

Rebuilding State-Society Relations in Post-Conflict Settings: A Case of Somaliland

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Abstract

State structure and its institutions always determine the outcome of state practices. In Africa, one of the most defining characteristics of its states and institutions is the lack of political will among the state leaders. This has become the feature of many African states and their subsequent failure to meet the people's needs and expectations. What emerges from this analysis is that the African countries, due to their odd policies and governance structures, have failed to coordinate their institutions effectively and efficiently. Therefore, many Africans are migrating for economic purposes and are eager to benefit from the opportunities available in the global north, which dominates the world's political economy. Yet some people are escaping from the repressive regimes ruling in their respective countries. In contrast, others have experienced social exclusion and marginalization from the state opportunities, including economic opportunities and political positions, thus opting to leave their country. This article examines the state fragility in the African states, its impact on the state institutions, and its outcome, such as migration, which is the major consequence of Africa's state fragility. Furthermore, the article analyses restoring the citizen-state relationship and building inclusive state institutions. Therefore, this article calls for an urgent response to the challenges against state institutions in the African context in general and Somaliland in particular. Policies to improve social and security services, such as health facilities, educational institutes, police, and access to good roads, are needed to improve the lives and livelihoods of the state and citizens.

Keywords: state, citizen, migration, fragility, opportunities, Africa, Somaliland, Horn of Africa

Introduction

In the post-colonial period, African state institutions performed poorly. This situation is attributed to factors such as a lack of political commitment from leaders, insufficient skills and expertise in administration and management, and the influence of colonial powers who were involved, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of African states (Tordoff, 2002; Gassama, 2008; Naudé, 2010). This indicates that governance systems in post-colonial Africa have become extremely weak. In fact, some regions are even devoid of effective governance due to the involvement of foreign actors (Nkrumah, 1965; Slomp, 2000). Furthermore, certain indigenous local groups have monopolized state institutions and resources, thereby marginalizing others. This situation largely results in unequal societies socially, economically, politically, and racially. A significant consequence is the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor (Dlamini, 1995). According to Gilbert Khadiagala (2008), this type of politics has created forms of statelessness and marginality that exacerbate societal insecurities and strain human livelihoods in Africa.

The adverse result of state fragility in most African countries on the state's socio-economic setups is migration. This is prevalent in most states if not all of them (Maunganidze, 2016). Migration has been happening in the Horn of Africa in general due to the presence of weak states, such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia (IOM, 2017). However, Somaliland has not escaped from this fragility where its drivers are mainly from the presence of weaknesses within the state institutions, while its contributors are a set of multi-faceted factors that vary from one context to another and that face Africa equally. These include conflicts, natural calamities, and catastrophes such as droughts and cyclones, poverty, political repression, unemployment, and a wide range of social injustice and

exclusion (Betts, 2013). The major problems faced by the post-colonial African states were and remain the absence of strategies aimed at improving the performance of the basic government institutions and functions due to the fragility of the states in terms of policies, governance, and security (Callaghy, 2008).

Following Somaliland's withdrawal from the union in 1960, post-conflict state institutions were vulnerable due to multiple factors. These factors include the lack of recognition necessary to be legible for foreign direct investments, which derailed the state institutions and prevented the economy from flourishing (Eubank, 2010; Phillips, 2020). Although Somaliland has managed to build its institutions without international engagement and involvement, the decay and decline of Somaliland's political and social institutions are an outcome of the absence of effective policies and a strong economy necessary to help state institutions thrive. However, when the fragility of the Somaliland state is analyzed, there are plausible factors that can be described as push and pull. A deeper understanding of those factors is necessary to bring about viable solutions and simultaneously address the impact of state fragility on citizens and state institutions. Lack of trust between the state and the citizens is a factor leading to state fragility. Due to this, simultaneously, the state loses its legitimacy and good relations with the citizens.

This article explores the responses that could be employed to overcome the challenges of state fragility and migration in Somaliland. The article discusses how to restore state-citizen relations and build trust between the two and finally bring state legitimacy with legitimate institutions. Furthermore, the article examines the importance of building inclusive state institutions for better citizens and a better Somaliland state.

State fragility in the African context

In Africa, fragile institutions are the primary drivers of the major forms of migration (Maunganidze, 2016). Different causes and triggers contribute to fragility and have their role in worsening the situation. Weak institutions unable to deliver the services needed by the citizens, unskilled human capital in the state institutions, and lack of political will from the leaders are the major drivers of fragility (Migdal, 1988; 2004). Other external factors, including colonial legacy and the issue of dependency, also have their influence on the work and performance of the state institutions. Nigeria, for example, experienced some major ruptures in its political history. Colonialism was recorded as one of the ruptures, while the civil war that Nigeria witnessed in 1967-1970 was one of the greatest human tragedies that ever happened in Africa (Mazrui, 2008; Okome, 2013).

The debt crisis that riddled many developing countries and the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed on African economies also deserve mentioning (Mkandawire, 2001; Alemazung, 2010). In this regard, those factors are considered to be the source of Africa's state fragility, which in turn produced institutions that are unable to deliver the services needed by citizens, thus generating massive waves of migration heading to the developed world. This has had a negative impact on the state, its economy, and its citizens, and many people feel that the next generation will end up losing their lives in the Mediterranean Sea in search of better living standards.

The state is a structure that accommodates many formal and informal organizations, and a structure may collapse and disappear (MacIver, 2006). However, what distinguishes the state, at least in the modern era, is that the state is a legally empowered organization that makes binding decisions on behalf of the citizens and protects them against conditions of insecurity (Migdal, 2004). In Somaliland, lack of strong institutions and poor service deliverance such as health,

education, and security, a high unemployment rate, a lack of viable policies and strategies to create jobs for the unemployed, and a lack of technical and vocational institutions in the entire country, widespread nepotism, and favoritism in the market place, are the major drivers of the massive migration happening in the country and pertaining to the fragile state of affairs. This article, therefore, offers a rethinking of the problems of state fragility and migration in Somaliland and engages policies and strategies to address those issues from different perspectives. These include engaging the citizens both at a national and regional level and international involvement. The article seeks to contribute to the debate on restoring state-society relations in Somaliland, which are deteriorating due to the weaknesses within the Somaliland state system, which failed to legitimize its relationship with citizens through providing the services they need.

Restoring state-citizen connections

At first glance, it is very important to describe what exactly the term “citizen” means. The dictionary of politics and government describes the term citizen as a person who has the legal right to live in a particular country, while citizenship is the legal status of being a citizen of a country, entitled to its protection and political rights (Collin, 2004). Richard Bellamy (2008) defines the term citizenship as a particular set of political practices involving specific public rights and duties with respect to a given political community. It describes human relations, which range from the importance of the distinctive political tasks citizens perform to shaping and sustaining the collective life of the community. The most crucial of these tasks is their involvement in the democratic process, primarily by voting but also by speaking out, campaigning in various ways, and running for office. According to Bellamy (2008), whether citizens participate or not, the fact remains, however, that the citizens should fulfill their responsibilities, such as paying taxes, doing military service, and so on. This also provides the most effective mechanism for them to promote their collective interests and encourage their political rulers to pursue the public’s good rather than their own.

In international relations and politics, the human population is one of the physical elements of the state after the territory, and the state cannot exist without having a population who is legally living in it (Clapham, 1996; Baylis, 1997; Johari, 2006; Patrick, 2011). Those people are the citizens of that state and are regarded as the primary actors; therefore, they are entitled to their legal rights, such as receiving quality healthcare, quality education, access to clean water, and security. All those services should be provided by the state institutions. The state is not the only actor that has responsibility; citizens also have an obligation and should comply with state laws and regulations, such as paying taxes, among others. In this regard, there is a great connection between state legitimacy and its capacity to deliver the services needed by the citizens. Therefore, the state is characterized as fragile when it is unable to deliver basic services to a large proportion of its citizens (Kaplan, 2008), thus losing its legitimacy to the public. According to Derick Brinkerhoff (2007), legitimacy refers to the acceptance of a governing regime as correct, appropriate, and/or right. Therefore, without a minimum degree of legitimacy, states have difficulties functioning. Loss of legitimacy in the eyes of some segments of the population is an important contributor to state failure.

In the developed world, citizens’ rights were guaranteed, while the responsibility of the citizens was also enshrined in the laws of their respective states (Frost, 2002; Bellamy, 2008). This is why the state-society relations in the developed world are flourishing compared to developing countries (Migdal, 1988; 2004). In connection with this, democratic constitutions protect citizens from the government and certain laws or regulations that may cut into individual rights and

freedoms (Kassab & Rosen, 2019). Successful states use local identities, local capacities, and local institutions to promote their development, whereas a dysfunctional state undermines all of those indigenous assets (Kaplan, 2008). Indeed, the lack of democratic institutions and leaders in developing countries and the reluctance of the citizens to respect the rules and regulations of the states hamper state-society relations (Zhao, 2001). In Africa, respect for citizens' rights, despite being enshrined in the African individual constitutions and the continental human rights regime such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted in 1981 and entered into force in 1986 (University of Pretoria, 2006; Lebas, 2011), has not been sufficiently implemented.

The lack of implementation of those policies has been a major setback against the emergence of a democratic African political system (Jana, 2014). This could be linked to the dilemma of state leaders in Africa and their nature to monopolize state institutions and consider themselves as presidents for life (Migdal, 2004; Bogaards, 2004; Hadenius & Teorell, 2006; Meredith, 2006; Carbone, 2007; Nordlund & Salih, 2007). This kind of practice demoralized those who had the ambition to run for office or had the euphoria to establish civil and civic organizations to counterbalance the state institutions and make them accountable to the public interest. In Nigeria, for example, many organizations challenged the state and criticized its responses to political and economic problems, pushing for further opening of the political space (Okome, 2013). However, the Nigerian state has never said a word about the public demands that need open political space.

Nigerian citizens and many African citizens face similar challenges, which force many of them to leave their countries in search of better living standards (Nordlund & Salih, 2007). To overcome those challenges, citizens' engagement is necessary, while the citizens' respect for the state's rules and laws is also essential. For instance, citizens should receive the services they need, such as health, education, access to clean water, good infrastructure, and decent jobs. Citizens should pay taxes in exchange for the services they need. The question arising from this is: do African citizens pay the taxes obligated by the state? And/or is the state ready to provide citizens with the services they need? Both sides are reluctant to perform their work properly. This kind of practice could be linked to the citizens not willing to pay the taxes obligated by the state as they consider their states as institutions riddled by corruption and question the state's capacity. However, in the African context, institutions scarcely perform well due to a growing and persisting mistrust between them and the citizens.

However, it is important to note that development is a therapy for fragility and a key to fixing fragile states (Kaplan, 2008). The responsibility to overcome the weaknesses and fragility within the state institutions lies on the shoulders of those ruling the state. Citizens should respect the rules and regulations of the state. The important role played by social cohesion and unity in constructing legitimate, robust national governing systems necessary for development can be traced back to how the state accommodates its citizens and how elites and state institutions are formed. Indeed, many of the difficulties confronting fragile states stem from how those states are structured (*Ibid*). Therefore, political identity fragmentation and weak national institutions are severely undermining the legitimacy of the state and leading to political orders that are highly unstable and hard to reform. However, states need to look inward for their resources and institutional models and adopt political structures and processes that reflect their peoples' and environment's history, complexity, and particularity (Herbst, 2000; Kaplan, 2008). In this respect, states need to be deeply enmeshed within the societies they are meant to represent if they are to be effective tools of governance and development (Migdal, 2004).

In Somaliland, empowering citizens as primary actors, owners, and long-term stakeholders of the state is necessary. Citizens played a major role in the statecraft and peacebuilding processes. Indeed, the elders and women played crucial roles in the successive peace and state-building processes as they pressured the politicians to agree to a peace deal to bring lasting peace to the people of Somaliland. The peace processes were, indeed, inclusive, and all parties participated. In this respect, Somaliland established institutions: executive, legislative, and judiciary, drafted a constitution and approved it in a public referendum, and saw the emergence of a free press. However, some problems, such as consolidation of power by the executive in a fragile context as the laws of the state gave excess power to the executive, and abuse of power from the police and other law enforcement agencies, started from the very beginning.

Weak states, including those in Africa, have had continuing and profound effects on numerous aspects of social life, but a few have been able to channel that influence to create centralized polities and highly integrated societies (Migdal, 2004; Jana, 2014). According to Joel Migdal (1988), skillful top leadership must be present to take advantage of the conditions to build a strong state. Therefore, rulers must be competent on a number of levels and must carefully select bureaucrats who can and will proffer strategies for survival to the population. Also, they must have a keen eye toward the changing risk calculus and must know when to move and against whom, as changing conditions demand pragmatism in their approach (*Ibid*). Therefore, states end up at the strong or weak end of the scale depending on the distribution of social control in society.

What is significant here is that the Somaliland citizens have enjoyed peace and stability since 1997. However, lack of employment opportunities, quality education, healthcare, widespread nepotism, and favoritism have been major critical issues that demoralize the citizens of Somaliland. Such issues are of public knowledge, are discussed in social gatherings and meetings, and are also criticized in private. Indeed, the youth, who constitute around 75% of the Somaliland population, are not offered opportunities in the job market and are not able to find decent jobs. Their absence from the scene derailed the prospects for young people to participate in the development of their country, thus starting to migrate to other places. The youth question in Somaliland can be directly tied to governance problems. The irrational practice of not investing in the community while simultaneously collecting taxes has left young people dissatisfied. The youth population in Somaliland is left with unmet needs, from major facilities to entertainment and youth centers (Abdi *et al.* 2019). Lands that were intended for public service purposes, such as health centers, schools, police stations, and public parks, have been plundered by the government, in particular local governments across the country.

The discourse on migration, which emerged years ago as a national issue, should be given particular attention by policymakers and decision-makers at this time. Despite this, the presence of idle youth due to the high rate of unemployment is becoming more and more an unfortunate reality every day. And this is one of the root causes of migration not only to Somaliland but also to the entire Horn region. With that in mind, it is evident that re-establishing cordial relations between citizens and the public can strengthen and empower state institutions. According to Michael Jana (2014), it should be concluded that many states in Africa have little to no political legitimacy. Therefore, restoring legitimacy between the state and citizens is important and should be done by expelling social inclusion, boosting political participation, effective governance, and inclusive development (Teichman, 2016).

While policies and approaches to address migration and fragility are discussed in this article, emphasizing the will and capacity of the state institutions to deliver the services needed is also

extremely important. Therefore, creating jobs for the youth, improving health facilities, reforming the education system, setting up recreation and entertainment centers for the youth, introducing volunteer opportunities to restore the fading relationship between the state and the public, establishing technical and vocational schools across the country, eliminating the practice of nepotism, favoritism and treating the citizens equally, launching awareness-raising campaigns, and beautifying the cities and towns of the country remain the major factors that can help Somaliland overcome and at least lessen both migration and state fragility. Nevertheless, though the state is responsible for addressing all those issues listed above, it is the responsibility of the citizens, in particular the haves, to create jobs for the unemployed youth.

Building inclusive state institutions for a better future

The illegitimacy and poor governance structures that rock many developing countries can be linked to many factors that reshape the institutions of those countries (Kaplan, 2008). The establishment of state institutions is to make binding rules that guide people's behavior (Migdal, 2004). However, state institutionalization is one of the central dilemmas that developing countries' governments have long faced. Institutionalization refers to the effective establishment of state authority over society through the creation of political structures and organs. In its most elementary form, political institutionalization is a state-building process. As an unavoidable phase in the process of political development, institutionalization involves the extent to which the entire polity is organized as a system of interacting relationships, first among the offices and agencies of the government and then among the various groups and interests seeking to make demands upon the system, and finally in the relationships between officials and articulating citizens (Kamrava, 2000).

Fundamentally, fragile states and their institutions have a negative impact on development, leading to corruption and the inevitable success of those who are against the system. However, inclusive political institutions are necessary for states to develop. Such institutions provide confidence for people (both within and outside the state) to invest in themselves and in businesses. Such investments hire people and create the tax revenues necessary to build state infrastructure (Kassab & Rosen, 2019). State fragility and institutional weaknesses are largely man-made and are among the primary drivers of contemporary migration in the developing world (Migdal, 1988; Rotberg, 2003; Migdal, 2004; Maunganidze, 2016). Institutional fragilities and structural weaknesses contribute to failure, but those deficiencies usually come from the decisions or actions of human beings. It is the leadership faults across history that have destroyed states for personal gain. In the contemporary era, leadership mistakes continue to erode fragile politics in Africa (Rotberg, 2003).

It is a reality that states have spread globally over the past two centuries, and the content of the social contract has evolved. In the twenty-first century, statehood has become an obligation to provide citizens with four main categories of political goods: physical security and territorial control; legitimate, representative, and accountable governance under the rule of law; competent economic management that provides an environment conducive to growth; and basic social welfare services to meet the fundamental needs of the population (Patrick, 2011). Therefore, unaccountable, non-transparent, and non-participatory governance are well-recognized pitfalls in international development (Goldsmith, 2007).

In Africa, most of the states are fragile or weak, and above all, there is a fading political legitimacy of the governing regime and the state's loss of a monopoly on the use of state resources and institutions. According to Stewart Patrick (2011), African states' instability and fragility are the

outcomes of the dynamic interplay among four major sets of variables that, collectively, determine a state's capacity to peacefully manage and adapt to change; these include the state's baseline level of institutional resilience or strength, the presence of long-term risk factors, or drivers of instability, which increase strains on the state; the nature of the external environment, which can either exacerbate or mitigate these drivers; and, short-term shocks to the system or triggers. In fact, the state is defined as a weak or disintegrated capacity when it fails to respond to citizens' needs and desires, provide basic public services, assure citizens' welfare, or support normal economic activity, and also fails to be a credible entity that represents the state beyond its borders (Brinkerhoff, 2007; Kamrava, 2016).

Somaliland has managed to build state institutions that offer a unique opportunity to promote good governance and democracy in the Middle East and Africa, develop political institutions, and improve economic and social life (Kaplan, 2008). But after almost three decades of existence, it remains in a situation entirely discouraging, which has social, economic, and political dimensions, including a high unemployment rate, poor health service facilities, poor public schools, and lack of access to water in some cities. Poor service provision from public institutions combined with fragile governance institutions disappointed the citizens who were initially enthusiastic about the services provided by state institutions. Fundamentally, weak institutions, poor human capital in service-providing public institutions, and lack of implementation of the policies and strategies by politicians are behind all the unfortunate acts happening in Somaliland since 1991.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Somaliland state to address all the challenges it is facing on social and security fronts. Thus, it needs to reform the policies already in place and introduce other strategies that can change this nation. The problems in the country are multi-dimensional and have a direct link with institutional weaknesses present within the state institutions intended to provide services and protection to the citizens. It is the responsibility of the intellectuals/elites to think of ways to develop their country to prevent migration and out-flux. The first point to note is to establish a viable governance structure. If there is no proper governance system, nothing will change. Most importantly, good governance is the means of survival and existence. However, Somaliland remains in a state of bad governance and corruption, which is why citizens do not receive adequate services from public institutions.

Conclusion

Conflicts and wars have always destroyed basic infrastructure, including social and security-providing institutions. However, in fragile settings, the inability of the state to provide fundamental services to the citizens has an immediate impact on the citizens. While the nature of Somaliland's state-building process has been unique compared to the other parts of the region and the world as well, focusing on the state's capacity to overcome the post-1991 fragile state of affairs is necessary. This could be realized if the capacity of state institutions, which can play an important role in bringing state stability, was improved by collecting taxes and delivering public services to the citizens, as well as enhancing and improving the capability and quality of political and bureaucratic state institutions. This can help Somaliland become less fragile compared to the other parts of the region. In this regard, building those important infrastructures can help Somaliland lay the foundations for functioning state institutions and government establishments, as well as the provision of social services to the citizens. Also, the world is interdependent in the twenty-first century, and each country is pursuing its interests within that established framework. Therefore, the Somaliland leaders and citizens are responsible for working within that framework to help Somaliland state institutions thrive and flourish.

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