

Somaliland's Search for Internal Recognition

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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 research compares South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Somaliland. This brief presents key findings of six weeks of Tim Glawion's PhD field research in Somaliland in April and May 2016. He visited three localities: Daami quarter in Hargeisa, Zeila district and the Gumburaha Banka. In each locality, he spoke to state authorities, as well as key actors such as chiefs, traders and religious leaders. He also organised focus group discussions with youths and women.

The discussion within and without Somaliland has focused on striving for external recognition apart from Somalia. During the country's 25th independence anniversary on 18 May 2016, some national and international voices suggested drastic measures to finally enforce recognition. Indeed, Somaliland has proven surprisingly stable and the negative consequences of non-recognition perpetuate the country's economic crisis. Nevertheless, the key struggle determining Somaliland's stability is the struggle for internal, not external recognition. The Somaliland success story builds upon the acceptance of interlinking chains of a complex security system. Typical conflict resolution charge traditional elders with solving the brunt of the load through compensation agreements. State justice institutions focus their limited resources only on specific incidences that go beyond the elders' capabilities. State intervention is also limited in time, as elders usually take over again after the police or army stopped the immediate conflict. However, three worrying signs marked the first half of 2016: A very low turnout during the voter registration process, high and yet increasing numbers of young people emigrating, and armed resistance against state forces. Internal state skepticism is paired with an ever-enlarging domain of administrative responsibilities. Whether state institutions use their increasing impact to provide services and non-tribal justice or rather to strike corrupt and clan-biased deals will mark the future path for Somaliland. Research in the ancient town and district of Zeila, in the nomadic Gumburaha Banka area, and in Hargeisa's Daami quarter unveiled the full scope of Somaliland's internal search for recognition.

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

Policing in Baligubadle and Gumburaha Banka – a small regional capital and its nomadic outskirts – perfectly exemplifies the Somaliland model of conflict resolution. Mediation starts with the elders in almost every incidence ranging from verbal insult to rape and murder. The elders contact the police to intervene when the situation needs coerciveness to stop conflict from spiralling. The police interfere rigidly, arresting the alleged perpetrator, often even the victim, and their respective families. If after 24 hours the elders still cannot reach an agreement, the police must transfer the case to the court for a ruling. Even after the court ruling and sentencing, the respective elders of the victim and accused can still strike a compensation agreement, present it to the courts and the culprit will be released no matter the crime. In other words, such an internal resolution scheme allows each actor to use its resources as far as possible before the next link in the chain jumps in to assist. This conflict resolution chain thereby constantly integrates conflicting parties. However, conflicts are growing as inhabitants enclose parts of the public land to engage in agriculture, to which some local herders resist violently. The role of the state judge is becoming ever more important, as rulings concerning the public grazing area, the "Banka", are under the sole jurisdiction of the state. In fact, government agencies often cause the problem by granting

land-titles with doubtful legality. The singular protective dimension is man-made: the Ethiopian-Somali border. The Somali Arab clan lives on both sides of this dividing line for at least the next 50 km. People can evade paying taxes by moving to the other side on collection dates and criminals can hide across the border. Increased communication between officials and armed forces from both sides on the local level have slightly reduced these risks.

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

The conflict resolution chain in Zeila district is officially the same as in the rest of Somaliland. However, the chain is broken on numerous links depending on the location within Zeila's security arena. Zeila town as an administrative centre holds many governmental institutions, including up to 50 police officers, and the mostly ethnic Samaron inhabitants engage in trading or government services activities. Here, state institutions dominate the resolution of conflict. Tokhoshi on the other hand is more diverse, with two large (Issa and Samaron) and some smaller groups present, while all inhabitants link to salt mining activities. The Guddi, a governmental village council, but with mostly traditional leaders as members, and a small police force of three resolve disputes that most often revolve around mining rights, distributions or salt theft. Finally, the Issa clan almost universally inhabits the rural areas and holds a long, rigid culture of self-rule and regulation. The lack of integration between the areas, which is at times interpreted as ethnically rooted, can cause sporadic outbursts of violence. Clan narratives and institutions continue to play a key role at the fringes of Zeila district. Feelings of marginalization are at times voiced violently to the centre as the repercussions of the allegedly fraudulent 2012 local elections live on. The most recent incidence was a dispute between Issa and Samaron teenage students that quickly spread to town, where members of both clans beat each other and threw stones. The police and military intervened and local leaders (Mayor, Imam, Elders) mediated, but a long-term solution has yet to be found.

Daami Quarter, Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland:

In Daami, clan compensation mechanisms are weak and the harmony of state and customary institutions is in discord. Minority groups of the Gabooye mostly inhabit Daami, who lack many of the inter-clan relations. They hold no parliamentary seats, only one in the House of Elders, and only very recently two Gabooye Akiils were included in the 14-member Hargeisa Akiil Council. On a less political, but more basic level of clan relations, other clans portray inter-marriage with Gabooye as a disgrace. The Gabooye also own very little livestock, making the traditional blood money a costly endeavour. A hindrance to good collaboration between the Gabooye and the police is the recruitment system – any recruit must bring his own gun. This system was established in the 90s to disarm clan militias and arm an unrecognized state. However, the Gabooye own no guns and are too poor to purchase them. As a result, in Daami, there are no Gabooye police officers. Although the majority population of the Daami quarter, the Gabooye are a minority in Somaliland and feel threatened by the Isaaq majority. The most recent clash erupted in late March 2016, when an Isaaq youth called a passing Gabooye girl “Midhgan” – a term considered a slur for Somali minority groups. Another youth from the Gabooye heard this and confronted him, tensions rose and soon young people from both sides were throwing stones. The clashes continued for two days and two nights. Three people were badly injured, two cars destroyed, and multiple houses damaged. The local police intervened with heavy back up from the regional headquarters. However, Gabooye citizens felt the police were targeting them, rather than keeping people apart. After many arrests, including one Akiil from both sides, the Sultans – the highest clan rank – of each clan came to the police station and struck a compensation payment deal. However, as one youth put it: “The clash can erupt again at any moment”.