

AFRICAN PERSPECTIV ES ON STATE RECONSTRU CTION

The Case of Somaliland
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INTRODUCTION

- The phenomenon of state failure, state contraction, state collapse has increasingly come to occupy the attention of policy makers with its corollary ungoverned spaces of deep concern
- Latest Failed State Index issued by the US-based Fund for Peace, the top five positions are all occupied by African states: Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, South Sudan and Chad. Moreover, no fewer than 32 African states are represented in the top fifty of the Failed State Index. Worryingly, these include Africa's biggest and most influential states such as Nigeria at number 16, Kenya at number 17, Ethiopia at 19 and Egypt at 34.

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AFRICA – THE HOPEFUL CONTINENT – ECONOMIST

- Optimistic view of Africa: half a dozen African economies are growing at more than 6% per year for the past six years
- 2 out of every 3 African countries hold elections
- Optimism misplaced – growth from a low economic base – Africa account for 2.5% of world output but accounts for a sixth of the world's population
- Put differently 10 million Belgians produce what one billion Africans produce
- Even this growth unsustainable because: 60% of Africans in low-paid, unpredictable and informal jobs; half a billion Africans subsist on less than \$1,25 per day, only half the youth is economically active
- Also point of institutionalized greed and corruption, shadow states

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PROBLEMATIZING THE AFRICAN STATE

- On political front, while more elections taking place, this did not lead to liberal democracy – Zimbabwe’s recent elections illustrates this well
- Freedom House – only 11 Africa countries classified as “Free”, 23 “Partly Free”, and 22 “Not Free”
- In attempting to explain the discrepancy between holding elections and perpetuating authoritarian rule, Fareed Zakaria coined the phrase “illiberal democracy” defined as “the troubling phenomena of elected governments systematically abusing individual rights and depriving people of liberty”
- The African State has lurched from crisis to crisis since achieving independence. Post-colonial Africa has experienced 100 coups, 95 conflicts and 45 civil wars. The 16 ECOWAS members alone have experienced 82 forms of political conflict including 44 military coups

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CASE OF NIGERIA

- 160 million people divided into 350 ethnic groups, speaking 400 languages
- 50% of population Muslim, 40% Christian, 10% indigenous beliefs – state no overarching national identity – politicians have exploited ethnic, regional and religious faultlines
- Since end of military rule in 1999, \$ 8 billion embezzled by politicians each year – state losing legitimacy – no notion of social contract
- At a time when Nigeria's oil revenues exceed \$74 billion per annum, more than half of Nigerians live on less than \$1 per days and 4 out of 10 Nigerians are unemployed
- James Ferguson – state does not refer to an actor in the African context but a process tying together a multiplicity of formal and informal power relations

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RESPONDING TO STATE FAILURE

- International efforts at putting Humpty Dumpty together have been a failure and in my view the current Somalia experience will also result in failure
- Part of the reason for this failure emanates from an attempt at state creation which is Eurocentric in scope – African states cannot really be Westphalian
- Related to this it is not organic coming from below and in keeping with the culture of citizens within a polity – rather it is seen as alien and generally a Western imposition
- Governments emanating from such processes are more accountable to foreign donors than to local constituencies exacerbating problems of alienation and legitimacy
- Ultimately responses to state failure have generally compounded failure

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SOMALILAND: RESPONDING TO FAILURE

- 1969-1991 Collapse of Siad Barre regime, warlords and collapse of Somali state
- Somaliland ruled by British unlike rest of Somalia ruled by Italy
- 1991 Somali declares its independence from rest of Somalia
- “If you want to dismantle a hedge, Remove one thornbush at a time” – Somali proverb
- Whilst not recognized as a state, it has had elections, engaged in state-building from below, built up its own bureaucracy, has been reliant on its own resources – nothing from the international community
- Somaliland was an independent state in pre-colonial era, Somalia has no history of being a state before colonialism
- Has its own police, coastguard - brought in PMC/PSCs with support of Somali private sector to train and provide logistical and operational support for its security forces

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SOMALILAND: RESPONDING TO STATE FAILURE

- Whilst predominantly Isaq clan in Somaliland , other Somali clans, sub-clans, lineage and blood groups and Oromo minorities in Somaliland
- Made use of Sufi Islam (as opposed to Al Shabab Wahhabi Islam) to build one set of values for the country as a whole
- Role of clan leaders and elders in mediation – especially important was role of the diya paying group or Jilibi Bah leaders – primary bond of loyalty, most stable unit in Somali – co-opted these leaders – also primary economic unit
- Unlike the tribal chiefs in other African societies, elders in Somaliland chosen by their expertise in negotiation, compromise, piety, wealth, knowledge, generosity, courage, fairness
- Women as clan ambassadors “Dual clan membership”, exogamy

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SOMALILAND: RESPONDING TO STATE FAILURE

- Important role of the Guurti, the assemblies operating at sub-clan and clan levels, to promote democratic participation – deliberations held publicly
- Greater legitimacy and greater accountability
- Effective use of local resources
- Also effective use of diaspora remittances – half of Somaliland’s 3,5 million citizens live outside its borders and send home \$50 million annually
- These played a key role in the DDRRR process – one of the most effective case studies ever
- National security forces created from clan militias- each clan given an allotment of recruits in national army – cannot be utilized for internal purposes, only when externally attacked

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CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

- Much more research needs to be done on this fascinating case study of state-building from below
- Challenge for political scientists to know more about political anthropology – personally had to read a lot about clans and their internal functioning
- Also had to come to understand issues of nomads and the conceptualization of space and territory
- AU and RECs–challenge – state-based
- 3,315 ethnic groups sitting uncomfortably within Africa’s 54 states
- Eritrea splitting from Ethiopia, the splitting of the two Sudans, the rise of the Tuareg-dominated Azawad seeking to break off from Mali and a Hausa-Fulani dominated northern Nigeria seceding from Nigeria all underline the importance of Somaliland for the rest of the continent.

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