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DIFFERENTIATING THE DIASPORA: REFLECTIONS ON DIASPORIC ENGAGEMENT 'FOR PEACE' IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Differentiating the Diaspora: reflections on diasporic engagement 'for peace' in the Horn of Africa[1]

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Abstract

The Horn of Africa is a highly volatile and conflict-ridden region. This is one of the reasons why huge Ethiopian, Somali, and Eritrean diasporas exist all over the globe at the beginning of the 21st century. While the literature frequently stresses the contribution of diasporic actors to conflict escalation and perpetuation, some studies also point to the possibilities and chances for development and peacebuilding through contributions from the diaspora. This paper is based on four individual research projects, three of which included extensive field research, and common discussions about an overall theoretical framework of the projects. It uses field research data as well as the secondary literature to illustrate the complexities and multiple layers of diasporic involvement in 'homeland peacebuilding'. Importantly, our understanding of peacebuilding does not exclude political struggles that aim at restructuring a polity on an inclusive basis, even if this momentarily leads to (more) conflict. In our comparative analysis we identify three major areas in which diasporic actions have contributed to peacebuilding in the conflict-ridden Horn of Africa. First, the engagement of all the diaspora groups discussed in this paper enhance the space for greater contestation of ideas and broaden the range of political options for the homelanders, who are largely confined within the space grudgingly granted by their respective governments or shaped by statelessness and ongoing civil war. Second, diaspora remittances are also crucial for family survival, community stabilisation, and economic growth in the absence of effectively and/or fairly working state institutions. Finally, there are a number of direct and indirect diasporic peace initiatives in the homelands at the local and even national level, concerning issues such as the mediation of inter-clan or sectarian conflicts or the rebuilding of the educational sector in a post-conflict society in order to induce hope (for a prosperous and peaceful future) for the next generation.

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Introduction

Research on the transnational activities of migrants is increasing since the early 1990s (Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton 1992). Diasporas have been termed the "exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (Tölölyan 1991: 5). Their activities concerning the countries of origin range from engagement in conflict escalation to participation in political, social, and economic reconstruction and reform (Skrbis 1997; Demmers 2002, 2007; Shain 2003; Shain and Barth 2003; Zunzer 2004; Dahre 2007; Orjuela 2008). Dynamics of diasporic engagement depend particularly on developments 'at home' as well as the legal, political, social, and economic situation in the 'host country' (Anthias 1998; Shuval 2000; Sökefeld 2006: 280; Horst 2008: 320). On a more general level, the formation of diasporas (through dispersal/migration) cannot be taken for granted. Not every migration automatically leads to diaspora formation. Diasporas constitute a particular form of group identity. Sökefeld (2006: 280) noted that "the development of diaspora identity is not simply a natural and inevitable result of migration but a historical contingency that frequently develops out of mobilisation in response to specific critical events." Moreover, diasporas are heterogeneous groups whose members are "stratified by class, caste, education, occupation, religious affiliation, cultural interests, urban or rural background" (Werbner 1999: 24). The positions of diasporas toward and engagements with 'home' may also change over time. On the one hand, second or third generations of diasporas may feel at home 'abroad' and perceive the conflict and needy relatives in a distanced country of origin (of their parents and grandparents) as a burden (Schlee 2004). On the other hand, particularly in political or in other contexts, 'home' can be revived after many generations (Clifford 1994: 305–306; Darieva 2007). This possibly points to the only *conditio sine qua non* for diasporic engagement, namely that at "a given moment in time the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing." (Shuval 2000: 43)

In sum, diasporas exist in a complex social and political field shaped by global as well as local powers and conditions. While this is a truism and these conditions in fact apply to all social groups, it is nonetheless worth stressing with regard to diasporas that they are placed in multiple and dynamic social and other relations. For long, diasporas have been perceived as 'closed systems' existing as culturally homogenous, alien fragments in a culturally different 'host society'. Fractures within, complex relations to the society in the country of residence, difficulties in the relation to a real or imagined home, and changes over time have only recently caught the attention of researchers.[3]

The case studies from diasporic engagement in the Horn of Africa illustrate some of these complexities, particularly the fragmentation within diasporas and the difficulties in the relations between diasporas and their respective countries of origin. Our research focuses on a very special aspect of diasporic engagement: the engagement in peacebuilding. In the context of this study, peacebuilding is defined as the (nonviolent) activities of various actors, including individuals and groups, that aim at the sustainable transformation of structural conflict factors and patterns. Structural conflict factors and patterns have to be identified in each local context separately. On a general level, they include, e.g., social inequality, religious, ethnic or clan antagonism, discrimination, political oppression, and so forth.

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[3] For a critical discussion of the contemporary diaspora research see Brubaker (2005).

Research was conducted in Ethiopia and Somalia/Somaliland, and a desk study was conducted on Eritrea. All of these settings are characterised by longstanding and multifaceted conflicts. The main research question we address in this paper is: what are the activities and chances of diasporic actors who originate from the Horn with regard to peacebuilding in their respective countries of origin? There is a lack of empirical studies on this topic. Lyons (2004: 6) pointed out that "research on conflict-generated diasporas and their roles in homeland conflict is new and more case studies need to be conducted to reach reliable conclusions." This paper is a contribution to this emerging field of research. However, it does not only concentrate on 'homeland conflict' but also 'homeland peacebuilding'.

The study is divided into four parts. The first part outlines the most important conflict trajectories and dynamics in Somalia/Somaliland, Eritrea, and Ethiopia in order to provide the historical background for diaspora formation and engagement. The second part provides a general discussion of the potential link between diasporic activities and peacebuilding. The third and most substantial part deepens this discussion by outlining important patterns of diasporic engagement. The sections on the three countries Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia are not fully equal. We are able to present case studies from Somalia and Ethiopia that are based on ethnographic field research. Yet, for political and security reasons it was impossible to conduct field research in Eritrea. Thus the section on the activities of the Eritrean diaspora draws exclusively on secondary literature and does not include a case study. We still think that it is possible to use the outlined material from all three contexts for some moderate comparisons, so as to arrive at some more general conclusions that are presented in the last part of the paper.[4]

The Horn of Conflict

The Horn of Africa is a crisis-region par excellence (Markakis 2003; Cliffe, Love and Tronvoll 2009; Shinn 2010). In the second half of the 20th century it was characterised by a host of natural and man-made desasters. We concentrate on the latter and particularly on the violent conflicts within and between Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Somalia
Already in the 1960s the so called 'Greater Somalia' policy of the government in Mogadishu, which aimed at uniting all Somalis in one state, led to armed confrontations with Kenya and Ethiopia (Matthies 1977). Ethiopia's weakness after the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 prompted Somalia's attack on its neighbour in pursuit of its irredentist dream. This resulted in one of the bloodiest inter-state wars in Africa, popularly known as the Ogaden War (1977–78). The devastating defeat of the Somali national army weakened the regime of President Siyad Barre. Mounting militant opposition during the 1980s climaxed in the all-out-war between the government in Mogadishu and guerrilla movements, particularly the Somali National Movement (SNM) that had its support-base in north-western Somalia and the diaspora. Mohamed Siyad Barre was overthrown in January 1991. The lack of agreement between the various Somali guerrilla movements led to new violence and the complete state collapse in Somalia, which produced

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[4] Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002) cautioned us against taking nation states as 'natural' units of analysis in migration research. We certainly agree with this position. Nonetheless, the cases we present here have to be embedded in their specific political, legal, social and other contexts in order to understand the significance of particular developments as well as the similarities and differences between them.

hundreds of thousands of refugees inside and outside of the country and led to internal territorial re-organisation (Prunier 1995). Somaliland in north-western Somalia seceded in 1991 unilaterally from the rest of Somalia. Puntland in the northeast was declared an autonomous region in 1998.

Warlordism reigned in southern Somalia during the 1990s. Since around 2000, Islamic courts and militant Islamists increasingly gained power in the south. This development worried the USA, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. Washington closely cooperated with Ethiopia and a handful of well-paid Somali warlords on the ground to execute or snatch terror suspects in Mogadishu and surroundings. Militant Islamists reacted with attacks on non-Muslim foreigners and on (alleged) US-collaborators in Somalia (ICG 2006; Marchal 2007). This 'dirty war' escalated into a fully-fledged military confrontation between warlord militias and the troops of the United Islamic Courts (UIC) in early 2006. The UIC won and established control over Mogadishu in June 2006. In concert with the USA but also minding its own national interests, the Ethiopian government intervened militarily in Somalia in December 2006 on the side of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) under President Abdullahi Yusuf. The UIC was defeated within one week. Immediately afterwards, however, militant Islamists and nationalists began to attack the Ethiopian and TFG forces in Mogadishu and southern Somalia. In the ensuing confrontation, Mogadishu and much of southern Somalia descended into the worst fighting, displacement, and human suffering since 1991/92 (Marchal 2007; Menkhaus 2007, 2008; Hoehne 2009a). In late December 2008, the Ethiopian troops withdrew from Somalia. Simultaneously, Abdullahi Yusuf, the president of the TFG, resigned. Sheikh Sharif, a former UIC leader who had fled to Asmara in 2007 from where he had started negotiations with the TFG and the international community, was elected president of Somalia in Djibouti in January 2009. Islamic militants inside Somalia, belonging to groups such as Al Shabaab and Hisbul Islam, refused to acknowledge Sharif's government, which they perceived as corrupted by the international community. The TFG moved to Mogadishu in February 2009. Heavy fighting between the new TFG and militant Islamists broke out in the capital city in May 2009. In 2010, Al Shabaab controls much of southern Somalia. Mogadishu and other locations have been heavily damaged in the continued fighting since 2006. More than 12,000 civilians lost their lives in the last four years. Hundreds of thousands became refugees within Somalia or the neighbouring countries. All parties to the conflict committed serious human rights violations and violations of humanitarian law over the past few years without impunity (Marchal 2009; Human Rights Watch 2007, 2008, 2010). The continued insecurity in southern Somalia feeds a steady refugee flow from this area.

The situation in Somaliland and Puntland is generally more peaceful than in the south. Both polities are governed by relatively effective, but internationally not recognised governments. They are, however, in conflict with each other over the control of the borderland regions Sool and Sanaag. Since 2001, this conflict has escalated several times into military clashes (Hoehne 2007, 2009b). Also militant Islamists operate in Somaliland and Puntland. The towns of Hargeysa (Somaliland) and Boosaasso (Puntland) were shaken by five concerted suicide bomb attacks on 29 October 2008. In total, more than 20 people were killed and about 30 were injured. Al Shabaab had masterminded these attacks. Between mid-2008 and mid-2010, Somaliland was caught up in a crisis over the presidential elections. The elections have been continuously, and as some believe unconstitutionally, postponed by the government in power. The tensions within the country only resolved after presidential elections were finally held on 26 June 2010. The winner was Ahmed

Siilyaanyo, the candidate of the Kulmiye party, which had been in the opposition since 2003. Puntland suffers from internal instability due to piracy and criminality.

Eritrea

Another very prominent series of wars and civil wars concerns the Eritrean struggle for independence (1961–1991) and the Eritrean-Ethiopian relations since the late 1990s. Under a UN-mandated referendum, Eritrea (a former Italian colony) was federated with Ethiopia in 1952. However, Emperor Haile Selassie annexed Eritrea a decade later. This incited the armed resistance of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). The change of regime in Ethiopia in 1974 and the military rule of the Derg (Amharic for 'committee') coincided with the rise of a more militant guerrilla movement called Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). The civil war produced a sizable pro-Eritrean diaspora that actively supported the guerrillas. A bloody conflict between these two movements exacerbated the struggle for independence. In 1981, the EPLF ousted the ELF from the field. Tensions among former fighters of both fronts prevailed in the Horn of Africa and in the diaspora. In May 1991, the EPLF finally took control of Eritrea (Aalen and Tronvoll 2009).

The Eritrean wars of independence have ensconced the establishment of ethno-liberation movements against the centralist state in Ethiopia. The strongest among these was the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF was supported by its ethnic comrades in Eritrea across the border. It also formed an alliance with other ethno-liberation movements and established the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in the late 1980s. The EPRDF seized power in Ethiopia at the same time the EPLF captured Eritrea. The EPRDF restructured the Ethiopian state into an ethnic federation. The new political order has its own detractors. Centrists oppose it for 'endangering' the very survival of the country since the constitution theoretically grants the federal states the right to leave the federation. Others complain about the continued centralising tendencies and the new form of ethnocracy, i.e. Tigrean hegemony (Salih and Markakis 1998; Merara 2003; Turton 2006).

The good relations between EPRDF and EPLF benefitted the official declaration of independence of Eritrea in 1993, agreed upon by the new governments in Addis Ababa and Asmara. Subsequently, Eritrea experienced a short period of reconstruction and recovery. Soon, however, the conflicting projects of state-building, failure to devise a mutually acceptable economic arrangement, and a border dispute brought Ethiopia and Eritrea the devastating 1998–2000 war (Negash and Tronvoll 2000). Despite the peace agreement, the conflict continued, albeit in the form of a proxy war in collapsed Somalia, where Asmara supported various Islamist groups while Addis Ababa engaged different warlords and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) under President Abdullahi Yusuf (2004–2008).[5] Moreover, Eritrea maintains an aggressive foreign policy towards other neighbouring countries, including tensions with Djibouti and Yemen, and reported involvement in Sudanese civil conflicts.

Eritrea, however, is not only involved in conflict with and among its neighbours. Inside the polity the increasingly authoritarian style of the government produced, first, political opposition, and

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[5] This aspect of mutual interferences and 'indirect' or 'proxy' wars against each other is indeed a central characteristic of the Horn. Cliffe, Love and Tronvoll (2009: 151) found "that analysis can start with any conflict situation (…) and map out a trail linking to other countries and their internal or bilateral conflicts." The Horn is a regional conflict system, in which conflicts in the neighbouring states are closely related through mutual political or military interferences, cross-border ethnic or clan-relations, and economic interdependencies. Ethnographic examples of cross-border relationships and political conflicts, among other issues, are provided in Dereje and Hoehne (2010); an overview over the regional conflict dynamics from the perspective of the nation-states involved can be found in Weber (2008).

second, after ruthless crack-downs on the latter[6], a massive refugee outflow of Eritreans to the region and also to Europe and North America (Treiber 2005; Treiber and Tesfaye 2008). Eritrea's constitution is still not fully implemented, and since its independence in 1993 there have been no elections at the national level. The ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), which had emerged directly out of the EPLF, remains the only legal political party, and the creation of Eritrean political opposition parties and oppositional activities can take place only in exile. Political opposition against the present government is mainly composed of factions of the ELF and of recently established ethnically defined organisations, such as the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO), the Afar and Democratic Movement for Liberation of Kunama (DMLK), and the Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP). In spite of the government's policy of 'unity in diversity', regional and ethnic loyalties still play an important role. Moreover, the influence of Islamic oppositional movements seems to be growing. Since 2001, factional rifts have also appeared within the ruling PFDJ, and the military and police forces (Hirt 2008: 314).

Rule of law, freedom of the press, of expression, and of assembly as well as movement and academic freedom are non-existent in Eritrea. Since 2002, religious freedom has been severely restricted for followers of minority churches, such as the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and Muslim minorities. An intensifying militarisation of the Eritrean society via compulsory conscription can be observed, and the country has an enormous military expenditure and a regular military personnel of 202,000 (IISS 2008). The educational system has been militarised since 2003, and large segments of the population of working age are forced to serve in the national service in the framework of the so-called Warsay Yikealo Campaign with little to no payment.[7]

In Eritrea, no civil society in the liberal-democratic sense can be found. The only existing civil society organisations (CSO) are quasi-governmental labour union, peasant, women, and youth organisations that have developed out of former EPLF mass organisations. No other independent CSOs or interest groups are allowed to operate outside the direct control of the government party. The very few local NGOs are strictly limited in their activities to developmental issues. In 2005, the government further tightened its NGO policy by withdrawing tax exemptions, instituting requirements for project reports every three months, annual renewing of licenses, meeting government-established target levels of financial resources, and by increasing registration requirements. International NGOs can hardly operate in the country (Freedom House 2009). These policies also restrict direct engagement of independent diaspora organisations in Eritrea. Moreover, the lack of a free civil society impacts on the potential of diaspora to find actors beyond the state to interact with (Schmitz-Pranghe 2010).

Ethiopia
Ethiopia is involved in external conflicts with Eritrea and Somalia since the mid 1990s, as outlined above. Internally, the country has been in turmoil for decades. The 'red terror' after the takeover of the Derg in the mid-1970s and the struggle of the TPLF against the government in Addis Ababa in the 1980s produced a host of refugees in the region and world-wide. The guerrilla struggle ended

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[6] In September 2001, eleven of the so-called G-15-reformers who were high-ranking former EPLF-members and current members of government pointed out important problems within Eritrea's political system and proposed changes. They were removed from their government posts and arrested. At the same time, other political 'dissidents', including journalists and students, were arrested and independent media outlets closed down.
[7] Warsay-Yikealo is a Tigrinnya neologism which refers to the 'post-liberation-struggle generation' of Eritrean youth. In the context of the Warsay Yikealo Campaign, which started in the early 2000s, young Eritreans of both sexes are required to serve in projects and companies run by the state and the military.

with the victory of the 'rebels' in 1991. As an innovative move towards conflict settlement, the new multi-ethnic government of the EPRDF proposed a federal constitution in 1994 that came into force in 1995. Article 39 of the constitution grants "every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia an unconditional right to self-determination, including secession". The division of the polity into nine federal states (five of which are mostly ethnically homogenous: Somali, Oromo, Afar, Amhara, and Tigray) initially seemed to be a way to integrate ethnic diversity peacefully. However, already in the early 1990s, tensions over power-sharing had escalated within the coalition built around the EPRDF; many of the previous ethnic movements left. They were replaced with willing allies by the dominating members of the TPLF. Since the mid-1990s, Ethiopia increasingly became a single-party state dominated by one faction, closely (but not exclusively) related to one ethnic group. In 2005, the EPRDF was so confident that it allowed free multi-party elections. When it turned out that the opposition parties had won a large share of the power, the results were rigged. Violence erupted and dozens, possibly hundreds, of people were killed between June and November 2005. Tens of thousands were jailed (ICG 2009); opposition members fled abroad. Besides the issue of power-sharing at the national level, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia led to a number of conflicts at the level of regions and districts over boundaries that determined ethnic belonging and access to resources (Hagmann and Mulugeta 2008; ICG 2009; Fekadu 2010).

The EPRDF's political Achilles' heel is the opposition coming from ethno nationalist organisations because this directly touches the basis of its political legitimacy. The EPRDF came to power primarily to resolve the 'nationality question' and, through that, redress the ethnic imbalance that underpinned the Ethiopian polity. In the eyes of ethno-nationalist organisations such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Ethiopia, after nearly two decades of regime change, is not yet post-imperial. In fact, the new political order is referred to as 'ethnocratic', based on an ideology of power that legitimises minority (Tigrean) rule. The failure to establish a democratic framework within which the liberation aspirations of the ethno-nationalist organisations can be contested or recognised by the people, whom they claim to represent, has led to the resumption of armed struggle between the OLF and the ONLF, on the one hand, and the EPRDF government, on the other (Asafa 2005; Hagmann 2005; Samatar 2004).

The uneasy relationship among the various religious groups and their volatile relation with the government has also resulted in religious conflicts in Ethiopia (Hussein 2006). According to the 2007 census, the three largest religious groups among the circa 80 million Ethiopians are Orthodox Christians (43.5%), Muslims (34%), and Protestants (18.6%). Many Muslims have contested this result and claim that their number is actually higher. Various scholars have noted the steadily increasing role of religion and inter-faith conflicts in defining the terms of political debate in Ethiopia, which was hitherto dominated by ethnicity. The main parties to the conflict are members of the historically dominant Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Muslims (Hussein 2006). The 2006 religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Jimma, Illubabaor, Wollega, and Kemisse as well as the 2008/9 clashes in Gondar, Addis Ababa, Arsi, and Dessie (Wello) are indicative of the explosive nature of the interfaith tension in the country. Underlying the religious tension is the way the Muslim rights movement is viewed by the Christian population and the Ethiopian government. The Muslims' struggle for recognition is directed towards both the Christian population and the Ethiopian government. In case of the former, it involves the differentiation of Ethiopian history and claims for land to build mosques. In case of the latter, it

concerns particularly the limits of organisational freedom, the controversial census, and the right for public manifestation of religious symbols.

Diasporas for Peace?

The contribution of diaspora actors to conflict escalation or perpetuation has dominated the literature until the early 2000s (Anderson 1992: 12–13.; Kaldor 2001: 7–9; Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 575).[8] Leroy and Mohan (2003: 612) note the emergence of a more balanced view of diaspora contributions that takes into account both the negative and positive consequences of diaspora engagement. This engagement takes place through remittances. Here we briefly distinguish two kinds of remittances – economic/financial and social remittances – and sketch their potential influence in the countries of origin. We consider these two forms of remittances to exhaustively cover diasporic engagement in the economic, social, cultural, and political sphere.

Individual financial remittances contribute to household survival; often they also support the education of one or several family members. In many countries the money sent back by individuals per year amounts to a considerable part of the state budget. In the case of Somaliland, it even exceeds the official state budget by far.[9] Lubkeman (2008: 54–55) argues that despite their seemingly limited focus on the family, individual financial remittances can contribute to overall political stability, economic development and structural changes in a country. In contexts characterised by years of civil war and high unemployment, individual remittances can keep people away from criminality and violence (ibid.). Another area of diaspora investment at the family level is education. Frequently, relatives in the diaspora finance the education of their usually younger relatives back home. Money can also be remitted collectively through diaspora (or: 'hometown') associations in order to support particular projects, such as the building of schools, roads, or hospitals. Private investments from the diaspora in the local economy are also important drivers of economic growth in the countries of origin.

Of course, this monetary support from abroad also has a downside. Economic/financial remittances can be used to finance conflict and war (Maimbo 2006). Armed movements such as the SNM in northern Somalia, the EPLF in Eritrea, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka were all financed through the diaspora. Another rather destructive effect of financial remittances is 'diaspora dependency'. Governments may take the continuous financial flow from the diaspora as an excuse for neglecting the provision of public services, and individuals at the receiving end may feel encouraged by the money sent from abroad to stop the search for employment.

The other type of remittances is social remittances. They comprise the transfer of ideas, values, norms, and concepts (Levitt 1998), which may contribute to peacebuilding in the country of origin but can also foster conflicts, in case, for instance, the cultural values of diaspora members and the people at home differ markedly. The political engagement of diaspora actors back home also falls

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[8] For an in-depth literature review on this topic see Pirkkalainen and Abdile (2009).
[9] Menkhaus (2009a: 189) observed that "[e]conomically, the US$500 million to US$1 billion that the Somali diaspora remits annually to relatives in Somalia dwarfs all other sources of revenue in Somalia and essentially floats an otherwise dysfunctional economy."

within this category.[10] It can have beneficial effects for peacebuilding and political stability, if sincere and skilled personalities invest their social and cultural capital, which was at least partly generated in the diaspora through new sets of (social) experiences and value shifts. The Ethiopian Muslim diaspora covered in a case study below, for instance, has contributed to peacebuilding through direct involvement in homeland conflict resolution and advocacy for the reconstruction of the Ethiopian polity on a more inclusive basis, including the history and present-day needs of the considerable Islamic minority in Ethiopia. Its activities were inspired by ideas about cultural and religious pluralism that, in general, prevail in countries in Europe and North America in which many Ethiopian Muslims reside. If, however, diaspora actors pursue their individual interests at the cost of the people at home and, for instance, once a political plan fell short the 'failed' politician can simply return abroad on a different passport and leave the 'mess' behind in the country of origin, then political engagement can become destructive (Ibrahim 2010). Particularly the current TFG in southern Somalia is staffed with Somalis from abroad, some of whom are not seriously committed to staying in war-torn Somalia and working for the betterment of the fragmented society (Sheikh und Healy 2009: 16).

Legal and other structures in the countries of origin as well as residence particularly impact the possibilities of economic/financial and social remittances. Despite the recent debate about diasporic and transnational communities as social formations across and beyond the borders of nation states (Glick Schiller, Bash, Szanton 1992; Appadurai 1996), the role of states remains vital in many regards (Wayland 2004 in Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009: 15). States can actively engage or co-opt diasporic and/or transnational actors in their sometimes aggressive, imperialist politics (Glick Schiller 2005). They can also take active measures against threats emanating from partly transnational and/or diasporic civil society activism. Eritrea and Ethiopia are two cases in point. Cliffe, Love and Tronvoll (2009: 154) recently observed:

> "If civil society organizations are severely repressed in Eritrea it is interesting that there has been a parallel, albeit less complete, movement in Ethiopia. An important recent example of this is the new restrictive NGO legislation (…) The law also restricts the type of activities and projects a foreign NGO can undertake or support. Inter alia, it will be prohibited for foreign NGOs to engage in what often form part of their core activities: human rights; conflict resolution and reconciliation; citizenship and community development; and justice and law enforcement services. *The measure may be a reaction to the monetary support received by the opposition during the 2005 elections from the (mostly US-based) diaspora*, and the fear among top EPRDF echelons of a foreign supported 'velvet revolution' removing them from power in 2010." (italics added)

In other settings, like Somalia and Somaliland, government structures are non-existent or extremely weak (Hagmann and Hoehne 2009). This presents a different kind of challenge to diaspora actors. On the one hand, they have to account for insecurity and violence, which sometimes makes their engagement impossible. On the other hand, they have to carry the burden of caring for their relatives and loved ones 'at home' since certainly no state institutions would provide any basic services, e.g., in the health or educational sector.

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[10] Political engagement of diaspora actors fits the definition of 'long-distance-nationalism' according to Glick Schiller (2004). In contrast to the narrow understanding of this concept that only focuses on the involvement of diasporic actors in conflict and violence at home (e.g., Anderson 1992), Glick Schiller understands any kind of diasporic political activism (also peaceful and reform-oriented policies) with regard to the country of origin as long-distance nationalism.

'Western' and partly 'global' politics and legal innovations after the 9/11 attacks on the USA had strong impacts, particularly on Muslim diasporic communities. In November 2001, for instance, the USA declared Al Barakaat, the then biggest Somali Hawala company transferring money from Somali diasporas all over the world to the Horn of Africa, an organisation supporting terrorism. It was suspected that some of the money transferred by Al Barakaat would benefit Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaida.[11] The accounts of the company were frozen and millions of US$ of Somali remitters were stuck, with partly dramatic effects for the families back home. Al Barakaat had to close down. Soon, other Somali Hawala companies took its place (Schlee 2004: 152; Lindley 2009: 529).

In sum, diasporic remittances can contribute to both conflict escalation and peacebuilding 'at home'. Clearly, diaspora actors "do not have a single stand" (Sökefeld 2006: 280). They do not necessarily form a common platform to influence their homeland. The differentiation within a particular diaspora partly mirrors the fragmented social and political landscape of the homeland and partly emanates from differences in the new sets of diasporic social experiences in the host country. Women, for instance, may experience being abroad differently than men, and the younger generation differently than the older generation. Divisions within the diaspora can hinder the negative (conflict-driving) but also the positive (peace-building) impact of diaspora engagement. In the following we provide concrete examples of diasporic projects and their relevance for peacebuilding in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia/Somaliland.[12]

Case Studies from the Horn

Somalia

It is estimated that there are about one million Somalis dispersed as diaspora in the world (Sheikh and Healy 2009). Chances for migration during the colonial era related to education and work, work migration especially to the Middle East during the oil boom in the 1970s and 1980s, political repression under Siad Barre's (1969–1991) rule, the ongoing civil war in many parts of collapsed Somalia (since 1991), and the foreign military intervention of Ethiopia (2006–2008) are the factors that led to the dispersal and, together with specific situations in the new resident countries, the formation of Somali diasporas (Ahmed 2000; Gundel 2002; Menkhaus 2009a; Sheikh and Healy 2009; Hoehne 2010a). There are large Somali communities in the USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, UK, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Australia. From their bases in Europe, the Middle East, and North America, the members of the Somali diaspora support their families with financial remittances and contribute to the general development 'at home' through infrastructure-building including schools, hospitals, and businesses (Kent, von Hippel and Bradbury 2004; Cassanelli 2007; Horst 2008; Sheikh and Healy 2009). Still, there are some in the Somali diaspora who support insurgents or clan militias. In the past, Somali guerrilla movements were financed by the diaspora (Reno 2003: 24; Bakonyi 2009: 439). More recently, the Islamic Court Union but also Al Shabaab and Hisbul Islam are cases in point (Menkhaus 2009b).

The Somali diaspora also enthusiastically provides assistance to various political authorities back home. The TFG as well as the governments of Somaliland and Puntland and even local authorities who 'govern' in the countryside benefit from the support of the diaspora (Horst 2008: 332; Kleist

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[11] These accusations could never be proven.
[12] Most Somali examples are concentrated in Somaliland. The projects of one organisation involved in diasporic activities, however, are located also in Puntland and central Somalia.

2008: 328; Sheikh and Healy 2009: 15–16). It is no exaggeration to say that peace and stability in Somaliland were actively 'co-created' by diasporic and local actors, and that in the absence of international recognition for this *de facto* state the diaspora constitutes the vital lifeline that guarantees the political and economic survival of this polity (Hoehne 2010a: 99).

However, the members of the Somali diaspora seem to be mired by complexities of local conflicts that blend personal and clan interests and rivalries; this can reflect negatively on their engagements. The following two cases, based on field research in Somaliland between late 2008 and early 2010, highlight these complexities.

The first case concerns a diaspora actor from the UK. Genealogically he belonged to the Dhulbahante clan, which is part of the Harti clan-confederation. In 2008, the man had returned to a small town called Galgal in the Sool region of eastern Somaliland. Sool is one of the most underdeveloped regions of Somaliland. The presence of effective government structures there is rather limited, compared with the other parts of the country.[13] The diasporic actor considered Galgal his hometown. He engaged in a small 'development' project in the eyes of his family and relatives by building a house and digging a well next to it. Galgal and its surroundings, however, had been contested between Habar Jeclo, a clan belonging to the Isaaq clan-family, and the local members of the Dhulbahante clan for over five decades. The bone of contention had been the ownership of water reservoirs. In 1952, the British colonial administration passed a decree banning the construction of any buildings or wells in Galgal. Tradition dictates that the first clan to dig a well or construct a house in a location has the right to claim ownership of the area. Therefore, it was only natural that members of the Habar Jeclo clan saw the project as a Dhulbahante attempt to reinforce their historical claim to the town. They launched an attack to prevent the construction from proceeding. Anticipating hostile reactions to the house-project, the Dhulbahante had already created a small militia to secure the site. The militia defended the construction site and ensured the successful completion of the project.

Having failed to prevent the construction militarily, a local Habar Jeclo man began to dig a well not far from where the Dhulbahante returnee had concluded his construction. This well-project, if successful, would have automatically strengthened the Habar Jeclo's position that the town belongs to both clans, and not only to Dhulbahante (as the latter mostly see it). Yet, the Habar Jeclo man was unable to finalise the well due to lack of funding. He reportedly left for Europe in 2009 to raise money to continue the construction and ensure Habar Jeclo's co-ownership of Galgal. In this case, it is clear that the Dhulbahante man from the diaspora knowingly enflamed the situation on the ground. Locals, and also those in the diaspora originating from Galgal, were fully aware of the conflict-potential of the 'development' project (Abdile forthcoming).

The second case involves five Somali individuals from UK and Finland who work for a peacebuilding programme locally known as the Peace Initiative Programme (PIP). The PIP initiative was developed by Somali religious and traditional leaders and some enthusiasts in Somalia and abroad, who thought they could more effectively contribute to the reduction or even elimination of inter-clan hostilities in their homeland if they unified their skills and resources. After a number of consultation workshops between 2007 and 2008, Finn Church Aid (FCA), a Finnish development organisation, decided to support the PIP. In 2009, the Finnish Foreign Ministry finally pledged funding to the joint Finnish-Somali initiative. The primary objective of the initiative is to settle and prevent inter-clan conflicts in Somaliland, Puntland and central Somalia by employing

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[13] Sool is located in the contested borderlands between Somaliland and Puntland, as mentioned above.

traditional and Islamic conflict resolution strategies. This involves the identification of capable, credible, and respected religious and traditional leaders from the warring clans to work as peace facilitators on the ground. These mediators then have to be supported, e.g. with money for fuel to drive to the conflict site, food, accommodation, and so on. Traditionally, inter-clan conflicts would be negotiated by elders. To involve religious leaders is an innovation. The influence of religious leaders has grown in Somali society after the state collapse and civil war in the 1990s. Many Somalis seek refuge in religion against the background of past experiences of violence and misguided politics. PIP is engaging in the Galgal conflict mentioned above. In total, four out of the thirteen conflicts in which the PIP team has recently been involved have been settled and peace has been restored.

The PIP case shows that the Somali diaspora has the potential to contribute to peacemaking and conflict resolution. While the Somali diaspora subsumes the capacity to make a significant contribution to rebuilding the war-torn country, the two cases clearly demonstrate that the potential impact of individuals and groups is contingent and depends upon their awareness of traditional social protocols and local politics. The PIP case also illustrates how a well-organised group of highly skilled and motivated diaspora actors in cooperation with responsible local counterparts can be a successful agent of change in the home society.[14] Simultaneously, the Galgal case shows that isolated and clannish diasporic efforts can have destructive effects.

A third case study concerns the diasporic involvement in the educational sector (particularly in higher education) in Somaliland. Until 1990, north-western Somalia had been completely destroyed in the civil war. For many young people looting and robbing had become a way of life. Shortly before and particularly after the declaration of independence of Somaliland in May 1991, local and diaspora actors worked for basic peace in the region. Soon they also began to rebuild basic infrastructure including schools. This reconstruction process began very moderately at the level of primary and intermediary schools, without many resources. It sped up and reached a much higher level after Somaliland became more stable in 1997. The first university of Somaliland, Amuud University, was opened near the town of Booroma in Awdal region in 1998. Apart from some book donations from an international NGO, the project had been developed by and realised with the resources of the local and the diaspora community related to Awdal region. Members of the diaspora from all over north-western Somaliland contributed as well. Amuud was the very first Somali university outside of Mogadishu (in the south).

The intention of the university founders had been "to find an outlet for the many children in the region who had no real prospect of productive employment other than joining the roaming militias" (Samatar 2001: 648). The actors involved were very conscious about not making Amuud a clan-owned institution but a university for all Somalis (Samatar 2001: 648–650). The University of Hargeysa followed in 2000. This institution had also been initiated by the diaspora, and local as well as diasporic actors joined hands in its establishment. Two steering committees, one in London and one in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland, were set up in 1997. Fawzia Yuusuf Haji Adam, one of the key actors and later the first chancellor of the University of Hargeysa, travelled back and forth for several years between the UK and Somaliland to improve interaction. She and Saad Ali

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[14] The Peace Committee for Somaliland constitutes another example for a very successful diaspora involvement in peacebuilding in Somaliland. It consisted of a group of Somaliland citizens living abroad who pushed for a peaceful resolution of conflicts between different clans in Somaliland that endangered the existence of the polity in 1994-95. This group organised a series of intra- and inter-clan peace conferences to promote dialogue between different groups and restore peace (Eubank 2010: 16).

Shire, a Somali businessman and the second leading person involved in the university project, used their extensive personal networks in Somaliland and abroad to acquire land and a building from the government in Hargeysa and to attract donations of money and equipment.[15] The transnational coordination of the project was greatly facilitated through online conferences (MacGregor et al. 2008: 246–248). The motivation behind the engagement of Fawzia and Saad was twofold: they wished to provide the first generation of post-war secondary students in Somaliland with follow-up opportunities. This was coupled with considerations about the development potential of better educated local students for the local/national market (ibid. 244–245). These 'double concerns' about security and economy in the country of origin were typical for diaspora actors investing in education. Lindley (2008: 407) argued that "[r]emitters are often keen to try to ensure that their hard-earned remittances are used productively". The money sent and the education provided should lead the way to employment and economic prosperity of the family and the community. Moreover, Lindley mentioned that, particularly in insecure places, schooling was and still is seen as a way to keep young people away from becoming militiamen (ibid.).

The foundation of the universities in Amuud and Hargeysa carried significance beyond the educational sector in Somaliland. These investments, like the building of the Ambassador Hotel near Hargeysa Airport (Ibrahim 2010), showed that the civil war was over and that the time had come to orient toward the future. Arguably, both projects had also a psychological effect in showing local and diaspora actors what they were capable of achieving together. In the following decade, hundreds of new schools and a dozen universities were established in Somaliland.[16] The vast majority goes back on private initiatives, many of them related to the diaspora (Hoehne 2010b).

There are considerable challenges faced by investors from the diaspora. They have to consider the fluid security situation, divisions among clans (also in the diaspora), and the locals' sometimes negative perceptions of returnees from abroad (who are frequently suspected of having lost their culture and religion). While some of the security risks relate to physical risks, programme-related risks have been increasing. An engaged diaspora actor explained that working in the peacebuilding, advocacy, and human rights sectors carries greater risks than working in health or livelihood programmes:

> "When you are implementing human rights, advocacy, or peacebuilding programmes, people tend to question your motives. It's even more complex when you are mediating inter-clan conflicts (…) The root causes of the conflict you are trying to mediate are many, (…) in addition to inter-clan rivalries there are political dimensions. If you want to be successful in your mediation, you have to behave neutral to all parties involved. You ought to explain yourself constantly if you work in the peace sector, and people tend to be more suspicious of such projects than, for instance, about food production programmes." (Interview Osman, January 2010)

Diaspora returnees are also 'stigmatised' back home in the Horn. Salma Ali, a 22-year-old woman from UK noted that members of the Somali diaspora are easily distinguishable in the homeland communities. She told *Wales Online* about her experience in Somaliland:

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[15] Both Fawzia and Saad had studied abroad, in the USA, and later settled in London, where they started their investment in education back home in Somaliland.

[16] For similar developments in the south see Abdullahi (2007).

"People immediately see you're different. They think we walk too fast (…) no matter how much we try to dress traditionally; they can tell we're from abroad. You can't blend in, so you get teased but not in a nasty way (…) we get called the 'in-betweens'." (Wales Online 2009)

Eritrea[17]

The Eritrean diaspora comprises approximately one-quarter to one-third of Eritrea's estimated population of five million people (CIA 2010). Estimates vary considerably, since Eritreans entering the recipient countries prior to 1993 were registered as Ethiopians upon arrival. Up to one million people left the country during the 30-year-long struggle for independence, the majority taking refuge in neighbouring Sudan. Other important destination countries included Italy, Germany, the UK, Canada, and the USA. The Ethio-Eritrean conflict (1998–2000) generated a comparatively small number of Eritrean refugees (Al-Ali et al. 2001; Hepner and Conrad 2005; Koser 2007) whereas economic decline, forced conscription, and increasing political repression in the aftermath of the conflict contributed, and contributes still, to larger migration flows. In 2008 alone, 62,700 new asylum claims were filed worldwide by individuals originating from Eritrea (UNHCR 2008: 16).

The liberation fronts as well as the Eritrean state built up and maintained strong linkages to the diaspora communities abroad. During the struggle for independence from Ethiopia and in the post-independence phase, the diaspora constantly engaged in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. The liberation fronts as well as the newly established Eritrean state were able to institutionalise and mobilise Eritrean communities abroad relying on the broad commitment to the project of Eritrean independence among the diaspora communities, a shared sense of pride in having achieved independence and a strong commitment to help build up the country. Especially through the establishment of mass organisations in the diaspora and through the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), they were able to efficiently mobilise substantive contributions to war and (re-) construction. In 1989, the mass organisations abroad were dissolved and local community organisations emerged. Following independence, chapters of the EPLF were replaced in part by embassies, consulates, and PFDJ chapters. Since 1991, all Eritreans in the diaspora are asked to pay two percent of their monthly income directly to the Eritrean state. This 'tax' can be considered one feature of the often cited "enforced characteristics of Eritrean transnationalism" (Al-Ali et al. 2001: 595; Koser 2007: 245). Upon the outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict in 1998, the government again intensified its links with the diaspora and efficiently re-mobilised Eritrean communities abroad.

After the war (1998–2000) and as a consequence of the increasing political repression of civil society, religious minorities, and opponents to the current regime as well as forced conscription and economic hardship since 2000, state-diaspora relations deteriorated and increased fragmentation and polarisation of the diaspora communities can be observed. This development is mirrored by the re-emergence of the former ELF and its splinter groups and the establishment of new opposition groups in the diaspora. Moreover, new rights-based initiatives advocating guarantees of human rights and democracy in Eritrea as well as the rights of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers in the respective recipient country have become increasingly significant. Religious associations, which had played a secondary role within the highly politicised Eritrean society before independence, and

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[17] This section, as initially explained, is not based on field research in Eritrea. It therefore presents general patterns of and challenges for diasporic engagement in Eritrea based on secondary literature.

cyber groups and forums have also gained importance. In addition, the alienation of considerable sections of the diaspora from the Eritrean state is observable. All these developments can be considered a "structural shift of the Eritrean transnational social field" (Hepner 2007: 11). What is more, new refugee flows as well as the maturation of second generation Eritreans, who are generally less willing to extend unconditional support to the Eritrean state, affect Eritrean transnationalism.

Three types of Eritrean diaspora segments can roughly be differentiated. First, there are groups and organisations supportive of the current government and closely interlinked with the quasi-governmental mass-organisations of the PFJD. Such organisations abroad are permitted to directly support government-led development or humanitarian projects or to run projects that have been approved by the government, and thus they often closely co-operate with Eritrean embassies and consulates, national unions, and branches of the PFDJ.

Second, we find organisations and chapters of the political opposition. These are banned from directly engaging in Eritrea, but maintain transnational networks with oppositional groups worldwide. Besides, the multitude of splinter groups, internal power struggles, the lack of transparency and participatory practices, and alleged collaboration with 'anti-Eritrean' forces weaken the opposition's potential to affect political development in Eritrea.

Third, we find a large number of community organisations and humanitarian and civic groups that try to sustain their independence from political cleavages, who passively support or criticise the government, or who have lost interest in party politics altogether. In recent years, especially the increasing number of human rights groups and organisations is noteworthy. These link up with the international discourse on human rights and break with traditional characteristics of exclusionism and insularism of Eritrean transnationalism and resist the monopolistic domination of the diaspora communities by the state (Hepner 2007: 5, 9–10). Although initiatives with an explicitly peace-related agenda are banned from working in Eritrea, the potential impact of these new human rights initiatives on the situation in Eritrea is mainly indirect and primarily lies in the dissemination of the human rights discourse within Eritrea via shortwave radio, the internet, word of mouth, and the sharing of linkages with exiled political organisations that advocate political change in Eritrea (ibid.: 5). By these means, they might broaden the understanding of universal rights in Eritrea and provide an alternative discourse to the dominant nationalist doctrines determined along entrenched party-political lines. However, especially in the course of escalating human rights abuses in Eritrea, the autonomy of these groups is threatened (ibid.: 9, 32). Besides the establishment of contacts with international rights regimes and their advocacy efforts serve to bring attention to the crisis of human rights in Eritrea and to raise awareness among policymakers in the residence countries and at the EU level.

Altogether, the Eritrean diaspora communities were and still are an important resource for the Eritrean state in terms of providing moral support for the government, but especially in terms of financial contributions. Due to its economic policies of de-liberalisation, which hardly encourage private business and foreign direct investment, and the regime's deep-seated suspicion of foreign aid, Eritrea's economy is heavily dependent on diaspora remittances. In 2002, remittances made up slightly less than one-third of the country's GDP (Fessehatzion 2005: 168).

Ethiopia[18]

Over one million Ethiopians live in North America, Europe, and the Middle East (Lyons 2007). By and large, four types of Ethiopian diasporas are discernible in reference to the nature of their political engagement with homeland affairs: the 'centrists' who vigorously contest the legitimacy of Ethiopia's ethnic federalism designed and implemented by the EPRDF; the 'ethno-nationalists' who bitterly resent what they consider EPRDF's 'backsliding' from democratic ethno-federalism into ethnocracy; the religious diaspora that contests the EPRDF's top-down prioritisation of ethnic identity and the continued inequalities in the country's religious landscape; and finally, the government-activated/created diaspora as a kind of transnational political constituency. The following case study focuses on one section of the religious diaspora, the Ethiopian Muslims, in reference to their identity politics and its actual and potential contribution to peacebuilding.

The Muslims are calling for a redefinition of Ethiopian national identity that recognises the Islamic heritage of the country such as its status as the land of the 'First Hijra'.[19] Although the Orthodox Church has lost its political leverage vis-à-vis the Ethiopian state since the 1974 revolution, the Ethiopian nation has still been narrated by the Christian population from the perspective of the history and symbols of the Orthodox Church. This resulted in the representation of Ethiopia as an 'island of Christianity' surrounded by a 'sea of Muslim principalities'.[20] This image had defined Ethiopia's foreign relations with its Muslim neighbours for centuries (Hussein 1992, 2006). The EPRDF has made significant concessions to include the Islamic heritage of the country as part of its history, yet a lot remains to be desired to reform Ethiopian historiography.

For decades, the one-sided Christian narrative of Ethiopian history and nationality had a strong bearing on the Ethiopian Muslims' sense of alienation from belonging to the Ethiopian polity and sharing its identity. It is very much resented by the Muslims in the homeland and in the diaspora. The negative reaction of the Christian population towards the Muslim rights movement compounded the problem. As it stands, the Christian establishment is not positively relating to the Muslims' struggle for recognition that unfolded since the late 1990s, related to reforms under the EPRDF government. In fact, many Ethiopian Christians, particularly members of the Orthodox Church, externalise the demands of the local and transnational Ethiopian Muslims and link them to the global rise of the so-called Islamic fundamentalism. This perception was exacerbated when the government in Addis Ababa joined the USA's war on terror in the wake of 9/11 and cracked down on its own and America's enemies in the Horn of Africa.[21] Against this background, the Ethiopian Muslims, spearheaded by their diaspora, began to actively engage in transnational identity politics.

Two Ethiopian Muslim diaspora organisations, the Network of Ethiopian Muslims in Europe and the US-based Badr, are on the forefront of the Ethiopian Muslim rights movement. They use different media outlets towards that end. They maintain a very strong presence in cyberspace with vibrant websites, blogs, and internet radios; hold annual conventions and conferences to assess current social and political issues pertinent to Ethiopian Muslims; and above all send delegations to

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[18] This section draws on Dereje (forthcoming).
[19] The history of Islam in Ethiopia dates back to 615 A.D. when the companions of the Prophet Mohamed (the *Sahaba*) came to Axum fleeing religious persecution by the ruling elite in Mecca; a historic event which Ethiopian Muslims refer to as the First Hijra (Trimingham 1952: 44; Erlich 2010: 2–3). According to Islamic traditions this is the reason why the early jihad was not applied to Ethiopia at a time when all countries in the Red Sea sub-region succumbed to the new Islamic political and military power.
[20] By the 9th century AD there had already been various Islamic principalities in the Horn of Africa that vied for regional political power with the Christian kingdom.
[21] The above mentioned extremely violent military intervention of Ethiopia in Somalia (2006–2008) was an outcome of this regional engagement in the 'war on terror'.

Ethiopia to dialogue with the political and religious leadership of the country. A delegation sent to Ethiopia from abroad in April 2007 is particularly noteworthy. It consisted of nine members out of which four came from the USA, three from Europe, one from Canada, and one from Saudi Arabia. The composition reflects the efforts the organisers made to represent the Ethiopian Muslims worldwide. Besides, the nine delegation members had high social standing, represented different ethnic constituencies, and adhered to different branches within Sunni Islam (from 'traditional' Sufism to contemporary reform movements). Before the delegation headed to Ethiopia it undertook a thorough investigation and conducted a baseline survey in order to establish the prominent Muslim issues in contemporary Ethiopia. On the basis of its findings and the extensive feedback it received from the homeland Muslims upon the announcement of the planned visit, the delegation produced a sixteen page document entitled *Questions Raised by the Ethiopian Muslim diaspora to the Prime Minster Meles Zenawi* (April 2007). This sharply contrasts with the depiction of diasporas as unscrupulous long-distance-nationalists who are detached from homeland realities (Anderson 1992: 12–13). The symmetric collaboration between the diaspora and the homeland in setting the Muslim rights agenda also challenges the conventional wisdom that diasporic actors would be wired with hegemonic dispositions towards their homeland counterparts.

The document produced by the delegation contains a wide range of issues, but the main talking points were greater recognition of the Islamic heritage of the country (Ethiopia as the land of the First Hijra); the quest for a larger physical space for worship (land for the construction of mosques proportional to the demographic size of the Muslim community in all parts of the country); the right to establish an autonomous and legitimate national Islamic organisation (contesting the rigid control of the state over Muslim representative bodies); the right to manifest religious symbols in public institutions (contesting an assertive secularism); ensuring civil liberty (lifting the ban on Islamic NGOs); ensuring an impartial census; establishing a more balanced media that does not represent Muslims as a 'national security threat'; and creating a Ministry of Religious Affairs in response to the need for a forum for inter-faith dialogue to avoid, mitigate, and resolve religious conflicts.

The articulation of the aspirations and interests of the Ethiopian Muslims by the diaspora delegation differed from the activities of the local Muslim rights movement in so far as the former was more focused and consistent and less violent. The written demands of the diaspora actors partly united the Ethiopian Muslims, who were otherwise divided along 'ideological', respectively, theological lines. Drawing on new sets of democratic experiences they had made in their host countries and referring to the globally recognised legitimising discourses, the Ethiopian Muslim diaspora eschewed the language of violence and framed its claims in the 'rights language'. During its one-month stay in Ethiopia the delegation held discussions with high-ranking government officials including Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and with a cross-section of the Muslim community and the Christian leadership.

Apart from awareness creation, the delegation also sought to reach out to the leaderships of other religious groups to foster peaceful religious co-existence. This was an important initiative because the politically dominant Christian population has not yet come to terms with the Muslim rights movement. Muslim demands partly contributed to the recent rise of religious conflict in Ethiopia. In fact, many members of the Orthodox Church still believe that the Ethiopian nation belongs to the Orthodox Christians and feel threatened by the awakening self-confidence of other religious groups. Aware of the Orthodox Church's historical claims, the delegation set out to explain what

the Muslim rights issues were. This was done in the spirit of belonging to a common nation and sharing citizenship, and by employing the globally recognised rights language. Within the Muslim community, the delegation managed to avoid sectarian violence by providing a neutral forum for the feuding ulema (Islamic scholars) to peacefully resolve or live with theological differences, concerning particularly the Sufi-Salafi divide.[22]

A closer examination of the objectives and achievements of the 2007 delegation explored in this case study demonstrates the peacebuilding dimension of the Ethiopian Muslims' identity politics. Five factors with a potential to contribute to peacebuilding can be differentiated: First, the delegation set a social reform agenda for the Muslim rights movement. Avoiding the 'victimhood-trap' into which most politically active minorities fall, the Ethiopian Muslim diaspora is not stuck with past injustices but is engaged in reforming contemporary Ethiopian society for a better future. This is important not only for the Muslim community at home, which is split and lacks legitimate leadership, it also concerns the Ethiopian polity at large. The audience and the relevant actors in Ethiopia, not least the Christian population, were at times in want of explanations about the objectives of the Muslim rights movement. Lacking explanations, particularly Orthodox Christians tended to react on the bases of the assumption that it was a manifestation of 'Islamic fundamentalism' in Ethiopia. The aim of the Muslim diaspora delegation was to open discussions about a place for Ethiopian Muslims in the national public space.

Second, the Muslim diaspora organisations and the delegation they sent to Ethiopia in 2007 framed their demands in the globally recognised rights language. They cited the country's constitution and international conventions. Additionally, they drew on the new set of democratic experiences, which many of them had made in their host countries, e.g. in the USA or Sweden. The ascendancy of the rights-language over the language of violence espoused by some fringe radical elements is an important discursive asset in peacebuilding. The alternative to such 'juridification' of protest would be to appeal to globally established Islamic networks. These most probably would readily respond to the Ethiopian Muslims' call for 'solidarity', given the country's proximity to the Middle East. In this context, the probability would be high that some 'global jihadists' would hijack the Ethiopian Muslims' struggle and abuse it for their own ends.

Third, the diaspora became directly involved in conflict resolution within and between religious groups in Ethiopia. The delegation moderated the polemical theological debate that threatened to incite sectarian violence among the Ethiopian Muslims through the creation of religious scholars' forum where compromises were made and civility was assured to accommodate theological differences. The delegation also sought to reach out to the Christian establishments to foster inter-faith dialogue at a time when religious conflicts were on the rise in Ethiopia.

Fourth, the diaspora's call for the reconstruction of a national identity including Muslims is a structural factor contributing to political stability and social integration. The identity politics of the Ethiopian Muslims unleashed a new sense of national belonging among the country's historic minority. Focusing on integrative narratives such as the First Hijra, the Ethiopian Muslims in the diaspora are active players in (re)constructing the Ethiopian nation from below on a more inclusive basis.

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[22] Salafi/Salafism refers to "contemporary Muslims who generally eschew the interpretive methods and norms of the medieval Islamic schools and take as a guide for proper behaviour only the word of God, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and the example set by the pious forbears" (Euben and Zaman 2009: 3). Sufism is the general label for a more mystical and 'folkloristic' Islam. The divide between Sufis and Salafis is currently visible among many Sunni Muslim communities in the world. It certainly also informs discussions and even violent conflict in Somalia.

Finally, the quest for freedom of association and organisational autonomy by the delegation also enhanced the space of democratic politics in Ethiopia by exposing what many scholars call the control-driven nature of the Ethiopian state across political regimes (Clapham 1986, 2009; Aalen and Tronvoll 2009). Attending to this dimension of the Muslim rights movement, therefore, takes one to the broader appeals for the democratisation of the Ethiopian polity.

Conclusion

The examples and case studies outlined in this paper amply reveal how important diaspora actors have become in their respective countries of origin in the Horn of Africa. They are shaping social, economic, and political processes at home. The case studies also show the Janus-faced nature of the diaspora engagement with the homeland affairs. While some individual and collective diasporic actions feed into conflict generation, others significantly contribute to peacebuilding. Still, it has to be kept in mind that conflict is a very problematic, relative, and politically loaded term. Conventionally it is defined in contrast to peace and attains a negative attribute. Contrary, the term peace is positively signified and is often equated with the stability of the status quo. In our respective field researches and in this paper we have taken peacebuilding beyond its literal and conventional meaning. We do not view political struggles that aim at restructuring a polity on a more inclusive basis, even if this momentarily leads to (more) conflict, in negative terms. The engagement of all the diaspora groups discussed in this paper enhance the space for greater contestation of ideas and broaden the range of political options for the homelanders, who are largely confined within the space grudgingly granted by their respective governments or shaped by statelessness and ongoing civil war. This does not mean, however, that there is a uniform 'diasporic stance'. Like other sets of actors, diasporas are differentiated along various axes. In the Horn of Africa, particularly political ideologies, religious orientations, and clanism and tribalism provide bases for divisions.

The following are the three major areas where diasporic actions have contributed to peacebuilding in the conflict-ridden Horn of Africa:

1) Family Survival, Community Stabilisation, and Economic Growth
All the case studies bear witness to the very significant role remittances play in sustaining families and contributing to economic growth. Whatever growth might have been registered at the level of national economies in the countries of the Horn in recent years was not translated into improvements of the living conditions of ordinary people. In fact, the quality of life worsened (for various reasons) in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia since the 1980s, and many families found it simply impossible to survive without diaspora remittances. Having one or more relatives in the diaspora is an economic asset. It is safe to argue – contrary to the findings of Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 575), who see a sizable diaspora as increasing the risk of ongoing or renewed violent conflict in the country of origin – that without the continuous remittance flow the countries of the Horn would have gone through more violent social conflicts and more severe political instability. Remittances reach beyond the bounds of family and contribute to macro-economic growth and stability in many contexts. For Ethiopia, the diaspora has become an alternative source of finance that is enabling a policy space for experimenting on a home-grown development model. In

Somaliland, remittances provide the main channel of access to foreign currency for a country without international recognition. The Somaliland diaspora constitutes the vital lifeline that guarantees the political and economic survival of this polity. In Eritrea, due to its economic policies of de-liberalisation that hardly encourage private business and foreign direct investment and the regime's deep-seated suspicion of foreign aid, the economy is heavily dependent on diaspora remittances. In southern Somalia, basic humanitarian aid is sometimes provided by the diaspora.

2) Autonomous Diasporic Political Space for Greater Contestation of Ideas

Despite the modest liberal openings in many countries worldwide in the early 1990s there has been a narrowing of political space in the countries of the Horn. Hegemonic 'box thinking' has reigned. The 'nationalistic box' in Eritrea; the 'ethnic box' in Ethiopia, and the 'clan box' in Somalia/Somaliland have something fundamental in common, i.e. they have crowded out the space for contestation of ideas that enhance people's life chances. Under such circumstances, the diasporic political space has become the most important forum for contestation of ideas that allows a more informed political choice for the public. This helps break the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments' monopolistic closure and their drift towards authoritarianism. In the Somali context, inspired diaspora-initiatives sometimes set out to challenge the established clan-thinking.[23] In this sense, the diaspora could be a source of liberalisation. The public debates in the diaspora, though at times very polemic, provide alternative social spaces to question the conventional wisdom and straitjacket ideas prevailing in the countries of origin, which are inimical to quests for alternatives. Diaspora-driven discussions can set new agendas in the search for solutions to the daunting security and developmental challenges in the countries of the Horn.

3) Direct Diasporic Peace Initiatives in the Homelands

There are also cases that illustrate the direct involvement and capacity of the diaspora in homeland peacebuilding. The 2007 Ethiopian Muslim delegation and the PIP-initiative in Somaliland, Puntland, and parts of Somalia are good cases in point. The delegation contributed to peacebuilding in various ways. For one, it meticulously articulated and set the agenda for the Muslim rights issues. This is a significant achievement because the Ethiopian Muslims in the homeland lack a legitimate and functional organisation that operates beyond the government's gaze. The delegation sought a peaceful and negotiated settlement of religious rights issues with the government. This contradicts the presumptions about the mostly irresponsible "long-distance-nationalism" of Anderson (1992: 12–13) and others. Commendable are also the delegation's efforts to communicate across the politicised religious boundaries in Ethiopia and engage the leadership of other religious groups in dialogue aimed at peaceful religious co-existence. The peacebuilding dimension of the delegation even extended to intra-religious conflicts and eased the tensions between the local Sufi and Salafi camps. The Somali PIP-programme also reveals the direct peacebuilding capacity of the diaspora. Like the Ethiopian Muslim diaspora delegation, the PIP challenges the conventional assumption that diaspora groups across the board harbour hegemonic aspirations on homeland counterparts. The PIP closely works with religious and clan elders with the aim of reducing inter-clan conflicts.

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[23] The Somali diaspora is certainly not free from 'clanism' (Bjork 2007). Still, voices 'against clan' and conscious efforts to transcend narrow notions of belonging are growing in the diaspora.

A more indirect but still very relevant contribution of diaspora actors to peacebuilding in war-torn Somalia and post-civil war Somaliland is their engagement in the educational sector. This provides a new generation of Somalis with options for a peaceful, and possibly economically successful future, which is an important foundation for long-term stability of any country. Furthermore, new values that are partly systematically introduced in schools and universities have the potential to transcend narrow 'clan-thinking', which is one factor that contributed to the escalation of conflicts in Somalia and Somaliland in the past.

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