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Sustaining the post-agreement peace – Galkaio, Somalia

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the implementation and evolution of the 2017 peace agreement in Galkaio, a divided town in central Somalia marking the border of clan and state boundaries. Drawing on extensive fieldwork and a trans-scalar peacebuilding framework, the study explores how peace has been sustained through adaptive mediation, local political agency, and the revival of customary law (*xeer*), rather than formal institutions or international oversight. While the agreement has brought a degree of stability and investment, it remains vulnerable to relapse due to a fragmented security landscape, unresolved inter-clan tensions, and weak governance structures. Conceptually, the paper challenges linear models of peace implementation, arguing instead that peace must be understood as a fluid, negotiated process embedded in political ‘unsettlement’. By linking political economy analysis with trans-scalar dynamics, the article contributes to debates on local peace processes and offers insights for sustaining peace amid institutional fragility.

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Introduction

Peace implementation has become an increasing focus for scholars and practitioners, shifting attention from how peace agreements are forged to the complex challenges of sustaining them.¹ Existing research emphasises factors such as power-sharing, third-party guarantees, and institutional reform as central to successful implementation,² while also acknowledging its contested political nature.³ However, this scholarship has largely focused on national-level agreements, with comparatively little attention to those forged and implemented at the local level. In Somalia, influential studies predating the establishment of the 2012 federal system point to the enduring strength of local customary processes and the persistent weakness of national peace efforts.⁴ Yet how local and national processes interact during implementation remains underexplored, particularly in contexts where authority is fragmented and negotiated across multiple levels. Emerging scholarship on trans-scalar peacebuilding offers a useful framework for analysing such multilayered dynamics,⁵ but its application to the implementation of local agreements in contexts like Somalia remains limited.

This article addresses this gap by examining the implementation of the 2017 local agreement in Galkaio, a divided town shaped by overlapping local, national and regional dynamics. The agreement brought

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¹Matthew Hoddie and Caroline Hartzell, ‘Civil War Settlements and the Implementation of Military Power-Sharing Arrangements’, *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 3 (2003): 303–20; and Madhavi Joshi, ‘New Avenues in Peace Implementation Research: Actors, Geolocation, and Time’, *Peacebuilding* 12, no. 1 (2022): 82–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2022.2154958>

²Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Madhav Joshi, Jason M. Quinn, and Patrick M. Regan, ‘Annualized Implementation Data on Comprehensive Intrastate Peace Accords, 1989–2012’, *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (2015): 551–62.

³Desirée Nilsson, ‘Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace’, *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (2012): 243–66; and Karl DeRouen Jr. et al., ‘Civil War Peace Agreement Implementation and State Capacity’, *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 3 (2010): 333–46.

⁴K. Menkhaus, ‘Traditional Conflict Management in Contemporary African Crises: Theory and Praxis from the Somali Experience’, in *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict Medicine*, ed. William Zartman (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 183–99; Mark Bradbury, ‘A Synthesis Report of the Peace Mapping Study’, 2008, Interpeace, the Academy for the Academy for Peace and Development, the Centre for Research and Dialogue, and the Puntland Development Research Centre

⁵Gearóid Millar, ‘Toward a Trans-Scalar Peace System: Challenging Complex Global Conflict Systems’, *Peacebuilding* 8, no. 3 (2020): 261–78; Sara Hellmüller, ‘A Trans-Scalar Approach to Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice: Insights from the Democratic Republic of Congo’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 57, no. 4 (2022): 415–32.

together elders from the two dominant sub-clans on either side of the town, alongside state authorities, mediators and civil society actors, and established a set of arrangements combining ceasefire provisions, joint security initiatives, and the reactivation of customary dispute resolution (*xeer*). While not itself a bilateral customary agreement, the process was anchored in an understanding between the two dominant sub-clans, with the expectation that further bilateral inter-clan agreements would follow. This article explores how peace has been sustained over the past seven years, drawing on insights from the literature on peace implementation, local agreements, and trans-scalar peacemaking.

Galkaio, positioned both geographically and politically at the centre of Somalia's fragmented landscape, and situated at the intersection of rival identity groups, two Federal Member States (FMS), and a major trade corridor, serves as a microcosm of the country's broader patterns of conflict and negotiation.

The article examines how the Galkaio agreement has been sustained through an iterative and adaptive process shaped by interactions across local, national and transnational levels, dynamics that are difficult to fully capture but can be detected through some of the patterns and interactions traced in this analysis. Rather than a top-down implementation plan, the process has been marked by local agency, the continued engagement of key actors and communities, and ongoing negotiation in response to shifting political and security dynamics. While the agreement included some formal elements such as a joint police force and coordination mechanisms, these remained weakly institutionalised and were sustained largely through personalised and negotiated forms of engagement and coordination. Central has been the reactivation of *xeer* or customary law, which had broken down over the previous two decades. The agreement has been upheld by the two major subclans in Galkaio representing either side of the border and their respective Federal Member States (Puntland and Galmudug), who subsequently brokered further bilateral agreements with smaller clans. It also enabled economic investment, reinforcing incentives to maintain stability and partly addressing longstanding inequities between north and south Galkaio.

Despite these gains, recent revenge killings reveal persistent tensions and the absence of a dominant security actor capable of enforcing a monopoly on violence. A plurality of security actors – formal and informal (clan militias, state soldiers, special forces, police forces, militant Islamist groups) – operate in and around Galkaio, many aligned with broader Puntland or Galmudug clan-state politics. While the agreement opened the space for continued negotiation and localised processes of peacebuilding, it has struggled to prevent renewed violence, reflecting the volatility of Somalia's transactional political and security marketplace and persistent underlying grievances. These dynamics illustrate how the same informality that enabled the agreement to emerge and function also constitutes a source of fragility.

The post-agreement dynamics in Galkaio offer a compelling case for understanding the implementation of local peace accords in fragmented and multilayered conflict contexts. The negotiation of the agreement itself required a trans-scalar mediation approach sensitive to local, national, transnational and international levels, and emerged from a protracted period of localised violence rooted in broader political and territorial tensions that followed Somalia's transition to a federal system in 2012.⁶ Although the agreement was signed under state auspices, customary authorities and international actors, including the United Nations, played a role in securing consensus. Unlike earlier ceasefires, the agreement introduced mechanisms for implementation, including a joint peace committee and coordinated security arrangements.

This analysis draws on multi-year empirical research combining participant observation, ongoing dialogue between locally-based and lead researchers, as well as over twenty-five semi-structured interviews with clan elders, youth leaders, women, government officials, and other experts. Two of the researchers involved in the study were Galkaio residents, based in the town. Interviews were conducted in Galkaio, Mogadishu, London and online. In addition, a workshop was held in Mogadishu on 1 February 2024 to discuss the heightened insecurity in Galkaio at the time.⁷ By analysing the agreement's evolution, implementation, and ongoing contestations, this study contributes to the broader peacebuilding literature by highlighting the importance of local agreements and their implementation in multilayered conflicts, where peace must be continuously negotiated across local, regional, transnational and national arenas.

⁶Nisar Majid and Marika Theros, 'Galkaio, Somalia: Bridging the Border', *Peacebuilding* 10, no. 2 (2022): 172–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2022.2032943>

⁷The workshop held 12 participants including traditional elders, current and former officials of local administrations in Galkaio, a Federal Member of Parliament, a businessperson, a former Police General and a researcher, representing different local clans from Galkaio.

The article proceeds as follows: it begins with a review of the relevant literature including the need for a trans-scalar perspective in peace implementation. It then provides a contextual overview of Galkaio and Somalia's political settlement, followed by an examination of the agreement and its post-agreement trajectory. The paper concludes by reflecting on the broader implications of the Galkaio case for understanding peace implementation in other fragmented settings.

Towards an analytical framework for peace implementation in local agreements

This section draws on three strands of literature – peace implementation, local agreements, and trans-scalar peacebuilding – to develop a framework for analysing the post-agreement dynamics in Galkaio. Together, these perspectives offer a more comprehensive understanding of how peace is implemented and sustained in fragmented settings. In particular, they help to illuminate how local agency, political economy incentives, and interactions across different levels of authority shape both the trajectory and durability of local agreements.

Peace implementation: content and process

The literature on peace implementation broadly distinguishes between content-focused and process-focused approaches. Content-focused perspectives examine how specific provisions of agreements – such as power-sharing, security arrangements, and institutional reforms – affect their durability.⁸ These studies highlight the importance of credible commitments, often emphasising the role of external guarantees, such as peacekeeping missions, in mitigating security dilemmas.⁹ Rooted in the liberal peace paradigm, however, they tend to prioritise institutional design over the processes through which agreements are enacted, contested, and sustained in practice, and often given limited attention to the interplay between local and broader political dynamics during implementation.

By contrast, the process-focused approaches conceptualise implementation as an iterative and dynamic process shaped by shifting political, social, and economic conditions. Bargaining theory emphasises how changing power relations and incentives require continuous negotiation,¹⁰ while sociological perspectives highlight the relational dimensions of implementation, including trust-building, repair of social ties, and new norm formation.¹¹ These approaches foreground the importance of sequencing, political will, sustained engagement, and adaptability across multiple actors, geographies, and timelines.¹² However, they have largely been developed in relation to national-level agreements, with less attention to how such processes unfold in localised settings characterised by fragmented authority.

Situating local agreements in a trans-scalar peacemaking framework

Local agreements are embedded within interconnected local, national, and global dynamics. While they respond to immediate, localised conflict drivers, such as land disputes, clan rivalries, and resource management, they are also shaped by broader political, economic and transnational forces.¹³ A trans-scalar perspective captures these interdependencies by focusing on how actors, resources, and incentives move across and between levels, rather than treating the local, national and international as discrete or hierarchical domains.

This perspective offers a distinct analytical advantage over approaches that treat peacebuilding as a set of nested or multi-level processes. Rather than assuming clear boundaries or linear interactions between levels, a trans-scalar lens emphasises how authority is fragmented and negotiated, and how outcomes emerge from

⁸Hoddie and Hartzell, 'Civil War Settlements'; Virginia P. Fortna, 'Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War', *International Studies Review* 6, no. 4 (2004): 105–30. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1521-9488.2004.00353.x>

⁹Fortna, 'Does Peacekeeping Work?'

¹⁰Suzanne Werner, 'The Precarious Nature of Peace: Resolving the Issues, Enforcing the Settlement, and Renegotiating the Terms', *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 3 (1999): 912–34; and James D. Fearon, 'Rationalist Explanations for War', *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379–414.

¹¹Oliver P. Richmond, 'Power or Peace? Restoration or Emancipation Through Peace Processes', *Peacebuilding* 9, no. 3 (2021): 254–71.

¹²Joshi, 'New Avenues in Peace Implementation Research'.

¹³Kaldor, Theros and Turkmani, 'Local Agreements'; Richmond and Mitchell, *Hybrid Forms of Peace*. Rethinking peace and conflict studies, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2012, p.11.

interactions between actors operating simultaneously across different arenas, including local elites, traditional authorities, civil society groups, and at times international mediators.¹⁴ In contexts such as Somalia, where governance is dispersed across state institutions, customary authorities, business networks, diaspora actors and armed groups, this perspective helps to explain how local agreements are shaped by, and in turn reshape, broader political and economic dynamics.

Political economy and political unsettlement

The negotiation, implementation and durability of agreements are deeply shaped by political economy dynamics. Violence in contemporary conflicts is often embedded in systems of resource competition, patronage networks, and control of strategic assets contested across multiple levels,¹⁵ while peace processes can generate new economic incentives that reinforce cooperation. For example, inequitable access to humanitarian aid or economic infrastructure may fuel grievances and destabilise agreements, while perceived material benefits of peace can strengthen incentives for cooperation and stability.¹⁶ In contexts such as Somalia, where economic and political interests are closely intertwined,¹⁷ these dynamics operate across multiple levels, linking the structural drivers of conflict to the evolving incentives that shape behaviour and implementation over time.

The concept of 'political unsettlement' further clarifies the environment in which these agreements are negotiated and implemented. Rather than marking a transition to a stable order, agreements often operate within conditions where authority remains contested and conflicts are managed through ongoing negotiation and adaptation.¹⁸ In such settings, implementation is not a linear process but an iterative one, shaped by feedback loops between security developments, political shifts, and social relations. This requires forms of mediation and coordination that are adaptive, sustained and responsive to evolving conditions.¹⁹

An understanding of local agreements therefore requires more than an analysis of their formal content. It demands attention to the broader political economy and conditions of political unsettlement that shape their negotiation, implementation, and durability. Much of the existing literature focuses on negotiation or short-term outcomes, such as violence reduction or humanitarian access, while the dynamics of implementation and longer-term sustainability remain underexplored.²⁰ Richmond cautions that local peace agreements risk fragmentation and unsustainability when they are not connected to broader political and peacebuilding processes.²¹ A trans-scalar analytical lens offers a more comprehensive perspective by capturing how economic, political, and social dynamics interact across levels, and by highlighting the importance of flexibility, continuous negotiation, and adaptive mediation in sustaining peace over time.

This framework provides a lens for analysing how the Galkaio agreement was implemented and sustained, by tracing interactions between actors across different levels.

Galkaio – a microcosm of Somalia's trans-scalar political economy

Somalia is frequently characterised by its fragmented political and territorial landscape,²² marked by multiple forms of political order.²³ It is an 'extraverted' state, deeply entangled with external factors and

¹⁴Kaldor, Theros and Turkmani, 'Local Agreements'.

¹⁵Rim Turkmani, Ali A. K. Ali, Mary Kaldor, and Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, *Countering the Logic of the War Economy in Syria: Evidence from Three Local Areas* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015).

¹⁶Majid and Theros, 'Galkaio, Somalia'.

¹⁷Ken Menkhaus, 'The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts', *African Affairs* 106, no. 424 (2007): 357–90.

¹⁸Christine Bell and Jan Pospisil, 'Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettlement', *Journal of International Development* 29 (2017): 576–93.

¹⁹Gearoid Millar, 'Toward a Trans-Scalar Peace System: Challenging Complex Global Conflict Systems', *Peacebuilding* 8, no. 3 (2020): 261–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1634866>.

²⁰Bell, 2015; Rim Turkmani, Mary Kaldor, Wisam Elhamwi, Joan Ayo and Nael Haririi, *Hungry for Peace: Positives and Pitfalls of Local Truces and Ceasefires in Syria* (London: London Schol of Economics and Political Science, 2014).

²¹Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* (1st Ed.). Routledge, 2011.

²²Pete Chonka and Sally Healy, 'Self-Determination and a Shattered Star: Statehood and National Identity in the Somali Horn of Africa', *Nations and Nationalism* 27, no. 1 (2021): 61–79.

²³Tobias Hagmann and Markus V. Hoehne, 'Failures of the State Failure Debate: Evidence from the Somali Territories', *Journal of International Development* 21, no. 1 (2009): 42–57; and Markus V. Hoehne, 'The Rupture of Territoriality and the Diminishing Relevance of Cross-Cutting Ties in Somalia After 1990', *Development and Change* 47, no. 6 (2016): 1379–411.

processes that influence its political and economic trajectory.²⁴ In trans-scalar terms, Galkaio can be viewed as a microcosm of Somalia's wider peace and conflict tapestry shaped by four intersecting dimensions: clan, Islam, state, and globalisation (namely trade, remittances, diaspora engagement and international intervention). These factors have influenced the organisation of power and territory.

Galkaio town is located at the central crossroads of Somalia both geographically and politically, playing an 'outsized role . . . in shaping Somalia's past and present'.²⁵ The town is physically divided by an invisible line marking the border of two FMS – Puntland and Galmudug – which is also the boundary between two major clan families, the Darod and Hawiye, and two powerful local sub-clans, the Omar Mahmoud and the Sa'ad. This borderline was created by the 1993 Mudug Accord following the collapse of the state, establishing an extended ceasefire that effectively stopped social interaction across the town for over two decades, including customary forms of negotiation.²⁶ Over time, the relative stability of Puntland, which includes northern Galkaio led by the Omar Mahmoud, enabled a level of investment and prosperity in the north while southern Galkaio led by the Sa'ad remained more fluid and insecure, producing economic inequalities and grievances between the two sides. Unlike Puntland which entered the new federal system as an established polity in 2012, Galmudug, which includes southern Galkaio, was only formalised as an FMS in 2017.

Violence in and around Galkaio is shaped by interactions within and between urban and rural contexts. Informants point to the role of unruly 'abtoy' in Galkaio town,²⁷ militia members located within the many highly militarised clan factions in and around the town, whose intoxicated disputes sometime lead to fatalities. In rural areas disputes often originate in the surrounding hinterland and are frequently linked to access to land, water, or grazing routes. In both cases disputes can quickly escalate moving between urban and rural settings, often drawing upon or being politicised by long-standing inter-clan grievances given the history of violence in these central regions of Somalia.²⁸ These dynamics blur the boundaries between rural and urban conflict, making violence relational and difficult to contain within formal governance or security structures.

Strategically located along one of Somalia's most important trade corridors, Galkaio functions as a vital economic hub linking northern and southern Somalia. These trade corridors are 'sites of power' associated with revenue accumulation and processes of state formation.²⁹ As Bell and Wise suggest, such 'routes of passage' often serve as spaces where conflict and peace dynamics often overlap, shaping stability across different spatial scales.³⁰

The central region of Somalia, including Galkaio has produced many of Somalia's political elites. Yet the capitals of Puntland and Galmudug (Garowe and Dhusamareb respectively) are located elsewhere, drawing political attention and contestation away from Galkaio itself. This reflects the town's contradictory positionality as both a centre and periphery in Somalia's political economy and history.³¹ Southern Galkaio is also closely connected to the national capital, Mogadishu, where many of its elites reside, adding further complexity to the town's political positioning.

Somalia's federal system structures political contestation most visibly during electoral cycles, often pitting the executive at the centre (Mogadishu) against the Federal Member States, as both sides compete to control electoral processes and secure political advantage.³²

The political settlement

Political scientist Ken Menkhaus describes Somalia's political settlement as 'principally a division of spoils' sustained by a shared threat from Al-Shabaab, external security assistance and international peacekeeping'.³³ This settlement is underpinned by informal 'rules of the game' including elite access to

²⁴Tobias Hagmann, *Stabilisation, Extraversion and Political Settlements in Somalia*, Report (Nairobi: RVI / PSRP, 2016).

²⁵Khalif Abdirahman, *Contested Commerce: Revenue and State-Making in the Galkayo Borderlands*, Report (Rift Valley Institute, 2021), 10.

²⁶Interpeace, Centre for Research and Dialogue, *Community-based Peace Processes in South-Central Somalia*, 2008.

²⁷Abtoy literally translates as 'drunkards', but is shorthand for clan militia members who regularly use the stimulant 'qat' and also alcohol (even though alcohol is forbidden in Somalia's predominantly muslim society).

²⁸Interpeace, *Community-based Peace Processes*, 2008.

²⁹Tobias Hagmann and Finn Stepputat, eds., *Trade Makes States: Governing the Greater Somali Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

³⁰Bell and Wise, 'The Spaces of Local Agreements'.

³¹Abdirahman, *Contested Commerce*.

³²Nisar Majid and Khalif Abdirahman, 'A Two-Year Presidential Extension in Somalia?' Blogpost, African Arguments, 2022.

³³Ken Menkhaus, *Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Somalia Case Study*. Report for Stabilisation Unit (London: Stabilisation Unit, 2018), 5.

state resources across clan lines, regional monopolies over resources by dominant clan families, and the 4.5 power sharing formula that allocates political representation proportionally among clan families.

Menkhaus argues that this system functions like a political cartel and incentivises the maintenance of state weakness, as political actors benefit from continued insecurity and the flow of external resources.³⁴ Political contestation operates through a competitive and decentralised marketplace³⁵ while security governance resembles an 'arena' of shifting coalitions rather than a coherent, 'unified' sector.³⁶ In this context, authority is highly personalised and shaped by entrepreneurial rivalries among a range of power brokers including politicians, business elites, warlords, police, militia, elders, religious authorities and commercial security companies or militaries, intelligence agencies and special units.³⁷

The clan system

The Somali clan system remains the foundational structure for societal organisation, mobilising identities, distributing resources, and shaping both conflict and cooperation. Customary law (*xeer*) plays a central role in mediating inter-clan disputes and providing a platform for dialogue, including through norms and mechanisms such as *diya* (blood compensation), where clans negotiate compensation for injury or death. While customary practices have long underpinned Somali governance, the collapse of the Somali state in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to the politicisation and militarisation of clan-based identities.³⁸

Although customary structures continue to mediate local disputes and contribute to forms of political order and public authority, such as in the cases of Somaliland and Puntland,³⁹ their authority has eroded over time. Political elites frequently instrumentalise and co-opt customary institutions to gain legitimacy, undermining their autonomy and effectiveness.⁴⁰

Another important feature of Somalia's society and customary practice is its transnationalisation. Long-standing patterns of displacement and migration,⁴¹ combined with digital communications, have transformed clan relations.⁴² Diaspora networks and transnational relations increasingly shape political and economic dynamics, often strengthening clan-based vertical ties while weakening cross-clan connections and relationships.⁴³

These dynamics shape both the conditions under which the 2017 agreement was negotiated and the challenges of sustaining it over time.

From peacemaking to implementation: the 2017 agreement

The 2017 Galkaio agreement emerged from a period of recurrent violence between 2015 and 2016, marked by clashes between forces aligned with Puntland and Galmudug, as well as escalating inter-clan tensions within and around the town. Early efforts focused on securing ceasefires to halt immediate violence and enable further engagement. These initial arrangements included provisions for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of armed actors from the town, and the reopening of movement and humanitarian access. While imperfectly observed, they provided a reference point for mitigating conflict and laid the foundation for

³⁴Nisar Majid, Aditya Sarkar, Claire Elder, Khalif Abdirahman, Sarah Detzner, Jared Miller, and Alex De Waal, *Somalia's Politics: The Usual Business? A Synthesis Paper of the Conflict Research Programme* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2021).

³⁵Alex de Waal, 'Somalia's Disassembled State: Clan Unit Formation and the Political Marketplace', *Conflict, Security and Development* 20, no. 5 (2020): 561–85.

³⁶Alice Hills, 'Security Sector or Security Arena? The Evidence from Somalia', *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 2 (2014): 165–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2014.910400>

³⁷See also: Jethro Norman, 'Private Military Security Companies and the Political Marketplace in Mogadishu', London: LSE, 2021, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/Conflict-Research-Programme/crp-memos/Norman-private-military-mogadishu-final.pdf>.

³⁸De Waal, 'Somalia's Disassembled State'.

³⁹Markus V. Hoehne, *Between Somaliland and Puntland: Marginalisation, Militarisation and Conflicting Political Visions* (Rift Valley Institute, 2015) (see: Hoehne_2015_-_Between_Somaliland_and_Puntland-libre.pdf).

⁴⁰Joakim Gundel, 'The Predicament of the 'Oday': The Role of Traditional Structures in Security, 2006.

Rights, Law and Development in Somalia', Danish Refugee Council. (see: https://www.academia.edu/17361544/The_Predicament_of_the_Oday_The_role_of_traditional_structures_in_Somalia)

⁴¹Cindy Horst, *Transnational Nomads: How Somalis Cope with Refugee Life in the Dadaab Camps of Kenya* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006); and Anna Lindley, *The Early Morning Phone Call: Somali Refugees' Remittances* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

⁴²Pete Chonka, 'News Media and Political Contestation in the Somali Territories: Defining the Parameters of a Transnational Digital Public', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): 140–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2018.1548210>; and Jethro Norman, 'From Elders to Influencers? Platform Kinship and the Reshaping of Political Order in the Somali Territories', *International Affairs* 100, no. 4 (2023): 1431–50.

⁴³Hoehne, 'The Rupture of Territoriality'.

further negotiations. The agreement and its negotiation process have been analysed in detail elsewhere⁴⁴; here, we briefly summarise its key features to situate the post-agreement dynamics examined in this article.

The process unfolded across multiple levels. Local elders and civic actors, authorities from Puntland and Galmudug, federal actors, and international partners all became involved, reflecting the wider significance of Galkaio for Somalia's political settlement. A small network of actors linked these arenas. Among them, Ilham Gassar, working through the UN SRSG's office, played a central role, operating across national, state, and local levels, skilfully leveraging her multiple – gender, clan, diaspora, UN – identities and resources. She was closely involved in facilitating the meeting in Mogadishu that brought together the Presidents of Puntland and Galmudug and resulted in a publicly signed agreement. While this marked an important political moment, it did not in itself resolve tensions on the ground but enabled further dialogue and negotiations to proceed in Galkaio.

Negotiations in Galkaio developed through both formal and informal arrangements. An informal network involving mediators, security actors, and local figures worked to manage tensions and sustain engagement. Somali General Abdiweli Jama Gorod was among those involved on security-related aspects of the process, including ceasefire enforcement and withdrawals. The Joint Ceasefire Committee (JCC), established after earlier violence, brought together elders and political authorities from the dominant sub-clans on both sides of the town and was expanded over time to include a broader set of actors. It also introduced measures aimed at reducing escalation, including restrictions on inflammatory communication.

Rather than a single negotiation, the process developed through a series of linked steps. Ceasefire arrangements, political agreements, and local-level engagement developed in parallel and were connected across levels. The possibility of capturing checkpoint revenue along this key trade route was used to incentivise the leadership of Puntland and Galmudug, where much of that revenue was kept locally.⁴⁵ The December 2017 agreement brought these elements together. It included provisions to halt violence, reopen movement across the town, and establish joint security arrangements. It also supported the reactivation of customary dispute resolution (xeer), which had largely broken down, while extending beyond it through coordination mechanisms, including a joint peace committee and a limited joint police presence supported by federal forces.

The agreement remained open in form. It was not a bilateral customary settlement, but an overarching arrangement anchored in an understanding between the two dominant sub-clans on either side of the town, with the expectation that further bilateral agreements involving other clans would follow. In this sense, it structured an ongoing process rather than resolving the conflict in full.

Following the agreement, efforts continued to support its implementation. General Gorod, who was asked to become the head of the national armed forces by the incoming Federal President (Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo'), in early 2017, personally requested to continue to play a role in Galkaio as part of his appointment. He thereby obtained Federal support for joint policing, a military unit to protect the volatile central market area and continued engagement among elders, as well as in pursuing inter-clan agreements. Over time, however, this support became less consistent and Gorod himself was removed from his position after less than two years (after which he continued to be involved in mediation in his personal capacity). Changes in political leadership reduced attention to Galkaio, while key mediators stepped back or were reassigned. Subsequent shocks, including targeted violence and assassinations against prominent local figures involved in the process, further weakened these networks. The agreement nonetheless continued to serve as a reference point for managing conflict.

This article builds on that account by examining how the agreement has been implemented and sustained over time, and how it has been adapted and contested in the years since its signing.

Analysing post-agreement Galkaio

The post-agreement peace in Galkaio is precarious yet holding. While tensions and sporadic incidents have fluctuated since 2017, a series of revenge killings in and around the town in 2023 and 2024 have posed the

⁴⁴See note 16 above.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

most serious challenge to the agreement since its signing.⁴⁶ Despite these recent setbacks, the overall trajectory in the town has remained relatively stable, marked by improved social relations and interactions across the town's divide, for example in the form of attendance at functions and events on the 'other side' which were previously unheard of.⁴⁷ The establishment of Galmudug as a relatively coherent FMS has brought material and political investments to southern Galkaio, narrowing the inequality gap with its northern neighbour, and disincentivising violence and conflict. At the same time, episodes of violence in rural hinterlands continue to reverberate within the town, often prompting people to retreat to their respective clan-identified territories out of fear of reprisals.

The recent escalation of revenge killings has been primarily linked to tensions between the Lelkasse clan of northern Galkaio and the Sa'ad clan of southern Galkaio. While the 2017 Agreement was multi-stakeholder in form, it most significantly represented an agreement between the Omar Mahmoud and Sa'ad on either side of the town. The signatories to the agreement recognised (orally) that further bilateral inter-clan agreements would be required. Within this framework, the Lelkasse, the second major Darod sub-clan in the north, entered into bilateral negotiations with the Sa'ad, resulting in the Bandiiradley and Goldogob agreements in 2020.⁴⁸ A participant in these two agreements from the Lelkasse side explained that *'We then went to Bandiiradley for more talks. 60 of us went there to progress the process. People were apprehensive but we had to go. We made progress there and came back to Goldogob for the final agreement. The most important part of this agreement was to settle the past conflict and set up ways to deal with future problems, primarily, capital punishment for anyone who commits murder within the two clans.'*⁴⁹

Although multiple factors have contributed to rising tensions in Galkaio, a key source of renewed tension has been the difficulty of enforcing the terms of the 2020 agreement, particularly provisions requiring the surrender of perpetrators by their clan to prevent cycles of revenge. Under *xeer*, elders typically intervene quickly to mediate disputes precisely to prevent them from escalating, but this depends on their authority and the willingness of clans to comply. Where this breaks down, cycles of violence can re-emerge. The same informant as above explained that the *'Sa'ad man killed a Lelkase man but instead of bringing the assailant to justice, they helped him escape justice and took him to Hobyo'*.⁵⁰ This incident triggered further incidents of violence as well as repeated interventions by traditional elders, local authorities and other influential individuals, at local, national and transnational levels to mitigate the escalations. However, these were all reactive and largely uncoordinated, rather than taking place under an agreed framework or structured process. The workshop held by the research team in Mogadishu was itself an example of a dialogue and mitigation effort enabling representatives from the competing identity groups to discuss the situation and challenges and options for mitigation. Their effectiveness was limited, however, due to the difficulty of securing compliance and the sense of injustice felt by the Lelkasse.

These developments unfolded within a wider context of political turbulence across Somalia. Events such as the Las Anod conflict on the Somaliland-Puntland border, the federal government's offensive against Al-Shabaab in Galmudug⁵¹ and contested elections in Puntland in 2023 and 2024⁵² have contributed to increased militarisation and politicisation along clan lines. While not directly involving Galkaio, these dynamics shape the local environment in which the agreement operates.⁵³ Respondents associated the end of the violence with two main factors, firstly the refusal of the Omar Mahmoud of north Galkaio (at traditional and state levels) to join the Lelkasse and rather their continued mediation and pressurising efforts to de-escalate tensions. Secondly, as a result of the passage of time and the exhaustion of resources

⁴⁶Nisar Majid and Khalif Abdirahman, 'Galkaio Town: A Spate of Revenge Killings', Blogpost, PeaceRep, London: LSE, 2024, <https://peacerep.org/2023/10/03/galkaio-town-spate-of-revenge-killings/>

⁴⁷Khalif Abdirahman, 'Flourishing Civil Society and Improving Security', Blogpost, PeaceRep, London: LSE, 2023, <https://peacerep.org/2023/03/01/Galkaio-flourishing-civil-society-improving-security/>.

⁴⁸PDRC, Assessment of Lelkasse and Sa'ad Conflict and Peace. 2022. (see: <https://pdrcsomalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/final-version02.pdf>).

⁴⁹Interview, Mogadishu, November 31, 2023.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Jethro Norman, 'Conflict in Las Anod and Crisis in Somaliland: External Investment, Intensifying Internal Competition and the Struggle for Narrative', Blogpost, African Arguments, <https://africanarguments.org/2023/03/conflict-in-las-anod-and-crisis-in-somaliland-external-investment-intensifying-internal-competition-and-the-struggle-for-narrative/>; and Abdifatah Ismael Tahir, *Forging a Future From a Failed Past? Prospects and Pitfalls of Somalia's State-Sponsored Vigilantism* (Ma'wisley: Hilin, 2024).

⁵²Al Jazeera, Dozens killed in Somalia's Puntland Region after Presidential debate See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/20/fight-erupts-in-somalias-puntland-region-after-parliament-debate>

⁵³Tahir, 'Forging a Future'.

and energy. The cycles of violence took place over more than twelve months. There was no final reconciliation or compensation process. General Gorod (Sa'ad) in his capacity as an elder, recognised the failure of his own clan in implementing the terms of the Bandiiradley and Goldogob agreements, and was among others influencing the Sa'ad to refrain from escalation from his position abroad by then.⁵⁴ These episodes illustrate a recurring pattern in which cycles of violence trigger mediation efforts, producing temporary stabilisation but remaining vulnerable to breakdown in the absence of effective enforcement.

Trans-scalar interactions and spatial dynamics

Peace in Galkaio is shaped by interactions between local, sub-national (FMS), national (FGS) as well as regional, international and transnational levels. These interactions directly influence how the agreement is implemented and how tensions are managed over time.

Election cycles at both Federal Member State and national levels frequently heighten tensions in the town. In 2024, for example, local youth publicly criticised Galkaio's elders for prioritising their presence in Garowe, the Puntland state capital, over addressing escalating insecurity in Galkaio.⁵⁵ Elders, in turn, were in the state capital due to the pressures of upcoming elections, where incentives such as access to financial 'benefits' also shape their engagement. At the same time, elders acknowledged growing difficulties in exercising their authority in light of new technologies and shifting social dynamics.

At the subnational level, Galkaio remains divided and continues to operate under parallel government administrations, with separate district authorities, governors, and justice systems. While cooperative relations exist, these are often contingent and uneven. Some officials act in the collective interest of the town, while others prioritise narrower political or clan interests. This institutional fragmentation reinforces the need for continuous negotiation across the town's divide. For their part, youth in Galkaio voice growing frustration with these dynamics and often express a vision of the town operating under a single federal mandate, pointing to the city of Dire Dawa in neighbouring Somali Region of Ethiopia as a possible model.⁵⁶

Transnational dynamics further shape local stability. The central regions of Somalia, including Galkaio, are closely connected to diaspora populations, who influence the region's political and economic dynamics.⁵⁷ At the same time, social media has intensified the spread of clan-based narratives, contributing to the escalation of tensions.⁵⁸ During the cycle of revenge killings, elders highlighted how these new dynamics complicate their ability to intervene and de-escalate conflict.⁵⁹ In the summer of 2024, former General Gorod involved in the original agreement-making process began mobilising diaspora support in the United States and Canada to support a united clan position on Galkaio.⁶⁰

International engagement also plays a role, particularly through humanitarian, development and security interventions that provide material and financial resources. However, these efforts are often constrained by a deeply entrenched political economy of aid, where international resources are frequently captured by competing interest groups, a factor noted in the 2015–16 conflict in the town.⁶¹ Moreover, international engagement remains ad hoc in character with a lack of institutional continuity and memory. Since the 2017 agreement, UN involvement and resources in Galkaio have significantly declined as priorities have shifted elsewhere, limiting sustained support for implementation.

⁵⁴Interview, London. September 18, 2024.

⁵⁵Nisar Majid and Khalif Abdirahman, 'Galkaio Town: A Spate of Revenge Killings', Blogpost, PeaceRep, London: LSE, 2024, <https://peacerep.org/2023/10/03/galkaio-town-spate-of-revenge-killings/>; and Horn Observer, 'Local Doctor Shot Dead by Genment in Central Somalia Town, 2023 (see: <https://hornobserver.com/articles/2446/Local-doctor-shot-dead-by-gunmen-in-central-Somalia-town>)

⁵⁶Peace Research Facility, Urban Contestation in Dire Dawa City, Rift Valley Institute. (<https://riftvalley.net/publication/urban-contestation-in-dire-dawa-city/>)

⁵⁷Bradbury, 'A Synthesis Report'.

⁵⁸Norman, 'From Elders to Influencers'.

⁵⁹Workshop minutes, February 1, 2024, Al Jazeera hotel, Mogadishu.

⁶⁰Interview, London, September 18, 2024.

⁶¹See note 16 above.

Security and rise of violence

The character of violence has evolved significantly since the 2015/16 conflict, which was largely an inter-state conflict between Puntland and Galmudug, politicised and fuelled by overlapping clan and 'state' identities. Since the 2017 agreement, violence has become more localised and episodic, most visibly through cycles of revenge killings. While the agreement involved multiple stakeholders, it was anchored in an understanding between the two most powerful clan-identity groups on either side of the town. As indicated previously, local informants referred to the absence of violence between the two dominant groups, the Omar Mahmoud and the Sa'ad, since the 2017 agreement, the unwillingness of the former to support their Lelkasse kinsmen (part of the same Darod clan family) in a wider conflict and instead pressurising them to de-escalate, as pivotal in reducing tensions. However, this conclusion was only reached after over twelve months of revenge killing and mediation cycles, that continued due to the absence of a dominant security actor and the momentum, incentives and resources to continue. The cordial relations between the Presidents of Puntland and Galmudug at the time were helpful in terms of not inflaming the situation further but also reflected a lack of political will to intervene more substantively at any stage.

The dynamics of revenge killings highlight the complexity of security and plural forms of authority in Galkaio. Militia members from different clans often socialise together, including through shared practices such as the consumption of qat, a local stimulant, or even alcohol.⁶² These interactions, amongst some of these 'abtoy' (drunkards) can escalate into disputes that, under the influence, result in violence, injuries, or fatalities. While elders and communities recognise the risks posed by these militias, they also depend on them for protection during periods of threat. This creates an inherent ambiguity: militias function simultaneously as sources of insecurity and as providers of protection in the absence of a dominant security actor.

Galkaio's security landscape is characterised by a plurality of actors, including clan militias, counter-terrorism special forces, and elements of both Puntland and Galmudug state police and military forces. Counter-terrorism units, for example, are narrowly focused on Al Shabaab and lack the mandate to engage in broader local security governance while local state authorities are frequently outnumbered by clan militias and openly acknowledge their inability to intervene in matters deemed as 'clan issues'.

The 2017 agreement introduced a number of important security measures, including a joint police force and the demilitarisation of the market area, both supported by federal resources. These initiatives were significant both symbolically and practically. Federal troops in the marketplace were perceived as more neutral than local actors, while the joint police force provided a mechanism for cooperation across the town's divide. There were also instances of intelligence cooperation between actors on both sides of Galkaio. For example, interviewees described how cooperation was instrumental in disrupting Al Shabaab cells and exposing the group's role in stoking inter-clan tensions as part of its broader military and destabilisation strategy.

Despite these developments, however, Galkaio's security environment remains fragmented. The co-existence of multiple armed actors, each embedded in different political and clan structures, complicates efforts to contain or de-escalate violence. Security in Galkaio is thus not governed through centralised authority but through ongoing negotiation among competing actors within a fragmented and shifting security landscape.

Governance: mechanisms for inclusion and dispute resolution

Governance in post-agreement Galkaio has been shaped by efforts to sustain inclusive dialogue and manage disputes across a fragmented social and political landscape, including urban and rural areas as well as different identity groups. Central to this has been the revival of *xeer*, which provides customary mechanisms intended for mediating tensions, encouraging dialogue and enforcing accountability between clans and lineages. The continuation of customary processes, including the 2020 Bandiiradley and Goldogob conferences between the Lelkasse and Sa'ad, reflects the importance of these mechanisms in extending the logic of the 2017 agreement. However, enforcing their provisions has proven difficult with elders explaining that

⁶²Alcohol is rarely consumed in the predominantly muslim country.

while they were intervening in the cycle of revenge killings their power is contested and they can even be threatened themselves.

The relationship between urban and rural dynamics is a critical feature of inclusive peace-making processes in Galkaio. The town is centrally located within vast grazing lands, where multiple lineages depend on the movement of livestock (primarily camel, sheep and goats) across large distances in search of water and pasture. Violence in rural areas frequently spills into the town, with revenge killings or retaliatory acts targeting urban populations as proxies for rural disputes. Recognising this, the 2017 process included efforts to engage rural constituencies, including through dedicated outreach mechanisms aimed at linking urban agreements to rural dynamics.

Despite these efforts, governance remains weakly institutionalised. The structures established through the agreement have not developed into a cohesive or formalised system. Instead, the management of the town continues to rely on ad hoc coordination, reactions to events and the intervention of key individuals. For example, the senior Somali General involved in the process played an important role in securing continued federal support, including resources for implementation, from then-Federal President, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo. However, as he himself acknowledged, such initiatives depended on personal influence rather than institutional arrangements.⁶³

This dependence on personalised and negotiated forms of authority rather than formal structures can enable flexibility and inclusion but also leaves the process vulnerable to shifts in political alignment, leadership turnover, and external distraction, thereby reinforcing the fragility of the post-agreement order.

Economics, resource management and peace dividends

Economic incentives and resources dynamics play a central role in shaping both peace and conflict in Galkaio and Somalia. The process leading up to the 2017 Agreement demonstrated how economic considerations and political incentives can determine the trajectory of peacebuilding efforts. Recognising and addressing competing economic interests among stakeholders were critical in securing the agreement, highlighting the necessity for peacebuilders to engage deeply with these factors.

In Galkaio, long-standing disparities in investment between northern and southern Galkaio have historically exacerbated tensions and perceptions of marginalisation. Since 2017, however, the stabilisation of Galmudug and increased investment in southern Galkaio, particularly from diaspora and private actors, have created opportunities for more balanced development. These developments have contributed to reduced incentives for large-scale violence as new economic initiatives depend on stability. The establishment of a new hotel in southern Galkaio that hosts weddings and events attended by residents from both sides of the town illustrates how economic activity can foster improved social interaction across divides.

Economic actors, particularly traders and businesspeople, also play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of peace and conflict. Galkaio's position along key trade routes has made it a significant economic hub, with potential to support peace through commercial activity. Bell and Wise's concept of 'route-of-passage space' helps to explain how such trade corridors can function as relatively neutral spaces that separate commercial activity from the conflicts that might surround it. In practice, traders are constantly navigating disruptions to the flow of goods and can exert influence on warring parties. However, their role remains under-recognised in the design and implementation of peace agreements.

At the same time, the political economy of aid in contexts such as Somalia introduces additional complexity. International resources, particularly in humanitarian, security and development sectors, are frequently captured or contested by clan-based cartels and gatekeepers. The role of an EU-funded road project in the escalation of the 2015–2016 conflict in Galkaio illustrates how external interventions, when not grounded in a nuanced understanding of local power dynamics, economic interests, and inter-clan dynamic, can inadvertently contribute to conflict.⁶⁴ This reflects a broader challenge, where insufficient political economy analysis and limited application of 'do no harm' approaches continue to shape external engagement.

⁶³Interview, London, September 18, 2024.

⁶⁴See note 16 above.

Continued adaptive mediation

Somalia's political landscape, defined by low levels of formal institutionalisation and the salience of informal institutions, requires continuous mediation processes that are flexible and sustained to maintain localised agreements. In this context, politics tend to be personalised, transactional and typically short-term in nature, which complicates efforts to institutionalise peace. Compounding this, international actors often invest more in forging local agreements rather than sustaining them, creating further challenges to their durability.

In cases such as the Galkaio Agreement, continuity in mediation and ongoing engagement have been critical in addressing evolving challenges and navigating structural complexities characterising the implementation phase. In Galkaio, this has been reflected in the continued involvement of key mediators in convening follow-up engagements, reaching out to diaspora groups, and securing intermittent support for implementation efforts. This is especially important since national and international attention tends to fade in the implementation phase, when it is most needed.⁶⁵

Our previous analyses of the process to forge the 2017 Agreement highlights the importance of mediators who possess 'credibility leverage'⁶⁶ – committed individuals like Ilham Gassar and General Gorod, who had been key in bridging divides across multiple levels as part of a wider 'peace network'. Yet, retaining committed peace activists and practitioners with the necessary experience and credibility in these processes is difficult. Often, these individuals are 'moved on' or marginalised due to shifting political realities, bureaucratic turnover, or donor fatigue. Even when they remain committed to addressing the 'unfinished business of peace' in Galkaio, as both the General and Gassar have been, their efforts proceed with limited support from the international peacebuilding world.

The inconsistency and fragmentation in sustained mediation efforts is symptomatic of broader trends in international engagement, where short-term timelines, projectisation and limited strategic coherence are common.⁶⁷ A European donor involved in the 2017 agreement-making process observed that subsequent investments in the implementation phase were ad hoc and lacked a coherent strategy and sustained approach.⁶⁸ This lack of continuity is compounded by the volatility of the Somali context, where priorities shift and resources remain constrained. The UN, for example, played an important role in the initial agreement-making process in 2015 and 2016, leveraging its convening power at both federal and local levels. Key UN personnel working in Mogadishu and Nairobi, were instrumental in bridging multiple layers of influence and fostering coordination across diverse actors.⁶⁹ This engagement, however, has been difficult to sustain over time as personnel rotate, mandates evolve, and attention shifts elsewhere.

Conclusion

The Galkaio peace agreement, now in its seventh year, stands as a significant yet fragile form of stability within Somalia's fragmented political landscape. The Lelkasse-Sa'ad conflict episode captures the complexity, pressures and limits on dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms but also the strength of the overarching 2017 agreement, which the FMS of Puntland and Galmudug and their respective dominant clan constituencies ultimately did not want to see collapse.

This article has shown that the agreement's relative endurance does not stem from institutionalised frameworks or sustained external guarantees, but from a context of ongoing mediation, the reactivation of customary systems, and sustained local engagement. While inherently fragile and contingent, the agreement illustrates how local peace processes can persist amid fragmentation and political volatility when grounded in flexible, context-responsive mechanisms. Yet this very flexibility also reveals a central vulnerability: the process remains heavily dependent on the leadership, networks, and legitimacy of key individuals. In the

⁶⁵Stedman, 'Introduction', in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, eds. Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 1–40.

⁶⁶L. Reid, 'Finding a Peace that Lasts: Mediator Leverage and the Durable Resolution of Civil Wars', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 7 (2015): 1401–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715611231> (Original work published 2017)

⁶⁷Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE), *Renegotiating the Terms of Aid: A New Vision for Effective Aid in Fragile States*, ISE, 2014. <https://effectivestates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ise-rtoa-2020.pdf>

⁶⁸Interview, online, September 2, 2024.

⁶⁹See note 16 above.

absence of their continued involvement, implementation risks stalling or even reversing, leaving peace in Galkaio reliant on personalised mediation efforts with limited institutional support.

At the same time, structural constraints continue to shape the limits of post-agreement stability. The absence of a unified security architecture leaves the town vulnerable to cyclical violence. Governance remains fragmented, with dual administrations and overlapping authorities that weaken coordination and public trust. These conditions create space for local disputes to escalate into broader political and clan rivalries, especially during election cycles, moments of regional tension or through provocation by groups such as Al Shabaab.

Analytically, this study advances a trans-scalar perspective on peace implementation that views local agreements not as discrete, time-bound events, but as ongoing negotiated processes embedded in fluid political, economic, and security landscapes. Unlike nested or multi-level frameworks – which typically model peacebuilding as a hierarchical and sequenced process moving from local to national to international levels – this approach highlights how outcomes emerge from dynamic, relational interactions across local, national and transnational arenas. It focuses on how peace is shaped by context-specific, overlapping networks of actors, including informal, transnational, and non-state participants.⁷⁰ Implementation is therefore iterative and relational, requiring sustained mediation, adaptation to uncertainty, and responsiveness to both shifting incentives and pressures.

The case also points to several implications. First, sustaining local agreements requires long-term investment in mediation that is resourced and legitimised across levels. This includes a shift in international engagement from episodic support for agreement-making towards sustained accompaniment of implementation. The Galkaio case reflects a broader tendency to prioritise negotiation and signing, while underinvesting in the long-term work of maintaining peace. More effective approaches require flexible, politically informed engagement that supports ongoing negotiation, adapts to changing conditions, and reduces reliance on individual actors.

Second, economic dynamics are central; investment, trade, and diaspora engagement can generate stabilising effects, but also introduce new forms of competition that must be actively managed. Third, diaspora actors are integral to both conflict and peacebuilding; their influence spans economic investment, political mobilisation, and the amplification of conflict narratives. A trans-scalar approach requires also engaging diaspora networks as key stakeholders in both implementation and conflict prevention.

Finally, the Galkaio case suggests that local agreements can endure in fragmented political environments but only when they are understood and supported as ongoing processes of negotiation, rather than as fixed settlements to be implemented. Sustaining peace in such contexts requires continuous engagement, adaptive mediation, and long-term investment – both domestic and international – in the political work of implementation. A trans-scalar approach provides a more realistic basis for aligning local agency, economic incentives, and multi-level engagement, offering a more durable pathway for sustaining peace in Somalia and comparable contexts.

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⁷⁰Oliver Richmond, Sandra Pogodda and Jasmin Ramovic, 'Introduction', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace*, eds. Oliver Richmond, Sandra Pogodda and Jasmin Ramovic (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1–20.

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