

Beyond Legal Dualism: Rethinking Hybrid Order Through Somaliland's Customary-Based Dispute Resolution

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Abstract

This article challenges legal dualism – understood in Hooker's (1975) sense as the formal separation of customary and state legal orders into distinct, non-interacting spheres – and argues that the framing obscures how hybrid governance actually operates in post-conflict contexts. Drawing on social transformation theory, hybrid political orders scholarship, Griffiths's strong legal pluralism and Moore's semi-autonomous social field, it examines Somaliland's Xeer-based dispute resolution as a case of dynamic interaction between customary and formal institutions rather than of parallel coexistence. The analysis combines legal text analysis, process-tracing and systematic review of secondary empirical studies, applied to the Xeer-state interface. The December 2025 Xeer Ciise crisis in Awdal exposed violent centre-periphery tensions and inter-clan sovereignty disputes between the Ciise and the Gadabuursi. Elder mediation contained the violence, and the February 2026 ceasefire is classified, following Galtung (1969), as negative peace: the fighting stopped while the structural conditions that produced it – peripheralisation, jurisdictional ambiguity and the exclusion of women, minority clans and youth – remained unresolved. The article advances endogenous legal transformation as its principal conceptual contribution: internally driven normative change negotiated among elders, communities and practitioners rather than imposed through external legal transplant. It concludes that sustainable peace requires moving beyond dualistic frameworks towards deliberate institutional design, including joint state-elder judicial training, partial codification of Xeer precedents on terms that preserve its adaptive character, guaranteed participation for currently excluded groups, and institutionalised early-warning mechanisms.

Introduction

Law and governance research in post-conflict societies has long been shaped by dualistic paradigms that presuppose a fundamental separation of traditional and modern, customary and statutory, informal and formal institutions (Merry, 1988; Griffiths, 1986). In its precise sense, legal dualism – as systematised by Hooker (1975) in his comparative study of colonial legal transplantation – refers to the formal administrative architecture in which customary and state legal orders are assigned separate, non-overlapping jurisdictions over designated subject-matter domains and population categories. This is a specific institutional design rooted in colonial indirect rule, not simply a shorthand

for pluralism. Critically, academic legal pluralism moved beyond strict dualism after Merry's (1988) foundational critique; the present article targets the residual dualistic assumptions that persist in donor frameworks, policy documents, and state-building programmes applied to post-conflict contexts such as Somaliland. These assumptions leave policymakers and scholars without adequate conceptual tools to understand how legal orders interact, adapt, and generate legitimacy. Such paradigms frequently regard customary law as an obstinate artefact of the past and formal legal institutions as engines of change and authority. Although influential in colonial and post-colonial discourses, this framing is increasingly inadequate for explaining the continuity, change, and transformation of customary law regimes in Africa (Himonga & Diallo, 2023; Ubink, 2018).

Somaliland presents a significant challenge to the propositions of legal dualism. This self-declared, internationally unrecognised state in the northwestern part of Somalia has developed a hybrid political and legal order since its unilateral separation from Somalia in May 1991, formally integrating customary institutions – most prominently the Council of Elders (Guurti) and customary law (Xeer) – with modern state structures (Boege et al., 2009; Walls, 2024). This is not a two-sphere legal order. Rather, it is a dynamic and contested field of interaction between customary and state institutions over power, legitimacy, and governance norms (Renders & Terlinden, 2010; Hoehne, 2023). The Somaliland legal system illustrates how local practices and formal institutions mutually constitute each other in processes that simultaneously shape policy, adjudication, and social norms.

Empirical findings highlight the deliberate and tactical approaches Somalilanders employ when navigating overlapping legal systems. Citizens and community actors selectively invoke Xeer or state law depending on social, political, and economic context to secure justice, resolve conflicts, or enforce rights (Musa & Horst, 2025; Yusuf, 2024). Crucially, this selective interaction is not equally accessible to all: access to tactical legal choices frequently favours wealthy men and powerful clan elders over women, occupational minorities, and those without diya-paying group membership. The hybrid legal order in Somaliland is therefore the outcome of an ongoing negotiation among state actors, traditional authorities, and a differentiated citizenry whose agency varies by gender, clan affiliation, and social status.

The December 2025 Xeer Ciise crisis in the Awdal region illustrates both the containment capacity and structural limits of hybrid governance in Somaliland. The cancellation of a cultural celebration associated with the UNESCO-inscribed Xeer Ciise triggered violent clashes between the Issa and Gadabuursi (Samaroon) clans over localised sovereignty, borderland ownership, and political representation in Saylac and Borama, resulting in at least 18 deaths and over 100 injuries (Al-Baksh, 2026a, 2026b; International Crisis Group, 2026). The crisis revealed that Somaliland lacks institutionalised mechanisms to adjudicate overlapping cultural and political claims. The February 2026 ceasefire brokered by traditional elders and subsequently formalised by the state (Hiiraan Online, 2026) represents, in Galtung's (1969) terms, negative peace: the suppression of direct violence without resolution of the structural conditions – peripheralisation, jurisdictional ambiguity, and centre-periphery grievance – that produced the crisis. This article's purpose is to advance an analytical framework – endogenous legal transformation – capable of accounting for both the containment capacity and structural limits of hybrid legal orders.

The Critique of Legal Dualism

Legal dualism, as analysed by Hooker (1975), presupposes the existence of two distinct and independent legal orders – the customary and the state – operating in separate administrative spheres. This conceptualisation was rooted in colonial administrative law and reinforced by the legal pluralism literature of the 1970s and 1980s, which assigned customary law to traditional matters

(family relations, land disputes, minor offences) and state law to commerce, criminal justice, and constitutional governance (Merry, 1988). The present critique is directed not at post-Merry legal pluralism scholarship – which already rejects strict dualism – but at dualistic assumptions embedded in contemporary donor frameworks, international peacebuilding programmes, and state-building agendas in contexts such as Somaliland, where policy continues to treat customary and state law as separable and sequentially replaceable systems.

Scholars have argued that dualism treats customary law as fixed and immutable, obscuring how customary institutions continuously evolved in response to colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary pressures (Chanock, 1985; Mamdani, 1996). Dualism also assumes a clear separation between legal regimes – a distinction rarely evident in practice (Von Benda-Beckmann, 1981; Ubink, 2018). Crucially, Griffiths (1986) draws a foundational distinction between weak and strong legal pluralism that this article's argument requires. Weak legal pluralism accepts the coexistence of multiple legal orders but retains the state as the ultimate source of their validity, effectively preserving dualistic hierarchy. Strong legal pluralism holds that multiple legal orders operate simultaneously with equal sociological force, none deriving its validity from the others. This article's positive thesis – that Xeer and state law mutually constitute each other – is a claim within strong pluralism (Griffiths, 1986, pp. 7–11). Dualistic approaches have also largely overlooked power asymmetries: state law may subordinate or marginalise customary institutions; customary elites may in turn capture state processes or resist them to retain power and influence (Himonga & Diallo, 2023).

The shortcomings of legal dualism are especially evident in the Somali context. European Union Agency for Asylum (2024) records indicate that over 80% of civil and criminal cases in Somali regions are handled through customary systems, owing to their accessibility, affordability, timeliness, and cultural appropriateness (EUAA, 2024, p. 46). This figure should be read as indicative of prevalence, not as a precise behavioural frequency: it aggregates across Somali regions, with significant variation in state-court penetration, and is derived from practitioner estimates rather than court-registration data. The Somali experience demonstrates that dualism fails to explain hybrid legal practices in which outcomes from one system influence the other and where individuals exercise agency in transferring strategies between forums (Menkhaus, 2006).

Legal Hybridisation: Theoretical Foundations

This article advances legal hybridisation as an alternative analytical framework, drawing on three foundational bodies of theory. First, Sally Falk Moore's (1973) concept of the semi-autonomous social field provides the micro-level foundation: social fields – including customary institutions – generate their own internal rules and coercive power while simultaneously being penetrated by, and dependent upon, the larger social matrix in which they exist (Moore, 1973, p. 720). Xeer elder councils function precisely as semi-autonomous social fields: they generate binding customary norms, enforce compliance through social sanctions and diya obligations, and yet operate within a state framework that periodically asserts jurisdictional claims over the same disputes. Second, Santos's (1987, 2002) concept of interlegality describes the lived experience of legal pluralism as the simultaneous application of multiple legal orders to the same social situation, producing "porous legality" in which legal consciousness moves fluidly across normative boundaries (Santos, 2002, p. 437). Litigants who threaten to transfer a dispute from an elder council to a state court – and vice versa – exemplify interlegality as a practical strategy. Third, Boege et al.'s (2009) hybrid political orders framework situates these micro-level dynamics within the macro-level analysis of post-conflict state formation, emphasising that hybrid orders are distinctive governance configurations in their own right.

Applied to Somaliland, this tripartite framework shows how legal hybridisation operates across multiple registers simultaneously. At the macro-level, Boege et al.'s (2009) hybrid political orders lens frames the post-1991 Somaliland state as a distinctive governance configuration rather than as a failed or transitional state. At the meso level, Forsyth's (2019) analysis of legal hybridisation in Pacific island states provides a comparative anchor, demonstrating that the mutual constitution of customary and state law is a documented pattern across diverse post-colonial contexts. At the micro-level, citizens who navigate strategically among forums enact what Ewick and Silbey (1998) describe as "playing the game" of legality: invoking and manipulating institutional rules in ways that serve their interests and legal consciousness.

The concept of endogenous legal transformation, advanced in this article, is distinguishable from but in dialogue with these frameworks. While Moore's semi-autonomous social field and Santos's interlegality describe how multiple legal orders interact, endogenous legal transformation is explanatory: it specifies the conditions under which hybrid arrangements generate normative change—namely, when change is driven by deliberative processes among elders, communities, and local practitioners rather than external imposition. Its discriminant claim is that endogenous processes generate higher legitimacy because they draw on existing cultural authority. Its falsification conditions include cases in which internally driven deliberation produces sustained normative change without external catalysts, and in which externally imposed institutional transfer fails to generate equivalent change despite adequate resources. Its predictive yield is that post-conflict legal systems whose normative evolution is primarily endogenously driven will demonstrate greater adaptive resilience and citizen legitimacy than those whose evolution is primarily donor-driven.

Social Transformation, Galtung's Peace Distinction, and Endogenous Transformation

Social transformation theory focuses on the underlying restructuring of social relations, power systems, and normative frameworks in response to crisis (Lederach, 1997; Reyhler, 2015). It is essential, following Galtung (1969, 1996), to distinguish between *negative peace* (the absence of direct violence, achievable through ceasefire and containment) and *positive peace* (the presence of social justice, equitable institutions, and resolved structural conditions). The elder-mediated ceasefire of February 2026 represents negative peace in Galtung's terms: direct violence was suppressed, but the structural conditions that produced it—peripheralisation of Issa and Gadabuursi communities, jurisdictional ambiguity, gender and occupational-caste exclusion from Xeer processes—remain unaddressed. Hybridisation's transformative potential must be assessed not by its capacity for rapid containment but by whether it creates pathways toward positive peace through the progressive reform of exclusionary structures.

Endogenous legal transformation foregrounds negotiated consensus and adaptive resilience. The Borama Conference of 1993 exemplifies this mechanism: a four-month deliberation among clan elders, intellectuals, and community leaders produced Somaliland's hybrid constitutional framework without external direction (Bradbury, 2008; Renders & Terlinden, 2010). Legal institutions drew on indigenous norms, practices, and structures—including Xeer customary law and elder mediation—ensuring cultural resonance and broad social legitimacy (Lewis, 1961, 2008; Abdile, 2024). The UNESCO designation of Xeer Ciise as Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2024 further attests to the deep cultural embeddedness of these mechanisms (UNESCO, 2024). Although Somaliland has engaged selectively with international norms, the primary drivers of legal reform remain local, and the legitimacy of hybrid systems rests fundamentally on internal endorsement rather than international recognition (Hoehne, 2023).

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology that combines legal text analysis, process-tracing, and a systematic review of secondary empirical sources. The study relies on secondary rather than primary data—a limitation that constrains claims about community-level variation and should be acknowledged directly. No fieldwork, interviews, or original surveys were conducted; all empirical claims are derived from and constrained by published sources.

Legal text analysis examines constitutional provisions, elder council agreements, and documented Xeer precedents to trace the normative content and evolution of Somaliland's hybrid legal order. Process-tracing provides a structured approach to the December 2025 Xeer Ciise crisis, mapping the sequence of events, actors, and causal mechanisms from the cancellation of a cultural celebration through inter-clan violence to the February 2026 ceasefire, enabling analytical inferences about the conditions under which hybrid governance contains—though does not resolve—conflict. Alternative causal pathways that contributed to the ceasefire—including military exhaustion, diplomatic pressure from neighbouring states, and sub-clan recalibration of cost-benefit calculations—are acknowledged as plausible and cannot be ruled out on the basis of the available secondary evidence.

Case selection logic prioritises Somaliland as a theoretically motivated extreme case in the sense of Flyvbjerg (2006): it combines endogenous state formation, internationally unrecognised sovereignty, and a well-documented hybrid legal order, testing theoretical propositions under conditions of high systemic pressure. Comparative cases (Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Mozambique, South Africa) are selected for their documented engagement with customary-state legal interfaces in post-conflict settings, enabling pattern recognition across varied institutional contexts without claiming generalisability. The article explicitly restricts its empirical analysis to the bi-jurisdictional Xeer-state interface; the Xeer-Shari'a interface—particularly in family law, inheritance, and personal status matters—is acknowledged as a distinct domain warranting separate investigation.

Historical Emergence of Somaliland's Hybrid Legal Order

Xeer customary law is centuries old, shaped by the pastoral social structure of Somali communities (Lewis, 1961, 2008). Xeer comprises a body of oral precedents, negotiated agreements, and evolving norms governing inter-clan relations, dispute resolution, access to resources, and social obligations. Its core principles include shared responsibility, reparation of wrongs through diya (blood-wealth), and the authority of elders as mediators and arbiters (Gundel, 2006; Menkhaus, 2006). Crucially, Xeer was never static; it evolved continuously through negotiation among elders and resolution by clan conventions (Abdile, 2024). This flexibility allowed Xeer to endure and adapt across centuries of political change, reflecting the character of indigenous institutions as living systems that inform, structure, and guide present practice while remaining open to future adaptation (Lewis, 1961, 2008).

The British colonial period in the Somaliland Protectorate (1884–1960) introduced Hooker's (1975) model of legal dualism through indirect rule (Mamdani, 1996). Colonial authorities recognised the authority of clan elders and Xeer in matters deemed of local concern, while reserving criminal justice, commercial law, and administrative control for colonial courts (Chanock, 1985; Mamdani, 1996). This arrangement established path dependencies that shaped the post-colonial legal order (Hoehne, 2023), while traditional institutions preserved the foundations for post-independence hybridisation. The Siad Barre regime (1969–1991) subsequently suppressed clan identities and imposed uniform state law, thereby generating resistance that contributed to the state's collapse (Menkhaus, 2006). The northwestern-based Somali National Movement (SNM) mobilised clan networks in opposition, and the regime's counter-insurgency campaign—including the destruction of Hargeisa and other cities—

left a governance vacuum (Walls, 2024; Hoehne, 2023) that accelerated the turn to traditional institutions.

The collapse of the Somali state in 1991 created both crisis and opportunity. Clan leadership mobilised to fill the governance vacuum, culminating in the Borama Conference of 1993 (Bradbury, 2008; Walls, 2024). The four-month deliberation produced a constitutional framework combining customary and modern governance structures (Renders & Terlinden, 2010). The accord enshrined the Guurti (House of Elders) as an upper chamber of parliament with powers over security, constitutional matters, and inter-clan dispute resolution, embedding customary authority within the formal state (Boege et al., 2009; Walls, 2024). This arrangement represented hybridisation rather than dualism: customary and state institutions were integrated into a single system enjoying broad social legitimacy precisely because it arose from internal deliberation rather than external imposition (Rakaab, 2026).

Xeer in Practice: Mechanisms, State Interaction, and Structural Exclusions

Xeer operates through a decentralised network of elder councils at multiple levels, from local nabaddoon (peace messengers) to clan-level Guurti (elder councils) and inter-clan meetings convened for major disputes (Gundel, 2006; Lewis, 1961, 2008). Procedures emphasise sustained deliberation, consensus-seeking, and the gradual construction of agreement among parties and their representatives (Abdile, 2024). The principle of collective responsibility, operationalised through the diya (blood-wealth) system, is central to Xeer: when harm is done, the perpetrator's clan pays compensation to the victim's clan, creating powerful incentives for members to regulate one another and prevent conflict (Lewis, 1961; Menkhaus, 2006). Musa and Horst (2025) identify complex social accountability systems underpinning Xeer, grounded in trust, reciprocity, and expectations of future cooperation; relational accountability sustains social cohesion through social sanctions and reputational loss (p. 85).

The relationship between Xeer and state courts cannot be understood in dualistic terms. State courts regularly refer cases to elder mediation, particularly in family, land, and minor criminal matters, and accept and enforce customary resolutions such as compensation agreements (Gundel, 2006; Abdile, 2024). Normative borrowing flows in both directions: Xeer incorporates principles of state law, while state institutions adapt Xeer norms to address challenges arising from urbanisation and commercial disputes (Yusuf, 2024). Individuals and communities navigate strategically between systems—sometimes threatening to invoke state authority to strengthen their position in customary proceedings (Musa & Horst, 2025).

Structural exclusions within Xeer constitute this article's most significant analytical contribution and warrant systematic treatment. Gender exclusion operates at multiple levels: women are excluded from elder councils and decision-making forums; the diya system treats women's blood-wealth at differentiated values relative to men's; and women belong to their fathers' (not husbands') diya-paying groups, which means that upon marriage they lose protective diya membership without acquiring equivalent membership in their husbands' groups, rendering them structurally vulnerable in any cross-clan dispute (EUAA, 2024; Yusuf, 2024; Hashi, Abdi & Ood, 2025). Occupational-caste exclusion is similarly systematic: the Gabooye, Madhibaan, Tumaal, and Yibir minority communities are assigned differential and lower blood-wealth values under Xeer, lack full diya-paying group membership, and are routinely excluded from elder council deliberations (Menkhaus, 2006; Gundel, 2006). Junior male clan members are similarly disenfranchised within Guurti structures, which concentrate authority in senior lineage elders. Internally displaced persons and refugees who lack diya-paying group membership are functionally excluded from Xeer adjudication entirely, as the system has no mechanism for adjudicating their claims in the absence of a clan guarantor (EUAA,

2024). These structural exclusions are not peripheral anomalies, but constitutive features of Xeer's architecture, and any assessment of hybridisation's transformative potential must account for them directly.

Contemporary Challenges and Comparative Perspectives

The December 2025 Xeer Ciise crisis illustrated the containment capacity and structural limits of hybrid governance in Somaliland. Analysts link the unrest to structural factors including historical and contemporary centre-periphery tensions, the underrepresentation of peripheral clans in central governance, and accumulated clan grievances (International Crisis Group, 2026; Al-Baksh, 2026b). The crisis revealed that Somaliland lacks institutionalised mechanisms to adjudicate overlapping cultural and political claims, relying instead on ad hoc interest-balancing that proved insufficient to prevent violence. The February 2026 ceasefire is classified here, following Galtung (1969), as negative peace: a rapid containment achievement rather than evidence that hybrid governance "produces" peace. The stress-test reading of this episode is as follows: the hybrid arrangement demonstrated significant containment capacity; it failed the structural conditions test. This is an analytically honest assessment that neither dismisses traditional mechanisms nor overclaims their peacebuilding significance.

Comparable dynamics are observable in other post-conflict contexts. In post-independence Timor-Leste, customary systems of lisan and adat achieved recognition within state institutions, but early international interventions bypassed these institutions, undermining the legitimacy of hybrid arrangements (Hohe, 2004; Bexley & Nygaard-Christensen, 2022). In Ambon, Indonesia, revived adat institutions facilitated post-conflict reconciliation by linking previously hostile villages through mutual responsibility partnerships (Bräuchler, 2015, 2023). In Mozambique, post-conflict reconstruction formally incorporated state-recognised régulos as informal justice providers, though questions of politicisation and the exclusion of women and youth remained unresolved (Kyed, 2018; Kyed & Buur, 2022). South Africa's constitutional approach—embedding customary law within a liberal democratic framework (Section 211, 1996 Constitution)—demonstrates that constitutional recognition can enhance legal protection while simultaneously generating tension between grassroots legitimacy and top-down reform (Himonga & Diallo, 2023; Ndulo, 2022).

Four cross-contextual patterns emerge. First, traditional institutions demonstrate remarkable resilience, continuing to perform important governance functions even when marginalised by state actors. Second, hybridisation is always a contested process, with future conflicts over power, resources, and identity embedded in present arrangements. Third, the challenge of structural inclusion remains persistent: customary systems tend to reproduce the advantages of the dominant population while marginalising women, minorities, and youth (Bräuchler, 2023; Himonga & Diallo, 2023; Yusuf, 2024). Fourth, endogenously driven hybridisation tends to achieve higher legitimacy, even if it reforms exclusionary practices more slowly than externally imposed alternatives (Walls, 2024; Bexley & Nygaard-Christensen, 2022; Kyed, 2018). The constitutionalisation of the Guurti, the integration of Xeer into the unitary state system, and the dynamism of customary law across urban and rural settings mark Somaliland as a distinctive and instructive case in the comparative study of legal hybridisation (Abdile, 2024).

Discussion

The findings of this article advance three interrelated arguments. First, Somaliland's hybrid legal order is best understood through the lens of strong legal pluralism (Griffiths, 1986) and semi-autonomous social field theory (Moore, 1973) rather than through dualistic frameworks that treat Xeer and state law as separate, non-interacting spheres. The Xeer Ciise crisis confirmed that these two legal orders are mutually constitutive: the crisis was generated by their interaction, and its resolution

depended on their interaction. Second, the concept of endogenous legal transformation accounts for the greater legitimacy of Somaliland's hybrid arrangements as against externally imposed institutional designs. The Borama Conference of 1993 and the February 2026 ceasefire both demonstrate that normative change arising from internal deliberation commands social buy-in that externally transferred designs cannot replicate. Third, hybridisation's transformative potential is currently operating at the containment level (negative peace in Galtung's terms) and has not yet generated the structural reforms required for positive peace. The structural exclusions of women, occupational castes, junior males, IDPs, and refugees are not peripheral anomalies; they are constitutive features of Xeer's architecture that any sustainable reform programme must address directly.

These findings have implications for legal pluralism scholarship. They demonstrate that interlegality (Santos, 1987, 2002) operates not only as a descriptive reality but as a strategic resource differentially available to different social actors. The wealthy clan elder and the female IDP navigate the same legal landscape; they do not navigate it with the same resources. This stratification of interlegality is undertheorised in existing scholarship and represents a productive direction for future research. The present study's reliance on secondary sources constrains its claims about community-level variation and limits its ability to trace change over time in specific elder councils or dispute contexts. Future research should employ longitudinal ethnographic and interview-based methodologies to address these limitations.

Conclusion

Somaliland's Xeer-based dispute resolution system exemplifies legal hybridisation rather than the formal dualistic separation described by Hooker's (1975) model, which persists in donor-framework assumptions. The December 2025 Xeer Ciise crisis provided a stress-test for this hybrid arrangement: it revealed significant capacity for containment—traditional elder mediation was ultimately decisive in brokering the February 2026 ceasefire—while confirming that the structural conditions that produced the crisis remain unresolved. This is negative peace in Galtung's (1969) terms: a genuine achievement and an insufficient one. The analytical conclusion is not that hybrid governance failed but that it is operating at the containment level and has not yet generated the structural reforms—inclusive Guurti participation, equitable diya rights for women and occupational castes, institutionalised centre-periphery dialogue—required for positive peace.

The concept of endogenous legal transformation, as advanced here, makes three contributions to legal pluralism scholarship. Descriptively, it characterises Somaliland's normative evolution as primarily internally driven. Explanatorily, it accounts for the higher legitimacy of Somaliland's hybrid arrangements by reference to cultural authority structures. Normatively, it identifies the conditions under which hybridisation can move from containment to transformation: when deliberative processes are progressively broadened to include women, occupational castes, youth, and peripheral communities; when Xeer precedents are partially documented to reduce arbitrary variation; and when state-elder jurisdictional boundaries are institutionally clarified.

For organisations working in Somaliland—including Interpeace, the Academy for Peace and Development (APD), and the United Nations—these findings point to four specific policy directions. First, joint state-elder judicial capacity programmes should build shared understanding of procedural norms, constitutional principles, and jurisdictional boundaries. Second, partial documentation of Xeer precedents should be supported—not to codify or rigidify the system, but to create reference points that reduce arbitrary variation and enhance accountability, particularly for diya-payment disputes involving women and occupational minorities. Third, formal participation mechanisms for women,

youth, and occupational-caste representatives should be created within regional Guurti councils, moving beyond advisory tokenism to structured decision-making roles. Fourth, institutionalised early-warning and inter-clan dialogue mechanisms should be established at the centre-periphery interface to address grievances before they escalate to the level witnessed in Awdal in December 2025.

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