few interviewees saw this. For those who did, for example the interviewees below, the link was tenuous and linked to livelihoods.

> Well, mine action is peacebuilding because if you define peace as absence of physical harm, then mines cause physical harm. So, it is peacebuilding. It is giving people security, freeing grazing area thus improving the economy. Mine clearance helps people move freely. But the question is who laid the mines in the first place? Is it Somaliland people or is it someone else? People do not see it as peacebuilding and neither do I see it as peacebuilding component. It is just an extra activity. (Local actor—INGO programme manager)

They acknowledged, however, that mine clearance did create a secure environment, though the majority did not see the relationship or linkage of mine action to peace or peacebuilding. This view was expressed by those who worked within the sector either directly or indirectly, and there was no distinction in views between national and international actors.

> There is peace, therefore mine clearance is not part of creating that peace, but is part of reconstruction. (UNHCR head of sub-office)

A senior UN official based in Nairobi who had oversight of the UN-led activities in the region suggested that while peacebuilding was linked to mine action generally, the Somaliland context was different and therefore mine action did not contribute to peacebuilding.

> I suppose it depends—because mine action is such a broad range of activities as well as peacebuilding involves a broad line of activities. An activity might not be related to peace building at all but because of the situation, it does. In Somaliland, removal of explosives in communities increases stability but that doesn't necessarily bring peacebuilding.

Similarly, a programme manager with one of the clearance organisations shared the same views as a senior academic and politician who had previously been engaged in campaigning against the use of landmines. Neither saw the link between mine action and peacebuilding; the mine action programme manager argued that mine clearance and peacebuilding were mutually exclusive.

> I don't necessarily see mine action as peacebuilding because the problem of mines in Somaliland is based on a war that ended in the mid-70s. The clearance of them now is not remotely relevant to peacebuilding in Somaliland. Because they are basically just an historical wreck that causes accidents on occasions or prevent the full use of land. They are not doing anything necessarily to affect peace. You could argue, and it has been argued, that the continued presence of large tank mines or large caliber ammunition provides a supply of explosives which could then be used for terrorism or other purposes. There has been some evidence of this. So, you could argue that the full clearance and destruction of those minefields will remove that threat. But generally, without that dynamic, and that dynamic doesn't exist for instance in Angola, and Angola has peace, and it still has mines. So, I am not entirely sure of the full link of mine clearance and peace. They are mutually exclusive. (International actor—programme manager, mine action organisation)

> I think mine action is done and has nothing to do with peacebuilding. Mine action has to do with reducing the risk of people using mines during conflict, but it is not in itself part of peacebuilding. But it reduces our ability to use mines during conflict. Based on that you need to make people see that using landmines is not the way and also you need to make sure that there are not landmines in the hands of individuals or militias. So that's where it would fit. (Senior academic & local politician)

Thus, as highlighted earlier, while within the academic literature and in practice, mine action is acknowledged to contribute to peacebuilding, it has been within the narrow view of mine action's role in enhancing security, with this being linked closely to the DDR programmes where provision of employment for ex-combatants is critical. The provision of employment was repeatedly highlighted by those who were interviewed. The mine action sector in general was seen as key in this. Unemployment remains a huge problem in Somaliland; therefore, any activity that is seen to employ a huge workforce is deemed as contributing positively to reconstruction and therefore peacebuilding. This view was common amongst both international and local actors working within the mine action sector; these two select quotes highlight the majority of those views.

> Well, I think mine action contributes hugely especially when we go into these remote communities where they've had no outside assistance or very limited outside assistance. Quite often in these types of communities there is tension and conflict because there is nothing else for people to do. There's no job, there's no accompaniment and in the case of Somaliland for example, there are limited resources for land. Eventually there is potential and then we have organisations that go clearing when there's a task and for a number of months employ local people, the local economy is slightly better because there is money. Whether it is the deminers who go out to the shops and purchase food, and other items or the local people benefit because the agricultural land has been cleared and they can go by and start ploughing, or they can even graze their animals. So, you know all of this contributes to peacebuilding efforts. (Former deminer, mine clearance INGO)

> In terms of peacebuilding as one of the mine clearance NGO that is arguably the fourth or third largest employer in Somaliland. Having 400–800 men employed, getting busy every day,

> getting a salary is a huge benefit. So, in that way there is a little bit more justification of mine action as peacebuilding. (Senior UNMAS official)

This view was further reflected in a response to Lardner's (2008: 26) evaluation of one of mine clearance organisation's activities on livelihood; the observation was made that given the large number of staff over the particular programmes' ten years of mine action, it had undoubtedly contributed to societal benefits. Mine clearance organisations used the concept of operations referred to by Willet (2003: 56) as 'proximity demining', which meant that the staff were recruited locally to work on local tasks. This evaluation report supported the view of some of those interviewed that this benefited the communities from a financial perspective and appears to have had a positive impact to society in the parts of Somaliland where the sector operated.

In conclusion, therefore, we see that the historical turmoil that the country has gone through, and the efforts made to achieve stability, have shaped the way in which activities are perceived in Somaliland; this process and efforts and the resultant peace is locally owned. Peacebuilding was also seen primarily as activities that deal with conflict resolution. To the majority of the interviewees, peacebuilding could not be anything other than efforts towards the resolving of conflicts, as witnessed post-1991, and the continued role that is carried out by the elders in addressing everyday conflicts.

While mine action was initiated by community leaders, external actors have predominantly remained at the core. Thus, while there was acknowledgement that there are elements of mine action which can be seen contributing to peacebuilding, those interviewed delinked it from being a core peacebuilding activity. Thus, while the academic literature and actors have previously limited mine action to security, the link by those interviewed is tenuous and it is only linked to peacebuilding because of its ability to address other priority needs in society such as provision of employment. This limitation, I would argue, is because of the centrality of external actors as key drivers within mine action in contrast to the centrality of local community leaders in reconciliation related activities. The extent to why and how this limits the framing will be examined in the next section.

Thus, while the notions of peace are not beyond the statist, liberal peace that prevails in peacebuilding literature and that places the international actors at the core and local actors as having no agency misses the nuanced reality on the ground. As demonstrated, even for international actors working at the grassroots level, their understanding of local contexts indicates a departure in view from those who work in the political and bureaucratic frameworks in mainly headquarters or policy spaces; and also contradicts the dominant views of liberal peacebuilding. This contrasts with the way in which critics present international peacebuilders as a homogenous entity; the critiques suggest that their (international peacebuilders/interveners) notions of

peace and peacebuilding are in contrast with those of communities that they engage with.

What limits mine action's intrinsic peacebuilding potential?

This section returns to the key question that this paper sought to answer: why was mine action only narrowly understood or seen as peacebuilding, especially by communities, yet it addressed the key indicators of peace such as mobility, employment, safety and livelihoods? The historical context of Somaliland contributed to the limitation of the extent to which mine action is conceptualised within peacebuilding. Employing Goodhand's peace audit (peaceability) approach, mine action is viewed to have intrinsic peacebuilding outcomes as discerned in the immediate post-conflict period, when at the end of hostilities activities helped in reducing deaths and injuries and, most importantly, facilitated relative safety for the return of refugees and internally displaced. It provided an enabling environment for rebuilding economies, opened transportation routes and other infrastructure and, most importantly, it continues to be a source of employment.

While an everyday lens on mine action suggests a tenuous link to peacebuilding, this is not because of the liberal nature of the activity but a result of several processes, including that mine action is no longer a priority now that time has passed. Landmines and UXOs no longer have a prohibitive presence in Somaliland's landscape, thus while justifiably there was a great reduction in rates of new accidents and victims, this diminished the humanitarian role for mine action related activities, especially demining. Mine action has therefore become less central, and current programmes are expected to be more in support of development as is already the main role of demining in other places. Thus, the mine action sector is slowly realigning itself in order to continue to be relevant; this interaction remains minimal. The sector has engaged with activities beyond the traditional mine clearance role, increasing its peaceability potential.

Autesserre (2014: 53) suggests that the source of the problem also lies in the very act of imposition of the everyday practice of the interveners on the ground. I argue that the everyday modes of operation and behaviour are some of the factors that contributed to negative perceptions about mine action, hence diminishing the extent to which society can conceptualise mine action as peacebuilding. The peace audit methodologies call for and allow for a critical examination of practices of mine action actors, and also examine the way in which mine action is undertaken in Somaliland to understand how this has raised or lowered the probability for peace (Goodhand & Hulme 2000: 3).

Everyday practices of mine action actors

The informalities, ambiguities and contradictions that peacebuilding runs into reflect the political nature of the process. These become visible when examined from the everyday practices of the actors involved. Similarly, Autesserre (2014) observes that the social lives of international peacebuilders, in this case mine action actors, their personal relationships and their informal actions carry an enormous significance in post-conflict zones. Therefore, local populations comprehended mine action interventions through the daily activities of the sector actors on the ground, their contrasting lifestyles, values and behaviour—for example, arrogant or derogatory attitudes towards local populations were highlighted by many of those who were interviewed. These attitudes were perpetuated by little or no contact with local people, therefore building an air of arrogance by mine action actors. These attitudes were pointed out by the majority of the interviewees. I was also privy to conversations within the sector and the anecdotes exchanged during informal conversations about the sector—for example, members of the community highlighted that they saw mine action organisations only in their very badly driven vehicles, and only heard of them in relation to the various labour disputes that were on-going and that were reported in the local media. The drivers were seen to drive carelessly, which led to a number of road accidents, mainly involving the numerous livestock that roam around Hargeisa. The running joke amongst the expatriate community is that if these organisations hit a goat, the owner always insisted that the goat was a she goat and pregnant at the time (even where the goat is proven to be a 'he' goat). The cost of this was sometimes as high as $300 per goat.[13] This was because it happened all the time and the local communities learnt to take advantage of the numerous accidents and saw them as economic opportunities.

Similarly, the behaviour of the expat staff in general in Somaliland, and especially that of the employees of one mine action organisation, were often a subject of resentment. Thus, even where the values of the sector and its operations might not necessarily have contradicted their local views of the world, the baggage, modus operandi, technique and personal behaviour of expat mine action workers often did. Thus, for those interviewed, mine action employees were generally linked with the vilification of their organisations in the media and this overwhelmingly negative perception of their role at the local level contributed to a credibility crisis. This was also reflected by one senior programme manager who recalled being driven out of sites at gun point by the local communities, partly because there had been lack of communication with the communities and hence lack of appreciation of what each party expected.[14]

[13] Research diary notes.

[14] Research diary notes.

These negative perceptions were never addressed, and this could be attributed to the common approach of the operations of sector agencies' access to communities being widely through the relationships of their staff and partners with local power-holders. There was a failure to assess or monitor local perceptions of their presence and activities and their senior managers' direct presence on the ground was often limited. This may have meant that they remained largely unaware of how negatively they are viewed among the majority of their client populations.

There are several factors that determine this behaviour; and these are based on daily work routines driven by the securitised responses contexts within which mine action in Somaliland took place. These saw agencies harden themselves through strengthening protection and more readily adopting deterrence measures (Van Brabant 2010: 8), a process that came to be known as 'bunkerisation' or 'conflict proofing', and hence eschewing direct relations with local populations (Duffield 2012; Goodhand 2000) with implications which are outlined below.

Implications of 'bunkerisation' on communication

The most visible of these deterrence measures for the host community has been the widespread retreat of international aid workers into their own expatriate world of the UN and international NGO compounds and residential units that are fortified and inaccessible. Bunkered compounds restricted and protected movement and short deployments, all contributing to aid actors 'substituting acquaintance for knowledge, activity for understanding, reporting for analysis, [and] quantity of work for quality'. The routines dictated procedures which in turn continued to have an impact on how the perceptions of local communities emerged.

Similarly, the bunkerisation did not just create physical barriers but also made it difficult for the mine action sector actors to appreciate or understand the people and societies they were engaged with. This led to policies that contributed to the formation of hierarchies between local and international staff, and between international organisations and the communities they sought to serve.

Communication constraints as a result of the nature of mine action and bunkerisation

There was a lack of communication, whether explicitly or implicitly, about the sector's projects and a lack of clear information on what the sector was trying to achieve. The sector lacked any systematic or reliable approach to understanding or engaging with the interests and agendas of other stakeholders, a problem significantly compounded by the social and physical detachment and weak contextual knowledge of many sector workers, especially the decision makers within the organisations. The view of those

interviewed was that, generally, mine action organisations were very secretive. Such views were common, and I was constantly asked 'so what are those people doing?' whenever I mentioned that I was researching the role of mine clearance agencies.

Mine action has historically be seen as a secretive operation and, during the later life cycle of the programmes, it can be disconnected from the local community, a practice that created local grievances with the community. The secrecy is likely a carry-over that the sector has to overcome because of their reliance on personnel from a military background. Those employed by the UN on mine action related activities, and other mine action implementing organisations, largely rely on the same competence in advisory and leadership positions of former military personnel—and are therefore less different in orientation than their basic mandates might suggest. While national armies are the most common government body in terms of engagement in mine action, the sector previously sought military competence when recruiting internationally.[15] This explains the secrecy in carrying out their work, which contributes to a negative perception from the community towards mine action, which is seen as part of a western conspiracy. The majority of those interviewed perceived mine action as an activity that is shrouded in secrecy, externally driven (by foreigners) and not responsive to the immediate needs of the Somaliland people. Mine action workers being primarily ex-military meant that their motives were questioned by members of the communities that they are trying to help.

The lack of communication is not just with the local communities but also across the sector, as the relationships between the different mine action organisations and the UN were somewhat tepid. The organisations were reticent towards collaboration with others and amongst themselves. While this can be attributed to the nature of mine action, this contributed greatly to the cynicism regarding the role of mine action, thereby limiting the peaceability potential of the activity to peripheral activities that the sector undertakes as outlined below.

> I don't think these institutions responsible for the mine clearance are very sincere with what they are doing. I think it is some kind of business so that they stay here for long. Yes in 1991 you could hear that they are collecting some number of mines, explosive shells and they are exploding them somewhere so that you could see. Since 1995, or 1997, I have never heard of that. You see them having tents in agricultural areas with a line of stools with line making them white etc. (Director of an independent research institute in Hargeisa)

The nature of the mine action sector in perpetuating distrust

The lack of interaction with ordinary people, due in part to perceived security concerns, meant that the sector actors did not interact with the local people who might

[15] This still remains the practice because of the technical expertise in some roles within the sector.

have challenged the dominant ways of acting and suggested alternative solutions. The result of this was a culture of distrust between the mine action sector and local communities; however, the distrust was not entirely due to the disconnect but also due to the extent to which the sector was deemed sincere in their operations. For example, the time frame and goalposts of meeting the clearance targets constantly shifted. There were repeated claims that mines/UXOs had an impact on the livestock and agricultural sector and that minefields principally blocked agricultural and grazing land—two activities that forms the backbone of Somaliland's economy.[17] A claim that was repeatedly cited by mine action organisations in annual reports, on their websites and to donors was that while mines did create danger, any impact on livestock would have expected to raise concerns with the communities, relevant ministries or with the government in general; however, this was not the case, especially at the time of research. The livestock sector contributes to and accounts for more than 60 per cent of the GDP and 85 per cent of foreign exchange; 70 per cent of the population also finds employment from the sector. It would therefore follow that if mines still had an impact, this would have been a reason for concern at the time. According to an economist at the ministry, the impact of mines and UXOs on the economy in general or on livestock was not significant.

The sector did not seem to see the importance of informing the local communities about what was being done so that they could fully understand and appreciate what they were aiming for, especially since there was lack of visibility in information of explosive devices being destroyed. There was scepticism as to what the deminers were doing and aiming to achieve as previously mine clearance was always accompanied by public demolitions; as this was no longer the case, the perception of those interviewed was that there were indeed no mines and therefore no need for demining.

The lack of communication, the secrecy, the use of ex-military (as programme managers) and the diminishing need for mine clearance added to the commonly believed myth that the mine clearance organisations were actually placing mines in some of these areas in order to justify their existence.

> Some people even have the perception that the agencies are putting the mines because for as long as they have been doing demining, they should have cleared all by now. It is an overdue programme. (Senior NGO worker)

The issue here was that the impact of mines was no longer being felt as there were fewer accidents, and their impact was no longer curtailing movement, including that of animals as it had done previously. This was dramatically illustrated when I first visited a demining site just outside Hargeisa, Makadra demining task, in November 2012, where deminers were using heavy machinery but this did not appear to deter

[15] See more at: http://www.halotrust.org/where-we-work/somaliland#sthash.mxZPS4EA.dpuf, accessed 19 July 2021.

or hinder the daily activities undertaken by those living in and around the areas. The local people were grazing their animals and going about other normal activities with full view of the demining activities and with total disregard for 'safety' and/or whatever was going on in the vicinity.

The weakness of the sector became more about the culture of aid that reduced interaction, the behaviour of sector workers and the endemic distrust between the sector agencies. Among host populations, the negative cultural and organisational factors illuminated by the fact that mine action was no longer seen as a priority and the impact of the sector's intervention was perceived as limited and at times not visible.

Kurtenbach (2007) has argued that the way in which societies conceptualise peace, and therefore peacebuilding, is dependent on various factors, including the society itself, its history, cultural and social foundations, and the legacies of violence it has experienced. In the same way as societies do this, so would those intervening who have engaged in such contexts and therefore drawn from their conceptualisation based on the same. Thus, this negates the view that these interventions have failed due to contrasting notions of peace. This conclusion of the failure is based on the measure of whether a Weberian state has not been the outcome. A state centric approach also means there is a limited critical engagement on other issues such as mine action. These critiques do not engage in the nuanced acknowledgement of other factors that interact with the peacebuilding interventions to the extent that they would limit the efficacy and therefore peacebuilding outcomes of such activities.

Conclusion

Examining how community's lived experiences of conflicts and peacebuilding has shaped their narratives around the issues of peace and peacebuilding has grown from a critique of liberal approaches to peacebuilding, of which Somaliland is an example, but the idea of 'everyday peace' has not been examined in as much as the extent to which the exemplar of hybridity (Boege *et al.* 2009) vis a vis Somaliland has been. This paper therefore addresses this gap by demonstrating the applicability to Somaliland through an examination of the mine action sector.

While the academic literature and the interpretation of the Somaliland space locate mine action as having been central and facilitated peacebuilding, it is clear that this conceptualisation only remains as an academic exercise (external), which is in contrast with the views of both local actors and international actors who inhabit the mine action space in Somaliland. This demonstrates that views and sometimes instructions from capitals and headquarters do not automatically translate into views (in this case) or action in the field. The interveners are a diverse group with contrasting views, which do not reflect the policy statements. This article therefore

supports the argument for the need to break up the often-one-sided view of external actors. It supports the call to resist the conflating notion of a 'dominant peacebuilding culture' (Autesserre 2010) and argues for greater integration of different perspectives while considering the full spectrum of actors and activities that are involved in local-level peacebuilding efforts. As noted, just as the dynamics of war and peace on the ground are usually different from those at the level of the state (Autesserre 2010), so are the perceptions, conceptualisation and understanding of peace and peacebuilding.

Conceptualisation of peace and peacebuilding in Somaliland has been shaped by the context in which the state was founded, Somaliland's history and the conflict transformative process that has taken place. When one talks of peacebuilding in Somaliland, a number of assumptions are made—that peacebuilding is about reconciliation and state building (that is the reconstitution of the state from scratch), that peacebuilding is outside the remit of any external actors, and finally that peacebuilding is confined to the elders and government officials. Through using the case study of mine clearance as an external intervention, I have demonstrated how localised perceptions of peace and peacebuilding are not only articulated in different ways to top-down narratives but that external actors—such as mine clearance organisations—have a role in changing the perception of what local actors consider as peacebuilding. For mine action, this conceptualisation is informed by the sector actors, including their relationship with the communities, the sector's identity and values and, most importantly, the sector programmes. This then shapes the perceptions of the communities, and a narrative is formed based on the historical association with peacebuilding, sector behaviour and sector programmes. Evidently from the narratives, the mine action's 'peaceability' potential is increased by its intrinsic capacities that support peacebuilding and peacebuilding processes; however, the sector's behaviour limits that potential.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge funding by the African Leadership Centre through the Carnegie Foundation. This facilitated travel to attend and present this paper at the conference *Building Sustainable Peace: Ideas, Evidence, and Strategies*—an interdisciplinary conference on the state of the field of peace research and practice and the nexus between them, held on 7–10 November 2019, at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. I also wish to thank the journal's anonymous reviewers, and my colleague at HPG—ODI Oliver Lough for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The standard disclaimers apply.

References

A.P.D./Interpeace (2008), *Peace in Somaliland: An Indigenous Approach to Statebuilding (The Search for Peace Somali Programme)* (Nairobi, Interpeace).

Autesserre, S. (2010), 'The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding'. *Trouble with Congo*.

Autesserre, S. (2014), *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Boege, V., Brown, M.A., Clements, K.P. and Nolan, A. (2009), 'On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: What is Failing – States in the Global South or Research and Politics in the West?' in *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation Dialogue Series* 8, 15–35.

Boulding, E. (2000), *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (New York, Syracuse University Press).

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992), An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-Keeping: Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992 (New York, United Nations).

Chandler, D. (2010), 'The uncritical critique of "liberal peace"', *Review of international studies*, 36(S1): 137–155.

Collinson, S. *et al.* (2013), 'Paradoxes of presence, Risk management and aid culture in challenging environments, Humanitarian Policy Group' (London, ODI) citing S. Cowper-Coles (2011) *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* (London, Harper Press).

Debiel, T., Glassner, R., Schetter, C. & Terlinden, U. (2009), 'Local State-Building in Afghanistan and Somaliland', *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 21: 38–44.

Duffield, M. (2012), 'Challenging environments: Danger, resilience and the aid industry', *Security Dialogue,* 43(5): 475–492.

Fiederlein, S. (2005), 'The Benefits of a Regional Approach to Mine Action', *Journal of Mine Action,* 9(1) https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol9/iss1/8

Goodhand, J. (2002), 'Aiding Violence or Building Peace? The Role of International Aid in Afghanistan', *Third World Quarterly,* 23(5): 837–859.

Goodhand, J. & Hulme, D. (2000), *Peace Building and Complex Political Emergencies Working Paper Series*. Manchester University. https://www.gdi.manchester.ac.uk/research/publications/working-paper-archive/peace-building-and-complex-political-emergencies/

Harpviken, K.B., Isaksen, J. (2004), *Reclaiming the Fields of War: Mainstreaming Mine Action in Development* (New York and Oslo, United Nations Development Programme).

Harpviken, K.B. and Skaešra, B.A. (2003), 'Humanitarian mine action and peace building: exploring the relationship', *Third World Quarterly,* 24(5): 809–822 https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659032000132867

Ibrahim, M.H. & Terlinden, U. (2010), 'Somaliland "Home Grown" Peacemaking and Political Reconstruction', in *Whose Peace is it Anyway? Connect. Somali Int. peacemaking l.*

ICG (2003), *Somaliland: Democratization and its Discontent* (Brussels, Nairobi, International Crisis Group).

Jennings, K., Ruge, C.H., Taylor, M., Cave, R., Moyes, R. and Taylor, S. (2008), *Peacebuilding & Humanitarian Mine Action: Strategic Possibilities and Local Practicalities* (Oslo; London, Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies and Landmine Action UK).

Kjellman, K.E., Harpviken, K.B., Millard, A.S. and Strand, A. (2003), 'Acting as one? co-ordinating responses to the landmine problem', *Third World Quarterly,* 24(5): 855–871, doi: 10.1080/0143659032000132894

Landmine Monitor (1999), *Landmine Monitor Report 1999: Toward a Mine-Free World* (New York, International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Human Rights Watch).

Lardner, T. (2008), *External Assessment of DDG's HMA Programme in Somaliland* (Geneva, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining).

Mac Ginty, R. (2011), 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace', *Security Dialogue,* 41: 391–412.

Mac Ginty, R. (2013), 'Introduction: The transcripts of peace: Public, hidden or non-obvious?' *J. Interv. Statebuilding* 7: 1–8.

Menkhaus, K. (2006), *BCPR Strategic Review* (Somalia).

Moser-Puangsuwan, Y. (2009), Mine Action Obligations in Ceasefires & Peace Accords: A survey of past implementation. Online: Available at http://archive.org/details/MineActionObligationsInCeasefiresPeaceAccordsASurveyOfPast

Njeri, S. (2015), *A Minefield of Possibilities: The Viability of Liberal Peace in Somaliland, with Particular Reference to Mine Action*, PhD Thesis, University of Bradford, available at https://bradscholars.brad.ac.uk/handle/10454/8101

Njeri, S. (2019), 'Somaliland: The Viability of a Liberal Peacebuilding Critique Beyond State Building, State Formation and Hybridity', *Peacebuilding*, 7: 37–50.

Njeri, S. (2020), 'The Politics of Non-Recognition: Re-Evaluating the Apolitical Presentation of the UN Humanitarian Mine Action Programs in Somaliland', in *Global Activism and Humanitarian Disarmament* (Springer International Publishing), 169–95.

Njeri, S. (forthcoming 2022), *Mine Clearance, in aid of DDR and Post conflict Peacebuilding: The Role of Humanitarian Mine Clearance Pioneer Corps* (HMCPC).

Omaar, R., De Waal, A. & Mc Grath, R. (1993), *Violent Deeds Live on: Landmines in Somalia and Somaliland* (London, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA, African Rights; Mines Advisory Group).

Paris, R. (2004), *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Phillips, S. (2013), 'Political Settlements and State Formation: The Case of Somaliland – Developmental Leadership Programme. Executive Summary' available at https://res.cloudinary.com/dlprog/image/upload/RKYEI7vAD61Bu5ovGhmTprdDnLb5cwwAw9UUiERi.pdf

Pouligny, B. (2009), 'Local Ownership', in V. Chetail (ed.) *Post-conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Pugh, M.C., Cooper, N. and Turner, M. (2008), *Whose peace?: critical perspectives on the political economy of peacebuilding* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan).

Research Directorate (1995), *Somalia: Update on the Situation in the North* (Somaliland).

Richmond, O.P. (2009), 'The Romanticisation of the Local: Welfare, Culture and Peacebuilding', *The International Spectator,* 44(1): 149–169, doi: 10.1080/03932720802693044

Richmond, O.P. (2009), 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism: Liberal-Local Hybridity via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding,* 3(3): 324–344, doi: 10.1080/17502970903086719

Richmond, O. P. (2010), 'Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies,* 38(3): 665–692.

Richmond, O.P. (2011), *A post-liberal peace* (Abingdon, Routledge).

Sending, O. J. (2009a), 'Why Peacebuilders Are "Blind" and "Arrogant" and What to Do About It', Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Policy Brief 3 Available on http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep08040

Sending, O.J. (2009b), 'Why peacebuilders fail to secure ownership and be sensitive to context', Security in Practice 1 (NUPI Working Paper 755).

Smith, D. (2004), 'Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together: Overview report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding'. *Foreign Aff*. 1/2004, 84.

Spears, I.S. (2003), 'Reflections on Somaliland & Africa's Territorial Order', *Review of African Polital Economy*, 95: 89–98.

Van Brabant, K. (2010), 'Managing Aid Agency Security in an Evolving World: The Larger Challenge' (European Interagency Security Forum).

Walls, M. & Kibble, S. (2010), 'Beyond Polarity: Negotiating a Hybrid State in Somaliland', *Africa Spectrum*, 45: 31–56.

Willet, S. (2003), *Participatory Monitoring of Humanitarian Mine Action: Giving Voice to Citizens of Nicaragua* (Geneva, United Nations Institute For Disarmament Research).

WSP International (2005), *Rebuilding Somaliland: Issues and Possibilities* (Lawrenceville NJ, Red Sea Press).

To cite the article: Njeri, S. (2022), 'Examining mine action's "peaceability" potential through everyday narratives and practices in Somaliland', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s1): 109–133.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s1.109

Journal of the British Academy (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk