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5. Somalia stability: Hostage to local, regional and distant actors

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Africa has been in a state of crisis since its post-colonial independence, with instability being primarily linked to external influences that have social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. The African states, for instance, Nigeria, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan, and most recently Mali, have suffered extreme consequences from unviable forms of political rule, which criminalized both the state and the economy and produced ethnic contention and deeply divided societies. The external actors are not the only architects of Africa's lingering conflicts and state failures: local actors in the post-colonial age are also partially responsible for the political and economic troubles, and for frequent instances of state collapse (Harden, 1991; Gassama, 2008; Mazrui, 2008; Ali, 2014). Somalia, for example, became a victim of internal and external actors; but the new actors that have emerged after the collapse of Somali state are the by-product of gradually deteriorating political situation since 1991. From the rubble and ruins of the state, self-appointed warlords who struggled to rule the country from the barrels of guns, business groups and, later, Islamists aspired to power with the influence of external actors, both from the region and beyond (Bulhan, 2013), exacerbating the political instability and economic shortcomings that impacted on the state and on the lives of the ordinary Somali citizens.

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Indeed, Somalia's problem of security and stability is multidimensional involving conflicting political and economic interests. There are competing interest groups, eager to reshape the Somali state. The local actors are mainly there to benefit from the absence of state institutions and thus fear to see centralized and strong institutions that could challenge their freedom: for instance, many business people were engaged in business throughout the state collapse period and never obeyed the applicable tariffs or paid taxes, a situation that would change with greater stability. Thus, they fear the return of state institutions that would regulate the market and state economy. In addition, the media enjoy considerable freedom as they are often able to avoid censorship or restriction by any national institutional framework, though facing other socio-political pressures, including threats of violence. Other actors that have benefited from the situation

include local non-governmental organisations, who are now frequently perceived by the Somali people, partly due to their politicised programmes, as the agents of national and international power centres that finance them. For instance, there are a number of research institutes based in the Somali capital and elsewhere in the region that engage in research activities, which feed the policies and programme formulation of external actors.

On the other hand, the Somali state became a victim of multiple external interventions both in the region and from beyond. Indeed, the Somali state became a battleground of the Americans and their allies who are still fighting 'terrorists' linked with both Somali and non-Somali radical groups such as Al-Qaeda. This move never helped the ordinary Somalis, but had and still has an adverse impact on their livelihoods. For instance, the Americans target Somalia's money transfer companies, which channel small amounts of money to the ordinary Somalis to cover and tackle their worsening living conditions. They have also launched drone attacks against suspects linked to the terror networks as the Americans claim, but kill innocent civilians in the southern Somali regions.

In the regional context, neighboring states (particularly Ethiopia and Kenya) have consistently engaged in Somalia's conflict as well since the state collapse in 1991. This engagement evolved from one form and objective to another throughout the period in which state institutions have been absent. It can be argued that Somalia's neighbours are pursuing their own national interests and that their ground troops are in Somalia for one reason or another, engaging in the Somali conflict, mainly to protect their national security and prevent the penetration of radical groups into their territories.

Though IGAD Members always had conflicting interests since its establishment in 1986, the internal division of Somalia's politicians as well as the disintegration of the country into self-governing administrations made Somalia's hope to restore peace and order uncertain (Mulugeta, 2009). But, the regional states are preserving their national strategies. It is unreasonable to expect those countries to solve Somalia's problems under current conditions, but indeed, they do offer a general anesthesia to the Somalis, framing state institutions that are neither applicable to the Somali context nor convincing for Somali citizens at large.

These externally-imposed institutions and leaders will never serve the interest of the Somalis, instead represent the will and interest of foreign actors. The best example is the

adoption of the federal system as a governance and state structure, which cannot integrate the Somalis into one polity, but even disintegrates the existing unity and coexistence among the citizens as Somalia's most recent experiences illustrate.

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Without blaming the regional and distant actors who are after their own national interests, the Somalia solution remains in the hands of the Somalis through traditional knowledge and conflict resolution mechanisms that have belonged to the

Somalis. Examples of these methods include Somaliland and Puntland, who resolved and settled their differences without the help of the international community. To achieve peace and stability, Somalisation of the conflict is necessary and remains the most significant factor that needs to be taken into account, which will define their fate and generate locally-designed durable institutions. Indeed, peacemaking and state restoration must involve the efforts of all sectors of society to address the underlying causes of violence and create the space and environment in which local people interact with and further understand each other. It is grassroots engagement that can produce sustainable and lasting stability. Thus, the support of the international community in addressing those underlying factors is also crucial but empowering, allowing and facilitating local peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms is the only way forward.

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