

Somaliland's Substitutive Security System Between Provision and Competition

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The GIGA-IAA research project on security governance, carried out within the German Science Foundation's SFB700 programme, sets out to understand the relations between actors and institutions involved in maintaining security and stability in areas away from the capital city. The project thereby seeks to decipher actions and structures that contribute to or undermine stability and social cohesion. The project focuses on South Sudan and the Central African Republic. This brief presents key findings of eight weeks of related PhD field research in Somaliland in mid-2015 of one of the project members, Tim Glawion. He visited three localities: Hargeisa, Zeila and Gumburaha Banka. In each locality, he spoke to state authorities, as well as key actors like chiefs, traders and religious leaders. He also organised focus group discussions with elders, youth and women.

Somaliland declared its separation and independence from Somalia in 1991 after nine years of conflict with the central government, but has yet to receive international recognition. Scholars often describe it as a "de facto" state, presenting attributes resembling those of formal states, such as an administrative structure, a defined (albeit contested) territory, registered citizens and an attempt to monopolize authority. On closer inspection, Somaliland's political order has three dimensions that are becoming increasingly intermeshed and competitive: the state administration, the clan structure, and religious law. The state institutions focus primarily on the security domain towards which they invest more than half of the only 250 Mio\$ annual budget. The clan system is incorporated into the state through an upper house of clan representatives that is widely perceived as a very powerful institution. Local conflicts are often resolved by "traditional" processes – communal contracts, elder negotiations and compensation payments –, mostly supported and encouraged by the state. Lastly, the religious law branch, nowadays seems to be reduced to the Sharia principle that underlies the other two strands, and no longer forms an independent governing strand. Conflicts used to evolve around camel ownership, but in recent times access to land has been the main driver of disputes. This happens both in rural landscapes, where more people are turning to farming causing pressure and resistance to privatizing communally owned grazing lands, and urban, where land investments substitute for the lack of functioning banks and other investment opportunities.

Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland, ca. 850 km from Mogadishu:

Hargeisa, as the capital of Somaliland, boasts around 700,000 inhabitants, a new international airport and many functioning services, such as water, electricity, and education. Albeit these are almost entirely privately run. Indeed, the state is limited in an extreme libertarian sense: institutions regulate very little outside the domain of security. The capital serves as the playing field for national power struggles. The postponement of the June 2015 elections pitted the Upper House of Clan representatives, the Guurti, against the administrative branches of government in a power struggle that is yet to be decided. In everyday security, clan structures and elders play a marginal role in the capital. The police effectively provides security during the day – allowing traders to keep bundles of cash in their market stands without worries. At night time, some areas have organized independent community policing, but these are unarmed and rely on the police for solving any serious matter. Religion plays an important spiritual role in that the vast majority of male adults pray at the mosque multiple times a day, but religious sheikhs do not play a key security role and Quran schools or mosques that show first signs of extremism are closed



down by the government. High levels of physical security are paired with extreme rates of unemployment caused by an unsustainable economic environment. Remittances and livestock sales to the Gulf inject large amounts of cash into the capital, which explain the large numbers of cars and villas seen throughout town. However, the real economy lies in shambles: unemployment is estimated at 70-80%, graduates fail to find jobs, and there exists no large scale industrial or service sector to speak of. The gap between an unemployed majority and a small, rich internationally-linked elite that is dominating positions of power and buying up large parts of the capital's land, is seen as a key bone of contention.

Zeila, ca. 350 km from Hargeisa, 12-hour drive:

Zeila lies on the border between the desert on the one and the Red Sea on the other side and has around 4000 inhabitants from throughout Somaliland. Dozens of Yemenis come and go by boat weekly, but the Zeila port has been surpassed by modern competitors in Djibouti and Berbera leading to economic decline. While ancient ruins are reminiscent of the town's Ottoman and pre-Ottoman glory, Security within town is provided on a high level through the presence of around 60 policemen and the fact that the town is so small that a potential thief or perpetrator could hardly hide. Within town, clan structures have become mostly irrelevant and the Imams and Sheikhs play only a spiritual role. The surrounding towns and villages are inhabited by the Issa clan, who continue to rely primarily on their traditional structures and their leaders span the area between Somaliland, Djibouti and Ethiopia. The rural population seems to deal with their problems internally through their traditional structures and go to the police only when absolutely necessary. In fact, the surrounding Issa people feel that the government is expropriating them: the vice president of the country is of the Gadabuursi clan and visited the town two years ago, in the local elections shortly thereafter for the first time the council was dominated by Gadabuursi members, who elected the Mayor and deputy. Also all the non-traditional jobs in Zeila (businessmen, police, etc.) they say are in the hands of non-Issa. On a structural-level, the government – in this case the governor of the Salal region – tries to tie the traditional leaders to it by paying mid-ranking leaders – the Akiils – a 50\$ monthly salary and per diems when solving conflicts. This process hollows out clan hierarchies and blurs the acclaimed lines between government and clan structures.

Gumburaha Banka, nomadic area, 60 km from Hargeisa, 2-hour drive:

Gumburaha Banka means “the plains by the hills” and is a nomadic area. Here, the competition between traditional and state structures can be felt, but continues to be won by the traditional elders: an example is that the local government gave a land concession to an individual within the communally-held plains. Locals contested this allocation, threatening violence, which led the local government to retract the concession and the land was left communal. In other cases however the two strands work together well. People usually turn to their elders first for the resolution of conflicts, but the police steps in, when violence occurs or the negotiations reach a dead-lock. Then, usually all suspects are jailed (it seems even those with little evidence against them) until the two clans reach a compensation payment deal, after which all are released, even if the person was a murderer or rapist. The biggest problems in the region are the pressures on the traditionally communally-held lands to privatize for agriculture and the lack of rain leading to many dead livestock visible throughout the plains.