

Between State and Non-state

SOMALILAND'S EMERGING SECURITY ORDER

The self-declared Republic of Somaliland frequently features as a prominent example for 'autonomous' processes of peace-building and state-making. Although its population endured civil wars both before and after its unilateral declaration of independence in 1991, this internationally unrecognized de facto state enjoys not only relative peace but also a comparatively high level of overall security two decades later. While these achievements have generally been associated with either its demobilization efforts or the application of traditional mechanisms towards peace and reconciliation, this chapter argues that these factors can only partly account for Somaliland's relatively stable and secure environment.

Despite projects of demobilization and disarmament, military firearms such as Kalashnikov-pattern assault rifles are still pervasive in Somaliland. And although traditional authorities did contribute to reconciliation and peace-building, they have also been key figures in mobilizing (sub-)clans for war. This chapter highlights other mechanisms that have been key for the evolution of Somaliland's stability. Its central proposition is that the armed conflicts of the early to mid-1990s were constitutive of the polity's emerging security order. Only thereafter was it possible to incrementally establish a sustainable security framework within the territory.

This chapter presents and analyses some key features of the contemporary security order for Somaliland as a whole as well as for particular urban centres. Recent trends in both firearm availability and armed violence are compared over time and with those in other Somali regions. In comparison with urban areas in south-central Somalia, major towns in Somaliland experience fewer attacks by armed groups, lower levels of gun usage, and an overall diminished rate of armed violence and homicides.

Resolving political conflict has been the precondition for overall security in Somaliland.

In mapping Somaliland's emerging security order, the chapter distinguishes between different types of conflict and violence, and looks at a range of actors that provide as well as compromise security. Crucial to the incremental improvements in the spheres of communal and criminal violence was the prior resolution of political conflict. Only once state authority had been established and major (sub-)clans had been integrated into the political power architecture could a nascent police force be established to provide security in an increasing number of locations throughout the territory. However, limited resources have compelled the police to cooperate with local security providers, such as neighbourhood watch groups. Although partly composed of former petty criminals, these non-state actors have come to be part and parcel of Somaliland's emerging security order, collaborating with the police in patrolling streets and market places in major towns.

Despite the progress made, peace and security remain fragile in parts of the territory claimed by Somaliland authorities. Spurred by communal tensions between different (sub-)clans,



Pistols and assault rifles for sale at the central weapons market in Burao, June 2011. © Dominik Balthasar



Female police officers stand in front of the MaanSoor Hotel, Hargeisa, April 2010. © Dominik Balthasar

the eastern region of Sool, for example, has seen violent conflict and armed insurrections against the authorities of the self-declared republic. While the Somaliland government prevailed in these conflicts thus far, unresolved conflicts over land, limited state presence, and grievances voiced by marginalized kinship groups remain fertile soil for future challenges to the Somaliland state.

Communal tensions remain fertile soil for challenges to the Somaliland state.

Beyond press articles and the established academic literature, the chapter draws on a recent series of victimization surveys conducted by a Somali research organization. This information is complemented by primary data collected and interviews conducted by the authors during field research in Hargeisa and Burao in June 2011.

Key findings of the chapter include:

- The overall security situation in Somaliland has improved despite the widespread presence of firearms, including military firearms, in private hands.
- Since the mid-1990s, the resolution of major armed conflicts and the corresponding enhancement of state authority have helped to contain large-scale armed violence in central and western Somaliland and facilitate the establishment of a police force within the territory.
- At the local level, neighbourhood watch groups, working with and under the authority of Somaliland police, are improving security in locations such as Hargeisa and Burao.
- Communal tensions in the form of clan-based violence remain a serious threat to safety and security in Somaliland. Their resolution continues to depend on the integration of all relevant clan groups into the state. ■