

EDITORIAL

Reclaiming the Narrative through Scholar-Led Publishing

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Academic publications and journals run by scholars in the Global South are vital to correct deep-seated knowledge imbalances, ensure local research addresses regional problems, and break down costly paywalls that restrict local access to vital scientific and humanistic discoveries. Historically, the dominant international academic landscape has been heavily skewed by a Western-centric framework that enforces an invisible network of Northern control. Within this uneven ecosystem, Global North journals frequently gatekeep knowledge, marginalizing research from the Global South as “too localized” or irrelevant to mainstream global discourses. This institutional bias forces Southern researchers into a position of academic dependence, where they are pressured to adapt their findings to Northern paradigms simply to achieve visibility. Platforms like the *Laas Geel Review of International Relations* and *Dhaxalreeb* (published by the Somaliland Centre for African Studies) are born out of a critical necessity to challenge these structural asymmetries. By transferring editorial stewardship directly into the hands of Southern scholars, these platforms mitigate regional biases in the peer-review process, ensuring alternative viewpoints, indigenous epistemologies, and domestic paradigms are validated on their own terms.

This editorial autonomy is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is directly tethered to practical, context-driven socio-economic survival. Local scholars naturally understand their regional realities best, framing inquiries around urgent, domestic public interests—such as localized tropical diseases, indigenous agricultural adaptation, governance, state building, and regional security dynamics. When knowledge production is managed locally, its outputs become immediately actionable. Governments and non-governmental actors can directly leverage data built on domestic realities to inform public policies, translating academic discourse into tangible societal transformations. However, the capacity to implement these local solutions is systematically undermined by the commercial publishing models of the Global North. The exorbitant subscription fees charged by legacy publishers lock out underfunded universities, while the modern shift toward open access has introduced predatory Article Processing Charges (APCs). These steep author-facing fees create a cruel paradox, effectively preventing researchers in regions like Africa from both reading global scholarship and publishing their own peer-reviewed empirical findings.

Bridging this critical need for knowledge equity with the immense opportunity for institutional autonomy, Diamond Open Access serves as a powerful catalyst for academic sovereignty. As noted by the Somaliland Centre for African Studies, the push for Diamond OA—which offers free and immediate access to academic publications without cost to authors—is critical in the Global South for promoting a more equitable sharing of knowledge on a global scale (Jama, 2025). By completely bypassing market-driven corporate mechanisms, non-commercial infrastructures treat knowledge strictly as a digital public good. This model does more than lower financial barriers; it reclaims true community ownership over the research lifecycle. When local publishing hubs are robustly supported, regional scholars are incentivized to remain within their native academic ecosystems, building long-term institutional strength and elevating the international visibility of Southern science without compromising its local relevance.

The current issue of the Laas Geel Review responds directly to this prospective by confronting a prominent thematic gap across contemporary literature: the stark tension between legal ambiguity and functional reality, particularly regarding statehood, governance, and regional security in the Horn of Africa (Ali, 2026; Ahmed, 2026). While mainstream academic focus often centres on formal, top-down institutional mandates—such as *de jure* recognition and international treaties—the articles in this issue demonstrate that real-world interactions operate largely outside these normative structures. This complex dynamic manifests across the region in three distinct ways:

- **Geopolitical Pragmatism vs. Juridical Status:** Foreign powers and external actors routinely bypass formal recognition to secure transactional economic and maritime interests (frequently observed in the “Recognition-Security Nexus” in Somaliland) (Idil Abdirahman, 2026). Simultaneously, unilateral cross-border infrastructure initiatives, such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), continue to redefine Nile Basin hydro-hegemony through *de facto* power metrics rather than historical, colonial-era legal treaties (Regina, P.M., 2026). Diaspora networks act as non-state agents, utilizing source mobilization and informal diplomacy to navigate recognition challenges (Askar, 2026).
- **Empirical Interventions in Local Public Health:** Localized field scholarship challenges top-down public health frameworks by illustrating how community-specific engagement mitigates structural policy limitations. As analysed by Kadar Nouh (2026), evaluating multi-pronged health communication approaches implemented by the Hargeisa Group Hospital reveals that localized, Somali-language frameworks, traditional birth attendants, and mother-to-mother support groups are what successfully reduce maternal and child mortality in underserved rural populations.
- **The Intersection of Indigenous Constitutionalism and Decolonization:** Scholarly debates within the region highlight a conceptual breakdown in Western institutional templates. Recent literature contrasts top-down unitary state structures against indigenous peace processes, such as the 1993 Borama National Charter, proving that self-determination built on local consensus forms a more resilient governance framework than top-down neo-colonial interventions (Ewusi, 2025; Ali, 2025).

Ultimately, global science and international relations theory cannot claim to be universal if they continue to silence or extract data from the majority of the world’s population. By championing scholar-led, Diamond Open Access publishing, the Global South is not merely asking for a seat at the established academic table; it is actively constructing its own, ensuring that knowledge production remains a shared, equitable global effort.

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