Electoral Politics and Violence in Somalia: Implications for Livability in Mogadishu

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I. Introduction

Somalia descended into chaos after the political elites who ousted the former president, Mohamed Siad Barre, failed to agree on the form, application, and reach of post-dictator power.[1] It took more than 15 peace conferences[2] to come up with an acceptable power-sharing plan, the 4.5 formula.[3,4] The basic element of the formula is that four significant clans, namely Darod, Digil and Mirifle, Dir, and Hawiye, get an equal share in power. In contrast, the smaller clans lumped together, namely Bantu, Benadiri, Gaboye, and others, share half of a slice of a major clan.[5] At the heart of this arrangement is an indirect electoral process where clan-based delegates select legislators who elect a president.[6,7] While significant literature examines the intention and rationale of this power-sharing arrangement,[8] scant attention is given to the new forms of violence it generates and the impact this has on urban livability. Adding value to this debate, this paper examines electoral politics and violence and their impact on everyday life in Mogadishu.

Electoral violence is a distinct form of political violence that occurs before or after an election to maintain or disrupt political or territorial control.[9] Significant literature on Africa's peace and state-building dwells on when, how, and why this form of violence occurs. For instance, Taylor et al. argue that electoral violence may emerge when an incumbent presidential candidate is running for re-election since existing beneficiaries often turn to violence to protect a reliable patron.[10] Fjelde posits that electoral violence is likely to occur in politi-

cal environments where more cost-effective ways to mobilize voters or constrain political actors are impossible, mainly because of the absence of strong political parties.[11] Along the same lines, Malik suggests that electoral violence may arise in regions where reforms fail to achieve sub-national resonance and where national and local leaders' incentives regarding electoral usefulness are misaligned.[12]

Although electoral violence poses a serious challenge to democratic consolidation and peace in Africa, knowledge of how to prevent and/or manage it is inadequate.[13] Some scholars suggest that the establishment of national infrastructures for peace, such as an early warning system and a reliable adjudicative mechanism, is of paramount importance to the minimization of electoral violence.[14] A related proposition also states that the integrity and strength of the electoral management bodies and capacity building using attitude-transforming strategies may play a significant role in the mitigation of electoral violence.[15] Albeit overlooked, election monitoring missions may also reduce or induce electoral violence. An empirical analysis of election-related violence for African elections between 1990–2009 shows that the presence of election observers increases the incidence of pre-election violence.[16]

In Somalia, a significant amount of scholarly attention appears devoted to the historical and contemporary dynamics of democracy and democratization. For instance, on the historical front, Samatar situates Somalia in the facade of those who, at one point in their postcolonial existence, excelled in the democratic transitions of power.[17] On the contemporary front, Elmi examines the politics of elections with a particular focus on the underexplored, indirect elections that have become central to Somalia's current power production processes.[18] At the sub-national level, Pegg and Walls explore Somaliland's electoral progress and, at times, setbacks.[19] While these discussions provide crucial insights into how electoral processes contribute to the state-building efforts, particularly the evolving political settlement, they have seldom examined the significant ways in which elections in Somalia generate violence that claims lives, displaces urban residents, and disrupts fragile peace and stability.

This paper examines the nexus between electoral politics and electoral violence in Mogadishu. This examination is essential for a number of reasons. First, it reveals how what happens at the city level impacts the national political settlement. Second, it deepens our understanding of state revival by giving us a window view into the prospect (or lack) of present arrangements metamorphosing into a fully-fledged democ-

racy with greater participation and civic rights. The paper highlights how the political elite use electoral violence as a strategic way to attract international attention and keep the violence from escalating into city-wide conflict and lawlessness. It argues that these opportunistic politics have severe implications for day-to-day urban life. It also argues that elections and related processes of power transition can partly explain the lack of trust among the political elites and, by implication, the perpetuation of insecurity and political instability. In so doing, the paper takes forward a handful of studies examining elections and their role in the ongoing political settlement and state remaking.[20]

The data for this paper was collected between 2016 and 2021 through key informant interviews, participant observation, and monitoring of media outlets. While the participant observation mainly relied on personal attendance in meetings and follow-up political events, the interviews were conducted with politicians with first-hand information about the subject. The remainder of the paper is organized into three sections. In the first section, I provide a historical overview of elections, politics of power-sharing, and their interface with democratization. In the second section, I explore the politics of indirect elections and electoral violence in Mogadishu. And, in the final section, I look at the implications of electoral politics and violence on everyday urban life.

II. Elections and Electoral Violence in Somalia

A. Pre-war Elections

Elections were introduced in Somalia during the latter years of colonial rule. The first of these elections was conducted in 1954 across 35 municipalities in the Italian colony. This was followed by territory-wide elections for a national assembly in 1959.[21] The Somali Youth League, a pan-Somali party, formed in 1943 to pursue independence, won both elections with a landslide victory. Such successive triumphs could partly be explained by the fact that the Somali Youth League (SYL) was more organized in terms of narrative and resources than the other parties.[22] In the north, the British colonial government began discussions on the introduction of municipal structures at about the same time. The aim was to transfer a limited authority to Somalis.[23] This began with the establishment of town councils in 1953.[24] Four years later, this was expanded to include a territory-wide legislative council with 30 members, of which only 12 were electable.[25,26] While these

elections have generated a significant negative attitude towards the colonial authorities, they have not generated violence, mainly because they were conducted in spatially limited confines.

When the colonial powers left Somalia in 1960, such elections were continued and regularly organized.[27] On the one hand, the postcolonial elections were characterized by a high level of participation which surpassed the imagination of Western writers and audiences who assumed that the nomadic culture in the country would be unconducive to universal suffrage.[28] On the other hand, the elections failed to produce a system that met the people's expectations, creating a rift in the relationship between the postcolonial elite and the public. For instance, the first election under the independent Somali flag, the constitutional referendum in 1961, was characterized by irregularities and complaints. While such irregularities were not seen as pervasive, they nonetheless became worrisome for the then-president of Somalia, Aden Abdulle Osman, who sought advice on ways to improve future elections.[29] His worries were reflected, or seemingly so, in the 1963 polls where the SYL performed far worse than any other election in which it had participated in the past. In this election, the SYL has fielded candidates in all districts, 58, but it managed only to secure 52 percent of the seats in parliament; falling behind 32 percent from its previous position (ibid).

Thereafter, divisions in the SYL's leadership appeared. This culminated in Osman being elbowed out of power in 1967, becoming the first head of state in Africa who peacefully transferred power to a new president, Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke.[30] The new president was assassinated in 1969 by a man whose clan had grievances related to how the elections were conducted. Soon after this electoral violence, the military took over the power. Initially, the coup was not only accepted but welcomed by most Somalis who were fed up with how the political class used and misused the state apparatus partly because it promised a significant shift from the past in terms of development.[31] However, it was not long before many of the same critics of the multiparty politics found themselves in the bad books of the military junta, mainly because of their disgruntlement with the extent to which the new regime deprived the citizenry of any breathing space for expressing themselves.[32] This dissatisfaction once again laid the foundation for stiff opposition against military rule. Internal friction between the ruling military cadre also began, helping the opposing elites gain sympathizers within the military ranks.[33]

Among the demands made by the insurgency was the reintroduction of democracy and multiparty politics. For the first few years, the military regime made little or no effort to respond to these demands in any meaningful way. But as the armed opposition grew and state resources dwindled due to internal pressures and geopolitical shifts, the regime considered changing how it structurally operated. As a result, single-party elections were introduced in 1986, where Barre won unopposed.[34] This exercise neither abated the opposition nor the public discontent with the military, however, it did not generate electoral violence mainly because no one saw it as an election. Moreover, by then, the regime had taken the clannish form it earlier opposed. The end game was the ouster of Barre in 1991 by a coalition of armed groups.[35] Thereafter, the state descended into a prolonged civil war, which occurred in different parts of the country with varying intensities.[36]

B. Post-war Elections

Attempts aimed at reviving the state have often failed. But in 2002, a new and painstakingly slow process of clan-based power-sharing was agreed. Amid accusations of non-inclusivity and procedural illegitimacy, three presidents, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, Abdikasim Salad Hasson and Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, have emerged from this dispensation. All were elected in foreign capitals: Djibouti and Nairobi. Upon their return home, these presidents faced violent resistance from local armed groups who finally forced them to step down. Equally, Hasson Sheikh Mohamed who was the first president elected on Somali soil was also faced with threats of violence rooted in fears about indirect elections dishing him a competitive advantage. The general dissatisfaction with indirect elections, in general, and term extension, in particular, have reinforced disgruntlement against the current set-up. Consequently, contemplation of a shift towards more sustainable means of power production gained momentum in Mohamoud's tenure. However, the institutional and logistical conditions necessary for a shift were not in place by the end of Mohamoud's term in September 2016.[37]

As a result, fears about election delays created political and legal ambiguities.[38] This legal ambiguity stemmed from the fact that the constitution did not provide a framework for the state to operate in case of an election delay. This lack of accommodation for scenarios like this made the state institutions, such as the parliament and president, legally vulnerable. This vulnerability paved the way for a new forum for political decision-making in Somalia: the National Lead-

ers Forum. Chief among the actors in this forum were the regional heads of governments, the speaker of parliament, and president.[39] The forum's setup was faced with two primary concerns. The first was that the forum membership was limited to a few leaders who put measures that served their narrow interests during an electioneering period. The second was that the forum might outlive its purpose and become an unconstitutional political institution that undermines the prospect of a future universal suffrage and institutions that would govern them.[40,41,]

In addition to the above concerns, fears of both pre- and post-election violence loomed. A number of the candidates who controlled a significant following among the disorganised and, at the time, disgruntled security forces, whose salary was not paid due to financial mismanagement and a reduction in external funding, made it clear that they would not accept the outcome if certain candidates won. In the end, the election was peacefully conducted and former prime minister, Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, won by a landslide. While the scholarship on democratization sufficiently documents the turbulent history of elections in Somalia,[42] it reflects two areas that require enrichment. The first is that it glosses over how post-transitional elections often disrupt fragile peace and security in urban spaces. The second is that it misses accounting for how the indirect election and associated violence create images and attitudes that can disrupt the calibration and recalibration of power, thereby impacting the evolving political settlement.

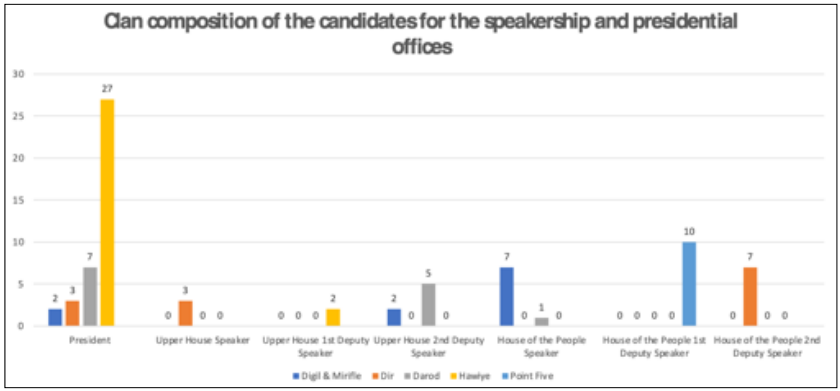
III. Electoral Politics and Violence in Mogadishu

A. Dynamic of Indirect Elections

In Somalia, indirect elections refer to electoral processes where a number of people representing a subclan elect legislators to the lower house of parliament.[43] This form of election was constituted as a temporary arrangement until such time when the federal authorities are able to implement a conventional election. On the one hand, indirect elections created hope for the warring elites in Somalia to pursue power in a non-violent manner. On the other hand, they resulted in an inherently alienating power-relations and political culture where politicians from certain clans tend to gravitate toward competition for particular seats over others. For instance, all eight men who ran for the lower house's leadership were from the Digil and Mirifle clans except one. Equally, all four candidates who ran for the Senate leadership were from the

Dir clan. On a similar footing, most people who ran for the presidential office were from the Hawiye and Darod clans. Outliers or those who defied this logic got few or no votes.[44] While various reasons and rationales are given for the asymmetry of who can and cannot assume premier or presidential roles in Somalia, the present political realities show that this is determined by the economic and political strength of the administration from which one hails and the ability of such administration to challenge or withstand federal authorities.

Figure 1: Clan distribution of candidates



So far, two political sites have demonstrated such regional strength. The first site is the Darod dominated regional states of Jubaland and Puntland.[45] Both administrations have greater autonomy from the centre not only because of their resolute public preference for decentralization but also because they have inherited relatively good infrastructures that enabled them to generate independent revenue.[46] Other regional states suffer political and economic challenges that prevent them from having the same level of influence in the state-making processes. The Southwest particularly is faced with more challenges than the rest, given the fact that Al-Shabab occupies a significant portion of its land, its economic clout is lesser than that of Puntland and Jubaland, and its ability to generate revenue is constrained by the absence of critical infrastructures.[47] Equally, politicians from Somaliland are considered outliers in the current set-up. For one, they do not have access to the social foundation from which they could mobilize resistance; and two, they are less organized than the Southern elites.[48]

The second site is Mogadishu, which is home to the Hawiye political elite. Albeit highly fragmented, these elites tend to command a significant following among the city's population. Current estimates put the city's inhabitants at around three million,[49] making up roughly a quarter of the country's population. Furthermore, Mogadishu is crucial for Somalia's ongoing and often fluid political settlement for two reasons.[50] Firstly, it is one of the few sources of revenue for the federal administration.[51,52] Secondly, it is a crucial site where a significant part of the electoral processes (chief among them the election of the Dir and 0.5 parliamentary representatives as well as the presidential elections) are conducted.[53] For these reasons, what happens in or to Mogadishu affects more than just its residents. It generates images and attitudes about the ongoing political settlement. A living example is that fears about pre- or post-election violence in the city have often given rise to calls for shifting away from the indirect electoral model.[54] In the following subsections, I will explore the electoral violence in Mogadishu and the electoral politics from which they resulted.

B. The Build-up: Shift from Indirect Election

In March, the government tabled an electoral bill in parliament.[55] The bill contained two contentious clauses. The first was that if elections were not held on time, the 10th parliament and, by extension, the government would stay in power, and the second was that the president would come from the party that wins the majority of votes. Both points were regarded as extraconstitutional. Given the nature of the bill, the speaker of the parliament appointed a committee to propose ways to improve it. After two weeks in Djibouti, the committee offered several fundamental changes, including expanding voting sites, maintaining the 4.5 power-sharing formula, and using a proportional representation list.[56] However, as the president's term neared the end, it increasingly became clear that elections would not occur according to the new bill's stipulations. The opposition also made it clear that they would not accept a term extension under any circumstance, creating a political impasse.[57] One of the opposition leaders put it this way:

> The clan-based indirect electoral system is not perfect, but it at least gives us hope that power can be ascended through peaceful means. An illegal extension would undermine this hope and with it the little trust we have over the years developed in our ability to contest for power peacefully and transfer to each other peacefully.[58]

Three issues have aggravated the political impasse between the opposition and the ruling group. The first concerned Jubaland, and centered on the power struggle between Ahmed Madobe, president of Jubaland, and the former head of state, Farmajo, whose clan specifically populates Gedo, Jubaland. While Farmajo provided political and military backing for Gedo to stay separate from Jubaland, Madobe insisted on its return to his administration to manage the elections.[59] The second was the election of members of parliament from Somaliland, which unilaterally seceded from the rest of Somalia but whose self-proclaimed representatives take part in the elections. The arrangement was that Mogadishu would become the venue for electing these MPs until Somaliland's quest for sovereignty was resolved. However, past experiences have proven that the incumbents often enjoyed a significant competitive advantage over their contenders, primarily because they manipulated the processes, still, arguably to a lesser degree than was recently done.[60] The third issue was the appointment of an Indirect Electoral Implementation Committee, which stood accused of a severe bias as their rank included civil servants and security agents.[61] According to an insider:

> The people who were put into this committee were handpicked by the president and his political allies to ensure that the election outcome was favourable to him. He wanted to become both the judge and the jury in the election.[62]

As the impasse deteriorated, the international community mounted pressure on both sides.[63] For instance, the United Kingdom tabled a resolution in the security council calling for the "implementation of timely elections by late 2020 or early 2021." This pressure has compelled the sides to meet in September to discuss possible electoral modalities. On September 17, the Federal Government of Somalia agreed to hold an election in two locations of every regional state. In the agreement, Somaliland's seats were also decided to be held in Mogadishu by the government in consultation with the politicians from the North.[64] Amid uncertainty about how the agreement was to be implemented, the president's term ended on February 8. This created a new wave of tensions in Mogadishu. But they subsided when the US "Ambassador and UN Special Representative for the Secretary-General brokered a meeting between FGS and FMS to discuss how the September 17 agreement could be implemented. However, the meeting ended prematurely when the government unilaterally announced on April 6 that the talks had collapsed.

C. The Confrontation: Back to the Indirect Elections

The international community expressed deep concerns over the government's decision. On its part, the government dismissed this concern as a "direct interference in its internal affairs in and breach of UN Security Council Resolutions, International Conventions and laws." This response did not, however, prevent the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) from reaffirming that they would not support "any parallel process, partial elections, or new initiatives leading to any extension of prior mandates."[65] In defiance of local and international pressure, the government organized parliamentarians in the lower house to extend their term and that of the president.[66] They did so on April 12. But, both the international community and the opposition groups have rejected this move. In a statement issued on April 22, 2021, the AU's Permanent Security Council blamed:

> The House of People [lower chamber of parliament which wield more power than the senate as per the interim constitution], which extended the mandate of the President and the Parliament, as effectively delaying the elections, thereby undermining unity and stability of the country, the nascent democratic and constitutional processes, which also threaten the relative peace and security, as well as the important gains [made over the years].[67]

The upper house and the states of Jubaland and Puntland have also rejected the extension.[68] Soon after, the Council of Presidential Candidates followed suit. They all accused Farmajo of inexcusably rebuffing the "collective efforts of the international community [and] maneuvering to shift goalposts to remain in power; illegally."[69] While the president saw neither the upper house nor Puntland and Jubaland as a challenge in Mogadishu, the same could not be said about the Council of Presidential Candidates.[70] This was because almost all key members in this political alliance hail from Mogadishu, albeit with varying degrees of support, influence, and resolve to challenge Farmajo's attempt to extend his mandate. Their most deadly move came in late April when they relocated to their clan's strongholds to organize support easily. This has drawn a swift response from Farmajo, who ordered the arrest of key opposition leaders.[71] On February 19, 2022, a contingent of heavily armed paramilitary units was sent to a hotel that

hosted former presidents, Hassan Sheikh Mohamed and Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, but they were repulsed by their equally heavily armed bodyguards.[72] According to one interviewee:

> The attempted arrest of the former presidents served two purposes. First, Farmajo wanted to see the extent to which his competitors commanded public support in Mogadishu. Second, he wanted to assess the extent to which the security forces were loyal to him.[73]

Beyond Farmajo's expectations, military units from the government forces based outside Mogadishu have come to the aid of the opposition leaders. In other words, they have defected or deserted their units and bases to defend the opposition leaders.[74] This was attributed to two reasons. First, Somali society is organized along clan lines.[75] Thus, many soldiers felt compelled to defend one of their own from being subjected to what they saw as an illegal arrest. The second was a high level of mobilization among the supporters of the presidential candidates who saw it necessary to defend them from what they considered aggression by a man who wanted to deny them their fundamental constitutional rights to electing and being elected. In addition to protecting the opposition leaders, these forces have also holed in strategic locations in the city to make it impossible for the government to carry out further actions against the opposition. These include Shirkole, a neighborhood near central government offices, the Sayidka and Ceelgaabta quarters, where manned checkpoints for exit and entrance of the presidential zone are located.[76] According to a local resident:

> The opposition mobilized armed men, but the number was not critical enough to cause city-wide chaos. They could have mobilized a far greater number, but they felt that this was not in their best interest. They knew if the violence spirals out of control, power could shift to junior militia leaders who were closer to both the soldiers and their local communities.[77]

The delicate ways in which political elites in Mogadishu, on the one hand, instigated violence to attract attention from the international community and, on the other hand, avoided city-wide violence shows the strategic manner in which opportunistic politics were used to create pressure that yielded advantage for the opposition. For instance, the deteriorating security situation in Mogadishu has put pressure on Hirshabelle and Galmudug.[78] Thereafter, Farmajo realized that the

extension might eventually lead to his forceful ousting. For this reason, he organized the parliament to rescind its earlier decision on May 1. He also ordered his Prime Minister to negotiate a truce.[79] In a nutshell, three interlinked key issues have forced Farmajo to reconsider his stance: the violence that erupted in Mogadishu; the suspension of western financial support; and the threats of targeted international sanctions.[80] For the most part, the change was made possible by the strategic ways in which the political elite in Mogadishu created enough pressure to attract international attention by motivating the local residents to resist federal power and keep the crisis from reaching a point of no return. The opportunistic ways in which such violence is deployed may undermine the prospect of elite trust not only among themselves, but also in the systems that regulate power production in the country.

IV. Implications for everyday life in Mogadishu

The above-narrated confrontations in Mogadishu were detrimental to the country's political and security landscape. Firstly, they disrupted the connective infrastructures and other critical services for everyday life in the capital. These happenings negatively impacted the residents' ability to earn income, given that most street and open market vendors could not go to work for fear of their lives and trade. Secondly, they have overstretched the fragile security institutions in the city, which were already grappling with serious challenges, including, but not limited to, lack of adequate skill and funding. For instance, the defections and desertions of duties and stations during the stalemate damaged the trust as well as the command-and-control relationship between and among the servicemen and women in the security forces. Thirdly, the complete breakdown (in some neighborhoods) or gap (in others) in law and order has weakened the city's highly dysfunctional, but visible security system. Many checkpoints at critical locations were left unmanned during the confrontation. This posed a greater risk to residents as it has created further opportunities for Al-Shabaab to conduct its attacks or undertake related preparatory activities.[81] Fourthly, the clannish narratives through which aspects of the political mobilization and subsequent armed resistance were conducted dwelled on the politics of Mogadishu's legal status and its important role in financing federal agendas. At present, Mogadishu is one of the few sources of income for the federal government. However, the government's extraction of revenues from the city generates tremendous

resentment among the residents, who blame the authorities for taxing but not servicing them.[82,83] The recent electoral violence has deepened this resentment and renewed calls for the city to have an autonomous administration. Given the complexity of the politics around the legal and administrative status of Mogadishu, in the past, successive administrations have avoided addressing this concern for fear of severe ramifications.[84,85] The current administration is not expected to deviate from this path. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the electoral violence has polarized urban residents further into those who supported the government and the opposition, sometimes along clan lines and others times along political lines. This polarization and the fear of related insecurity created shock waves in the social and economic circles of the city, causing many people to consider relocating their families to safer parts of the country or even overseas. While electoral violence and irregularities are not new in Somalia,[86,87] the extent to which they have recently created despair in urban spaces is alarming.[88] Much of this despair stems from the opportunistic and over-sensitized ways in which clannish narratives are used to challenge or hold on to power. Furthermore, this despair is amplified by the increasing level of public resentment towards the 4.5 power-sharing arrangement because it compromises the citizens' constitutional right to elect their representatives directly.[89]

V. Conclusion

Elections are vital instruments for producing and maintaining legitimate power.[90] However, their utility in achieving this depends on the way they are conceived, managed, and/or advanced. Rather than making governance responsive and leaders accountable, most elections in Africa result in tensions and political instability.[91] Somalia is not an exception. In fact, elections in Somalia have always left a painful mark on the social and political spaces in the country. For instance, the multiparty elections between 1960-69 generated public resentment towards the political elites. This played a crucial role in the justification of the military coup and assassination of the democratically elected president of Somalia, Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. More recently, the locally organized indirect elections of 2012 and 2016 produced a notable degree of concerns resulting from the prospect of one or more competing sides rejecting the outcome. Equally, the delay of the 2020 elections landed the country in constitutional and security crises that threatened the painstaking recovery from a protracted conflict.

In light of this, this paper has provided empirical evidence to show how electoral politics and related violence in Mogadishu have significantly impacted the public mindset in ways that could impede or roll back the progress toward democratization in Somalia. In arriving at these conclusions, the paper historicized elections in Somalia and argued that the current political settlement has failed to go beyond creating clan-based inclusivity rhetoric. In other words, the political class manipulates the current 4.5 system to their respective advantage. The result is an acute shortage of legitimacy in the political settlement and state-building efforts. Therefore, given the magnitude of Somalia's election challenges, rethinking is imperative if the country's nascent electioneering democracy is to make progress. For this to occur, some have suggested the country must find a way to deal with the dilemma of balancing a high investment and high-risk approach with relatively democratic outcomes versus low investment and potentially less democratic outcomes.[92] Others have countered that if Somalia is to have a stable political settlement, the accommodation of its religious and traditional structures is necessary.[93]

This article contributes to this debate by abridging the subnational and national focus with a city-level agenda that examines how electoral politics and violence generated in cities shape people's attitudes, actions, and counteractions and how that impacts the ongoing political settlement. For several reasons, cities are a relatively more appropriate scale at which peacebuilding, state-building, and democratization in Somalia can be advanced. First, electoral violence in Somalia often occurs in cities. Therefore, understanding what happens at the city level will provide critical insight into nature and possible solutions to the problem. This is even more compelling because Somali cities are rapidly growing with one of the highest rates in the region. Unlike in the past, when the dominant nomadic people and their relatively autonomous existence gained little or no attention from the state, urban settings now require a higher degree of state involvement in regulating people-people and state-society relations. This places tremendous pressure on state authorities in more ways than one, including the provision of higher levels of services than was the case in nomadic settings.

Second, power production at city levels generates less attention than the national level exercises. Representational benefits are lesser, and hence elite manipulation is less intense. Thus, this could become a ground for experimenting with best practice democratic exercises. Third, the conflict in Somalia has created a massive displacement. For

all practical reasons, it would be impossible to relocate everyone to where they came from; hence, it is inevitable that an environment conducive to coexistence should be created. Hence, elections in cities are the best sites to develop a degree of civic neutrality, as demonstrated by local elections in Puntland, where an Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has won a councillorship. Finally, as electioneering sites where significant violence emerges when electoral exercises and politics go wrong, cities can become containers of violence where an environment and bureaucracy more conducive to stability can be created. The goal is to create a city-level political settlement (foundational in nature) at the heart of which lay functional and realistic peacebuilding that results in the emergence of a civic order anchored on citizenship instead of sub-ethnic patriotism and sectoral differences.

In a nutshell, the exploration of electoral politics and related violence are critical to understanding the elite commitment to a political settlement. This is even more imperative in urban settings, given that many residents now openly challenge democracy as an alien system whose transplantation has not and will not work in the country. It is this call for an alternative that future research must explore and debate. What options do we have? Does an improvement in how the system works provide enough transformation for preventing despair and restoring trust across the dimensions mentioned above? Or, do we need a significant overhaul whose parameters are stretched beyond the bounds set by the international community or local advocates or inhibitors of change? These are questions that need further inquiry.

Notes

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43. Prior to 2016, a designated traditional leader, aided by a handful of his clan elders, selected parliamentarians. In 2016, this was increased to 51 delegates from the clan plus the traditional leader. In the latest election, the number was increased to 101.
44. This has widened the depth of despair in Somali society and deepened the existing social segmentation.
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46. Critical infrastructure such as ports and airports are the most common sites for tax collection in Somalia.
47. In Somalia, ports are significant sites for revenue generation.
48. Somaliland has unilaterally seceded from the rest of Somalia in 1991 but is not recognised as a sovereign state. However, the administration in Somaliland controls almost all the regions in northern Somalia (in line with the then borders of the British Somaliland protectorate). For this reason, the current federal arrangement is that representatives of Somaliland are elected in Mogadishu until the question of secession is resolved.
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52. It is the only territory with significant critical infrastructure that the federal government controls.
53. See reference 42, HIPS (2021).
54. for which such violence is blamed.

55. The bill was passed with an overwhelming majority.
56. Interviewee 11 June 19, 2021. Political Party Official.
57. Interviewee 3 February 05, 2022. Politician.
58. Interviewee 7 April 07, 2022. Leading opposition figure.
59. The government rejects this because it sees Madobe as a self-styled leader who only endorsed interim for the sake of peace.
60. Interviewee 13 October 11, 2017. Former Indirect Election Commissioner.
61. GHDHF (2020) Shaacinta jadwalka doorashooyinka 2020/21 ee Aqalka Sare iyo Golaha Shacabka Barlamaanka Jamhuuriyadda Federaalka Soomaaliya. Guddiga Hirgelinta Doorashooyinka Heer Federaal. Obtained copy on the same date; CPC (2020) Press Release. December 23; Dowladda Puntland (2020) Warsaxaafadeed. December 24.
62. Interviewee 19 February 02, 2022. Businessman.
63. Interviewee 8 March 21, 2022. NGO Worker.
64. Interviewee 2 May 15, 2022. Member of Parliament.
65. AU, EU, IGAD and UN (2021) Joint Communique on the Situation in Somalia. April 10th
66. Interviewee 9 July 13, 2021. Member of Parliament.
67. *Peace and Security Council, 2021. Communique of the 993rd meeting of the PSC held on 22 April 2021, on the political and security situation in Somalia. African Union, Peace and Security Department. URL https://www.peaceau.org:443/en/article/communique-of-the-993rd-meeting-of-the-psc-held-on-22-april-2021-on-the-political-and-security-situation-in-somalia (accessed 8.25.22).*
68. Abdi Hashi (2021) Go'aanka Guddoomiyaha Aqalka Saree e ku aadan Qaraarka Sharci Daradda ah ee ka soo baxay Golaha Shacabka ee waqtigiisu Dhamaaday. April 12; Puntland (2021) Go'aanka Dawladda Puntland ee Xaalada Doorashada Dalka. April 22.
69. Council of Presidential Candidates (2020) Press Release. April 19.
70. Interviewee 1 December 04, 2021. Researcher.
71. A charge denied by Farmajo.
72. Interviewee 4 March 23, 2022. Political Analyst.
73. Interviewee 17 January 09, 2022. Ordinary Citizen.
74. Interviewee 15 February 18, 2022. Security Analyst.
75. Interviewee 4 March 23, 2022. Political Analyst.
76. Interviewee 16 May 25, 2022. Former Military Official.
77. Interviewee 20 January 08, 2022, Ordinary Citizen and Interviewee 21 January 17, 2022. Ordinary Citizen.
78. who supported Farmajo despite their population being predominantly connected to the capital in both economic and social terms, to reject the extension; Interviewee 10 February 01, 2022. Deputy Minister.
79. Prime Minister (2021) Speech of the PM. May 5.
80. Interviewee 12 April 26, 2022. Election Commissioner.

81. Al-Shabaab has repeatedly threatened to disrupt the elections in Somalia See reference 42, ICG (2020). by increasing its operations in the city and executing delegates who participated in the election.
82. HIPS (2014), "Attitudes towards Elections and Democracy in Mogadishu".
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86. See reference 20, Brendon Cannon (2019); See reference 42, HIPS (2021); See reference 42, Ahmed Ibrahim (2021).
87. Large sums of money change hands in the run-up to election day. Much of these funds come from external forces eager to finance the Somali elections.
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